
INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS - IDPs

Brotherhood and Justice: Shahbaz Announces Rehab Package for Waziristan IDPs

Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif said the provincial government would build 2,000 houses in North Waziristan on behalf of the government and the people of the Punjab. He was addressing displaced persons of North Waziristan at Baka Khel in Bannu, on the second day of Eid. He said the government would also build a hospital in North Waziristan at a cost of Rs1 billion. The chief minister said the government would set up a university and build Danish schools for boys and girls in the area. He said the government of the Punjab was providing fodder for the livestock of displaced people and had set up a mobile hospital. The chief minister said Rs280 million had been distributed among 40,000. He said the government aimed to distribute financial aid to 54,000 displaced families in the next few days. He said financial assistance would again be provided to 54,000 families in August.

The chief minister paid tributes to the Pakistan Army and said its efforts in the war against terrorism would not be forgotten. He said curbing extremism was no less important than the 1965 war with India. He said Pakistan was fighting for its survival and the people of the country stood should-to-shoulder with their armed forces. Sharif said people of North Waziristan were benefactors of the nation as they had left their homes for the survival of the country. The chief minister further said the tribal people had played a historic role for the creation of Pakistan and for its stability. He said it was tragic that Pakistan today was not what was envisioned by Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. He said there was a need to promote brotherhood and justice to transform Pakistan in accordance with the vision of the country's founding father. He said Independence Day was around the corner and every member of the society should ask themselves why Jinnah's dream had not materialized. He said prosperity could not be achieved without peace.

The chief minister said the energy crisis threatened to destabilize Pakistan's economy. He said the government had started a number of energy projects to cope with the crisis. "Peace and development go hand-in-hand," he said. "Establishing the writ of the state is a prerequisite for peace." He said those threatening the existence of Pakistan would soon know that its people stood united against terrorism.

The Express Tribune - August 01, 2014

Without NICs, Women Barred From Aid Centres

Thousands of women displaced by fighting in North Waziristan are struggling to get food and other aid because they lack identity cards and elders have forbidden them from going to distribution centres. The women are among nearly a million people who registered for aid after the army began an offensive in North Waziristan. No census has been conducted in North Waziristan for years, so no one knows the true scale of the problem. Government figures, however, show almost three-quarters of those seeking aid are women and children. There's plenty of food to go around, with the World Food Programme handing out nearly 5,000 tones and many other aid groups active. But women face two problems: the lack of identity cards and an edict from elders of their Pashtun tribes forbidding them from going out to get aid. Some families find the idea of a woman being photographed or fingerprinted for cards highly intrusive, even though the national identity agency runs women-only centres. Others simply lived in areas too remote to get cards.

For now, women and children without male relatives are largely dependent on handouts from neighbors who are themselves dependent on aid. Even women who have husbands may face

problems, since many men have more than one wife depending on them. One woman sobbed behind her veil as she waited outside the main sports stadium in Bannu last week, watching men with wheelbarrows carry out sacks of flour and containers of water. "They are not letting me in," the woman said. "I have no chance to enter." The woman, Basmira, had no identity and no male relative. She stood near a cluster of women in burqas beseeching stick-wielding police and army guards to let them into the stadium.

Another woman, Maimoona, said her husband was killed by a stray bullet three months ago. "You see those sticks in their hands? They will beat us if we try to go in," said 30-year-old Maimoona. Two other women said they were also widows and one said her son was a drug addict. A soldier at the gate said women were welcome to go to other distribution sites around the city, but Reuters found that women were also being denied entry at four other centres. "This lack of ID cards is a major problem for widows, second wives, and many women whose husbands are not here," said Yasmin Akhtar, regional manager for Khwendo Kor, an aid group helping about 1,000 of the women. Muhammad Abbas Khan, the commissioner for displaced families in Bannu, was exasperated. "We tried to resist the elders but it was like talking to a brick wall," he said.

The government says it will set up a women-only distribution point in the next few weeks but until then, women have to rely on handouts from other hungry families. That generosity is keeping many people fed at Bannu's Government School Number 3, where hundreds of displaced live in concrete classrooms partitioned by cotton sheets. Shashparizada, 45, and her co-wife are at the school with their 12 children and husband, a frail 70-year-old with a long white beard. He lay on a rope bed with a fan nearby, too weak to stand. "He is so old, it is hard for him to wait in line," Shashparizada said. "We do not have ID cards and he cannot go, so there is nothing for us."

The Express Tribune - August 02, 2014

Jirga Seeks Repatriation of Waziristan IDPs

The Waziristan Qaumi Welfare Jirga asked the government to announce forthwith repatriation of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their native areas and declare North Waziristan as calamity-hit besides unveiling a comprehensive package to establish what it said was 'a new Waziristan'. The decisions were announced by Engineer Rahmatullah Dawar at a press conference. The jirga members included Malik Jalal Manzarkhel, Maulana Khalid Ahmad Dawar, Malik Gul Naeem Wazir, Malik Abdul Ghaffar Khan Wazir, Akbar Ali Khan Dawar and Abdul Malik Wazir. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Speaker Asad Qaiser and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Member National Assembly Ayesha Gulalai were present on the occasion. Rahmatullah Dawar said the jirga demanded the formation of a survey committee comprising tribal elders and representatives from North Waziristan's political administration under the supervision of the Minister of Safron Lt Gen (Retd) Abdul Qadir Baloch to assess the losses suffered by the people.

Rejecting the 1998 census, the jirga insisted that the total population of North Waziristan was two million of whom 1.2 million people have been displaced. It noted that a large number of displaced people had not been registered and demanded their registration. The jirga termed the Fata Disaster Management Authority a failed institution and argued that suspension of registration process on the pretext of dual addresses was injustice. Rahmatullah Dawar feared the suspension of registration would deprive many displaced people of getting relief. He asked the government to take practical steps for re-launching the registration process. The jirga, he said, demanded setting up a cadet college in Miranshah, immediate relocation of Cadet College Razmak to Razmak, upgrading of postgraduate college to university, establishment of a polytechnic institute and a women hospital at the tehsil level and ensuring basic necessities of life to those who have not left their homes in North Waziristan.

Rahmatullah Dawar observed that the tribal people were facing enormous difficulties due to the prevailing situation in Fata. "We are not terrorists, but are patriotic citizens and have rendered sacrifices for the defense of the homeland," he added. Ayesha Gulalai recalled the sacrifices of the tribal people for Pakistan and deplored that they were kept backward in the past. She lamented that the tribal population was still denied basic human rights and asked the federal government to honor its commitment in this regard. Asad Qaiser said the provincial government would not leave the IDPs in the lurch. He urged the federal government to announce a hefty amount for rehabilitation of the affected people. "The establishment of peace in Fata is must for stability of the country," he said. The provincial assembly speaker said the tribesmen had not been granted basic rights and demanded a fair and transparent system for the distribution of development funds and rebuilding of hospitals, schools and other infrastructure in Fata. He supported the merger of Fata with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in consultation with the tribal elders. Asad Qaiser parried questions about the PTI's 'long march' on August 14 and the reports about the resignation of his party's MPAs, arguing that his comments would overshadow the demands of the IDPs.

The News - August 05, 2014

Displaced Women Miscarrying: PCSW's Research Report

An estimated 75% of women living in camps for the displaced have trouble sleeping at night, revealed a study conducted by the Provincial Commission on the Status of Women. Over four months 315 people were interviewed for the report, titled 'Women in Emergencies'. The PCSW wanted to probe the effects of displacement on women. The report was presented in a consultative session. Representatives of the Department of Social Welfare as well non-governmental organizations Aurat Foundation, SPARC and others attended the session. While presenting the results, PSCW's Umme Kulsoom explained that 45% of the 315 displaced people interviewed at several IDP camps said they had been living there for the past six months. Around 89% of the women interviewed and 81% of the men said they were unable to meet the financial requirements of their families and are totally dependent on aid, said Kulsoom.

The study revealed that 15% of the displaced women interviewed reported they had been subjected to verbal abuse from their husbands after displacement, a behavior they said they had not witnessed before they were forced to leave their homes. Nearly 86% of the displaced women told the research teams they could not go to a doctor for a medical check-up due to social restrictions or poverty. According to Kulsoom, 16% of women miscarried during displacement, while 17% of women who were pregnant faced medical complications due to the exertion of excessive travelling. PSCW Chairperson Neelum Toru said Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa has faced a number of disasters during the last decade. "Women and children are the worst affected in emergencies as they are completely dependent on male family members.

Toru said that the research aimed to forward recommendations to the provincial government so that appropriate measures and administrative reforms and legislation can be formed. The study recommends that a gender sensitive best practices' model be developed for displaced persons to facilitate women living in camps. It also urged that women be included in all peace, reconciliation and rehabilitation activities. A revision of the Return Policy Framework for Fata was also called for to expedite the return of IDPs to their homes. The commission recommended that gender specialists be appointed at field locations to ensure the rights of women and girls are protected, and gender-based abuses and human rights violations are monitored and reported regularly.

The Express Tribune - August 06, 2014

IDPs Asked To Vacate Schools by August 10

The elementary and secondary education department has asked the internally displaced persons, taking shelter in the buildings of the government schools, to vacate the schools till August 10 as academic activities would resume from September 1, according to sources. The students would start coming to their schools from September 1 at the end of three-month summer vacations, said an official in the district education office Bannu. However, he said that the deadline set for the IDPs to vacate the schools was August 20. The IDPs claimed that they were asked to vacate the school buildings till August 10. Besides other incentives, the federal government would provide the IDPs with Rs. 12,000 per month for food and rent charges. The news about vacation of schools has worried the IDPs as they are not sure to get proper shelter after leaving the school buildings because the host cities including Bannu, Lakki Marwat and Karak have not enough houses for rent to accommodate them, according to officials and IDPs. Mohammad Khalil, a displaced tribesman, told Dawn that IDPs were panicked when they were told to leave the school buildings. Many displaced families would likely to shift to other big cities of the country to take houses on rent, he said.

Announcement of Deadline Panics Displaced Families

Mr. Khalil, whose family is residing in a school in Bannu, said that he had been searching for a house to rent it for the last few days but couldn't find any empty house for his family. The IDPs have taken shelter in the buildings of 1,400 government schools after displacement from their native towns in North Waziristan Agency with the launching of military operation Zarb-e-Azb. Of the 1400 schools, around 90 were in Bannu and rest of them in Karak and Lakki Marwat, officials in the education department said. Quoting a recently conducted survey, they said that of the total families taken refuge in the schools, 600 wanted to reside with their relatives in Bannu and other cities, 520 in rented houses and 425 families wanted to shift to the camps established by the government for them.

However, officials said that students of the 189 under-enrolment primary schools, particularly girl schools, had to be shifted to other adjacent schools to accommodate IDPs in the building of their schools. Similarly, IDPs would also be asked to shift to the buildings of 50 more schools, which were closed since long owing to absence of teachers. The officials said that 30 more schools, which were in the final stage of construction, would also house the IDPs. After vacating the schools, the communication and works department would launch a survey to assess the damage caused to the schools during the stay of IDPs. Definitely, the children of IDPs and their cattle might have caused minor damage to the school buildings, officials said. They said that after completion of the assessment, the government would provide the required funds for the repair of the school buildings.

Dawn - August 06, 2014

IDPs without CNIC Being Denied Assistance

Many families displaced from North Waziristan Agency due to the military operation against militants don't get the government assistance, including goods and cash, either due to unavailability of computerized national identity cards or absence of male members, or presence of male members with physical disabilities, says the latest assessment. A copy of the written multi-sector initial rapid assessment carried out from July 12 to July 16 by the provincial government with the help of international organization is available. According to the document, 31 per cent of IDPs from North Waziristan are struggling to obtain assistance due to unavailability of documents, including CNICs, and therefore, such people should be given necessary papers on fast track basis for their relief. "Seven per cent families headed by female, four per cent by children and five per cent older and persons with disabilities have been

excluded from the relief due to the modalities laid down for the distribution. There is a need to develop a strategy to support the extremely vulnerable families, who are not yet registered but require urgent humanitarian assistance," it said.

Government Assessment Suggests Review of Relief Distribution Procedures

The document said the authorities needed to review relief distribution procedures to address access challenges to distribution points faced by children, women, old and physically-challenged persons. The data was obtained through interviews in villages with more IDPs in Bannu district to pinpoint their concerns on healthcare, water and sanitation practices, and nourishment. According to the document, only five per cent of the families have a source of income. "Inadequate shelter services, overcrowding in areas of displacement, harsh weather conditions and high rental charges remain key challenges for displaced families which warranted immediate attention. Only two per cent of the Bannu-based displaced families intend to move to other parts of the province." The document said lack of access to information, particularly on registration process and available services were identified as major gaps hampering the IDPs' relief.

It added that there was a need to strengthen humanitarian communication mechanisms to better inform families of available support/services and registration processes. According to it, 87 per cent of displaced families are not treating water at home, while 40 per cent of them are not using latrine facilities and practice open defecation. "Bannu, one of the 25 districts of the province, has infrastructure to support its 1.2 million populations, so it failed to absorb the huge influx of IDPs. The schools and other public buildings where they lived too lack basic amenities. Alternate arrangements are necessary to house the displaced people when schools reopen." The document said currently, 55 per cent of the families resided within the host community without rent, 24 per cent in schools and eight per cent in other government buildings, while two per cent families lived without shelter, while one percent was in makeshift houses.

According to officials associated with the findings of the report, the government should use the locally available material to shelter IDPs first to ensure optimal use of the funding and second to help boost local economy. Also, the community-based hygiene promotion using multiple communication channels could help contain preventable diseases. The officials said provision of toilets and non-food items to displaced people and putting in place a mechanism for disposal of solid waste management were others areas, where relief bodies had been working. They said there seemed to be a slight hygiene awareness in the target community as it 79 per cent of its members were seen practicing hand washing with soap before eating and 49 per cent after defecation, whereas only five per cent of mothers washed hands with soap before breastfeeding.

Dawn - August 12, 2014

Bara IDPs Protest Camp Enters 11th Day

The Tehreek Mutasireen Bara asked the government to provide facilities to the internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the Bara tehsil in the Khyber Agency. The demand came at the protest camp of the IDPs from Bara. The protest entered its 11th day to urge the government to make facilities available to the IDPs from Bara like the ones being extended to the displaced families from North Waziristan. A representative of the IDPs, Shah Jehan Afridi said the IDPs from Bara were facing a host of problems due to the non-availability of quality standard food and other non-food items at the camp. He said the uprooted families from Bara and Tirah valley were being provided substandard food and other items. He alleged some government officials demanded bribe from the IDPs to provide them relief goods.

The representative said the camp authorities would provide two bags of flour, two bags of rice, 10 kilogram sugar, soap, five kilogram pulses and other items, but now the items have been reduced. "Previously the ration provided to the IDPs at the camp was sufficient for a family for one month, but now it lasts hardly for a week," he added. Another IDP, Gul Sharif, said in the beginning the authorities provided standard food items to the displaced persons living at the Jalojai Camp in Nowshera and Jarma camp in Kohat. He complained the IDPs had been holding the protest camp for the last several days, but nothing had been done to mitigate their sufferings.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Khyber Agency chapter leader Iqbal Afridi said most of the IDPs from Bara and Tirah valley couldn't register their families due loopholes in the registration process. He urged the government to take action against the officials creating problems for the IDPs. Iqbal Afridi alleged expired and substandard food and non-food items were given to the IDPs at the distribution points. He asked the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governor to take notice of the injustice being meted out to the IDPs and redress their miseries by ordering investigation into the malpractices.

The News - August 13, 2014

DISASTER

Heavy Rain Claims Up To 16 Lives in Peshawar

Heavy rain accompanied by wind storms wreaked havoc in Peshawar, killing at least 16 people and injuring more than 80 others. Mushtaq Ali Shah, director of the meteorological office in Peshawar, said the rain lasted for only one hour and 30 minutes - from 4 pm to 5:30 pm - but caused so much damage as 42mm of precipitation was recorded in the city. "At least seven children were injured when the roof of a seminary in Akhunabad collapsed, and we shifted them to Lady Reading Hospital (LRH)," Rescue 1122 spokesperson Bilal Faizi told. However, four of them succumbed to their injuries. Moreover, more than five houses and two walls collapsed inside the city. The downpour lashed Peshawar, causing massive traffic jams as water started collecting on the roads within the hour. Trees were also uprooted, adding to the chaos.

The Express Tribune - August 16, 2014

Drought Threatens Thar Again, Government Finally Prepares Plan

The district of Tharparkar, where 285 children died due to malnutrition last year, has been hit by another drought and, just like last time, the government has yet to officially declare it as a 'drought-hit area'. The most recent drought has caused mass migration from Mithi, Nangharparkar and Diplo after a large number of animals perished due to the lack of water. "Around 80 per cent of the villages in Thar have yet to receive rain this year," said Tharparkar deputy-commissioner Asif Ikram. "I have written a couple of times to the provincial government and the relief commissioner but we are still waiting for a notification to officially declare this a drought."

Officially declaring it a drought means that the government has to provide incentives to the people, distributing wheat and fodder at either a subsidized price or for free, added Ikram. The situation is not new for the people of Thar; this is the third consecutive year that the area has suffered from a lack of rain, and according to media reports, more than 1,000 people - including 600 children - have lost their lives due to water scarcity.

Proposing a Solution

Following the deaths of the children, and the resulting media outcry, the Sindh government constituted a committee in May to prepare a drought management and mitigation policy. The committee, headed by Pakistan Peoples' Party MNA Pir Noor Muhammad Shah Jilani, includes politicians, bureaucrats, journalists and social activists. Thar journalist, Sohail Sangi, who is one of the 22 members of the committee, said that a final draft for the 'Sindh Drought Management and Mitigation Policy 2014' was approved by the committee last week. "The plan has been approved not only for the Thar desert but also for other arid areas of the province, including the Achhro Thar [the White Desert], Kachho, Nara and Kohistan," he said, adding that the policy aims to address the problems faced by citizens during droughts. "We have done our job with this policy, along with the proposal for the Thar Development Authority. It is now the job of the Sindh government to implement the proposal."

In the draft proposal, ensuring availability of water has been identified as the top priority. "Availability of water will be ensured through the formation of a water board that will initiate water projects such as solar water pumps, irrigation water and water desalination," said the draft. Provincial minister Dost Mohammad Rahimo told The Express Tribune that the government will table a bill to pass a law regarding the new drought mitigation policy and the Thar Development Board, which will include innovative projects to create drought-resilient communities so that the area becomes less sensitive to water scarcity.

“Official declaration of drought has always been a complicated issue as there are a lot of technicalities that need to be taken into account and it is therefore a lengthy process,” said Rahimo. Therefore, the new policy has suggested a procedure to declare drought in a region. The district commissioner is to issue a series of ‘warnings’ in this regard to the relief commissioner and the Sindh chief minister. A senior member of the board of revenue, who is also the relief commissioner, then has to declare the area as ‘drought-hit’.

“The deputy commissioner is to issue three separate alerts if monsoon rains are delayed,” revealed Rahimo. “The first warning will be issued on June 30, advising the relevant departments to prepare for drought and devise a contingency plan. The second warning will be issued on July 30, and the third and final one will be issued on August 15, when the area will officially be declared as drought-hit if it hasn’t yet received any rain. Hence, citizens will be provided all the required facilities till the next monsoon season.” If the proposal is implemented, then the area will soon be declared as drought-hit since the final August 15 deadline has now passed.

The Express Tribune - August 16, 2014
