Pakistan Essay, Research Paper

Pakistan separated from its British Rule in 1947, after separation the country was divided into two sections east and west. Pakistan borders on the Arabian Sea between India and Iran on the west. Pakistan?s total land mass is an area of 796,095 sq km. Pakistan consists of fertile plains, hot deserts, valleys, snow clad mountains, almost sky touching peaks and over 1000 km of coastline. Such a diverse range of physical features has created a very broad base of differences between various regions in Pakistan. There are at present 32 distinct languages spoken in Pakistan. Pakistan is a low-income country, with great promise for growth. Unfortunately, it has been held back from reaching middle-income status by chronic problems like a rapidly growing population, sizable government deficits, and a heavy dependence on foreign aid, recurrent governmental instability and large military expenditures. At current estimates the population of Pakistan is approximately 144 million. It is presently ranked the fifth most populous nation in the world, according to United Nations estimates. This over-population is having some devastating effects on every aspect of its infrastructure. Massive unemployment, inadequate housing, religious conflict, to increased mortality rates are just some of the issues that are plaguing Pakistan. This paper will examine these issues at greater depth.

Pakistan has a current infrastructure that is able to carry approximately 40 million people. This means that it is only able support twenty seven percent of its current population. Sixty nine percent of its citizens do not have access to running water, or sewage facilities, and current illiteracy rates are at sixty seven percent. A huge majority of the population does not have access to safe clean drinking water. Water pollution from untreated sewage, industrial wastes, and agricultural runoff from insecticides are issues that must be addressed as soon as possible, in order to prevent ecological disasters in the future. Pakistan is also heavily dependent on a single export crop, cotton. Hence the country?s fortunes rise and fall with the cotton market. It is no wonder that there are so many poverty stricken people in Pakistan. When almost half the population is involved in a very volatile market, a lot of the time, a lot of people will be burnt by price fluctuations. The country is also subject to the mercy of the weather. Focusing on a major cash crop means very little diversification. This translates to mass hunger and hard times for the agricultural sector whenever the agrarian lands are ravaged by floods, or conversely, by droughts. Even more importantly, Pakistan?s agricultural sector is marked by large landowners, controlling most of the production. Hence, only a minimal amount of the profit from exports goes to the poor people working for the large farmers. It is these people who constitute a large portion of Pakistan?s population. It is also these people who are living in abject poverty in the rural regions of the country, devoid of the right to feed their families.

Pakistan is expected to reach a population level of 252 million people within the next fifteen years. The main occupation of Pakistan’s residents is agriculturally based. The chief exports of the country are cotton, wheat, rice, sugarcane, fruits, vegetables; milk, beef, mutton, eggs. Forty percent of Pakistan?s population lives below the poverty line. Many feel that if Pakistan is to advance in today?s global markets than it will have to take a good look at itself in order to make any advancement whatsoever.

One of the most inhibiting factors to Pakistan advancement is its illiteracy rate. Like many other Asian countries education is simply inadequate. Using western standards of what it is to be literate; than it is estimated that less than ten percent of its 144 million individuals would make the grade. This plays an extreme role in how a developing country advances into today?s growing global economy. The main reason for Pakistan education problem is due to insufficient dollars to invest into education. While government officials claim that education is Pakistan?s new main concern this is simply inaccurate. Pakistan cannot afford to provide a 12-year education system similar to that of the western culture for every one of its children. Despite this governments however have pledged to try to create opportunities for everyone to go to school. The government says 71 percent of children age 5 and up presently attending a primary school. However upon closer examination it has been found that many of these schools in rural areas are not being used for education at all. One such incident found that a wealthy land owner in a rural area was using the school for a liquor manufacturing plant.

With plans in the works for new schools, ?an estimated 200 this year alone? the government is claiming that there are massive plans to significantly increase the levels of education as well as reducing level of disparity between men and women.

Women?s rights have long been a global issue when it comes to Pakistan. In this culture women have been given a lower social status than that of men. Women are the primary food producers in Pakistan. They represent over fifty four percent of the population, yet most lack any formal education. Education that could aid them in increasing food production, which in turn translates to increased efficiency. Once again, this all ties into the powerlessness, that marks the hunger and poverty-stricken. Without the ability to receive an education or to vote, how can the country be expected to progress? Even less has been done regarding the issue of violence against women.

Domestic violence is perhaps one of the country’s most pervasive violations of human rights, Government officials dismiss any thoughts that domestic violence is factor in society, and if it is then it?s certainly not an issue for the government to be involved with. Crimes against women are practically non-existent. This is an issue that cannot be ignored any longer by the government. The problem of violence against women must be urgently and systematically tackled by whatever government comes to power in Pakistan.

Those who attempt to receive retribution through judicial procedures system are felt feeling even more victimized by the system then from there attackers. Domestic violence is routinely dismissed by law enforcement authorities as a private dispute and female victims who attempt to register a police complaint of spousal or familial physical abuse are invariably turned away. Worse, they are regularly advised and sometimes pressured by the police to reconcile with their abusive spouses or relatives.

Those who report rape or sexual assault by strangers fare marginally better than victims of domestic violence. Victims who are persistent and determined sometimes succeed in registering complaints. However, reflecting the institutionalized gender bias that pervades the criminal justice system, women alleging rape are often disbelieved and treated with disrespect, indeed harassed outright, by officials at all levels. They must contend with abusive police, forensic doctors who focus on their virginity status instead of their injuries, untrained prosecutors, skeptical judges

Human Rights activists in Pakistan have called for the criminalization of all forms of domestic and familial violence against women and the establishment of clear guidelines for police intervention and protection in such cases. There should also be a repeal of Pakistan’s rape law, which allows marital rape, does not establish the crime of statutory rape, and which in some cases does not permit the female victim to testify.

MARRIAGES

Another significant aspect of the daily life is that of family. Closely related to religion, marriages in Pakistan, in all the four provinces are arranged. The groom’s relatives visit the girl?s house and offer the proposal. If the proposal is accepted the “mangni” takes place, it is known as Sangoabandhi or engagement. Mangnis of Punjab and the Frontier are Mangnoo of Sind. When the marriage date is fixed, the groom, with friends and relatives, goes to the house of the bride where the Nikah is performed and the dower money fixed. Nikah is performed by Nikah Registrar and is recorded on a legal Performa singed by both the parties. This is followed by Walima. In Sindh the groom stays in the bride?s house for a night where as in other provinces, he leaves with the “Doli” of the bride after the Nikah. It is the family structure and lack of education that has lead to increased fertility rates.

Fertility Rates

Pakistan has shown strong resistance to change when it comes to birth rates. During the early 1960s a national policy was introduced to attempt to curtail this growing problem. Known as the Family Planning Service This program however has had little or no affect whatsoever on the current birth rate in Pakistan. Current indicators point that only 18% of all Pakistan women are using contraceptive methods. Recognizing the need to provide better services, the Family Planning Association of Pakistan developed the concept of the Family Health Hospital, for women and their families providing primary reproductive health care and referral to specialized services. There have been eleven of these family health hospitals. They provide services for everyone within a 50 Km region. It was believed women would benefit directly if these services were provided and the overall welfare of the family would also improve. Although effective in some areas this program for the most part has been plagued with corruption, mismanagement and in general offering poor services to its cliental. The average women in continues to be approximately five births per woman. It has only been since the 1990s that methods of contraception have begun to take hold. Contraceptive use rose much more rapidly in the urban areas, many feel due to education levels in the city versus the rural area. Many claim that the program is beginning to have an impact yet it will take years to see the spreading of these ideas into rural Pakistan. Considering that only 33 percent of Pakistan?s population lives in urban areas it will take some time to slow the rapidly growing population. One issue that the Family program has not addressed is that of abortion. In rural areas abortion is the most commonly used method of birth control in Pakistan. Despite recent changes in the fertility rate, change is not coming quickly enough.

During the 1950s and 60s the rate of growth in economic terms as well as population increased significantly. Technical advancements such as the ?green Revolution? increased food production, as well as medical advancements which lead to increased life expectancies. While these advancements have slowed, the rate at which the population is growing has not. With a growing rural population many peasants are migrating to the cities, leading to over-urbanization. Massive unemployment levels and a larger percentage of poverty are important issues that must be addressed. Wages for unskilled laborers continue to decline yet the amount of unskilled workers continues to rise. Broad economic and social changes in Pakistan have shed new light on how its fertility rate, which is affecting every aspect of this nation. Yet change may be coming too slowly.

Religion

Perhaps the most important aspect of life for the average citizen of Pakistan is that of religion. Religion is actually how Pakistan came into existence. Ninety eight percent of its population consists of Muslims. The basics of this religion are very clear. There is only one God and He is the creator of all the things. The prophet Muhammad was sent in the world to convey the message of the God to people. The Prophet Muhammad is the most significant figures for a Muslim. It is only trough his teachings that Islam spread from Spain to India. The Quran ?Islam?s Holy Book? teaches the philosophy of how to live for Islam. It is seen as the book of guidance for a Muslim. Religion plays a very active role in the lives of Pakistanis and Islam affects every aspect of society. Women in Islam are made to cover their bodies according to religious teachings. Islam is the official religion of Pakistan but there are many other religions which are an important part of daily life. Some of the other major religions in Pakistan are Christianity as well as Hindus, and Buddhists. The freedom of worship is one of the most important aspects of Islamic law.

This paper has examined some of the many complex issues regarding Pakistan as a growing nation. While I found it quite difficult to find specific data on hospital, crime rates, and social safety nets that may be in place for Pakistan. I also was hoping to look at such issues as political corruption, as well as the exploitation of the poor. Yet it seems that there have been many studies looking at its cultural, religious and economic makeup of this perhaps prosperous country. It is unlikely that Pakistan will be able to adapt quickly enough, due to deep religious convictions, and a clear lack of education in how to push this country ahead in the worlds economy.

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5 http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/pk.html Cia World Fact-book