

PAKISTAN

PIDE launches research study on housing shortages

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PESHAWAR: The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) has launched a latest research study titled “The Assumed Shortage of Housing in Pakistan”. The last research of PIDE published in its monthly issue P & R. “We are short of 10 million housing units” has been the clarion cry in politics, media, and donor-driven research for the last ten years, according to a statement issued here on Sunday, quoting Dr. Nadeem ul Haque, a renowned Economist & VC PIDE, and Dr. Durre Nayab, Pro-Vice-Chancellor PIDE, as they are saying.

The renowned economists said that the IGC report cites an SBP report, but interestingly, the said report gives a lower per annum figure than the one quoted by the IGC. Some WB documents refer to a House Building Finance Company Limited’s presentation as the source but nowhere does one find the exact method used to reach the oft-repeated number.

The worst part is that the government also uses this estimate without questioning its validity. And sadly, we have based policy on this assumption and initiated a significant public housing effort at considerable cost.

Dr. Nayab said that a few indicators to judge the housing conditions include congestion or crowding, security of tenure, provision of civic amenities, structural quality, and cultural adequacy. The Pakistan Social and Living Measurement (PSLM) survey, conducted by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), provides us with the opportunity to look into most of these factors, and we do so using its 2019-2020 round. Since urban and rural Pakistan exhibit quite different trends, we look at them separately, along with some provincial patterns.

She elaborated that using the definition given by the UN-Habitat, “a house is considered to have a sufficient living area for the household members if not more than three people share the habitable room that is a minimum of 4m in the area.”

The 4m was rightly upgraded to 9m, as the measurement was too small. We do not get room sizes in the PSLM, but the number of living rooms is covered in the survey. Since nine sq2 is a typical size even in informal settlements, we would estimate congestion by the number of persons per room.

Dr. Nayab further added that our estimates suggest that 4.37 million households, equalling 12.3% of the total households, live in congested conditions, with over two-thirds of these in rural areas (3.04 million). Young children generally live/ sleep in their parents' room, so we do not include children aged five years and half-count those under 12 years while estimating occupancy per room.

So, if congestion is the rationale behind the 10 million housing deficit, our estimates give a much lower number.

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SBP PIDE HOUSING SHORTAGES DR. DURRE NAYAB DR. NADEEM UL HAQUE IGC

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