

Update on Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Situation of IDPs

IDPs from Tribal Areas

Not only has the theatre of war against the militants in the northwest expanded in recent times, it has also exacted a heavy price in the process by displacing people from various affected areas on a very large scale. The fact must be kept in mind and both state and civil society should come to the aid of the IDPs. According to one relief agency, it has registered over 1.3 million IDPs from the tribal areas. The exodus from Orakzai Agency alone amounts to over 75,000 tribesmen at even conservative estimates. Parts of the agency have reportedly turned into ghost towns where starving children search for food. Unsurprisingly, the battle against militancy has led to mass migration, with people seeking refuge in Kohat and Hangu districts and Khyber Agency. The exodus was a predictable consequence of the operation against the militants, but little evidence is available of the state having made efforts to mitigate the IDPs' suffering. The sole relief camp in the area is in Hangu district, accommodating less than 4,000 people. There is no room for the hundreds of people streaming into the area everyday. Apparently, no relief camp exists in Kohat district, where over 22,000 IDPs have registered themselves with the social welfare department. This is an unacceptable situation. The IDPs are caught in a war that is not of their making and they have a right to receive the state's protection. Tackling the militants must of course continue with full force — after all, just on Wednesday militants blew up five schools and a basic health unit in the Utmankhel area of Orakzai Agency. But the fallout on ordinary citizens must be mitigated as far as possible. The conflict must speedily be brought to a successful closure. Meanwhile, efforts are needed towards setting up relief camps.

[Dawn – April 2, 2010]

Mismanagement, Chaos Hit IDPs Registration Centre

There was a complete mismanagement and chaos at a point opened at Pajagi Road in Peshawar for the registration of displaced persons from the troubled Orakzai Agency, as the officials were invisible, forms unavailable and the process later halted. The fresh drive for registration was launched at a time when the number of IDPs from different volatile tribal areas hit 1.3 million. However, this huge displacement could not get government and international community's attention like those from Malakand division. The baffled and helpless IDPs protested and blocked the Pajagi Road but the locals forced them to open the road at gunpoint. A clash was narrowly averted when the displaced people returned. This risk of a clash was caused by the inability of the relevant government departments to make proper arrangements for the registration to avoid mismanagement and chaos. There was also a complete disorder at the point, established in centre for rehabilitation of the paralysed people, as the government had not deputed police or other security officials thereof.

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA), the number of uprooted persons from Orakzai and the neighbouring Kurram agencies has reached 197,667. It said the uprooted people from Orakzai constituted 71 per cent of the total number. The intensifying fighting in Orakzai Agency has escalated displacement as thousands of residents of the troubled agency continued to move to safer places. "I fled Bizot area in Orakzai four days ago due to severe shelling and am now living in Sro Killay in a rented house for Rs400," said Ahmad Khan. The man who said he was unemployed complained the authorities had refused to register him. Ahmad said he had old national identity card and token for a computerised one but they did not accept it. "Please ensure my registration," the poor man said, hoping this scribe could help him enlist as IDP. The authorities have said both new and old NIC were valid documents for the registration. The OCHA said 800 families were being registered on daily basis in Hangu and Kohat districts. There is only one camp for the IDPs in Muhammad Khwaja in Hangu, housing only 3,630 persons.

[The News – April, 7, 2010]

IDPs' Crisis Far From Over, Funds Drying Up

Nearly a year since more than three million people were displaced by military operations in the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province (formerly NWFP) and tribal areas, the crisis is far from over. More than 1.3 million people are still displaced, dependant on emergency relief to survive, yet funding for the emergency response is drying up, according to a group of leading aid agencies working in the country.

According to a study report of the Pakistan Humanitarian Forum (PHF), a group formed in 2003 to coordinate and strengthen efforts of 35 international NGOs involved in the relief work, dwindling contributions from the international community, which have so far pledged less than a third of the funds needed for the first half of 2010, are now forcing humanitarian organisations to close essential life-saving programmes in Swat valley and surrounding areas as well as in the Federally-Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). For the people benefiting from these programmes, this means less access to basic services such as water, sanitation and healthcare. The crisis is far from over and hundreds of thousands of people are still in desperate need," said Caitlin Brady, Chairperson of the PHF and Acting Country Director of the International Rescue Committee (IRC), adding: "Already many people are not getting the help they need, and we're now faced with having to close more programmes for lack of money". Some of the displaced people have been unable to return home since military operations against armed opposition groups surged last April. Others have been displaced by more recent operations such as the military offensives in FATA, which have forced more than 200,000 people to flee from their homes. The humanitarian situation in Hangu, Kohat, DI Khan, Tank and in Peshawar is becoming increasingly desperate. About 90 per cent of those displaced are either living in rented houses or staying with relatives or friends.

[Dawn – April 20, 2010]

FATA IDPs in Dire Need of Food, Medicines

People fleeing the fighting in Orakzai and Kurram agencies are arriving in the adjacent district of Hangu in urgent need of food, medicine and other items. Hundreds of thousands have fled since last November and the displacement has gained pace with the return of warmer weather. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) in a statement on April 14 said they had started delivering food and other essentials, such as blankets, tarpaulins and jerrycans to the newly-arrived displaced people in Hangu. Antje Ruckstuhl, In-Charge of ICRC activities in the northwest of Pakistan Our priority is to reach those living outside relief camps, as approximately 95 per cent of the displaced are hosted by local families or live in rented accommodation. He said that they need food and medicine right away, that much is clear. However, it is a challenge to estimate the scale of their needs. It was stated that the PRCS was carrying out door-to-door registration of displaced people, and so far over 122,000 people had been registered in 19 union councils of the district. The Red Crescent has already completed two rounds of relief distribution to some 63,000 displaced people living outside camps since December 2009. The statement said the ICRC had donated emergency medicines to the Thall District Hospital. An assessment is underway to determine which other healthcare facilities could benefit from ICRC support. The organisation is also trying to find ways of restoring contact between family members who have become separated from one another. Since January 2010, the ICRC and the PRCS have jointly assisted 350,000 victims of fighting in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and the Frontier province.

[Dawn – April 15, 2010]

Donors' Assistance for IDPs

Pakistan Received \$357.67m Foreign Grants for IDPs in 9 Months

The government received and disbursed \$357.67 million external project grants, emergency supplementary funds to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) in the first nine months (July to March) of the current fiscal year 2009-10. Pakistan received \$113.67 million under external project grant on bilateral bases from friendly countries and international donors. Under this category, the government received maximum amount from US \$38.94 million, second maximum amount from the government of Japan \$22.89 million and the third largest amount from World Food Programme \$15.96 million. The sources further said the government received \$12.99 million from Germany, \$0.02 million from Australia, \$5.09 million from Canada, \$8.50 million from China, \$0.80 million from International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) World Bank, \$03.45 million from International Development Association (IDA), \$4.38 from the government of Norway, \$0.05 million from Switzerland and \$0.61 million from United Kingdom in the first nine months of the current fiscal year, the sources maintained. The total sum of these grants was \$113.67 million.

The sources further said that the government of Pakistan also received some grants for IDPs from the war on terror in South Waziristan and other parts of the tribal belt. In this regard, the US government extended emergency supplementary fund for IDPs as a grant of \$44 million. The signing ceremony in this regard was held in Economic Affairs Division (EAD) on September 30, 2009 between Pakistan and the US officials. The sources further said that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have signed an agreement to extend \$380 million for budgetary support, import of urea and co-financing for Neelum Jhelum Hydropower Project. Out of the total agreement, Pakistan so far had received

\$200 million as loan from SFD. In this regard the agreement had been signed on November 10, 2009 in the EAD, the sources claimed. The agreement consists of a time deposit of \$200 million to be kept in the State Bank of Pakistan and the Saudi Arabia has paid this amount to Pakistan. The sources claimed that the activities of the SFD were one of the channels of economic co-operation between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. This co-operation extends to various areas including trade and investment. According to the agreement, this Saudi Arabia loan carries an interest rate of three months LIBOR and its repayment would be made in eight years including three years grace period.

[Daily Times – April 15, 2010]

Lack of Funds Hampers Projects for IDPs: UN

The United Nations said on April 12 that humanitarian aid for 200,000 people affected by military offensives against Al Qaeda-linked militants might cease because of scarce funds. UN aid agencies in February launched a \$537 million aid appeal for people impacted by the fighting between government forces and militants in the northwest of the country.

Martin Mogwanja, the UN humanitarian coordinator for Pakistan, said agencies had received \$106 million, accounting for only around 20 per cent of requested funds. He told that we are concerned as the humanitarian community in Pakistan that the response from (the) international community is inadequate in terms of the resources provided. "The humanitarian actors who are active on the ground responding to the needs of the vulnerable and displaced populations... are concerned that some of their projects and programmes may have to be suspended due to lack of resources." He said many humanitarian agencies had reported that some projects will be closed or suspended and new ones, particularly related to the return of displaced people, might not be launched. Currently, there are 1.3 million displaced people in Pakistan. Of these, over 125,000 are living in camps, said Mogwanja. Some 200,000 people have been displaced by fighting in Orakzai and Kurram and many more were leaving their homes to safety, he said. Health agencies had received only about 5 per cent of requested funds, while those working on food and basic sanitation only about 25 per cent. Food stocks were available only up to May.

[Dawn – April 13, 2010]

UN Lobbies for More Aid for Pakistan's IDPs

A UN envoy pressed donors Tuesday for urgently needed funds for an estimated 1.3 million IDPs in northwest Pakistan, amid warnings that some aid projects may have to be cut. Jean-Maurice Ripert, the UN special envoy in charge of humanitarian affairs for Pakistan, said he had just met donors to complain about inadequate funding for the \$537 million UN humanitarian appeal launched in February for Pakistan's IDPs. "We are becoming a little bit nervous and worried about the financing," he said at UN headquarters, warning that there was no funding at all for sectors such as agriculture or education in Pakistan's northwest and rugged tribal regions. He added that I met with donors to launch a new appeal,

[Daily Times – April 14, 2010]

Repatriation of IDPs

Return of Bajaur IDPs Starts

Return of IDPs hailing from 53 villages of Wara area of tehsil Mamund and Charmang area of tehsil Nawagai in Bajaur Agency has started after the authorities declared these areas as no longer being conflict zone. The decision had been made after the security forces successfully completed an operation to get these areas rid of miscreants said a press release issued from the Directorate of Information FATA here Thursday. The repatriation process of the Bajaur IDPs hailing from 53 villages in Wara Mamund and Charmang area of tehsil Nawagai shall be carried out under the supervision of the FATA Disaster Management Authority (FDMA) along with the support coming from Special Support Group (SSG) and Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA). These dislocated families from Bajaur have been sheltered in camps setup at Charsadda, Nawshera, Lower Dir and Hangu Districts. As many as 18,402 families comprising of 94,879 individuals moved to these camps after the security forces launched a major counter offensive in Bajaur Agency to wipe out anti-state elements operating there. It is also worth adding here that 416 families residing in Palosa Camp in District Charsadda had already expressed their willingness to return to Bajaur as normalcy returns to the conflict hit region. The remaining 40 families have been shifted to Jalozaï camp in district Nowshera. Secretary Law and Order FATA, Capt (r) Tariq Hayat Khan informed the media

that preparations had been prioritized and extended to ensure smooth and safe return of these displaced tribals to their native areas.

[The Nation – April 16, 2010]

IDPs to Start Returning to Orakzai

The political administration of the Orakzai Agency has decided to start phase-wise return of displaced people of the Stori Khel tribe from April 30 under supervision of security forces. The decision was taken at a meeting summoned at Orakzai House in Hangu by Kohat Division Commissioner Khalid Khan Umerzai. Orakzai Agency political agent Riaz Khan Masud, senior army officers and elders of Stori Khel and Feroz Khel tribes participated in the meeting. Mr Umerzai, after discussing the issue of repatriation of the displaced people, decided that the elders of the two tribes would be asked to vacate the Hangu IDPs camp and the houses they had rented in Kohat, voluntarily. He assured the tribes of launching development schemes in the area after their return. The participants said the displaced people should return to their homes because government's writ had been established in Tooti Bagh. The political administration told the tribal elders to start phase-wise return to their homes and set up peace committees to maintain peace in their area. The meeting also decided to provide one month's food to each family. Representatives of the tribesmen, on this occasion, demanded that the government should announce a relief fund for them on their return.

[Dawn – April 29, 2010]