Global Protection Cluster

PAKISTAN

Protection Cluster
Findings of consultations with Tirah Valley returning population at departure points
15 – 17 September

The planned return of the population displaced from Tirah Bagh Maidan started as planned on 15th September 2013. Amidst concerns, the humanitarian community decided to support the Government in the process, as a way to uphold the will of thepopulation to return. The Protection Cluster through a representation of its members (UNHCR, EHSAR, IRC, NRC, CERD, PADO, PVDP, and the Child Protection Commission KP) organized a joint monitoring at the planned departure points in Jerma (Kohat District) and New Durrani (Kurram Agency), while waiting for the permission to reach the drop off points and the return areas[1]. This short note presents a series of initial qualitative findings of the first three days of the return process (15 – 17 September), undertaken through consultations with Key Informants (KI) and through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)[2]. It also briefly summarizes some of the recent development in the return process and their consequences. It concludes with few recommendations for consideration by the humanitarian community.

1. General return trends and consultations

- The first three days of the return process saw shifting trends. On the first day the return was already sizeable in New Durrani Camp departure point, both for camp and for off-camp populations (see below), while the departures from Jerma/Kohat were sluggish. This trend was completely reversed on the second and third day, due to the suspension of the return of the main tribe set to depart from New Durrani (Bar Qambar Khel tribe), as announced by FDMA. Overall, according to FDMA, 567 families/ 2003 individuals returned from 15 to 17 September (45.6% women).

Figure 1: return trends 15-17 September (Source FDMA)[3]
http://www.fdma.gov.pk/index.php/news-a-events/126-dsr-of-return-of-dp-families-to-bagh-maidan-tirah-khyber-agency

	Location																
Day	Jerma					New Durrani					Grand Total					Remarks	Source
	Fam	M	F	%F	Total Ind	Fam	M	F	%F	Total Ind	Fam	M	F	%F	TOT IND		
15/09/2013	48	59	9	13.2%	68	215	500	457	47.8%	957	263	559	466	45.5%	1025	ND: 109 fam Camp; 106 fam off-camp	FDMA
16/09/2013	123	197	90	31.4%	287	3	3	4	57.1%	7	126	200	94	32.0%	294		FDMA
17/09/2013	178	372	312	45.6%	684	0	0	0	0.0%	0	178	372	312	45.6%	684		FDMA/ UNHCR

[1]NOC Granted to the Protection Cluster Mission on 16 September; the mission left on 18 September.
[2]Monitoring teams were instructed to choose the less disruptive type of consultation for the IDPs engaged in the return procedures.
[3]Statistics represents the number of families that declared to be returning. It is currently estimated from VRF data that 60% return entirely

- During the first three days, the protection Cluster partners conducted 46 discussions with returning population (35 with KI representing families and 11 FGDs), consulting some 352 individuals (19.3% women). Male between 18 and 59 years old represented the overwhelming majority of the consulted IDPs (65%), but older persons were also represented (9%) as well as youth (9.7%). 2.6% of the consulted women were reportedly heading household.

2. General observations on trends

- IDP families were generally happy to participate at the return process.
- Family splitting was observed, especially during the first day in the Kohat/Jerma departure point. During the consultations feedback was generally mixed and a clear trend was not visible. Some families indicated that only part of family is returning now, and in some cases the family was even retaining the rented accommodation in areas of displacement. Others declared to be already returning with all family members. The return of complete families can also be inferred from the statistics in terms of number of women that reportedly return[4]. The presence of children was also observed, when the entire family was returning.
- As foreseeable, IDPs who opted for a phased return, partially now and partially in spring, stated that only male family members presently intended to visit their native place and assess the situation. The remaining members of the family would return once the conditions are perceived as satisfactory and the shelter is repaired. Health and education were also highlighted as factors determining the phased return, when families had school-attending children or members receiving medical assistance in areas of displacement.
- It cannot be excluded that IDPs returning alone were also taking an opportunity to undertake a "Go and See" visit in areas of origin. This was more evident during the first day at the Jerma departure point, where IDPs who came to collect their regular food ration realized that the return was ongoing and decided on the spot to embark on the convoy to visit their areas of origin.
- None of consulted IDPs affirmed to have been put under pressure to return. However, in a good number of cases, the impression was that the families believed that they had to return jointly.
- Most families who approach the departure areas were registered IDPs. Sporadic cases[5] were identified as families who were not previously registered and thus eligible to participate to the organized return at this stage.

3. Access to information and highlighted needs

- As foreseen, access to information on the process and the entitlements was generally weak, largely due to the late start of the information campaign and the lack of clarity on some of the elements under the responsibility of the authorities: timelines, process, activities at departure points and assistance offered by the Government, including the "Cash grant" and the compensation. Not surprisingly, the majority of the consulted IDPs admitted that communities were not properly informed. The knowledge initially seemed to be higher amongst population in New Durrani, and seemed to increase in Jerma as time passed (e.g. in the consultation of the last days).

- Most of the consulted IDPs declared to have received information on the organized return through relatives and local authorities. IDPs were informed between one to five days in advance about the return, and a good majority remarked the missing elements in the information. Generally, when disseminated by the authorities

[4] In the de-registration phase, the Voluntary return Form (VRF) marked the family members that the HoH declared to be immediately returning from those members who were to remain in displacement. More data analysis can follow.

[5] 2 families reported through a KI in Jerma

(FDMA) or by the community leaders ("Maliks"), the information reached IDPs few days before the actual start of the process, although it was very generic in nature. Conversely, IDPs who relied on the formal information campaign obtained more detailed information but later in time. It was also reported by some of the monitoring teams that IDPs who arrived in Jerma for the regular food distribution on 15 September brought informative material (leaflet) back to their current residencies in Kohat or Peshawar.

- In general, there was a substantial lack of information about almost all aspects in the process of return for at least half of the consulted population. This refers particularly to timelines and routes, reception facilities in areas of return, onward transportation to villages of origin. While during the first day of return on 15 September consulted IDPs did not receive any information on the granted assistance, IDPs consulted the following days were already informed about the transport modalities and partially on the assistance.

- Only some 40% of the consulted IDPs seemed to be somehow aware of the available material assistance, sometimes as they had just received the assistance when interviewed. There was a general tendency to anticipate that NFIs will be distributed, considering also that they are standard items provided by the humanitarian community during the displacement cycle.

- The knowledge on the food assistance regime, i.e. the inclusion of the whole families in the return cycle, and information on the point where food assistance will be delivered was also somehow mixed. Generally, this was explained by the humanitarian workers on the ground.

- A generalized lack of knowledge was evident on the Government housing compensation regime as well as on the additional type of assistance that the Government would provide. Some of the comments gathered indicated that returning IDPs were sometimes skeptical to receive any substantial support from the authorities.

- At least 50% of the consulted returning IDPs lacked knowledge regarding the security situation in areas of origin. The information that they possessed seemed generally to come from indirect sources and was an element of uncertainty in the whole decision-making process. Some groups of IDPs asked for assurances to the monitors, who referred them to FDMA representatives.

- The perception of the security situation was mixed. Based on information received by the Government or by relatives, in some 40% of the consultations returning IDPs expressed confidence in the stabilization of the area. In several other consultations returning IDPs declared that security was their main uncertainty and the factor that could determine the permanent or temporary character of their return. This was particularly cited by those IDPs returning with the whole family.

- In general, none of the consulted returning IDPs knew about the "Go and See Visit" reportedly organized by the Government in the past weeks with a group of community representatives and that could have provided useful information for the rest of the communities on the situation in Tirah Valley[6].

- Few consulted IDPs expressed concern on the presence of mines and UXOs. Some IDPs seemed to be convinced that this was not an issue; others simply highlighted the complete lack of knowledge.

[6]Despite initial reassurances, the humanitarian community has never been briefed by the Government on the results of the "Go and See" visit, not is it clear if it ever took place.

- IDPs seemed to be more confident in their expectations on the status of their house. Tribes leaving from New Durrani reported less damage in their areas, but the majority of the IDP leaving from Kohat declared to be sure that their house was partially or completely destroyed[7].

- In general, returning IDPs explicitly asked for more information on the security situation in Tirah, the content of return packages, the house compensation regime as well as the authorities' plans for rehabilitation of the Tirah Valley area.

4. Other observations

- The vehicles that the authorities / FDMA put at the disposal of the IDPs were mainly 4x4 vehicles / pickups. They were put to the test by the rough terrain and by the overcharged load (families, belongings etc.)
- Authorities were present throughout the process, trying to promote the return, including amongst the IDPs who had arrived in Kohat for the food distribution.
- The overall organization of the departure process was positively assessed by the returnees, although not all of them were aware of all the functions of the various Desks. Protection Cluster partners present on the ground invested efforts to increase the visibility of the various services and to properly direct families to the Child Desk or the immunization desk.
- The presence of the Child Desk managed by the Child Protection Commission of KP and the Social Welfare Department of FATA was observed in both departure locations. In Kohat in particular, the role of the CP Commission and Child Protection partners was very active. The Child Desks did not report any presence of unaccompanied or separated children.
- IDPs travelling to the departure points did not report any specific security incident. Most of the returning IDPs travelled with their own means to the departure points. No families/individuals were prevented from entering the departure area, although a large number of families had to wait outside due to space constraints.
- Regrettably, no medical support was observed during the travel.

5. Concerns on the process

- As predicted, the still unstable weather conditions on the first day prevented the convoys to reach the ultimate destination at villages of origin. All departing convoys from Kohat/ Jerma and New Durrani were compelled to stop at the reception area in Merdan Bah or at another point on the way from Kurram to Tirah (Haider Khandao) and reportedly had to stay overnight in those locations. This may have created some difficult conditions for persons with specific needs.

- Since monitoring in areas of return initiated only from September 17[8], there is not yet a complete understanding on the arrangements in the official reception area in Merdan Bah, including whether gender-sensitive criteria have been considered in the set-up (e.g. separation of the areas, separate facilities etc).

- As reported by FDMA, on 15 September the return of the Bar Qambar Khel Tribe, originating from the western part of Tirah bordering Kurram, started regularly and with a good turnout of families. However, the convoy was halted on the way in Haider Khandao by the weather conditions as well as by some emerging disagreement between the local authorities (civil and military) and the elders' jirga. Reportedly, the

[7] It cannot be excluded that this was also due to the fact that the interviews were conducted by humanitarian organizations, known to be providing assistance.
[8] Protection Cluster Mission to Tirah 18-20 September

negotiation related to the request from the Military authorities to declare the identity of the tribesmen in charge for the security of the communities, to obtain assurances that those elements will not be factors of a new destabilization of the area or could otherwise pose a security threat. At the moment of drafting, the negotiations were still ongoing and the return from New Durrani was de facto suspended, as evident from the statistical trends. The episode raises concerns on the fact that the organized return process, including the signing of the VRF, may also be used for non-humanitarian purposes.

6. Developments on 18 and 19 September

- The departure site in New Durrani remained closed on 18 September as returns were suspended till further notice due to the negotiations between the Jirga of the Bar Qambar Khel Tribe and the authorities[9].

- On 18 September, FDMA and the Political Administration of Khyber Agency decided to temporarily suspend the return of Tirah IDPs from the Jerma Departure point until Sunday 22 September. Only families already arrived in the previous days were to be supported in the return process[10], with a factual halt of all operations from Friday 20 to Sunday 22 September included. The suspension of the return was motivated by the challenges for the authorities in maintaining effective transport arrangements due to the extremely difficult terrain conditions. The deferral was also necessary to complete the September monthly food cycle distribution, which was undertaken at the same time and in the same location. This arrangement had in fact created a high concentration of population in the Jerma assistance hub, creating potential security risks, and reportedly disorienting the IDPs and returning IDPs on the different processes and assistance regime.

- Concerns arose about IDP returning families that were already lined up for return at the moment of the suspension, having signed the VRF or having been pre-listed, as well as about the adequate information of the suspension to potential returnees that were planning to reach Jerma. A new round of mass information was organized. Reportedly, the returning IDPs who found themselves in Jerma at the moment of the deferral had to spend the night in the area around the departure site, initially with no supporting facilities such as shelter or medical services, including for women and children. This created additional humanitarian constraints. Later in the day, the authorities put in place some limited mitigating measures, such as a shaded area outside the departure site for women, children and older persons, the provision of cooked meals and a medical doctor on call in the departure areas.

- On 19 September the registered families that had been waiting in the departure area in Jerma were able to start their return journey. Reportedly, tucks and heavy vehicles were used to transport the families. The departure from Jerma was delayed to the end morning. When the families reached Orakzai they could not proceed further due to the inadequate transport and due to the late arrival, which would have made the journey to Tirah Valley unsafe. After waiting for some hours in Orakzai, families were directed back to the departure site in Jerma, where they arrived in the evening well after dark hour. To relieve the families the authorities organized an emergency distribution of hot meals, supported by some humanitarian actors.

[9] At the moment of writing this report there was no information on any resolution or agreement reached.

[10] Reportedly, 291 families/ 1,198 individuals (622 male and 576 female) previously arrived in Jerma returned on 18-19 September.

7. Main Recommendations

- Before the resumption of the return process, it is of utmost importance that the authorities present and adhere to a solid and detailed operational plan for the return to Tirah Valley in order to avoid unnecessary additional distress for the returnee families, particularly considering the presence of women, children, older persons and persons with disabilities.
- Reinforce the information campaign on the return process through several measures:
  - restate the principle of the voluntary and free choice to return and the option for the phased return later in spring;
  - improve the quality and depth of information;
  - continue to disseminate information on the return through diverse channels (TV, radio, newspapers, leaflets, information centers in all areas of displacement) with increased involvement of FDMA;
  - make sure that the helplines provided by the Government are also functioning and well equipped.

  The presence of IOM and the inception of the Humanitarian Communication program should provide positive support to the Government/FDMA in this respect.
- FDMA should disseminate the information on the results of the "Go and see visit" and the feedback of the elders who participated. This information should be disseminated to the communities.
- FDMA should increase the level of details (timing, process, necessary documentation…) regarding the planned Government assistance for the returnees, most notably the foreseen 25,000 PKR "Cash Grant" and the house compensation and disseminate this information effectively to all IDPs and returning IDPs.
- The Protection Cluster partners should continue their presence and monitoring in the New Durrani camp and registration centre to understand the situation and the evolution of the case of the Bar Qambar Khel Tribe.
- Efforts shall be put to adequately inform and provide documentation assistance to families registered as Tirah Valley IDPs but whose registration was not cleared by NADRA so that they may be assisted in return in the spring phase.
- The current measures to support the organized return, including the presence of the Child Desks, Health Desks, and information desks, should be continued and strengthened, including with MRE.
- During the return process, the presence of medical staff should be ensured. As the conditions of the terrain will unlikely allow for the deployment of ambulances, some fixed health posts in Dabori way station or in the reception area in Bagh Maidan should be arranged.
- Any additional activity at departure point, such as the regular food distribution, should be avoided not to create unmanageable fluxes of persons and related security challenges and to ensure a clear communication on the processes and entitlements for the return to Tirah Valley.
- FMDA should urgently solve the transport arrangements to avoid any future situation of stranded families.
- Humanitarian actors should be facilitated in increasing their access and presence on the return route and in areas of return to undertake monitoring and consultations with the returnees, including on challenges, needs, and access to assistance and services, and for referral of cases to FDMA, the FATA social institutions etc.

Protection Cluster Peshawar/Islamabad 19 September 2013

Annex I Overview of consultations

General Information					1. Profile of the population consulted												
					Age/ Gender Profile												
					13 – 17		18 – 39		40- 60		> 60		TOTAL		GRAND TOTAL		
Date	Place of consultation	Place of consultation Location	Org	Type	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F		Women HH	Persons with disabilities
15/09/2013	Kohat	UC Jerma	IRC	KI						1			0	1	1	Nil	Nil
15/09/2013	Kohat	UC Jerma	IRC	KI				1					0	1	1	Nil	Nil
15/09/2013	Kohat	UC Jerma	IRC	KI						1			0	1	1	Nil	Nil
15/09/2013	Kurram	New Durrani IDP Camp	CERD	KI					1				1	0	1	Nil	Nil
15/09/2013	Kurram	New Durrani IDP Camp	CERD	FGD			3		6		8		17	0	17	Nil	Nil
15/09/2013	Kurram	New Durrani IDP Camp	CERD	FGD		4		15		5		1	0	25	25	Nil	Nil
15/09/2013	Kohat	Jerma	PADO	FGD	2		4		2		1		9	0	9	Nil	Nil
15/09/2013	Kohat	Jerma	PADO	KI					1				1	0	1	Nil	Nil
15/09/2013	Kohat	Jarma	NRC	KI						1			0	1	1	Nil	Nil
15/09/2013	Kohat	Jarma	NRC	KI						1			0	1	1	Nil	Nil
15/09/2013	Kohat	Jarma	NRC	KI						1			0	1	1	Nil	Nil
15/09/2013	Kohat	Jarma	NRC	KI				1					0	1	1	Nil	Nil
15/09/2013	Kohat	jarma	NRC	KI				1					0	1	1	Nil	Nil
15/09/2013	Kohat	Jerma	NRC	FGD			14		7				21	0	21	Nil	Nil
16/09/2013	Kohat	Food Distr. Point Jerma	CPU Kohat	FGD	2		20		20		1		43	0	43	Nil	Nil
16/09/2013	Kohat	UC Sudal	IRC	FGD			13						13	0	13	Nil	Nil
16/09/2013	Kohat	UC Jerma	IRC	KI				1				1	0	2	2	1	Nil
16/09/2013	Kohat	UC Jerma	IRC	KI				1					0	1	1	Nil	Nil
16/09/2013	Kohat	UC Jerma	IRC	KI						1			0	1	1	Nil	Nil
16/09/2013	Kohat	UC Jerma	IRC	KI						1			0	1	1	1	Nil
16/09/2013	Kohat	Thugh Bala/Host area	IRC	KI					2	7			2	7	9	Nil	Nil
16/09/2013	Kohat	Jerma	IRC	KI			1		1				2	0	2	Nil	Nil
16/09/2013	Kohat	Jerma	IRC	KI					1				1	0	1	Nil	Nil
16/09/2013	Kohat	Jerma	IRC	KI			1						1	0	1	Nil	Nil
16/09/2013	Kohat	Jerma	PADO	FGD	1		3		5		2		11	0	11	Nil	Nil
16/09/2013	Kohat	Jerma	NRC	KI				1					0	1	1	1	Nil
16/09/2013	Kohat	Jerma	NRC	KI						1			0	1	1	Nil	Nil
16/09/2013	Kohat	Jerma	NRC	KI								1	0	1	1	1	Nil
17/09/2013	Kohat	Food Distr. Point Jerma	CPU Kohat	FGD	20		65		28		9		122	0	122	Nil	Nil
17/09/2013	Kohat	Jerma	PADO	FGD				3		2		1	0	6	6	Nil	Nil
17/09/2013	Kohat	Jerma	PADO	FGD	2		4		4		4		14	0	14	Nil	Nil
17/09/2013	Kohat	Jerma	NRC	KI						1			0	1	1	1	Nil
17/09/2013	Kohat	Jerma	NRC	KI				1					0	1	1	Nil	Nil
17/09/2013	Kohat	Jerma	NRC	KI						1			0	1	1	1	Nil
17/09/2013	Kohat	Jerma	NRC	KI						1			0	1	1	1	Nil
17/09/2013	Kohat	Jerma	NRC	KI				1						1	1	Nil	Nil
17/09/2013	Kohat	Jerma	NRC	KI				1					0	1	1	1	Nil
17/09/2013	Kohat	Jerma	NRC	KI						1			0	1	1	Nil	Nil
17/09/2013	Kohat	Jerma	NRC	KI								1	0	1	1	1	Nil
17/09/2013	Kohat	Jerma	NRC	FGD	3		12		9		2		26	0	26	Nil	1
18/09/2013	Kohat	Jerma (out. dep. area)	UNHCR	KI						1			0	1	1	Nil	Nil
18/09/2013	Kohat	Jerma (out. dep. area)	UNHCR	KI						1			0	1	1	Nil	Nil
18/09/2013	Kohat	Jerma (out. dep. area)	UNHCR	KI						1			0	1	1	Nil	Nil
18/09/2013	Kohat	Jerma (out. dep. area)	UNHCR	KI						1			0	1	1	Nil	Nil
18/09/2013	Kohat	Jerma (out. dep. area)	UNHCR	KI				1					0	1	1	Nil	Nil
18/09/2013	Kohat	Jerma (out. dep. area)	UNHCR	KI				1					0	1	1	Nil	Nil
			KI	35	30	4	140	29	87	30	27	5	284	68	352	9	1
			FGD	11	8.5%	1.1%	39.8%	8.2%	24.7%	8.5%	7.7%	1.4%	80.7%	19.3%	100.0%	2.6%	0.3%

Annex II – Photos at departure site

Photos 1-6: Departure from Kohat/Jerma and set up of the support Desks in the departure areas/ Photo Child Protection Commission KP
Photo 7: Return of families to Jerma Departure point in the night of 19 September after the unsuccessful return journey to Tirah/ Photo UNHCR