EDITORIAL

Greetings from the editorial team of 'Voices from FATA'!

The July-August 2013 issue of our newsletter highlights the important issue of displacement that continues to affect not only KP and FATA but is also placing a burden on our national security and economy. Counter terrorism and counter insurgency operations and other armed violence are constantly resulting in waves of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in Pakistan’s already volatile North West regions.

In addition, the displacement issue also needs to be dealt with on an urgent basis and families must be provided with financial and other assistance. Alternatives to repatriation, in case of continuing security threats in FATA, such as local integration must also be sought. The government must intensify its efforts and put into practice lessons learnt – in particular, the experience of Afghan ‘refugees’ – and move towards mutually acceptable solutions instead of conventional solutions which may no longer be appropriate. However, international humanitarian aid must also be sought and developmental organisations should be facilitated by reducing bureaucratic constraints on accessing difficult areas.

Our cover story on IDPs residing in camps and host communities and their issues begins on Page 2, highlighting not only the problems faced by the displaced, but also looks towards solutions and provides recommendations for a future plan of action.

In relation to security, July 2013 proved to be the most violent month of this year after January which resulted in more than 250 casualties. In contrast, August was peaceful with only nine violent incidents resulting in 10 deaths and six people injured. Details on the security situation are provided on Page 6.

In the news section, we have included stories on the government’s efforts to bring about peace in FATA; a redoubling of the quota for students belonging to the tribal region; and, the role of peace committees in Wana, South Waziristan, in maintaining peace. A news story on the demand for the Supreme Court of Pakistan and High Courts’ jurisdiction to be extended to FATA put forward by the FATA Lawyers’ Forum is also included. These news stories appear on Pages 7-9.

With the new democratic government assuming power, it is heartening to note that steps are being taken to bring about peace in FATA with the inclusion of key stakeholders; such efforts, if continued with sincerity, will demonstrate to the tribal people the centre’s willingness to address their problems.

We believe local NGOs must also continue to play a role in addressing the basic needs of IDPs; CAMP, in particular has led from the front in relation to providing emergency relief and primary health care for displaced families in Jalozai since 2009.

Recently CAMP concluded a cash grants project for the IDPs from Tirah, living in Kohat. And we hope to carry on our efforts in providing services to the IDPs until they can return to their homes, in safety and dignity. InshAllah!

Barrister Irum Ali Khan
Editor and Advocacy Coordinator
CAMP Office, Islamabad

Editorial Team
- Irum Ali Khan
- Said Afzal Shinwari

Layout & Design by: M. M. Tahir Saeed

P.O. Box 765, Islamabad, Pakistan
E-mail: camp@camp.org.pk
Website: www.camp.org.pk
THE INTERNALLY DISPLACED OF PAKISTAN:
Struggling to Survive

In addition to hosting millions of refugees in the past, Pakistan also has the largest communities of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the world. According to the latest UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) estimates, a total of 1,75,030 displaced families are residing in camps and host communities across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province – the vast majority originate from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) who were forced to leave their homes due to the militancy and conflict.

Jalozai is the biggest and widely recognised camp for refugees and IDPs in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province. It was initially established in 1980 for Afghan refugees fleeing the Soviet invasion. However, by May 2008 it was officially proclaimed to be a hub for IDPs from across KP and FATA.

In the aftermath of conflict, humanitarian aid began flooding into Pakistan to address the IDP crisis; however, with time both interest and support from the international community has waned. It has also lost its appeal to the media and seems to have become a universally accepted truth attracting few stories and articles on occasion.

A Pakistani journalist, Ms. Kiran Nazish uncovers the ‘human element’ which been highlighted by numerous other journalists and investigators who interview affected families and draw attention to their plight in IDP camps. In her article titled ‘The Bleak Lives of Pakistan’s Internally Displaced’, the account of a girl named Amna, living with her family at Jalozai, illustrating the hardships faced by most families living there is provided below.

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) reports that the most affected areas in FATA are the Khyber and Kurram agencies which have forced people to leave their homes due to terrorism and counter terrorism, as well as clashes between militant groups/ factions. OCHA has also estimated that the number of people who have been displaced since mid March to early June stands at 1,31,000 in 2013 alone.

Despite reassurances by government authorities, hundreds of IDPs complain about the lack of utilities, supplies and food in camps, and generally it is those living in camps who are perceived to be most in need. However, according to NRC, two-thirds of IDPs outside camps live below the poverty line and do not have access to food, housing and basic facilities.¹

According to IRIN, families such as Amna’s, in addition to suffering from the overall psychological trauma of dislocation, often fall victim to ‘negative coping strategies’ when they are forced to start purchasing food and shelter to survive. The immediate and urgent need is for cash which results in debt that most are unable to pay and selling their assets. The Internally Displaced Person Vulnerability Assessment and Profiling (IVAP) survey shows that a large proportion of IDPs from FATA have resorted to negative coping strategies for survival; 30 percent of families purchase food on credit, and 21.7 percent borrow food, or ask friends and relatives for help.²

Apart from the problems of IDPs themselves, massive displacement has created serious security and protection challenges as well as potential and actual violations of rights and fundamental freedoms. It has been observed that only those families who are able to meet government criteria for registration are eligible for food assistance. Despite efforts to improve the registration process, there are serious concerns about its impartiality and accessibility for the most vulnerable. It is obvious that major reform is essential to “bring the criteria for registration into line with

² IRIN: ‘Pakistan’s IDPs find it can get worse’ - http://www.irinnews.org/report/98524/pakistan-s-idps-find-it-can-get-worse

“I want to go back home,” says a little girl named Amna, who has spent most of her life here in the IDP (internally displaced persons) Camp in Jalozai. Amna is six and a half years old and her family moved here four years ago, escaping military operations against terrorists in the Khyber Agency tribal area of Pakistan. She doesn’t remember her village in Khyber, or any of those children or games that her elder siblings talk about all the time. But she has a fantasy of how things would be if she goes back home. Her idea of home is constructed by the stories and life that her older siblings and parents have shared with her.

She picks up two water buckets and starts walking, chuckling, spilling water on her way to her home where she now lives. It’s a tattered dusty tent with stitches here and there, reminding of the rain that tore the cloth tent in winter, seeping chilly wind inside. Amna shudders at the memory of the last winter. “We don’t have clothes that are warm enough,” she says. “And donations with sweaters or warm clothes have stopped coming in so we did not have enough to fight the monstrous cold this past winter.”

Amna works a few hours every day delivering water to different families in her camp neighborhood to make some money for her mother’s medicine. They have to go to a private hospital since the government facilities at the Jalozai camp are scarce and doctors are almost never available. Amna has vowed to bring more money to their family of seven, along with her other elder siblings – all of whom work. “Maybe if we have more money, we will one day go back and rebuild our home (in Khyber Agency).”

Excerpts from ‘Pakistan’s Internally Displaced’, Kiran Nazish (The Diplomat, 16th August 2013)
Voices from FATA | July – August 2013 | Issue No. 4

the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and to deliver assistance to those most in need, including protracted and urban IDPs.”³

Despite humanitarian assistance from the private sector and a few continuing international efforts, there is nonetheless a vacuum that needs to be filled with timely and appropriate government action. The displacement issue must be tackled to address the growing number of IDPs and develop durable solutions for the future.

Recommendations from the NRC include registration and assistance of vulnerable IDPs displaced for prolonged periods and substantive policies which support local integration. In addition, community based programmes which also address the problems of both host populations as well as the displaced must be developed to facilitate integration as a viable alternative to repatriation especially in light of security concerns.

An Early Recovery Assistance Framework (ERAF) for FATA which was introduced in March 2013 represents a welcome step in this direction and can help in creating a constructive environment for IDPs. However, more concentrated efforts are required by the government and developmental organisations to ensure effective implementation of this framework and to guarantee safe and voluntary repatriation.

Also, the government must take positive steps to reduce the bureaucratic constraints on humanitarian organisations and facilitate their access to displaced populations. It is essential that the principles of international humanitarian laws are respected for the benefit of both aid workers and beneficiaries.

Security concerns at camps such as Jalozai are yet to be addressed by authorities. The media often reports bomb blasts and suicide attacks which further deteriorate conditions. On 21st March 2013, Jalozai saw its worst bomb attack which killed 15 people and injured dozens, including women and children.

Even though the government itself favours IDPs’ return and large scale voluntary repatriation, and nearly all families do wish to return, factors such as constant insecurity, damaged infrastructure and lack of compensation or aid packages means that tens of thousands of families cannot do so. Since 2008, more than three million people have returned to FATA, but the repatriation process has slowed down dramatically since last year.

“The impact of the withdrawal of NATO and US troops from neighbouring Afghanistan in 2014 on the north-west’s displacement crisis is uncertain, but whatever its effect sufficient international humanitarian funding for Pakistan’s IDPs must be guaranteed in 2013 and beyond.”

³Ibid
FATA SECURITY MONITOR

<table>
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<th>AUGUST</th>
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<td>IEDs</td>
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<td>Drone attacks</td>
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<td>Military/SF operations</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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As illustrated in the table above, a sudden increase in violence was witnessed in the month of July 2013 with a total of 35 incidents resulting in more than 250 casualties. Security operations against militants have continued with the same intensity along with attacks from militants targeting security personnel and civilians alike.

On 26th July, 48 persons were killed and 100 others were injured in coordinated twin suicide attacks at Parachinar in Kurram Agency. Suicide bombers on motorcycles blew themselves up within a minute of each other outside an Imambargah in Parachinar bazaar targeting the Shia community.

There were six drone attacks; three occurrences of IEDs planted by militants targeting security personnel; two incidents of bomb attacks and mortar shelling injuring women and children. Militants also intensified their attacks on military forces at specific check posts across the tribal region.

In contrast, the intensity of violence dramatically reduced in August 2013 with the least number of violent incidents – nine – and resulting deaths observed in the year thus far. No incidents of mortar shelling, suicide bombings, or drone attacks were reported this month.

In both months, girls’ schools continued to be targeted by militants; one incident in July was an attack on a girls school in Wana, South Waziristan, while the second targeted a school for girls in Khar Tehsil of Bajaur Agency in August. However, no casualties were reported in either incident.
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Engineer Shaukatullah has said that 80 percent work on construction of an electricity transmission line from Gomal Zam Dam Project to Wana as well as Wana Grid Station has been completed.

Addressing a Grand Jirga of Ahmadzai Wazir, Dotani and Sulaiman Khel tribes of South Waziristan at Wana on Thursday, the Governor also reminded the tribal elders that the employees of WAPDA engaged in construction of Gomal Zam Project who were kidnapped sometime back were yet to be recovered and there was a need that the tribes of the agency should also extend a helping hand to ensure their safe return.

The Governor highly eulogised the role and contribution of the members of the Peace Committee of Wana and expressed confidence that it would meet with more success in future. He also assured every possible support to the Committee. The Governor on this occasion also announced the up-gradation of the Degree College for Boys at Wana to Postgraduate level and said that the project would be launched during the current year.

The Governor earlier attended the first convocation of the Cadet College, Wana as its Chief Guest. An MNA from South Waziristan, Ghalib Khan; Principal Secretary to Governor, Muhammad Abid Majeed who also looks after the education sector in FATA; and, Political Agent of South Waziristan Agency, Islamzeb Khan were also present on the occasion.

Referring to the demands put forward by a prominent tribal elder of the agency, Malik Muhammad Ajmal Khan, the Governor pointed out that he was keenly interested in socio-economic development orientated projects in the agency and that he would shortly examine the pace of progress on the ongoing projects of small dams which were under construction through the FATA Development Authority.

He said that efforts would also be made to arrange funds for launching more similar projects. Responding to another demand, the Governor further pointed out that construction projects of an Institute of Technical Training and a sports stadium had already been launched at Wana and assured his help in making their timely completion possible.

Source: http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/1207293/

ISLAMABAD: The government will take all stakeholders including the people of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) on board to return peace to the tribal belt. This was said by Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz leader Siddiquil Farooq on Tuesday while speaking at a seminar titled “NATO Post-withdrawal Scenario in Afghanistan”. The event was organised by the FATA Research Council.

Jan Achakzai of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazal (JUI-F) and Shehryar Afridi of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) also shared their views about the post withdrawal scenario.

Farooq said the PML-N is aware of the situation and is going to convene an All Parties’ Conference (APC) to pave the way for peace in FATA.

“In the past, several APCs were convened, but there was lack of political will. This time we are serious. Political will exists and all political parties are supporting us,” he said.
He added that the PML-N is also working on bringing FATA into the mainstream and hoped that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will also pay a visit to the tribal areas.

Jan Achakzai said it is imperative for all stakeholders to strike a deal as this is the only option stakeholders are left with.

“We all know that [military] power is not the solution, that is why dialogue is the only way out to restore peace in the region and the country,” he said.

Afridi said the government should focus on the ground realities. “Sitting in Islamabad to resolve the problems of FATA is ridiculous,” he said.

He said the government should take local elders on board instead of making policies based on the analysis of “pseudo-analysts” who do not know about the culture and problems of the area.

FATA Research Council (FRC) President Dr Ashraf said those who term US presence as a curse will have no justification left to wage jihad after the withdrawal.

“The government is going in with one ‘D’ — deterrence — while ignoring dialogue and development,” he said.

The FRC also launched its biannual report based on a survey carried out in FATA. Among the findings, 41 per cent of respondents believe that after the US withdrawal, local militants will lay down their arms, 26 per cent says the groups will vacate the tribal belt, and 20 per cent are of the view that militants will continue their war.

On a separate question, 74 per cent said that the withdrawal will bring positive changes in the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan, while 19 per cent disagreed with the notion.

Published in The Express Tribune, July 10th, 2013


PM DOUBLES FATA STUDENTS’ QUOTA IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has doubled the quota in engineering and medical colleges/universities throughout the country for the students belonging to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) on an immediate basis. The Prime Minister’s Office issued the directive on Wednesday.

Former federal minister and leader of FATA members of Parliament Senator Abbas Khan Afridi urged the Prime Minister in his meeting with him early this week for enhancing the quota since the students hailing from the tribal areas were facing trouble due to the limitation of berths in professional colleges and universities.

He briefed Prime Minister Nawaz that the education ambiance had improved in the tribal areas considerably and students were passing the examinations qualifying them for the engineering and medical colleges/universities but unfortunately the area did not have engineering and medical education facilities. The situation is making such students divert to undesirable activities due to frustration. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif accepted the submission
made by the tribal leader and issued the directive accordingly.

Senator Abbas Khan Afridi thanked the Prime Minister for the action and hoped that this step would go a long way in promotion of education among the young generation of FATA. Talking to The News on Wednesday evening, he said students will avail this opportunity befittingly as yet another feather has been added in the cap of the PML-N government for the service of tribal people who are facing acute problems due to the law and order situation and other issues. He said Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is tackling the situation in FATA and resolving problems of the area intelligently. All political forces must extend a hand of cooperation towards Prime Minister Nawaz, he urged.

“Extension of the Political Parties Act does not make sense when the tribesmen do not have any decision-making powers,” Mohmand argued, adding the previous government considered it a huge success but people are still subjected to the same tyrannical rule.

At the press conference, FLF member Taj Mahal Afridi alleged non-governmental organisations get funds from international donors for the tribal region and pocket the money. “No one wants to change our condition as this is an easy source of income,” he alleged.

The FATA Tribunal created to provide quick justice to the tribal areas has been subjected to criticism after a retired bureaucrat was hired to pass judgments. “Hundreds of people are languishing in jails around FATA since the last two years and nobody has been presented for trial,” said Afridi.

DEMAND FOR REFORMS: LAWYERS DEMAND SC’S REACH BE EXTENDED TO TRIBAL AREAS

PESHAWAR: A lawyers’ forum from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) has asked the government to extend jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and High Court to the tribal areas.

Addressing a press conference at the press club on Monday, the president of FATA Lawyers Forum (FLF) Muhammad Ijaz Mohmand said the area has been neglected since the creation of Pakistan and now the world calls it a ‘crime zone’.

“No one is interested in bringing any change in the war-torn area,” said Mohmand, adding they expected much from the new government but it has not even talked about the oppression in FATA.