



REFLECTIONS from the Field

How Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas (RAHA) will make a difference in the lives of the poor?



From
the people of Japan



United Nations
PAKISTAN 
Improving lives and helping people



UNDP is the UN's global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. We are on the ground in 166 countries, working with them on their own solutions to global and national development challenges. As they develop local capacity, they draw on the people of UNDP and our wide range of partners. World leaders have pledged to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, including the overarching goal of cutting poverty in half by 2015. UNDP's network links and coordinates global and national efforts to reach these Goals. Our focus is helping countries build and share solutions to the challenges of:

- Governance
- Poverty Reduction and Gender
- Crisis Prevention and Recovery
- Energy and Environment

UNDP helps developing countries attract and use aid effectively. In all our activities, we encourage the protection of human rights and the empowerment of women.

Disclaimer:

"The views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations, including UNDP, or their Member States." UNDP

About the Programme

Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas (RAHA):

After 30 years of war, civil strife and insecurity in Afghanistan, 1.7 million registered Afghans remain in Pakistan. Between 1979 and 1992, over six million people entered Pakistan and Iran in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the ensuing civil war. To those arriving in Pakistan, the Government gave prima facie refugee status and provided them protection within 340 camps set up in NWFP and Balochistan, and another one in Punjab. With the assistance of UNHCR and the international community, the GoP ensured international protection to safeguard Afghan human rights, and established a Commission for Afghan Refugees at the federal, provincial and local levels under the Ministry of States, Frontier Regions and Northern Areas (SAFRON).

The Afghans have contributed towards economic uplift and transferred traditional knowledge and skills to local communities, including: Afghan-style carpet weaving; cultivation of nuts, fruits and vegetables; beekeeping; timber gathering, retailing and transportation etc. Resultantly the economy in some areas has flourished due to the availability of low wage Afghan labor and the entrepreneurial activities of some Afghan families, such as brick kilns, garbage collection and recycling. Unfortunately, however, the local Pakistani wage laborers have not been able to compete with the lower rates paid to Afghans, disturbing thus to some extent the local wage economy. At the same time the Afghan Refugees pose a threat to the local population too, to a certain extent. The consequence of a prolonged Afghan presence in Pakistan has created no doubt issues like job competition between the locals and the Afghan refugees, that too in an already job scarce Pakistani environment. Deterioration of local infrastructure has degraded environment, diminished water resources and damaged irrigation systems etc. Additionally, the Afghans residing in Afghanistan regularly cross the border for relatively better public health, market and financial services available in Pakistan which further increases pressure on local communities.

It was in light of the above mentioned issues /problems that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) initiated a programme entitled as "Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas Programme". RAHA is a joint five-year initiative between the Government of Pakistan, the UN System and its Implementing partners. The programme will be implemented in 30 districts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province (KPK) and Baluchistan and six urban areas.

RAHA is a joint five-year initiative between the Government of Pakistan, the UN System and implementing partners. The programme will be implemented in 30 districts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province (KPK) and Baluchistan and six urban areas.

It is expected that the programme will ensure safe stay for Afghan refugees in Pakistan and substantially improve the living standard of over 1 million Pakistanis who have hosted Afghan refugees.

Objective:

The overall objective of this programme is to improve livelihoods, rehabilitate the environment and enhance social cohesion within communities of refugee-affected areas. It is expected that the programme will ensure safe stay for Afghan refugees in Pakistan and substantially improve the living standard of over 1 million Pakistanis who have, or who are still, hosting Afghans.

An assessment was carried out during March 2010 in nine villages in KPK. The objective of the assessment was to document the problems faced by the local communities through conducting focus group discussions (FGDs) in District Haripur, Swabi, Nowshera and Peshawar.

I. Right to clean water - essential for life, essential for development:

The right to clean water is one of the most fundamental of all human rights. The UNDP Human Development Report, published 11 November, 2006, reveals that over 1 billion people worldwide live without any access to clean drinking water and 2.6 billion without adequate sanitation. In Pakistan, only about 60% of the urban population is provided water by the municipal authorities. The water usually supplied is mostly unhygienic for human consumption causing widespread water borne diseases.

Rural population is mostly excluded from water supply system; therefore they rely on their own sources which are never tested for safety. Contamination of ground water due to poor sanitation, salinity, excessive use of pesticides and fertilizers are the factors that expose them to greater health risks. Situation in rural areas in KPK especially around Mera Akora Khatak, Nowshera is even worst compared to other districts of the province.

Villages are also known for sporadic spells of water born diseases / epidemics. In summers, cholera outbreak is very common which often causes an emergency situation any time anywhere. Refugee community residing in Mera Akora Khatak lacks access to potable water. It was further observed that women and aged people are to bring water from far flung areas. A lot many times they tend to carry unhygienic water stored in water tanks near the tube well. It was also observed that the tube wells in their village belonged to landlords who are not only reluctant to give water but also create problems by switching them off. Ameer zada Kaka and Samandar Khan added they cannot even dig their own tube wells because the water table is 160 meters below, so they really have to build a powerful tube well which would be really expensive.

Ayub Khan, chairman, Citizen Community Board Rifaqatabad said that he had installed three hand pumps in different locations but they failed owing to low water table in the area. He added that strong tube wells and proper water distribution system in our village is need of the hour. Abida Maryam, Principal, Government Primary Girls School, Rifaqatabad said that the way to school is extremely bad and needs immediate support from the government. The students also face lot of problems while accessing the school.

In light of the above mentioned problems identified through the assessment, RAHA will rehabilitate water supply and sanitation scheme in Mera Akora Khattak and also construct water supply scheme in UC Daag Besud. Further, some major road schemes have been included in the annual work plan which will be implemented through the Communication and Works department of district Nowshera.



65 years old Baba Ameerzada searching drinking water for his home in village Rifaqatabad, UC Mera Akora Khattak

2. Host Communities affected by the presence of Afghan refugees:

The affectees of Tarbela Dam have as yet not been provided the fundamental rights, like quality education in a school with reasonable space and condition. The only government primary school Jagal in UC Dheenda is providing education to girls and boys of both local community as well as the Afghan refugees. This school is located in Tarbela dam reserved area close to Camp No. 16 of Afghan refugees.

A total of 80 students are being taught by 2 teachers in this school. A retired school teacher of village Jagal, Muhammad Irshad said that this school is very old and was renovated in 1983. Children from extremely poor families are studying in this school; he added that the space is extremely inadequate to accommodate the students. The rooms are dilapidated and pose a grave threat for the students. On the contrary, it was observed that the school is offering quality education to the students.

Sadiqullah, an Afghan Refugee claimed that one of his daughters Nadia and a son Subhanullah were studying in class two and one respectively. He added that the school is good compared to other schools in the area. RAHA has included this school in its project by constructing two additional rooms in the school.



Drinking water pipes through the drains in Nazar Khail, Swabi

3. Afghan refugees affected by water pollution in Swabi:

Pakistan has tried to accommodate the refugees at its level best; however, the huge influx of refugees has resulted in greater challenge for the local population. Some of the Afghans work as skilled labour, yet others are involved in illegal trades. It therefore, makes it more difficult to accommodate the refugees due to the dilapidated infrastructure and public services system prevalent in the country. Swabi District lies between the River Indus and River Kabul in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa formerly known as North West Frontier Province of Pakistan. It is the fourth most populous district and is also known for inhabiting the Afghan refugees for more than 20 years when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. Water pollution is one of the major problems, Afghan refugees are facing today. It is the principle reason for most ailments found in the district. Moreover, heavy rains not only cause massive destruction to homes and livestock but also spoil the cultivated land, thus diminishing the main source of their livelihood.

Abdul Muneem, social worker said that "the residents of Swabi have no choice except to drink polluted water from municipal water distribution system. Also, the drinking water network had been installed in 1968 and there is only one water tank which is providing water to the whole community. Unpaved roads aggravate the situation when the runoff water enters the houses during the monsoon season." Contaminated water has also been causing dental problems amongst children due to the presence of fluoride in water.

There is one veterinary hospital which lacks Testing / investigation equipment and even necessary medicines. Dr. Mir Abdullah DO / Incharge, said "that there are few diseases which are not only threat to the livestock but also gets transferred to human beings." He further added that the hospital lacks diagnostic laboratory, x-ray machines and ultrasound equipment for livestock." Government school buildings in Swabi are not fulfilling the requirements of the students. Majority of the students in schools attend classes under open sky. Government Girls Primary School No 1 has only two class rooms, which offers the worst case scenario.

Under the Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas (RAHA) Programme, UNDP will provide Sui Gas, equipment and medicines to district veterinary hospital during 2010.



Female school teachers going to government girls primary community model school Rifaqatabad, UC Mera Akora Khatak



Road of Dagbehsud which was the only route to schools and residential area

4. Punjpir lack basic facilities needed by the Refugees:

Education is universally recognized as one of the most fundamental building blocks for human development and for poverty reduction. It is the key to attain the Millennium Development Goals. It remains one of the most powerful instruments of reducing poverty and inequality and helps lay the foundation for sustained economic growth.

Based on the literacy profile, the districts in Pakistan can be grouped into three categories i.e. districts with high literacy rate i.e. above 70%; districts with medium literacy rate i.e. 50%-69%; and districts with low literacy rate i.e. less than 50%. Almost all the districts of Balochistan, FATA and FANA, most of the districts of KPK and Sindh fall under the third category.

Panjpir is a village in Swabi district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. According to 1998 census total population of union council is 25,271 persons. Hashmatullah Khan, Ex Nazim and well known social worker said that the union council Panjpir consists of 10 villages. He further said that the residents of UC are facing many problems on all fronts. He also said that "we have a basic health unit (BHU) but without required facilities. We have primary schools but without buildings". He added that there are three girls' and three boys' government (primary) schools which had been established and being run in rented buildings. Government did have money to purchase lands for these schools, he informed.

Another serious issue faced by the refugees is the unavailability of a bridge/ road on nallah Badray, which is the main route to the schools in the village. The students and the locals all have to cross the nullah or take a longer route which is 3 km away. Hashmatullah also informed that about eight months ago two children had drowned while crossing the nullah on their way to school.

According to him UC is dependent on agriculture, although few parts such as Gella cannot receive water. The farmers depend on natural rain to cultivate their crops. He suggested that if irrigation channels are provided in the respective fields it would not only increase income of the farmers but will also increase agricultural output.

Dr Asif Medical Officer, Basic Health Unit Panjpir told that the Afghan refugees do come over to the BHU for getting treatment. In daily outdoor patients department, about 12 to 15 patients are Afghan refugees among the total of 35 to 40 patients. He also added that the labor room, ultrasound machine and x-ray machine are not available in the hospital. People are extremely poor and do not afford private hospitals. He suggested that a referral laboratory can be provided in the Basic Health Unit.

RAHA has included the construction of labor room with equipments in the BHU as one of its main project activities during 2010. It is hoped that it will result in improved mother and child health care services in the community. Also, agriculture, livestock, education services, water supply and sanitation schemes of Barakai, rehabilitation and construction of farms and village roads will be improved in the target union councils.



Teacher along with a child crossing Nallah, District Swabi

5. Floods take its toll in Union Council Haryana, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa:

Heavy floods are devastating not only because they claim lot of lives but also leave thousands of survivors homeless and with shortages of food, clean water and employment. Also, they inundate vast cultivated land and destroy crops, poultry, livestock and physical infrastructure.

Similar situation is often seen every year in Union Council Haryana Payana, Peshawar District. Heavy floods and the deadly floods cause severe damage to villagers inhabiting the respective UC. In August, 2008 the flood washed away the whole village (Choli Kali). About 120 houses swept away and water entered their houses as it rose up also many feet high. Muddy water remained in the houses and fields and there was not any place for the refugees to stay.

One Khurasan told the ex nazim that the infrastructures was devastated and the communication system was totally out of order. Haji Azizullah, Fida Husain and Afzal Khan are known for their social work in the area. During the assessment they informed the interviewers that August 2008 flood was very harsh for the refugees. They were running helter skelter to save their lives and protect their families and property, but nothing was safe. Many precious lives and livestock were lost, the infrastructure damaged and drinking water was polluted to the greatest extent. The affected Afghan refugees also suffered from water born diseases due to the dilapidated sanitation system.

According to the assessment and gaps found, it was recommended to construct protection wall over the Nullah to improve lives of the poor in the flood affected areas in Haryana. Also, rehabilitation of drainage and sewerage system be provided during 2010.



Deadly nullah in Haryana Payan, Peshawar

6. Hand woven shawls – The Dying craft of Pakistan!!

Weaving is one of the oldest skills known to humans, dating back to prehistory. Subcontinent has a glorious past in the production of textiles and was specially known for printed textiles. Weaving in the subcontinent dates back to 3,000 B.C and some historians are of the view that it may have been the original home of textile weaving and printing.

Haji Gulfaraz Baba (aged 80 years) and his wife Shahkhobana (aged 75 years) were recalling the golden days of their lives when they were having sufficient income from hand woven shawls. On August 4, 2008 a powerful flood in flood water nullah in their native village kandary Regi washed away not only their houses but of other villagers' too. His family's prosperous life was cut down to poverty and their hand weaving machines and raw material were completely destroyed. Only, skill was left with him and his family.

Although he revived his business on very small scale on self help base yet it did not meet the requirements. Now, once again Gulfaraz Baba returned with new spirit and vowed to hand over his skill of Shawl weaving to the next generation of local community Regi Lalma. Otherwise, as he said in broken voice, he would bury his skill with his body in the grave.

Gulfaraz Baba related that shawl weaving is an income generating business. He and his wife weaved six shawls in a month and earn 20 thousand rupees before flood devastated their hearth, home and weaving tools. He said that machine could be purchased at a cost of Rs 10,000. He suggests that if a centre was established in his house he would conveniently deliver his skills to males and females alike. Baba repeated, if the advantage was not made of his skills transferred to younger generation, the time was drawing near when he would die and thus along with his body, his skills would likewise be buried under tons of earth.

However, Gulfaraz Baba was not the only person in union council Regi Lalma but also there were /are other individuals who are rich in different other skills like tailoring, shawl weaving and hays weaving, hand fans, and baskets etc. There was a girl named Shazia who is skilled in tailoring. She said that if she was supported financially she was ready to train the girls in tailoring.



Gulfaraz Baba displaying his hand woven Shawl

7. Crafts and Craftsmanship:

The decline may lead to a diminished weaving cluster in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Carpet making is basically a craft of Muslim heritage. It was one of the first crafts which came to this area with Islam. Historians believe that carpet making was introduced in this region sometime back in the 11th century by Muslim conquerors of Ghaznavi and the Ghauri dynasties. However, Afghans learnt and mastered the craft from their counterparts residing in Iran. The skill got transferred from generation to generation for their subsistence. The centuries old tradition of carpet weaving is still used by the Afghan refugees living in Mera Akora Khattak, KPK of Pakistan.

Afghan refugees though generally are considered as a burden on the economy of Pakistan; yet they have significantly contributed to the economic growth by adding a new flavor to the hand-knotted carpets produced in Pakistan. Mostly, the handlooms clusters for producing hand knotted carpets are located in the rural areas of KPK, Balochistan and Punjab.

Village Lalma in UC Mera Akora Khatak is located 60 km away from Peshawar, KPK. There are three Afghan refugee camps inhabiting almost 25000 families. The Literacy rate of UC Mera Akora Khatak is 55% in males and 35% in females. It has a total population of 22,380 inhabitants out of which male population is 11,678 and females are 10,702.

Mehraban Shah is an Afghan refugee living in Lalma village for twenty years. He has been in the carpet weaving profession for decades. According to him, the whole family is involved in the business. The carpets are either sold to middlemen or traders coming from different parts of the country. The raw material is provided by the middlemen or traders and transportation cost is also borne by them. According to him there were lots of people in this profession earlier. However, due to decrease in the number of orders from the middlemen, artisans have switched over to other businesses. He also informed the surveyors that there are only 20 families left in the camp now who still are engaged in this profession.

Bashir Khan, a 16 years old boy said that his father had died and he supports his family by weaving and selling these carpets. He has learnt this skill from his father and also wishes to transfer the skill now to his children in the same way. His mother, sisters and younger brother also support him in dying and drying threads, making bundles and weaving on the handlooms. Nevertheless, most of the Afghan women are skilled in carpet weaving. Whereas, men are mostly engaged in selling and marketing the carpets in the adjoining cities in KPK, it was also observed during the assessment that the skills of the crafts (wo)men can be better honed if a six months refresher course is organized in the area.



An Afghan refugee practicing the skill of weaving carpets in Camp Lalma

Child labour continues to be a reality for various reasons. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), for instance, at least 1.1 million children are engaged in hazardous labour according to SPARC, which does appear to be underestimated because home businesses are not registered. In NWFP now called KPK, 50 percent of children in primary school drop out. Many parents are also heroin addicts which forces the children to work at a very tender age. KPK also has a very low literacy rate compared to the rest of Pakistan: just 37.3 percent, according to a report by IRIN Asia (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs).



Mehraban Shah – An Afghan refugee displaying his hand knotted carpet during the assessment in Mera Akora Khattak.

8. Community narrates awful tails of Fraternity and Vows

Hazrat Shah, a 50 years old school teacher was sitting in veranda of the school along with his students of class three in an open cold and rainy day. The pupils were without woolen clothes and also seemed lethargic and disappointed.

He came forward, welcomed the interviewers and took them to the classrooms. After a brief introduction and little general conversation, one of the interviewers put a question about Afghan refugees once lived in their village. Hazrat Shah narrated that: "I have had good friends in Afghanistan but I did not see them for a long time as situation deteriorated in the country of Afghans. However, we do have Afghan refugees in our village as well. We never feel they are aliens, for they are our Pakhtun brothers. We shared with them the bread of our own kids. We shared with them our schools, our roads, our hospitals even our agriculture fields.

Waheedullah, another teacher, said, "I can give example of my own school too, GPSs 1 and GPS 2 in Dagbehsud where more than five hundred children from Afghan refugees camps studied. We don't have enough space even for our local kids but we never refused admissions to Afghani children. "We consider them as our own kids, our own sons. Their parents' i.e. Afghan refugees captured every small business, the transport and the agriculture, labour, almost every trade, and every business.

Waheedullah, then offered us to visit the internal road of the village where mostly their schools and the Jinaz gah [the building for prayers offered to the departed souls] were located, to have a look over the condition of the roads and schools.

He continued his tail of vows as he wailed: Heavy dumpers and trucks of Afghan refugees destroyed this road. The sanitation system could not withstand the heavy traffic of trucks and dumpers which used to travel on this internal road.

Hazaratullah continued to narrate the travails he and his village folk are now facing. He said many village heads have promised that the problems of their village would be solved soon but nobody did anything so far for the poor villagers. However, the union council now has been taken in the RAHA programme.



Stagnant water standing in the compound of government girl's middle school, Dagbehsud

9. Only the Baby or Mother can survive! Said the doctor

A male baby died on way to CMH Abbottabad. The infant, an innocent soul did not know it is bound to die, not that the Providence wished it so but for want of a labour / maternity room in his native village BHU Gudwalian, Haripur.

How unfortunate a baby! He did not survive because his mother did not get the needed medical cover in time. The name of this very unfortunate mother is Mrs. Naheed of Mochi Mera Gudwalian. While narrating the awful story of the unfortunate baby, the Lady Health Visitor of the BHU Gudwalian, Sakina Bibi told that Mrs. Naheed had visited her hospital for check up three days before her child's untimely death.

She told her that their case was complicated and the BHU was not competent enough to handle her delivery case. But, said the Lady Health visitor Sakina, that Naheed responded to her by saying that she could not afford delivery in a hospital and would therefore must give birth to her baby boy at home. After three days, she was brought to the BHU in a serious condition and she (the LHW) was unable to provide her the treatment she needed. The Lady Health visitor further said that parents of the unfortunate baby were poor and could not even afford the travel expenses to proceed for a proper treatment (that an expectant mother requires & which are available only at a major hospital in Abbotabad). Though they managed somehow to take her to the CMH Abbottabad but it was too late.

Condition of Naheed herself too was precarious but fortunately she survived though barely. When asked, the local community elders Mehboob Ali, Dilawar Shah, Ahsan Shah and others said that the death of a baby was not only one occurrence but there are many such examples happening in the past.

They reported the case of a certain woman named Shehnaz daughter of Momin Shah who faced same fate during delivery and died during delivery some three months ago, as she like Ms. Naheed did not receive timely medical care during her child's birth. Mehboob Ali, 60 years old, said that BHU Gudwalian served the patients of four union councils. People of the area are very poor and cannot afford expenses of baby deliveries in major hospitals.

Extra ordinary high taxi fares are another big burden which further strapped their means to get proper medical care during pregnancies. Medical officer of the BHU Dr Shabaz, said that 40% patients who took treatment from BHU Gudwalian are the refugee families from Afghanistan. Dr Shabaz said that establishment of labor room in the BHU is the dire need of the local community.

RAHA programme has included the construction of labor room with equipments in the BHU in its annual work plan 2010. The local community has appreciated the announcement on establishment of a labor room in their BHU. They expressed thanks to the United Nation and Government of Pakistan who had resolved their long standing demand as construction of a labor room at the BHU of their village would save lives of mothers and children of their village.



اہل برڈے ۰ ۸۵-۱۲۵
..... (دن) میرا ہر شاگ
۱۵ دن

Mrs. Sakina Lady Health Worker, BHU Gudwalian



United Nations
PAKISTAN 
Improving lives and helping people

UN House # 12, Street 17, F7/2, Islamabad. Tel: 051 8355693
<http://www.undp.org.pk>