**INCREASED POPULATION GROWTH: CITIES NEED URBAN PLANNERS**

Urbanisation is not a new story in Pakistan. In 1947, the year of Partition, masses of Indian Muslims (estimates range from 6 million to 8 million) crossed the new border. Many of these refugees settled in urban areas in the eastern Pakistani provinces of Sindh and Punjab. Additional migratory flows occurred in 1965 and 1971, when wars between Pakistan and India resulted in more Indian Muslims streaming into Pakistani cities (certainly these wars also sparked outflows of Pakistani Hindus into urban India). These new arrivals were mostly Urdu-speaking ethnic Mohajirs, who would later launch the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), a political party that has dominated the southern metropolis of Karachi (in Sindh province) for decades. In the 1990s, the anti-Soviet insurgency in Afghanistan spawned a new exodus into urban Pakistan. Scores of Afghans, most of them ethnic Pashtuns, crossed the Durand Line into north-western Pakistan; as early as 1992, nearly 4 million had arrived. Initially they resided in border refugee camps, but because of economic struggles in these rural areas the Pakistani government forbade Afghans to cultivate land many ventured to the western Pakistani cities of Peshawar and Quetta. Today, urbanisation continues to be fueled by war, insecurity, and economic necessity. Pakistani military offensives in the rural north-west have induced many people to flee to cities. While most are civilians, militants including the Pakistani Taliban are on the move as well. According to some reports, 8,000 Taliban fighters now operate in Karachi. “Pakistan’s largest city rocked by wave of violence.” Quetta, the largest city in Baluchistan province. Hazara Shia Muslims have streamed into Quetta at the same time as members of Sunni extremist organizations. The result, as in Karachi, has been increasing levels of violence.) Additionally, many residents of rural Sindh are relocating to Karachi to escape from dacoits bandits and thugs who take advantage of breakdowns in law and order and wreak havoc on people and their property. Meanwhile, many Pakistanis are leaving the hinterland to seek jobs in cities. These include farmers and fishermen whose livelihoods have been shattered by water shortages – a scourge sure to be compounded in the coming years by drought, desertification and other effects of climate change. Other Pakistanis are relocating to cities because of their belief that urban areas contain better-quality healthcare, education and other basic services. These rural–urban migrations are not the sole explanation for Pakistan’s rapidly growing urban population. A second factor is the natural increase in Pakistan’s general population. Given the country’s high rate of overall demographic growth, this natural rise is a steep one. The total population is growing by 2% every year, and if the average fertility rate (currently about four children per woman) remains constant, Pakistan’s population, now about 180 million, could number nearly 300 million by 2030 and more than 450 million by 2050.

As with all its challenges, however, Pakistan must take ultimate ownership over urbanisation. To its credit, Islamabad is starting to give the issue some attention. In 2011, Pakistan’s Planning Commission, a government advisory body, released a report proposing a new paradigm for economic growth, and urbanisation was a major focus. One chapter, “Creative cities”, calls on the government to revamp city zoning laws to allow for more high-rises and mixed-use buildings. Such changes, the Planning Commission argues, can generate more housing units and open up more space for schools, shops and markets, in effect increasing the supply of services while also boosting commercial activity. Crafting an appropriate urban policy will require both creativity and judiciousness. This is because policymakers must strike two different sets of delicate balances. One is between urban industrial growth imperatives and the basic needs of city populations. While securing urban land for new corporations is important, such pursuits should not encroach on areas used for low income housing. It entails making a strong policy commitment to cities while taking care not to neglect the ongoing needs of rural areas. For all the rural labors and communities relocating to cities, many will remain where they are and large percentages of them are deeply impoverished, food-insecure and unemployed.

The problems associated with cities can only be solved if right person is hired to perform the job who is none other than urban planner. An urban planner is someone who develops plans and programs for the use of land. They use planning to create communities, accommodate growth, or revitalize physical facilities in towns, cities, counties, and metropolitan areas. Young town/urban planners are fighting for their rights from many years. Government should understand the fact that problems of our cities can’t be solved without city doctors.

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