

# Proposal for Summer Research Grant at American Institute of Pakistan Studies

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In the wake of the military crackdown on Taliban in the north-west of the country, Pakistan has had to face one of the largest internal displacements in history. Since 2004, almost 3 million people have had to flee their homes in order to avoid the repercussions of civil violence<sup>1</sup>. Quite a few of them have settled temporarily into government camps set up for Internally Displaced People (IDPs). In other parts of the country, recent floods have necessitated another mass displacement of people with many IDP camps being set up in Balochistan and Sindh.

Although the average income for the displaced who take shelter in camps is likely to be low across the board, important differences do exist between the IDPs who were displaced due to conflict as opposed to those displaced due to the floods. Interestingly, most of the IDPs currently settled in Jalozai camp, close to Nowshera and located within the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, originated from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan. FATA has historically been administered through the Federal Crimes Regulation (FCR) of 1901 that does not guarantee the same access to human rights and justice as the constitution of Pakistan guarantees to other citizens. Even universal suffrage was introduced in FATA only as recently as 1995 and anecdotal evidence suggests that it is still usurped by tribal leaders who forbid others to vote. Conflict IDPs living in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, therefore, now have access to justice through national courts and to the democracy at large through the right to vote.

Given these historical insights, I want to conduct an empirical study of how moving from ungoverned spaces to institutionally governed spaces has an impact on people's perception of the government. By comparing conflict and flood IDPs, the effect of merely living in camps will be accounted for, allowing me to estimate the precise effect of displacement due to conflict. I will, however, have to control for the effect of other confounding variables such as the district of origin, average household income and the level of educational attainment.

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<sup>1</sup>(Brief, 2009)

Current empirical literature on IDPs is very sparse. Steele (2007;2009) explores the reasons for displacement, particularly as a strategy of the armed groups, but does not touch upon possible interventions within these camps that may lead to a better status of living for the IDPs. Literature on the conditions of those living in concentrated communities exists in the case of Palestinian and Kenyan refugee camps<sup>2</sup> but it is mostly qualitative. The research focuses on how children living in camps are more inclined towards violence, both within the camps, and later in life as possible recruits for armed groups. There is also work on how to improve public goods delivery in the area of health and education to lessen the negative impacts of long periods spent in exile.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, there is no empirical analysis that has been done on the IDP camps in Pakistan. Despite the dire need to improvise methods of increasing the social mobility of IDPs, academics have not yet taken to the area due to dearth of data as well as severe security issues. Currently, three major organizations are involved in the collection of data regarding Pakistan IDPs; the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), Internally Displaced Person Vulnerability Assessment and Profiling (IVAP) and Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). Most of this data consists of aggregate figures but is not yet available for researchers. My purpose in going to Pakistan this summer is to gage the possibility of accessing these camps, for initial data collection and a possible cash-assistance intervention field experiment.

I have established contacts with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) which is heading the IVAP project as well as the Norwegian Refugee Council; under their auspices, I will be able to conduct several trips to the IDP camps. My pilot methodology will be to conduct a survey of about a 125 residents each in a flood camp and an IDP camp and carry out an exploratory analysis of the surveys. After having assessed accessibility issues and the viability of my hypothesis, it is possible to extend this project by conducting a more comprehensive survey as well as initiating a field experiment to assess factors that facilitate the return of the IDPs. Since security and financial hindrances have been oft-cited as reasons for not returning, a study of political perceptions coupled with a microfinance field experiment will shed evidential light on these factors. Such a study will directly address the current gap in empirical literature while also informing humanitarian policy for both the government as well as the non- governmental organizations working in Pakistan.

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<sup>2</sup>See for example(Hart, 2008)

<sup>3</sup>(Wright and Plasterer, 2010)

## References

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