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Pakistan, Factor 17: Good Governance

**Pakistan: reducing corruption by promoting the rule of law, government accountability, democratic principles and transparency.**

Adequate amount of food is produced on Earth to feed each and every human being every year. Food security is available at all times. Existing world food supplies and basic food stuffs can sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and offset fluctuations in production and prices. Food insecurity occurs when there is threat of inadequate food supply. It is the state of being without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable and nutritious food. Malnutrition occurs when the body doesn't get enough nutrients. Malnutrition is a principal cause of deaths occurring worldwide, united nations food and agricultural organization estimates that about 795 million out of 7.3 billion people or one in nine people around the world are suffering from chronic undernourishment. Almost all the people 780 million or one in eight are from developing countries. (<http://www.worldhunger.org/2015-world-hunger-and-poverty-facts-and-statistics/>)

Pakistan is a low-income developing country and agriculture is its backbone. However, the agricultural sector is facing some serious setbacks these years. A typical farm family in Pakistan doesn't have a very pleasant livelihood. A typical farm family relies on subsistence farming, that is farming in which the farmers focus on growing enough food for themselves and for their families. Mostly they grow food, barely enough to support their family needs alone. The size varies of the family varies but on an average most families are big. One of the main reasons of big families is the joint family system in Pakistan. Everyone lives in the same house and contributes to the requirements of the household.

A normal farm family of Pakistan comprises of grandparents (if alive), parents and children. The number of children varies but normally there are 4 to 6 children in a family. Talking about the education, education is not very accessible in the rural areas of Pakistan. A poor family, most of the time, can't afford the education expenses which results in only 1 or 2 kids going to school or sometimes none. Although the education system in rural areas is being improved day by day, there are still many areas that lack a good education system. If we consider access to health care, there are not many well equipped hospitals. Only a handful of clinics with no access to modern medicine and several small hospitals.

The amount of land that a farm family of Pakistan owns is also not consistent. It varies from area to area. In Punjab and NWFP, two of the provinces of Pakistan, the average land falls under 5 acres but both the provinces have the largest population densities. On the other hand, in Sindh and Baluchistan, average land falls under 25 acres. Because of the population difference in the respective provinces, income level becomes vulnerable. Punjab and Sindh having most of the population don't have enough land to support everyone living in their regions.

Usually the small land holders/poor farm families follow primitive agricultural practices. The slash and burn technique is the method of opening a new land. Commonly the farmers in question have only a small amount land, small fields or sometimes merely gardens near the homestead, there they practice intensive techniques until shortage of fields then they can apply slash and burn to clear new fields by burning the existing vegetation to provide fertilizers (ash). Small gardens nearer to home often receive home refuse, the manure of any household chicken or goats and compost pile where refuse is thrown initially just to get it out of the way. However such farmers realize the value of compost and apply it regularly to their smaller fields. They also may may irrigate parts of such field if they are near to a source

of water. In many parts of the country, new agricultural techniques have been introduced and it is leading to more food production but on the whole many areas are still deprived of modern techniques.

The income from the farm for most of the families depends upon what they grow and what is the amount produced at the end of the season. The major crops grown in Pakistan are wheat, barley, rice, sugar cane, tobacco, maize and cotton. There are many barriers a poor family has to face in order to attain a life that has a good supply of food, health and education. Some of the barriers that a typical family might face are a lack of money, illiteracy, lack of adequate information and knowledge, and no access to modern techniques. This leads to many problems for a typical poor family. For food, sometimes there are no problems because the crop yield is good but other times the food that is not available in rural areas creates a problem because people have to specially go to some city or other areas to get that.

## **FACTOR: GOOD GOVERNANCE**

In March 2010, Gondal, the food and agriculture minister, announced that any decisions on exporting surplus wheat would be made only after a “final assessment report” of the current crop had been prepared, in order to avoid “the faulty and rash decisions” of the previous government. Nonetheless, bad management of the wheat economy and poor stewardship of the agricultural economy as a whole have arguably continued with the government that took over in 2008.

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Many observers contend that smuggling has persisted (one estimate concludes that Pakistan is losing \$2 billion a year through the smuggling of wheat to Afghanistan), while others allege that politically connected flour and sugar millers are hoarding supplies to drive up prices.

Such debate highlights the importance of good governance in the context of food security: when it is absent, food security suffers. Pakistan is by no means among the most corrupt governments; it ranked 139th out of 180 countries in Transparency International's 2009 Corruption Perceptions Index. However, the country's government consistently fails to provide services and goods—particularly food and water—in a fair and equitable manner.

Corruption plays a major role in food insecurity. Pakistan's agricultural sector is a frequent victim of corruption. For example, in September 2009, government authorities announced the “Benazir Tractor Scheme,” billed as a computerized lottery that would award thousands of free tractors to randomly selected small farmers across Pakistan. However, among the “winners” were those owning thousands of acres of land (to be eligible for the drawing, only a maximum of 25 acres could be owned), including, suspiciously, 48 family members of a single parliamentarian. As an editorial in one Pakistani daily put it, “A number of powerful individuals...conspired together to rob poor people of an opportunity to better themselves.”

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Zafar Altaf harshly criticizes the poor governance in Pakistan's agricultural sector. He describes how powerful farmers “hog” water that should be going to smallholders; how “a lack of knowledge of equity” translates to rampant resource misallocation and how industry “mafias” forestall economic liberalization by monopolizing new products and demanding government subsidies.

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Pakistan takes small steps toward agricultural market liberalization before reversing itself. ([https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/ASIA\\_100412\\_PakistFood\\_rptL0713FINALVERSION.pdf](https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/ASIA_100412_PakistFood_rptL0713FINALVERSION.pdf))

Malik attributes this “backsliding” to a “paranoia” about losing control over the ability to provide food security. As a result, “much-needed” wheat policy reforms do not occur, and wheat markets remain inefficient. According to Roshan Malik, the combination of poor governance, corruption, and food insecurity has troubling implications for Pakistan’s overall security situation. In his essay, Malik, of Iowa State University, argues that the areas of Pakistan with the worst governance indicators tend to be not just the most food-insecure, but also the most violent and conflict-ridden. For example, he cites a 2003 study that determined that 38 districts in Pakistan were extremely food-insecure.

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More than half lacked government effectiveness, the rule of law, and political stability (indicators used by the World Bank to measure governance). These 38 districts include all of those in FATA, 11 in NWFP, and half Michael Kugelman of Baluchistan’s—all volatile areas that in many cases have been overrun by Taliban forces in recent years. Malik also points out that of the 36 nations classified by the FAO as food-insecure, 30 appear in Foreign Policy magazine’s 2008 Failed States Index—and Pakistan is one of them. Roshan Malik writes that “successive governments” in Pakistan have “neglected” the social dimensions of food insecurity, with this disregard leading to “dire consequences” for human development and law and order in the country.

Abid Qaiyum Suleri, of the Sustainable Development Policy Institute in Islamabad, takes a close look at these social dimensions. He blames Pakistan’s legacy of military rule for the neglect of society’s basic needs: The “huge influence of the armed forces” has ensured that Pakistan’s national security is emphasized over individual security, and public spending is deeply skewed against social upliftment programs. “Public sector development expenditures always face the brunt of fiscal constraints,” Suleri writes, because policymakers refuse to reduce spending on defence, debt repayment, or public sector administration. His point is exemplified by Islamabad’s decision in January 2010 to divert as much as 30 percent (\$2 billion) of the social sector’s total budgetary allocation to security expenditures—a “massive cut” at a time when “millions are suffering agonies on account of sky-high food inflation.”<sup>22</sup> According to Suleri, Pakistani society often responds to the “high prevalence” of food insecurity by resorting to what he calls “extraordinary behaviours”—committing suicide, working as bonded labour, selling or killing dependent, and engaging in “antisocial activities.

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Others succumb to the inducements of militants. Many Pakistani Taliban fighters, Suleri notes, are not unrepentant Islamic hard-liners, but instead impoverished young people “outraged by chronic hunger” and by the government’s inability to provide services. Suleri writes of a “mullah-Marxist nexus”—religious forces tapping into the “anti-elite” sentiments of poor, young, food-insecure Pakistanis in order to recruit new suicide bombers. Others in society are drawn to the free meals offered by religious shrines and madrasas. Suleri is careful to point out Pakistan’s Food Insecurity: Roots, Ramifications, and Responses that most of these institutions are peaceful—though “quite a few” are run by religious hard-liners. Suleri believes “it is an established fact” that food insecurity sparks violence and conflict.

Echoing Roshan Malik, he notes that Pakistan’s most volatile and conflict-torn areas are also the most food-insecure. He refers to the Waziristans and other parts of FATA and NWFP, but also to Baluchistan’s Dera Bugti—the second-most food-insecure district in Pakistan, and home to an anti-Islamabad insurgency fuelled by grievances about resource misallocation. Clearly, Suleri concludes, “fighting

hunger is not merely charity work.” He advocates for a paradigm shift in which “individual hunger is perceived as a national security threat.” Such a shift, he hopes, would allow public spending priorities to be adjusted, so that more monies could be freed up to combat food insecurity.

To be fair, as MacDonald himself notes, from an agronomic standpoint Baltistan is an anomaly in Pakistan—security of land tenure is “reasonably strong,” and landlessness “is virtually absent.” So the efforts of AKRSP and other development organizations may very well have better results elsewhere in Pakistan. Indeed, many of this volume’s contributors agree that development interventions are desperately needed across the country’s marginalized and impoverished regions. Clearly, different areas of Pakistan have different problems and require different types of solutions. Nonetheless, as expressed in these pages, there is a certain pattern that extends throughout the entire food security landscape of Pakistan— from the AKRSP’s field offices in Baltistan to the halls of government. The same mistakes are repeated, with corrective measures never taken.

Corruption widens the already yawning gap between the poor and rich of the society. We can't say that corruption in Pakistan has totally been overcome, neither can we say that it is constant. It varies from place to place and people to people but still exists. It is affecting our food security badly and needs to be addressed.

Improving this factor would help nourish and develop the agricultural sector resulting in better food management and food security. If we control corruption in Pakistan, the unequal distribution of food will eventually be reversed, in turn leading to better quality and quantity of food and the employment level would flourish. If poor farmers are given some attention and some money is spent on them, the living conditions of rural areas and the lives of typical farm families will surely improve.

Even if the government becomes corruption free, there are certain factors that can affect food security. Like climatic conditions: these are natural and can't be controlled. If there is heavy rainfall or drought for a long period of time, crops may be affected. Similarly if population and urbanization is not normalized, it can badly affect the food security. Adding to that, if water scarcity is a problem then controlling corruption alone would never solve the problem of food insecurity.

## **SUGGESTIONS:**

1. Strengthen governance: Food security is always threatened in environments of poor governance and corruption, and Pakistan suffers considerably from both. At best, Pakistan’s governance problems ensure a lack of agricultural reform. At worst, they could push food-insecure Pakistanis toward militants who provide the basic services that Islamabad does not, and spawn new generations of extremists..

2. Revitalize the agricultural sector: Agriculture has been neglected since many years. It must be brought to the focus of the government to revitalize the agriculture sector specifically in rural areas and to provide people with adequate agricultural facilities.

3. Understand the regional dimensions of Pakistan’s food insecurity: The western and south-eastern parts of Pakistan are poorer, hungrier, and less developed than the eastern areas of the country. Punjab’s total food grain production is about seven times that of NWFP and 18 times that of Baluchistan. Disparities are similar in the context of irrigation—the size of Punjab’s irrigated area is 16 times that of NWFP and 11 times that of Baluchistan. Additionally, average national road density is considerably higher in Punjab than in other provinces.

4. Declare hunger a national security issue: Pakistan has always emphasized national security priorities over individual security. As a result, public funding for defence dwarfs what is allocated to the social

sector, and government food assistance programs suffer. Yet individual food insecurity is tied to Pakistan's national security. Some of the most food-insecure regions of Pakistan lie in the country's militant hotbeds, and the ranks of the poor and food-insecure are prime targets for extremist recruitment. So instead of couching policy debates on hunger in the language of humanitarianism and charity, policy-makers should link hunger to defence.

5. Address the information shortages: Information and data about food security and agriculture—and the capacity to undertake analyses of these topics—are scarce in Pakistan. There is little available information on what works and what does not, and on how the better strategies can be replicated. Additionally, farmers have few resources at their disposal to help them understand more about farming or to assist them in resolving problems. At the same time, development organizations operating in Pakistan often lack sufficient knowledge about self-sustaining agricultural systems and the social structures that under gird them.

One of the local projects working in Pakistan is KHYBER PAKHTOONKHWA ANTI-CORRUPTION LEGISLATION. The khyber pakhtoonkhwa right to information bill was passed in the provincial assembly on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2013. it was enacted throughout the province by Governor of khyber pakhtoonkhwa on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2013 as the KHYBER PAKHTOONKHWA RIGHT TO INFORMATION ACT 2013. The legislation makes way for provisions that add transparency to the various functions and departments of government. It gives the citizens of the province a right to access the information or record held by a public body, except into that is sensitive to the security of the state. This is a local project that can be scaled up successfully as a national project that could help overcome the problem of corruption in Pakistan. It could help handle the problem on a large scale.

There are certain things that government, national authorities and communities can work on to make Pakistan a better place to live. We should keep an eye on government authorities. We can approach people with power and try to work on different issues. Communities should join hands to work for a better society and get hold of any criminal activity or any suspected activity leading to corruption. People should work for the betterment of education. Try and make efforts to improvise education system across the country. We need to change the government processes and get hold of people who are the culprits behind activities leading to damage. We can reduce corruption by building direct contact between the government and the common people. We as responsible citizens should ensure that all the civil servants are doing their job and that food distribution on large and small both scales is free of prejudice, favouritism and injustice. We as communities should make sure that every part of the country is taken into consideration when it comes to major facilities of life and the rights of citizens. Additionally, youth must elevate to more leadership roles locally, regionally and nationally and continue to advocate for peace, equality and justice for all. As future leaders, young people should avail themselves of information and training that allows them to become the advocated and leaders of the truth in spite of the consequences. Corruption should not become a norm in today's society. Let us all as responsible citizens, stand up for what is right in order to have a successful future.

A typical family could work on these recommendations in some ways that benefit us on small levels like education consideration of their children. Making sure that the crops are free of chemicals and harmful substances. Keeping up with the latest going ons in the country and trying to take part in things that effect their community positively. Force accountability and transparency. Ask questions and demand answers for them. Every member of the family should try to contribute in financially supporting the family and try to improve the employment rate of the country as well.

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