EDITOR’S CORNER

Welcome to another edition of our e-newsletter Voices from FATA!

With the advent of a new year, possibilities of peace talks and negotiations between the government and militants have brought an onslaught of multiple issues affecting the local people of FATA. Displacement remains a core problem which needs to be addressed on a priority basis. In addition, damage to infrastructure, particularly education and health centres is depriving the locals of basic amenities. Given the current circumstances, people are desperate for some relief and thus the government must take proper measures to ensure security and access to basic utilities; also, special initiatives for disadvantaged groups, particularly, women, children and youth must be taken to ensure their inclusion in all spheres.

In light of the recent announcement of a Draft FATA Youth Policy developed by the FATA Secretariat which represents a much needed first step towards the welfare of tribal youth, we have included an overview of this draft in our newsletter. The youth represent a large majority of the population – both in FATA and Pakistan – and thus their needs must be catered to; this ‘youth bulge’ has tremendous talent which must be utilised for the sake of progress. The policy includes educational, social and economic initiatives to help youngsters achieve academic and professional excellence. We hope that this policy will be backed by sincere and timely efforts for the uplifting of tribal youth. Our cover story “FATA Youth Policy: A measure for relief or mere rhetoric?” appears on Page 2 of our newsletter.

In the news section, we have chosen to highlight particular issues which pose serious threats to the tribal region; the narrative of Zarmata Bibi, a 60 year old IDP reminisces of home; polio cases are on the rise in FATA with five being reported in a single day despite prevention campaigns; these news stories and other reports are included on Page 5.

Despite not a very good start to 2014, we still express hope for developmental progress in FATA; in particular, the proposed youth policy represents one positive initiative as a step forward for advancement of the largest group of our population – once implemented it will no doubt improve conditions for youngsters, not only in FATA but also for Pakistan overall.
FATA Youth Policy: A measure for relief or mere rhetoric?

On the special directive of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Governor, Engineer Shaukatullah Khan, the FATA Secretariat announced a Draft FATA Youth Policy in January 2014 to address the needs and welfare of tribal youth. CAMP has included some key points of this proposed draft policy to promote awareness and encourage debate on this much needed and welcome initiative from the government.

WHY DOES FATA NEED A YOUTH POLICY?

Pakistan, like numerous other countries, is currently facing a youth bulge with about 21.5% of the population between the ages of 15 to 24 years.¹ As of December 2013, the median age of people living in Pakistan is 22.2 illustrating that exactly half of the population is below and above this age.² The population pyramid of Pakistan is presented below, which illustrates that the majority of our population falls between the ages of 15-29 years.

![Population Pyramid](image)

According to the Pakistan Youth Policy (2008):

"Pakistan's population profile is changing. The proportion of working age population is increasing and offering a window of opportunity to turn this demographic transition into a 'demographic dividend'. This 'demographic dividend' provides a great opportunity to steer the energies of youth for Pakistan's economic growth and well-being."

Thus addressing the needs of the biggest demographic group of our population is not only inevitable but essential as the youth represent a vital part of any economy and society. FATA's youth is particularly vulnerable given the security and economic situation in the tribal areas. Opportunities for education, employment, and recreation are decreasing to an extent that youngsters living in FATA have no outlet; people with resources prefer migrating to settled areas while the majority languishes.

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² Ibid
In such circumstances, this initiative from the government is a welcome step towards inclusion of the FATA’s youth into mainstream economy by providing them with the much needed tools for surviving in today’s competitive world.

WHAT IS THE YOUTH POLICY ABOUT?

The FATA Youth Policy is presented in the form of a strategic action plan which comprises of guidelines for youth development in FATA. Some of the salient features of this plan are provided below:

**Economic Empowerment:** This involves diversification of employment sectors, developing skills, technical training, encouraging entrepreneurship and quotas for female employees.

**Education:** To broaden educational outcomes beyond literacy; uniform basic and secondary education; set standards and competencies for students irrespective of educational background; safe/violence free campuses to promote positive learning environment; availability and accessibility to books, research material and facilities; promoting exchange and scholarship programmes; and, encourage non-formal education including general life skills.

**Health & Sports:** To promote health awareness and prevention programmes for promoting well-being; and, establishing and preserving sports facilities and holding competitions at all levels.

**Social Empowerment:** To encourage youth volunteerism and community service; and to promote youth mobility and tourism both inside and outside FATA.

**Political Participation & Engagement of Youth:** To demand inclusion of youth development agendas in political manifestos; instil civic responsibility and citizenship; and ensure inclusion of minorities and other disadvantaged groups.

HOW WILL THE POLICY HELP FATA’S YOUTH?

By providing FATA’s youth with such opportunities for education, employment and political participation, it is hoped that a direction for progress can be established for the next generation. As Sheikh (2013) states:

“*The only way out of this rapidly deteriorating condition and increasing youth-violence is to create enough economic growth and employment opportunities. But this seems to be too ambitious a dream to be realised at least in the foreseeable future. However, the seriousness of the issue demands priority attention, and the problem of integration into the national workforce must be tackled urgently as part of a counter-terrorism strategy; for employing the young would not only help the economy but also cripple the extremists ability to turn the youth-bulge into a terrorist surplus.*”

However, there is a perception that this policy cannot be properly
implemented in this current environment of insecurity and “is in conflict with ground realities.” According to a news report published in Dawn news, the universal principles of human rights and core values that form the basis of this policy are in contrast with the ‘black law’ of the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) which still regulates the tribal region. It states:

“Instead of engaging youth of FATA in populist rhetoric, the government should free tribal people from the clutches of draconian system prior to introducing any policy.”

In particular, the proposed policy is criticised for being too idealistic in relation to the fact that despite student unions being banned at educational institutions across the country, the draft asks for such platforms to be established at colleges in FATA. In addition, the draft also focuses on education, scholarships, entrepreneurship for youth, but again, in the absence of grassroots administrative measures for the integration of FATA into mainstream Pakistani society, these demands do seem ‘populist rhetoric’. It is also important to note that “thousands of tribal youth under the age of 29 have gone abroad for higher education as well as skilled and unskilled work” and “youth from FATA living abroad have been ignored in the policy draft.”

WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF FATA’S YOUTH POLICY?

Even though it is still very early to see any real impact, the policy itself represents a much needed and welcome step towards inclusivity of tribal youth into mainstream economy and society as a whole. In particular, the educational and economic aspects of this policy illustrate the government's will to provide a direction for FATA's youth and empower them with the right tools for progress. This is the first time that the voices of youth comprising students, journalists and various groups from FATA were heard at a consultative seminar organised in Peshawar last month for brainstorming and propositions for inclusion into the draft policy.

Nevertheless, it remains to be seen whether the youth of FATA derive any real benefit from this policy; the tools and mechanisms through which it is implemented are crucial to its success - but this policy does represent a triumph for the tribal region and must be hailed as a historical move to empower the tribal region.

FATA SECURITY MONITOR

<table>
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<tr>
<th>TYPE OF INCIDENT</th>
<th>JAN</th>
<th>FEB</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>K</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bomb attacks</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landmine explosions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortar shelling</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEDs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drone attacks</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military/SF operations</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By unidentified/militant groups</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>99</td>
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The declining trend in violence continued into 2014 with fewer incidents of bomb blasts, no suicide bombings and a halt in drone attacks during January and February. With the possibility of peace talks and surrounding debate, this decrease could be perceived as a reflection of the militants' willingness to negotiate and a change of tact from the government as well; however, with the breakdown of negotiations, militant attacks and responding military operations resumed targeting hideouts, specific groups and individuals once again forced thousands to flee their homes, especially in North Waziristan. Given the circumstances, it is hard to be optimistic about FATA's security situation in the coming months but one can hope for improvement. Meanwhile, it is important for the government to address the social and economic problems arising from the security situation, in particular the displacement of thousands, which is no doubt placing a huge burden on national resources.

4 Ibid
5 Ibid
6 Ibid
Pakistan’s displaced families put faith in peace talks

For Zarmata Bibi, a grandmother from the tribal areas, landmark peace talks between the government and the Taliban aimed at ending years of insurgency couldn’t come soon enough.

The 60-year-old has lost both a son and a granddaughter to the conflict, seen her home turned to rubble and was forced to flee in 2012, uncertain if she and her remaining family members would ever return.

“I miss my home, I miss my relatives, I miss everything. Any move for peace means returning to normal life,” she told AFP from her temporary home in the northwestern town of Hangu.

Bibi is one of around 750,000 “internally displaced people” (IDPs).

They are domestic refugees whose stories rarely figure in the daily coverage of military operations and suicide bombings that have blighted the country.

While analysts are sceptical over the outcome of talks announced by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif that began last week, the dialogue has ignited hopes for some refugees desperate for good news after years of hardship.

Caught between the Taliban on the one side and military shelling on the other, many say peace talks are their best chance for some sort of lasting solution.

“In the end, dialogue will be the only solution. I am hopeful the current peace process will lead to a solution,” said Haji Namadar Khan, a 57-year-old from Khyber district who has been living in the Jalozai Camp for refugees on the outskirts of Peshawar since 2009.

The plight of Pakistan’s internal refugees came to national prominence when many were forced to flee the picturesque Swat Valley, just 125 kilometres from the capital Islamabad, in 2009 following an army operation against the Taliban.

Fundraising drives at home and abroad provided them with food, shelter and provisions, and after the conflict many displaced returned home.

According to an official report some 750,000 displaced people are living outside the refugee camps, often in rented houses or with friends and relatives in settled areas.

An estimated 40,000 who are even less fortunate are forced to live in camps in Peshawar, Kurram tribal district and Hangu.

In the camps, tents stretch for as far as the eye can see. There is no running electricity and limited water, and residents are exposed to the searing heat of summer, when temperatures can reach 50°C before plunging below zero during the frigid winter.

The latest displacement started late last month, when some 1,500 families – about 13,000 people – left their villages in North Waziristan fearing an impending military offensive against the Taliban.

That threat failed to materialise. Arshad Khan, a senior official from the FATA disaster management authority, told AFP the government is working on repatriating most families in March, with compensation payments of 25,000 rupees for the displaced.

For some, the move to hold talks with the Taliban has fuelled a deep longing to return.

“I want to go back, I want to see my school and school fellows, I miss my cricket, I miss my friends,” said Tahir Khan, a 15-year-old from Khyber agency currently living in Peshawar.

But others remain sceptical of peace efforts, citing the wide gulf between the two sides and past failures.

The Taliban’s demands include the nationwide imposition of Sharia law and an end to US drone strikes, conditions the government and army are unlikely to be able to meet.

Regional deals in the past have also failed, most notably in 2009 when a ceasefire between the two sides in the Swat Valley broke out after the Taliban carried out public beheadings and flogged women.

“I am not hopeful of these peace talks,” said Sakhi Ullah, a 47-year-old refugee who lost his sister during the conflict and is now living in a rented house in Jarma village of Kohat.
Teams to reach 0.712 mn children in FATA

PESHAWAR: A three-day anti-polio drive has kicked off in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Frontier Regions (FRs) here Monday with a total target of 0.712 million children.

Additional Chief Secretary FATA Arbab Muhammad Arif administered polio drops to children here at FATA Secretariat to formally inaugurate the second passage of Short Interval Additional Dose (SIAD) in FATA to be held from February 24 to 26, 2014.


Capacity building programme held in Bajaur Agency

BAJAU AGENCY: Bajaur’s Political administration is taking concrete steps for the rehabilitation of the militancy hard-hit people of the agency by organizing a number of training programs with different intervals in the agency, FRC learnt.


Five more polio cases emerge in FATA in single day

PESHAWAR: Officials of the Prime Minister Polio Cell, who are trying to eradicate polio through meetings and closed door briefings, received another setback within days of Maulana Samiul Haq’s issuance of a public statement against his own polio fatwa and emergence of five more polio cases from FATA on Saturday.

The detection of five new cases in a single day from FATA also poured cold water on the high level meeting chaired by President Mamnoon Hussain at the Governor’s House on Saturday, where yet again more promises and commitments were made through closed door briefings to lift the ban on polio immunisation in North Waziristan Agency and provide security to the polio workers in FATA.


Khyber Agency Colour win hockey league

PESHAWAR: Khyber Agency Colour won the inaugural Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Fata Hockey League 2013 after beating FR Kohat Whites 4-1 in the final at the Lala Ayub Hockey Stadium here on Thursday.

FR Kohat took the lead through right winger Shah Nawaz in the 20th minute but it lasted barely 60 seconds as Khyber Agency Colour’s centre-half Usman levelled matters and they went into half-time 2-1 up after another goal by Zabiullah.

In the second-half, FR Kohat missed to convert any of the five penalty corners they were awarded before a quick-fire double by centre-forward Shamsuddin — later named best player of the tournament for his 14 goals — sealed victory for Khyber Agency Colour.

Former Provincial Minister for Sports Syed Aqil Shah was the chief guest at the closing ceremony and gave away the prizes.

Khyber Agency Colour had beaten Mohammad Whites 4-1 in the semi-finals while FR Kohat Whites overcame FR Koht Colour 5-2 in the other last-four clash.

Eight teams from across FATA took part in the league, organised for the first time by FATA Olympic Association.—APP


Seven projects completed in Orakzai Agency

PESHAWAR: The Federal Government in order to ensure best transportation facilities and improve poor hygiene and sanitation conditions completed seven projects of link roads, street pavements, drains and retaining walls in various villages of Central Orakzai Agency.

The schemes were completed in several villages include Zwan, Kandoli Samana, Rabi Khel, Nakka Mela, Kandoli Tor Okhpo, Ibrahimzai, Koz Koroona and Umer Mela and Lakaray to Kuch Mela, Central Orakzai, said a Spokesman of FATA Secretariat here on Friday.

These interventions would directly benefit thousands of community members at their doorstep.—APP

http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=229940