

The Internally Displaced of Malakand Division...narratives, relief and the ERU

**Aryana Institute for Regional Research and Advocacy, Islamabad
And**

Disaster Response Network, Peshawar

May 29, 2009

1- Introduction

According to conservative estimates, some two million people have been internally displaced from the three districts of Malakand Division, i-e., Swat, Dir and Buner, of the North West Frontier Province (Pakhtunkhwa) of Pakistan due to the fierce battle between the security forces of Pakistan and the Taliban insurgents in Malakand Division. The internally displaced from the above districts have largely put up with their relatives and friends in the districts of Mardan, Swabi, Charsadda and Peshawar. Only a very small portion (from 15% to 18%) of the IDPs is settled in camps established by the government of NWFP with the support of the UN organizations in Mardan, Swabi and Peshawar. With their loss of a sense of dignity and belonging, the IDPs from Swat, Dir and Buner are observed to be living in severe distress due to the hot weather, the problems of their registration, ill-coordinated and inequitable relief distribution and confusion in their minds about their fate in the wake of military operation.

The mass exodus from the above districts might bring about demographic imbalance in other parts of Pakistan, may create law and order situation and may result in the depletion of natural resources if the government of Pakistan, the civil society of Pakistan and the international community at large were unable to respond to the plight of the IDPs in a coordinated and equitable manner. In this report, we will discuss the narratives of the IDPs, the response of the government to the plight of the IDPs and analysis of the coordination system, Emergency Response Unit (ERU), put in place recently by the NWFP government with the help of the UN organizations.

2- IDPs Survey

The AIRRA team decided to visit some IDP camps and view live exodus of migrants from Dargai to different areas of Pakhtunkhwa and Pakistan. However, the program was postponed due to the news of bomb blast in the area between Sher Garh and Skha Kot. Though there was a plan to visit Peshawar too, but in Peshawar too there was one terrorist attack ending up at casualties. Hence the visit was restricted only to camps in Mardan that day due to the security situation.

After entering Mardan, the first camp we stopped by was in Takht Bhai, Tehsil of Mardan, where approximately 125 families had moved from Swat, Dir and Buner areas.

There were roughly 1100 people. The tents they were living in were installed by the IDP families themselves by using bed sheets and coverings/Chaadars of women ([see AIRRA picture gallery, Photo-1](#)). Some families were seen sitting under open sky without tents ([Photo-2-A](#); [Photo 2 B](#); [Photo- 2 C](#); [Photo 3 C](#)).

An elderly man from Kalam said that the tents were made of their clothes, suggesting that the cloth was insufficient to cover in hot weather. One of the IDP said that nothing was provided by the government while the families made their tents with bed sheets, thin paper-sheets and other stuff. There were some 10-20 tents donated by Ummah Welfare Trust. The IDPs at Takht Bhai said that the local people have been donating them food and other stuff, but nothing has come from the government yet.

At the camp of Takhbai, people placed all their baggage on earth, things were placed random and scattered. They had made their artificial stoves on which they were cooking rice, tea, etc., whatever the food they got from local people ([Photo-3](#); [Photo-4](#)). Most of the families brought domestic animals with them like buffaloes, goats, cows, etc. ([Photo-5-A](#); [Photo-5-B](#)) ([Photo- 6 A](#); [Photo- 6 B](#); [Photo- 6 C](#))

A young girl named Hajira said that there were no female doctors and the IDPs, especially women and children, were suffering from several diseases. The IDPs in Takht-Bhai had had the only choice of making small toilets with cloths at the bank of the canal they had started living on, where they were washing dishes, taking bath, and simultaneously the human waste/excretion was also going into that water, as the toilets were at the bank of the canal. See Pictures: [Photo 7-A](#); [Photo 7 B](#); [Photo 7 C](#); [Photo 7 D](#). There would emerge umpteen health issues sooner than later because of the contamination of the water. The major issue the IDPs were facing here was of registration. The social welfare department, the UNCHR and the local administration all claimed there were proper arrangement for registration but one could not see the evidence of this claim on ground.

3- Jalala Camp: Detail of interviews

The camps at Jalala were mostly donated by UNHCR and some of those were collaborative donation by UNHCR and Pak-Cop.

A woman migrated from Swat and living in a camp at Jalala said that it was good that the Taliban were being killed by military; she also shared that in the camps there were some Taliban who came here wearing *Burqa* (veil). She also added that a girl came to her a while back and told her that her brother was Talib. “When I said to her to hand her brother to police, she refused by nodding”.

She said that two Taliban with guns were creating terror in their neighborhood and all men were just as if helpless; she told that she said to her husband, “ why you men are incapacitated and cannot fight back with merely two Taliban while you are many”?. She further said: “The Taliban think they are better Muslims than us; who are they to tell us how to be a genuine Muslim”? In an answer to the question that why Taliban was that powerful there, she said, “they are savages, thieves, who have stolen weapons and

resources and now are harassing people” She shared about an event when government sent a truck of ration and that the Taliban set that on fire. She said there were not only Fazlullah and Sufi Muhammad, they had their dozens of comrades who terrorized the community around.

A man said that few days back a TV channel was interviewing the IDPs at the Jalala camp where he too gave interview. As soon as he finished talking, a Talib came to him and asked never to give interview to the channels and that never talk against the Taliban. He said there were many spies of the Taliban there.

A woman from another family said: “I want all Taliban should be killed and Swat should be cleansed. They closed us at homes, stopped us from going to market; we followed everything they said but their cruelty increased day by day. American drones are killing the Taliban; but common people have also been killed. Military is doing well but they should avoid throwing mortars in the streets and kill common people as well”.

We visited a family that had moved from Dir; an elderly woman of that family said that she saw bloodshed with her own eyes. A doctor along with the whole of his family was killed in their neighborhood by a Talib; she said the doctor was innocent but cruel Talib killed him and his family.

Another family who came from Buner said that she came along with her neighbors here with two kids while her husband, brother and a sister were still in Buner stuck up in curfew. She said that it was not possible for them to distinguish what was game/drama and what was reality; she added, “Time will prove what truth is and what is lie”.

A young boy said that he came from Swat because of mortars and shells that were targeting the Taliban but “our military does not have any information, they are just shedding mortars without knowing the exact targets of the Taliban”.

A middle-aged man moved from Swat said that he was just helpless, if he talked against the Taliban, the Taliban would cut his throat, if he talked against the military, it would imprison him, he said, “its better for us to keep mum”.

A lady from Dir said that her family walked all the way from Dir because they could not get lorry. She said that in the haste of leaving home and curfew, she could not pick her daughter up from her brother’s home where she went to play. Two babies were born in jalala camp a few days before the interview.

4- General Comments

Many people traveled on foot to escape the cross fire for the reason that they could not get a vehicle. Walking under sun on bare foot, one can imagine the sufferings the families had passed through.

Generally, at both Jalala and Takhtbhai camps, the IDPs complained about the worst condition at their native places; their damaged houses; lack of health and hygiene facilities in the camps, lack of food and water and electricity. Sleeping in the night on floor caused fear of insects and snake bites too.

The Bathrooms at Jalala camp were better, no matter how stinky those were, however, at least they were better than the situation at Takhat Bhai where there were no toilets and human excretions were being dropped in the same water where children were playing/swimming, women were washing dishes and clothes and men and women were using that water for bath.

The toilets (installed by UNICEF and HOOD) at Jalala camps were stinky and did not have proper water supply for the lavation there. We saw a distribution truck carrying mattresses; they were distributing one mattress per tent. *(Photo 14)*

5- Risks:

- A Radio Journalist said that he was recording his program with kids. As soon as the kids heard helicopter flying, they ran away. He indicated that there might be problem of child adaptation; he said he had sensed one woman was just trying to say if she could give her child to someone.
- The Tliban in the camps in disguise can create law and order situation

6- Facilities provided by different organizations

Tents and facilities donated by:

- Ummah Welfare Trust donated tents
- UNHCR gave tents at Jalala camps *(Photo 12)*
- UNICEF and HOOD installed toilets- more toilets were being installed *(Photo 11)*

Relief Camps

- Watan Dost group for the affectees of Dir and Buner
- The tents were installed at Jalala camp by UNHCR and Pak-Cop
- Food was being cooked within the camp
- Relief camp by Khudai Khidmat Gar
- Malgari Usatizan Tehsil Takht Bhai
- Salik Development Organization

For Children

- SPARK had installed a fun centre for children of the camps

Other facilities

- NADRA opened its office there in the camps
- Personnel of Shahri Difa' were active there for the facilitation of people
- There was office of Administrator of Jalala Camp

Medical Camps (Photo 13)

- There was free medical camp by Hamza Foundation Welfare Hospital in collaboration with Chief Minister NWFP's Tanzeem ul Lassail o Mehroom for the affectees of Swat, Dir and Buner (Doctors were there with compounders and medicines and were checking up the patients)
- Merlin- Medical relief, lasting health care, had brought team of doctors there
- There were some lady health workers as well
- There was one free veterinary camp installed by the Department of Livestock and Dairy development Mardan
- LAKSON medical Trust had also established a camp

Registration in Camps

- Civil defense Mardan had opened a registration camp
- PPP installed Shaheed e Jamhooriyat, Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Registration Camp for the affectees of Malakand division
- Registration camp by Alkhidmat Foundaiton with the collaboration of Jamait e Islami, Tehsil Takhtbhai
- Tehsil Coordination Council Takhtbhai (TCCT)

7- Analysis of the IDPs narratives

After transcribing and analyzing the narratives of the Internally Displaced, one reaches the following conclusions:

- The response of the government to the plight of the IDPs is so far been far from being coordinated and effective
- The people of conflict zones see themselves as transformed and are skeptical both of the religious slogans of the Taliban and the relief slogans of the government
- The people of the conflict zones perceive their calamity has been caused both by the Taliban incursions into their culture as well as state's apathy to their conditions
- A small minority of the people of the conflict zones might take up arms against the Taliban if the military fails to eliminate them
- The people feel frustrated because of their helplessness to put a full stop to the destruction in their native towns because of the Taliban hordes
- The worst affected (the children, women and the old) are in trauma and mostly suffer from the disconnect in their memory

The liberal democratic and secular forces of the country are so far polarized, indecisive and slow in response to the catastrophe and hence the extremist organizations are fast gaining ground in the IDPs camps and concentration points. In these circumstances, the cultural code of Pakhtunwali is what the IDPs mostly rely on. The common people of Mardan, Swabi, Nowshehra, Charsadda and Peshawar have displayed an immense capacity to tackle the exodus in a very commendable manner. Due to interaction among

different tribes of the Pashtuns because of the exodus of Yousufzais from Swat, Dir and Buner, it might become a starting point for a minimum level of homogeneity in the behavioral systems of the Pashtuns living in different cultural paradigms. This might bode well for the state building and nation building of both Pakistan and Afghanistan.

8- The analysis of Emergency Response Unit (ERU) adopted for coordination for relief to the IDPs

The provincial bureaucracy of the North West Frontier Province under the patronage of the provincial government and the United Nations country bureaucracy have recently come up with a coordination mechanism for quick response to the issue of the Internally Displaced. The ERU has been structured in a Policy and Strategy Committee, Operational Coordination Committee and Clusters. The Policy and Strategy committee works under the Chief Secretary NWFP and has membership of PRC-ERU, SSG, OCHA, UNHCR, WHO, UNICEF, ICRC, MSF, UNDP, Home Secretary of the North West Frontier Province, FATA Secretariat, Social Welfare Department of the NWFP, and the Afghan Refugee Commissionerate. This committee has:

- To develop and agree on system-wide humanitarian policies to streamline IDP response.
- To allocate responsibilities among agencies, line departments in humanitarian programmes.
- To develop and agree on a common strategy framework for all humanitarian activities.
- To advocate for common humanitarian principles.
- To identify areas where gaps in mandates or lack of operational capacity exist.
- To resolve disputes or disagreement about and between humanitarian agencies on system-wide humanitarian issues.
- Stake stock of the situation and direct IDP operational coordination committee¹.

The Strategy Coordination Committee is chaired by PRC and will have almost the same members as are there in the above committee with the addition of Education Department, Health Department and Local Government. This committee will be responsible:

- “For coordinating the entire humanitarian operation assisting IDP’s
- Committee under the direction and policy of PSC will develop operational framework
- Committee will take stock of situation and make operational arrangement by clusters
- Committee will address un-met needs and respond to gaps and identify funding short falls for each cluster

¹ See http://helpidp.org/strategic_organization.php and <http://www.airra.org/analysis/IDPandConflictaffectedpopulationassistancecoordinationMechanism.html>

- Streamline all Aid operations and coordinate activities through clusters”²

The clusters have been formed for food and agriculture, camp management, protection, health and nutrition, education, water sanitation and hygiene, logistics, shelter and NFI, and early recovery. “Specific responsibilities of cluster at the provincial level include ensuring the following:

- Inclusion of key humanitarian partners
- Establishment and maintenance of appropriate humanitarian coordination mechanisms
- Coordination with national/local authorities, State institutions, local civil society and other relevant actors during response
- Participatory and community-based approaches
- Attention to priority cross-cutting issues (e.g. age, diversity, environment, gender, HIV/AIDS and human rights)
- Needs assessment and analysis
- Emergency preparedness
- Planning and strategy development
- Application of standards
- Monitoring and reporting
- Advocacy and resource mobilization
- Training and capacity building
- Provision of assistance or services as a last resort
- Sector based dispute resolution
- Allocation of gap areas of partners
- Maintaining “who is doing what where” database
- Reporting to operational coordination committee”³

The above coordination arrangement effectively excludes the civil society organizations working on ground. A No Objection Certificate needs to be issued to the organization desirous to work on ground. The procedure for the NOC is highly cumbersome and would take quite some time to be completed which will create problems for the civil society organizations that are capable to facilitate the government in an impending humanitarian crisis. The system also excludes political activists from the arena of response to the plight of the IDPs. The counter Talibanization discourse can be effectively constructed with the help of the secular and liberal political activists in the shape of Pakistan People’s Party and Awami National Party during the crisis of the Internally Displaced. It seems that the coordination mechanism mentioned above is an alliance between the civil bureaucracy of Pakistan and the UN bureaucracy. A bureaucratic response might not be able to effectively deal with the issues of the IDPs. For instance, the administrative and financial structure of the civil bureaucracy has been unduly lethargic and cumbersome in Pakistan. The funds for the IDPs from the federal government, the international community and the common people of Pakistan have to be

² Ibid

³ See http://helpidp.org/strategic_organization.php

first funneled to the Commissioner Malakand Division who will in turn direct the funds to the respective District Coordination Officer (DCO), and then the DCO will channel the funds through local Revenue Officer. This procedure is not fit for any kind of emergency situation.

The theoretical structure of the ERU is yet to be seen on ground reaching out to the deserved. This casts a shadow of doubt on the capability of the provincial and federal governments to deal with the issue of the IDPs. The above coordination mechanism is also silent on how to utilize and monitor the distributions of funds collected by the people and the charity organizations in the country.

There seems to be still a big problem with the registration of the IDPs both inside and outside the camps. It has usually been observed that some families have multiple registrations while others do not have even single registration. Women usually suffer in this kind of situation because of cultural reasons. There are usually single queues for both men and women. The IDPs women can not push for their right of registration in this kind of arrangement and are left at the mercy of the circumstances.

9- Recommendations

We would like to offer the following recommendations to effectively respond to the plight of the IDPs.

- 1- There should be a quick procedure for issuing NOCs to the organizations active on ground. It is suggested in this regard that the Clusters be given to the deserved civil society organizations with a monitoring and evaluation system in place. The Pakistan People's Party and the Awami National Party have to make their district chapters functional and influence the Union Councils of the respective districts besides capturing the space for constructing a counter Talibanization discourse.
- 2- Thumb impressions should be used for the registration of the IDPs with separate windows for men and women to avoid duplication and to bring about a minimum level of equity in the relief distribution of the IDPs. The National Data Base Authority (NADRA) of Pakistan has already had such kind of technical facility which can be effectively used for the purpose.
- 3- The bureaucracy and the international community have to be aware of the cultural sensitivities of the UDPs.
- 4- There has to be a minimum level of responsiveness in the civil bureaucracy in dealing with the issues of the IDPs for which amendments in the administrative and financial structure will play a pivotal role. It is suggested here that the ERU headquarters are placed in the Chief Minister's House of NWFP instead of the present arrangement in which the headquarters of IDPs are placed in the house of the Relief Commissioner of NWFP.

- 5- The host families of districts Mardan, Swabi, Charsadda and Peshawar are to be supported on emergency basis as they have accommodated more than 80% of the IDPs in their houses and guest houses.
- 6- The suggestion that the IDPs should to be shifted to the cold environs like Nathia Gali and Murree because of their cold habitat would create more problems both in terms of law and order situation and in terms of dealing with the psychological trauma of the IDPs. Taking the IDPs away from their cultural roots would add to the IDPs' anguish due to the loss of sense of dignity and sense of belonging.
- 7- The political governments of NWFP and Islamabad have to devise a comprehensive strategy for rehabilitation and reconstruction in Malakand Division, especially in Swat, Buner and Dir, without any more delay. The fact of the matter is that when the 2.2 million IDPs return their native towns and villages, they will find destroyed infrastructure and a non-functional social welfare system. They would need to have a minimum level of sustenance in their home twons.

(Sahar Gul Bhattie, Khadim Hussain, Shad Begum and Shaukat Sharar contributed to this report)