

IDPs, Disaster & Food Security

IDPs & Disaster

Khyber IDPs Struggling To Survive: Save the Children: KPK

Save the Children, said that the internally displaced families of Khyber Agency were struggling to survive as they continued to live in cramped conditions with very little food to go around. Islamabad Save the Children Emergency Response and Recovery Program (ERRP) Media and Communication Coordinator Muhammad Farouk said that the humanitarian needs of the IDP population were increasing. He said that the access to basic services and facilities was challenging for many vulnerable families who had been displaced. Local authorities have requested support from the humanitarian community to assist in meeting the unmet needs, he added. The recent food shortages have resulted in World Food Programme (WFP) announcing that food baskets given out as part of their food distribution initiatives will decrease.

Daily Times – August 09, 2012

NDMA Asked To Boost Flood Preparedness

Alarmed by the threat of flash floods in different parts of the country, Prime Minister Raja Pervez Ashraf asked the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) to enhance the level of preparedness and review the stock of material needed for relief and rescue operations. The prime minister expressed grief over the loss of lives caused by sudden heavy rains and said rivers' banks must be reinforced and monitored for the threat of overflows. He said all federal and provincial authorities should remain on alert, enhance coordination and exchange information regularly to be able to respond rapidly in the event of any emergency. The prime minister ordered the Federal Flood Commission, Ministry of Water and Power and the NDMA to closely monitor the situation across the country and keep him updated. He called for a thorough checking and updating of the early warning system to be able to timely warn the people living near rivers and streams. He also asked the NDMA to remain in close contact with the Provincial Disaster Management Authorities for coordination and assistance as and when required.

NDMA Chairman Dr Zafar Iqbal Qadir said 127,000 cusecs of water was flowing in Chenab and a medium-level flood was expected if the flow exceeded 150,000 cusecs. He said there was no major threat from rivers Indus, Jhelum and Ravi. However the possibility of flash floods causing destruction in some areas could not be ruled out, he said. The NDMA chief said widespread thunderstorm with heavy to very heavy downpour was expected in Bahawalpur and Sahiwal divisions over 24 hours. Scattered thunderstorm and rain with isolated heavy falls is expected in Kashmir, north and northeast Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Isolated thunderstorm and rain are expected in Dera Ghazi Khan, Faisalabad and Sargodha divisions. According to the Flood Forecasting Division of the Meteorological Department, Chenab at Khanki was in low flood, while all other major rivers were flowing below flood level. A monsoon current was penetrating into Kashmir and adjoining sub-mountain areas of Punjab.

According to NDMA's estimates of damage caused by rain over the past two days, flash floods caused 21 deaths and damaged 752 houses. Flash flood in Nowshera caused three deaths and loss of livestock and property. In Buner, heavy rains damaged the Riyal Bridge. Heavy rains in Mansehra caused six deaths and blocked the Garhi Habibullah-Mansehra Bridge. In Azad Jammu and Kashmir, flash flood caused landslides in Muzaffarabad, Neelum, Bagh, Mirpur, Hattian, Sudhnoti and Kotli. AJK Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed said at least 17 people had been killed and nine injured in six districts of the region since Monday. Some 685 houses and 125

shops have been damaged and roads washed away, He said, adding that a request had been made to the federal government for financial help. Most of the deaths came when buildings collapsed due to the rains. An official in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa said he feared the death toll in the province could rise. Dozens of families have suffered and their houses have been destroyed. Several people are still missing," he said.

Dawn - August 23, 2012

Flash Floods Kill 20 People in AJK, K-P

At least 17 people were killed as flash floods and landslides triggered by torrential rain swept away hundreds of homes in six Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) districts. Some 683 houses were left damaged by the floods. Zia Ahmed Khawaja, director of the Relief and Disaster Management Department of the AJK government, from Muzaffarabad told that 17 people were reported killed and 9 others were wounded. Four fatalities were reported in Muzaffarabad, six in Bagh district, three in Mirpur district, and two in Poonch district and one each in Kotli and Hattiyān districts. Khawaja also recorded the loss of property: up to 268 houses were partially or fully damaged in Muzaffarabad, 120 in Bagh district, eight in Bhimbher district, 50 in Mirpur district, 93 in Sudhanoti district, 102 in Kotli district and 42 houses in Poonch district. According to him, relief efforts have been launched in the affected areas to rehabilitate the people. Three boys were killed as floods swept away homes in different areas of Tank district in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and injured two people. Naimatullah, a district government official in Tank, told that Sanan, a three-year-old boy was killed and a woman identified as the wife of Naqeebullah in Karhi Haidar village was injured when the roof of their house collapsed. Naimatullah further stated that two boys aged around 12 were swimming in a stream near their homes in Gharibabad when both of them drowned. An official at Mulazai police station said that Muhammad Ilyas, son of Abdul Qayyum, a resident of Gul Imam, was seriously injured when he stepped on a landmine that was washed away by the floodwater. At least four people were injured and dozens of mud-houses were swept away after heavy rains lashed various parts of Khuzdar district in Balochistan late night.

The Express Tribune - August 25, 2012

Rain Water Playing Havoc in DI Khan: Punjab

Persistent rains have been playing havoc with lives of people in Dera Ismail Khan, Mandi Bahauddin and other areas, as water entered houses causing massive damage to property. Flash floods and landslides triggered by heavy rains have resulted in loss of lives and destroyed hundreds of houses in different parts of the country. The Met Office has forecasted low-flood in Jhelum and Chenab, and heavy rains in next 24 hours. Heavy rains in different cities of northern Punjab have also been predicted. Several villages have been inundated by floodwater in Punjab. Hundreds of poor people have been forced to spend days in open as floods destroyed their homes. People living in Dera Ismail Khan, Nowshera and other adjoining areas have been facing enormous difficulties because all the nullahs have been overflowing after rains.

Daily Times - August 27, 2012

Heavy Rains, Land Sliding Block Roads in Abbottabad: KPK

Heavy monsoon rains and landsliding blocked the roads leading to Nathiagali, Thandiani, Naran, Kaghan and surrounding areas of the city. People in the area told that floods had caused losses worth billions of rupees as houses collapsed and shops and businesses were destroyed.

Flood-hit residents along the banks of River Kunhar, and particularly in the Garhi Habibullah area, said their properties and business had been swept away and a number of people, including minors, had been killed. Most of the mud houses in the area had collapsed and the people were living under the open sky amid heavy rains and flood, they said. Cultivated lands were inundated by floodwater, causing heavy financial losses and making the land unfit for cultivation in the near future, the residents added. They said the government should have made preparations to meet emergencies during the monsoon season.

It is pertinent to mention that further monsoons rains are expected in Hazara Division, where a large number of people made homeless by flood await rescue and relief.

Daily Times - August 27, 2012

Food Insecurity

Food Security Vulnerability: World Bank Data

ACCORDING to the new World Bank data, in the last seven weeks, international wheat prices have risen by 50 per cent, corn 45 per cent and soybean 30 per cent. The rise is surprising even for the bank as it surpasses all earlier predictions, at least for this period of the year. The grain market analysts were forecasting a fall in prices as late as early June because fresh crops were due. Instead, they are experiencing a new spike. At the heart of current price peak lie the weather-related production issues. They hit the US, Russian, the European and Asian regions, changing international projection and calculations within a span of barely 60 days. The pattern of weather has taken everyone by surprise; the Europeans are unable to deal with excessive rains and the Russians, Ukrainians, Kazakhs and the South Asians are praying for them, suffering drought condition - out of 600 districts in India, 300 have officially been declared drought-driven calamity hit. Comparison of the current spike with 2008 hike reveals another dimension. In 2008, all grain prices went up but wheat and rice spiked the most. This time, rice seems to be safe so far. But, with rice crop in big trouble in South Asia (Indian drought and delayed monsoon in Pakistan), its prices may climb up the hill soon. Though this rise may not be as steep as of other grains because of comfortable international stock position, it may still threaten the poor - especially those for whom it is a staple. If a few more rice-producing countries also stumble in the next few weeks or months, it would complete the disaster for grain market.

Of most of the regions and countries facing these weather-related problems, Pakistan falls in the list of the 'most vulnerable' for three reasons: it is neither studying nor preparing for the weather phenomenon, nor it has storage capacity to absorb such temporary volatility, nor a system for predicting and preempting impact of such hikes. The World Bank started such warnings from 2010 that price volatility would rule markets for at least up to 2015. Now it is warning the trend to hold even beyond 2015. These crises are caused by two factors: increasingly erratic weather and behavior of international market. In this context, Pakistan is ill prepared and helpless. By June, its weather pundits were promising 15 per cent more rains than its long-term average. By the end of July, the country was in the grip of drought, threatening its rice and cotton crops. Fluctuation of 45 per cent in rains behavior in a matter of six weeks is something no one can deal with, nor plan anything. The international players have integrated

stocks, energy and food markets – de-linking food from production and dealing only in the Futures. This has multiplied speculative pressure on food price.

This market has become so big that smaller economies like that of Pakistan cannot do anything about them. It is a place with one trillion-dollar food market while three trillion dollars are put on the Futures. Thus, the only option countries like Pakistan have is to improve their meteorological paraphernalia for more precision in weather studies. In addition to the World Bank, almost every international body has put Pakistan on the top of the list of those states that face 'extremely bad food availability and pricing position.' In the absence of appropriate institutions, Pakistan can neither predict nor pre-empt any food price volatility in domestic market, leave alone international ones. Everything now depends on the market indicators, when international or domestic prices start rising, Pakistan wakes up to them – making things difficult for it and its people. It is yet to develop an honest system of even basic indexation of food price. Its current indexation is politically motivated – keeping it down by including non-essential items that are relatively stable in prices.

The policymakers just have to look around to learn how the world is dealing with food price volatility. The most viable solution it found is by building storage capacity for its grains, especially for staple and export crops. The country is stuck at around 20 per cent storage of its total grain production. It even does not have basic storage facility for its staple – wheat. With the weather turning erratic and all commodities out either under the scorching sun or rains, no wonder the post-harvest and storage losses of the country are one of the highest in the world. They directly translate either into food scarcity or financial loss for farmers or the state. Pakistan policymakers need to realize that weather and food price volatilities are now part of the human lives. Free trade driven by profit would keep testing markets with greed and weather with unsustainable agriculture that bring short-term profits. This is a world that Pakistan has to live with. Better prepare rather than regret every six months when weather and food prices misbehave – and push a few more million homo sapiens down the poverty line.

Dawn – August 13, 2012

Access to Water Key for Food Security

Global food security starts with ensuring access to water, the head of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said at the beginning of World Water Week Monday. "There is no food security without water security," said FAO director-general Jose Graziano Da Silva in Sweden, which is hosting the annual event organized by the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI). With crop growing hampered by the effects of pollution and climate change, agriculture must become "more efficient and fairer", he said, adding that nations all over the world need to "produce more with less" and manage water resources well. The conference, whose theme is water and food security, also heard from Swedish Co-operation Minister Gunilla Carlsson who urged the business world to find fresh ideas and new partners to help improve food security. "The need for innovation and collaboration with corporations and small businesses are significant," she said. "Increasingly, business is looking for innovative models building on local ideas and demand, rather than adapting products and distribution processes that were conceived for US or European markets." Da Silva also called on the private sector to develop agriculture in a responsible manner in emerging countries.

Dawn – August 28, 2012
