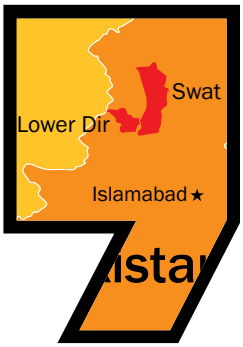
Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium

Researching livelihoods and services affected by conflict



Perceptions of post-conflict livelihood interventions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan: targeting, access and relevance

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About us

Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) aims to generate a stronger evidence base on how people in conflict-affected situations (CAS) make a living, access basic services like health care, education and water, and perceive and engage with governance at local and national levels. Providing better access to basic services, social protection and support to livelihoods matters for the human welfare of people affected by conflict, the achievement of development targets such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and international efforts at peace- and state-building.

At the centre of SLRC's research are three core themes, developed over the course of an intensive one-year inception phase:

- State legitimacy: experiences, perceptions and expectations of the state and local governance in conflict-affected situations
- State capacity: building effective states that deliver services and social protection in conflict-affected situations
- Livelihood trajectories and economic activity in conflict-affected situations

The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) is the lead organisation. SLRC partners include the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), the Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) in Sri Lanka, Feinstein International Center (FIC, Tufts University), Focus1000 in Sierra Leone, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Humanitarian Aid and Reconstruction of Wageningen University (WUR) in the Netherlands, the Nepal Centre for Contemporary Research (NCCR), and the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in Pakistan.

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Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
BISP	Benazir Income Support Programme
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DFID	Department for International Development
DNA	Damage Needs Assessment
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EC	European Commission
ERLAP	Early Recovery in Livelihoods and Agriculture Programme
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FODP	Friends of Democratic Pakistan
GIZ	German International Cooperation
GONGO	Government-Based NGO
HOPE	Hundreds of Original Projects for Employment
ICG	International Crisis Group
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
ILO	International Labour Organization
INGO	International NGO
IRC	International Rescue Committee
KII	Key Informant Interview
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
MDTF	Multi-Donor Trust Fund
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIC	National Identity Card
NOC	No Objection Certificate
Norad	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PaRRSA	Provincial Reconstruction Rehabilitation and Settlement Authority
PCNA	Post-Crisis Needs Assessment
PDMA	Provincial Disaster Management Authority
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation
SDPI	Sustainable Development Policy Institute
SLRC	Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium
SRSP	Sarhad Rural Support Programme
SSG	Special Support Group
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UC	Union Council
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
US	United States
USAID	US Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Programme.

1 Introduction and research questions

Supporting livelihoods in post-war communities is a complex endeavour, as difficult to achieve as it is important. Local economies in post-war environments face many economic and social challenges, including the reintegration in the short term of several potentially large population groups such as ex-combatants, internally displaced persons and refugees. These contexts, however, also include opportunities that can be capitalized on for supporting livelihoods (Goovaerts et al., 2006:).

1.1 Background

This paper examines the rationale and relevance of post-conflict livelihood interventions[1] in Swat and Lower Dir districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province of Pakistan. Both of these districts have undergone violent conflicts (militancy in 2007-2009) and natural disaster (floods in 2010) in the recent past and have seen a huge inflow of international development aid (Shahbaz et al., 2012).

Rebuilding livelihoods and economic recovery are major challenges in conflict- and disaster-affected areas. Such regions need special attention from international and national donors as well as from the state. Livelihood recovery in post-conflict situations is often the foremost priority of international development assistance in fragile- and conflict-affected states.

The rationale, relevance (to local needs) and effectiveness of such efforts and issues of social inclusion/exclusion are the focus of many contemporary debates on post-conflict recovery and development assistance (Anderson et al., 2012; Hoeffler, 2012; James et al., 2009; Levine and Chastre, 2004). In the Pakistani context, however, there is little empirical evidence available on these issues. For instance, the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) Pakistan evidence paper (Shahbaz et al., 2012) concludes that, despite large-scale responses from aid agencies and the government, there is a lack of evidence regarding the effectiveness and accessibility of aid interventions in Pakistan's conflict-affected areas. Evidence on the rationale and effectiveness of aid with regard to local needs and issues of inclusion/exclusion is also limited, meaning there is a need for further research.

This paper seeks to contribute to these debates through an analysis of the relevance of post-conflict and disaster livelihood interventions in Pakistan's conflict-affected areas from a beneficiary perspective. It discusses the following questions:

- What were aid agencies' responses with regard to livelihoods support[2] in the conflict- and disaster-affected districts of Swat and Lower Dir?
- What were beneficiaries' perceptions of aid agency livelihood interventions, in particular their targeting criteria? Who had access to these interventions and who was excluded?
- What is the rationale behind post-conflict livelihood interventions in the study area? Were livelihood interventions relevant to local needs in the post-conflict and post-flood contexts?
- What challenges were identified and what recommendations for future aid agency interventions can be gleaned from this analysis?

The research was conducted within the framework of the SLRC, which is a multi-country research programme funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the European Commission (EC) and Irish Aid. The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) is the lead organisation for

[1] 'Livelihood interventions' in this paper refer to interventions intended to support livelihoods – both income and non-income dimensions (assets-building, income generation and infrastructure).
[2] 'Livelihood' is defined in this paper as the assets/capital (human, natural, social, physical and financial) required by an individual or household to adopt livelihood strategies (income-generating activities).

the overall programme and the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) is leading the Pakistan research component. One of the overarching aims of the SLRC is to contribute towards a better understanding of what processes of livelihood recovery and state-building look like following periods of conflict in eight countries (Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, South Sudan, Sierra Leone and Uganda).

As a first step in the SLRC research in Pakistan, a paper was produced that provided evidence from the existing literature with regard to livelihoods, poverty, food security, access to basic services, social protection and governance in conflict-affected areas of KP province (Shahbaz et al., 2012). As a second step, the first round of an original panel survey was implemented in the country in 2012/13. This survey was designed to produce information on people's livelihoods; their access to basic services (education, health and water), social protection and livelihood services; and their relationships with governance processes and practices (Shahbaz et al., 2014).

It was then decided that a deeper understanding of beneficiaries' perspectives of the targeting criteria, rationale and relevance of livelihood-related interventions in conflict-affected areas of KP (Swat and Lower Dir) was needed. This paper reports the findings of qualitative research carried out to this effect and seeks to analyse the relevance of livelihood interventions to local needs as well as to identify which segments of the population are able or not able to access aid interventions. The report deliberately focuses on beneficiaries' perspectives and not those of aid agencies. However, aid agency perspectives are included where they serve to clarify particular points. The interventions analysed in this paper are those whose declared goal was to support livelihoods (asset-building, income generation, support for agriculture, public infrastructure).

1.2 Theoretical framework

The true test of aid effectiveness is improvement in people's lives (OECD, 2007).

The effectiveness, impact and relevance of international development aid are issues of intensive debate in contemporary literature on aid effectiveness. Several evaluation studies conducted by researchers, aid agencies and organisations have used different approaches to measure aid effectiveness (see, e.g., Anderson et al., 2012; Demukaj, 2011; Goovaerts et al., 2006; Levine and Chastre, 2004; Santiso, 2001). The Paris Declaration laid out five core principles – ownership, alignment, harmonisation, delivering results and mutual accountability – to make development aid more effective (OECD, 2007). Berry (2009) suggests a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of education-related interventions in fragile states, based on three basic aspects of aid effectiveness identified in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD's) 'Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States': coordination, state-building, and 'do no harm'. In post-conflict and post-disaster contexts, however, there has been an increasing emphasis on assessing the relevance of aid through a livelihoods lens (Levine and Chastre, 2004; Mosley et al., 2004). Anderson et al. (2012), in their book *Time to Listen*, captured the perceptions and 'voices' of people who had received international aid, had observed the effects of aid or had been involved in providing aid. They asked people in several international aid-recipient countries to assess the cumulative impacts of aid on their society, using the perceptions/views of the people (stakeholders) as a tool for impact assessment.

In this paper, we have adopted the framework of Levine and Chastre (2004), who examined food security interventions in the Great Lakes region of East and Central Africa. Based on the findings of several case studies, conducted in Burundi, DRC and Uganda, Levine and Chastre analysed food security interventions to see how and why they were carried out, how well they were targeted and what impact they had on food security. More specifically, they attempted to answer primary questions related to the *response* of agencies and institutions, the *relevance* of interventions to local needs, the

constraints that aid agencies did not address and *institutional or structural factors* that affected how organisations responded to food insecurity.

Based on this framework, this paper attempts to analyse the response of aid agencies in supporting livelihoods in post-conflict situation, criteria/strategies for targeting beneficiaries and the rationale and relevance of interventions to local needs. Anderson et al.'s (2012) approach, 'hearing people at the receiving end of international aid', is also adapted for this paper. We also discuss issues of inclusion and exclusion from aid interventions. Social exclusion is the 'inability to participate in economic, social cultural life' (Duffy, 1995), disadvantageousness based on certain socioeconomic characters of groups of people (DFID, 2000), discrimination (World Bank, 2013) and capability deprivation (Sen, 2000).

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 describes the methodology and Section 3 the context of the study areas and aid agency responses (post-conflict livelihood interventions). Section 4 presents people's perceptions of these livelihood interventions. This section is divided into two sub-sections: Section 4.1 discusses people's perceptions with regard to targeting criteria and strategies followed by issues of social exclusion/inclusion in the context of the interventions. Section 4.2 discusses the relevance and appropriateness of interventions to local needs. Section 5 presents conclusions and recommendations.

We have kept the identity of respondents anonymous. Similarly, the names of aid agencies/organisations (in most cases) have not been disclosed (especially in Section 5, on perceptions), as the intention here was not to evaluate an individual agency intervention or organisation but rather to gain an overall understanding of the perceived rationale and relevance of interventions.

2 Methodology

The study is qualitative in nature; focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) were the main tools for data collection. The research is complementary to the survey conducted during 2012 in conflict-/disaster-affected Swat and Lower Dir districts of KP province of Pakistan. Both of these districts had suffered from intense fighting between the Taliban and the Pakistani army in 2008/09, which resulted in large-scale displacement of the population. After the conflict ended, and many displaced persons had returned, large-scale floods in 2010 again caused unprecedented damage to the area. Union Council[3] (UC) Charbagh and UC Hayasarai were selected from Swat and Lower Dir districts, respectively. The selection of these UCs was based on the fact that the conflict and the subsequent flooding highly affected both. Donor interventions were also found to be more numerous in these UCs compared with other UCs where the 2012 survey was carried out. In total, 30 FGDs were hosted, 10 with males and 5 with females from each of the two UCs (see Tables 1 and 2). On average, there were 10 participants in male FGDs and 8 in female FGDs. Participants included both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of any interventions. The main author of this report was part of the team conducting the FGDs; other team members included trained research assistants from SDPI. In addition to FGDs, in-depth interviews with ten selected key informants (local leaders, political personalities, personnel of aid agencies and focal persons of aid interventions)[4] were conducted in both districts. Interviews with a number of donor agencies were also carried out to clarify and triangulate findings from the fieldwork.

Interviews were recorded in the local (Pashto) language, and each moderator translated the FGD s/he moderated in order to overcome translation challenges. At the end of the fieldwork an analysis workshop was held, with all team members participating and discussing each interview in detail. The moderators tried their best to motivate all participants of FGDs to actively take part and give their views openly.

Table 1: Detail of FGDs in Swat district (UC Charbagh)

Village	No. of FGDs		No. of participants			
	Male	Female	Male		Female	
			Beneficiaries	Non-beneficiaries	Beneficiaries	Non-beneficiaries
Bagh Muhallah	1	-	5	3	-	-
Kot Mattikhel	1	1	6	4	5	4
Jabagai	1	-	9	5	-	-
Sara Chena	1	1	6	3	5	3
Tankai Chena	1	1	7	4	5	3
Kaimal Pur	1	-	5	4	-	-
Shengarai	1	-	5	4	-	-
Cham	1	-	6	4	-	-
Dado Palo	1	1	5	4	5	3
Omer Khel	1	-	5	4	-	-
Zangai	-	1	-	-	5	3
Total	10	5	59	39	25	16

[3] The UC is the lowest tier of the administrative structure in Pakistan. A UC usually comprises four to six villages

[4] 'Focal persons' in this paper refers to people who work to coordinate between aid agencies and local communities. The qualitative interviews revealed that, in most cases, aid agencies select local person(s) – usually local leaders – in order to establish contact in the area.

Table 2: Detail of FGDs in Lower Dir district (UC Hayasarai)

Village	No. of FGDs		No. of participants			
	Male	Female	Male		Female	
			Beneficiaries	Non-beneficiaries	Beneficiaries	Non-beneficiaries
Gedarro Khas	1	1	5	3	4	3
Binoar Abad	1	-	5	3	-	-
Shabandai	2	1	15	7	5	4
Asad Kalay	1	-	7	2	-	-
Khroshah	1	-	5	4	-	-
Kamar Kotkay	1	-	6	3	-	-
Muslim Abad	1	-	5	5	-	-
Jaba	1	1	5	5	4	3
Hayaserai Khas	1	-	7	4	-	-
Kaladag	-	1	-	-	4	4
Sherkhanai	-	1	-	-	4	3
Total	10	5	60	36	21	17

Selection of UCs was made after detailed discussion with officials of the Provincial Reconstruction Rehabilitation and Settlement Authority (PaRRSA), the district administration and some of the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) involved in the implementation of various interventions funded and planned by different donors.

Insecurity in the area meant it was not possible to reach certain villages in both districts. For instance, army personnel did not allow the research team to visit certain villages. The original plan was to approach the same people interviewed in the quantitative survey (the first round of the panel survey), but this idea was abandoned as it became clear the same people would be too difficult to find. Hence, both beneficiaries included in the original quantitative survey and those not included participated in the FGDs. Security remained a concern for the field team during data collection. Some areas were not yet safe, but the team was able to reach the same villages where the quantitative survey was conducted in 2012.

It remained challenging in the local context to access women and to gather them for FGDs, as men do not like women to leave the home unaccompanied. We addressed this issue by recruiting female moderators and using female enumerators, as well as conducting FGDs in the homes of one person rather than in a public space.

Language was another challenge. We hired local facilitators who spoke the Pashto language for the FGDs and all proceedings from the discussions were then translated into English.

Participants often did not know the exact names of the agencies that had carried out any intervention, or they were unable to attribute the intervention to a particular agency. Some participants were beneficiaries of several types of interventions, while others in the focus group had not received anything.

There were also differences in levels of knowledge about aid interventions among men and women. Some males had basic knowledge about interventions and organisations that carried out aid work in their area but women often did not know details about the profile of the organisations. Most of the women who benefitted from an intervention did not know the name of the organisation providing the assistance. However, women were knowledgeable about the interventions carried out and had some understanding of the rationale and the targeting for those.

3 The context

3.1 Conflict and disaster affectedness

Violent conflicts in KP province of Pakistan have prevailed for many decades. The province shares its border with Afghanistan and consequently violent events in Afghanistan directly affect KP, particularly those regions that are closer to the Afghan border. The Afghan–Soviet war and post-war violence, post-9/11 events, the emergence of Taliban militants in the area and the war within Taliban groups and between the Pakistan Army and the Taliban have directly affected KP province in many ways. In the recent past (2007-2009), Malakand region remained the nucleus of the war between the Taliban and the Pakistan Army. The Taliban took control of almost the entire Swat district and started to advance towards neighbouring districts (Dir and Buner) during 2007. In 2009, the army launched a full-scale operation in Swat and some other districts and, after fierce fighting, the Taliban was pushed back and the army regained control of the region. Just before the start of the war, millions of people were internally displaced from conflict-affected areas to other relatively peaceful districts of KP. After the war, internally displaced persons (IDPs) started to go home, and by mid-2010 most had returned. However, their sufferings did not stop here, as destructive flooding in July 2010 caused heavy damage to lives and property in the conflict-affected areas. The region, which was already at the bottom of the Human Development Index and lacked public infrastructure (Suleri et al., 2009), became even more vulnerable.

Swat was the hub of small business activity, particularly small industries and tourism, providing employment for considerable numbers of households (WFP, 2010). The agriculture and livestock sectors also have an important role in rural people's subsistence livelihoods, but the majority of people depended on income from local and foreign labour markets. The loss of livestock, agricultural land and inputs and of local employment because of floods and war has severely affected rural livelihoods. Similarly, war has badly damaged markets, transport and other public infrastructure, as well as the tourism industry, and has consequently affected local livelihoods (Shahbaz et al., 2012). There has been a huge inflow of aid from the international community for emergency relief, support re/building livelihoods, infrastructure development, skills trainings, etc. The next sub-section briefly describes the response from aid agencies in the study area.

3.2 Aid response

3.2.1 Institutional landscape

Damage from conflict and disasters to the two districts discussed here was high, and international and national aid agencies responded to the crisis (Shahbaz et al., 2012). To assess the losses, the government of Pakistan, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank jointly carried out a preliminary Damage Needs Assessment (DNA) in 2009, which estimated a requirement of $1,089 million to meet the immediate needs of the affectees in the social sector (health, education, livelihoods, social protection and housing), infrastructure (transport, water and sanitation, energy) and productive sectors (agriculture, livestock, private sector and irrigation) and for improving governance and environment in Malakand division and two agencies of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) (Government of KP, 2011). The DNA was followed up in 2010 by the Post-Crisis Needs Assessment (PCNA), which put total requirements at $2.7 billion. The DNA chalked out a plan for the relief phase, whereas the PCNA covers the immediate post-crisis transition and stabilisation phase, medium-term transformation and the longer-term institution-building, consolidation and development periods.

To help conflict-affected people of Malakand division, the government (both provincial and federal), donors and NGOs started various interventions soon after people vacated their homes and rushed to

the camps to seek protection. In 2009, a Special Support Group (SSG) was created under the Prime Minister's Secretariat to coordinate emergency assistance-related activities for displaced people in conflict-affected areas (Government of KP, 2011). Later on, PaRRSA was established within the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA). The organisation was meant to provide the requisite speed, ease, facilitation, coordination, supervision and linkages with all the stakeholders involved, helping the provincial government in its endeavour to rehabilitate the affected areas in a transparent manner and coordinating recovery and reconstruction efforts in conflict- and disaster-affected areas.

The Pakistan Army remained a key player in the rehabilitation of immediately needed infrastructure during and after the armed conflict in Malakand division. It took almost a year after the conflict for the civil bureaucracy to take charge of affairs in Malakand division. During the relief phase, the army was given the mandate for coordination of all activities, including resettlement and development interventions. Soon after the return of the displaced, it was the military that started various interventions to help people meet their immediate needs. The Pakistan Army was provided more than Rs.500 million for various restoration activities, such as the rehabilitation of schools, roads, mosques and bridges. The army established Peace Committees in some villages, and some aid agencies worked through these. The military also supported PaRRSA through the SSG. Many humanitarian agencies were reluctant to cooperate with the army initially, which lengthened the latter's involvement in humanitarian affairs. Gradually, aid agencies started to work with the military; some, such as Qatar Charity and United Arab Emirates (UAE) development organisations, had started doing so much earlier on.

The state remained visible during this whole time through PaRRSA and the SSG. Some projects, such as the Early Recovery in Livelihoods and Agriculture Programme (ERLAP), PaRRSA itself carried out, and some interviewees suggested the success of this project may have provided PaRRSA with legitimacy that was much needed at that point of time. The provincial government also started an early recovery plan for Malakand development. The KP government announced a package of Rs.30 billion for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of affectees in the area and this amount was spent through line departments (Haq, 2009). Donors pledged similarly large amounts of funds for the same. Almost all notable donors (members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC)) and some non-traditional donors (UAE, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, China & Turkey) were also present in the area. International, national and local NGOs joined hands with the government and donors to help community.

3.2.2 International organisations

To generate aid and assistance from around the world, the Friends of Democratic Pakistan (FODP) forum, comprising developed countries and blocs including the UK, the US, France, Germany, China, Turkey, the European Union (EU), UN and Saudi Arabia, was launched in 2008. This forum generated substantial funding to help IDPs. The World Bank established a Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) for conflict-affected areas of Pakistan, with funding from various international donors.

UN agencies were among the first to receive permission to start operations in the area. The UN and other bilateral and multilateral humanitarian agencies provided aid for rebuilding and reconstruction efforts. Save the Children, the UK DFID, the World Food Programme (WFP), the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and other humanitarian agencies collaborated to provide assistance to IDPs (World Bank, 2010). The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and CARE International launched a major project on emergency relief for IDPs in KP (Government of KP, 2011). The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) worked in emergency assistance and the immediate protection of livelihoods and food security of

vulnerable households though the provision of critical livestock and agricultural inputs. USAID launched major interventions for the provision of health services, school reconstruction and cash grants. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) facilitated the coordination of the response to the conflict-induced humanitarian situation in KP (CIDA, 2011). Islamic Relief also started relief and support interventions in conflict-affected areas of KP (Shahbaz et al., 2012). It is pertinent to mention that those agencies that had been working in KP for a long time (e.g. WFP, Save the Children, UNHCR) started their interventions directly through their local offices (after coordinating with PaRRSA). Most agencies, however, were 'new' in the context of relief and reconstruction in the area and therefore had to rely on local organisations and/or hired local people on a short-term basis to establish contacts in the area.

3.2.3 Local organisations

Major donor agencies for most of the interventions were international NGOs (INGOs) and multilateral and bilateral international agencies, while many interventions were implemented by those local NGOs that had been active in the area even before the conflict. For instance Carvan, Lasoona and Hujra have been working in Swat for a long time; other organisations, like Abaseen, HOPE (Hundreds of Original Projects for Employment) 87 and Hands, had also started work in the area. Most of the local organisations implemented their interventions through funding from international donors but a few used their own funds to carry out short-term relief operations for IDPs. As the next section discusses, some local NGOs active in the area since the earthquake of 2005 shifted their offices during the conflict to other cities of the province or worked with IDPs in camps and started coming back as IDPs started returning home.

Many of the village committees working in the area were established by NGOs already working there. This started back in the 1980s, but a mushrooming of NGOs occurred after the earthquake in 2005. Some of the village-level institutions established under different donor projects are now registered as NGOs with the provincial authorities. The Sarhad Rural Support Programme (SRSP), a government-based NGO (GONGO), seems to have earned a good reputation with affected people by working through village committees. It received funding from the provincial government through the Bacha Khan Poverty Alleviation Fund.

The emergency situation (conflicts and floods) in Malakand also created space for some faith-based organisations to carry out relief and rehabilitation work. For instance, charities and Islamic organisations, such as Jamat-e-Islami and their charity arms (Al-Khidmat), have worked in the area. Al-Khidmat provided roadside camps and arranged education for children in some IDP camps (ICG, 2009). Falah-e-Insaniat Foundation, a charity arm of Jamaat-ud-Dawa that has roots in the banned Lashkar-e-Taiba, also carried out (short-term) relief activities such as provision of food packages and non-food items to IDPs.

3.2.4 Types of interventions and evolution of interventions over time

Tables 3 and 4 give details about livelihood interventions in Swat and Lower Dir districts of KP. The geographical span of the interventions mentioned in the tables ranges from merely one village to more than one district. The focus of our research is to cover those interventions that supported livelihoods (asset-building, capacity development, infrastructure, food, employment, business support, etc. – i.e. income and non-income dimensions of livelihoods).

Table 3: Key post-conflict interventions in the study area of Lower Dir

Organisation	Nature of organisation	Nature of intervention
WFP	Multilateral	Distributed food package
UNHCR	Multilateral	Provision of shelter
Al-Khidmat	Faith-based national NGO	Distributed food packages, blankets, kitchen kits
World Vision	INGO	Distributed blankets, kitchen utensils etc.
UNICEF	Multilateral	Worked for nutrition and health
Qatar Foundation	Qatar-based charity	Installed water pumps in mosques and homes; pavements, cash grants
Malakand Development Programme	Pakistan Transition Initiative of USAID	Constructed link roads, investment in agriculture, livestock, irrigation
PDMA/PaRRSA	Government agency	Reconstruction of schools, compensation on destroyed houses, seeds and fertilisers and fruit saplings
Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development	INGO	Food package, sewerage system, cleaning of drainage system, school renovation, water supply, distributing of chicken, goats, plant seedlings
IRC	INGO	Constructed link roads, distributed goats, chicken, fertiliser, seeds
International Committee of the Red Cross	Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement	Distributed fertiliser, food package, chicken and goats
Islamic Relief International	INGO	Provision of shelters, working on child health
Caravan	NGO	Sewing machines to females
USAID	Bilateral	Distributed food packages (flour, cooking oil, biscuits etc.), livestock
Children Rights Committee	Local NGO	Water supply in some villages
Malakand Development Programme	Pakistan Transition Initiative of USAID	Road construction
Benazir Income Support Programme	Government	Cash grants
Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health Programme	Government project	Child health
Malteser International	INGO	Trainings on disaster management, first aid kits, seeds, fertiliser
Green Star Social Marketing	NGO	Distributed medicines

Source: The information provided in this table is derived from FGDs and KIIs.

Table 4: Key Post-conflict interventions in study area of Swat

Organisation	Type of organisation	Type of intervention
SRSP	GONGO	Social mobilisation, formation of village organisations, provided cash grants (Rs.40,000 per household), river-side protection walls, vocational trainings along with relevant tool kits (welding, electrical, plumber), forestry, grafting, livestock training, fruit saplings
Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development	INGO	Distributed food items, reconstructed sewerage system, cleaning of drainage system
Uqaab Welfare	Local NGO	Distributed hygiene kits and water tubs
UNHCR	Multilateral	Shelters
HOPE 87	INGO	Hygiene kits
WFP	Multilateral	Food for work, food
Handicap International	INGO	Distributed hygiene kits, tools for the disabled
UN-Habitat	Multilateral	Shelter kits, street renovation
Al-Hamra	Local NGO	Built latrines, dug wells and installed solar geysers at mosques
Qatar Foundation	INGO	Installation of solar geysers (water heaters) at mosques
Malteser International	INGO	Provided trainings on disaster management, distributed first aid kits
Hujra	Local NGO	Distributed plants, seeds, fertilisers, arranged farmers' trainings
Sustainable Development Society	Local NGO	Arranged shelter, livestock (goats and poultry)
Qatar Charity	INGO	Constructed dug wells, built streets, water, sanitation
PaRRSA	Government	School renovation, protection walls, compensated partially damaged house owners by giving Rs.160,000 and fully damaged house owners with Rs.400,000, distributed fertilisers, seeds, etc.
Lasoona	Local NGO	Distributed fertilisers, seeds, farming tools; arranged vocational and capacity-building trainings for self-empowerment
UN Development Programme	Multilateral	Bio-gas plant for generating electricity; sewing machines, capacity-building
Hujra	Local NGO	Distributed fruit plants and fertilisers and provided training on gardening, cultivation, techniques of grafting, etc.
Initiative for Development and Empowerment Axis	Local NGO	Renovation of schools, trainings on peach growing and also some compensation to people
IRC, Oxfam	INGO	Livestock distribution
USAID	Bilateral development agency	Compensated injured persons during crises and the families of dead persons to start their own small business and livelihoods
German International Cooperation	Bilateral development agency	Distributed fertilisers and seeds, infrastructure
Sustainable Development Society	Local NGO	Livestock (goats, chicken)
FAO	Multilateral	Distributed seeds and fertilisers, animal feed
Church World Service	INGO	Distribution of poultry, cash for work
International	Red Cross and Red	Technical training and training on disaster management

Organisation	Type of organisation	Type of intervention
Committee of the Red Cross	Crescent Movement	
Malakand Development Programme	USAID Pakistan Transition Initiative	Infrastructure, training on embroidery and then distributed sewing machines, agriculture, irrigation channels improvement through cash for work

Source: The information provided in this table is derived from FGDs and KIIs.

Immediately after the conflict and floods there was initial large-scale (but short-term) relief with the aim of providing immediate relief to affected people. Such interventions focused mainly on:

- Distribution of food and shelter;
- Distribution of blankets, cooking utensils, soaps, etc.;
- Distribution of hygiene kits;
- Cash grants and cash transfer (also by the government through the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) and Watan cards).

Most of these were short term and hastily organised partly because of the rush to provide assistance to people before the winter. Many of these interventions used blanket targeting, attempting to reach all returning IDPs or all people in one village for grants. For instance, in some villages all people who previously had businesses received cash grants to re-establish their businesses (e.g. in Charbagh). In other villages, all people received food and non-food items.

After the initial short-term interventions, long-term interventions started with aim of supporting and rebuilding livelihoods. The above list reflects some of the key investments made in livelihoods, which aimed to support agriculture and livestock, a priority established by various needs assessments carried out in the area. According to the background paper for the preliminary DNA on livelihoods and social protection, around 40% of the people in the area depend on agriculture for their livelihoods; 70% people own land in the area. Each household keeps animals such as buffalos (around urban areas), cows, goats and sheep (ADB, 2009). On average, a household owning 1 hectare of land used to have 3-4 cows, 5-6 goats and 10-15 poultry birds. When people vacated their homes as a result of the military operation, these assets (livestock) became a liability for them and they sold their animals at very low prices (Ibid). Similarly, the rationale for huge investments by donors in agriculture came from the fact that people had missed one harvesting and one sowing season because of displacement (Nyborg, 2012). People left their homes when harvesting of wheat was just about to begin and returned when the time for sowing maize/rice and summer vegetables had lapsed.

Training of local people in various technical skills (e.g. welding, electrical, and plumbing) was an important component of long-term interventions. Some of the trainings were supplemented by the distribution of tools and equipment so trained persons could start their own work. For women, specific training programmes were introduced on embroidery, kitchen gardening and poultry rearing; some women also received chicken, seeds and fertilisers. Many women received sewing machines.

Reconstruction of roads, schools, bridges and irrigation channels was another major line in the long-term efforts of donor agencies. Aid agencies worked with government agencies to reconstruct and rehabilitate infrastructure.

Examining the different kinds of interventions and their timing, one can see many different organisations rushed to help IDPs in camps, and upon their return during the relief phase, but did not stay on after that. During the early recovery and rehabilitation phase, very few organisations working to support the socio-economic recovery of the population were left in the area. The intervention pattern also changed. During the relief phase, many organisations started interventions to resettle affected

populations by taking care of their food and shelter needs. Interventions to support their means to earn a livelihood started late and withered quickly.

3.2.5 Geographical spread and focus

There were more agricultural-based interventions in Swat as compared with Lower Dir. One of the reasons for this specified by aid agency personnel was that Swat district was the hub of agricultural activities before the conflict and many fruits and vegetables (persimmon, peach, apples and potatoes) were sent throughout the country from there, hence aid agencies wanted to rehabilitate these activities quickly. Another reason for the larger number of interventions in Swat was that Swat experienced much higher losses compared with Lower Dir, as Swat was the epicentre of the conflict (Shahbaz et al., 2012; 2014). The duration of most of the projects, even those with large funds, was short – one year or less. Often, humanitarian agencies rush to areas affected by disaster but soon funds dry up or another emergency arises elsewhere, and Swat was no exception to this. However, in the case of Swat the emergency/relief phase was prolonged (to almost a year) – but the magnitude of crisis was so high that this duration was not sufficient. According to PaRRSA, in Swat 34 development interventions related to livelihood improvement were initiated, whereas in Lower Dir only 16 projects were aimed at building livelihoods – even though Lower Dir falls behind Swat on all development accounts.

Interventions were concentrated in some specific areas within the district. For instance, our qualitative research found that, of all the five UCs in which the quantitative survey was carried out in 2012, donors focused on Charbagh and Hayasarai more than the other UCs. In Charbagh UC few households have benefited from more than six different kinds of interventions.

4 Perceptions of interventions

> **Universally, when asked to comment on their assessment of international assistance and its cumulative effects on their societies, people respond with, 'International aid is a good thing, and we are grateful for it … but ….' They cite a specific positive experience or two and express their appreciation for the people who care enough to help. However, after this, a 'but' always follows. And then they begin an often thoughtful and clarifying analysis of how aid has worked and has not worked, and of how they believe it should and could work to make a more positive difference in their lives (Anderson et al., 2012).**

This section reports the perceptions, experiences and voices of the intended recipients/beneficiaries as well as non-beneficiaries of aid in Swat and Lower Dir districts. This section is subdivided into two, on targeting criteria and inclusion/exclusion; and rationale and relevance.

4.1 Targeting criteria and inclusion/exclusion

4.1.1 Targeting criteria

Interviews conducted for this paper suggest most of the organisations that worked in the study area after the conflict tried to pump aid in as quickly as possible because of the emergency situation. Many organisations were coming to the area for the first time, and they started interventions in a hurry based on their experience elsewhere. This meant that, in most of the cases, systematic surveys/assessments (at the household level) of beneficiaries were not carried out in the case of short-term relief interventions and only inconsistently for longer-term interventions. And when an assessment was done before distribution, project staff often visited the *hujra* (guest room) of an influential person and then depended on the information that person provided. In some cases, aid organisations allegedly prepared a list of potential beneficiaries by themselves and gave this to the members of a village organisation to confirm whether they were eligible or not.

Few organisations that had a long history of working in the area did start to conduct assessments after interventions had already started. Others started their work in the area after conducting rapid assessments rather than systematic assessments, and subsequently overlooked local power relations and socioeconomic realities. Similarly, aid agencies did not attempt to understand the role of informal institutions in the context of relief and recovery operations.

Some aid workers explained the haste by the fact that, for agriculture-related interventions, it was important to provide seeds and fertilisers immediately otherwise farmers would have missed another sowing season because the gap between the return of IDPs to their homes and the next sowing season was too short. In this context, detailed analysis of the socio-political context was difficult.

While some international agencies had been working in the area for a long time (e.g. WFP, UNHCR), most were 'new' and had no or very limited prior experience of working in the area. Insecurity also meant many organisations had to work through local contacts or organisations, rather than implementing directly. Such organisations either hired local persons on a short-term (contract) basis or had to seek cooperation from local leaders (elders, members of the *Jirga*,[5] etc.). The predicament for most of these aid agencies working in KP was that, as outsiders and wary of security threats (Shahbaz et al., 2012), they had to rely on local leaders, village-level institutions and political/religious figures or hire local persons as temporary staff. Interviews indicate that, in some cases, the same person was the focal person for many organisations, and s/he helped her/his own friends and relatives. In most cases, the focal person prepared a list of potential beneficiaries based on their own criteria – a view

[5] The assembly of local elders, a traditional institution, which meets mostly for dispute settlement and conflict resolution.

consistently articulated in the FGDs conducted for this study. The following comments from different focal persons highlight how they perceived their role:

> **I know all the people and have information about the economic conditions of people living in the village. In the initial phase we (the community leaders of the village) provided a list of poor and vulnerable people of the village. Our criterion of nomination was that we first considered widows and orphans (for distribution of food and cash) and then other most deserving (needy) people from the village.**
>
> **They [aid organisations] conducted a survey but we [the community leaders] played our role in identifying the most deserving people. We provided them with a list of most deserving people according to their demands. They were saying provide us the list of widows, orphans and most poor people (for distribution of food and cash). We followed their instructions and did the same.**
>
> **Donors and different NGOs contacted the village committees[6] and asked them to provide a list of deserving people. On their request, we [community leaders] prepared a list of most deserving people of the village and forwarded that list to them.**

Aid agencies interviewed suggested that, for short-term (immediate) relief operations, they had no choice but to work through local focal points, given the lack of contacts in the area. They highlighted that the emergency was huge, with millions of people displaced, and, as needs were urgent, existing contacts or contacts provided by agencies already working in the area were used to reach the needy. Another factor was that the process of obtaining a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the government and the army to work in the area was cumbersome and took a lot of time. As a result, agencies were often delayed and, once granted access, tried to reach beneficiaries as quickly as possible.

The majority of people interviewed (from both districts) were critical of this strategy of selecting focal person(s) by aid agencies and entirely relying on them for the identification of beneficiaries. For instance, one respondent said, '*although they (focal persons) were entering the names of all affected persons the priority was given to those who were their relatives*'. Similarly, a school teacher and social activist in Lower Dir commented, '*there were no proper criteria to identify the beneficiaries. No merit was kept in front but every intervention made was through personal relations, every (focal) person tried to benefit his relatives, friends, etc.*'

Another interviewee made a similar point:

> **In fact many people benefited from these interventions and we don't deny it, but the basic issue was that they [aid workers] have not conducted a survey but usually khans and influential persons used their personal relation for access to aid.**

Some respondents also reported that they had to pay bribes to get their names registered. The majority of male respondents reported some form of favouritism.

Women interviewees had very similar perceptions to those of men. A female participant from Lower Dir, who was also a beneficiary of aid, said, '*They [the focal persons] selected their own relatives and no anyone else. The donor agencies never knew about it, for example if Husna [the name of a woman] is representing us, she would suggest only the name of her relatives for assistance.*' Even though the relief operations were arranged in haste and tried to benefit the maximum amount of people, many people were still deprived of assistance. For instance, a non-beneficiary woman of Swat commented, '*I don't know about the criteria, because no one informed me at the time of the intervention and my children are very young and can't go outside of the house to get information about aid.*' Another woman commented, '*All support was given to those people who arranged meetings for the organisation and provided their place to them.*' Similarly a participant from Lower Dir commented, '*There were no proper criteria for identifying/targeting but here was a community leader and they [aid workers] used to meet*

[6] Many of the village committees working in the area were established by national NGOs (e.g. by SRSP) already working in the area. Some of the committees established under different donor projects are now registered as NGOs with the provincial authorities. Peace Committees were also established in many villages by the army.

him and they did all of their activities through his opinions. He benefited his own relatives because he was also member of the committee so he had the power that time to decide about the beneficiaries.' Another participant from Swat said, '*When they [the aid agency] visited our village they met with the focal person and the focal person selected his own people and that was the criterion for identification.*'

Key informants also reported that some focal persons used aid to gain political benefits, for example to please their voters. For instance, during a female FGD, a participant said, '*If a focal person belonged to the Muslim League then he tried to benefit people in order to create a vote bank for himself. They didn't give priority to the poor, as I told you, every organisation did this.*' Another participant from Lower Dir said, '*Our homes were damaged a lot, we lost everything, there were some people from the People Party who came and made entries and gave money to those people who followed the party ideology and voters; similarly, a person from Jamat-e-Islami played a negative role in this.*'

Other male interviewees expressed a similar view:

> **Our homes were damaged and we lost everything; there were some people from a political party who came and made entries and gave money to those people who belonged to their party.**
>
> **There is a category of non-deserving people; they were political workers, those who have relationships and contacts with organisation staff or heads and members of aman [peace] committees. Other than the WFP no-one accessed the beneficiaries directly and the beneficiaries were identified through khans and political and personal approaches.**

Perceptions of interviewees suggest that, on most occasions, they did not think aid agencies targeted those they thought were 'deserving'. According to those interviewed, these would have included those who lost their homes, those who lost their sources of earning (including farmland), injured victims of war and floods, widows, orphans and the disabled. Comments such as these were typical:

> **The deserving peoples were not targeted. They [the aid agencies] had no such programme to benefit, compensate and help deserving people. No efforts were made to help the handicapped, disabled and vulnerable; no medical assistance was given to the victims of war and floods. No cash grant was given to orphans. In Hayasarai no food was given to children suffering from malnutrition and pregnant women.**
>
> **Rich families of the village benefited more from the intervention.**
>
> **Poor people were the most deserving but rich people didn't care about this and came forward to receive support because NGOs didn't know who was rich and who was poor, nor did they visit [survey] properly here.**
>
> **They said that it [the aid package] was for widows, but not all [recipients] were widows. They gave it to those they knew and had good relations with them.**
>
> **The needy got a small portion of it [poultry] while the bigger chunk was given to rich people.**

Despite these widely reported problems, most of the interviewees agreed that aid agencies selected focal persons under the assumption that the focal persons knew the people of their area and could genuinely help them identify needy people. A respondent commented, '*We can't blame the agency people for this [discrepancy] because they didn't know about the area and people.*'

Focal persons/community leaders also denied any involvement of politics: 'All the interventions were on a non-party basis. There were no political hardships in the way of donors in implementing their projects. On the community side we tried our best to identify the most deserving people without considering the political affiliations of the people because during conflict all the people were affected equally.' Another participant of a FGD said, 'Most of the organisations selected three to four local persons who may be religious or political leaders of the area, or members of the village organisations. Such people were involved in every intervention. These persons were the criterion for identifying beneficiaries.'

Local NGOs were perceived to have been comparatively better at targeting the right beneficiaries than their international counterparts. For instance, Lasoona (a Swat-based NGO) carried out door-to-door visits for beneficiary registration. One possible reason for the better performance of local NGOs was

that they had been working in the area for a long time and were more familiar with the local dynamics than outsiders.

Besides the strategy of selecting 'focal persons' for aid disbursement, some organisations also used village-level organisations and committees. After the early phase of the post-conflict period, some aid agencies realised that, by using the strategy of relying on local leaders/focal persons, they were not generally targeting those most in need and therefore started to conduct more needs assessments before implementing their (long-term) projects. For instance, Islamic Relief, Qatar Charity, IRC and Save the Children conducted a general assessment and then implemented their rehabilitation projects (see Tables 3 and 4) in Swat. During this process, their monitoring team visited the village, made a damage assessment and identified those in need – in this case those who had lost their livelihood means or earning members of the household. In some cases, village committees were established and were asked to identify people in need within their jurisdiction. Some of these committees were established during the pre-conflict era by some development agencies (e.g. by the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC), German International Cooperation (GIZ) and the Rural Support Programme). Village development committees, community-based organisations and in some areas citizen community boards (created after the Devolution Plan 2000) were used as village committees. It cannot be said these committees were free from elite capture and control; however, as our research revealed, in some cases they were perceived as effective – owing to democratic accountability – and were able to direct the intervening organisations towards the most pressing needs.

Similarly, in a few villages, where the villagers were somewhat organised through village organisations (courtesy of SRSP), the aid organisations contacted these for the identification of beneficiaries. For example, an FGD participant said,

> **In the first stages there were no proper criteria to identify beneficiaries. Most focal persons tried to benefit relatives, friends, etc. But afterwards, when SRSP gave them awareness, villagers formed their own organisations of 20 members on a mohallah [hamlet/street] basis. Then every organisation came first to them to inform them of their programme. The committee would call a meeting and nominate deserving people.**

The role of SRSP regarding the formation of such organisations was generally appreciated. It was also interesting to note that mutual cooperation and harmony among local people was also important: '*When the committees were forming, a total of 150 participants were selected from the whole area; of those 150 people, all of them left the committees but we, the people of Jabagai Muhallah, stood united and still have a strong committee and we have implemented the project for six month so that's why we got aid materials.*'

Peace Committees formed by the army after the war also played a major role in the implementation of some projects, but the majority of respondents were not happy with these committees and said the members favoured their own relatives and friends.

The criteria for large-scale aid distribution were better defined. For instance, PDMA/PaRRSA developed a criterion for compensating people that said that, if a house was partially damaged, the owner was given Rs.160,000 ($1,600); if fully destroyed, the owner received Rs.400,000 ($4,000), but on the condition that the owner was not involved in any anti-state activity and the house was damaged either by the army or by militants.

The strategies of aid agencies regarding targeting beneficiaries caused the exclusion of certain social groups. The next sub-section further discusses this issue of exclusion and inclusion.

4.1.2 Exclusion/inclusion: who benefited and who did not?

Issues of social exclusion and inclusion in the context of donor-assisted interventions are the topic of intense debate. Failing to identify and address social, economic and political exclusion can undermine donor-led interventions in post-conflict settings (Anderson, 2010). Various forms of social inclusion and exclusion surfaced from the qualitative data.

4.1.2.1 Social and political contacts

Those with good relationships with local community leaders or political workers generally benefited more compared with those with minimal social capital. Those without social capital were often excluded from access to aid interventions. Not only individuals or households but also sometimes whole villages were deprived of access to aid because of political differences (with the focal person or political personalities). Interviews with aid agencies indicate that PaRRSA and in some cases the army also directed aid organisations to intervene in specific villages and even identify beneficiaries. Most of those interviewed were of the view that 'personal relations' was the foremost criterion for the identification of beneficiaries.

As a participant of an FGD in Lower Dir commented, '*those people got benefits whose relatives were in some authoritative place in NGOs.*' Another participant from Swat recalled how an influential person benefited disproportionally by getting 65 fertiliser bags for his own family. Although people in need did also benefit from interventions (mostly in the form of food packages), this was perceived to be much less compared with the benefits accrued by influential people of the village. Note that influential does not necessarily mean rich, but rather those with the most social capital and good connections to aid agencies and local elites (members of village committees, political leaders, etc.).

National government-led programmes such as BISP were also reported to be influenced by political pressures, and it was alleged their support was often distributed based on political affiliation. Members of Peace Committees (formed by the army) were also reported to be involved in many interventions, and those persons connected with them reportedly benefited more than others.

4.1.2.2 Landless farmers (tenants)

In both of the districts, landlords reside in big cities and rent out their farmland on an annual basis. Despite the now widespread recognition in the international humanitarian world of the danger of targeting aid by land ownership (see, e.g., UN-Habitat's 2010 guidelines), interviews revealed that some agencies distributed fertilisers among landowners and not among tenants. Thus, the landlords received agricultural inputs whereas the tenants, who were actually affected by the conflict and floods, did not receive any relief items. As a respondent from Swat explained, '*Mostly farmers benefited from these interventions because most of the people are farmers, but very poor [landless] people were left because they were not farmers [landholders] and nearly all NGOs gave priority to landowners for distribution of inputs.*' As discussed in the previous section, aid agencies did often not get past influential gatekeepers, in this case landowners, when trying to identify beneficiaries.

4.1.2.3 Resource-poor people

The poorest of the poor were also often deprived of the benefits of larger aid interventions (with the exception of food distribution), according to interviews for this study.

There are two different issues at play here: 1) structural factors that affect access to aid that mean agencies unwittingly excluded the poor; and 2) elite capture.

Regarding the first issue, for example, after the conflicts the Government of Pakistan distributed Rs. 25,000 to those IDP households that crossed into Malakand. But many poor people could not travel that far because of a lack of money, and instead migrated to nearby places. Similarly, some families

remained in their homes because of limited financial resources or because they feared losing their assets and thus were not enrolled in cash distribution. Some participants were also of the view that poor landless persons, who often go to different areas in search of labour, were not enrolled in the programme. Many people who were in need but remained passive because of illiteracy, unawareness or lack of social/political contacts missed out.

Second, as already discussed in the last section, elite capture is a key problem. Wealthy people (*khans* and *maliks*) were the only ones who could afford to entertain organisations' employees in their *hujras* and were often given priority when it came to aid distributions.

Some respondents pointed out that local people were also to be blamed for unjust targeting, not just aid agencies: 'An aid agency came for distribution of seed and tools for kitchen gardening, and I registered myself but when I realised that the target beneficiaries of the project were widows, poor persons (with a very small piece of land beside their house), I decided that, as I don't have a garden, I would take out my identity card, but a mullah [religious figure] gave his card and took a lot of things. So the donors' fault is less than ours because we people don't have sense.'

4.1.2.4 People living in marginal/remote areas

People living in remote areas did not receive the same benefits from interventions as those living in more accessible areas. One of the reasons was the urgency with which some aid agencies distributed their relief items during the emergency period. In doing so, they targeted comparatively accessible areas and did not go to the villages located far away. People from remote places were also not able to come at the right times to register themselves with the aid agencies. One key informant said, '*If a person did not register himself at the proper time, he was not enrolled and the people who were living outside the central areas were ignored because they were unable to come at the right time.*' Unawareness by the people is also linked to remoteness. A woman from Lower Dir said, *'We remained unaware [of the registration process] because we live a bit far from the main village, so no one came for the assessment, and we didn't know about it.*'

Lastly, a key and perhaps inevitable issue for aid agencies was lack of access to certain areas because of insecurity. Some areas in conflict-affected districts were declared 'red zones' owing to the presence of militants. Aid agencies were not allowed to work there and consequently the residents were deprived of the benefits.

4.1.2.5 Women

Conservative societies of rural KP do not allow women to move freely outside their homes and prevent them from land ownership. Gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment are on the policy agenda of most international agencies, and implementation was a major challenge in the KP context. Many agencies hired local women as staff on a short-term contract basis but even then most of the 'female-oriented' interventions faced resistance from males. Lack of trust of NGOs perceived to be coming from outside and unfamiliar with the local context is a major issue hindering work on women's empowerment (see Shahbaz et al., 2012), Unfamiliarity of some foreign NGOs with the local context and local norms also played a role.

Some organisations targeted women farmers and distributed seeds for kitchen gardening. Yet, although some females received this assistance, men reportedly resisted this approach, suspecting such NGOs had a hidden agenda that may be detrimental to their culture. A woman commented, '*They [aid workers] said they would give inputs [seeds and tools] to females who had some land [beside their home], and to females who could go out and work in the fields […] but male members of our family didn't like this.*' Similarly, a community leader said, '*NGOs wanted to involve females of the village in the intervention process, which is against the norms and values of our society. Different agencies were*

asking us to establish and work through village committees of women but this was unacceptable to us. Therefore we did not allow them to do this.'

Some organisations offered skills development trainings for women, but again restrictions in mobility meant many women did not benefit: '*Yes the intervention [training] created awareness in people to start their own poultry farming and kitchen gardening but some females were not interested in trainings because the men didn't allow the women to go to another house for training.*' During a male FGD in Lower Dir, participants said an aid agency asked committee members to give the names of 12 deserving women to whom they would provide sewing and embroidery training; after completion, they would be given sewing machines as well. But the residents refused to accept this intervention because they did not want their women to go outside the home.

Another institutional hindrance for women, rather different from the above issues, was the lack of a National Identity Card (NIC). Some organisations require a NIC to ensure beneficiaries belong to the target area. Some women do not have a NIC (or have lost it) so they could not enrol.

4.2 Rationale and relevance

This section reports on the perceived rationale (reasons behind the interventions) and relevance (to the needs of affected people) of aid interventions. The guiding questions to examine rationale were, did people get what they needed? Was it sufficient? And did the intervention address problems/constraints people identified/were facing?

Agriculture is an important aspect of rebuilding efforts in post-conflict reconstruction. It improves rural livelihoods and enhances food security among conflict- and crisis-affected rural communities (Briner et al., 2011). In Pakistan's case, farming is the main livelihood strategy in the conflict-/disaster-affected areas under study (Shahbaz et al., 2014). Swat in particular is a hub for commercial fruit and vegetable production, but, generally speaking, Malakand division is highly food-insecure and the majority of farmers are smallholders possessing less than 1 acre of arable land (Suleri and Haq, 2009; WFP, 2010). While men work in the fields, women are mostly involved in livestock-rearing and vegetable-growing (inside their houses) for household use (Ahmad et al., 2007). Batool et al. (2010) report that rural women perform several livestock activities, like feeding and watering, milking and poultry-raising, etc. It was, therefore, imperative to support farmers so they could (re)start farming. Remittances and labour migration are the major livelihood strategies in the area under study, but other livelihood sources – small businesses and industrial enterprises, local markets and public infrastructure – were also badly damaged. Militants destroyed most of the schools, and the education system of the area was badly affected (Shahbaz et al., 2012). The war and floods also caused severe damage to the irrigation and drinking water system, roads and bridges, etc., which are non-income dimensions of poverty.

In the post-conflict and post-flood scenario, donor agencies and national and international NGOs played an important role in the immediate response because, at that time, the government alone was not in a position to intervene quickly.

4.2.1 Cash grants, food and non-food items

During the initial relief phase – when IDPs were returning – cash grants and food and non-food items were distributed to returnees. The rationale behind this was that IDPs were short of cash and food when they returned. Cash grants were provided by the government only once on the return of the IDP to their home. They were limited to Rs.25,000 (around $300). Food items were distributed by several national and international agencies (see Tables 3 and 4). Most of the participants appreciated the free distribution of food. According to one respondent, '*During the emergency situation and when the IDPs came back to their homes, food packages supported them a lot. Most of the people did not have the*

cash to buy food items for their families and if a person had some money then he could utilise it for other purposes.' Another FGD participant commented, '*Cash grants and non-food items played an important role in rebuilding the livelihoods of the people. Their role was important because all the basic sources of livelihoods had been demolished by conflict in the area.*'

According to Levine and Chastre (2004), 'Food aid in the form of free distributions is the appropriate response when the following three conditions all apply:

1 Targeted households lack access to food; and
2 There is a lack of availability of food and inelastic supply (making income support ineffective in helping to increase access to food through the market); and
3 Alternative ways of helping people get access to food would either take too long or might not be practical or reliable.'

Based on these criteria, it is argued that, in the post-conflict situation, there was a severe shortage of food in Swat and Lower Dir because almost all of the households were displaced during conflict. After their return there was a serious shortage of food in the market because agricultural activities in the area had ceased and because of the tense security situation, which restricted the supply of food to the markets from other places. Similarly, lack of employment meant most people could not afford to purchase food items (Shahbaz et al., 2012; 2014). The floods also temporarily destroyed the farming system. As such, free distribution of food was an appropriate strategy. Similarly, distribution of cash grants was based on the rationale that people needed to rebuild their damaged houses and restart their businesses.

Right after the war, the GONGO SRSP distributed cash payments to poor people of the community. These helped households meet their needs during the emergency. They also helped the many small shops and businesses in both districts to (re)establish themselves According to one respondent, '*These shops are now a source of livelihoods for many household*s.' Most of the people who received cash to open up shops were those who used to own shops before the conflict. There were, however, a few cases where people who did not have shops in the past were included. IRC and Relief International distributed cash grants to 30,000-40,000 people to restart businesses after they were destroyed during the floods. Beneficiaries interviewed generally perceived this as a successful intervention as it continued to contribute to livelihood regeneration.

Early recovery activities by NGOs also provided temporary employment (cash for work) to the people of area. For instance, after the floods, Lasoona hired people for their project (funded by another agency) on a daily wage basis at the rate of Rs.300-350 per day, which is almost comparable with market rate. When asked whether interventions addressed the problems and constraints people faced, opinions varied. Some commented positively, saying people were in need of any kind of assistance during the early stages of the emergency, but no one was asked about their problems/constraints. When asked about the adequacy of the aid, most respondents were of the view that the interventions were not adequate to solve their immediate problems, even though this was their intention. Cash grants and food packages were small compared with family size, and house reconstruction kits contained inadequate material.

Most respondents said either the aid agencies themselves or influential persons determined the needs of affected people, and did not take into account the latter's opinions, although there were some exceptions (some local NGOs, such as Hujra, Lasoona and SRSP). As the SLRC's Pakistan evidence paper (Shahbaz et al., 2012) describes further, local NGOs that operate at the grassroots level often have the advantage of being familiar with governance procedures and socioeconomic conditions and thus are able to design and implement more appropriate interventions.

4.2.2 Seeds, tools and fertilisers

A few interventions directly targeted farmers in the form of distribution of seeds, tools and fertilisers and provision of trainings. But fertilisers and seeds were not of good enough quantity. Similarly, interviewees gave examples of farming tool kit distributions by a local NGO whereby people were given vouchers to buy tools of their own choice from a specific retailer at the maximum cost of Rs.12,000 but they found the retailer did not carry the right tools and, if they did, they were very expensive (about two to three times more expensive than normal market prices) and of low quality. This was because of malpractice on the part of the retailer and lack of follow-up rather than a lack of adequate assessment prior to the intervention. Other organisations installed bio-gas plants at selected sites, but only a few households benefited. The estimated cost of a bio-gas plant is around Rs.500,000, and four to five such plants were installed in households that had at least three to five farm animals (cows or buffaloes, respectively). However, the majority of the households are smallholders and hence did not benefit.

The war and floods meant crops were totally destroyed and fields were empty. Some farmers were given seeds and fertilisers so they could cultivate their land again. The majority of farmers are smallholders and they were in need of help because they had lost their farming tools, seeds and other inputs. Swat is famous for peach and persimmon orchards, but most of the orchards were destroyed (Zahid, 2009). Orchards are spread over 30,000 acres of land in Swat and peaches 10,000 acres of land, but, because of militancy and army operations in 2009, farmers failed to harvest.[7] Some aid agencies provided seeds, tools and fruit plants during the early recovery phase. However, irregularities in the distribution of agricultural inputs were reported. In many cases, seeds and tools were distributed to those who were not active farmers and they either wasted or sold them. A majority of interviewees expressed disappointment with aid agencies with regard to these interventions. Comments such as these were very common:

> If they were distributing fertilisers, they didn't judge whether it was going to a farmer or a businessman, poor or rich. So, because of this blunder, mostly people who benefited were those who didn't need or deserve it.

> The strategy adopted by them [aid agency] was not right, seeds were to be delivered to those people with land but the seeds were distributed to those who don't have land.[8]

> If they need 20 persons for distribution of their packages, they would just do their job and meet their requirements by writing the names of 20 persons without considering deserving or non-deserving persons.

The investment in seeds, fertilisers and agricultural equipment did help some people start agricultural activities on their return home when they lacked inputs. It also helped boost yields and introduce new technologies[9] and seeds into the area. However, cases were reported of the seeds supplied not matching the cropping season (maize seeds were provided when it was time to sow wheat) or farmers who had not grown hybrid seeds before being provided with a hybrid variety of maize without receiving knowledge of how to take care of them.

4.2.3 Livestock

Livestock is an important asset for rural people but also a key source of food and income for many households. During the war, many people had to sell their animals at a very low price. '*I purchased a buffalo for Rs.150,000 but at the time of displacing I sold it at only Rs.20,000.*' Some aid agencies provided assistance in the form of livestock. However, interviews indicated that the quality of the livestock animals was not up to scratch. Goats were not of an appropriate breed adaptable to the local

[7] http://www.thenews.com.pk/TodaysPrintDetail.aspx?ID=246415&Cat=7&dt=6/22/2010
[8] There were beneficiaries who did not own land but received seeds and fertiliser because of lack of adequate assessments by aid organisations and corruption.
[9] One such example is ERLAP, implemented by PaRRSA and funded by the Italian government.

conditions. Most of them died because they could not bear the cold, or were sold at a low price. Goats, cows and poultry were also distributed among affected people in selected areas, and this did yield benefits for many. However, in interviews, people highlighted that some inexperienced farmers also received livestock but could not maintain them properly.

Backyard poultry is women's domain in rural areas. Poultry-related interventions seem to have been widespread and many women participants reported receiving poultry birds. A majority of female interviewees reported that the intervention was useful and that they had been able either to increase their income by selling eggs/chickens or at least to support themselves better. In some areas, widows were given preference in the distribution of livestock, poultry and seeds/plants for kitchen gardening, and their assets increased as a result. The intervention also contributed to raising these women's income as they could sell the dairy products and eggs, etc. In other areas, though, interviewees reported that beneficiaries had not received sufficient training with regard to the upkeep of the poultry so they soon died. Interviewees were generally more positive about those interventions that included training and support.

In some areas, widows received as many as 25 hens. There were though questions with regard to the targeting of widows specifically, as not all widows were necessarily vulnerable. This was a wider problem with many of the other interventions described above, where often 'women', 'children' 'widows' and others were targeted as a social group presumed to be intrinsically vulnerable by virtue of belonging to a certain category. Such approaches reveal a lack of proper analysis and understanding on the part of aid agencies of the underlying factors that really do constitute a person's vulnerability.

4.2.4 Vocational training, embroidery, stitching, shawl-making, etc.

Many women received embroidery and shawl-making training and support, including a sewing machine to start their business at home. The rationale seems to have been to empower women to earn an income and start a business they could do from their home. Such interventions generally received much positive feedback, with many women reportedly benefiting and now working from home supporting the household's income. However, some men were critical and refused to support the intervention because they suspected NGOs were trying to get women to become too independent and to get them out of the house. Even where the intervention was only supporting women's livelihood activities inside the house, there was reportedly often still much suspicion among men of the ulterior motives of some NGOs, in particular foreign ones. NGOs that tended to work through village committees fared better than those that tried to implement interventions directly and that the local people did not know. Also, the work of local NGOs (e.g. Lasoona, Hujra) was generally perceived more positively because such organisations were familiar with the area and its people. Local NGOs have often developed strong relations with the local community because of their extended presence and knowledge of the area and are perceived as planning interventions more carefully without violating local traditions. According to some interviewees, these NGOs had also gained their credibility because of their role after the 2007 earthquake and the 2007 floods. Local NGOs were more active in Swat district and their focus was on capacity-building of people in various skills (orchard management and vocational training for men, embroidery and cloth-making/stitching for women).

Capacity-building and vocational trainings for men were generally welcomed and were perceived as having helped people rebuild their livelihoods. A few people were able to establish their own business through these schemes and many are now earning an income. Training of plumbers and electricians delivered by an organisation was also reported to have been beneficial. One farmer reported that he was given welding training and a welding machine, and now runs a workshop as his new livelihood. Some aid agencies, however, reportedly had predetermined training and capacity-building programmes that were perceived as inflexible and not adaptable enough to local demand. Aid agencies sometimes

came to the village with their predetermined 'packages' and presented them to leaders to identify who should benefit. The 'package' was often based on generic interventions implemented elsewhere.

In other cases, trainings were not accompanied by distribution of relevant tools and equipment and thus some people found them to be of little use afterwards: *'I provided them a place for training but at the end they just gave us certificates, nothing more, and insulted me: they broke my chair and tables, but I don't remember the name of that NGO because I have burnt the certificate [because of anger]. They promised they would give sewing machines to the trainees but they didn't fulfil their promise.'* Interviewees suggested aid organisations should have adjusted their programmes better to the needs and problems facing affected people. According to one respondent, *'If a person has some technical skills and he doesn't have resources and related tools then he should be given proper instruments. A plumber needs his plumbing kit, what would he do with a farming kit; or if a person doesn't have cultivable land what would he do with seeds and fertilisers?'*

4.2.5 Infrastructure

Infrastructure in the conflict-affected areas under study was badly damaged by the war and floods and there were some large-scale interventions to rebuild schools, roads, bridges and hospitals, etc. Our research suggests a slower pace of efforts to rebuild infrastructure as compared with 'soft' interventions. Public infrastructure in the region was already in a poor condition[10] before the conflict, and the state was not able to meet the needs of local people in this regard. It was worse in Lower Dir than in Swat, although both districts lag well behind other districts in KP in terms of infrastructure (see Shahbaz et al., 2012). Even though it is not the primary role of relief agencies to rebuild community infrastructure, there were huge expectations of aid agencies to do this. Interviewees stressed that aid agencies focused only on providing short-term relief and did not do enough to help rebuild community infrastructure. Rebuilding of schools was one of the main demands of the local population but very few interventions addressed this issue. As one community leader commented, '*War and then flood damaged our schools and colleges and the education system was badly affected. Donors were required to rebuild them but none of them concentrated on this issue. They were focusing on providing short-term relief to the people.*'

Health was also one of the major priorities, especially for the displaced. Interviewees complained about unhygienic conditions in IDP camps as well as a lack of medical facilities on return to their home area. Much of the public health infrastructure had been destroyed during the war and local health centres lacked staff and medicines. Interviewees complained aid agencies addressed health insufficiently both in the relief as well as in the longer-term recovery interventions.

The most pertinent criticisms of aid agencies was perhaps with regard to the lack of understanding and assessments of how a shortage of infrastructure was affecting the livelihoods programmes they were supporting. Several women, for example, highlighted how they had received seeds for kitchen gardening but were unable to plant them as a result of a lack of water in their area. Similarly, damage to the electrical infrastructure had a significant effect on small and household-level enterprises. As one interviewee explained, '*There are many people in our village who earn their living by making caps with the help of electric sewing machines but electricity is a big issue and very few people can afford an electricity generator.*' Hence, otherwise useful livelihoods interventions that were supported by donors and agencies failed to achieve their full potential.

[10] Several empirical studies (Awais, 2005; Shahbaz, 2009; Steimann, 2004) indicate that people's access to educational and medical institutions was limited even before the conflict. Educational institutions (except primary schools) and medical facilities are located far from most of the villages.

Many respondents highlighted how most agencies would only do ‘soft’ interventions but few were interested in infrastructure projects. Others did not assess how a lack of infrastructure or water might affect their projects. Women, for example, noted that, even though they received seeds for kitchen gardening, lack of water meant they were unable to plant them.

5 Discussion and conclusions

5.1 Conclusions

Post-conflict interventions in conflict-affected Swat and Lower Dir districts of KP can be divided into two broad categories: 1) short-term or immediate relief efforts and 2) long-term rehabilitation interventions. Short-term interventions began immediately after the start of war and gained momentum when IDPs were returning to their homes after the end of war. During the early stages (immediately after the conflict and floods), cash grants, food and non-food items were distributed to returnee IDPs. The rationale behind this was that the IDPs were short of cash and food when they returned to their residences. This strategy helped address the immediate needs of affected people. The floods also temporarily destroyed the farming system and therefore free distribution of food was an appropriate strategy. Similarly, distribution of cash grants was based on the rationale that people needed to rebuild their damaged houses and restart their businesses. These interventions were mostly supported by international organisations and implemented at the local level in coordination with government agencies (PaRRSA, PDMA). Most organisations did not conduct systematic surveys for short-term relief interventions but relied on rapid assessments through the collection of information from local informants or community leaders.

Wary of the security situation, aid agencies adopted two major strategies in carrying out their activities in post-conflict rehabilitation: most agencies worked through 'focal persons' and some used village-level committees for aid disbursement. We might argue that aid agencies selected focal persons with genuinely 'good intentions', assuming they knew the people of the area well and could help with identifying the most vulnerable. However, as we have seen, the majority of respondents did not think the strategy of selecting focal persons (who were mostly local influential persons) was appropriate and frequently complained about misuse of power, favouritism and corruption. People's perceptions with regard to working through village committees and local organisations were more positive. In this context, similar to what Goovaerts et al. (2006) suggest for other post-conflict situations, there were major trade-offs between the urgency of meeting the immediate needs of conflict-affected people and ensuring inclusive and equitable community processes and avoiding social exclusion. The risk of resource capture by elites and powerful elements in the community, as well as the danger of reinforcing social exclusion and inequalities, was also pertinent.

As this research has shown, those with fewer political and social contacts (social capital), women, landless farmers (tenants), those living in marginal and remote areas and extremely poor people were often deprived of assistance.

Long-term interventions focused on rebuilding livelihoods through the distribution of agricultural inputs, agricultural tools, livestock and poultry birds, arranging capacity-building trainings and rebuilding damaged public infrastructure. However, many aid agencies implemented predetermined packages that they could not adapt easily to people's specific needs. Capacity-building and trainings were generally appreciated by those interviewed, but only where programmes had assessed the kinds of skills needed locally, and where they included the provision of tools and inputs to continue using the skills or set up a business afterwards. Programmes targeting women specifically were most successful where they took local norms and cultural constraints into account and where organisations had built relations and trust with community members, particularly the men.

The findings of the research indicate weaknesses mainly around the implementation of aid agency interventions and lack of assessment and understanding of local power and institutional structures. While many of the programmes in principle had good intentions and the right analysis of what was

needed, they could often not achieve their stated objective as programmes were derailed or captured by local elites.

5.2 Challenges and options

This paper has underlined many key challenges regarding the implementation of short- and longer-term aid agency interventions in the post-conflict and post-disaster context of two districts in north-west Pakistan.

Elite capture is a common issue in livelihood-related interventions in many developing countries, and Pakistan is no exception. The problem of social exclusion and local power capture has also arisen in other contexts: for instance, Anderson (2010) concluded that, in Nepal, aid had mostly benefited elites and advantaged groups and provided little benefit to socially excluded groups. She argued it was critical that aid address local grievances, including income inequalities and unequal access to benefits. Likewise, on the basis of the World Bank's and International Labour Organization's (ILO's) experience in development assistance, Goovaerts et al. (2006) argue that there are challenges regarding the dominance of elites and powerful elements in most post-war contexts, and consequent inequalities in such communities.

Keeping in view that elite capture is at times inevitable and will remain a challenge in these contexts, donor agencies need to invest more in a thorough understanding and analysis of local context and power relations, particularly the institutional landscape (informal and formal institutions). A better understanding, and better tools to gain such an understanding, may help minimise the risks of elite capture and enable more equitable targeting, particularly in long-term interventions.

Systematic, local-level needs assessments are particularly challenging to carry out during the early phase of an emergency. However, during early and long-term recovery, there is often more scope for thorough assessments and contextual analysis before proceeding with interventions. While our study indicates that, in the context of Swat and Lower Dir, macro-level assessments and overall analysis of needs were often done, micro-level assessments and analysis were not sufficient. As we have shown, local organisations that have often been in the area for prolonged periods of time and have gained the trust of the communities could be of help to international organisations, which could harness their contacts, experience and greater insights into the local context.

Support to agriculture was mostly limited to distribution of seeds and fertilisers, but aid agencies should also consider other options beyond the (often late) supply of these. Relevant trainings, supporting extension services and facilitation of marketing of products should be considered as part of livelihood interventions. Similarly, although provision of livestock such as goats and poultry was generally appreciated, better assessments of their suitability for the local environment and the kinds of trainings people need to look after them are needed. Local livestock and agricultural experts should be involved in these types of interventions. Although there is a full-fledged government department of agricultural extension at the district and even at the UC level, it seems they were not able to handle the crisis situation, nor did they seem to have been involved or consulted on any of these interventions.

Targeting landless farmers and tenants, poorer households, females and people living is remote areas is a real challenge for agencies working in conflict- and disaster-affected regions. Shahbaz et al. (2012) highlight how, because of security concerns, international NGOs rarely reach into the more remote rural areas of Malakand. These organisations may be able to work more closely with local organisations as they have different perceptions and experiences with regard to security risks. Likewise, access to women by foreign NGOs is almost impossible, and local organisations can be very helpful in this regard. Local patterns of migration also need to be understood to make interventions more effective and to avoid social exclusion.

The challenges of including women need to be properly understood when planning any intervention. Some of the interventions, such as provision of agricultural inputs and cash for work, were not suitable for women in the local context. Very few women own land, given customary practices, so the number of female beneficiaries for these is likely small. Similarly, since women are restricted to their homes and gardens, they are not in a position to participate and benefit from cash for work schemes in KP.

One of the major demands of local communities was support to rebuild destroyed public infrastructure (schools, hospitals, water supply) and, although they often had unrealistic expectations of aid agencies in this regard, they thought this issue had received inadequate attention. Given that aid agencies have limitations in terms of both financial and human resources to take on major infrastructure projects, the state holds the key responsibility to support its citizens in the reconstruction of civic infrastructure. Technical support, information-sharing and coordination with the relevant government agencies may provide opportunities in this regard.

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