

## Chapter 11: Reconstruction

The conflict in Jammu & Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan has caused damage that is both visible and otherwise. As an example, visible damage would include the destruction of buildings and infrastructure, such as roads, rail, water, telecommunication, health, education and electricity. The not so visible damage includes injury to social structures, institutions, and human dignity. In order to bring about reconciliation and reconstruction, these structures have to be woven together.

### **Communal Harmony**

The conflict in Kashmir is often mistaken as a communal confrontation between the Hindus and the Muslims on the Indian side and Shi'as and Sunnis in Gilgit-Baltistan on the Pakistani side. On the contrary, life in Kashmir, provides some of the clearest instances of shared religious identities. Many customs and beliefs are common to Kashmiriyat, irrespective of religion or sect of the individual. Popular Sufism has served as a common way of understanding the world. The belief in the powers of Sufi saints and attendance at their shrines has helped promote an everyday interaction between the Muslims and the Pandits, Shi'as and Sunnis.

The Sufi traditions of Jammu and Kashmir still play an important role in the lives of people, despite the efforts of groups such as the Ahl-i-Hadith and the Tablighi Jama'at among the Muslims, fiercely opposed as they are to popular Sufism, and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad among the Hindus, hostile to any manifestation of what they see as Islamic culture. It is important to build bridges between people of different faiths and to highlight religious perspectives on inter-faith dialogue and co-operation that can play a vital role in challenging the politics of religious hatred.

Besides the majority Muslim community, it is necessary to address the grievances of the local minorities. The Ladakhi people complain of low representation in Ladakh's administration. The Gujjar leaders from Jammu complain of low level of education in their community. Panun Kashmir, representing the Pandit community, desires a protected enclave for the Pandits.

The woes of Kashmir on the Pakistan side and Gilgit-Baltistan consisting of Gilgit and Baltistan are even worse. Kashmir (Pakistan) is technically an independent state with its own Prime Minister, Legislative Assembly, Supreme Court, High Court, Auditor General, Chief Election Commissioner and Chief Secretary. In reality it is governed by the federal government out of Islamabad. Gilgit-Baltistan has no status, as they are neither a province of Pakistan nor a part of "Azad Kashmir." The extent of deprivation of the people of this region can be seen by the fact that there is only one doctor per 6,000 plus people. There is increasing tension between the majority Shi'a population who seeks independence and the Sunnis who want to merge with the adjoining Kashmir province. In 1947, about 80 per cent of the population was Shi'a. It whittled down to 55 per cent in 2005, with the systematic immigration of Punjabi and Pathan population. Tanzeem ul-Ikhwan, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, and other terrorist groups, aim to annihilate the Shi'a population. Reconciliation in Gilgit-Baltistan will require the dismantling of extremist groups.

Kashmir's social fabric will be weakened if Ladakh and Gilgit-Baltistan are granted separate status or if the Pandits are settled in a cantonment. It is essential that all communities are integrated as per the tradition of the society over centuries. Peaceful co-existence of a plural society should be the basis of the envisaged Kashmiri society.

### **Widows and Children**

Women in Jammu & Kashmir have been most affected during the conflict. At present, there are few schemes to enable about 54,000 widows in the records of Department of Social Welfare in Srinagar, to take over as the breadwinners of their families. Also, there are accusations made that some of the schemes are available only to those who have been bereaved by militant actions and not to those affected by actions of the security forces. This perception, whether true or not, should be changed with immediate effect.

Women can set up enterprises based on local customs and traditions such as handicrafts. It is necessary to encourage NGOs to set up projects for the capacity building of women in production as well as marketing.

There are an estimated 100,000 children in Jammu and Kashmir, on the Indian side, affected by violence and orphaned by the conflict. There are no reliable statistics available for the Pakistani side. The fate of these children

needs to be closely monitored. Many of them are forced to fend for themselves as laborers and are severely traumatized. Here again, NGOs can play a critical role in providing vocational training.

### **Internally Displaced Persons**

As many as 350,000 people have been displaced within India as a result of the conflict in Kashmir. In 1990, more than 90 per cent of the Hindu Pandits from the Kashmir valley fled south. It is estimated that today there are less than 20,000 Hindus in the Kashmir valley. A large majority of those displaced within India are living in and around the city of Jammu, mainly in refugee camps. The internally displaced also consist of Muslim and Sikh families, though they are relatively few. Also, Pakistan government runs camps for 22,000 refugees. Most of these camps are located near Muzaffarabad. There is no record of what happens to a Shi'a victim of terrorist violence in Gilgit-Baltistan. It is not clear if they simply disappear into oblivion or are housed in any of the Pakistani refugee camps. It is necessary for the International Committee of Red Cross to investigate the changing composition of population in Northern Area and the status of Shi'a refugees.

The camps in Jammu and Muzaffarabad need regular up-gradation and maintenance of water, electricity, drainage and communications. Most important, there should be a vision to resettle refugees in the society. On the Indian side, Pandits hope to go back to the valley. On the Pakistani side, there is no clue about the eventual resettlement policy.

### **Rebuilding Civil Society**

In Jammu and Kashmir, on both sides of the Line of Control, there is a handful of youth groups, blood banks and orphanages, but no development NGOs or trade associations. An important exception is Gilgit-Baltistan where the Aga Khan Foundation has an excellent network. Some NGOs, from the Mumbai-Pune belt, are active in rehabilitation efforts, in the Kashmir valley, but there are not too many local NGOs that can implement large-scale development work if initiated and funded by NGOs elsewhere. It should be possible to create such a capacity with appropriate and large-scale training. The Kashmiri youth appears to be highly competent, articulate and aware. If provided training and exposure, they should be in a position to construct a vibrant civil society in a short period of time.

In recent years, many new local newspapers mostly edited and managed by young journalists, have emerged in both sides of Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. The critics may flay the nascent media for technical and editorial lacunae. Nevertheless several new publications have survived despite financial and technical constraints and a difficult working environment. This shows the intrinsic potential that the people of Jammu and Kashmir have for building a vigorous civil society.

Instead of encouraging young talent, Pakistani authorities have banned several local newspapers in Gilgit-Baltistan. In October 2000, the Gilgit district magistrate revoked the publication license of *K-2*, an independent weekly. A year later, extremist groups attacked the offices of *Naqqara*, a Gilgit-based weekly and assaulted its staff. In 2004, *Kargil International*, another periodical, was banned. Gilgit-Baltistan has no local broadcast media. It is necessary to have freedom of press for capacity building of young media persons.

### **Youth Employment**

Many of those who have opted out of militancy consider reverting because of the lack of jobs and opportunities in Jammu & Kashmir (India). Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh took a step in the right direction in November 2004 when he announced an Rs.240 billion plan to reconstruct the economy of Jammu & Kashmir. While the main thrust of the economic plan is the electrification of all villages in the state by 2007, the Prime Minister announced the immediate creation of 24,000 jobs, which include 15,000 jobs for women in pre-school children centres. It has been estimated that another one lakh jobs, albeit temporary, will be generated by the electrification projects. Lifting of the ban on further recruitment into state government services and plans to boost the tourism industry are also expected to help alleviate unemployment.

Opportunities need to be created for ex-militants as well. There are several sectors in which they can be trained furniture making, handicrafts, tourism and agro-industries. There is potential for development of electronics units, mini cement plants, computer hardware, TV and watch manufacturing, that would be low volume, high value

sunrise industries, pollution free and benefiting from moderately cheap labour. Sericulture and silk industry, textiles and ready made garments, sports goods industry, processing of gems and precious stones, selective mining projects and mineral based industry, welding electrodes, pesticides, are some other areas that have potential. It would be important to change the attitude of society to accept ex-militants in jobs, and in facilitating and helping them to acquire skills.

So far, surrendered militants have been offered jobs in the para-military and the state police. The Indian Army has also engaged the services of a large number of ex-militants as “Ikwanis”. They are on the regular pay rolls of the army and are armed with AK 47 rifles. Since they have surrendered and offered to fight militancy, they have been given employment and security for their families. Former militants can also be helpful in identifying locations of landmines. In Kashmir, as well as Rajouri and Poonch districts of Jammu, landmines have maimed innocent people. A de-mining operation has to be urgently undertaken on a large scale with the involvement of ex-militants.

## **Rural Reconstruction**

Jammu & Kashmir on the Indian side has tremendous potential for horticulture, floriculture, fruit processing and food processing. The government has already established a model floriculture centre in Srinagar, one of the nine centres set up nation wide, in order to formalize the traditional industry.

The state is predominantly a mono-cropped and rain-fed with about 40 per cent of the area in Jammu division and 60 per cent in Kashmir division having assured means of irrigation. Agriculture is the mainstay of the state's economy. The productivity level of paddy, at about 40 quintals per hectare in Kashmir valley, is the highest in the country. Rice, maize, and wheat are the major crops. In Kashmir, wheat, oil seeds and fodder cultivation is being introduced as a second crop. In Jammu, farmers are raising paddy as an additional crop.

Walnut is another important crop that has tremendous potential in Jammu & Kashmir. The state is already the largest producer of walnut in India with an annual production of approximately 60,000 tonnes. Currently, the area under walnut cultivation is 61,000 hectares. There is scope to increase it in Doda, Rajouri, Poonch and Udhampur. Kargil also needs diversification since the agricultural season is very short, running from May to September.

Currently, about 20 per cent of the cultivated area in Jammu & Kashmir is under fruit cultivation. About half a million families are engaged, directly or indirectly, in horticultural activities. Sopore is the main fruit producing district in the valley that accounts for 50 per cent of the total fruit production. Apple occupies a predominant position amongst horticultural crops, constituting 45 per cent of the total area under tree crops. Enlarged facilities are being set up for processing and canning of fruits in the state. There is a need to improve marketing of these products.

Horticulture activities are also being given a major thrust in the hilly areas of the state. Other fruits that grow here are pears, cherries, apricots and peaches in the temperate areas and mango and citrus in the sub-tropical areas.

Saffron cultivation is unique to Jammu & Kashmir, the only place producing the flower crop outside Spain. Annual production of saffron confined to Pampore in the Kashmir valley and to the Kishtwar valley of Jammu province, varies from 10 to 12 tonnes. Honey, herbs and herbal products also have tremendous opportunities for export worldwide. To impel horticultural activities creation of cold storage facilities, through public or private investments, is warranted.

On the Pakistani side, both Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan have been completely neglected and the basic conditions of livelihood need to be created. This is unlike the Indian side, where fundamental elements of the economy are in place. In Gilgit-Baltistan, almost 94 per cent of the land is mountainous and therefore difficult to cultivate. According to economists of All Parties National Alliance, the federal government needs annual investment of Rs. 15 billion against the current Rs.2 billion. It is necessary to train the youth in new agricultural techniques, and learning from experiences of mountainous regions elsewhere in the world. Also, there is tremendous scope for developing mineral resources. In the Kashmir part, irrigation covers only 10 per cent of the cultivated land, as against 85 per cent in Punjab, Sindh and NWFP. For realising agricultural potential, there is need to examine integrated water development to protect and promote the interests of Kashmiris on both sides of the Line of Control. This issue is discussed elsewhere in this publication.

Finally, it is necessary to attract investments for ecologically sensitive industrialisation. The Indian side has good infrastructure, though there is tremendous scope for improvement. The main problem is legal in nature; Article 370 that places restrictions on the ownership of property and dissuades external investment. The Pakistani side is characterised by very poor infrastructure. As a result, Kashmir (Pakistan) has less than 1,000 small-scale industrial units and Gilgit-Baltistan has no more than a few brick kilns.

## **Electricity**

The state of Jammu & Kashmir has tremendous hydropower potential, estimated at over 15,000 MW. Out of this hardly 10 per cent has been harnessed till date. With a view to tapping the available hydel potential, the state government is exploring the possibility of attracting private local and foreign capital. Currently, the state generates just 25 per cent of the actual demand for electricity. Power transmission and distribution losses are over 40 per cent.

As per the Indus Water Treaty, Jammu & Kashmir cannot erect dams on its rivers, thereby limiting the options to power projects that are based on run-of-the-river schemes. Even a modest exploitation of the huge power potential of Jammu & Kashmir's rivers will need an integrated water development approach instead of the current divisive basis of the Indus Water Treaty.

At present, the Uri Civil generates only around 50 MW of power as against its actual capacity of 489 MW. This is because the average water available at the plant during winter is only 700 cusecs, as against its design capacity for 7,500 cusecs. Due to the takeover of the project by the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC), the state gets a small proportion of the power generated by this power station. One of the many other factors responsible for low power production in the valley is the elimination of the dam at the Lower Jehlum Hydel Project to facilitate linear water flow to the Uri Civil power plant. As a result, during lean season, only 10 MW of installed capacity of 100 MW can be utilized. The Ganderbal and the Upper Sindh Hydel Projects are currently operating at a meagre 5 MW each.

During sub-zero temperatures in winter, people in the state face acute energy scarcity to meet the domestic and commercial heating needs. As a result, power remains the only source of energy to meet the needs. Although much is being expected from the proposed Baglihar and Kishen Ganga Hydel Projects, however, like the Uri Civil project, the state is unlikely to get the required power from these projects. Like the Uri Civil project, the financial considerations of these projects are likely to fall under the purview of the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation.

Indian Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, visited Jammu & Kashmir in late 2004 and announced a package of Rs.180 billion for power development (out of the total transfers of Rs.240 billion) in the state. The Government of Pakistan needs to invest substantial funds in Gilgit-Baltistan where about 70 per cent of the population has no access to electricity at all. There is only one small power station, Kargah Power House, which is unable to fulfil the requirements of even the capital city.

## **Health and Education**

A major emphasis of restructuring has to be in the field of health and education. On the Indian side, there is a need to expand psychiatric health care as the annual number of cases in the only psychiatric hospital in the valley has increased from 775 in 1985 to 43,650 in 2002. The cases in 2003-2004 were estimated to be in the range of 35,000-45,000, though exact statistics are not available.

The basic healthcare in Jammu & Kashmir is better than many other Indian states. Srinagar alone has quite a few hospitals: SMHS, Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS), Bones and Joints Hospital, Govind Balabh Pant Hospital for children, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Hospital. New hospitals are being set up or old hospitals are being upgraded in district capitals of Anantnag, Baramullah and Sapore. The hospital in Jammu is being modernised to the level of All India Institute of Medical Science, the best in the country. There are innumerable small hospitals and clinics.

On the Pakistani side, the main problem is in Gilgit-Baltistan area. There are only 25 small hospitals serviced by 140 doctors, as compared to 830 hospitals and 75,000 doctors in the rest of Pakistan. There is an urgent to multiply

health facilities in the area.

Both sides need to upgrade their educational facilities as well. Jammu & Kashmir hopes to achieve total literacy by 2007. The government of Mufti Mohammad Sayeed has created 30,000 new posts of teachers, increased the coverage of students entitled to free text books, added new subjects like biotechnology and computer education at the higher secondary level. However, the state needs to increase the number of colleges and higher education institutions.

Gilgit-Baltistan has an overall literacy rate of 33 per cent (male 40 per cent; female 25 per cent). Educational indicators are especially poor for girls and women. Approximately 82 per cent of government run primary and middle schools are for boys only. There are only twelve high schools and two regional colleges in Gilgit-Baltistan, with no post-graduate facilities. A few locals are able to secure government jobs and they are paid up to 25 per cent less than non-native entrants. Apart from the government jobs, there are no jobs except in the tourism sector.

In the last decade, the number of religious seminaries in Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir (Pakistan) has gone up from 102 to 185 and 76 to 151, respectively. Poor economic conditions and lack of educational facilities have aggravated this trend. At present Gilgit-Baltistan stand third after NWFP and Balochistan in Pakistan in producing *ulemas* (religious scholars). Obviously, a complete overhaul of the education system in Kashmir (Pakistan) and Gilgit-Baltistan is overdue.

## **Environment**

Gilgit-Baltistan, spread over 72,000 sq. km has a rich collage of human and natural resources with varying cultures, languages, flora and fauna. There are 14 National Parks in Pakistan and Kashmir (Pakistan), out of which 4 are in Gilgit-Baltistan and one in Kashmir (Pakistan). The area attracts tourists from all over the world to its mountain peaks, glaciers, alpine pastures, forests, lakes, plateaus, valleys and rivers. However, rapid growth in population, lack of sanitation, and abject poverty have led to deforestation, depleted pastures, declining wildlife and severe soil erosion. Uncontrolled urbanization and unplanned tourism have further degraded the environment and the ecological balance in Gilgit-Baltistan.

The mountainous regions of Pakistan are famous for a number of wildlife species including Snow Leopard, Hunting Leopard, Brown Bear, Black Bear, Ibex, Grey Goral, Musk Deer, Kashmir Stag, Himalyan Monal, Pheasant, Western Tragopan, Snow Pheasant, Partridge, Peacock, Eagle and Dusk Markhor. Many of these are endangered and given the very poor quality of life in this region. It is hard for the people to cooperate with the authorities to protect these species when their own survival is at stake. It is important to find solutions that are beneficial to both the people and the wildlife. Eco-tourism is one of these, as there is tremendous scope of employment in this field.

Forestry is an area where clearly a huge amount of employment and wealth can be created. Kashmiris use a lot of wood to make their houses. In addition, firewood is the primary fuel used for cooking and heating, even in towns. Srinagar alone consumes some 50,000 tonnes of firewood every year. Therefore, there is big demand both local and external for Kashmiri wood. A community forest management programme is needed to help afforestation.

## **Line of Cooperation**

It is possible to identify many other areas for the reconstruction and development of Jammu & Kashmir. The most obvious is tourism, which has attracted attention in many studies and reports. The development of rural industry, agriculture, horticulture and other spheres will depend on establishing a network of transport and communication across the different parts of the area. Some of the most interesting ideas, which have been discussed by experts, include:

- The introduction of rail link between Jammu and Srinagar and improvement in the condition of road connecting the two cities
- The launch of Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service along with the construction of a good quality road between the two cities.

- Establishment of a road network between Jammu and Sialkot
- Establishment of a road network in Gilgit-Baltistan, since currently a region of 72,500 sq km has a road length of less than 500 km length in the form of the Karakoram Highway
- Establishment of an integrated market development plan with several agri processing units, cold chains, small size container services, bonded trucking service, and joint tourism package.

The creation of such a network of transport and business services will first require the establishment of Joint Economic Development Council and an atmosphere free of violence. This is only possible if India and Pakistan reach a final settlement about the terms of co-existence and cooperation in the future.

The conversion of Line of Control into Line of Cooperation can take place gradually. At the Foreign Secretary level talks held in the last week of December 2004, a proposal was mooted to create zones of family interaction along the Line of Control. The specific places identified were Tangdhar, Poonch, Mendhar and Uri, along the Line of Control and Suchetgarh along the international border. According to this proposal, divided families could meet once or twice a week on designated days without going through formalities of passports and visas. Some independent scholars have proposed that the same zones of family interaction can also be used for trade facilitation. Thus, the traditional South Asian concept of a weekly bazaar may be introduced to enable traders and business leaders from both sides of Line of Control to come together for commercial exchange. Eventually, family interaction and trade facilitation can be made a permanent activity in these designated zones. In the next phase, the number of zones may be increased from five to ten or fifteen. This can pave the way for a gradual conversion of the entire Line of Control into Line of Cooperation.