

Report on inter-organisation observation of Tirah Valley displacement

3rd April 2013

Background

Since 15th March 2013, thousands of families have been forced to flee their villages in Tirah Valley, Khyber Agency, which borders Orakzai and Kurram agencies of Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA). This is due to heavy clashes between militant groups. Families have fled to safer areas, resulting in a large influx of families into Kurram and Orakzai agencies (in FATA) and Kohat, Hangu, Peshawar and Nowshera districts as well as the Frontier Regions (FR) of Kohat and Peshawar (in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa - KP) in the last weeks. The nature of this situation differs from prior displacements from FATA, and is resulting in families being especially vulnerable.

An inter-organisation observation exercise was carried out in order to provide initial top-level information on the trends and needs of this particular displacement. This report highlights some of the findings and stresses that immediate assistance is required to all families, which are suffering both physically and mentally from the ordeal of their displacement.

Methodology

A rapid observation exercise was carried out between 28th and 31st March 2013. Seven organizations (ACF, ACTED, IRC, IVAP, NRC, Oxfam, Save the Children) collected information from key informants in their areas of operation using a common key informant form. A total of 91 Union Councils – UCs – (out of 192) were covered in Peshawar, Kohat, Hangu and Nowshera districts, and 2 main villages in Lower Kurram – areas known to be housing the Tirah Valley internally displaced people (IDPs). In each UC, three key informants were interviewed; one key informant from the host UC and two from originating from Tirah Valley. The data was consolidated and cleaned prior to analysis.

Key findings

Current location and estimated numbers of IDPs

Whilst FDMA figures of 29th March indicated the number of families in displacement to be 5,479, key informants from the UCs included in this observation indicate that this figure could be more than double. The map in annex 1 indicates where the relative concentrations of IDPs are based in Kohat, Hangu, Peshawar, Nowshera and Kurram, derived from key informant estimations. Based on key informant feedback, the majority of IDP families are located in Peshawar, however a good number are also located in Kohat, Hangu and Nowshera. Note that the observation exercise only covered 47% of the UCs in the districts, so there are likely to be IDPs based in the UCs which were not covered as well as in adjacent areas of Orakzai Agency, FR Kohat and FR Peshawar.

All key informants included in the observation were located off-camp (due to security concerns in Jalozai camp at the time of observation), therefore all findings relate to off-camp families. Information from other sources supports that very few IDP families were located within camps at the time of the observation, due to fears associated with living on-camp. In off-camp locations, over 50% of key

informants report that families are living with previously displaced off-camp IDP families in KP (often with 4-5 families living in one compound). These hosting IDP families are already vulnerable, having put in place a number of negative coping mechanisms in order to live off-camp throughout their own displacement, and so it is a considerable added burden to have the newly displaced Tirah families living with them. Therefore the prioritisation of off-camp assistance is strongly recommended to ease this burden.

Origins of IDPs

The key informants from Tirah Valley reported that almost all families from their areas have been displaced, indicating that there are next to no families of this group remaining in FATA.

On 15th March 2013, the Government officially notified 98 villages in Bagh Maidan as conflict affected areas: 47 villages of Malik Deen, 21 villages of Shalobar Khel, 5 villages of Adam Khel, 17 villages of Bar Qambar Khel, 6 villages of Zakha, and 2 villages of Kamar Khel. Based on key informants' reports of origin locations of IDPs, some families are fleeing from villages adjacent to Bagh Maidan, which do not fall within the notification area, and hence will be unable to register under current registration criteria which requires families to originate from within government-notified areas. Other sources indicate that, although families may originate from the notified area, the address on their computerised national identity card (CNIC) may indicate that they are from elsewhere.

IDPs' arrival in displacement

Key informants report extremely difficult journeys from Tirah to their displaced locations. It is believed most IDP families travelled on foot from Tirah to Orakzai agency (journeys which took between 8 hours and 2 days) as there was no transportation available. With no roads to follow, families were forced to walk across mountainous terrain, often barefoot, and in the rain which resulted in a large number of individuals, particularly children, elderly and women, becoming sick and injured along the way. As families had left their homes in a hurry, they had no provisions with them for shelter, medication, water or food, and had to sleep in the open-air. Some vulnerable family members (particularly newly born children, chronically ill and elderly) died along the way, and key informants reported seeing dead bodies on their journey. Some families were forced to leave family members with disabilities in origin locations or on the way as it was too difficult to take them, and some children were misplaced during the journey and are still missing. Key informants reported security issues on the way; some reported being attacked by militants on their journey and increased inspection from security personnel.

Once in Orakzai, families were able to find private vehicles to transport them to KP, however reports indicate that most families had to pay high costs for this transport - between 7,000 PKR and 15,000 PKR – a considerable expense which some families borrowed from host communities and will have to repay.

Needs of IDPs

IDP families left their homes with no notice, and therefore brought no belongings, often leaving with only the clothes they were wearing. All families had to leave their cattle behind as they would not survive the journey and, given their reliance on agriculture, few have a livelihood source in displacement. Key informants therefore report that IDPs are in urgent need of all types of assistance.

Many families have vulnerable members including sick or injured individuals, elderly, disabled, women and children who must be prioritised for support.

The top stated needs of IDP key informants are **food, temporary shelter and non-food items (NFIs)**. By shelter, this refers to assistance with rent for off-camp housing rather than tents. **Healthcare, cash assistance and clean water** also feature as high priorities given that many IDPs were severely injured on their walk across the mountains into displacement and require urgent medical and psycho-social assistance. Given the urgency of their displacement, many families have no money, have had to pay large amounts for transport to displacement, have left their livelihoods behind, and now have to pay high costs for rent in off-camp locations.

IDP documentation

The computerised national identity card (CNIC) is a key piece of documentation required for the registration of IDPs. Most key informants reported that IDPs had CNICs with them. However anecdotal information indicates that, even if IDPs do have CNICs with them, a good number of families from Tirah may not have the correct address recorded on the card to enable IDP families to get registered in displacement under current registration criteria.

Some key informants also reported that IDPs' CNICs had been burnt in their homes prior to displacement, that they had been left behind in the rush to leave their homes, and some reported that a good number of IDPs do not have CNICs due to unavailability of NADRA facilities in their area of origin.

Next moves for IDPs

The map in annex 1 gives a snapshot at the time of the observation exercise, however the numbers and locations of IDPs is constantly evolving. It is anticipated that further IDPs will arrive in KP from Orakzai and Kurram, and the location of IDPs within KP will change as they move on from staying with host families to finding alternative accommodation.

Key informants were unable to determine where Tirah IDP families would move to next, largely because these IDPs are unfamiliar with the area and do not have concrete plans of where they will move to next. Most key informants in Peshawar report that IDPs in their UCs are likely to remain in those UCs (likely because most jobs are located in Peshawar), whereas 28% in Kohat, 25% in Nowshera and 10% in Hangu report that they will move elsewhere in the host location (though the exact location is not confirmed). Key informants report that movement may depend on availability of affordable rent, and previous displacement patterns indicate that the availability of assistance also indicates movement. If registration and assistance in Peshawar are not pull factors, families may choose to settle in areas where rent is more affordable, for example in Kohat and Hangu.

Only seven of the key informants indicated that families would move from their current locations onto camps, to avoid the cost of rent associated with living off camp. Conversely, a number of key informants indicated that Tirah families would be unlikely to move on-camp due to security concerns both due to recent security incidents in the camps, and due to personal enmities which are exposed further if living on-camp rather than blending into the off-camp communities. One key informant reported that community leaders of Tirah IDPs were encouraging them not to go to the camp for this reason. This again reinforces the importance of off-camp assistance.

Particular vulnerability of Tirah IDPs

As described above, the observation exercise indicated a number of concerns which make this group of displaced families unique and particularly vulnerable, and therefore in urgent need of assistance:

- Nature of displacement: This displacement is not linked to typical military operations in the area of origin, but to tribal enmities which place families at risk of personal insecurity. Therefore many families are fearful in displacement, and three key informants reported that host communities feel uncomfortable hosting them for fear of security risks. Displaced families are reluctant to live on-camp for fear that it will highlight them, therefore even more families than normal are likely to be located in off-camp locations.
- Difficulty to return: Entire villages in Bagh Maidan have been blazed and destroyed, and sources of income and livelihood have also been destroyed. Therefore these families will be in displacement for a long period of time before it is possible for them to return.
- Suddenness of displacement and difficulty of travel to displacement: Families left their homes with no warning, and therefore have next to no belongings with them in displacement. They had treacherous journeys over mountains and in the rain, walking for many hours and days. As a result, many individuals are sick or injured and in dire need of assistance. Furthermore, they had to pay a significant amount on transport, which put them into debt in only the first few days of their displacement. Therefore all families are in urgent need of assistance of all types.
- Heavy reliance on already displaced families: In the immediate period following displacement, displaced families are staying with previously displaced IDP populations in KP. These families are already vulnerable having put in place a number of negative coping mechanisms in order to live off-camp, and so it is a considerable added burden to have the newly displaced families living with them.

Recommendations

- Urgent assistance is required for all IDP families with all types of assistance being prioritised (food, temporary shelter, NFIs, healthcare, cash assistance, water). Funding must be made available for this immediately.
- Assistance should be focused off-camp and in all areas of displacement (Peshawar, Kohat, Hangu, Nowshera, FR Kohat, FR Peshawar, Kurram and Orakzai).
- The Tirah IDP families will have increased challenges getting registered due to inadequate CNIC documentation and some families originating from villages falling outside the notified areas. Therefore assistance should be provided to the vulnerable families identified from a wider range of individuals than stipulated by current registration criteria, as recognised and supported by PDMA. Furthermore, NADRA facilities are required to support CNIC processing in off-camp locations hosting Tirah families.
- A more detailed multi-cluster assessment into the needs and locations of IDP families should follow this observation exercise as soon as possible when IDPs settle in displacement, to inform the longer-term response to these families.