

Socio-Economic Conditions of Post-Conflict Swat: A Critical Appraisal

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Background of Conflict in Swat

The Pakistani province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), previously known as the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) lies between the Indus River in the east and the Suleiman mountain range in the west, with an area of 74,521 sq. km. It comprises of 18 districts and Provincially Administered Tribal Area (PATA), consisting of Malakand Agency, which is further divided into districts of Upper Dir, Lower Dir, Chitral, Swat, Buner, Shangla and areas of Kala Dhaka. Swat is one of the districts of PATA, Malakand Division.

Swat is a mountainous region with varying elevations, ranging from 600 meters to 6000 meters above the sea level, from south to north to the foothills of Hindukush mountain range. The region is blessed with abundance of water in shape of the Swat River. It also has forests, lush green valleys, plains and glaciers. The Swat valley is rich in flora and fauna. It is famous for its variety of fruits, medicinal herbs and botanical plants.

The total area of District Swat is 5337 sq. km, divided into two tehsils, namely Matta (683 sq. km) and Swat (4654 sq. km). The total forest cover in Swat is 497,969 acres which consists of varieties of Pine trees.

The District Headquarter of Swat is Saidu Sharif, but the main town in the district is Mingora. Saidu Sharif is at a distance of 131 km from Peshawar, the provincial capital, towards the northeast,

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and 164 km from Islamabad, the federal capital. Other important localities in District Swat include Charbagh, Thana, Madyan, Bahrain, Kalam and Mitaltan. According to the population census of 1998, total population of district Swat was 1,257,602, with a density of 236 persons/sq. km and an average growth rate of 3.37 percent for the years 1981 to 1998. The estimated population of Swat in 2009 was 1,811,425. 86.62 percent of the population lived in rural areas while only 13.38 per cent live in urban areas.

Swat district has a variety of ethnic groups, including *Pakhtuns* (mainly of the Yusufzai clan), *Kohistan* (of Dardic descent) and *Gujjars*. *Pakhtu* or *Pashtu* is predominantly spoken in Swat, and is understood and used by roughly 93 percent of the population as their mother tongue. A variety of other languages are also used in the area, like Torwali, Kalami and Khwar, spoken by the Kalam and Kohistani people in the Northern part of Swat; *Gujro*, a mix of *Pashto* and Punjabi, spoken by the Ajar and Gujjar people. The predominant religion in Swat is Islam, with 99.67 percent of the people referring to themselves as Muslims. A negligible proportion of the population belongs to other religions, including Christianity, Hinduism, Qadiani/Ahmadis, and so on.

The roots of militancy in Pakistan can be traced back to the commencement of the Afghan War in 1979. This war in Afghanistan caused the rise of militancy and emergence of many militant organizations and *Jihadi* movements in Pakistan. The intentional amalgamation of religious concept of *jihad* with the fight against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan brought the religious parties and personalities to the forefront in the Pakistani society and politics.¹

Maulana Sufi Muhammad, a cleric from district Dir, came on the scene in 1989 with the demand to enforce Shariah in Malakand, and formed *Tehreek Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi* (TNSM - Movement for the Enforcement of Islamic Shariah). Sufi Muhammad remained an active member of Jamaat-e-Islami, a conservative religious party, throughout the 1980's. Under the influence of the chain of events taking place in Afghanistan, Sufi Muhammad left Jamaat-e-Islami and formed TNSM.² The

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activities of this movement concentrated mainly in the Malakand agency. His movement reached its peak on May 9, 1990, when the members of the TNSM pitched a camp in Temargrah, in district Dir. In 1992, the PATA regulations were abolished by the courts but no alternative system was put in place as a replacement. The TNSM launched the *tor Patki* (black turban) movement in 1994 in Swat and succeeded in forcing the government of Pakistan to accept the demand for Shariah, and on December 1, 1994, the then Governor of NWFP enforced *Nizaam-e-Shariat* Regulation. However, this did not bring any change nor redressed the people's grievances due to which TNSM's activities and demands for a change in the judicial system and enforcement of Islamic laws continued.

In 2001, Sufi Muhammad led many people from Malakand - including a large number of young boys, approximately 5000, very poorly trained and equipped - to fight against the US led forces in Afghanistan. Many of them were killed there, others traumatized. After returning back to Pakistan with heavy death toll and casualties, he was arrested on his own request by the government and was jailed. His son in law Maulana Fazalullah emerged as the new leader of the TNSM.³ He was the main military leader in Swat. 'With the help of the local population and the financial and technical support of a native of Kuza Bandai, a village adjacent to Imam Dherai, he started an illegal FM radio channel in 2004. The support was rendered by Habib Khan, who had made his fortune while working in Britain, and was known in the locality as a staunch Wahhabi *jihadist*'.⁴

Fazalullah succeeded in winning the hearts of the people mainly due to the government's slow response to the relief and rehabilitation in the region after the 2005 earth quake. This vacuum was filled by the Fazalullah group by winning the trust of the people. By 2007, Maulana Fazalullah and his companions had established themselves in Swat, controlling majority areas of the district and the districts of upper and lower Dir. Pakistan Army launched an operation against the insurgents. The Fazalullah group had started attacks on security check posts and police out posts,

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kidnapping and killing hundreds of security personals. In December 2007 Fazalullah merged his movement with the movement of Baitullah Mahsud, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). 'Fazulallah's militia started running a parallel judicial system, parallel administration and recruiting from almost all parts of Swat, especially from the towns of Charbagh, Kabal and Matta.'⁵

In April 2008, the ruling political party in the province - the Awami National Party (ANP) - which is a nationalist and secular party, signed a six point agreement with Maulana Sufi Muhammad. However, the law and order situation again deteriorated and at last in February 2009, the government gave the approval of enforcing Sharia Laws in the region. Nonetheless, due to the lack of trust from both sides, the TNSM led by Maulvi Fazalullah refused to lay arms. Pakistan Army had to launch a full scale operation against them in order to root them out.

The operation caused large scale devastation to the social and physical infrastructure. Hundreds of thousands of people were internally displaced. These Internally Displaced People (IDPs) have now returned back to their communities, but are facing immense and multi-ferrous post conflict complications.

Map of Malakand Division



Post-Conflict Scenario in Swat

A large scale research has been done and several reports have been published to assess the extent of damage caused to the economy and commercial activities in Swat. 'For all conflicts, the most important impacts are the suffering, injury and death of men, women and children. The losses in output, means of production and infrastructure seem insignificant in comparison. Yet, these material losses are also important, for they undermine the ability of conflict survivors to subsist and recover.'⁶ The agriculture sector, local trade and industries, and the tourism sector were devastated mainly due to the conflict and then the military

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operation. Mingora, which used to serve as a hub of local trade for Buner, Shangla and Kohistan districts is now replaced by other new and bigger trade hubs like Mardan and Abbottabad.⁷ It will be, however, difficult to analyze the long term effects of these losses.

The people of Swat had to pay a huge cost in terms of losses to local economy and their livelihood. Preliminary reports estimated 141,582 families were internally displaced from District Swat as a result of the military operation against the militants⁸. A Fact Finding Mission was sent to Swat by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) in May 2010. Although the HRCP team noticed the law and order situation relatively under control after the military operation, it could not ignore the apprehensions of the locals regarding the sustainability of prevailing peace in the region.⁹

The inhabitants of Swat had to face yet another great challenge in the shape of severe damages to the infra-structure caused by the severe floods that hit Pakistan in July 2010. Twelve (12) major bridges along with roads were swept away by the flood in Swat. Many villages were destroyed and scores of them were cut off from the rest of the world for several weeks to come. A substantial damage to the harvest due to floods further deepened the miseries of the families who had just come back to their homes after the operation.¹⁰ Wounded and scarred by the militancy, floods, the destruction of infra-structure and tourism industry, Swat had remained war-ravaged and isolated, and it caused severe socio-economic repercussions for its residents. The reconstruction and rehabilitation process has since been begun with the joint efforts of Government of Pakistan, Pakistan Army and foreign donors, however, a lot is still required to be done in this respect.

The Agriculture Sector

Approximately 50 per cent of the economic activity in Swat is linked with the agriculture sector, which is major source of income for the rural population. Agricultural activities are concentrated mainly in the southern parts of the valley, i.e., Mingora, Barikot, Matta, Kabal and Khwazakhela. The main source for irrigation is

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the Swat River. Main crops grown in Swat are wheat, maize, variety of vegetables, tobacco, fruits, Soya bean and sun flower.

Research study carried out by Aryana Institute for Regional Research and Advocacy in April 2009 has estimated the losses to the Swat farming sector due to the crisis. “An area of 153730 hectares is normally brought under cultivation in Swat including 130369 hectares in cereal crops (like wheat, maize and rice), 12218 hectares for fruit orchards and 11143 hectares for vegetables. Gross output from this area is around PKR 9 billion per annum or PKR. 55,000 per hectare. On the basis of data collected from field, aggregate losses to this sector are around PKR 4 billion per annum or PKR 25000 per hectare. The total impact during 17 months war period from crop production alone is PKR 7914 million.”¹¹

Before the conflict, farming system in Swat was progressing at a very good speed; it was a hub of fruit orchards. Swat was ranked third (3rd) in Pakistan in the nursery raising industry. In its 2009 report, ICRC indicated that during the conflict, wheat crop production ceased completely and livestock was lost. ICRC provided wheat seed and fertilizers to approximately 315,000 people in Malakand Division in May, 2010.¹² Similarly, the Provincial Reconstruction, Rehabilitation & Settlement Authority (PARRSA) established in 2009 by the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, had started a project funded by the Italian Government in March 2010. This project was aimed at an ‘Early Recovery of Agriculture and Livelihood’ (ERALP). Four Tehsils of Swat were designated as the areas where the program was to be implemented. So far, the project has assisted 18,514 farmers in agriculture sector through provision of certified and quality inputs with provision of production technology. Agriculture packages include 458 tons of cereal crops, vegetables and fodder seed with an appropriate quantity of fertilizers (1642 tons). The Orchards produce in Swat is incredible, considering the fact that it is being managed as a standalone activity. Support to orchard farmers was provided in the form of 295,754 fruit plants for hill orchards, 488 tons of fertilizers, 10,000 kg/lit of plant protection inputs and

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 capacity building to 10,603 orchard growers. ERALP conducted a baseline Orchard Survey, being first of its kind, in 24 UCs of Swat area.¹³ Although this program played an important role in the recovery of agriculture sector of Swat after the conflict, more efforts are needed to extend significant help to the locals in this regard.

Table: Extent of losses to Farming Sector in District Swat.¹⁴

Tehsil	Name of Villages	Extent of losses
Matta	Bandai, Sherpalam, Pirkalay, Matta, Kwaray, Barthana, Ghat, Shangwatai, Nazar Abad, Baidara, Baghdheri: Durishkhela, Asharay, Sumbat and surrounding villages.	Severe (70-80%)
Kabal	All villages of Kabal Tehsil	Severe (70-80%)
Babozai	Charbagh, Maglore, Sangota, Guli Bagh, Kashawra, Jahan Abad, Malam Jaba	Severe (60-80%)
	Maghuzar, Salampur, Kookrai, and adjacent villages Dangram, kokarai, jambil, Parona, chinaar. Qambar, Odigram, balogram, Fagingram areas.	Slight (40-50%)
Barikot	Bankot, Ghaligay, Gogdara, Najigram, Shamoza areas	Slight (30-40%)

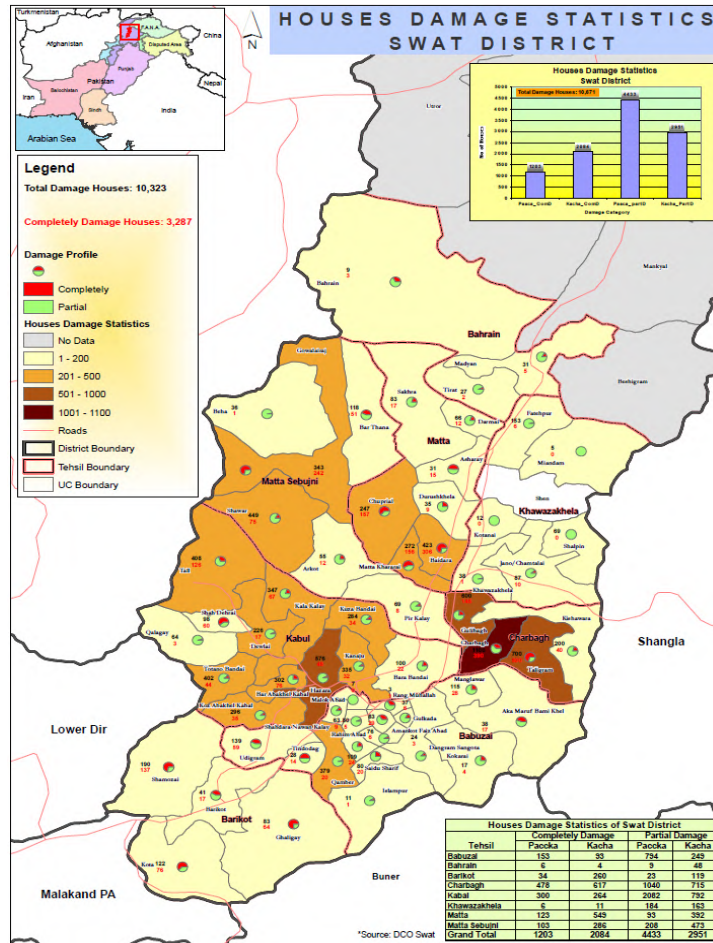
The Infra-Structure

Swat conflict has severely damaged the social infra-structure of the region. Not only the militants had destroyed many public and private buildings, roads, bridges and shops, but the subsequent military operation also caused a lot of destruction. This situation inflicted enormous stress on the economy of Swat. The figures of houses damaged fully or partially in the conflict vary. Different surveys conducted in this regard give different statistics. These figures are ranging from 8000 to 10500 houses (approximately) fully or partially damaged. Houses damage statistics in District Swat provided by the DCO office of Swat district are mentioned below in a map as an example (See map 2). Similarly, the communication sector which is an essential ingredient in the economic development of a region - including roads and bridges - also had to suffer a lot. Forty three (43) bridges were either totally or partially damaged in Swat district and the total damage is estimated to be around PKR 251.9 million. Approximately 663

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kilometers of road was also damaged in the conflict and the estimated cost of the damage is calculated at about PKR 138.7 million.¹⁵ (See Table 1)

MAP.2



The energy and power infrastructure also suffered due to the conflict and the estimated cost of the damage reaches up to PKR 300 million, causing severe blow to the local industry, particularly the farming and mining industry of district Swat.

PARRSA, in collaboration with different donor agencies, initiated several programs for the reconstruction of infrastructure in Swat district, which include reconstruction of houses, roads, bridges and others. Millions of dollars have been spent on these programs since 2009 but due to the lack of coordination between the governing authorities and their incapability, the benefits of these programs could not reach in full to the needy.

Table 1: District-wise Roads and bridges' damaged and the costs.

District/ Agency	Affected Bridges				Affected Road Structures and Formation		Table of Cost of Damages PKR (million)
	Completely Destroyed	Partially Damaged	Total	Cost of Damages PKR (m)	Length (KM)	Cost of damages	
Bauaer	2	1	3	42.5	246	34.0	76.5
Dir Lower	3		3	12.2	198	19.6	31.8
Dir Upper	5		5	50.5	150	29.4	79.9
Shangla	1	3	4	7.7	72	18.0	25.7
Swat	29	14	43	251.9	663	138.7	390.6
Total NWFP	40	18	58	364.8	1,329	239.7	604.5

Source: *Nov. 2009: ADB & WB; NWFP & FATA Preliminary Damage and Needs Assessment.*

Health and Education

‘A key feature of the Taliban militancy was a systematic attack on people who were suspected of violation of the Taliban’s interpretation of the principles of Islam. Health infrastructure in Pakistan has also been targeted by the militants: 29 percent of health facilities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have been damaged in the conflict between the Taliban and the government forces.’¹⁶ During the conflict in Swat, the militants systematically targeted the primary health care programs, like family planning and polio eradication programs through harassment and physical assault. Many health workers were killed while others kidnapped by the militants as they regarded these programs un-Islamic and against their interpretation of Islam. A total of 18 health facilities have been affected in Swat district during the conflict. The estimated cost of damage to health sector in Swat is about PKR150 million.¹⁷

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Unlike other sectors, the education sector of Swat had to face immense destruction in the conflict. This destruction was not only in the shape of material losses and damage to infra-structure but also in the form of severe setbacks to the overall progress and development of education sector of Swat. The estimates of damages to the educational facilities in Swat are calculated to be at about PKR 2696 million. The total number of educational facilities destroyed partially and fully in Swat during the conflict reached about 200 in number.¹⁸This number increased with the damage caused by the floods in the subsequent year.

The Preliminary Need Assessment report of PARRSA in 2009 indicated that US\$15.5 million were needed for the recovery of health and education sector. The USAID and the government of UAE, along with some other NGOs, have been lending support to the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for the reconstruction of these facilities. Recently, the USAID has agreed to provide more funds for the reconstruction of schools damaged by floods in Swat.

Table 2: Partially and fully damage institutes in Swat (Male/Female)

S.No.	Category	Swat			S.No.	Category	Swat		
		M	F	T			M	F	T
1	Primary	28	33	61	1	Primary	19	82	101
2	Middle	13	6	19	2	Middle	8	26	34
3	High	17	1	18	3	High	13	13	26
4	Higher Secondary	3	1	4	4	Higher Secondary	4	2	6
5	Colleges	2	1	3	5	Colleges	2	2	4
S. Total (Partially Damaged)		63	42	105	S. Total (Fully Damaged)		46	125	171

Social Challenges

The effects of conflict on a region are not confined to law and order and security, rather it also has deep imprints on the very social fabric of the region and could tear it apart. One of the effects of the conflict is radicalization of the society. Many factors like ignorance and poverty were responsible for the radicalization of society in course of the conflict. One of the major challenges faced by the authorities after the end of conflict in Swat was to address this issue, because negligence on part of the state in addressing the social and administrative problems of the people of Swat was the very cause of the conflict in the region.

After the conflict ended in Swat, many militants were detained by the armed forces; some surrendered while some were handed over to authorities by their families. For the rehabilitation and de-radicalization of those militants who were also a part of the society once, the Pakistan Army launched a comprehensive program in Swat. The program was initially provided funding of PKR 4.4 million by the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The program had three main components: one called Project Sabaoon, which focused on juveniles; Project Mishal, for adult detainees; and Project Sparlay for family members of detained persons. The rehabilitation efforts have been divided into four main modules, including an educational module comprising formal education, especially for juveniles to enable them to continue their education. Another module includes psychological counseling and therapy for developing independent and logical thinking. The social module included social issues and family participation and the fourth module includes vocational training, such as repairing home appliances, etc., to equip the detainees with skills which could enable them to make a decent living.¹⁹

The most vulnerable segment of the society in the context of a conflict is women and children, as they are the easiest targets. Militants in Swat were initially fortunate enough to have the support of the local people in general and women in particular. Fazalullah used his FM radio broadcast intelligently to grab the support of women in Swat, particularly those above the age of 55.

Initially, women forced males to support Fazalullah, and themselves donated their jewelry and other valuables for his cause.²⁰ Young boys were recruited for operational activities by the militants in Swat. They were incited by the militants through offers of salaries, as most of them were jobless.²¹

Conclusion

Post 9/11 events had far-reaching consequences for Pakistan. By supporting the US's 'War on Terror', Pakistan suffered politically and economically and had serious impact on social fabric of its society. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa faced the brunt of insurgency which brought colossal damage to its overall setup. The Swat valley, one of the most beautiful areas of Pakistan, and once famous for its tourism industry, was the centre of militancy in the country. It remained a war zone for almost two years with irreparable consequences to its infrastructure, agriculture, industry, health and on the top of the list the educational setup of the valley, with deep physical, mental and psychological implications. The post-conflict rehabilitation, reconstruction and recovery are in the process through the efforts and support of the government, the international community and NGOs. However, serious efforts are needed to complete the massive task of reconstruction and rehabilitation.

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