

**Migration Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

MRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

Research Response Number: PAK35293
Country: Pakistan
Date: 13 August 2009

Keywords: Pakistan – Mirpurkhas District, Sindh Province – Livelihood matters – Security

Questions

1. Please provide a brief background on living conditions in the area of Naukot, District Mirpurkhas (or Mirpur Khas), in the Sindh Province of Pakistan. Please also provide any information on any socio-economic, political and/or security issues in this area would be of use.

RESPONSE

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Livelihood matters

The Church World Service's 'Mirpurkhas Food Security Project' webpage provides extensive background on the situation in the Sindh's Mirpurkhas district in terms of location, population, demography and livelihood matters. The majority of the Mirpurkhas population would appear to be affected by poverty and low socio-economic status. According to the Church World Service: "An average [Mirpurkhas] family earns around 2,000 or 2,500 rupees per month, which is insufficient to meet their daily needs". Pertinent extracts follow:

Mirpurkhas district lies in lower region of Sindh Province, which is located in the south-east part of Pakistan. The total area of the District Mirpurkhas is 140,914 square kilometers and bears a population of 1,004,109 people. The latest demarcation of the district (2005) divided it into six Tehsils (cluster of union councils); Mirpurkhas, Digri, Kot Ghulam Muhammad, Sindhri, Hussain Bux Mari and Jhudo. The ratio of rural and urban population of the district is 70:30, respectively. Agriculture and related activities are the main source for people's livelihood.

Due to drastic decline, owing to various problems, in agricultural production, the food production has suffered in Pakistan. The country has to resort to importing food which is expensive, thus, beyond the reach of the poor people. The problem of food production is attributable to government agricultural policy, land degradation, climate change, flooding, and frequent occurrence of droughts and unemployment/underemployment.

There are three economic strata in the vicinity: landlords, small farmers, and haris (landless tenants of landlords). Most haris living in the area are in debt of big landlords and money lenders and are living in continuous bondage. Most of the farming community works on an unjust share cropping system that keeps haris in debt. Eighty percent of the haris belong to

Hindu minority group. The condition of women and children is most vulnerable due to the lower status of women in society. An average family earns around 2,000 or 2,500 rupees per month, which is insufficient to meet their daily needs. Mostly landlords do not give regular income to their tenants. Most families can afford only two meals a day and are malnourished. There is no concept of saving or having bank accounts; people mostly rely on their animals in the time of need or sickness. General living conditions of the people are very deprived, living in mud or straw huts. Contamination of food and water due to absence of sanitation system results in thinning out many diseases. In most places, ground water is brackish and people have to drink water from ponds and canals.

The main cause of poverty in the immediate area of the program is lack of livelihood opportunities other than agriculture. People remain in a continuous, vicious cycle of debt to the landlords and money lenders. They are not organized in any sort of organization/committee and lack the will to change their situation. Moreover, they are unaware of simple mechanisms, like saving or vegetable preservation that can bring change in their living situation. People are continuously suffering from malnutrition and disease due to insufficient or unhealthy food. The savings, if any, are spent on the treatment in times of sickness. Loans are also taken for the same in certain situations.

For many people in rural areas like Jhudo – Mirpurkhas, the lack of access to basic amenities for farming activities such as good quality seeds, fertilizers, lack of agricultural conservation, and above all scarcity of irrigation water that ultimately brings a decrease in land fertility and less purchasing power in these rural communities. The absence of basic services in education and health are the determining factors behind selection of this area. Due to poor nutritional food (calorie intake), unhygienic living conditions, usage of contaminated water, exploitations by influential in an unjust environment, and continuous mental stress to meet living needs, the poor and marginalized normally have shorter life spans.

Livelihood Means

The population in this area mainly depends on agriculture. People cultivate the land with a market trend approach and try to get more production with the help of chemical fertilizers and pesticides without knowing their side effects. One of the other livelihood strategies is to raise livestock for selling and milking. Mostly, women work together with their men in fields to earn more money; this makes women's lives harder as they have to do domestic work as well as work in fields.

Some of the people also work as labor help in surrounding towns on very low wages. Seasonal migration is also one of the means of livelihood; people migrate temporarily to the upper region of Sindh province at harvesting time where they receive higher wages as compared to their native place. Less land productivity due to irrigation water shortage, low quality seeds, and rains makes communities more vulnerable to migrate from their native home grounds ('Mirpurkhas Food Security Project' (undated), Church World Service website http://www.desiakhbar.com/cwspa/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=41&Itemid=117 – Accessed 13 August 2009 – Attachment 1).

A range of other sources also discuss the depressed socio-economic situation in Mirpurkhas for the majority of the district's residents (Ullah, J.I. 2004, *Dissertation: The Economic and Social Impact of Drought on the Rural Poor: the Case of Pakistan*, University of Birmingham website, September <http://www.idd.bham.ac.uk/research/dissertations/03-04/inam.pdf> – Accessed 13 August 2009 – Attachment 2; District Government Mirpurkhas & Sindh Devolved Social Services Program (undated), *Report on Planning Convention at Mirpurkhas Held on June 4, 2007*, Sindh Devolved Social Services Program website http://www.sdssp.gov.pk/docs/news/report_planning_convention_mirpurkhas.pdf – Accessed

13 August 2009 – Attachment 3; Action Aid International Pakistan 2007, ‘Peoples’ Review of ADB: Sindh Rural Development Project Report’, Governance website, April <http://www.governancelink.org/IssueNo1Apr07/ReportPeoplesReviewofSRDP.pdf> – Accessed 13 August 2009 – Attachment 4; ‘Mirpur Khas’ (undated), Gender Justice Through Musalihat Anjuman Project website http://www.gjtmap.gov.pk/reports_documents/profiles/mirpurkhas.pdf – Accessed 13 August 2009 – Attachment 5).

Recent news reports suggest that water shortages, an ongoing drought and the unreliable supply of electricity, remain significant concerns for Mirpurkhas District residents. Rallies calling for a government response to both problems have occurred regularly in Mirpurkhas in recent years. It would appear that such demonstrations have been generally peaceful. It may be of interest that, on 16 February 2009, it was reported that: “Around 15 people...have died of hepatitis over the past few months, as the hazardous disease broke out in Naukot and its adjacent areas” (for examples of such recent reporting, see: ‘Demo against water shortage at Jhuddo’ 2009, *Pakistan Press International*, 17 May – Attachment 6; ‘Citizens protest against power outages’ 2009, *Pakistan Press International*, 25 June – Attachment 7; ‘Mirpurkhas faces big power breakdown’ 2009, *Pakistan Press International*, 19 June – Attachment 9; ‘Acute water shortage poses serious threat to agriculture sector in Sindh’ 2008, *Pakistan Press International*, 25 March – Attachment 8; ‘Hepatitis cases on the rise in Naukot’ 2009, *Pakistan Press International*, 16 February – Attachment 10).

Security matters

In terms of security it would appear that Mirpurkhas is affected by a degree of lawlessness. Outbreaks of tribal violence between different communities competing over local resources are reported regularly from Mirpurkhas. Clashes between supporters of different political organisations are also reported on occasion. Domestic violence, as is noted above, is said to be a significant problem in Mirpurkhas and problems relating to criminality and policing are sometimes also reported. It would not appear that Mirpurkhas has been affected by the kind of insurgent violence which is currently being reported from the North Western Frontier Province (NWFP) and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and which has also seen bomb attacks in major metropolitan centres like Karachi, Islamabad and Lahore in recent months (for tribal clashes, see: ‘Tribal clashes: 55 perished during five months’ 2008, *Pakistan Press International*, 12 October – Attachment 11; ‘Three injured over land dispute’ 2009, *Pakistan Press International*, 26 April – Attachment 12; for political violence, see: ‘Five injured in clash near Mirpurkhas’ 2009, *Pakistan Press International*, 16 June – Attachment 13; ‘Clash leaves four political workers injured’ 2008, *Pakistan Press International*, 24 February – Attachment 14; ‘3 STTP workers killed 10 injured’ 2009, *Frontier Star*, 10 June – Attachment 15; ‘Police baton-charge JSQM activists’ 2009, *Pakistan Press International*, 25 July – Attachment 16; ‘ST leader shot dead in Mirpurkhas’ 2009, *Pakistan Press International*, 8 April – Attachment 17; for domestic violence and criminality, see: Chandio, R. 2008, ‘Sindh became hub of crimes under previous govt’, *The Nation*, 28 November <http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Regional/Karachi/28-Nov-2008/Sindh-became-hub-of-crimes-under-previous-govt> – Accessed 13 August 2009 – Attachment 18; for criminality and policing problems, see: ‘DPO replaces four SHOs, suspends five other police officials’ 2008, *The Baluchistan Times*, 17 August – Attachment 19; ‘Murder case lodged against police, landlords’ 2009, *Pakistan Press International*, 8 July – Attachment 20; ‘Theft incidents increase in Naukot’ 2002, *Pakistan Press International*, 30 January – Attachment 21; for an overview of the insurgency

affecting other parts of Pakistan, see: International Crisis Group 2009, *Pakistan: The Militant Jihadi Challenge*, Crisis Group Asia Report no.164, 13 March <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/getfile.cfm?id=3870&tid=6010&type=pdf&l=1> – Accessed 18 June 2009 – Attachment 22; and: International Crisis Group 2009, *Pakistan's IDP Crisis: Challenges and Opportunities*, Asia Briefing no.93, 3 June – Attachment 23).

Mirpurkhas District has also reportedly been affected by some outbreaks of communal violence, with attacks on the local Ahmadiyya Muslim minority community reported in 2008 and 2002. Amnesty International's 2009 annual report relates that: "In September [2008], two Ahmadi men, Abdul Manan Siddiqui, a doctor from Mirpurkhas, Sindh, and a 75-year-old trader, Sheikh Mohammad Yousaf from Nawabshah, Sindh, were shot dead by unknown persons days after a private TV channel had aired a contributor's call to kill apostates and blasphemers as a religious duty". In January 2002 the town of Naukot, in District Mirpur Khas, was reportedly the scene of an attack upon the mosque of the local Ahmadiyya Muslim minority according to the website of the Ahmadiyya Muslim movement (Amnesty International 2009, *Amnesty International Report 2009 – Pakistan*, Amnesty International website <http://report2009.amnesty.org/en/regions/asia-pacific/pakistan> – Accessed 17 July 2009 – Attachment 24; and: 'American Physician Murdered in Pakistan' 2008, *Science Letter*, 30 September – Attachment 25; for the attack on the Ahmadiyya mosque, see: Ahmadiyya Muslim Community (undated), *Persecution of Ahmadis in Pakistan during the Year 2002: A Summary*, The Persecution.org website <http://www.thepersecution.org/nr/2002/y2002.html> – Accessed 8 April 2008 – Attachment 26).

The political landscape

Politically, District Mirpurkhas would appear to be dominated by the Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP; also the PPP). The PPPP currently holds office in all three of the Mirpurkhas constituencies in the Pakistan National Assembly and in three of the four Mirpurkhas constituencies in the Sindh Provincial Assembly (the remaining Mirpurkhas seat in the Sindh Assembly is held by the Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM; United National Movement)). The PPPP is currently the leading party of government in the Sindh and at the national level also. The PPPP has been described as a progressive secular party of the moderate centre-left. Nonetheless, the PPPP has joined hands with a selection of regional nationalist and Islamist parties in order to form government. Following the 2008 national elections "[t]he PPP formed a four-party coalition in the centre that also included the Awami National Party (ANP), a Pashtun regional party, and the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam–Fazlur Rehman (JUI-F), a Pashtun Islamist party. ... In Sindh, the PPP heads the coalition government, with the Muttahida Qaumi Movement as junior partner" (for Mirpurkhas office holders in the Sindh Provincial Assembly, see: 'PS-65 Mirpurkhas II: Ali Nawaz Shah' (undated), Provincial Assembly of the Sindh <http://www.pas.gov.pk/index.php/members/profile/en/19/251> – Accessed 13 August 2009 – Attachment 27; 'PS-64 Mirpurkhas I: Fahim Ahmed' (undated), Provincial Assembly of the Sindh <http://www.pas.gov.pk/index.php/members/profile/en/19/250> – Accessed 13 August 2009 – Attachment 28; 'PS-66 Mirpurkhas III: Haji Muhammad Hayyat Khan Talpur' (undated), Provincial Assembly of the Sindh <http://www.pas.gov.pk/index.php/members/profile/en/19/252> – Accessed 13 August 2009 – Attachment 29; 'PS-67 Mirpurkhas Cum Umerkot (old Mirpurkhas IV): Mehboob Ali Talpur' (undated), Provincial Assembly of the Sindh <http://www.pas.gov.pk/index.php/members/profile/en/19/253> – Accessed 13 August 2009 –

Attachment 30; for Mirpurkhas office holders in Pakistan's National Assembly, see: 'Members: Sindh Province' (undated), National Assembly of Pakistan <http://www.na.gov.pk/sindh.htm> – Accessed 13 August 2009 – Attachment 31; for background on the PPPP in the current political context, see: International Crisis Group 2008, *Reforming the Judiciary in Pakistan*, Crisis Group Asia Report no.160, 16 October – Attachment 32).

List of Sources Consulted

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Asian Human Rights Commission <http://www.ahrchk.net>

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Research Groups

International Crisis Group <http://www.satp.org>

Jamestown Foundation <http://www.jamestown.org>

Regional News Services

Daily Times <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk>

Dawn <http://www.dawn.com>

The Nation <http://www.nation.com.pk>

The News <http://www.thenews.com.pk>

Search Engines

Google search engine <http://www.google.com>

Staggernation Google API Proximity Search search engine

<http://www.staggernation.com/cgi-bin/gaps.cgi>

Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIAC Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

ISYS (RRT Research & Information database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)

RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

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