



# Voices from FATA

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## Editorial

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### Rising political awareness in FATA

History reflects that FATA and its people have always been misunderstood and there has been a criminal negligence on the part of government of Pakistan as well as the International community to understand the exact nature of the areas and its inhabitants' mind-set.

When Pakistan inherited the FATA region from Britain in 1947, the decision on its future constitutional status was made on the whims of only 200 tribal maliks in a jirga in Peshawar. It is understandable why those maliks favoured the status quo, as they are the real beneficiaries and part of the existing governance system under the FCR (Frontier Crimes Regulation) – the legacy of colonial era. The trend continues, as Islamabad has always made decisions on FATA on the basis of either few maliks or the civil bureaucracy that have vested interests in keeping the status quo in FATA.

Before 1997 General Elections, only 35,000 Maliks [representing 3.17 million people] were perceived as the sole representatives of the tribal society and were made integral part of the system that could choose representatives for the national legislature. The tribal society had no right to vote until 1996 when Adult Franchise Act was introduced during the 2nd People's Party government headed by Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto [Shaheed].

Some argue that democracy does not fit into the tribal society; however various research studies recently conducted by CAMP portray a different and amazing picture of the FATA. Through "Understanding FATA", (Volume II, 2008) when local men and women were interviewed, over 30% of the tribal society chose 'democracy' as the most important human rights issue in Pakistan. Surprisingly, over 62% people of FATA demanded the extension of Political Parties Act 2002, while only 22.35% opposed it. Over 40% of the tribal society argued that they should be involved in the political process. Of 60%

interviewees who had voted during the 2008 Parliamentary Elections, around 35% felt that their vote made a difference.

The recent amendments in FCR [Frontier Crimes Regulation] announced by Mr. Asif Ali Zardari, the President of Pakistan, on 14th of August 2009 are welcomed widely by the tribal society. In the same Poll, over 63% of the tribal society believed that Political Parties be allowed to organise and operate in FATA. These encouraging developments will pave ways for ultimate mainstreaming of the tribal society into Pakistan's development process. However, the implementation of the FCR Amendments 2009 is taking too long and as a result creating confusion and doubts within the tribal society.

There is a need to bring drastic change in the lives of the tribesmen and it is also time to bring constitutional changes in FATA. Besides improving other social indicators, there is a need for political education of the local people. 'Understanding FATA' and other reports reveal that tribal people are very vocal and can express themselves effectively, if given the chance.

Policy makers believe that FCR is widely accepted by the people of FATA, as it addresses their culture and way of life. However, the FATA Poll conducted by CAMP in 2007 and 2008 depict a totally different mind-set of the common man living in FATA. Consultation with the local tribes is a must for bringing any change. Without consultation, any change would open another Pandora's Box and the local people would have to face dire consequences for a long time to come. ■

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## COMMUNITIES FOR CHANGE:

Laying the Grassroots Foundation for Political Reform in FATA

### News from the field

#### Laying the foundation for CBO Capacity Building

One of the prime needs of FATA is to create an organized civil society in the region that is aware of the problems facing it and ready to take up the challenge to resolve it. There is a need for coordination among the people to take responsibility for their areas and stand for their rights. A network of organizations that are rooted in the area can be an initial point for the solution of these problems. The project of “Communities for Change” (CFC) is working in this regard to strengthen Community Based Organizations (CBOs) that will then be trained and equipped to deal with problems



during selection and formation of CBOs. Field teams of the project were constantly assessing the needs of these organizations so that they could address areas where they needed most training.

To motivate these CBOs, regular coordination meetings were arranged to discuss training needs and other issues. Based on these meetings, the Field teams initiated ‘informal’ training sessions with the members of CBOs. These training sessions were conducted on various topics including CBO formation, characteristics, role and responsibilities, record keeping management, advocacy, the importance of a press release etc. During the month of November, CAMP arranged further training sessions for CBO members. The sessions gave CBO members an opportunity to share their views on various



through advocacy and lobbying.

The project was initiated in May 2009 in Kurram, Mohamand and Khyber agencies of FATA. The identification and formation of CBOs, one of the main activities of the CFC Project was completed in October this year, with 102 CBOs selected in three agencies. The field teams laid the foundation for this activity by holding regular meetings at the village level. This not only introduced CAMP and the project objectives among the local communities but also helped identify local leadership, who would further help with the selection and formation of CBOs. Moreover, regular contact was maintained with local NGOs and leadership to coordinate CAMP’s activities.

A total of 102 CBOs have been taken on board for capacity building and networking, including 37 in Khyber agency, 30 in Kurram agency and 35 in Mohmand Agency. Some of these CBOs were already functional in their respective areas while CAMP facilitated the formation of some of them. In the beginning CAMP developed criteria which were applied



issues and set the tone for the formal training that is scheduled to start in December.

11 trainings were arranged in Kurram agency that involved 34 CBOs and the total number of participants was 165. Number of trainings in Khyber was 3 and a total of 63 participants were involved through 37 CBOs. 5 trainings were held in Mohmand agency through 25 CBOs and

involving 105 participants.

The teams also developed village profiles which include information on the number of major tribes, expected population, socio-economic conditions, education, and health facilities in the area. These profiles are not only helpful for the field teams, but can also be used as a source of information by the CBOs when they develop funding proposals. So far the field teams of CAMP have developed 63 profiles in all, including 37 in Khyber, 10 in Kurram and 16 in Mohmand agency.

The monthly newsletter aims to educate the general masses as well as the policy makers on numerous issues confronted by the marginalized communities of FATA. These newsletters have been widely distributed among communities, CBOs/NGOs, INGOs, national and international media, federal and provincial governments cabinets, UN agencies, diplomatic missions, FATA parliamentarians, FATA Secretariat, FATA Development Authority, Political Administration in FATA, universities departments and libraries, various political parties leadership, etc. The publication is appreciated by the readers as it has brought forward some crucial issues that needed to be highlighted.

The impact of the military operation and worsening security has been felt by all the field teams, as it is felt by everyone living in the FATA. The work has become even more challenging after the blocking of communication networks. For the Kurram team, travel to Peshawar for meetings remains a problem.

### **Information, Education, Communication (IEC) Material:**

A consultant was selected for the publication of the IEC Material in the beginning of November. This will include the electronic and published material. The electronic material will be based on a ten to fifteen minutes documentary which will reflect the work of a CBO that started work on a small scale. The documentary will be presented to the other CBOs as an example to be followed. The published material will include a diary and calendar. The diary and calendar would reflect the economic, social, political and security situation in FATA through sketches. These sketches will be linked to the constitution of Pakistan, UDHR and human rights in Islam.

### **Capacity building of CBO network:**

For the next stage of the CFC Project, a comprehensive training program for the selected CBOs has been planned. It has been decided that a training manual for the sessions will

be prepared in five thematic areas.

In this regard, Stakeholders' Consultative workshop was held from 24 – 26 November 2009 to assess the needs and requirements of the CBOs before the preparation of a training package. Around 31 individuals from Khyber, Mohmand and Kurram Agency attended the three days workshop. The members were connected to regional CBOs and NGOs. In addition to one journalist, three students of Peshawar University belonging to Kurram and Mohmand Agency also attended the workshop. The areas that were covered under the workshop included:

1. Project Planning and Management
2. Communication and Presentation skills
3. Human Rights and Democracy
4. Conflict Resolution
5. Advocacy and Lobbying

During the workshop, two groups of consultants assessed the needs of the participants by applying various assessment tools; these included role plays, discussions, self-assessment forms and other exercises. The participants took active part in the proceedings and gave valuable feedback to the facilitators that would not only help in developing the training manuals but also giving a clearer picture of FATA. ■

## **Recommendations from the Workshop**

The consultants analyzed the information from the workshop to assess the needs of the target group. Based on their analysis the consultants recommend the following:

1. Although the participants are aware of concepts of human rights, democracy and conflict resolutions, their knowledge is superficial. Therefore, the training manuals on these topics should include practical examples and in-depth information to equip the participants.
2. Development and gender should be cross-cutting themes throughout the training package.
3. The Communication and presentation skills manual should emphasize on writing, presentation and speaking skills, as these were identified as areas where participants feel less confident. Communicating tactics with donors and other stakeholders should also be highlighted in the manual.
4. Clarity on project and concept design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation is needed in the Project Planning and Management manual.

## FATA: the Past and Future

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All through Pakistan's history, from 1947 to 2001, the tribal belt was considered the iron fort of the country and the tribal people were the absolute defenders of the soil. From Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah to Zia-ul-Haq, Ayub Khan, Bhutto and Nawaz Shairf, all the political and military leaderships respected and valued the tribals. However, all of them failed to take any practical steps in order to bring the tribes into the mainstream national politics. Although there was a host of historical and political reasons due to which our governing elite was unable to undertake any direct actions in the area, yet there was a time when these interfering elements had been weak enough to allow for changes. If the Pakistani government had tried to take direct control of the area and started developmental activities, there was no apparent reason that they would not have succeeded.

Unfortunately, by that time the Civil and Military bureaucracy had had their own benefits attached to keeping the place as is and the vested interests of these two groups are the main reason why the area is still a forbidden land. The misfortune however is that the military or political governments did not demonstrate wisdom or courage in this regard and status quo was maintained in this area, just as the VIP culture was promoted in the rest of the country. Although the interests of the military and civil bureaucracy were very different, yet to keep this area separate became the mutual objective of these two entities.

During the Afghan War the military bureaucracy needed an independent area so that Pakistan would not be held responsible for the movements of mujahideen and arsenal. As for the civil bureaucracy, the tribal areas are such bountiful land of riches from where they could fill their coffers within days or weeks, since the lack of any rules and regulations allows the officers to do as they please. These factors promoted the culture of weapons in FATA. The special few, like Maliks, remained part of the ruling elite, sidelining the common man. The lack of any long-term developmental plan aggravated the problems of the people. The sense of deprivation in the people turned into a fatal wound for which a military operation is thought of as the only solution. However, what FATA needs is not a military operation but a

political and economic one.

Although it is a fact that there are foreign elements involved in aggravating the situation in Baluchistan and FATA, the question remains that why were they able to find such open play fields in this region. How were those outsiders able to control the patriotic people of the area? We need to consider this matter with a cool head. Using force is not the solution to every problem and developmental plans cannot satisfy people. If might and development could satisfy people, then why did we need freedom from the British? Not only were the British good at using power but they also had excellent developmental projects in place. The fact however is this: good educational facilities, political awareness, safeguarding peoples' rights and accepting the right of people to rule are the fundamental requirements for satisfying the common people. Unfortunately the situation in FATA is completely opposite. In a place where people do not have access to education or political freedom, basic rights and the right to rule are a far cry!

In these times of grave concerns, the following suggestions are being presented with complete sincerity with the view that these, and not the military operations, are the solution to the problems in FATA.

1. Amendments should be introduced in the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) in the form of a comprehensive package so that the tribal people have complete political independence. They should be able to appeal in the higher courts and the national political parties should have some influence in the area so that they can change the public opinion. This will also lessen extremism and violence in the area.
2. The credibility of Pakistan Army is badly damaged as it



has been operating against its own people for a long time. It is not only creating negative sentiments against the army but the organization is also losing the confidence that the nation had in its armed forces since if the army cannot defeat a few hundred militants, how will it safeguard the borders spread for thousands of miles and the millions of Pakistanis.

It is therefore suggested that the capital being spent on the military operations should be used to strengthen the patriotic influential Sardars and religious scholars of the area. The Armed Forces should be restrained to the protection of the borders and Frontier Core and Khasadar Force should be used in unavoidable circumstances and under intelligence reports only. Even in those conditions, the action should be specifically against the militants and the people should be kept out of harm's way.

3. FATA is one of Pakistan's most underdeveloped areas. The previous governor, Syed Iftikhar Hussain suggested many mega developmental projects and asked for immediate steps for their completion. These projects included Cadet College Mohmand, Engineering College Bajaur, Medical College, Kurram, FATA Road Project, and Shalman Water Supply Scheme among others. For creating job opportunities, in addition to recruitments for the government agencies, three special industrial zones should be set-up where special concessions should be made in the rates for electric rates and taxes.
4. In order to prevent such situations again in near future, and to bring the tribal people into the national stream, a revolutionary ten year education plan should be set in motion. But such a plan should take into account the tribal backwardness, lack of interest in education and the special circumstances of the region.

It is hoped that the above stated suggestions will help in normalizing the situation, but what has taken years to make, cannot be altered over-night. We must remain patient and hopeful. ■

### FATA Facts: Education Indicators

The percentage of literate persons in FATA is estimated to be 17.42%, of which less than 3% are female. There are 2567 primary schools, 278 middle schools, 201 high schools and 9 colleges for intermediate and degree level. There are no colleges for women.

## Agricultural Prospects in FATA

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FATA, administered by the federal government, is an area that is famous for the uniqueness of its land and people. Its sky rocketing mountains, soaring trees and intense weather is of interest worldwide. The people of the area are as unique as the geographical location they inhabit; they are extremely generous hosts, brave, hard working and loving people.

No one denies the fact that the tribal people are even today faced with a host of problems. The first decade of the twenty first century is about to end and even in this age of modernism and technology the common tribal individual is still hankering after the basic necessities of life. Even such necessity as safe drinking water is not available to them and in most of the areas the people are forced to buy water tankers from far off places.

Same is the situation of agriculture; while FATA is blessed with a rich and fertile land and conducive atmosphere, yet due to lack of cultivable land and sources of irrigation, the area has lagged behind in the development race from the other areas of the country.

There are many projects in place for the development of the tribal areas with the aim to revolutionize the lives of the tribal people. It is my opinion that if we make the tribal leaders the center of these projects, they will greatly lessen the problems of FATA. The general views about the tribal people is that they are interested in businesses and all over Pakistan, one can witness them doing business activities. While that is true in itself, it is my opinion that even today a large faction of their population is still related to agriculture in one way or the other. Majority of people in Khyber Agency, a place of harsh mountains and one that has seen many rulers pass through it, are related to agriculture.

The famous poet Khatir Afridi is right when he says,

The multi-coloured poems of Khatir astound me

What else is of interest in this arid land of Khyber!

But even in this dry area of Khyber, there are many places where the people are attached to the profession of agriculture

for generations. The aim of the discussion is to reiterate that if attentions are focused on the tribal agriculture, things will definitely change. According to the facts and figures, out of the total area of FATA, only 200, 000 hectares, which is 7.4 % is cultivable. That is why per acre crop-yield of the area is much less compared to the other areas of Pakistan. The grave problems being faced by the people of tribal belt is a lack of resources or water for irrigation, lack of education of the tribal farmers about the latest agricultural technologies, less rainfall, transportation of the agricultural produce from farms to market, barren and uneven land as well as rock-strewn land.

In future, if we initiate agricultural plans for the tribal regions on an emergency basis, there are strong chances that the tribal farmers will be able to increase their agricultural produce such as that of wheat, corn, maize and rice. In doing so, the farmers will not be making themselves financially stronger, but will the country and the nation at large will also be benefitting.

Today, the greatest problem posed to Pakistan is of agricultural produce. Even being an agricultural country, we are forced to import wheat and depend on foreign aid for it and are parched for wheat. It is on record that many precious lives of the poor tribal people have been lost while they were trying to 'smuggle' flour for providing to their children. It is also a well-known fact that if 20 kilos of flour is being sold at Rs. 650 in the settled areas, it will cost twice as much in the tribal areas. The poor tribal people are forced to buy flour for their families at such high prices. The main point here is that if we are able to provide him with the basic resources for agriculture, there are strong chances not only that he will be able to provide for his family but that he will also play a beneficial role for the country as well. But if we leave him to his own tactics, the dream of achieving agricultural self-sufficiency will never be fulfilled. It is high time that we implement plans that focus around the needs of the tribal farmers. We should not leave them high and dry at this time.

FATA Rural Development Project, the experiment to achieve people partnership in the agricultural sector has been started in FATA Secretariat and it has yielded far-reaching results. Through the project, the farmers of Khyber, Mohmand and Bajaur Agency have been gathered to form small organizations at village level. These farmers are taught latest

## What do people in FATA want for their children?

During a 2008 opinion poll conducted in seven agencies of FATA, 2000 adults were asked what they wanted for their children. For boys, people wanted more education (69.6%) and employment opportunities (21%) followed by more security and marriage. While for girls, more security topped the list (53%), followed by education (36.85%), marriage, employment opportunities, religious education and pardah.

The Poll clearly shows that despite the conservative mindset in FATA, a high percentage of people want education for their sons and daughters.

technologies of farming, about using the best seeds, fertilizers and required insecticides are being provided. The tribal farmers have not only understood the FRDP project but also accepted it whole heartedly. That is why, I think that people partnership is the solution to FATA's problems and such projects can change the course of destiny for FATA.

The most important step in this regard is the installation of Dug Well Irrigation since irrigation water is not available in FATA. Through these dug wells/tube wells, the farmers can fertilize their otherwise barren lands and increase their financial stability. Irrigation channels should be built side by side in these areas so as to save the water being used for irrigation purposes and all the fields are equally irrigated. Added to that, the availability of quality seed should be ensured because only that will result in quality crops. For getting quality crop, 35% depends on quality seeds. If that is made available to them, majority of the problems will be solved automatically. To provide the tribal farmers with the latest technology in regards the farming techniques is also necessary, so that they leave the traditional methods and apply the modern ways, and play their role in earning foreign exchange.

If the agricultural sector of FATA is attended to on an emergency basis, there are strong chances that the tribal people will gain respectable job opportunities in their own areas and they will not have to roam around in the country for it. This will also enable them to feed their family and be an asset to the country.■