Refugee Protection: In the Perspective of Information Sharing

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Abstract

The present study on "Refugee Protection- In the perspective of Information sharing" was conducted with special reference to seven selected refugee camps i.e., Ghamkol camp (1, 2 and 3), Gulam Banda Camp, Chichana Camp, Jerma camp and Oblan Camp in district Kohat. A sample size of 381 respondents was proportionally allocated to each camp and then randomly selected. The association between independent variables (Information sharing) and dependent variable (Refugee Protection) was tested by using Chi-square test. Association of refugee protection was significant with change of accommodation (P=0.004), Knowledge about Information Counseling and Legal Assistance (ICLA) (P=0.001), availability of Norwegian Refugee Council team (P=0.000), participation in information session (P=0.004), and information was useful in terms of solving problem (P=0.000). Registration of Afghan refugees, framing favorable policies for refugees in light of international refugee laws, awareness among refugees in respect of their legal rights and responsibilities and integration of efforts from national and international organization for refugee protection in camps were some of the recommendations in light of the study.

Keywords: Refuge protection; Information sharing; Afghan refugees

Introduction

Since displacement, Pakistan is hosting more than 1.6 million afghan refugees, with a continuous and speedy raise, which reached up 2.5 million by the end of 2012. Afghan census report, which is held in March 2005, showed that majority, which is up to 80 percent of refugee, come to Pakistan in the first five years i.e. 1979 to 1985 [1].

Refugee convention 1951 is giving assurance to the basic human right and physical protection not only for the own citizens but also for refugees residing in their country. The refugee convention along with the additional protocol developed in 1967 is the foundation stone for modern refugee protection. In addition, the legal principles they developed and preserve have contributed in formulation of various other national, regional, international laws, and practices [2].

Protection challenge on refugee protection has significantly changed during last fifty years because of the refugee convention. This is true that protection is mostly liked in expression but most disliked in practical. In response to this gap the international consultations practices provides a forum to promote understanding about protection challenge and increased cooperation for its redress. For this purpose, protection gaps are identified and efforts are made for solution. Further, strengthen protection through new approaches and supporting governments to improve international governance related to refugee problem and required direction for the protection of refugees in future needs expansion [3].

Refugee has specific right but especially the refugee children have also right to save their lives from the destruction. These international protection rules are convention on the rights of child and all measures relating to children. As per these rules, the best interests of the child shall be given priority and considered primarily. The states make sure the rights of every child are secure, within its boundaries and without any kind of discrimination [4].

Norwegian Refugee Council's (NRC) Information Counseling and Legal Aid (ICLA) program is providing information and legal assistance to refugees. ICLA Pakistan began in 2001. A sister programme ICLA Afghanistan was established in 2003. The two programmes merged to become a single regional program in 2007 [5]. The core objective of NRC work is to improve protection and endorse the rights of displaced persons in terms of humanitarian assistance and towards durable solutions. By following this objective, NRC implemented projects under their core competency program i.e. ICLA, in Pakistan. NRC was very successful in helping Internally Displaced Persons in getting National Identity Cards, which is very much important for getting access to humanitarian assistance as well as made them qualified to obtain cash compensation by Government of Pakistan through Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) and Wattan card in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). ICLA was also been a useful return monitoring tool in Bajaur. As Pakistan is not a signatory to refugee convention, therefore Afghan refugees would have not any trustworthy legal instrument to deal with their problems without ICLA support. The program is considered a highly efficient program for protection of its beneficiaries [6].

ICLA is globally considered as the first step of protection to make sure to have a valid and timely information to everyone, facilitate them in taking decision and provide them legal assistance and preparation of civil documentation i.e. proof of registration card, birth certificates, educational certificate, house land and property issues and documents, food card, marriage deeds etc. This study has focused on the Refugee protection in the perspective of ICLA (Information, Counseling and Legal Assistance). This checked the level of understanding of refugees and existed gaps in this program. The result are produced in the shape of policy level recommendation to the stakeholders of refugee protection i.e. Government and NGOs for policy making and make sure to incorporate it in their programs for refugee protection.

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Methods and Materials

The study was carried out in Afghan Refugees camps in District Kohat, Khyber Pukhtunkhwa. More purposely the data was collected from those refugees of seven selected Refugees camps (Ghamkol Camps 1, 2 & 3, Ghulam Banda Camp, Jerma Camp, Chichana Camp and Oblan Camp) who had been benefited from ICLA program of NRC.

Since the primary unit of analysis was individuals in the given age bracket (18 - 65), individuals of this age group were sampled by simple random sampling through households. Refugee's record in District administrator Kohat office shows that there were 51,992 inhabitants residing in seven selected camps that had been benefited from ICLA program of NRC, for which a sample size of 381 was required. The sample was proportionally allocated to each camp and selected through lottery method of simple random sampling. A conceptual framework was devised as shown in Table 1. The data was collected on an interview schedule covering both study variables (Information of ICLA program and refugee protection). Data was collected by using a three level Likert scale. Descriptive statistics techniques of frequencies and percentages were used to describe the data Table 1 [7].

$$\chi^2 = \sum_{i=1}^{r} \sum_{j=1}^{c} \frac{(O_{ij} - e_{ij})^2}{e_{ij}}$$

Where (χ^2) = Chi-square for two categorical variables

$\sum_{i=1}^{r}$ = Total of ith row

$\sum_{j=1}^{c}$ = Total of jth column

O_{ij} and e_{ij} = Represent the observation and expected values shown by Chaudry and Kamal

Limitation of the Study

Despite of all out efforts by the researcher in data collection, it was not possible to access the female folk residing in the refugees camps due to cultural limitations. The result given in the chapter, "result and discussions" represent the views, perceptions and experiences of male refugees residing in the camp only.

Uni-variate Analysis

This portion of the chapter deals with the uni-variate analysis of independent variables (Information, Counseling and Legal Assistance) and dependent variable (Refugee Protection).

Information services under ICLA program

The Table 2 shows the frequency and percentage distribution of respondents according to their level of understanding regarding "Information Services under ICLA program" implemented in refugee camps. The results further elaborate the respondent's accessibility to these services as well as to the NRC team and the level of satisfaction. The results show that all the respondents (N=381) were living in Afghan Refugees camps. Some 19.4 percent had tried to change their accommodation from camps to settled area; however 11.8% percent faced logistical issues in shifting. It is obvious that life in refugee camp is quite difficult. The refugee attempted to shift to settled area to avail better life facilities, but due to economic, cultural and policy constraints they were unable continue their life in settled residences.

When asked about NRC work, high proportions of 83.5% percent respondents were well aware about NRC-ICLA program as well as the purpose of the visit of NRC team in refugees' camp. Those who were not clear on the purpose of NRC-ICLA team were 11.3 percent only. Some 19.7 percent respondents showed grievance and said that NRC- ICLA teams was not accessible whenever they needed for ICLA services. The results further showed that 68.8 percent respondents had participated in NRC- information sessions, where 62.7 marked the information sessions very useful and informative regarding ICLA work, especially in civil documentations. The results indicate clearly of respondents awareness of NRC programs, its functioning mechanism and level of participation in various community based interventions.

Independent Variables	Dependent variables
Information services under ICLA program	Refugee Protection

At bi-variate level, Chi-square (χ^2) test was used to test the association between dependent and independent variables. Following procedure was adopted to calculate chi-square as was outlined by Tai (1978).

Table 1: Conceptual frame work.

#	Statements	Yes	No	Don't know
1	Status of accommodation (on camp)	100 (100)	0 (0)	0(0)
2	Attempt to change the accommodation from camp to settled area	74 (19.4)	307 (80.6)	0 (0)
3	If yes, problems faced in terms of logistical issues	45 (11.8)	18 (4.7)	318 (83.5)
4	Knowledge about NRC ICLA program	317 (83.2)	44 (11.5)	20 (5.2)
5	Knowledge about NRC team visit in your area	318 (83.5)	12 (3.1)	51 (13.4)
6	Knowledge about the purpose of NRC- ICLA visit	284 (74.5)	43 (11.3)	54 (14.2)
7	Accessibility of NRC ICLA team in time of need	241 (63.3)	75 (19.7)	65 (17.1)
8	Your participation in NRC information session	262 (68.8)	98 (25.7)	21 (5.5)
9	Were the information provided in the session useful?	239 (62.7)	28 (7.3)	114 (29.9)
10	Have you ever discussed your problems (related to ICLA) with NRC- ICLA team?	236 (61.9)	86 (22.6)	59 (15.5)
11	Was the information beneficial for your issues and queries?	240 (63.0)	36 (9.4)	105 (27.6)
12	Have you further shared the information (obtained in the information session), with family or community members?	274 (71.9)	63 (16.5)	44 (11.5)
13	Will you/ your family approach to NRC- ICLA for any other information required to you?	252 (66.1)	33 (8.7)	96 (25.2)

* Frequencies are shown in tables and percentages are shown in parenthesis

Table 2: Frequencies and percentage distribution of respondents according to information services under ICLA program.

Moreover some loopholes in form of access NRC team for guidance and help was described as not always easy. This probably is because of the overloaded NRC staff with lot of field and office work that limits their accessibility to many areas [8].

Moreover, high proportion 71.9 percent respondents said that they further shared the information (Obtained in the information session) with their family members, friends and other community members. Respondents who were willing to further approach NRC-ICLA for assistance were 66.1 percent and those who were not willing were 8.7 percents. The refugee showed high interest in information sessions with NRC team. The information were not only beneficial for their own well-being, they also shared these information with their circle of friends and relatives. The success of information session is evident from the fact the refugee still approach NRC for information seeking and is willing to participate in information sessions (Table 2).

Association between information services under ICLA program and refugee protection

Information service is one of the components of NRC – ICLA model. This model is highly useful for the protection of refugees, IDPs and return's. Updated and timely information to these targeted people in time displacement, during or after displacement helps to protect them or their families from different types of abuses as well as help them to access humanitarian assistance. To assess the association of Information and Refugee Protection reliably, the perception of information was narrow to few statements as given in Table 3.

A significant (P=0.004) relationship was found between attempt to change in accommodation from camps to settled area and refugee protection. The significant relationship indicates that change of accommodation from camp to settle area leads towards high refugee protection. The refugees consider themselves more secure in terms of services in settled area as compared to camps. Similarly, the association between logistical problems and refugee protection was highly significant (P=0.000). This indicates that refugees faced many problems in term of their shifting from one place to another place, which increased their vulnerabilities and sense of insecurity.

Moreover, a highly significant (P=0.001) relationship between the knowledge about NRC-ICLA program and refugee protection was found. Those who had full knowledge about ICLA services and they knew the process how to get these services were, in a position to access to these services and was more protected. Further a highly significant (P=0.000) relationship was found between the knowledge about NRC team visit to afghan refugees camps and refugee protection. The result indicates that those who were well aware about the NRC team visit were more protected as they shared their issues to NRC team and seek guidance which leads towards the solution of their problems/issues. On the contrary, a non-significant (P=0.138) association between knowledge about the purpose of NRC team visit and refugee protection was found.

Furthermore, a highly significant (P=0.000) relationship was found between availability of NRC-ICLA team in time of need and refugee protection. The result indicated that availability of NRC-ICLA team is very important for refugee protection and dealing the issues related to ICLA. Likewise, a significant association (P=0.004) was found between participation in ICLA information session and refugee protection. The results reveal that those who participate in ICLA information sessions had more updated and useful information and they are more protected in terms of dealing their issues. In addition, a highly significant

(P=0.000) association was found between the information provided to refugees were useful and refugees protection. The results shows that the information provided to refugees were very useful and helped in their protection. Conversely, a non-significant (P=0.060) relationship was found between sharing of problem with NRC team and refugee protection. It probably was because of the fact that not all problems faced were discussed with NRC team. Efforts should be made to step out for solving the problems and issues themselves in the light of information provided.

On the other hand, a highly significant (P=0.000) association was found between the information provided were beneficial in terms of solving the problems and refugee protection. This shows that timely and accurate information or guidance/counseling leads towards refugee protection. In addition, a highly significant (P=0.002) association was found between sharing of information to family/ community and refugee protection. The result reveals that those who had participated in information session further shared the information to their family members and community, which leads towards refugee protection. Other people will also get benefited from these information and they can be in better position to solve their issues. In opposition a non-significant (P=0.801) relationship was found between further approach to NRC team for information and refugee protection. This shows that it is not necessary to approach NRC for every type of information. It is concluded based on the above findings that awareness of the refugees regarding the existing programs helps them in better understanding the underlying objectives of information seeking. Availability of information teams and interest of refugees to participate in information session ensure successful dissemination of information and its utility is ultimate protection of refugees. On part of information team, the trainer should be equipped with suitable interpersonal communication skills and focus on relevant information that are of interest of refugees to make the information dissemination session a success. On the other hand, the refugees should be motivated to discuss their problems openly and shared the gained information with the rest of refugee's community for effective protection of refugees (Table 3).

Conclusions

The study focused on refugee protection in the perspective of ICLA (Information, Counseling and Legal Assistance) an international model considered the first step in the protection of Refugees and Returns, during and after displacements. It is concluded that most of the afghan refugees were illiterate and lack of knowledge and information in order to protect themselves from different sort of abuses. Provision of timely and updated information at every stage could lead towards refugee protection. Moreover, availability of NRC-ICLA team helped refugees by giving them quality and accurate information to deal their issues, specifically related to civil documentations. Sharing of the information to other family members/community members had also contributed towards refugee protection.

Recommendations

• Reinitiating and strengthening of NRC-ICLA program to ensure availability of NRC team for provision of information to refugees relating to basic refugee problems and their solutions, especially relating to settlement of refugees inside and outside camps.

• Ensuring legal documentation of all refugees in the camp to protect them against complete harassed from police authorities or court cases.

Designing a study specifically for women folk of refugees residing

Information	Perception	Refugee Protection		Total	Chi-Square (P-Value)
		Yes	No		
Any attempt to change the accommodation from camp to settled area	Yes	50 (13.1)	24 (6.3)	74 (19.4)	.004
	No	153 (40.2)	154 (40.4)	307 (80.6)	
	Don't know	0	0	0	
Problems faced in terms of logistical issue	Yes	39 (10.2)	6 (1.6)	45 (11.8)	.000
	No	3 (.8)	15 (3.9)	18 (4.7)	
	Don't know	161 (42.3)	157 (41.2)	318 (83.5)	
Knowledge about NRC-ICLA program	Yes	186 (48.8)	131 (34.4)	317 (83.2)	.001
	No	7 (1.8)	37 (9.4)	44 (11.5)	
	Don't know	10 (2.6)	10 (2.6)	20 (5.2)	
Knowledge about NRC team visit in your area	Yes	184 (48.3)	134 (35.2)	318 (83.5)	.000
	No	2 (.5)	10 (2.6)	12 (3.1)	
	Don't know	17 (4.5)	34 (8.9)	51 (13.4)	
Knowledge about the purpose of NRC-ICLA team visit	Yes	158 (41.5)	126 (33.1)	284 (74.5)	.138
	No	20 (5.2)	23 (6.0)	43 (11.3)	
	Don't know	25 (6.6)	29 (7.6)	54 (14.2)	
Availability of NRC-ICLA team in time of need	Yes	136 (35.7)	105 (27.6)	241 (63.3)	.000
	No	55 (14.4)	20 (5.2)	75 (19.7)	
	Don't know	12 (3.1)	53 (13.9)	65 (17.1)	
Participation in NRC information session	Yes	158 (41.5)	104 (27.3)	262 (68.8)	.004
	No	32 (8.4)	66 (17.3)	98 (25.7)	
	Don't know	13 (3.4)	8 (2.1)	21 (5.5)	
Was the information useful	Yes	149 (39.1)	90 (23.6)	239 (62.7)	.000
	No	8 (2.1)	20 (5.2)	28 (7.3)	
	Don't know	46 (12.1)	68 (17.8)	114 (29.9)	
Have you ever discussed your problems with NRC –ICLA team	Yes	146 (38.8)	90 (23.6)	236 (61.9)	.060
	No	19 (5.0)	67 (17.6)	86 (22.6)	
	Don't know	38 (10.0)	21 (5.5)	59 (15.5)	
Was the information given to you beneficial for your problems	Yes	158 (41.5)	82 (21.5)	240 (63.0)	.000
	No	24 (6.3)	12 (3.1)	36 (9.4)	
	Don't know	21 (5.5)	84 (22.0)	105 (27.6)	
Have you further shared the information with your family and community	Yes	164 (43.0)	110 (28.9)	274 (71.9)	.002
	No	18 (4.7)	45 (11.8)	63 (16.3)	
	Don't know	21 (5.5)	23 (6.0)	44 (11.5)	
Will you/ your family further approach to NRC-ICLA for any other information	Yes	136 (35.7)	116 (30.4)	252 (66.1)	.801
	No	12 (3.1)	21 (5.5)	33 (8.7)	
	Don't know	55 (14.4)	41 (10.8)	96 (25.5)	

*Number in table represent frequencies and number in parenthesis represent percentage proportion of respondents and in the last columns number in the parenthesis represent P-Value

Table 3: Association between information and refugee protection (N=381).

in the camp to ascertain their views, experiences and perception regarding information, counseling and legal assistance interventions.

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