

DISASTER & IDP CRISIS

Situation of IDPs

Aid Agencies Asked To Prepare For NWA Evacuation

Humanitarian agencies active in Pakistan's northwest have been quietly told to prepare for up to 365,000 displaced people in advance of a military offensive against North Waziristan. Pakistan will launch a military offensive against al-Qaeda and Taliban safe havens in the Afghan border regions. Humanitarian agencies operating in FATA and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa were given the heads up two weeks ago by the authorities of a possible displacement of up to 50,000 families. An understanding for an offensive in North Waziristan, the main sanctuary in Pakistan for militants fighting in Afghanistan, was reached when Clinton and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen visited Pakistan

[The News - May 31, 2011]

Already Homeless, IDPs Asked To Leave Jalojai Camp

The decision was taken at a high level meeting of the Return Task Force (RTF). The meeting also decided to stop registration of IDPs living outside Jalojai camp near Pabbi in Nowshera District, and wanted them to return to their villages. In first phase all IDPs living in the camps will return. More than 95,000 IDPs are living in Jalojai Camp, among them 65,000 are from Bajaur Agency, 11,000 are from Mohmand Agency, while the remaining are from Khyber Agency. More than 16,000 IDPs went back from the Jalojai camp when the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) announced Bajaur and Mohmand Agency IDPs return plan. All IDPs will go home by the first week of June 2011. Last month, IDPs from Bajaur and Mohmand Agency refused to return when the provincial government announced their return plan, demanding that they first be paid compensation because most of the IDPs' home in their villages had been destroyed.

A total of 9,521 houses were partially or completely damaged in different parts of Bajaur and Mohmand agencies, 8,455 in Bajaur Agency and 1,066 houses in Mohmand Agency. Authorities will pay compensation to all 9,521 homeowners, Rs. 400,000 to those whose houses were completely destroyed and Rs. 160,000 for partially damaged houses. FATA Disaster Management Authority has already established two centers in Khar, Bajaur and Ghalani area of Mohmand Agency, where special food packages will also be provided only to the affected people returning from Jalojai camp. Most of the areas in Bajaur and Mohmand agencies have been declared safe and have been cleared of militants and now the government plans to start reconstruction and rehabilitation in the affected areas. Therefore, the government has decided to set the last week of June as the deadline for the people to return.

[The Express Tribune - May 18, 2011]

Displaced Persons: In Swat, Little Rebuilt, Returning People Still Unpaid

As those displaced by military operation against militants to regain state control over Swat in 2009 return home and begin rebuilding their lives, nothing much seems to have been rebuilt or regained. The writ of the state has been restored but the rule of law is still a cherished dream. Civil administration and the judiciary are not independent or powerful. Listing sectors that require the most focus includes agriculture, communications and tourism. Out of 176, 89 schools that are heavily-damaged are under construction. But none of them has so far been rebuilt completely. Most non-government and community-based organizations are wasting millions of aid on cosmetic endeavors. Barring the Swat University and Cadet College, no major projects have been initiated. No attention has been paid to art and culture, and the historical museum of Swat is a haunted, empty building. Some resentment against the government is also building up.

The government has not fulfilled the promise that it will provide monetary compensation to the injured and families of the dead. Hundreds of owners of destroyed houses are also yet to be paid. But in official corridors, the return and rehabilitation process is considered a success. The safe return of a large number of displaced persons in just three months is a major success of the government and the army. About the

slow pace of reconstruction and rehabilitation it is said that all areas cut off by floods have been reconnected to the rest of Pakistan and restoring infrastructure to its previous position is a difficult task and will take time. Army presence will be reduced after complete normalization of the situation. After the cantonment is constructed, the army will be moved there.

[The Express Tribune - May 12, 2011]

Rising Tide: Surging Swat River Puts Hundreds of Villages at Risk

The Swat River is back to its boisterous self, swelling up with the surge in heat, putting hundreds of villages on either side at risk. The protection walls along both sides of the river were wiped out by last year's floods. As summer temperatures keep soaring, snow on mountains is melting fast, threatening vulnerable areas. A temporary road connecting Kalam with Madyan came under water after recent increase in water level. Due to this, the entire Kalam tehsil was cut off from the rest of the country. More than 10 houses in Malak Nagar in the Kalam Valley are now under water. The flooding has caused other people to vacate their houses. This is a real mess; the government must build protection walls along both sides of the river. There is no denying that protection walls along both banks of the Swat River are needed. Until they are rebuilt, neighboring areas will be at high risk. Strangely, despite the release of funds, work for the restoration of Kalam Road has not started yet. Dozens of markets located at the Shahdara Watkey side of Mingora have been flooded by the river water, destroying valuable goods. Every now and then, when Swat River overflows its banks, water enters into our shops. This is caused by the absence of retaining walls which were washed away by the floods last year. Just now started work on restoration of roads that could have done earlier when the flow of water was not so intense. This is only wastage of time and money.

[The Express Tribune - May 23, 2011]

Swat Children Forced To Study in 'Ovens'

Buildings of the most of the more than 400 schools destroyed in Swat during the two-year insurgency are still to be reconstructed. The government has claimed time and again that they will rehabilitate these schools but has not done much beyond talking. The students are either forced to study in tents or in the open under the scorching sun without even the most basic facilities such as water or chairs. In situations like these, proper schooling seems not only impractical but the inadequate environment is also affecting the psychological health of the children. The temperature in the tents is even higher than outside. Children constantly change their positions for a shadier spot to escape the extreme heat and suffocation. The school's building was destroyed in 2009 by the Taliban. The tents cannot stand upright when strong winds blow and the poles fall hurting children in the process. Parents are also very angry and not satisfied with the situation. When the school re-opened, they had to sit in open air and on bricks and stones, since they did not even have jute-mats.

[The Express Tribune - May 16, 2011]

Relief & Rehabilitation Activities

Rs. 315m Released For IDPs of Hunza

The government of Gilgit-Baltistan released Rs. 315 million to be disbursed among the internally displaced people of Hunza who were affected by the formation of an artificial lake on Hunza River after a devastating landslide. Speaker Gilgit-Baltistan said 457 families which had lost their homes and lands in the disaster would be paid Rs. 600,000 each. The disbursement would begin after verification of the families by the National Database Registration Authority. The lawmaker added the federal government had fulfilled its pledge of providing funds to compensate the affected families. New boats were being purchased for safe travel of the people across the artificial lake. The customs and banking court has started functioning in Gilgit for the first time; has been given additional charge for three months till appointment of a permanent judge. The customs and banking court was set up to dispose of those cases which were pending because of absence of such an institution. The staff had been hired from other courts and the pending cases had been listed for regular hearing. The earlier additional district and session judge heard cases related to the customs and banking court, but the Supreme Appellate Court had barred him from doing so.

[Dawn - May 3, 2011]

22 Model Villages for Flood Victims Being Built With Donations: CM

Chief Minister Mian Shahbaz Sharif has said that construction of 22 model villages in flood-hit areas of the province is in full swing and the houses will be handed over to the flood victims within a stipulated period. He was presiding over a meeting held to review the pace of implementation of model village project in the flood-affected areas. The CM said that construction of model villages, having the latest residential facilities, would introduce a new culture in the backward areas. He directed the chief secretary to evolve a transparent policy for the houses allotment in model villages. CM said that the Punjab government had spared no effort for the relief and rehabilitation of the victims of the worst-ever flood in the history of the country and utilized all the available resources for the purpose. The model villages were being constructed in place of the villages wiped out by the flood and dispensaries, vocational institutions, schools, sewerage system, water supply, livestock sheds, spacious roads, parks and other facilities were also being provided there.

The rehabilitation of the devastated people was a noble cause and progress had been made for its achievement. Beside provincial government, various NGOs and welfare organizations were engaged in the construction of houses in the devastated areas. Philanthropists had donated generously to his fund and 22 model villages in seven districts were being constructed with their donations a not a single penny was being spent from the national exchequer. Transparent utilization of funds was being ensured and a high standard of construction work was being maintained. The chief minister said that solar and biogas system was also being provided for power generation in model villages. He said a three-year agreement would be signed with a company supplying the system for its initial operation and maintenance and it would also be binding upon the company to impart training to the locals on the technology so that they could be able to operate the system after the expiry of the period of the agreement.

[The News - May 13, 2011]

Disaster Response: Government Seeks PRCS Support in Devising Plan

The government alone cannot cope with any disaster and organizations like PRCS play a vital role during disasters and even during normal times. Interior Minister Rehman Malik said that Pakistan is passing through a critical stage and there is a dire need to focus on disaster preparedness and management. Malik said that the government would also set up rehabilitation centres for disabled persons in each hospital in addition to drafting law for them. Malik was speaking as the chief guest at the inaugural session of a two-day conference on “Mega Disasters in Pakistan Lessons Learnt - Way Forward” organized by the PRCS. The conference aims at bringing together all the stakeholders to discuss and formulate a joint strategy for better planning within available resources. The government is ready to help PRCS in terms of logistic and administrative, praising the PRCS for its “commendable” services. The conference targets relief and humanitarian organizations, enabling them to avert or minimize the losses of lives and property.

Focus will be on four main disasters — earthquakes, floods, cyclones and man-made disasters. The document at the end of the conference will prove a starting point for a well-coordinated disaster management mechanism. The document will be given to all parliamentarians before the start of the budget session, so that the government can set its priorities and allocate funds for disaster management and preparedness to cope with any future disaster in a more effective way. The conference aims providing a perfect platform to identify available resources and improve strategies to prepare for the next disaster. The conference will not only focus on the 2010 floods, but also reassess and review the lessons learnt from previous “mega disasters”, adding that this in turn “would allow us in analyzing how far we have moved in disaster management since each successive disaster. The interior minister also inaugurated a photo exhibition “Journey through Times” depicting the role of Red Cross/Red Crescent over the world and in Pakistan.

[The Express Tribune - May 18, 2011]

Requirements for Relief & Rehabilitation

Floods 2010 Aftermath: \$572m Required For Rehabilitation Programme

An amount of \$572 million is required for UN agencies to complete the early recovery and reconstruction phase in the aftermath of last year’s floods. UNDP advisor for early recovery programme said that donors

need to immediately release the pledged funds and implementing partners need to divert the released money for relief. The agency revealed that the funding gap remains a challenge for agencies. Of a total gap amounting to \$572 million, the funding gap for housing remains the highest at Rs. 174.6million which is 30 per cent of the required amount. Agriculture and food security remains second with a funding gap of US\$119.3 million – a total of 21 per cent of the required amount. There are funding challenges in almost every sector which need to be timely addressed, adding that the donors had pledged enough funds which, if released on time, will meet approximately half of the \$572 million needed.

Half of the problems could be resolved if the donors disburse funds. The other half the government of Pakistan can manage. According to the UNDP advisor, a funding gap of US\$137 million needs to be filled in the non-farm livelihood sector. A total of 127 projects in the sector are supposed to be launched shortly but are subject to availability of funds. However, more resources have been made available for the community-based early recovery systems in 81 of the worst affected union councils. Post to the 18th amendment; PDMA's have been actively involved in the recovery and rehabilitation phase. Still there are many grey areas such as capacity building which needs to be supplemented either by the donors, agencies or the government itself. The early recovery and reconstruction phase is going to run throughout 2011.

[The Express Tribune – May 14, 2011]

Delayed Compensation: Flood Survivors Await Cash to Rebuild

Pakistan is currently negotiating with the World Bank to determine the amount of the compensation. Pakistan is likely to sign a finance agreement. It is yet to be decided whether the flood-stricken people will get Rs. 40,000 or Rs. 80,000. The amount will be disbursed in two tranches depending on the deal with the World Bank. The second phase of the Watan card scheme includes disbursement of cash for reconstruction or repairs of homes. UN Habitat Country Director said that the flood survivors can only initiate construction work once the government releases the promised funds. Several programmes require the beneficiary to make a contribution towards construction undertaken with the agency's assistance, but it is unable to even begin the process due to the delay in the disbursement of funds. The first installment of Rs 20,000 has already been distributed among 1.6 million people over a span of six months through Watan cards to provide immediate relief in the aftermath of the floods.

Rs. 30 billion has already been disbursed across the country with contributions from the centre as well as the provinces. The first phase, now in its final leg, will be over soon. Post 18th Amendment, there are certain changes due to take place in the Calamity Act of 1954. 50 per cent of the adjustment of resources of phase two will be done by the provinces now. The provinces have begun a damage survey with technical assistance from NGOs and the UN which will help to determine the needs of the affected population. NADRA will then be in a position to identify the most vulnerable through a transparent mechanism. With the exception of Punjab, which has completely stopped entertaining grievances of the flood-hit people, all the other provinces have been making efforts for their rehabilitation. The Punjab government has directed them to file complaints in the courts, which is not helping the cause. According to the UN, the last year's floods constituted the worst natural disaster in Pakistan's history. Over 18 million people were affected by the devastation and at least 1.67 million homes were damaged or completely destroyed

[The Express Tribune - May 16, 2011]

Flood-Affected Women to Lobby for Fund Allocation

Hundreds of rural women from flood-affected areas of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Sindh gathered in Islamabad to demand budgetary allocation for a comprehensive flood rehabilitation package for women on priority. Flood-affected women had an interface with media, students, civil society, general public, parliamentarians and policy-makers using interactive theatre and their folk music traditions to highlight their issues in the aftermath of floods, such as issuance of Watan Cards to flood-affected women, women's land ownership and control over productive resources and prioritization of women and girls in flood rehabilitation process. Policy-makers and media were invited to have an interface with the flood-affected women who will present A Charter of Rights to demand women specific provisions in the upcoming budget. To mark the one-year anniversary of devastating floods of 2010, Action Aid Pakistan planned a series of events to highlight issues facing the women and poor flood-affected people one year after the flood disaster. The objective of this commemoration is to highlight an urgent need for improved Disaster Risk Reduction mechanism, institutional capacity building, and government's focus on women's

rights, governance and food security issues; to bring the focus of authorities, donors and civil society to post flood recovery and rehabilitation, as the attention is shifting away towards other socio-political and security related issues; and to strengthen civil society to engage with and lobby for key policy agenda pertaining to women s rights, food and livelihood, and governance. The planned activities spanning three months, May to July, include a unique Women s Caravan in Islamabad, a policy dialogue on Disaster Risk Reduction in post 18th Amendment scenario; a special publication on flood emergency and response, with testimonies from flood-affected women and children; and a grand multi-stakeholders consultation.

[The News - May 23, 2011]