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PAKISTAN

Displacement caused by conflict and natural disasters, achievements and challenges

Pakistan has faced a series of displacement crises due to natural disasters and armed conflict in recent years. 19 million people have been displaced by earthquakes and flooding and over five million by armed conflict over the past seven years. In December 2011, more than half a million people were still displaced following the flooding of the Indus in September, and almost one million remained internally displaced by armed conflict in the north-west.

Conflict continued to cause displacement in 2011. Since April, major displacements have taken place in Kurram and Khyber agencies of the Federally Administered Tribal Agencies (FATA), and in a number of other locations.

Responses to the displacement, coordinated by the government, have included some important achievements. Millions of people have received food, household items, temporary shelters and cash assistance, and widespread death caused by malnutrition and communicable diseases has consistently been avoided.

However, there have been significant limitations, particularly in the process of registering internally displaced people (IDPs); in the lack of a comprehensive government policy on IDPs; and in the lack of access for humanitarian agencies. The government's budget allocation for IDPs remains low and humanitarian responses rely almost entirely on foreign funding.

In 2010, some 11 million people were displaced by flooding of the Indus river, and as many as four million people were displaced during the 2011 monsoon season. The impact of natural disasters in Pakistan, and particularly their impact on women, is cause for concern. The provision of food assistance, non-food items and cash support to those displaced by the 2010 and 2011 floods was mainly channelled through registered male heads of household. Following the 2005 earthquake, the 2007, 2010 and 2011 floods and the 2009-2011 displacement crises in the north-west, almost identical concerns had been raised and policy suggestions made.

There are also persistent obstacles to durable solutions for those who are unable to safely return to their place of origin. Return for those displaced by conflict in the north-west is hindered by insecurity and difficulty in recovering livelihoods, shelter and access to basic services. In Kurram, where the last of the major displacement waves in 2011 took place, abandoned property must be returned to its rightful owners and credible security guarantees must be offered and enforced for returns to be durable.

General map of Pakistan



Source: UN Cartographic Section
 More maps are available at www.internal-displacement.org

Introduction

Massive displacement has been caused in Pakistan by natural disasters including earthquakes and successive floods, and by conflict and human rights abuses in the north-west of the country, scene of military operations against militant groups. Tribal disputes over resources and family feuds are further factors.

Background on conflict in north-west Pakistan

In the north-west, the province of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) is part of the national legal framework, while the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) comes under the jurisdiction of the 1901 Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR), which makes tribal governance structures responsible for the maintenance of peace, law and order.

In FATA, militants of the Pakistani Taliban have sought since 2007 to overthrow the region's tribal governance structures, and the armed forces have carried out military operations against them. Local conflicts caused further displacement.

Displacement continued through 2011. Since April, major displacements have taken place in Kurram and Khyber agencies of FATA, and further displacements in a number of other locations (Pakistan Today, 30 August 2011; Dawn, 21 October 2011; IRIN, 5 July 2011).

In Lower Kurram, militant groups arrived in early 2007 and sought to gradually replace the tribal leadership by exploiting existing sectarian divides. By March 2011, sectarian fighting had destroyed some 60 villages, damaged 95 places of worship, destroyed as many as 7,000 homes and displaced more than 50,000 people.

The government has started efforts towards resolving the sectarian violence. It intervened in Central Kurram

in late 2009 and early 2010 to suppress militants connected to a command structure based in Orakzai agency, displacing at least 60,000 people in the process. It launched operations in June 2011 with the stated purpose of re-opening the Thal-Parachinar road; the road was reopened in October following a peace deal which was holding as of December 2011 (American Enterprise Institute, 6 September 2011).

In Khyber agency, the armed forces have conducted a number of operations since 2007 to relieve pressure on Peshawar and protect NATO supply lines through the Khyber Pass against insurgent attacks. Resulting clashes have caused large-scale civilian displacement and casualties. As many as 100,000 people fled the Bara area in the first two weeks of September 2009. Displacement escalated in November 2009 and April 2010, and again in the spring and autumn of 2011, causing further displacement (Dawn, 10 April, 20 and 21 October 2011; Pakistan Today, 15 November 2011).

During past operations, internally displaced people (IDPs) were instructed to leave the *Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)* and settle in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), where the government exerted greater control. Those displaced during since late 2010, however, have been ordered to flee to camps inside FATA. The assumption behind this policy change is that people displaced to nearby areas will return more quickly to their areas of origin and will have less of a negative impact on host communities. This turned out to be the case in Mohmand and Kurram. Most IDPs, however, still prefer to seek refuge with relatives or other social networks (Dawn, 21 October 2011).

Figures and registration

Some 850,000 people (129,000 families) were internally displaced in FATA and KPK as of November 2011, according to official statistics (FDMA, November 2011). This figure represented a modest decrease compared with the end of 2010:

there had been more than 100,000 new displacements in 2011 from Kurram, but a large number of IDPs from FATA's Bajaur, Mohmand and Orakzai agencies had returned to or near their places of origin and the government no longer considered them displaced, despite a lack of data on their situation. Most of the remaining IDPs, some 77 per cent, were from Kurram and South Waziristan agencies of FATA (IAPC, 8 December 2011; USAID 15 November 2011).

The most recent figures which are not provided by the government are from May 2011, when an IDP vulnerability assessment and profiling (IVAP) exercise estimated that there were as many as 140,000 displaced families in KPK alone. This figure included many IDPs who had not been able to register as such, for reasons described below (IDMC interview with IVAP coordinator, May 2011).

The displaced population is, like the general population, young and roughly equally divided between men and women. IVAP found that 57 per cent of all IDPs living in KPK were under 18. Of the IDPs returning to South Waziristan in December 2011, 60 per cent were children, and 18 per cent were under five (FDMA, 25 October 2011; IVAP, 22 July 2011 p.3; IAPC, 8 December 2011 p.8).

The registration of IDPs and the criteria for selecting who receives help have relied on the same system of disaster notification as previous waves of displacement, with the same inherent advantages and disadvantages. IDPs from government-designated disaster areas, who are clearly associated with a male head of household with a valid computerised national identity card (CNIC), are quickly registered by the FATA Social Welfare Department, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the World Food Programme (WFP) and Commissionerate Afghan Refugees. They are then later verified by the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA). One of the flaws in this system is that people can register who are not IDPs but who come from the same

areas where there are registered IDPs, while IDPs without a CNIC or come from places outside an officially-designated disaster area struggle to register. According to IVAP, 36 per cent of internally displaced families have never been registered (Dawn, 1 November 2011; IAPC, 8 December 2011, p.3). This problem has persisted: for example, IDPs from Khyber faced difficulties in registering during the summer and autumn 2011 (The News, 15 November 2011; Pakistan Today, 15 November 2011; Dawn, 4 July 2011; Dawn, 26 October 2011).

With the exception of IVAP's work, there is more data on IDPs living in camps as agencies and organisations systematically gather information about their needs. Those who seek refuge in insecure areas inaccessible to humanitarian agencies are generally not registered or recognised by the government.

Protection issues

The differences in the situations of those who can register as IDPs and others who identify themselves as displaced are considerable. Internally displaced families who have never been registered do not qualify for most assistance programmes. This particularly affects IDPs from some of the most vulnerable groups, including households headed by women and children (Dawn, 1 November 2011; IAPC, 8 December 2011, p.3).

According to IDMC research from January to May 2011, nearly all displaced households were better off before they fled their homes. There was a clear correlation, however, between wealth prior to and during displacement. Those who were relatively well-off before fleeing continued to have better living standards than other IDPs. They had more savings, wealthier relatives to offer them support and better chances of getting well-paid jobs or migrating abroad. Those who were less well-off prior to displacement continued to live in relative poverty in their places of refuge.

According to IVAP, most internally displaced families are highly vulnerable in economic terms. Seven out of ten live below the national poverty line (IVAP, 22 July 2011, p.4). Rent payments are their greatest concern, along with access to food and water. According to the National Nutrition Survey 2011, food insecurity in Pakistan is on the rise, and displaced families have worse food consumption scores than the general population in both KPK and FATA. IVAP found that 65 per cent of registered displaced families had poor or border-line food consumption (IVAP, 22 July 2011, pp.3-6; Daily Times, 27 November 2011).

IDPs may struggle to access some of their basic necessities, but it is also clear that the responses to mass displacement in north-west Pakistan over the past four years have consistently prevented humanitarian catastrophes, and limited infant mortality, starvation and the spread of transmittable diseases. People recently displaced from Kurram, for example, struggled to find adequate accommodation and to feed themselves in the initial stage of displacement, but the combined national and international effort brought rapid relief. Almost all of those who had been displaced since July 2011 received non-food items from the Norwegian Refugee Council, temporary shelter from UNHCR, and food and water from WFP. Tens of thousands of children from central FATA who had not been vaccinated against polio have been vaccinated during their displacement (Dawn, 22 July 2011; DARA 2011, p.17; IRIN, 18 July 2011; IAPC, 8 December 2011, pp.5-9).

Settlement choices of IDPs

According to the FATA Disaster Management Authority (FDMA) and IVAP, around 90 per cent of IDPs would prefer to return to their places of origin than to integrate locally or resettle elsewhere. 10,000 registered IDPs from Mohmand displaced to the Nahaqai and Danishkool camps in early 2011 had returned to their areas of origin by November, as had some 23,000

households displaced from Orakzai during 2010. IDPs from South Waziristan have gone back to their home areas: of almost 42,000 families, nearly 6,600 have returned. However, the government does not report on the progress of IDPs towards other durable solutions, reflecting the national authorities' aim that IDPs should return to their areas of origin (Central Asia Online, 30 November 2011; Dawn, 12 October 2011; The News, 1 December, 2011; FDMA, 25 October 2011).

Local integration

Fewer than ten per cent of IDPs from FATA displaced in KPK want to settle in their current locations, but despite their stated preference for return, they have remained there due to ongoing insecurity and the lack of services in their areas of origin. Many IDPs from FATA arrived in the place of displacement as cohesive groups, and have created political, social and economic spaces for themselves, which help them maintain a sense of community. They have also utilised social networks from their home areas. Many IDPs and host communities also share an understanding of Pakhtun customs, or *Pakhtunwali*, and speak the same language (IPS News, 25 June 2011).

Better-off families from FATA have even bought land and built a house in KPK. According to the Peshawar Property Dealers Association, property prices have risen sharply in areas adjacent to FATA. Thousands of families have sold their properties in FATA at low prices and bought homes in safer places (IPS News, 25 June 2011).

Policies to integrate IDPs into host communities are required, however. At reception areas in north-west Pakistan, some tribal people have faced discrimination because of their rural backgrounds and low social standing. IDPs also face hostilities from the host communities because most derive their principle source of income from work available in their places of refuge, where they accept lower pay than the local population and force wages down. In some areas, local people perceive IDPs as a security risk and so decline to offer them accommodation (AFP, 25 October 2009; IRIN, 29 October 2009).

Settlement in cities

Settlement elsewhere in the country to areas less affected by the conflict is an option for some IDPs. A number of displaced families have found jobs in Karachi, Peshawar, Islamabad and other places where there are significant Pakhtun communities. Discrimination is still an issue, but it may not be so different from what an economic migrant from the same area might experience (IRIN 7 February 2010).

Large numbers of IDPs have flocked to Karachi. The city is home to more than four million Pakhtuns, and is the preferred destination of many IDPs because they are more likely to have relatives settled in the city, accommodation is cheaper and job opportunities are better.

IDPs who reach Karachi live in the Pakhtun slums and dwellings situated for the most part outside the main city or at its gateways. The main problems they report are discriminatory law enforcement, the lack of employment opportunities and the lack of safe drinking water, sanitation, health care and education facilities (IRIN, 17 November 2009; AlertNet, 12 January 2010).

Insecurity is growing in Karachi. The number of targeted political killings has increased dramatically since 2009. More than 800 people were assassinated in the city during the first eight months of 2011, and Pakistan's Supreme Court has opened an inquiry into the killings. Some believe the phenomenon is linked to the influx of IDPs (BBC, 12 February 2009; IRIN, 20 January and 11 July 2011; PakSafe, 23 November 2011; SPO, September 2011).

Return

Measures to ensure IDPs' safe, dignified and voluntary return must be accompanied by clear signals and practice that the government is committed to rebuilding the shattered economy. There is consensus on the need to work towards reconstruction and development in return areas, and returns have been partially facilitated by mine

clearance, shelter and cash support from Pakistani authorities and humanitarian agencies allowed to operate in FATA (The News, 16 September 2011; The Nation, 14 December 2011; FDMA 25 October 2011).

In South Waziristan, some 30,000 people (6,600 families) have returned in two phases. 47 per cent of them are male, 53 per cent female and 56 per cent children. They were promised basic amenities such as health care, education, clean drinking water and electricity, as well as tools and seeds to help them restart their livelihoods. FDMA along with two other UNHCR implementing partners have distributed 2,000 shelters kits and 8,500 cash grants among the returnees. Earlier commitments have not always been fulfilled, but news reports suggest that the government has kept its promise to invest in areas where local commanders have agreed to collaborate with the security forces. New dams have improved agricultural production in Waziristan after a peace deal was signed with the tribe in 2006, and such initiatives provide some hope that promises given to IDPs and returnees will be honoured (The National, 26 June 2011; FDMA, 10 September and 25 October 2011; IAPC, 8 December 2011).

However, a number of obstacles to return remain in place. Access restrictions in most of FATA prevent independent organisations from assessing the security situation, and IDPs' own assessments often differ from those of the security forces.

In Kurram, at least two conditions must be met if IDPs are to find a durable solution. Abandoned property and infrastructure must be recovered by its rightful owners, and credible security guarantees must be offered and enforced.

Recovery of abandoned property appears, at first sight, to be feasible. Many houses and villages were damaged or in some cases destroyed, but they have not been occupied by others. This contrasts with the situation in most areas affected by

displacement, where abandoned property is taken over by people associated with the adversary. Land has been grabbed in some cases, however, and unless an agreement is reached to ensure a peaceful transfer, owners who try to reclaim it will face threats and insecurity.

Displacement caused by natural disasters

Natural disasters have caused repeated devastation in Pakistan. In October 2005, an earthquake in Assad Kashmir and parts of KPK killed some 73,000 people, injured around 200,000 and displaced 3.5 million (UNDP, 2006, p.6). Floods in Balochistan in June and July 2007 displaced another 300,000. In the summer of 2010, flooding triggered by heavy monsoon rains left 20 per cent of the country under water and caused significant loss of property, infrastructure and income among ten per cent of the total population of 181 million. Some 11 million people were displaced (ADB-GoP-World Bank, November 2010, p.22).

As many as four million people were displaced during the 2011 monsoon season, of whom 35 per cent had also fled the the 2010 flooding. By December 2011, almost 500,000 households had returned to or near their area of origin but 660,000 individuals were still displaced further afield, most of them living in temporary shelters (MSNA, December 2011, p.3).

The floods struck almost every province of Pakistan in 2010 and large areas of Balochistan and Sindh in 2011, but the impact varied widely depending on topography and the nature and extent of the flooding. Sindh is widely believed to have suffered the most in both years. As many as seven million people were displaced in the province in 2010 and four million in 2011. The flat terrain offered no barriers to the floodwaters of the Indus river, meaning they affected a much wider area for a longer period than in other areas.

Those who fled to hilltops or dry areas near their homes and then ended up being surrounded by the rising waters were particularly at risk. This included extremely poor families who did not have the resources to flee further away and thus found refuge on nearby protective walls or *bunds*. Most of them had no assets to sell in exchange for transport to camps or other safe places.

In Sindh, 90 per cent of those displaced by the 2010 floods reported at the moment of registration that they wanted to return. However, the destruction of infrastructure including roads, schools, medical dispensaries, and government offices meant that many of those who tried to return only became displaced nearer to their homes (UNHCR, February 2011, p.2).

As of December 2011, the greatest need in Sindh villages was housing, with additional emergency relief required in certain areas. Men said their greatest needs were food, cash and shelter, while women said they needed food, health care services and household items. Both men and women identified housing and livelihood support as priority recovery needs (MSNA December 2011, pp.7-15).

Livelihood support is, however, not a straightforward issue. Feudal culture is stronger in Sindh than in Pakistan's other three provinces. A large proportion of the rural population, both men and women, works as labourers for agricultural landowners, or *waderas*. Bonded labour is illegal but widespread, and workers remain indebted to their landlords for generations. Accordingly, some displaced households have refused to go back to their area of origin out of fear that their landlord would force them to either to account for crops destroyed by the flooding or to return money given to them for seeds. Faced with the prospect of being forced to return to their work as bonded labourers, others have sought alternative livelihoods near their home areas.

National and international responses

Responses to displacement caused by conflict

The most important response is provided by social networks and local charities. Displaced households receive support from relatives and other acquaintances in the initial stages of displacement, particularly for private loans and shelter. But they are careful not to overburden these networks. Rather, they seek independent shelter in inexpensive neighbourhoods, reduce their spending on food and health care and sell valuables to cover their expenses during displacement (IVAP, 2011, pp.3-17).

On a policy level, the government's response to the conflict induced-displacement crisis between 2004 and 2008 remained limited but it has since provided support to a large number of IDPs in tandem with international organisations. In FATA, provision is currently coordinated by the security forces in conjunction with FDMA.

The government's achievements include the registration of nearly 250,000 internally displaced households; the provision of food and non-food items to the majority of those households; the issuing of CNICs to thousands of women affected by displacement; the provision of health services to many of those residing in host communities; and the arrangement of accommodation in camps in tolerable conditions for many of the most vulnerable IDPs. A cash support scheme has proved an efficient way of reaching the majority of IDPs who have sought refuge outside camps.

Aid was harder to access for female-headed families, for example, and relief help was prioritised over recovery assistance such as livelihoods support. As expected, those in camps were better assisted than those outside them.

Assistance has been concentrated outside FATA, where most IDPs are found, but those near conflict areas or in other places where there are

serious obstacles to providing humanitarian assistance may be in greater need. As of November 2011, international humanitarian agencies had a limited presence in Mohmand, Bajaur, Kurram, Orakzai and Khyber, where they were helping returnees recover their livelihoods or helping new IDPs access the basic necessities of life.

However, the government's budget allocation for IDPs remains limited and the response relies almost entirely on external funding (Dawn, 2 March 2011; DT, 27 February 2011).

Responses to displacement caused by disasters

The huge scale of the 2010 and 2011 flooding revealed inadequate disaster preparedness, inefficiencies in the response system and a considerable gap in the willingness of national and international stakeholders to fund the provision of basic necessities and early recovery support to the affected population. In 2010, the impact was made worse by the fact that local authorities and communities were unprepared. Again, in 2011, of the displaced families who settled in camps, 74 per cent lacked access to latrines and three out of five children had no access to education (MSNA, December 2011, p.23).

Funding for the humanitarian disasters in Pakistan has varied widely, and this has been reflected in the government's responses to them. While 71 per cent of the resources requested in 2009 were forthcoming, donations following the 2010 floods were insufficient, and in 2011, only 41 per cent of the required amount was funded by December. Due to funding shortages, food distribution and other vital support have been halted, and less than half of the flood-affected population received assistance in 2011 (OCHA, 9 December 2011).

Note: This is a summary of IDMC's internal displacement profile on Pakistan. The full profile is available online [here](#).

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About the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) was established by the Norwegian Refugee Council in 1998, upon the request of the United Nations, to set up a global database on internal displacement. A decade later, IDMC remains the leading source of information and analysis on internal displacement caused by conflict and violence worldwide.

IDMC aims to support better international and national responses to situations of internal displacement and respect for the rights of internally displaced people (IDPs), who are often among the world's most vulnerable people. It also aims to promote durable solutions for IDPs, through return, local integration or settlement elsewhere in the country.

IDMC's main activities include:

- Monitoring and reporting on internal displacement caused by conflict, generalised violence and violations of human rights;
- Researching, analysing and advocating for the rights of IDPs;
- Training and strengthening capacities on the protection of IDPs;
- Contributing to the development of standards and guidance on protecting and assisting IDPs.

For more information, visit the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre website and the database at www.internal-displacement.org

Contact:

Kate Halff

Head of IDMC

Tel: +41 22 799 07 03

Mobile: +41 79 551 82 57

Email: kate.halff@nrc.ch

IDMC

Norwegian Refugee Council

Chemin de Balexert 7-9

1219 Geneva, Switzerland

www.internal-displacement.org

Tel: +41 (0)22 799 0700

Fax: +41 (0)22 799 0701