

## **Crisis and Opportunity: A 3D approach to humanitarian aid in Pakistan**

**Part six in a series on Defense, Development and Diplomacy**  
(Sponsored by the 3D Security Initiative, and Global Systems Initiatives)

**14 July 2009**

**LEENA EL-ALI (MODERATOR)**

Program Director, Partners in Humanity, Search for Common Ground

**AZHAR HUSSAIN**

Vice President, Preventive Diplomacy,  
International Center for Religion &  
Diplomacy (ICRD)

**MUKHTAR KHAN**

Analyst, The Jamestown Foundation

**Amb. RIAZ MOHAMMAD KHAN**

Pakistani Scholar, The Woodrow Wilson  
International Center for Scholars; Former  
Ambassador to China, European Union

**REBECCA WINTHROP**

Fellow in Global Economy and  
Development, Brookings Institution; Former  
Head of Education, International Rescue  
Committee

### **DESCRIPTION AND MAJOR POLICY POINTS**

Washington, DC – July’s **Conflict Prevention and Resolution Forum (CPRF)** was held at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) on July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Over 80 individuals from government agencies, think-tanks, non-profits and local universities attended the event. The CPRF is organized by the non-profit organization **Search for Common Ground** and is co-sponsored by the **Alliance for Peacebuilding, American University, Council on Foreign Relations, George Mason University, Johns Hopkins University, Partners for Democratic Change, United States Institute of Peace and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.**

The CPRF commenced with Pakistani journalist and **Jamestown Foundation** analyst **Mukhtar Khan** describing the immense nature of the crisis in Pakistan’s Northern Region. Mr. Khan cited two major factors that have contributed to what he called “the most serious crisis in history of Pakistan”: The Pakistani government’s lack of preparedness to effectively handle the influx of refugees into surrounding areas, as well as the international community’s poor commitment to delivering aid money.

Mr. Khan, who maintains contact with refugees from his home region, told of how only 20% of all refugees are housed in camps. “Some of those refugees have not been given the financial assistance they were supposed to get. The amount is insufficient; even then they have not received [assistance] because of the government’s mismanagement and corruption...and the lack of donor funding.” Mr. Khan went on to say, “The UN mandated \$549 million [and the refugees]

have received only about 40%...” Even so, Mr. Khan stated, “[the IDPs] are reluctant to go back... so far there is no security in the Swat region, the Taliban are still at large; they are not being captured, especially their leadership”.

According to Mr. Khan, Western governments missed an opportunity to effectively engage with the people of the region. “Every crisis is an opportunity,” he said. “It was the first time that the people in Pakistan felt that the Taliban was the enemy. This is the first time the civilian leadership and military leadership were on the same page... The US’ war on terror was also their war on terror.”

Mr. Khan summed up his presentation by offering a few suggestions for future aid efforts. Along with government-led infrastructure and rehabilitation projects, “we should have strategic communication for the refugees on their way back [to their homes].” He continued, “If there is no communication wired in the region, again [the IDPs] will fall in the hands of the Taliban and they will exploit the refugees’ weaknesses.”

**Rebecca Winthrop**, a Fellow in Global Economy and Development at the **Brookings Institution**, spoke about the importance of educating the Pakistani women and young girls who will be returning to their homes. At present, only 3-18 percent of women in the region are literate. The situation is particularly dire because “560,000 children have been displaced” and “over 285 schools have been destroyed, most of them girls’ schools.”

Amidst the destruction, Ms. Winthrop identified a number of opportunities aid organizations can pursue. “Despite the really dire humanitarian context... there is an opportunity to lay the foundations for long-term socioeconomic development in the region.” Aside from imparting the skills of critical thinking and writing or “being able to discern what is propaganda and what is not,” education of women and girls offers “ripple effects.” Ms. Winthrop went on to say, “when there is an increase in female education...data shows an improvement in children’s health and general economic development”

Furthermore, the Pakistani education officials and Western aid organizations have the opportunity to learn lessons from similar contexts. Ms. Winthrop stated that, for example, “in Darfur, despite the humanitarian crisis, more girls are in school than before the conflict began.” Education officials also have the opportunity to implement “innovative programs” such as home-based and village-based schooling, which would be supplemented by the UN or other aid organizations.

Ms. Winthrop summed up by calling on the international community to continue, as well as augment their current funding schemes. “\$300 million has been pledged for education... and only 17 percent has been delivered.”

**Ambassador Riaz Mohammad Khan**, a Pakistan Scholar at the **Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars** was next and spoke about the ramifications this large-scale displacement will have on the future of Pakistan’s government. “The people must return to their homes, otherwise it would be an even greater failure for the government,” Ambassador Khan

said, referring to the steep decline in public opinion following the conflict. “Public opinion is very important to the Pakistani Government.”

Amb. Khan continued, “The government is committed to taking a long-term approach to addressing the extremism in the northern region,” including addressing the problems with neighboring Afghanistan.” According to Ambassador Khan, one of the major criticisms of the government was the “lack of immediate action by the military.”

Along with the continuation of judicial reform, Amb. Khan called for a battle against Taliban propaganda as a way of establishing peace. The Ambassador stated that because “Pakistan is engaged in a fight against militancy, [the local people] cannot be influenced by external debates... it is the largest impediment in Pakistan’s capacity to be fully mobilized against extremists.” The people of the region, unless effectively communicated with, will be “exploited by the detractors.”

Amb. Khan concluded that protracted military engagement with the Taliban is not an effective strategy; “the economy needs to be restored.”

Wrapping up the CPRF was the Vice President of Preventative Diplomacy at the **International Center for Religion and Diplomacy, Azhar Hussain**. Mr. Hussain, who has developed peace training programs intended for Pakistani religious leaders, spoke about the need for a robust and wide-reaching approach to addressing the conflict in Northern Pakistan. Mr. Hussain explained that “terrorists are very flexible” and that a way to approach the issue would be from multiple angles—most notably, democratic reform. Mr. Hussain suggested education, infrastructure projects and judicial reform, as a way to empower the citizens. Furthermore, Mr. Hussain cites the archaic justice system of the region as a primary impediment to civic engagement.

“Though the people of the North West Territories are poor, you will find the least number of beggars” Mr. Hussain states, referring to the pride amongst the Pashtuns, “it offers a good opportunity when repatriating back into Swat and eventually Waziristan.” He suggested scaling up educational centers “not necessarily a full-scale public school system,” but vocational centers and skills initiatives.

Lastly, Mr. Hussain suggested “engaging with the religious clergy to provide productive systems,” citing the tendency for civilian welfare to come from religious institutions in times of crisis. The West should work with clergy to deliver aid and services, thereby curbing the potential for the spread of religious extremism and militancy.

*For comments or questions related to this or other Conflict Prevention & Resolution Forums,  
Please send an email to: [cprfnewsletter@sfcg.org](mailto:cprfnewsletter@sfcg.org)*