

The Quagmire of Internal Displacement: Reinstatement Challenges and Counter Strategies in District Swat, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

In the period following the military operation against insurgents in the Swat district during 2009–10, the Pakistani government, with support from international organizations, initiated a comprehensive program aimed at the rehabilitation and reintegration of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). This research study utilizes the Delphi method to gather data through face-to-face interviews with officials involved in the rehabilitation efforts. The analysis revealed a range of challenges, such as security threats, infrastructural deficiencies, bureaucratic complexities, educational system revival, unmet donor commitments, financial constraints, weakened local governance, and communication breakdowns. Despite these obstacles, strategic interventions have ameliorated the IDPs' conditions, including enhanced security, temporary infrastructure, international partnerships, makeshift educational provisions, and a dedicated rehabilitation budget. Nevertheless, the full rehabilitation of IDPs remains an unachieved goal. This article suggests that successfully reintegrating affected communities requires innovative strategies tailored to Pakistan's unique socio-structural context, which could serve as a model for similar situations globally.

Keywords: District Swat, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), Pakistan, rehabilitations challenges, reinstatement, returnees

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INTRODUCTION

Pakistan is susceptible to experiencing internal displacement caused by social and natural disasters (Sayed & González, 2014; Shah et al., 2018). In 2009-10,

a military operation against insurgents followed by a devastating flood forced around 2.3 million people to flee from Pakistan's Swat district (Ahmad, 2018; Din, 2010; Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2012). This turbulence wreaked havoc on the local infrastructure and collapsed the socioeconomic conditions (Asian Development Bank, 2010). Reports illustrate that nearly 400 schools, 8500 houses, and several hotels and shops were partially or fully destroyed (Provincial Disaster Management Authority, 2019). The government's main challenge was reinstating the internally displaced persons (IDPs) who returned to their original place of residence after the completion of the military operation in 2010 (Sayeed & Shah, 2017). With the help of national and international NGOs and donor organizations, the government of Pakistan launched multifaceted plans for the rehabilitation and reinstatement of IDPs (Khan, 2011; Rafiq et al., 2021; Rafiq, Hassan, 2022). However, reinstating the IDPs and re-establishing normality in Swat was an unprecedented challenge due to the scale and speed of the repatriation (Ahmad, 2018; Zahid, 2012).

Several studies (Ahmad, 2018; Ahmad et al., 2017; Akhunzada et al., 2015; Azim et al., 2018; Din, 2010) have probed into the history and reasons behind the mass displacement of people from district Swat. Some studies have researched the socioeconomic conditions of IDP returnees, often relying on quantitative data and structured tools for data collection (Khan & De Nardi, 2024; Rafiq et al., 2021; Rafiq,

Hassan, 2022; Swaroop & DeLoach, 2015). A few studies have reported a grim situation of the rehabilitation and reinstatement of IDPs from district Swat. For example, bad governance, mismanagement, corruption, and nepotism impeded the rehabilitation and reinstatement of IDPs in Swat (Bangash, 2012; Elahi, 2015). Some studies have documented not only the lack of existence of a uniform policy at the state level to deal with the issue of Internal Displacement effectively but also have reported the no adherence to the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and Rehabilitation (Ahmad, 2018; Ahmad et al., 2017; Din, 2010). Research advocates that appropriate resettlement programs significantly improve subjective well-being (Randell, 2016) and that the happiness of people is associated with the resettlement scheme and associated social, cultural, and economic transformations (Boadi et al., 2022; Danquah et al., 2014; Herath et al., 2017; Xu et al., 2021).

The scholarly landscape notably lacks detailed examinations that illuminate the complexities and apply solutions in rehabilitating and reintegrating Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) within the Swat district. This deficiency underscores an imperative to thoroughly explore the barriers and impacts stemming from rehabilitation efforts on the return of IDPs to Swat. This investigation is of paramount importance as it seeks to mend the existing schism by meticulously reviewing a wide range of relevant literature and weaving together various theoretical perspectives pertinent

to the successful rehabilitation of IDPs. Through the lens of firsthand accounts and insights from officials, this study casts a spotlight on the extensive array of challenges encountered. It delineates the strategies devised to overcome these hurdles. This innovative method augments our comprehension of the subject and lays a foundational stone for subsequent inquiries within this field. In this milieu, this study sets forth the following objectives.

1. To explore the political, administrative, and socioeconomic challenges of rehabilitation projects faced during the reinstatement of returnees in Swat, Pakistan.
2. To investigate the counterstrategies adopted by the authorities to cope with political, administrative, and socioeconomic challenges of rehabilitation projects faced during the reinstatement of returnees in Swat, Pakistan.

The scope of this study is to examine the efficacy of rehabilitation initiatives, delving into the insights, obstacles, and tactical responses associated with the rehabilitation process. The research methodically traverses through a critical review of existing literature and a robust theoretical framework, advancing toward the methodologies employed. Subsequently, the findings are revealed, and a thorough discussion is conducted before culminating in a concise conclusion. The study also thoughtfully acknowledges its own limitations, ensuring a balanced and reflective scholarly discourse.

Background of the Study

Swat, a former princely state with an independent government, merged with Pakistan in 1969 to improve the living conditions of its people. However, the merger ended up being a failure and had a negative impact on the local population (Khan & De Nardi, 2024). The English judicial system introduced did not align with the local population's customs and failed to outperform the traditional Jirga, a conflict resolution system based on Sharia Law (Lutfullah et al., 2022). Jirga was an effective forum for solving issues between the government and the militants. Still, due to differences, the Jirga has been manipulated by the state and the militants in Swat. Hence, the higher-level Jirga, such as the Swat Qaumi Jirga (Swat National Jargas), have become increasingly active since 2007, whereas lower-level (village) Jirga have become less common in practice in many parts of Swat (Azim et al., 2018). Consequently, civil and criminal cases that had previously been resolved in a matter of weeks began to drag on for years, causing high costs and stress for those involved (Bangash, 2012).

The genesis of militancy, exemplified by movements such as Tehreek Nifaz-e-Muhammadi (TNSM), started by Maulana Sufi Muhammad in 1989, and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), spearheaded by Maulvi Fazlullah in 2005, is deeply rooted in the soils of poverty and underdevelopment (Ahmad, 2018; Khan, 2020; Saeed, 2012). These conditions facilitated and accelerated the rise of such movements, serving as

fertile ground for their emergence and proliferation (Hashmi, 2016; Khalid & Helge, 2010; Peracha et al., 2012). In 2008, in an unexpected turn of events, the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) leader took command of the Swat district with a daring pledge: to return the region to its “golden era” under the Wali. This period was marked by the enactment of Sharia Law, offering prompt and cost-free justice, a stark contrast to the pre-merger era. This bold initiative aimed at dispelling the pervasive despair among the people of Swat. Mula Fazalullah, in a courageous move, openly defied the state’s authority, securing considerable support from the public (Adnan, 2012). This support, however, swiftly transformed into widespread turmoil as the TTP embarked on a brutal campaign that included the

beheadings of adversaries, public lashings of both men and women, coerced marriages of women to TTP leaders, mutilation of corpses in public squares, prohibition of female education, and the destruction of law enforcement infrastructure (Khaliq, 2010). This political unrest made the region unsafe (Saeed & Griffin, 2019). This escalation of violence prompted the Pakistani government to launch a military operation against these militants, a move that resulted in the displacement of approximately 2.3 million individuals to safer areas within the country (Ahmad, 2018; Haider, 2009). See the map of district Swat below in Figure 1.

In the repercussion of the military operation’s completion and the subsequent return of internally displaced persons (IDPs), the Swat region faced a devastating flood

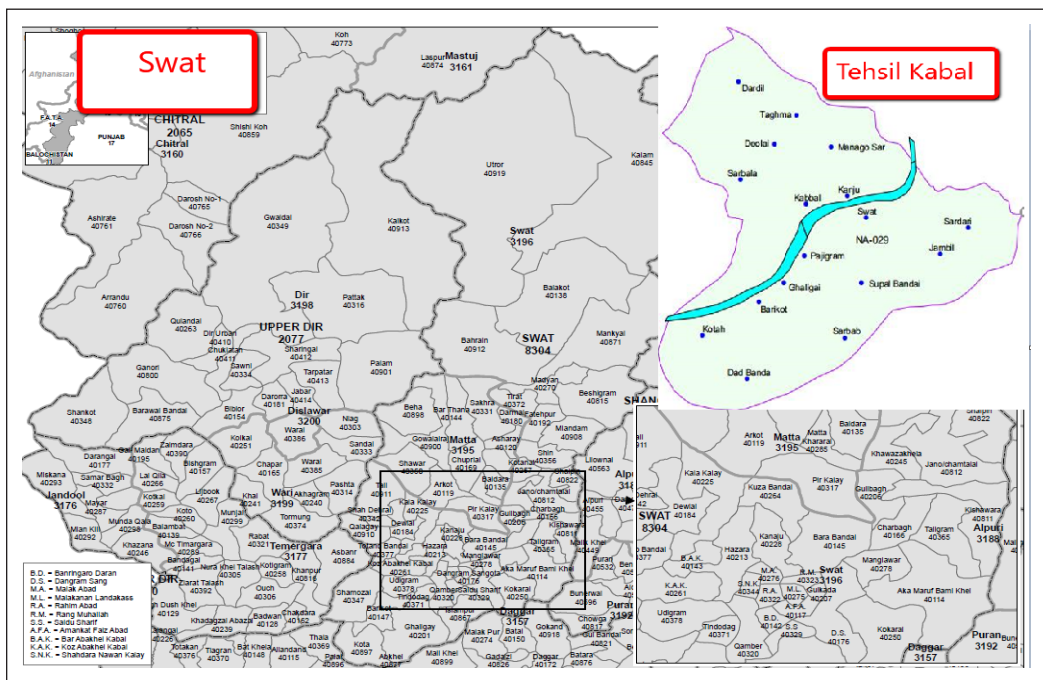


Figure 1. Map of Swat district
 Source: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2010)

(Internal Development Monitoring Centre, 2018). This calamity further exacerbated Swat's tribulations by displacing over a million individuals anew (Internal Development Monitoring Centre, 2018). These events inflicted considerable damage on the local infrastructure and precipitated a collapse in the socioeconomic conditions of the IDPs (Shaheen, 2011). Conversely, the repatriation process was remarkable in its scale and rapidity, presenting the Pakistani government with formidable challenges in facilitating the returnees' reintegration into Swat and the resumption of their normal lives (Shaheen, 2011). Complicating matters, insurgent activities, including kidnappings for ransom and the execution of hundreds of government and international organization employees engaged in rehabilitation efforts, significantly shifted the administrative focus towards security concerns, detracting from the economic and social spheres (Din, 2010). This shift interrupted or decelerated various international organizations' rehabilitation projects (Elahi et al., 2015). Furthermore, the comprehensive restoration of infrastructure—encompassing homes, roads, hospitals, and schools—presented an overwhelming challenge for the government (Zahid, 2012), underscoring the multifaceted nature of the crisis and the intricate path towards recovery.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Various research (Aburas et al., 2018; Ahmad, 2018; Cantor et al., 2021; Ogunode et al., 2022; Rafiq, Hassan, 2022; Rafiq, Saeed, 2022) have been conducted on the

rehabilitation of displaced people. The displacement is a growing concern as people lose their sources of livelihood and become dependent on aid provided by the government and aid agencies (Wistrand, 2023). A study by Kanishchev et al. (2022) found that a sudden influx of IDPs in a new host area can create economic and social issues, such as a decline in wages, pressure on schools, hospitals, and the job market, as well as an increase in crime rates (Khan et al., 2018; Shami, 1993; Ullah et al., 2017). Moreover, most IDPs experience stress and depression, making women, children, and the elderly particularly vulnerable (Morina et al., 2018; Murphy et al., 2018; Ulke et al., 2021).

Besides, the main contributory factors to the long-standing migration phenomena are economic consideration, natural disasters, socio-political issues, demographic growth and urbanization, conflicts, and family reunification (Urbański, 2022). Most migration studies have concentrated on push-pull factors for human migration (Ahmad et al., 2017; Anwar & Ahmad, 2017; Bangash, 2012; Edge et al., 2014). The push factors for displacement include political instability and conflict, whereas the pull factors are the rehabilitation projects that might improve their standard of living (Rafiq, Saeed, 2022). Rehabilitation efforts often aim to restore normalcy, including social lives, education, and economic systems (Elahi et al., 2015; Serghiou et al., 2016). In the studies by (Adekola et al., 2024) and (Akilova et al., 2022), it is argued that rebuilding social infrastructure, establishing shelters, and

fostering peace, political reconciliation, and improved security are crucial for encouraging the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their original homes. However, completely restoring the socioeconomic conditions of IDPs requires more time and cost (Salgado-Gálvez, 2018). Unfortunately, rehabilitation projects often lack the necessary resources, such as funding (Lam et al., 2015). According to Bain and Parkinson (2010), rehabilitation projects need huge expenditures because they support the affected people by providing them with employment and business opportunities, ultimately contributing to the country's economy. In such scenarios, aid organizations and NGOs collaborate with the government to provide quick aid and reinstate affected communities (İçduygu, 2015).

Often, the displaced communities experience a decline in their standard of living. For example, it was documented that nearly half of the respondents were unsatisfied with resettlement development schemes for Malaysia's displaced Orang Asli community (Abdullah et al., 2016). However, appropriate rehabilitation programs produce advantageous social and economic benefits for a displaced population to improve subjective well-being (Randell, 2016). One of the most important components of the afflicted individuals' rehabilitation programs is the physical infrastructure, which significantly affects tourism (Bashir et al., 2022). After agriculture, tourism is the second largest source of revenue in Swat, severely impacted by the region's inadequate

physical infrastructure and security threats (Sohail et al., 2023). However, collaboration between the government and local communities, acknowledging the importance of heritage tourism and reinforcing policies for cultural heritage conservation boosts the economy (Ma et al., 2023). In addition, the rehabilitation programs offer opportunities for enhancing the impacted community's hard and soft skills. Employment is improved when technical and practical business knowledge and hard and soft skills demonstrate the coexistence of current and traditional values (Chan et al., 2021). On the contrary, a study conducted by Kinyanjui et al. (2017) examined how rehabilitation processes affect the safety and norms of the residents. For example, the Syrian refugees fled from their country due to security concerns and faced another shelter problem (Molnar, 2017). Thus, the rehabilitation programs have positive and negative consequences depending on the migration's culture, norms, and nature. Positive impacts include increased socioeconomic status, while negative implications include norms, safety, and security challenges.

Research in Pakistan has also revealed positive and negative consequences of relocation and rehabilitation. Internal displacement caused by the construction of the Tarbela Dam in Pakistan, for example, has disturbed social life and the social networks of individuals in the affected areas (Abbasi-Shavazi & Sadeghi, 2015; Magsi & Torre, 2014). Similarly, Edge et al. (2014) also addressed the dynamic socioeconomic

constraints associated with the social and economic development of IDPs in Pakistan. However, the large displacement from Pakistan's Swat Valley presented numerous hurdles for the administration in providing essentials to IDPs and returnees (Akhunzada et al., 2015). Nevertheless, the IDP returnees' socioeconomic condition improved, so the government coped with the situation (Loescher, 2017). A similar finding was carried out by (Elahi, 2015) that the government has been taking considerable measures to promote the resettlement and rehabilitation of IDPs in Swat.

Contrarily, studies indicated that the government had paid little attention to fulfilling humanitarian issues associated with the Swat IDPs and returnees. For example, Khan and Wei (2016) urged that the government provide minimal monetary compensation, which was insufficient to rehabilitate and reinstate the affected people completely. Therefore, it is necessary to reconsider the implementation of rehabilitation programs to protect the rights of IDPs in the country. Adam (2015) criticized the service delivery by supporting and helping authorities to the IDPs in Pakistan. Hence, people cannot access the service at the right time to meet their needs. In addition, Adam (2015) suggested that policymakers and key stakeholders can take necessary actions to protect the rights of marginalized and deprived people in the country. The findings of these studies revealed that, somehow, the returnee's socioeconomic condition improved through rehabilitation,

but the administration has faced various challenges in the rehabilitation process.

In district Swat, the government of Pakistan initially focused on delivering fundamental amenities like food, shelter, healthcare, and infrastructure (Khan et al., 2017). The subsequent stage involved reinstating education, peace, and healthcare and reviving the economic and social sectors, as mentioned by Bhatti and Shah (2017). According to research, the government encountered various obstacles while carrying out rehabilitation programs (Abbasi-Shavazi & Sadeghi, 2015; Lam et al., 2015; Peterson et al., 2018). Therefore, this study explores the challenges and strategies adopted for reinstating returnees IDPs in Swat, Pakistan.

Theoretical Background

This study draws on Kukrit Pramoj's (1957-58) theory of good governance, emphasizing effective, transparent, and accountable political systems for managing change (Waters, 2022). In Swat, Pakistan, stakeholders encountered multiple hurdles during rehabilitation, such as inadequate infrastructure, approval processes, budget allocation, and local governance issues, as illustrated in Figure 2. Pramoj's theory posits that robust governance is essential for rehabilitation projects' well-being, security, and success. We argue that safeguarding the rights of internally displaced persons (IDPs) depends on the successful implementation of these projects through good governance. This research highlights the obstacles faced in managing and reintegrating IDPs,

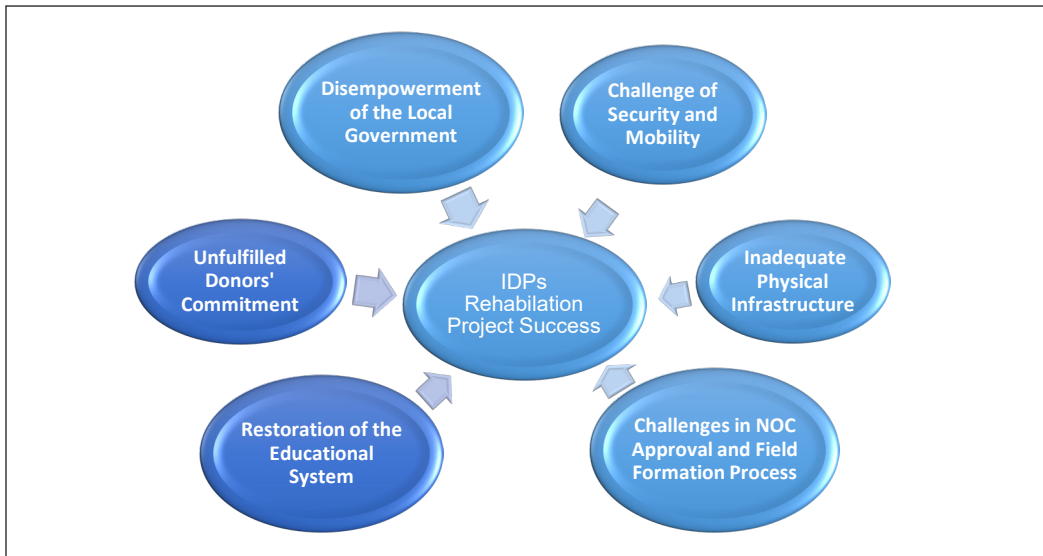


Figure 2. Theoretical background of the study (Source: Authors' work)

using Pramoj's framework to explore how public and private institutions address these challenges.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research study employed an exploratory research method. Specifically, the Delphi technique, including interviews with officials involved in the planning and executing rehabilitation processes, was used for data generation. The Delphi method's systematic and unbiased approach aligns well with rehabilitation research's dynamic and interdisciplinary nature, making it effective for achieving consensus and generating valuable insights (Al-Qawasmi et al., 2021; Landeta, 2006). Further, the interview process creates an environment of trust where participants feel heard and valued (Mason et al., 2010). It goes beyond a simple Q&A session, fostering a genuine exchange of thoughts and perspectives

(Creswell & Clark, 2017). The study participants were accessed through the Provincial Development Management Authority (PDMA), Pakistan. However, respondents from the local government representatives, including the education and health departments, Tehsil Nazem, and Commissioner's office in Swat, were accessed through a local political leader of the Awami National Party (ANP) (refer to Appendix 2 for visuals).

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select appropriate respondents. The purposive sampling method is used when participants are chosen on purpose because they are thought to be the best fit for the study (Creswell & Clark, 2017). Since this study aimed to gain insights into the challenges faced in the rehabilitation process for internally displaced persons, fifteen expert interviewees were selected from government and non-governmental

organizations who were actively involved in the rehabilitation process (Appendix 1). Choosing an appropriate sample size in qualitative research involves the researcher’s experience and judgment in evaluating the usefulness and quality of the collected information (Sandelowski, 1995). The Delphi technique’s “information power” approach was utilized to ensure the sample was information-rich. According to the “information power” approach, the fewer participants are required, the more information the sample contains that is relevant to the study (Malterud et al., 2016). The interviewees initially discussed the challenges they faced in assisting IDP returnees in Swat with their rehabilitation. This discussion was complemented by open-ended questions, leading to further inquiries.

This article is based on the corresponding author’s PhD thesis, for which the data was collected over six months from January to July 2019 in the district of Swat. This duration enabled a comprehensive examination of the subject, ensuring a robust dataset that highlights nuances and variations over time.

The study adhered to the ethical standards for social research. Participants

provided informed consent and were assigned pseudonyms to ensure their confidentiality and anonymity. The corresponding author, a Ph.D. scholar, received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and a no-objection letter from the University of Technology Malaysia (ref UTM.K.55.01.03/13.11/1/4; UTM.K.55.01.03/13.11/2/4), confirming compliance with ethical guidelines prior to initiating data collection. No participants were placed in vulnerable situations, and all had the option to withdraw their participation or opinions at any time during the study.

Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed using an inductive approach, following a 6-step framework for analysis of the collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2006), as shown in Figure 3.

First, the audio-recorded data was transcribed word-for-word into text using Microsoft Word to analyze textual data. Reviewing the transcripts allowed us to observe patterns and themes. Subsequently, we transferred all data to Microsoft Excel for sorting by font color and theme, both alphabetically and numerically. In the

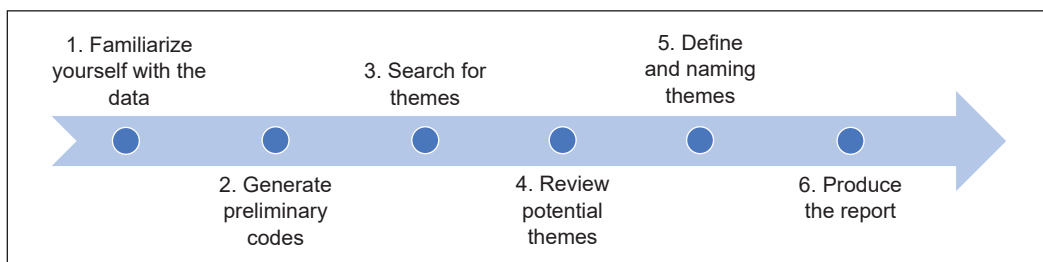


Figure 3. 6-step framework for analysis (Source: Author’s work)

second step, we generated preliminary codes by assessing the themes and patterns in the transcripts. Rather than coding every word, we segmented the data into meaningful chunks, coding each part that reflected or revealed something significant about the research question. We then compared and adjusted these segments—the third phase involved organizing the codes into broader themes and subthemes guided by relevance. While codes might overlap, the determination of a theme remained flexible (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For example, codes related to an organization's challenges in rehabilitating returnees in Swat were amalgamated into a *field formation process* theme. In the fourth step, we refined these themes. We consolidated all relevant information under each theme using Microsoft Word's "cut and paste" feature to assess its validity and interrelations (Bree & Gallagher, 2016). This process helped us identify supportive data, combine related themes, and discard irrelevant details. The fifth step involved defining each theme and pinpointing its essence (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It included examining the relationships between main themes and subthemes, such as grouping sub-themes related to agricultural restoration and road/bridge reconstruction under the *infrastructural challenges* main theme. Finally, the sixth step focused on writing up the analysis. Here, we presented and interpreted the main themes, discussing the challenges in reinstating Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and the counterstrategies adopted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Challenge of Security and Mobility

The military operation in Swat District was designed to eradicate militants. However, these militants, familiar with the terrain, could seamlessly integrate as IDPs, thereby posing a security threat. This risk was a major concern for both locals and rehabilitation staff, who were potential targets. This theme's analysis corresponds with the study's first objective, which addresses political, administrative, and socioeconomic challenges. In this context, numerous interviewees voiced their concerns. For instance, Respondent R3 remarked:

“Due to the possibility of militants returning as IDPs, it was not safe to roam around the area freely. Furthermore, the public was reluctant to trust NGO employees, hindering them from providing rehabilitative programs without any restrictions” (Respondent R3).

Despite government assurances of safety and security in the region, NGO workers and representatives from local communities continued to feel endangered. This finding aligns with the study by Reza (2010), who reported that in April and May of 2010, targeted assassinations claimed the lives of seven village defense committee members. This violence, underscored by a suicide bombing in Mingora that killed three people, signaled militant activity and heightened fears of an insurgency resurgence, significantly disrupting aid organizations' operations and mobility.

Especially for women workers, the volatile situation combined with cultural barriers deterred them from engaging in remote areas, thereby obstructing NGOs' ability to provide rehabilitation services. Another study by Muhammad et al. (2011) supports our findings, as their research noted that NGO workers encountered local distrust, security threats, and skepticism, impeding their movement and relief efforts due to perceptions of them as foreign agents.

In response, the government took steps to enhance security and facilitate ongoing rehabilitation projects, such as implementing stricter security measures, increasing checkpoints, and providing police escorts for personnel in high-risk zones. This successful strategy for addressing these challenges incorporates the good governance principles espoused by Kukrit Pramoj. However, these interventions also introduced complications. For example, Respondent R5 observed that enhanced security checks reduced threats and caused significant delays due to prolonged traffic queues. To mitigate these issues, the government issued special permits to NGOs and rehabilitation workers, alongside creating a dedicated vehicle lane at checkpoints for faster screening and smoother transportation for officials and aid workers.

Lack of Sufficient Physical Infrastructure

All interviewees identified the region's second most significant challenge for rehabilitation workers as the insufficient physical infrastructure, which impeded their

mobility and service delivery. For instance, Respondent R5 stated:

“The difficulty of navigating the region due to significant damage to the physical infrastructure, worsened by the 2010 flood. The flood destroyed previously repaired facilities, further restricting access to remote mountain villages” (Respondent R5).

Various studies complement our findings. One study has mentioned that during the military operation, Swat's infrastructure, encompassing roads and bridges, sustained substantial damage, impeding access to isolated regions (Bangash, 2012). This damage consequently hindered the timely rehabilitation of displaced individuals in these areas. Although the government and various aid organizations initiated numerous projects to rehabilitate the infrastructure, the catastrophic flood of 2010 negated much of their progress. The flood demolished numerous smaller bridges, three of which were significant ones in Gyeman, Shamozai, and Baghdairi (“Delay in construction of the bridge,” 2013), severely restricting access to vital services and facilities. A report from the (United Nations, 2010) mentioned that the flood caused extensive damage, destroying approximately 170 bridges, 2,000 km of roads, and 158 government buildings, leading to major transportation delays. For example, traveling from Mingora to Kalam in a 4-wheel drive took around 13 hours to cover 93 km (Kiren, 2016). The disaster also devastated the agricultural infrastructure,

leaving irrigation channels, crops, and fields barren (Peracha et al., 2012). In an effort to mitigate these challenges, the government developed a strategy for establishing temporary infrastructure to facilitate essential relief services. This strategy aligns with Kukrit's approach to good governance. Respondent R6 has mentioned a detail of these initiatives:

“Efforts were made to connect communities and principal regions swiftly by constructing temporary side roads and steel bridges. Eventually, we erected two major bridges, the Khwazakhela and Mingora bridges, and 15 roads spanning 44.07 km. We also refurbished and expanded 84 km of the road from Mingora to Fatehpur; rehabilitated 19 flood-affected irrigation channels, and founded an agricultural research center. Furthermore, we supported 801 small-scale infrastructure projects through the UNDP, such as culverts and local roads. However, the scarcity of roads and numerous security checkpoints escalated the cost of materials and hindered progress” (Respondent R6).

The temporary infrastructure reconstruction provided essential relief to displaced individuals, showcasing the government's smart strategy. Nonetheless, the efforts to reconstruct temporary roads and bridges led to increased costs and extended timelines. It was particularly evident in the

case of the Ayoub Bridge, which, despite expectations to be completed by 2013, faced delays due to funding shortages. The rehabilitation of basic infrastructure and services spanned 3 to 4 years, with the government shouldering most expenses. This situation strained the government's budget, pushing the fiscal deficit to 6.3% of GDP in 2009/10, above the target of 5.1%. The total cost of reconstruction was estimated between Rs 662 billion (4.5% of 2009/10 GDP) and Rs 779 billion (5.3%). Challenges such as a lack of proper management plans, a scarcity of skilled labor, and insufficient heavy machinery further delayed the reconstruction efforts. Several respondents highlighted these issues. For example, respondents R1, R2, and R5 noted that the scarcity of labor, skilled personnel, and heavy machinery prolonged project timelines.

Security concerns and threats contributed to the labor and skills shortage, complicating reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts. Additionally, the local administration faced challenges in sourcing heavy machinery, often having to procure it from other provinces, which further delayed projects (Khan et al., 2017). The government and aid organizations offered higher wages to attract local labor and brought in skilled workers and heavy machinery from other regions to address these obstacles. Priority was given to restoring economic and social infrastructure, with 207 rehabilitation and reconstruction schemes implemented with UNDP support, facilitating access to

remote areas and aiding in the restoration of physical infrastructure (Mujtaba, 2013).

The government's initiative for temporary infrastructure reconstruction provided essential relief to displaced individuals. Despite its financial burdens and operational challenges, such as labor shortages and security concerns, this strategic approach to crisis management mirrors the principles of adaptive strategies and proactive management highlighted by Kukrit. These efforts in overcoming obstacles through higher wages and imported skilled labor underscore the application of good governance in crisis situations, aiming for efficient resource allocation and clarity in project execution.

Challenges in NOC Approval and Field Formation Process

The complex, time-intensive bureaucratic processes for securing No Objection Certificates (NOCs) have significantly impeded NGO operations. In the Swat region, for instance, these organizations could not function without the required NOC from pertinent authorities. Multiple respondents voiced their frustrations with the NOC approval mechanism, highlighting the daunting nature of acquiring NOCs for NGOs. Many respondents stated:

“A stringent, multi-step approval sequence and tight security vetting as primary obstacles. Additionally, the army's necessity to grant final NOC approval further restricted many NGOs from engaging in rehabilitation initiatives for

returnees, thus limiting their potential contribution” (Respondent R4, R11, R12, and R13).

One key concern the respondents raised was the rigorous NOC approval process for NGOs. According to them, NGOs would not be able to participate in rehabilitation without NOC approval. The process was complex and time-consuming, requiring approval from multiple government departments and security agencies. The government's main objective was to ensure that registered NGOs had no suspicious affiliations with banned organizations and adhered to the rule of law. However, aid organizations were allowed to collaborate with local registered NGOs to speed up the rehabilitation process. For instance, the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa updated the NOC process for aid organizations in 2018, allowing them to obtain their NOC within 35 days from proposal submission to approval. This one-step process would have given NGOs more time to rehabilitate and reinstate the returnees quickly while still ensuring the enforcement of strict policies against anti-state practices.

According to respondent R2, NGOs faced challenges in identifying potential beneficiaries due to the need for NOC approval and difficulties accessing isolated rural areas with limited employee mobility and damaged infrastructure. Consequently, the field formation process was time-consuming, causing delays in rehabilitation for returnees (Madeeha, 2017; Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2013). To address this issue,

NGOs developed a structural process to identify beneficiaries at the village level, as mentioned by Respondent R7. He said:

“Our approach to identifying poverty involved a three-tier system known as CRP (Community Resource Persons), which included the following sub-units: (1) CO (Community Organizer), responsible for 10-15 houses; (2) VO (Village Organizer), responsible for 5-10 villages; and (3) LSO (Local Supervisor Organizer), responsible for all villages. The affected individuals were assessed using the PSC (Poverty Score Card) form, which the CRP completed. Once the data was entered into the database and verified by the community, an EDP (Enterprise Development Plan) was prepared” (Respondent R7).

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) methodologies are frequently employed to gather information to address local community issues. RRA is particularly beneficial during a project’s initial phases, where foundational information is necessary for devising a plan. Conversely, the PRA methodology emphasizes local community involvement and empowerment, a critical component for achieving project objectives (Townsend, 1996). This method fosters strong social cohesion, leading to rapid success through community efforts, as highlighted by Alifa and Nugroho (2019).

Social capital serves as the primary source of support for entrepreneurs, especially when formal institutions are inadequate (Khan & Sepulveda, 2022). Khan (2024) also suggests that a community-based rehabilitation approach that incorporates a local community holds the potential for effective reintegration. The effectiveness of this approach was exemplified in Swat, where the involvement of local community members was crucial in identifying vulnerable returnees. It supports Kukrit’s approach, emphasizing how good governance facilitates public and private institutions in efficiently managing the affairs of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Swat.

Restoration of the Education System

The Taliban displayed hostility towards Western education, especially female education, as they deemed it a catalyst for indecency and Westernization in the community. According to the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (2019), a total of 152 schools were bombed and destroyed, while 237 sustained partial damage. As a result, when the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) returned to their homes, they hesitated to send their children to schools that were damaged or destroyed. Respondent R13 shared this concern:

“The extremists were against the current educational system... they thought it was promoting the Western agenda and was un-Islamic. Therefore, they destroyed schools, killed teachers, banned women’s

education, and wanted to replace it with the Islamic education system. After the return of the displaced people, enrollment in schools dropped because the parents were frightened and could not risk their kids' lives by sending them back to school" (Respondent R13).

Due to the fear of Taliban attacks and the absence of protective boundary walls, many parents were hesitant to send their kids to school. Approximately 55,000 students lost an academic year since most schools lacked fencing and were destroyed (Ullah et al., 2017). Therefore, the rehabilitation plan's priority was to restore education and renovate the schools. A respondent, R4, expressed the same sentiment.

"After the unfortunate damage to schools, the projects promptly initiated the reconstruction process while also establishing new schools in rented buildings as per the required demand. Furthermore, they erected fences and boundary walls, provided school uniforms, and arranged recreational and vocational training sessions for both parents and children" (Respondent R4).

Reiterating it, respondent R6 stated:

"We focused on both rehabilitation and reconstruction and convinced the parents and children. We reconstructed 122 damaged schools in district Swat" (Respondent R6).

Respondents R6 and R9 shared similar views about their education restoration initiatives in district Swat's post-conflict era. They said:

"In urban areas, we have built a classroom capable of accommodating 40 students, a principal's office, a clerk's office, a stand for cycles, and a security hut for schools. Additionally, we have rented some buildings to establish community schools and constructed a two-room school where necessary. Our efforts also include providing these schools with staff, furniture, ICT, and solar systems" (Respondent R6, R9).

Efforts were made by the government and project officials to restore education in post-conflict Swat. However, rebuilding the schools and bringing children back to school proved to be a challenging task. Community schools were established in rented buildings to address these challenges, with assurance given to parents of their children's safety. Negative propaganda by the Taliban concerning modern school education and the un-Islamic nature of female education was discouraged through local media and Friday masjids' sermons. Additionally, refreshments, entertainment, and sports were organized in schools to provide a sense of security and inclusion for traumatized parents and children. These initiatives helped restore confidence and trust in the education system. The resilience and capacity to recover from adversities

underscore the inevitability of challenges and the significance of responses to them (Carlson et al., 2012). It was particularly pertinent to the rehabilitation endeavors for IDP returnees in Swat, fostering resilience through infrastructure development and community inclusion in resolving their problems.

However, despite a decade of conflict, many schools remain unreconstructed. According to statistics from the Elementary and Secondary Education Department (2016), the government of Pakistan still needs to rebuild several schools in the Swat district. For instance, a report by “Pakistan: Plight of IDPs” (2010) indicated that out of the 94 destroyed and damaged girls’ schools, only 79 had been reconstructed. Furthermore, while the government focused on rebuilding damaged schools, establishing new schools was put on hold, indicating that the education system in Swat is still not fully restored.

Unfulfilled Donors’ Commitment and Budget Allocation Challenges

Despite making solid commitments to provide funds for rehabilitation, some donors failed to follow through, leaving the humanitarian efforts of those involved severely underfunded. Despite persistent requests for donor and project details, respondents were hesitant to share information. It became evident that certain donor organizations focused on short-term relief efforts rather than sustainable development, resulting in incomplete and underfunded compensation and rebuilding

processes, as reported by Reza (2010). The United Nations (2010) also found that only 24% of the \$537.7 million intended for humanitarian operations was received. As a result, some humanitarian agencies were forced to shut down or cut back on their projects due to the lack of funding.

According to respondent A-1, some donors who wished to contribute to the rehabilitation process were not familiar with the local culture and requirements. They had unreasonable demands for unfeasible and uneconomical projects that were not well-suited to the local context (Farooq, 2017). The authorities and project team members must be free to carry out the projects without interference or undue influence from donors to ensure the smooth execution of rehabilitation initiatives (Levac et al., 2015). In Swat, for example, some donors were conducting quality checks on drinking water samples to ensure they were safe for human consumption (Khan et al., 2018). While this improves effectiveness, impatience with the slow pace of reforms and frustration can delay rehabilitation. It is crucial for authorities to maintain the integrity of rehabilitation projects and allow the project team to perform their responsibilities without pressure from donors (Guy et al., 2013). Maintaining a good relationship with them and involving them in strategic decision-making or changes to the project plan is essential to fulfilling the donor’s commitment. The government was facing a significant challenge in deciding how to allocate funds. They had to choose between spending the developmental budget

on relief and rehabilitation or constructing new physical infrastructure. However, this decision posed a risk of neglecting a crucial aspect of reconstruction and reinstatement. Respondent R2 shared their thoughts on the matter.

“The government’s primary goal was to ensure that people received prompt resolution and reinstatement. However, financing and fund diversion posed a significant risk. This dilemma necessitated obtaining approvals and simplifying audits” (Respondent R2).

During disasters, the government focuses on relief and rehabilitation rather than new development initiatives because restoring the affected people requires significant funds. For example, instead of building new schools, the government diverted funds towards restoring education by opening community schools in rented buildings. Additionally, they prioritized temporary side roads and bridges over constructing new ones. To deal with post-displacement reconstruction, other countries such as China, Brazil, Canada, Columbia, and Japan made arrangements for additional investments (Cernea, 2008). However, the diversion of development funds to relief efforts required prior approval from the concerned authorities to avoid audit objections and complexities. This delay in the fund diversion process affected the overall rehabilitation of returnees and the region’s new developmental

schemes. Rationalizing and reprioritizing the existing development budget could free up some fiscal space. Still, a higher fiscal deficit would have adverse fiscal and economic implications for the future (Asian Development Bank, 2010). In Swat’s rehabilitation case, the government of Pakistan assigned a separate fund for future rehabilitation to avoid diverting the existing development budget in case of future disasters. This move on the part of the Pakistani government complements and endorses the good governance doctrine of Kukrit within the realm of rehabilitation in district Swat. Well-organized and planned initiatives ensured the judicious allocation of resources, clarity in the execution of projects, and citizens’ active engagement in rehabilitation and reinstatement.

Disempowerment of the Local Government and Empowerment of the Security Agencies

The government’s primary responsibility is to ensure the safety and well-being of internally displaced persons (IDPs) (Khan et al., 2018). Complying with this, the government of Pakistan, in collaboration with donor agencies, reinstates IDPs through multi-layered rehabilitation projects (Patil et al., 2017; Sáez et al., 2018). Due to the unstable security situation in the Swat district, security agencies assumed full control, previously vested in the local government. This shift in power posed significant challenges to the implementation of rehabilitation initiatives. Respondents R12 and R15 emphasized the impact of

this disempowerment on local officials. They said:

“The escalation of security threats by militants led to the Pakistan army being granted absolute authority over the region under the Civil Aid Action Regulation 2009, significantly reducing the local government’s role in rehabilitation efforts and beyond. This unilateral decision prevented a potentially more effective collaborative approach between security agencies and the local government, which could have better served the Swat community. The agencies, inexperienced in community service and primarily versed in military operations, struggled to adopt a more nuanced approach to governance and community engagement” (Respondent R12, R15).

Other study participants concurred that the local government’s participation was instrumental in cost-effective rehabilitation. Azhar (2022) found that cost-effective disaster countermeasures include a holistic, integrative approach to governance that involves minimal bureaucracy and attempts to leverage local expertise. They argued for full engagement due to the government’s intimate understanding of the region’s culture, community, and dynamics. Such active involvement would have ensured the alignment of rehabilitation efforts with local needs and norms, optimizing project prioritization. Moreover, the local

government’s role in collecting information on internally displaced persons (IDPs) returning could prevent project redundancies and omissions. Their comprehensive knowledge of local traditions and ability to foresee risks significantly contribute to project success (Cruz & de Brito, 2015). In Swat, however, the local government faced operational constraints due to security concerns and the risk of information leakage to militants. Nonetheless, they implemented notable safety measures, including arming teachers, employing security guards for schools, and enhancing school infrastructures.

CONCLUSION

This study comprehensively examines the challenges and successes in rehabilitating and reintegrating Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Swat, Pakistan, intertwining Kukrit Pramoj’s good governance theory with resilience and conflict transformation frameworks. Utilizing the Delphi method and qualitative data analysis, numerous obstacles and facilitators to effective rehabilitation are identified. Key hurdles include security threats, bureaucratic delays, corruption, inadequate infrastructure, educational deficiencies, weakened local governance, financial limitations, and unmet donor commitments. On the flip side, effective strategies include improved security measures, infrastructure development, NGO collaboration, community involvement, and substantial international donor support, particularly from the USA and the UAE.

The research further details the positive impacts of these efforts, citing increased life

satisfaction, psychological well-being, and community participation among returnees, based on Rafiq and Hassan (2022). However, it acknowledges critiques, such as the insufficient financial compensation and lack of focus on humanitarian needs identified by Khan and Wei (2016), advocating for a more comprehensive rehabilitation approach. The study concludes by recommending regular evaluations of rehabilitation programs, incorporating community feedback and well-being indicators. It stresses the significance of collaborative efforts aligned with good governance and community engagement, involving community leaders, NGOs, and local governments. The insights garnered extend beyond Pakistan, offering valuable lessons for developing countries on sustainable development, peace, and disaster management strategies, enriching the global discourse on forced migration and rehabilitation.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

Despite significant displacement issues, Pakistan lacks a comprehensive policy for the rehabilitation of internally displaced persons (IDPs). However, it has implemented the Agency Standing Committee Framework for Durable Solutions for IDPs. This framework, anchored in international law, aims to address the rights and needs of IDPs without discrimination and ensure long-term solutions (Ali & Kandhro, 2015; Jaung et al., 2017; Mohsin, 2013; Sharma, 2015). Moreover, collaboration with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has

been initiated to assist in rehabilitation and relocation efforts, aligning Pakistan with UN rehabilitation recommendations, specifically Principles 28-30 (Ali & Kandhro, 2015). Nonetheless, there are significant gaps in the implementation of these principles and domestic legislation concerning internal displacement (Ahmad et al., 2017).

This study on the rehabilitation of IDP returnees in Swat, Pakistan, reveals significant program challenges and proposes targeted policy measures to improve rehabilitation management. Key recommendations include:

1. Establishing a clear rehabilitation policy with defined roles for local governments, administrative bodies, and stakeholders.
2. Creating a dedicated fund to protect development budgets.
3. Involving local governments in projects to leverage their cultural insights.
4. Fostering local community involvement in project selection to reduce political bias and nepotism.
5. Setting up a monitoring team to ensure project integrity, track finances, and assess needs.
6. Streamlining NGOs' No Objection Certificate process to expedite rehabilitation efforts.
7. Implementing a centralized coordination system to avoid project overlap.
8. Emphasizing expert input in early planning to ensure efficient use of resources.

9. Increasing transparency and expert oversight in project planning and execution.
10. Ensuring timely and clear communication with donors for effective fund management and project adjustments.

These strategies aim to enhance the IDP rehabilitation framework in Pakistan through greater transparency, accountability, and community involvement, addressing existing challenges more effectively.

Limitations of the Study

This study's primary limitation lies in its narrow focus on the perspectives of returnees exclusively from Swat. Future studies should extend their scope to include returnees from additional regions such as Dir Lower, Bunner, Shangla, Bajaur, South Waziristan, and North Waziristan to better understand attitudes towards rehabilitation and reinstatement. Moreover, the findings predominantly reflect male viewpoints, potentially overlooking the unique perspectives of women on these issues. Future research should endeavor to incorporate women's perspectives. Additionally, expanding the investigation to cover diverse geographical areas and various socioeconomic strata within society could enrich the understanding of the subject matter.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Table of organizations involved in the rehabilitation process

S.No	Code Name	Pseudonym Name	Organization Name
1	R1	Liaqat	PDMA (Provincial Disaster Management Authority)/Relief Dep
2	R2	Nawaz	PDMA(Provincial Disaster Management Authority)
3	R3	Ali	PDMA(Provincial Disaster Management Authority)
4	R4	Ikram	Directorate of Education /UNICEF
5	R5	Ahmad	UNICEF
6	R6	Shah	UNDP
7	R7	Lal	EPS (Environmental Protection Society)a
8	R8	Akbar	PARSA (Provincial Reconstruction Rehabilitation and Settlement Authority)
9	R9	Ibrahim	Lasona (the organization name)
10	R10	Noman	Hujra Foundation (the organization name)
11	R11	Mahmood	Tehsil Kabal Nazim
12	R12	Speen	Assistance Commissioner
13	R13	Tariq	ASDO (Assistant District Education Officer)
14	R14	Yousaf	In Charge Principal Medical Officer BHU Kabal
15	R15	Adnan	Political Leader

Appendix 2: Field trip visuals

