

Peace through prosperity:Economic aid in post-conflict societies

When the guns fall silent, the true battle for lasting peace begins. The wounds of war can be healed through enough provision of aid and resources.

Economic aid goes beyond financial recovery. Not only it addresses the scars of deprivation and inequalities but act as a catalyst for greater transformation through dismantlement of roots of violence. It nurtures growth by providing humanitarian relief .However, this critical component of growth must be used in conjunction with other peacebuilding activities to foster enduring peace. Apart from economic reforms, societies recovering from prolonged conflicts require restoration of trust among various social or ethnic groups, psychosocial healing, and reconciliation. Such holistic approach of ‘conflict transformation and peacebuilding depoliticizes socioeconomic problems in a sustainable structure that involves all stakeholders in collective decision making process. Baum and Lake (2003), studying the indirect effects of development indicators on economic growth, find public health, particularly life expectancy, and education intimately interlinked with sources of growth.

Financial support is the major driving force behind peace building efforts whether local or global. Hence the government institutions, NGOs, World Bank and United Nation agencies can pay a pivotal role in this regard. A poignant example is South Waziristan, battered by insurgency, violence and terrorism. In this region the role of development aid projects has gained broader acknowledgment where various organisations have filled the gap through development assistance projects.

Development aid, conflict resolution, conflict transformation, and peacebuilding have become pressing issues in ex-FATA following the US-led invasion of Afghanistan (Chaudhry and Wazir 2012). The Twin Tower attacks triggered a series of profound social, economic, and security challenges in Pakistan’s tribal belt, as all tribal agencies, except Orakzai Agency, share a border with Afghanistan (Sadiq and Naeem 2016). Among these, South Waziristan remained a hotspot of violent conflicts experiencing massive infrastructural destruction and internal displacements.

In response to these challenging conditions, aid agencies, supported by national and international humanitarian organisations, swiftly launched peacebuilding initiatives to address the post-conflict landscape (ICG 2012). These efforts aimed to facilitate grassroots community engagement, promote lasting peace, and drive economic and social development. Major international donors, contributed substantial aid to Pakistan. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) were also actively involved in development activities to support conflict transformation in the NMDs (Javaid 2016; Hameed 2015).

Development aid is crucial for rebuilding communities, promoting inclusivity, and empowering marginalised groups, fostering a sense of ownership and participation. This is particularly significant, as peace is just one component within a broader strategy for the government to enhance human security, education, healthcare, and overall public welfare in the region (Chaudhry and Wazir 2012). Education and training programmes steer youth away from activities that could undermine peace during the early post-conflict phase. Ultimately, peacebuilding is not a goal—it’s a process and collective effort that must be nurtured with care, collaboration, and commitment.