

Chapter 70

Social and Economic Consequences of Violent Armed Conflicts: Evidence From Displaced Camps in Jammu and Kashmir, India

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ABSTRACT

Ongoing violent armed conflict in Jammu and Kashmir has resulted in the displacement of thousands of non-Kashmiri households since early 1998. Displacement increases the pressures on young children to work, possibly at the expense of their schooling, and also leads to under-nourishment and malnutrition, which has caused poor physical growth, inability to learn, and poor work performance. The “care and maintenance” assistance and aid received by displaced families was completely undependable, erratic, and inadequate, and given the opportunity, they would like to move out from the camp as quickly as possible. The displaced children have special vulnerabilities and require additional care and protection from disease, hunger, malnutrition, and abuse. There is urgent need to meet the physical needs of displaced families such as water, sanitation, healthcare, shelter, and psycho-social assistance. Education, including literacy training, primary, secondary, tertiary, vocational, life skills, informal, and other age-specific educational opportunities, is needed for young children.

INTRODUCTION

Developing countries are not only vulnerable to economic shocks but also to political shocks including violent armed conflicts and displacement (Bohra-Mishra, & Massey, 2011; Czaika, & Kis-Katos, 2009; Williams, Ghimire, Axinn, Jennings, & Proddam, 2012; Williams, 2013). Violent armed conflict induced displacement is likely to have significant social and economic consequences on the poverty

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status of households and children (Adhikari, 2013; Gressmann, 2016). Armed violence induced displacement destroy assets and livelihoods (Maystadt, & Verwimp, 2014), break social cohesion, institutions and norms and create fear and distrust. These effects are likely to push the worse-affected households into extreme forms of poverty and destitution, even if some of these households were not poor initially (Alderman, John, & Bill, 2004; Verwimp, 2005; Bundervoet, & Verwimp, 2005; de Walque, 2006; Shemyakina, 2006; Justino, 2006). Armed conflict induced displacement often leads to the simultaneous destruction of assets and serious reductions in educational attainment and nutritional status of children (Alderman, John, & Bill, 2004; Bundervoet, & Verwimp, 2005), which may push women and children into labour and poverty (Vargas-Silva 2017; Heinze, 2016) and possibly create poverty traps since under those circumstances the household and children would have little chance of recovering their economic status by resorting to productive means (Dasgupta, & Ray, 1986).

In 1989, Kashmiri Muslims in Kashmir valley began an armed insurgency, leading to the increasing militarisation of the state, large-scale forced displacement, widespread abuses of human rights and the deaths of tens of thousands of people. Kashmiri Pandits (Hindu community) were forced to flee their homes in the Valley from 1990 onwards. They have settled elsewhere, with large numbers relocating to Jammu and New Delhi. The long displacement of the Kashmiri Pandit community has led to a loss of identity especially among the younger generation. The Jammu and Kashmir government is assisting around 15,000 families in Jammu and the Government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi is aiding over 3,600 Kashmiri Pandit families in its territory. The assistance, albeit insufficient, is generous in comparison to the response to other displaced groups in India. In addition to basic dry rations, the aid provision includes cash relief.

Other groups of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Jammu and Kashmir include non-Kashmiri households who have been displaced due to violent armed conflict in 1998 in Doda, Udhampur, Poonch and Rajouri districts, as well as civilians displaced by shelling along the Line of Control (LOC) between India and Pakistan. Over 2,200 non-Kashmiri Hindu families consisting of 12,000 persons fled their homes after receiving threats from militants and following the killings of 27 Hindu people at Prankot in the Reasi region in 1998. More than 400 of these families have been staying at the Talwara camp in Reasi district, which was established by the government and provided assistance to the IDPs since 2004. However, due to non-availability of funds, assistance was stopped to them even after a directive from the Supreme Court of India in July 2006 to provide financial assistance to these IDPs at par with the Kashmiri Pandits. Due to acute poverty, IDP families in the Talwara camp were being forced to indenture their children to survive and offered their children to people within and outside the state as “security” on loans, ranging between Rs. 8,000 to Rs. 25,000 (\$170 to \$530). The children, between 8 and 15 years old, were working as domestic help or labourers until their parents could repay the loan. The state government announced Rs. 45 lakh (\$96,000) in assistance for the IDPs in Talwara in October 2007. IDPs on an initial registration received some sporadic rations and cash assistance. By early 2008, the district administration had stopped the aid again claiming a shortage of funds, which caused the vulnerable such as widows and the elderly to suffer more. Besides, border people along the Line of Actual Control have also fled their homes due to clashes between Indian and Pakistani forces. Due to ceasefire and improvements in the security situation, many border IDPs have been able to return to their homes in early 2003. However, 1800 displaced families whose homes were destroyed in shelling in 2001 and fled to the safer areas until they were forced to return in 2004 by government, still remain without permanent houses.

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