

# Poverty Perspectives

## Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund

*Restoring hope, Securing the future, Ending poverty*

This is the second of a two part series that examines the complex relationship between poverty and violence. While the first part focuses on the link between poverty and violence, this part examines this issue within a Pakistani context. For your views, suggestions and comments please email us at [mer@ppaf.org.pk](mailto:mer@ppaf.org.pk).

### **Conflict and Violence in Pakistan**

Conflicts, similar to natural disasters, have caused economic and social disturbances in Pakistan, leading to a severe impact on the poor. Most visibly they have triggered large scale displacements of residents seeking refuge and shelter in temporary camps or, as was the case in KPK, with relatives. Conflict and ensuing displacement, particularly Displacement due to conflict, particularly when conflict causes the death/disappearance of household members of working age, may push previously vulnerable households into extreme forms of poverty. Intersectionally marginalized households (those affected by conflict that are also women headed, or those with widows, orphans, or disabled individuals, or from ethnic or religious minorities) can fall into extreme and chronic poverty as they are cut off from earlier sources of livelihoods. The disruption in households' ability to access food, healthcare and education – often at key points in the life courses of adolescents or pregnant women – can also contribute to the intergenerational transmission of chronic poverty.

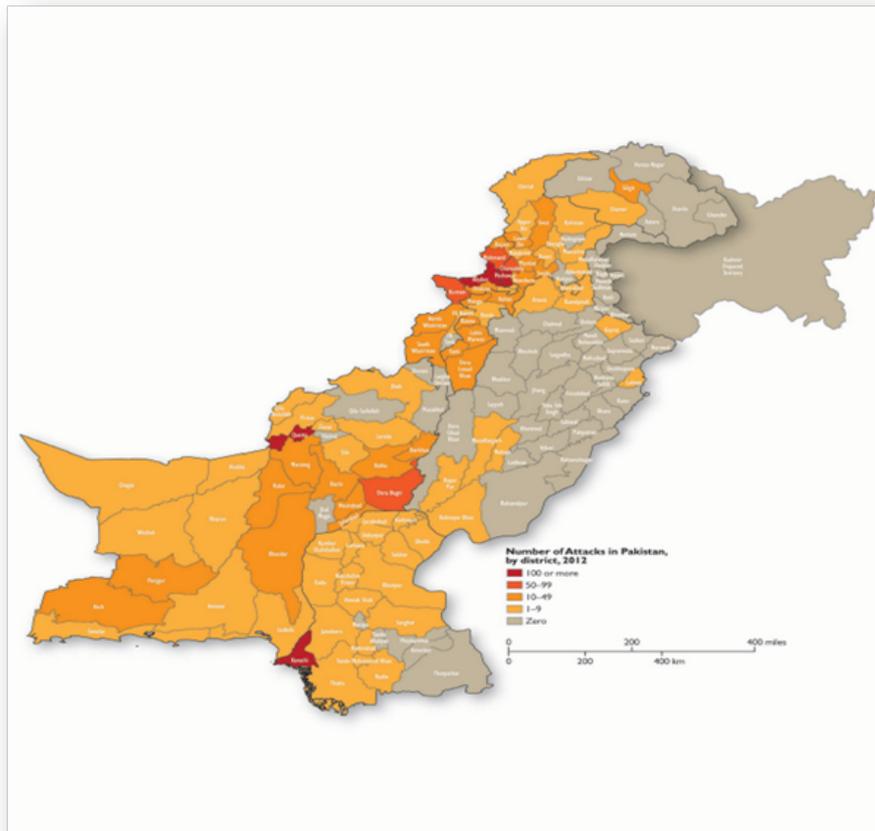
In February 2014, United States Institute of Peace released a report that investigated the trajectory of violence and the range of conflicts in six regions. The authors conclude that if existing socioeconomic conditions persist and the state continues to fail to deliver public services, justice, and security, Pakistan could face further escalation of violence and lawlessness. The authors summarized that each region of the country faced conflict in a different capacity (see box and map below).<sup>1</sup>

- In the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) violence is mostly entrenched along the Afghan border. Other parts of the country that are adjacent to the Afghan border, such as Balochistan and Gilgit-Baltistan, have also seen an acceleration in violence. This escalation is in part a result of the nexus between sectarian militants and terrorist outfits.
- In Sindh, most of the violence is concentrated in Karachi, which witnessed a tenfold increase in violence between 2006 and 2013. The security landscape there has become increasingly complex over the years with the addition of many types of actors, including sectarian militant groups, terrorist outfits, political parties, and criminal gangs.
- The scale, scope, and magnitude of violence in Balochistan, the largest province in Pakistan in terms of territory, remains unprecedented and unabated. Sectarian and terrorist activities targeting the Shia Hazara community have compounded the effects of a high intensity conflict between a secessionist insurgency and the military that has been under way in the province since 2006. Balochistan also provides safe haven to the Quetta Shura, a key Afghan Taliban group headed by Mullah Omar.

*Source: United States Institute of Peace (USIP)*

<sup>1</sup> Yasmin, Saira, and Salma Malik. Mapping Conflict Trends in Pakistan. Rep. United States Institute of Peace, 7 Feb. 2014. Web.

## Pakistan's Conflict Mapping by USIP



## Violence and Poverty in Pakistan

The World Bank's report titled "Addressing Inequality in South Asia", published in 2014, states that "In Pakistan, the probability of violent attacks by insurgents, sectarians, and terrorists is found to increase with food insecurity and land inequality". The report highlighted that in conflict-affected areas in Pakistan, poor households are likeliest to incur debt, suffer damage in the course of fighting, or be displaced. This is exemplified in the case of the internally displaced persons who have had to leave their homes in North Waziristan due to the continuing operations in the region. Militant violence in the country has prevented the poor from getting their children educated, while they are also more likely to suffer from theft and other crimes. A consequence of that is a drop in consumption, especially in rural areas, and a lowering of the quality of food the poor consume. As a result, the report finds that poorer sections of the country which are affected by terrorism and conflict have a greater aversion to terrorists as compared to the middle-income classes. The World Bank report asserted that 16% of households reported high levels of insecurity from strict rules imposed by militants, curfews or bans on freedom of movement, military operation against militants, displacement, or property damage.<sup>2</sup>

In an empirical study conducted in 2012,<sup>3</sup> regarding the effects of terrorism in Pakistan, it was found that although the overall economic growth in the country increased regardless of conflict and terrorist activities, poverty simultaneously increased. The report suggested that poverty further ignited terrorism and violence in the country. The disparity in distribution of benefits causes a rift in society, and the lack of political opportunities to articulate grievances results in citizens engaging with the state and its systems through violent means. Secular violence in Balochistan can be explained by the combined effects of poverty and political repression. The economic motivation behind the political violence in that province is implicated by the fact that since the start of the ongoing insurgency since 2004, 58% of the attacks have targeted energy utilities.<sup>4</sup>

The constant stream of violence, unrest and terrorist activities impede the Government of Pakistan and the development sector from effectively implementing poverty reduction schemes across the country. A strategy to counter violent

<sup>2</sup> Rama, Martín. Addressing Inequality in South Asia. Web.

<sup>3</sup> Saeed, Luqman. "Economic Study of Terrorism in Pakistan." (2012): n. pag.

<sup>4</sup> Saeed, Luqman. "Understanding Terrorism in Pakistan." Asia Times Online. Web. 16 Feb. 2015

extremism is to build community resilience through development organizations. Although national development organizations and NGOs do not explicitly teach communities how to counter terrorism, their resource mobilization techniques are used to create bottom-up strategies to address challenges from countering extremism to countering corruption. For example, they provide communities with the appropriate communication skills so that when a threat is identified, they can develop a strategy within their community to address the problem using their collective resources. These skills are particularly useful for impoverished, rural, at-risk communities.<sup>5</sup> Despite these efforts from civil society, a resilient and sustainable strategy for ensuring stability, justice, and human security is missing. Activists and civil society members in Pakistan face constant security threats particularly in conflict zones and their peripheries. Pakistan has become one of the most dangerous countries for journalists. In parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces, where social development indicators are among the lowest in Pakistan, the institutional capacity of civil society is underdeveloped compared to regions like Punjab, hindering community mobilization and project implementation.<sup>6</sup>

For decades development organizations such as PPAF have invested in socio-economic development for vulnerable and deprived communities. Although the establishment and institutional capacity building of local community institutions has been successful in most rural areas, penetration into extremely far flung areas, inclusive institution-building (especially with regards to women's inclusion) and sustainable development initiatives in conflict-ridden districts has been more challenging. Almost 40% of PPAF operational areas (80 district)<sup>7</sup> have been affected by the emerging conflict and can be considered fragile. In response, PPAF is undertaking research and piloting new initiatives with its partners in insecure and conflict-affected zones so as to identify strategies best suited to operate in such situations. PPAF realizes that conflict has a hugely negative impact on communities, and that it is untenable to wait for peace to occur before undertaking development activities. Thus, the program "Poverty Reduction through Rural Development in Balochistan, KP & FATA," financed by the Government of Italy (GoI), aims to target regions that are suffering from poverty and conflict. In order to effectively intervene and overcome the challenges of working in conflict zones, PPAF is developing a strategy around "Emerging Roles of Institutions in Promoting Transformative Peace and Pluralism". This strategy will identify opportunities and pathways through which to mobilise the tremendous potential of local institutions facing conflict and insecurity, and build their capacity to play a role in promoting peace and pluralism both within their communities and as part of the broader objective of peace building. The strategic intent of this study is to build the resilience of PPAF target communities, and to protect and celebrate the diversity of our national ethos.

As mentioned in the previous section of this poverty perspective, the greatest victims of conflict are often women. Thus, a central focus of the initiative will be protecting and advancing the needs, priorities and rights of the local community women. In the same vein, it is integral to target the youth in these areas that potentially could be recruited into groups that perpetuate strife and conflict. Therefore, the initiative will aim to engage the youth in the community-building and decision-making process.

PPAF aims to pilot this approach in 4 selected districts that are facing variations of existing conflict or insecurity. PPAF will conduct a review of the outcomes, lessons learnt and best practices of the pilot phase, before mainstreaming this across the country in all of PPAF's interventions, in partnership with the Community Organisations, Village Organisations (VOs) and Union Council-based Organisations. Thus, PPAF envisions its peace and pluralism strategy as not just a long term development initiative, but a long term transformative peace building process that will strengthen political governance through bolstering and engaging local institutions and communities.

<sup>5</sup> Mirahmadi, Hedieh, Mehreen Farooq, and Waleed Ziad. *Pakistan's Civil Society: Alternative Channels to Countering Violent Extremism*. Washington, DC: WORDE, 2012. Web

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> These 80 districts were selected because they were assessed to be at the bottom end of food insecurity, economic and social indicators, and human capability indicators.