

PART 8: REFUGEES AND IDPS

8.1 Introduction

Our eighth theme focuses on displaced persons in Pakistan, both from Afghanistan and internally. This corresponds to points [#12](#) and [#19](#) in the NAP.

Altogether Pakistan accounts for between 5-6 million forcibly displaced persons, both refugees and internally displaced.

8.2 Refugees

8.2.1 Refugees - Numbers

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates 1,554,910 registered Afghan refugees in Pakistan.¹ This is still the world's largest refugee population and the validity of this figure is linked with the Proof of Registration Card (PRC), an identity document issued by the National Data Registration Authority (NADRA). Since 2002, some 3.8 million Afghan refugees have returned to their home country. Additionally, some 58,211 repatriated back to Afghanistan in 2015.

This figure does not account for unregistered Afghan refugees in the country. The UNHCR believes that any other Afghan citizens living in Pakistan – all those not in possession of PRCs – are in fact migrants and not refugees. This definitional semantic can affect treatment of Afghans on Pakistani soil.

According to the UNHCR, refugees are people outside their country of origin because of feared persecution, conflict, violence, or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order, and who, as a result, require 'international protection'.² Refugees are forced to flee to save their lives or preserve their freedom. On the other hand, migrant is a wide-ranging term that covers people who move to a foreign country for a certain length of time - not to be confused with short-

¹ UNHCR. (2016, January 01). UNHCR Pakistan Fact Sheet - December 2015. Retrieved March 03, 2016, from <http://www.unhcr.org/5000210e9.pdf>.

² UNHCR. (2016, March 16). 'Refugees' and 'Migrants'- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). Retrieved May 06, 2016, from <http://www.unhcr.org/56e95c676.html>.

REFUGEES AND IDPS

NAP Point 12: Administrative and development reforms in FATA with immediate focus on repatriation of IDPs.

NAP Point 19: Formulation of a comprehensive policy to deal with the issue of Afghan refugees, beginning with registration of all refugees.

term visitors such as tourists and traders. People migrate for a variety of reasons.

Migrants choose to move not because of a direct threat of persecution or death, but mainly to improve their lives by finding work, or in some cases for education, family reunion, or other reasons. Unlike refugees who cannot safely return home, migrants face no such impediment to return. If they choose to return home, they will continue to receive the protection of their government.

It is estimated that somewhere between 1-2 million unregistered Afghans live in the country.³

In addition, there are a few hundred Somali refugees in the country.¹

8.2.2 Refugees – Regional Distribution

As of 2012, 85% of the refugees are Pashtuns, while the remaining 15% comprise Uzbeks, Tajiks and other ethnic groups. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa hosts the largest Afghan Refugees population (62.1%), followed by Balochistan (30.3%), Punjab (4.2%), Sindh (4.2%), Islamabad (2%) and Azad Kashmir (0.4%).⁴

The registration process was initiated in 2006 and the PRCs have been extended six times over the last several years. The last validity of PRCs was until December 2015. On January 12, 2016, this date was extended to June 30, 2016⁵, although rights-based groups such as Human Rights Watch have urged the government to extend this to December 31, 2017.⁶ Bear in mind that in September 2015, Pakistan had confirmed to UNHCR that the PRCs would be extended by two years, not six months.⁷ The most desirable solution for dealing with refugees is, in order of preference: a) repatriation, b) assimilation, c) resettlement to another country.

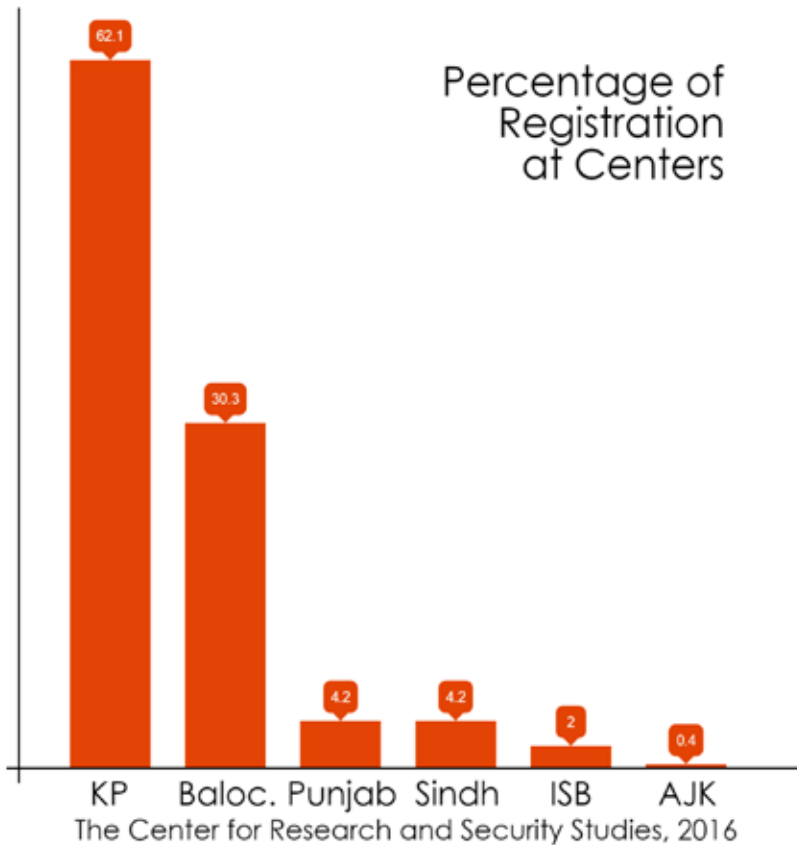
³ Rehman, Z. (2016, January 05). With no decision on Afghan refugees, only a letter stands between them and jail. Retrieved March 03, 2016, from <http://www.thenews.com.pk/print/86367-With-no-decision-on-Afghan-refugees-only-a-letter-stands-between-them-and-jail>.

⁴ UNHCR. (2011, November 30). Registered Afghan Population in Pakistan - 2010-2011. Retrieved December 28, 2015, from <http://unhcrpk.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Registered-Afghan-Population-in-Pakistan.pdf>.

⁵ Ali, Z. (2016, January 14). PM grants six-month extension to Afghan refugees. Retrieved March 24, 2016, from <http://www.dawn.com/news/1232892/pm-grants-six-month-extension-to-afghan-refugees>.

⁶ Human Rights Watch. (2016, January 16). Pakistan: Extend Afghan Refugee Status Through 2017. Retrieved January 25, 2016, from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/01/16/pakistan-extend-afghan-refugee-status-through-2017>.

⁷ Shahid, S. (2015, September 10). Afghan refugees' PoR cards to be extended till 2017. Retrieved March 03, 2016, from <http://www.dawn.com/news/1206055>.

Graph 8.1 Number of Afghan Refugees and Regional Distribution

8.2.3 Refugees – Current Status

A tripartite commission including Afghanistan, Pakistan and the UNHCR was set up in early 2015. So far, the commission has held two meetings, first in Islamabad (March 2015) and the second in Kabul (August 2015). One of the aims of the commission is to explore options for voluntary return of Afghan refugees from Pakistan.⁸

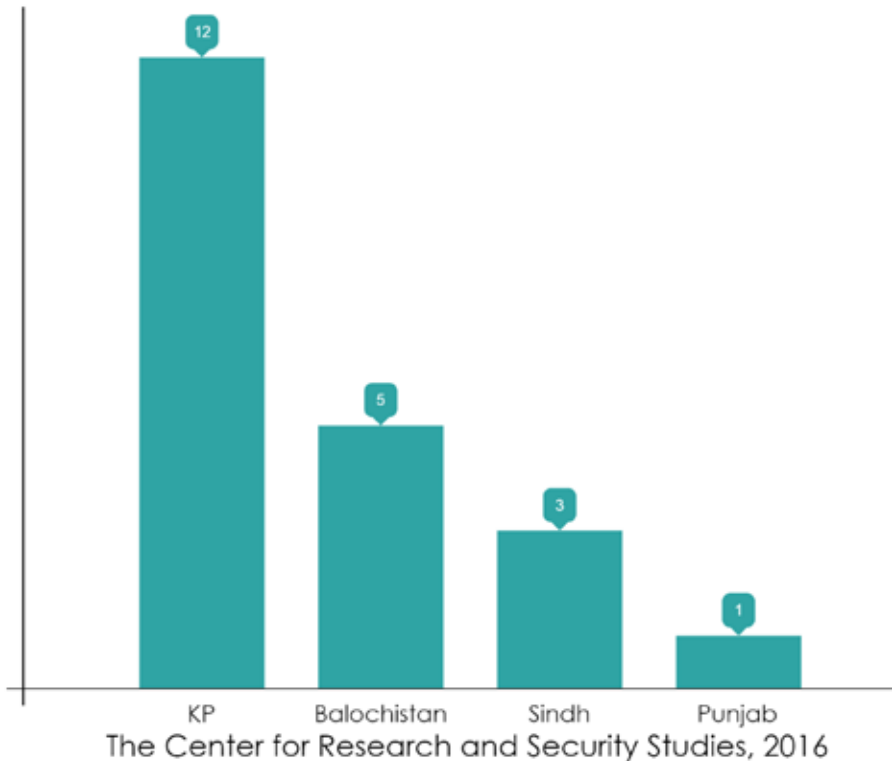
The Ministry of Interior and Narcotics Control presented a report in the National Assembly in January, 2016. According to that report 21 registration centers have

⁸ UNHCR. (2015, August 22). Afghanistan, Pakistan, UNHCR welcome new policies on Afghan refugees in Pakistan and returnees to Afghanistan. Retrieved March 17, 2016, from <http://www.unhcr.org/55dddc4a6.html>.

been established by NADRA for registration of undocumented migrants.⁹ However, the Interior Minister said, actual registration and repatriation is yet to commence. Of the 21 centers, 3 are in Punjab, 1 in Sindh, 12 in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa, and 5 in Balochistan.

It must be stated that these centers exist in name only, and were not operational during the review period of this report.

Graph 8.2 Locations of Registration Centers by NADRA



8.2.4 Refugees – Controversies

Since the atrocious APS attack, Pakistan changed its policy towards the Afghan refugees living in Pakistan. Dubious or suspect CNICs were blocked, resulting in 100,000 losing their Pakistani nationality in May, 2015.¹⁰

⁹ Questions and Oral Answers, 28th session of the National Assembly. (2016, January 15). Retrieved March 15, 2016, from http://www.na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/questions/1452850149_459.pdf.

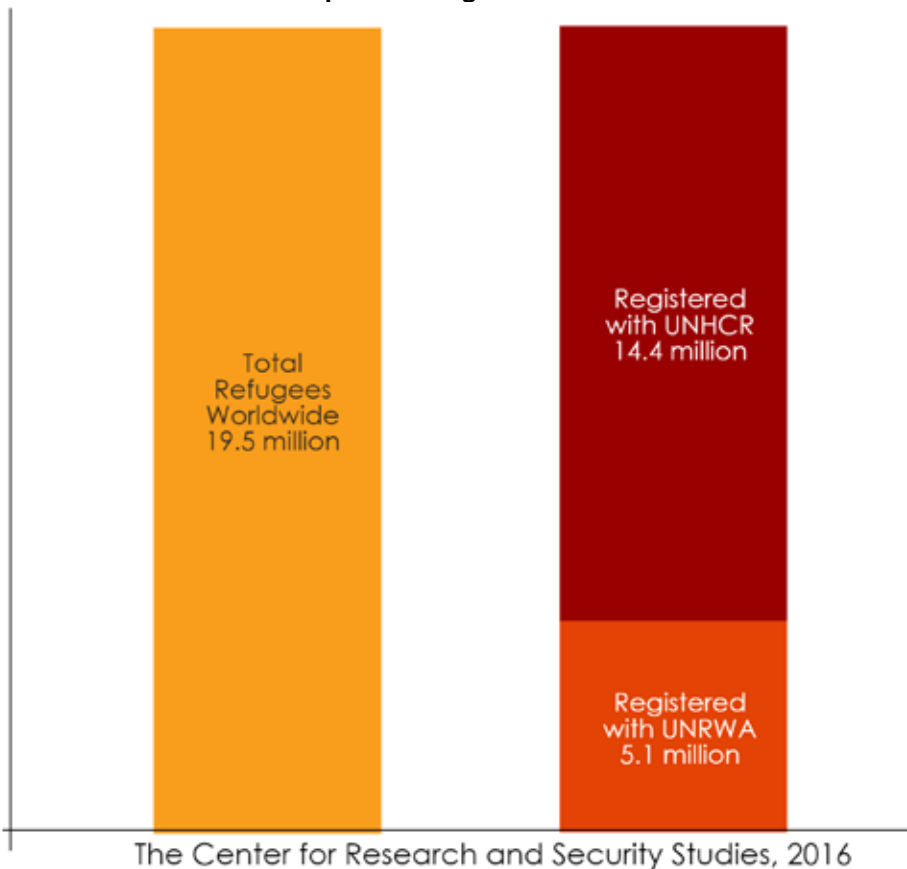
¹⁰ Tahir, Z. (2015, May 29). 100,000 Pakistanis lose nationality for being 'suspect aliens'. Retrieved

The level of indecision regarding Afghan refugees and migrants reached such an impasse in January 2016, that the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SA-FRON) issued a circular to law enforcement agencies not to harass Afghans with expired PRCs.² This debacle was finally concluded when six days later Pakistan renewing the PRCs for six months.⁴

8.2.5 Refugees - Worldwide

UNHCR estimates 19.5 million refugees worldwide at the end of 2014. Of these, 14.4 million are under the UNHCR mandate. The remaining 5.1 million are registered with another UN agency, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).¹¹

Graph 8.3 Refugees Worldwide



March 16, 2016, from <http://www.dawn.com/news/1184905>.

¹¹ UNHCR. (n.d.). UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency - United Kingdom. Retrieved March 17, 2016, from <http://www.unhcr.org/about-us/key-facts-and-figures.html>

Surpassing Afghanistan, Syria now has the largest refugee/migrant population in the world: a shocking 4,812,851 people displaced by war and strife.¹² Turkey hosts 2,715,789, Lebanon 1,067,785, and Jordan 636,040, among others.

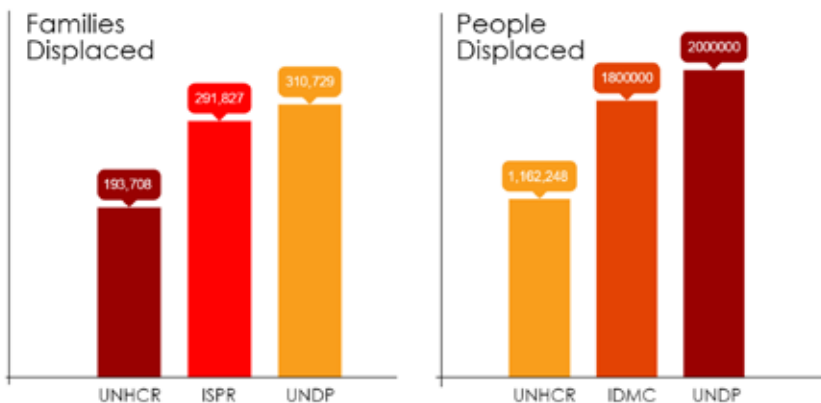
The third country with the largest originating refugee population is Somalia.

8.3 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

8.3.1 IDPs - Numbers

At the end of 2015, 193,708 IDPs registered families (1,162,248 individuals) were internally displaced in and off camps in the KP province and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).¹ However, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center estimates roughly 1.8 million IDPs in Pakistan, significantly higher than the registered individuals with UNHCR. UNDP estimates them to be around 2 million people, from 310,729 families.¹³ Interestingly, in the briefing given to the National Assembly in January, 2016, despite being a part of NAP, there was no mention of IDP rehabilitation. This indicates the lack of government resolve and priority when it comes to IDPs.⁸

Graph 8.4 Discrepancies in Exact Number of IDPs



The Center for Research and Security Studies, 2016

¹² UNHCR. (n.d.). UNHCR Syria Regional Refugee Response. Retrieved March 17, 2016, from <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>.

¹³ FATA Secretariat. (2015, April 06). FATA Sustainable Return and Rehabilitation Strategy. Retrieved March 17, 2016, from http://www.pk.undp.org/content/pakistan/en/home/library/crisis_prevention_and_recovery/fata-sustainable-return-and-rehabilitation-strategy-.html.

8.3.2 IDPs - Causes

The primary causes of displacement include insurgency, counter-insurgency and other related violence. In June, 2014, Pakistan launched Operation Zarb-e-Azb, designed to root out militancy permanently from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and adjoining regions. This has contributed greatly to the displaced persons crisis. History effectively repeated itself, as a similar operation in 2009 had also displaced some 3.4 million people.

Other causes include natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes.

8.3.3 IDPs – Rehabilitation Plans

“You know well that the 2016 is the year of finalising the Zarb-i-Azb operation and rehabilitation of IDPs,” said Finance Minister Ishaq Dar in early December. He also announced that a chunk of the Rs. 40 billion collected in taxes would be used to rehabilitate IDPs.¹⁴

The FATA Secretariat launched the FATA Sustainable Return and Rehabilitation Strategy in April, 2015.¹² This is a very comprehensive, well thought-out plan. The implementation of this strategy is the real challenge for the Secretariat. Rehabilitation formally began in March 2015, as the military gained control of towns within the operational areas. Four phases were intended to see the return of displaced persons:

- March 2015-July 2015
- August 2015-November 2015
- December 2015-March 2016
- April 2016-November 2016

The FATA Rehabilitation & Reconstruction Unit (RRU) conducted the surveys in Khyber and South Waziristan Agencies, and launched an initiative to rebuild destroyed homes. The army is also involved in extensive reconstruction projects in the region, but the exact scope and scale is unclear.

According to a joint report by World Food Program (WFP), Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the International Rescue Organization (IRO) and the Food Security Cluster, in collaboration with Fata Secretariat, 75,000 families had been rehabilitated.¹⁵ A few days later, an ISPR press release on December 19, 2015 stated

¹⁴ Husnain, K. (2015, December 02). Rs40bn fresh taxes to be spent on IDPs’ rehabilitation: Dar. Retrieved March 17, 2016, from <http://www.dawn.com/news/1223712>.

¹⁵ Usman, M. (2015, December 10). 75,000 IDP families rehabilitated, says report - The Express Tribune. Retrieved March 18, 2016, from <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1007253/safe-re->

that 291,827 families had been displaced as a result of the conflict, but 108,503 (38%) had returned to their homes.¹⁶

8.3.4 IDPs – Controversies

This does imply that 62% of the families are still displaced, and if their protestations are any indication, the system needs significant overhaul and oversight. In October 2015, tribal elders staged a protest in Peshawar, demanding early rehabilitation.¹⁷ In January, shortly following the Finance Minister's statements on rehabilitation, North Waziristan IDPs staged a protest, claiming that they had been given relief money for only 2 of the 19 months they had been displaced.¹⁸ Yet another protest followed two weeks later, on January 19, 2016.¹⁹ This is the tail end of dozens of protests since January 2015.²⁰

8.3.5 IDPs - Worldwide

Estimated figures for IDPs were about 38.2 million who were forcibly uprooted within their own country. This includes 7.6 million IDPs from the Syrian Arab Republic, 3.5 million from Iraq, 805,000 from Afghanistan, 155,000 from Mali, 611,000 from the Central African Republic, 200,000 from South Sudan, and 85,000 from Yemen.¹⁰

8.4 Refugees - Worldwide

On June 18, 2015, UNHCR revealed that the total worldwide refugee (including IDPs) population was higher than that in World War II. Put another way, that's one in every 120 people worldwide. Put yet another way, that's roughly the equivalent of the entire population of the United Kingdom, or Italy or South Africa being pushed out of their homes. This figure includes internally displaced persons as well.

turn-75000-idp-families-rehabilitated-says-report/.

¹⁶ ISPR. (2015, December 19). Bara Release No PR390/2015-ISPR. Retrieved March 17, 2016, from https://www.ispr.gov.pk/front/main.asp?o=t-press_release&date=2015/12/19.

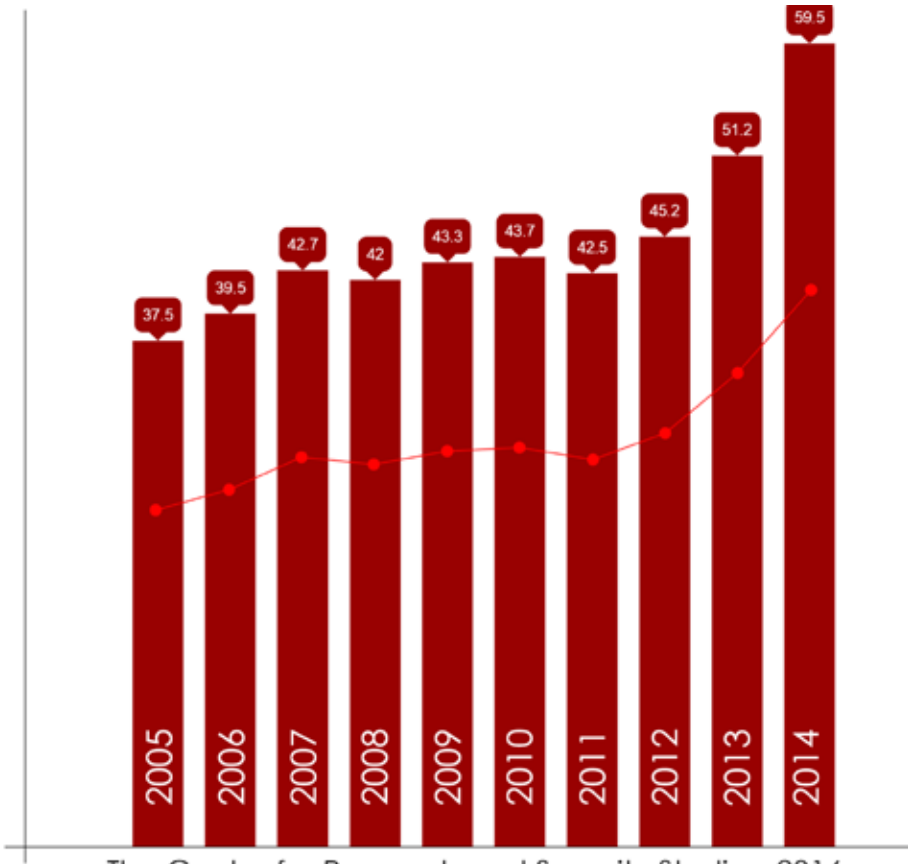
¹⁷ Bureau Report. (2015, October 27). Protesting IDPs demand early rehabilitation. Retrieved April 03, 2016, from <http://www.dawn.com/news/1215686>.

¹⁸ Correspondent. (2016, January 07). Show me the money: NWA IDPs demand arrears from govt - The Express Tribune. Retrieved March 17, 2016, from <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1023233/show-me-the-money-nwa-idps-demand-arrears-from-govt/>.

¹⁹ Correspondent. (2016, January 19). Never-ending ordeal: IDPs demand govt speed up repatriation - The Express Tribune. Retrieved March 23, 2016, from <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1029984/never-ending-ordeal-idps-demand-govt-speed-up-repatriation/>.

²⁰ Shah, S. (2015, January 27). Bara IDPs end protest as return plan announced. Retrieved May 06, 2016, from <http://www.thenews.com.pk/print/20754-bara-idps-end-protest-as-return-plan-announced>.

Graph 8.5 Refugees Worldwide in the Last Decade (in millions)



The Center for Research and Security Studies, 2016

8.5 OPINION: IDPs, Refugees and The National Action Plan by Imtiaz Gul

The 20-point National Action Plan (NAP) on counter-terrorism promises administrative and development reforms in FATA with immediate focus on repatriation of IDPs (point 12) and Formulation of a comprehensive policy to deal with the issue of Afghan refugees, beginning with registration of all refugees (point 19).

Both the refugees and the IDPs - found place in the NAP because the civilian and military authorities viewed them as part of Pakistan's security crisis as well as a source of shelter and support for terrorist networks. Regardless of the veracity or correctness of these claims and apprehensions, the displaced populations – both locals and foreign –, particularly those not documented, do represent operational and management hazards. They can easily serve as conduits – offering shelter and support for all those non-state actors who are involved in cross-border terrorism.

That is why the double “R” i.e. *resettlement* of the IDPs and *repatriation* of Afghan refugees, continue to remain an essential part of the conversation on the national security.

Status of IDPs

In September 2014, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs directed various government departments particularly the Disaster Management Authority to replace the term Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) with “Temporarily Dislocated/Displaced Persons. The ministry was of the opinion that the term ‘IDP’ is used only for people displaced due to war or occupation of their area²¹.

By mid-December 2015, according to an ISPR statement, nearly 40 per cent of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) had returned to their homes.²²

During a briefing to Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Gen. Raheel Sharif, the formation commander of North Waziristan informed that around 291,827 families were internally displaced due to the Zarb-e-Azb operation. Nearly 108,503 families had returned to their homes by mid-December.

The repatriation process, carried out under the supervision of the FATA Disaster Management Authority, Pakistani Army and the government, started off in March

²¹ Ali, Z. (2014, September 13). Call IDPs temporarily dislocated persons, govt agencies told. Retrieved May 06, 2016, from <http://www.dawn.com/news/1131711>.

²² (2015, December 19). 40% IDPs returned to North Waziristan, COAS told. Retrieved May 06, 2016, from <http://nation.com.pk/national/19-Dec-2015/40-idps-returned-to-north-waziristan-coas-told>.

2015,— shortly after areas in Orakzai Agency, South Waziristan, Khyber Agency, Kurram Agency and North Waziristan were de-notified.²³

About 350 areas were de-notified between 2011 and 2015,”according to official documents which claimed that about 40 areas of North Waziristan had also been cleared.²⁴

According to official documents, the IDPs from Khyber Agency, Kurram Agency, Orakzai Agency and Frontier Regions (FR) Tank total about 54 864 families. The number of displaced families from North and South Waziristan agencies stood at around 70,000 families (490,000 persons).²⁵

Out of 203,181 IDP families, 200,734 had been living in host communities, and nearly 99% of the IDPs have been putting up in and around Peshawar, DI Khan, Hangu, Khyber, Kohat, Kurram, Nowshera, Tank and Bannu. IDPs from Khyber Agency are staying in Jalozai camp in Nowshera.

IDPs Resettlement Problems

Return of IDPs (or TDPs) however appears to be a formidable challenge. Background interaction with officials of various departments looking after the TDPs reveals that displaced people will not be able to return to their native homes in year 2016, claiming the civil administration lacked the capacity to reconstruct the damaged infrastructure. Only 20 officials of Tribal Electric Supply Company (Tesco) are available to restore the electricity system in North Waziristan, where electricity poles and transmission lines have been blown up by militants or were damaged due to military operation.²⁶

The army together with the political administration, have been surveying the cleared regions and conducting damage assessments allowing locals to return in small batches after due documentation. The process, however, has been extremely slow. Inadequate financial resources, and delays in release of funds for the repair of the damaged infrastructure, including private homes, stand out as a major hurdles .

“Why the displaced persons are not invited to start travelling to their native villages when 95 percent of the area is claimed to have been cleared? Should they

²³ (2016, October 08). IDPs returning as areas get denotified. Retrieved May 06, 2016, from <http://tribune.com.pk/story/969227/idps-returning-as-areas-get-denotified/>.

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Khattak, I. (2015, December 23). Slow rehab work delaying TDPs return to homes. Retrieved May 06, 2016, from <http://nation.com.pk/islamabad/23-Dec-2015/slow-rehab-work-delaying-tdps-return-to-homes>.

²⁶ Ibid

wait for the compensation money?” Mr. Nazir Khan (MNA from North Waziristan) questioned, according to *The Nation*.²⁷

“They can be given the amount when they return to homes,” the MNA suggested. Mr. Khan said that Mirali Bazaar has been razed to the ground and new buildings were currently being constructed. “Owners of shops that have been razed will not get the ownership of the new constructions. Instead, new bidders will get the ownership?” the lawmaker asked and expressed his deep concern that this could lead to a lot of unrest amongst the locals. But a SAFRON official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, offered a conflicting account and said that according to tribal customs, the roads and bazaars are property of the state that can be given to anybody on the will of the state (political administration), the paper said.

This means non-agreement on the mode, timing and level of financial assistance remain serious challenges. Yet, the Federal Minister for SAFRON Lt Gen (ret.) Abdul Qadir Baloch informed the National Assembly that the complete return of IDPs will be ensured in December 2016.

Another big obstacle for voluntary return and revival of normal life is the missing will of relevant stakeholders for **political reforms** in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). The special status under the draconian *Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR)* continues to blot and block socio-political development of these regions.

The abolition of this status, observers agree, is crucial to sustain gains in the counter-insurgency, Zarb-e-Azb operation. While the operation has established the state writ in most parts of FATA, it cannot be expected to herald democratic governance structures. Operation Zarb-e-Azb certainly provides the much-needed opportunity for political reforms and integration of tribal areas for which the federal government shall have to garner the support within the national parliament.

Afghan Refugees

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that there are currently 1.5 million registered Afghan refugees in Pakistan. The validity of this figure is linked with the “Proof of Registration Card (PoRC),” an identity document issued by the National Data Registration Authority (NADRA).²⁸ The PoRCs issued to Afghan refugees, have meanwhile been extended from December 31, 2015 to December 31, 2017.

²⁷ *ibid*

²⁸ CRSS, (2015, November 10). Remarks by UNHCR official at Pak-Afghan Civil Society Track 1.5/2 Meeting. Retrieved May 06, 2016. crss.com.pk.

Currently, some 32% of the refugees live in 54 existing camps, while the rest 68% reside in urban areas. A UNHCR research carried out in 2010-11 through which almost 1 million refugees were surveyed found out that out of the legal Afghan refugees, 23% are economically active. Out of this 23% some 85% are male. Amongst these economically active refugees, 55% are daily wage workers, about 22% have businesses or are self-employed and about 19% are salaried.

It is important to understand that any other Afghan citizens living in Pakistan – all those not in possession of “Proof of Registration Cards” - are in fact *migrants* and not *refugees*. Though all Afghans in this other category have access to UNHCR, yet their refugee status is determined if they qualify a certain criterion.

UNHCR does not provide direct financial support to the government of Pakistan for the needs of the Afghan refugees, yet it implements certain projects which contribute to improving lives of host communities in Pakistan.

According to António Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR through its Refugees Affected and Hosting Areas (RAHA) initiative, has completed over 300 projects in different districts of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan at a cost of \$175 million. He noted that more than 10.6 million people, including Afghan refugees and Pakistani nationals, have benefitted from these projects since the launch of RAHA initiative in 2009.²⁹

RAHA has been facilitating host and refugee communities in health, education, infrastructure, and livelihood sectors and the key objective of its programmes was to create cohesion between Afghan refugees and their host communities, the UN commissioner said.

To deal with the crisis for Afghan refugees in the aftermath of the attack on the Army Public School (APS), Peshawar (16 December 2014), a tripartite commission including Afghanistan, Pakistan and the UNHCR was set up in early 2015. Until December 2015, the commission has held two meetings, first in Islamabad (March 2015) and the second in Kabul (August 2015). One of the aims of the commission is to explore options for voluntary return of Afghan refugees from Pakistan.

The mechanism also calls upon full protection of Afghan refugees in Pakistan under international law. During the two meetings, Pakistani and Afghan governments agreed to devise specific country plans to resolve this crisis and eventually merging both plans into one unified framework – a comprehensive approach to address this challenge by combining forces and efforts.

²⁹ (2015, November 12). Over 56,000 registered Afghan refugees repatriated from Pakistan: UNHCR. Retrieved May 06, 2016, from <http://tribune.com.pk/story/990102/over-56000-registered-afghan-refugees-repatriated-from-pakistan-unhcr/>.

Though Pakistan is not a signatory of the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees, yet it is part of several related international frameworks. For instance, Pakistan is part of the “*Solution Strategy of Afghan Refugees*”, a framework endorsed by Afghanistan, Iran, UNHCR and Pakistan. The strategy explores various ways and possibilities to increase durable solutions for Afghan refugees.

Voluntary Return

Since 2002, UNHCR has facilitated voluntary return of almost 4 million refugees to Afghanistan. The organization provides support in the form of cash (upon arrival in Afghanistan UNHCR cash centres), ensuring safety of returning refugees as well as the possibility of carrying certain household items without custom duties into Afghanistan. The cash support provided is \$200 per person for the Afghan refugees, which means a returning family of 6 Afghan refugees is entitled to \$1200 upon arrival in Afghanistan.

In 2015 alone, the UN agency facilitated the repatriation of over 56,000 registered Afghan refugees from Pakistan to Afghanistan, making it the longest running voluntary return programme.

Afghan Refugees

Despite all the good work of UNHCR and the Pakistani government, Afghan refugees continue to remain on the receiving end. Many of them have to endure stricter scrutiny of their credentials, snap-checks by the police as well as para-military forces, or a witch hunt following a big terrorist or criminal incident.

Additionally, the Pakistani authorities simply raised the bar on Afghan refugees when they were mentioned in the NAP, and by implication singled out as one of the reason for insecurity and crime in Pakistan. This brought in a new wave of harassment for many refugees.

No long term solution is in sight particularly in view of the fact that nearly 60% of the registered Afghan refugees in Pakistan are under the age of 24 years. This means that most of them were born and raised in Pakistan and have limited links in Afghanistan. This represents a big challenge - as most young Afghan refugees are reluctant to go back to a country to which they have limited or no connection.

One of the possible solutions for the Pakistani government could be to grant citizenship to those refugees who are born in Pakistan; or devise a Permanent Residence scheme. While broad political consensus would be required together with a clear implementing legislation, this move would perhaps mitigate the burden on the government as well as the UNHCR, allowing full legal integration of a big chunk of the Afghan population that has been living in Pakistan for the most part of their

life and consider it their home.

Conclusion

Pakistan's National Action Plan identified Afghan refugees among the possible sources of insecurity, and resolved not only to work for their return to Afghanistan but also to expedite repatriation and rehabilitation of the IDPs. However, work on the ground does not match the sense of urgency reflected in NAP. The government of Pakistan keeps reiterating to ensure the "honourable return of Afghan refugees to their homeland" but hardly offers any durable solution for Afghans born and raised here. It could have followed examples of several other countries where "naturalization" or legal assimilation of immigrants constitute a core human rights principle.

Similarly, return of IDPs to FATA regions, and revival of normal life largely depends on whether those areas can be mainstreamed to pave way for extension of normal governance structures and the fundamental rights – as available to citizens in other parts of the country. None of these steps are visible as of January 2016 – and the absence of long-term solutions fails to reflect the urgency that NAP had expressed on these two challenging issues.

Both these issues will continue to haunt the state of Pakistan until the time that the government takes concrete steps which truly implement the National Action Plan - in letter and spirit.

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