

Case Study Series

**AFGHANS IN QUETTA**  
Settlements, Livelihoods,  
Support Networks  
and Cross-Border Linkages

Collective for Social Science Research

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## About the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit

The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) is an independent research organisation that conducts and facilitates action-oriented research and learning to inform and influence policy and practice. AREU actively promotes a culture of research and learning by strengthening analytical capacity in Afghanistan and by creating opportunities for analysis and debate. Fundamental to AREU's vision is that its work should improve Afghan lives.

AREU was established by the assistance community working in Afghanistan and has a board of directors with representation from donors, UN and multilateral organisations agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

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## Executive Summary

This report presents one of three case studies of Afghans living in different parts of Pakistan, which together form one component of a three-country study conducted by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit on Afghan population movements between Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran. The study explored selected communities of Afghans living in Quetta, covering different ethnicities and phases of arrival. It looked at the livelihood strategies and support networks of Afghans who are living in Pakistan, but in this case in a location quite close to the border with Afghanistan. It also sought to understand the extent to which cross-border movement and activities are important to the survival of Afghans living in Pakistan, and provide detail on their role in the process of future planning among these households.

The findings of the study can be summarised as follows:

### Quetta as a destination

- Violence, individual and collective, and the accompanying disruption of livelihoods, were major determinants in most refugees' decision to leave their place of origin.
- Ethnic links were a major determinant in choosing Balochistan over other destinations in Pakistan.
- Many refugees initially came to the refugee camps near Quetta, while livelihood opportunities in Quetta later attracted Afghans to urban areas as aid support in the camps diminished.

### Livelihoods

- Livelihood opportunities available to Afghans in Quetta are diverse, but the most common are marginal activities. Some Afghans are involved in lucrative business and trade activities.
- The participation of women in the labour market is limited. Some Achakzai Pashtun, Tajik and Hazara women are mobile and work outside the home, while women who are uneducated are generally restricted to home-based income-generating work.
- Afghans often travel through Quetta in transit to other places in Pakistan. Some are successfully engaged in inter-provincial trade, while others go on to work in other cities, mainly in marginal activities.
- Afghans access international labour markets through Quetta. Iran, Europe and Australia are the primary destinations to which Afghans travel for unskilled work as well as trade or business.
- Some Afghans in Chaman are active in cross-border smuggling.

### Security and vulnerability

- Police harassment, most commonly a tool of extortion, is the main threat that Afghans face in Quetta.
- The inability to own property makes some Afghans, particularly those living in irregular settlements, vulnerable to the whims of local landowners.

### Ethnicity

- Afghan refugees are often able to identify local patrons on the basis of ethnicity. This is particularly true for Pashto-speaking Baloch and Hazaras.

- Local patrons in Quetta city often assist Afghans to acquire (unauthorised) Pakistani identity cards.
- Ethnic tensions between Afghans of different ethnicities persist, and intermarriages are not common.

#### **Links with Afghanistan and views on repatriation**

- Perceptions regarding Afghanistan are highly individualised and shaped by place of origin and ethnicity.
- Reasons for not repatriating include a fear of crime and violence, particularly against women.
- Afghans perceive that economic opportunities are lacking in Afghanistan, especially in certain parts of the country.
- Land disputes, as well as the absence of social services, are other discouraging factors in the decision to return.

## 1. Introduction

The 2005 Census of Afghans in Pakistan found that over 3 million Afghans remain there, although 2.4 million are recorded as having repatriated since the US-led defeat of the Taliban in 2001.<sup>1</sup> The registration of refugees followed by assisted voluntary repatriation, as undertaken under the Tripartite Agreement between the UNHCR and both states involved, has obviously motivated a large number of Afghans in Pakistan to return – but not all. In order to better understand this segment of the population, questions about their decision to stay, livelihood strategies, links with Afghanistan and intentions to repatriate, must be answered.

There is a growing realisation that Afghans in Pakistan came for many different reasons, and presumably in many cases a combination of these: seeking refuge from political conflict, fleeing natural disaster, as well as seeking solutions to their economic plight. Moreover, many among them have moved back and forth repeatedly between the two countries. Policies on both sides of the border need to undergo some revision and offer differentiated solutions to what is considered by some to be a protracted refugee situation.<sup>2</sup>

The state is the main entity responsible for policymaking, and its actions directly influence the day-to-day lives of individuals. However, there are many social relations that mediate the link between the state and individuals, playing a part in both the policy that the state creates and how it influences individual lives. These relations include kinship and ethnicity, economic relations and faith and party politics, all of which have been persistent features of the Afghan experience of displacement, migration, and settlement in neighbouring countries. They have facilitated, protected and sustained large populations, including those within refugee camps, over long periods of time, and in many cases they are transnational in that they provide support to Afghans across national borders and create networks based on common ethnicity, social, business and political links between Afghans and Pakistanis.

This report is based on qualitative field research undertaken among Afghans living in eight communities in and around Quetta city. Findings are discussed thematically, and are presented following a review of the study methodology and a description of the research sites. The main themes are: reasons for selecting of Quetta as a destination; livelihood issues; and links with and perceptions of Afghanistan.

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<sup>1</sup> UNHCR, 2004, *Afghanistan: Challenges to Return*, Geneva, p. 8; Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON), Population Census Organization (Government of Pakistan) and UNHCR, 2005, *Census of Afghans in Pakistan 2005*, Islamabad.

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR, 2003, *Towards a Comprehensive Solution for Displacement from Afghanistan*, Geneva, p. 3.

## 2. Population and Demography

Afghans in Pakistan number 3,049,268 individuals as enumerated in the *Census of Afghans in Pakistan 2005*. Almost half reside in five districts (20.1 percent in Peshawar, 11.1 percent in Quetta, 7.6% in Nowshera, 5.1% in Pishin and 4.3% in Karachi), while the balance is spread across the remaining 120 districts of Pakistan. According to the Census, there are 769,268 (25.2 percent) Afghans, or 115,565 families, in Balochistan province. The 2005 Census notes that if Pakistan's population ratios have not changed since the 1998 Census, then Afghans in Balochistan would be equivalent to 10 percent of Pakistanis, and in the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) the figure would be 7.6 percent.<sup>3</sup>

The Census tells us that Afghans under the age of five number 27 percent of all Afghans in Balochistan.<sup>4</sup> Quetta district ranks second in Pakistan among the top ten districts with Afghans under the age of five (11.6 percent). This age group constitutes 19.4 percent of the total Afghan population in the country.<sup>5</sup> The realities and issues of a significantly young population must figure prominently in effective policymaking for Afghans living in Pakistan.

<i>Pashtun</i>	<i>Uzbek</i>	<i>Tajik</i>	<i>Baloch</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Hazara</i>	<i>Turkmen</i>	<i>Total</i>
598,203	44,719	43,225	31,573	27,785	16,988	6,775	769,268
77.7%	5.8%	5.6%	4.1%	3.6%	2.2%	0.8%	100%

Table 1. Ethnicity of Afghans in Balochistan

Source: *Census of Afghans in Pakistan 2005* (SAFRON and UNHCR, 2005, p. 54)

Lack of enforcement of state restrictions on refugees' mobility allowed Afghans to settle in formerly Baloch neighbourhoods in Quetta, and to set up squatter colonies around the city throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Afghans worked for lower wages than Pakistani labourers, and they leased shops from locals to operate businesses servicing their own and other communities. Afghan refugees benefited economically from the permits they received from the state to transport relief goods to and from camps in the province. The 2005 Census shows Afghans in Balochistan engaged in varied livelihood activities, with daily wage work being the most common at 54 percent (417,378 individuals), followed by self-employment at 20 percent (155,186) and then employment and dependent categories.<sup>6</sup>

Most Afghans in Pakistan (82.6 percent) do not intend to return to their homeland at present. Out of the 17.4 percent (531,710) who do wish to return, most reside outside the refugee camps and 39.9 percent currently live in Balochistan.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> SAFRON and UNHCR, *Census*, p. 17, 66

<sup>4</sup> SAFRON and UNHCR, *Census*, p. 12

<sup>5</sup> SAFRON and UNHCR, *Census*, p. 14

<sup>6</sup> SAFRON and UNHCR, *Census*, p. 55

<sup>7</sup> SAFRON and UNHCR, *Census*, p. 8–10

### 3. Methodology

The research methodology relied primarily on qualitative tools. These were selected because they offered the opportunity to capture the diversity of experience among respondent groups, and the tensions and contradictions within individual behaviours. The qualitative results complement quantitative data gathered in the 2005 Census of Afghans in Pakistan, both by deepening our understanding of its findings and by providing new insights into the lives of respondents.

Research tools were selected for their appropriateness to the duration and location of the fieldwork. The field team was selected from experienced Quetta-based field researchers fluent in Pashto and/or Persian. The Collective for Social Science Research utilised its in-house capabilities for qualitative field research work to build upon the experience of researchers who were both familiar with the field tools as well as the localities and communities of Quetta.

Research tools used were:

- **Community profiles:** a detailed profile of each locality selected for fieldwork, including social, economic, ethnic and political background information;
- **Social mapping:** an introductory exercise to map out key details of the locality – its meeting places, areas of female mobility and other information pertinent to the research goals;
- **Key informant interviews:** formal discussions with local experts to elicit information about the community as a whole;
- **Informal group discussions:** unscheduled discussions with 3–5 respondents used to develop a sense of the range of their views and experiences;
- **In-depth interviews:** scheduled detailed explorations of individuals' experiences, used to develop case studies and explore complexities; and
- **Short interviews:** unscheduled brief interviews used to explore possible patterns in responses and expand access to community for further interviews.

All interviews were documented and form part of the analysed data. They are based on same set of interview guidelines structured to answer the primary research questions.

#### 3.1 Selection of respondents and communities

The selection of sites was based on four days of preliminary investigative fieldwork that included several meetings with the UNHCR and NGOs working with Afghans in Quetta. These resulted in community profiles of four residential sites – three within Quetta city and one camp site. Three other city sites were used as sources for random interviews. The sites vary in terms of livelihood, living conditions, ethnic/tribal configuration and geographical location.

The area of Hazara Town has a developed infrastructure and is located on the periphery of Quetta city. Jungle Bagh and Ghausabad are unofficial settlements within the municipality, and are located to the west of the city. Saranan is an official refugee camp on the Quetta–Chaman road about 35–40 kilometres outside the municipal boundary of Quetta. Three localities, Killi Kamalo, Zamindar Colony and Bashir Chowk, were randomly covered by informal interviews only. Further observations were recorded at the Pakistan–Afghan border at Chaman. The four



main study sites are exclusively populated by Afghans, while the remaining three have a mixed Afghan and Pakistani population.

The respondents interviewed arrived in Quetta during different phases of population movements, beginning with the first wave triggered by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and followed by the second and third waves caused by the fall of the Soviet-backed government and then mujahedin fighting. Ethnically the respondents represent Pashtun, Hazara, Baloch, Tajik, Uzbek and Turkmen groups. The research team conducted interviews with Afghan males and females of different ages, including those born in Pakistan.

## 3.2 Main research sites

### Hazara Town

Hazara Town is a lower- to middle-income area on the outskirts of Quetta with a population of up to 70,000, of which an estimated one third are Hazara Afghans. The area was established in 1982 by Haji Ali Ahmed (an ethnic Hazara) who bought the land from a Kirani Baloch family and built housing there. Many ethnic Hazaras from Afghanistan who were living in different areas of Quetta moved to the settlement, attracted by cheaper land and the security of the scheme.

Hazara Town is divided into nine blocks, and almost all the houses are made of concrete. Afghan residents are Persian-speaking Shias, originally from various provinces in central Afghanistan – including Hazaras who migrated to Pakistan well before the war in Afghanistan as well as those who fled as refugees over the recent years of conflict. The community is a distinct minority in Quetta, which is dominated ethnically by Pashtuns and is predominantly Sunni Muslim.

Most of Hazara Town's residents arrived as refugees in Quetta in 1996, when the Taliban regime in Afghanistan began to persecute Hazaras. They initially stayed in mosques in Quetta, then moved to homes with the help of local Hazaras who had arrived in Balochistan as early as the late nineteenth century. The refugees' local networks allowed them to bypass refugee camps altogether. Hazara Town is used as a transit point by some Afghans who move on to Iran, assisted by local Hazaras. Other Afghans are heavily involved in local trade and business within Hazara Town and beyond. It is common for families in Hazara Town to have relatives settled in Europe, Canada or the United States, and receive regular remittances from them.

The leading source of income for men is work in coalmines in Balochistan. While some of them are contractors in the mines, most work as labourers. The rest of the population is involved in small trade, shopkeeping and daily wage work.

### Jungle Bagh

Jungle Bagh is a 12-year-old settlement with a cluster of 500 Afghan households within a larger area known as Ferozabad. Two hundred of these families arrived within the last year and a half. It is an unofficial *katchi abadi* (irregular settlement) on the outskirts of the city, alongside the main open sewer line of Quetta. The houses are mostly mud but there are also dwellings made of canvas, wood and tin. The surrounding land is owned by a local Raisani Baloch family, which has made direct contractual arrangements with the residents at the rate of 200 Pakistani rupees per month, per household.

All residents moved to Jungle Bagh from refugee camps. They are organised into sub-communities, with Pashtuns living in the northern and southern parts. The first settlers were *kuchis* (nomads), followed by Pashtuns and then Pashto-speaking Baloch from Kunduz – who form the largest proportion of Jungle Bagh's residents.

The settlement has no paved road, and no clean drinking water, electricity or gas. Men work as labourers (many in a nearby large market) and as vendors.

### **Ghausabad**

Ghausabad is a residential area with homes made of mud, mixed mud/cement and cement. It is approximately 20 years old and has grown to a community of 8,000–10,000 households. There are some paved roads in the settlement, but only where properly constructed homes exist. They are also the only homes that have access to water supplies; other residents order water in tankers at the rate of 200 Pakistani rupees per tanker.

The wealthier homes (those made of concrete) are occupied by ethnic Tajiks, Uzbeks and Sunni Hazaras, along with some Pashtuns and some locals. The poorer areas are home to both Pakistani and Afghan Pashtuns, as well as Pashto-speaking Baloch (the Rakhshani and Mohammad Hassni tribes from Kunduz which arrived in 1994–95), Uzbeks and Pashtuns. Later settlers include Tajiks and Uzbeks.

There is one large market for the whole area at which Uzbeks sell material and Pashtuns work as labourers. Tajik men and women work in various clerical jobs and as teachers.

### **Saranan Camp**

Saranan is an official refugee camp established 20 years ago. It is a vast settlement of 4,000 mud houses, whose inhabitants were Pashtuns active in the first *jihād* against the Soviet occupation. Residents moved here from Surkhab Camp (in Pishin district) when men brought their families to live in Saranan while they went back to fight in the war. When some residents of Surkhab Camp moved out after a brief stay of two years, they negotiated with a landowner of the Saranan locality to lease the land permanently. Only when the government of Pakistan took notice of this settlement was this agreement made public. In order to legalise the agreement, it was reformulated as a lease between the landowner and the government, after which the UNHCR could officially establish a camp here. Respondents in Saranan say that the UNHCR provided rations here for six years. The camp was also provided with schooling and health facilities, electricity and natural gas. The camp population started dwindling when rations were reduced, and refugees moved in large numbers to the city.

Saranan is divided along ethnic lines into three camps. Camp 1 is comprised of Pashtuns from Kandahar and Helmand. Camp 2 is a settlement of Uzbeks from different parts of Afghanistan. Camp 3 is home to Pashtuns from various tribes.

## **3.3 Secondary research sites**

Informal interviews were carried out with Afghans in the following sites.

### Killi Kamalo

Killi Kamalo is located near the new bus stand off Bus Adda Road, and has been inhabited for around 15 years. Most inhabitants are Uzbek, with minority communities of Pashtuns and other groups. Houses are mainly fully cemented, with a few mud constructions. The settlement is a well-planned one, with sewage facilities, schools, shops and basic utilities (natural gas, water and electricity). Some NGOs working here provide health care and skills development activities. There is no cemented road in the area.

### Zamindar Colony

Zamindar Colony, off Saryab Road, has been inhabited for only a decade. Its population is approximately 60,000 individuals living in 7,000–8,000 households. Most houses are made of brick, while around 150 houses are mud. Lanes in the settlement are unpaved. The land is owned by a Baloch tribe and rented for up to 1,500 Pakistani rupees per year, per household. The landowner does not allow civic amenities for the residents, so they collect water themselves and have no electricity or gas connections in their homes.

Afghan residents are predominantly Pashtun, followed by Uzbek, Turkmen and Sunni Hazara. Local inhabitants are Baloch, Brahvi and Sindhi. The Afghans moved here from camps in Balochistan and NWFP. The houses are in clusters based on tribal identities.

### Bashir Chowk

Bashir Chowk is a settlement of 700–800 households, just half a kilometre from Zamindar Colony. It is parallel to a main road, and its mud houses are located on both sides of this thoroughfare. Sewerage and drainage is inadequate.

Most inhabitants are Afghan Pashtuns, followed by Uzbeks and Pakistani Baloch. Households pay 300 Pakistani rupees per month to the landowner, and have built their own homes on the land.

## 3.4 Comparison of settlements

The four main sites vary in terms of civic amenities and construction. While Hazara Town is a fully constructed municipal settlement, Saranan is an official camp with mud houses. Jungle Bagh and Ghausabad are also *katcha* settlements, while the remaining secondary sites are a combination of *katcha* and *pakka* (cement or brick), constructions. The latter two main sites are the least developed in terms of infrastructure and even the quality of their mud constructions. They have no cemented roads or lanes, no piped water facilities and no sewage systems.

Saranan benefits from being an official camp site in that it has been built according to some systematic house planning. However it lacks paved roads, the land level is uneven, and there is no sewage or drainage system. There are international NGOs still working in the camp and providing some social facilities. Respondents claim that in the early 1990s when the UNHCR began to withdraw its support, existing facilities began to fall into disrepair.

The socioeconomic differences between residents are apparent in the quality of their housing materials. In Ghausabad, for example, the Tajiks are the wealthiest

group and live in cement homes, while the mixed construction homes belong to the Uzbeks and the poorest *katcha* constructions to Pashto-speaking Baloch.

The influence of religion and ethnicity is clear even in the distribution of services and clustering of residents. A dominant tribal or ethnic group will enjoy better services, such as access to piped water, even within one settlement. Across the city, families are clustered according to their ethnicity, tribal affinity and religion.

Since Afghans live in their settlements through contractual arrangements with local landowners, they can be subjected to unfavourable and difficult conditions. For example, in Jungle Bagh and Ghausabad, residents' contracts stipulate that they must leave immediately if the landowner requests them to do so. The settlement agreements of Hazara Town residents, however, are more like regular tenancy contracts. Residents can lease existing properties from landlords for fixed one-year periods, but in Jungle Bagh and Ghausabad the contractual arrangements are based on lease of land, after which houses are constructed by the tenants. The contractual arrangements in *katcha* settlements found in our other sites are similar to those in Jungle Bagh, where the lease of land is the basis for the agreement, not rental of existing housing. This means that those who enjoy least security of tenure and least civic amenities are the poorest Afghans who have had to build their own *katcha* homes on land that is undeveloped.

## 4. Destination Quetta

Over the last 25 years, Afghans affected by political conflict and natural disasters have left Afghanistan in distinct waves. The first was the predominantly Pashtun exodus from Afghanistan under Soviet occupation, followed by mainly urban-based groups of mixed ethnicities fleeing the mujahedin fighting between 1992 and 1996, and then the Taliban regime which forced non-Pashtun and religious minorities to seek refuge over the subsequent five years.<sup>8</sup> While escape from violence was a compelling reason to flee for those from northern Afghanistan during the Taliban years and through the American assault on the Taliban, those from southern Afghanistan often cited “economic opportunity” as their reason for moving to Pakistan.

Over the years, the primary reason for Afghans to choose Quetta as a destination has been ethnic links. This was observed for four main tribes: the Achakzai and the Kakar Pashtuns, and the Rakhshani and Sanjrani Baloch. Key informants from these tribes explained that their ancestors had all migrated into Afghanistan from Balochistan. The Rakhshani and the Sanjrani, who came from Kunduz, claimed that their ancestors had originally been from Kharan and had migrated to Kandahar several centuries ago. Subsequently, some of them had migrated north, finally settling in Kunduz. They had retained their Balochi language until that time, but as they intermarried with the local Pashtun they adopted Pashto as their language. When they fled Afghanistan in the early 1980s, they came to Peshawar and after a short time moved on to Kharan, asserting their historic links with a local tribe. Respondents say the tribal leader offered them to stay, but they moved into refugee camps because of the rations and other supplies available there. When rations were reduced in the 1990s these same people moved on to Ghausabad in Quetta and settled on land provided by the same tribal leader.

The Kakars had a similar experience. Their ancestors had migrated from Zhob (in Balochistan) to what is now Afghanistan several centuries ago, but maintained some contact with their relatives in Zhob. There was some limited livestock trading which involved Afghans crossing the border with their livestock and selling it in Zhob. On coming to Afghanistan the local Kakars gave these Afghans their fallow land to cultivate. The Afghan Kakars did not arrive in Quetta until the protracted drought, which began in 1998, rendered agriculture unproductive.

The ethnic Hazaras had close links with Hazara tribes who had arrived in Quetta in the last century and now exercised some political influence in the provincial government. Most Hazara refugees arrived in Quetta during the Taliban era, although smaller numbers were already living in different parts of the city. Hazara refugees avoided the camps and settled in the city under the protection of their local Pakistani Hazara patrons.

For those Afghans who have arrived in the last 25 years, their decision to come to refugee camps in Balochistan rather than elsewhere in Pakistan was made primarily on ethnicity, as illustrated by the Baloch Afghans who first went to Khuzdar and then settled in various camps. Others who did not have any ethnic bonds were guided by political organisations of which they were a part: “I was a member of Yunus Khalis’ organisation, and he advised me to go to Muhammad Khel Camp” (Saleh Muhammad,

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<sup>8</sup> See for example: Collective for Social Science Research, 2005, *Afghans in Karachi: Migration, Settlement and Social Networks*, Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit.

60, Ghausabad). There were others who initially went to Peshawar, but got caught in ethnic conflict in the camps there, and subsequently migrated to Quetta.

*When food aid stopped in 1992,<sup>9</sup> the Pashtuns, who had grown used to an easy lifestyle, were affected the most. The Uzbeks had never stopped working, and so were doing well. A lot of Pashtuns started to loot the Uzbek people, and we had to move to Balochistan. (Hafiz Abdul Haq, 38, Killi Kamalo)*

Finally, some Pashtun refugees from southern Afghanistan chose to come to Quetta or nearby simply because of its proximity.

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<sup>9</sup> UNHCR began its programme to offer cash in return for refugees' ration cards, as the first step towards repatriation, in 1992. Food aid in camps was officially reduced in 1995.

## 5. Living in Quetta

### 5.1 Livelihood opportunities

Afghans living in Quetta are engaged in activities as diverse as the general economy. Key informants reported that Afghans have a presence in trade and business as well as in the NGO sector. However, large segments of the population are involved in marginalised activities such as daily wage work, rag picking and domestic work. Concentrations of such workers can be found in irregular settlements across the city. Marginalised work also seems to be correlated with ethnicity, with Baloch Afghans in general the least educated and subsequently occupying the lowest cadre of the workforce. In contrast, some among the Uzbeks and Turkmens have created a niche in their traditional profession of carpet weaving. The Pashtun Afghans, despite their lower levels of education, appear to be relatively well off due to their involvement in cross-border trade and smuggling. According to respondents, this has been made possible partly by traditional trade links between Afghanistan and Quetta. Similar prior links have also been exploited by Afghan Hazaras, who have, in contrast to other Afghan groups, actively invested in education. This has generally enabled them to participate more in the formal sector and, to some extent, in the public sector.

The nature of activities in which the people of the refugee camps are involved merits specific mention as it is qualitatively different from Quetta city's economy. While a large number of Afghans from the two camps, Saranan and Jungle Pir Alizai, have either repatriated to Afghanistan or moved to Chaman or Quetta, the two main economic sectors in which residents are now engaged are business and trade. Both camps are located slightly off the Quetta–Chaman route, and residents have maintained active links with Afghanistan – forming part of an elaborate trade network that connects the Central Asian republics with Pakistan. Along the route, some goods also make their way into the busy local camp market. Afghans in the camps are also engaged in limited agricultural wage work, brick kiln work and the service sector catering predominantly to the needs of the camp population.

### 5.2 Women in the labour market

Women's ability to participate in the labour market is determined both by social restrictions as well as their household's economic status. Only in the cases of the Hazara community and some Pashtun communities do women appear to be relatively free to choose their occupations. Women from other ethnic groups do work, but often in home-based activities such as carpet weaving and embroidery, or as domestic workers. For such women, the decision to work outside the home is motivated by socioeconomic conditions rather than individual agency.

*Only poor households allow their women to work as domestic servants. They survive with difficulty. (Gulbibi, 35, Jungle Bagh)*

*The educated women here work as teachers. Those who are poor take up embroidery work, carpet weaving or quilt making. There are some training institutes in the city where girls can learn embroidery. There are very few women working in big houses as domestic servants. (Zeenat, 40, Hazara Town)*

Educated women were not identified in any other community, since significant social barriers in Baloch, Pashtun Tajik and Uzbek communities limited female education. However even educated women are generally limited to the teaching in refugee

schools or the NGO sector. Surprisingly, educated Hazara women are not even as physically mobile as uneducated Achakzai women, who transport smuggled goods from Chaman to Quetta.<sup>10</sup> This information suggests that they are part of networks that allocate positions on the trade route that best suit traders' capacities: the smuggling route from Wesh, the border town in Afghanistan, to Chaman requires intense labour, while shopkeeping in the various markets in Quetta is male dominated. It seems that women have a comparative advantage in transporting goods from one male-dominated sector to another, probably because they can easily cross the border without significant checking by border police.

Uneducated women in most other communities are confined to home-based income-generating activities. The nature of the work done at home varies from community to community. For example, Killi Kamalo's women, who are mostly Uzbek and Turkmen, are involved in their traditional profession of carpet weaving. Similarly some of Jungle Bagh's women are involved in traditional thread making work. Women involved in home-based work generally do not go out to sell these products: this is the domain of a contractor or a male relative. Contractors provide the design and the raw material, and collect the product for onward selling, however they do not have any direct contact with the women – the instructions, raw material, finished product and remuneration are all channelled through male household members. It is not clear whether women, uneducated or otherwise, have direct control over their own earnings.

### 5.3 Tribal and kinship networks

Tribal tensions can have devastating consequences for Afghan refugees, affecting their settlement options in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. For example, in Saranan Camp Block III most residents are Pashtuns from the Ishaqzai tribe (90 percent); the remaining are Kakars, Tookhis, Khiljis, Arabs (all Pashtun tribes) and some Pashto-speaking Baloch from Kunduz. When the Taliban took over Afghanistan they fought with the Ishaqzai tribe in Kandahar, which had formerly been mujahedin. Taliban sympathisers (in Camp II) were attacked by the Ishaqzai refugees from Camp III in retaliation. Camps I and II were inhabited by Uzbeks and Pashtuns. Uzbeks from Kandahar had allied with the Taliban in the attacks on the Ishaqzais, and were then targets of retaliation. The local landowner supported the Ishaqzais in pushing the residents out of Camps I and II. The Pashtuns from those camps returned to Kandahar, while the Uzbeks remain at the border: tribal conflicts mean they still have no safe place to go in Afghanistan.

Tribal connections can also contribute to developing and strengthening Afghan settlements in Quetta. For example, a large group of Jungle Bagh residents claim themselves to be Pashto-speaking Baloch who left for Afghanistan a century ago and have now returned because of the war. They feel entitled to reside here because they live on land owned by a Raisani Baloch. In the Ghausabad settlements, those who live in mud homes claim they are Pashto-speaking Baloch from Kunduz, and also feel entitled to live on Baloch-owned land for the same reason. Other Afghans from different ethnic groups and tribes also live here, but the original Afghan settlers were those who had this tribal affinity with their hosts.

The importance of networks based on kinship, tribe and even religion cannot be overemphasised. The Hazara ethnic group, for example, includes Shias, Sunnis and

<sup>10</sup> Achakzais are spread across the border, and this point pertains to both Afghan and Pakistani Achakzais.



Ismailis, however only Shia Hazaras live in Hazara Town. In the mid 1980s there were religious tensions between Shia Hazaras and Sunni Pashtun groups in Quetta in which dozens were killed, and this tension and accompanying violence have persisted to some degree since then. In order to protect themselves, the Hazara Shias have confined themselves to Hazara Town and Marriabad, an old settlement. Afghans living in Hazara Town benefit from protection offered by local Hazaras.

#### 5.4 Intermarriage

If intermarriage had become commonplace over the last 25 years, this would be an obvious sign of integration between Afghans and locals in Balochistan; it would have a direct bearing on decision-making about repatriation as well as on policy planning for the long-term benefit of those on both sides of the border. However, intermarriage is not the norm at all, and given the social structure in the region this is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future.<sup>11</sup>

Afghan respondents clearly preferred marriages within their own communities – that is, within tribal and kinship networks. As one Pashtun man from Ghausabad put it:

*We don't marry into Uzbeks either. Actually, if they want to give us their girls that is fine. We don't mind. But we will never allow Uzbek men to marry Pashtun girls. We are not bay-ghairat [without honour]. If someone from our clan gives a girl to Uzbeks we will consider him an Uzbek too and will boycott him. (Umer Jan, 45, Ghausabad)*

Marriage customs generally prevent ethnic groups and kinship clans from marrying across these boundaries, although exceptions do exist. In one case an Afghan married a Tajik girl from outside his own ethnic group, but then immediately divorced her upon realising she was not a Sunni like himself.

*We cannot marry into Shiites. We would rather shoot them. (Umer Jan, 45, Ghausabad)*

Although obviously not the preference, respondents suggested that in some circumstances marriage between Afghans and Pakistanis would be acceptable. For example, it is deemed feasible for a local girl to marry into an Afghan family because the family could take her with them if they decided to return to Afghanistan. (Conversely, if an Afghan girl were married locally it would be impossible to take her back to Afghanistan.) Some obstacles that dissuade Afghans from considering intermarriage with Pakistanis were mentioned, for example, where Afghans would consider marrying their sons to Pakistani girls, they note, "Who would give us girls for marriage?" presumably for the same reasons that they would not marry their daughters to Pakistanis. One man also exclaims, "Look at their houses, and look at ours, how can we marry them?" in recognition of an obvious gap in income between Afghans and locals.

#### 5.5 Political participation

Afghans have some degree of political participation in Quetta, with access to the political process based on tribal relations with locals. For example, the Akakhel are an Afghan Pashtun tribe with strong connections and some wealth in Balochistan –

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<sup>11</sup> Marriage between Afghans living in Iran and Iranians is more common; see J. Abbasi et al, 2005, *Return to Afghanistan? A Study of Afghans Living in Tehran*, Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, p. 45.

owing to their presence there since before the war started. The Akakhel have had Pakistani identity cards since their arrival, allowing them to vote. The Pashtoonkhwa Milli Awami Party, a leading Pashtun nationalist party in Pakistan that demands increased autonomy for those parts of NWFP and Balochistan which are inhabited by Pashtuns, has been known to facilitate some Pashto-speaking Baloch in acquiring identity cards.

*Most of us have identity cards. The Pashtoonkhwa [party] helped us because culturally and linguistically we are Pashtun. We also vote for them.* (Usman, 47, Ghausabad)

For Afghans who do not have local ethnic or tribal connections, it is harder to obtain these cards – effectively excluding Tajiks, Turkmens and Uzbeks from becoming politically influential. Landlords, who are Pashtun, do not assist non-Pashtun Afghan residents in acquiring identity cards and for this reason they cannot vote.

Political participation extends beyond voting: an Afghan Pashtun proudly says that he is a member of the Pashtoonkhwa party, which also has ties with Pashtuns in Afghanistan who share a belief in a larger Pashtun nationalism. Afghan members of this party participate in their political rallies and donate funds to help Afghans buy identity cards during elections.

## 5.6 Tensions with local communities

Despite their 25-year-long exile, there are some Afghans who feel they have not been able to integrate into society in Quetta, and some believe that tolerance for Afghans in Quetta has gradually diminished over the years. Even second-generation Afghans who were born and raised in Quetta feel that there are times when being Afghan is used against them:

*When we mind our own business, we feel no different from Pakistanis. But the moment we have a fight with a local, everyone including the administration differentiates between locals and us.* (Sher Muhammad, 21, Saranan Camp)

*In case there is a conflict, and the police get involved, we have to pay double the amount of money Pakistanis pay.* (Abdul Haq, 38, Killi Kamalo)

This feeling of subordination appears to run across the ethnic spectrum. The Pashtuns of Saranan, the Uzbeks of Killi Kamalo, the Hazaras of Hazara Town and the Baloch of Jungle Bagh and Ghausabad all share this feeling to varying degrees.

## 5.7 Ill-defined residential rights

For Afghan refugees, particularly those living in Ghausabad and Jungle Bagh, the lack of ownership rights to their houses is a major concern. Afghans cannot own land because they are not Pakistani citizens. Many rent houses, but these are relatively expensive and for poorer Afghans makeshift housing on vacant land is often the only option.

Although tenants living in Ghausabad and Jungle Bagh can be evacuated at two hours' notice for any reason, forced evacuations from Jungle Bagh were not reported during this study's fieldwork. However, there were some households which had been required to move from one place to another *within* Jungle Bagh. Among those living in Jungle Bagh were households which had finally settled down after moving three

times from different areas in Quetta. At each location, the owners of the plot had eventually evicted them:

*Although we build our own houses, there is no guarantee we will live in one house forever. The owners of our land can evict us any time, and we will have to move to another place in Jungle Bagh.* (Sultan, 35, Jungle Bagh)

Property rights in the refugee camps were the most secure, as land was bought by the Pakistan government for the express purpose of settling refugees. While refugees do not own their houses in these camps either, locals cannot force them to vacate.

## 5.8 Police harassment

One of the main sources of problems for Afghans living in Quetta is police harassment. Without an ID card, Afghan refugees can be accosted and threatened with the charge of illegal entry into Pakistan. However where it exists, this threat is often only an instrument of extortion: "The police do harass us at times because we don't have an ID, but the problem is soon solved with money", says Ahad, a 40-year old Pashtun from Bashir Chowk. Only rarely are people actually arrested, and these cases are often either based on some prior animosity or a result of being present at a raid site. Muhammad Khan was one such victim: according to his wife the police picked him up when his employer's house was raided, and while the employer, a Pakistani, escaped, Muhammad Khan is still in jail. Khan's lack of citizenship not only made it difficult for him to get legal counsel, but sometimes his wife is even denied permission to see him: "I never realised I would ever need the ID card so much. Sometimes they don't even let me see him" (Naureen, 30, Jungle Bagh).

Since police harassment is generally aimed at extortion, the nature and intensity of harassment is often related to the victim's socioeconomic position. Residents of Jungle Bagh and Ghausabad generally seemed more threatened than the relatively well off and politically connected residents of Hazara Town. Some respondents believed that those Pashtuns who had migrated after 2001 were vulnerable due to their supposed contacts with the Taliban, while others believed that the police distinguished between Pakistanis and Afghans on the basis of distinctive facial features:

*I am an Uzbek. The police will harass me regardless of an ID card. Turkmens, Tajiks and Uzbeks cannot hide behind ID cards.* (Abdul Haq, 38, Killi Kamalo)

*Those who came after the Taliban lost power are particularly vulnerable. They can be easily accused of being Taliban.* (Ahmad Gul, 35, Saranan Camp)

## 5.9 Health services

Afghans in Quetta are vulnerable to major diseases, including typhoid, tuberculosis and malaria. Respondents also mentioned diarrhoea, gastritis, anaemia, respiratory infections, "weakness", kidney problems and skin diseases among their common health complaints. They say that lack of community hygiene and the absence of a proper sewerage system in the area contribute to these problems. Respondents from Jungle Bagh say that living conditions were cleaner in the camps. Some say that they have a few household members sick at any given time. Respondents also list psychological problems among their complaints, and they say they do not have access to any psychological counselling or psychiatric treatment.

Government hospitals are free for Afghans, and larger hospitals and some NGO-run health centres refer patients to each other for free treatment. If a health problem is serious, some Afghans prefer to access private doctors or clinics. Treatment is expensive, but “at least you get well if you spend money there”. Others clearly state that they use the larger hospitals for more serious problems. With a few exceptions private health facilities were considered better quality, but government hospitals remained the standard choice for Afghans who could afford little else.

Women respondents appreciate the greater access to health services they enjoy in Quetta, in contrast to the many physical and cultural restraints they faced when seeking health care in their places of origin.

## 5.10 Education services

There are more than 50 Afghan educational institutions in Quetta city with languages of instruction including Persian (Dari), Pashto, English and Arabic. They run two shifts and most are co-educational. Students are predominantly Persian-speaking. All passing certificates and degrees are issued from the Ministry of Education in Afghanistan. A representative of the textbook board, based in the Afghan Commissionerate in Peshawar, supervises the functioning of all Afghan schools in NWFP and Balochistan.

Almost all Afghans schools in Quetta are registered with the Afghan Teachers Association (ATA), which has a membership of almost 400 male and female teachers. It was established in 1999 and it is registered with the Ministry of Education in Afghanistan. The ATA runs schools with the support of international donors. It works to improve the quality of schooling for Afghans in Quetta, as does another Afghan organisation, Shuhada.

The network of Shuhada schools was established in Quetta to serve people of Afghan origin, and its schools and health facilities extend across the border into Afghanistan as well. The Shuhada network is a remarkable example of transnationalism in education among refugees. Young Afghan students whose education was disrupted by conflict were able to continue their studies in Quetta in institutions accredited in Afghanistan, and then return to their home country with recognised qualifications.

The Hazara community is generally better educated than other Afghan communities, and in Hazara Town there are a number of schools, computer centres and language centres. The Pakistani government has established one primary school and one middle school each for boys and girls in the area. The preferred option, for reasons of quality, is private schooling (Urdu or English medium) offering co-education at kindergarten, primary, middle-school and high-school levels. There over ten schools operating with Iranian support. Afghans have access to six non-formal schools for working children, and two adult education centres for women which cost 20 Pakistani rupees per month. There are also six home-based skills centres and a number of madrassas for girls. Many Hazara graduates from Shuhada educational institutions are reported to have returned to Afghanistan.

There is a strong gender bias in education. Pashtun Afghans are the most reluctant to send girls to school, in contrast with Persian-speaking groups, particularly the Shia Hazaras and Tajiks from Kabul. Girls are often more likely to be allowed to study at a madrassa, which is cheaper and attracts less social risk, or else at mainstream schools until puberty only. However, there was broad diversity in attitudes about girls' education among the families interviewed.

## 6. Links with and Perceptions of Afghanistan

UNHCR's statistics show that in 2004 over 120,000 Afghans repatriated to Afghanistan from the province of Balochistan under its facilitated voluntary repatriation programme.<sup>12</sup> The complex process of decision-making about return continues for those who remain. Respondents in this study explained their methods of assessing the benefits of repatriating to Afghanistan – based on well-developed transnational links with their country of origin that are maintained despite conflict, borders and lack of documentation among refugees. The issues discussed in this section centre around how Afghans living in Quetta evaluate conditions in Afghanistan and decide whether they should return there.

### 6.1 National and transnational labour markets

It is apparent that, except for trade and business, the livelihood opportunities available to Afghans in Quetta and the two nearby refugee camps are limited. Over their extended exile, Afghans have looked towards other national and international labour markets for job opportunities. From Quetta, they can access trade and labour markets across Pakistan: respondents reported having travelled to Karachi and Lahore in search of work – often only daily wage work or rag picking.

Iran, Saudi Arabia, Europe and Australia were quoted as the main international recipients of Afghan labour from Quetta and its vicinity. Iran is perhaps the easiest destination since there has been a history of refugee movement to Iran, and people generally have relatives working there who are able to facilitate access to employment. An elaborate network of human traffickers, mainly ethnic Baloch, has evolved to cater to this demand. While the network itself is active at the border, Quetta provides a place for assembling potential migrants into a group to be smuggled. The smugglers have relatives across the border who are responsible for transporting migrants from the Iranian side of the border to cities such as Zahedan and Tehran.

#### *Cross-border goods smuggling*

*The two-kilometre stretch of road connecting Chaman to the Pakistan–Afghan border is busy with hundreds of men carrying flour, cooking oil and blankets on their bicycles and donkey carts. Flour is smuggled into Afghanistan, and cooking oil and blankets are smuggled into Pakistan. These men transport goods in small quantities at a time, make up to seven trips in one day, and literally transporting the contents of entire warehouses across the border. Local Pashtuns call them laghris, meaning naked, to emphasise their socioeconomic status. The local society condones smuggling, pointing to the laghris' need for a source of income in an otherwise limited economy. The border guards also largely condone it and charge a minimal "fee" of Rs. 10 per trip.*

*Laghris work for established networks of transnational traders with warehouses in Chaman (Pakistan) and Wesh (Afghanistan). A trader in Chaman will contract a number of laghris to transfer the contents of his warehouse to that of his partner in Wesh. The Wesh warehouse will then forward the received goods to Kandahar and other cities. Similarly, partner warehouses in Herat smuggle cooking oil from Iran and transport it to Wesh. From there, the laghris take cycle loads into Chaman.*

<sup>12</sup> UNHCR, 4 November 2004, press release, Islamabad.

## 6.2 Transnational trade and cross-border smuggling

Historically Quetta has been at the crossroads of transnational trade. *Zeera* (cumin) is brought from Kabul, iron and hides from Herat, and wool from Kandahar. Hides that are imported are sold in the Punjab, and the other goods are sold in Quetta and Peshawar. Among those who are involved in this trade, there are some for whom this is a traditional profession, while for others their involvement has been driven by necessity and lack of alternatives.

Field observations suggest that there are three distinct segments within the trade sector. Firstly, large and established companies are responsible for the large-scale movement of goods. According to key informants, Pakistani Achakzais are owners of these companies, and employment opportunities in this segment are limited to driving trucks. While this is not a highly skilled job, the responsibility of transporting valuable cargo is immense, and jobs are often rationed on the basis of prior acquaintance.

The second segment involves smuggling, or transporting goods into Afghanistan without paying the required taxes (see box). This is the segment that provides a livelihood to many Afghans and Pakistanis in Chaman. A 20-year-old *laghri* suggested that around 30 percent of *laghris* are Afghans. This sector appears to be open to all segments of the Afghan population, however to be a *laghri* requires living in Chaman, and this is not an option for everyone:

*This area belongs to Achakzais. Kakars are not welcome here, so they cannot become laghris. (Zaman Khan, 35, Chaman)*

The third segment of the sector is small-scale, back-and-forth trading between Pakistan and Afghanistan. For example, a young Afghan man can simply buy a back load of any small item from Pakistan and venture into Afghanistan, spending the night where it falls and moving off again in the morning. Often, these men take the route to their ancestral village, visiting their relatives while doing business.

*I bought watches in Quetta, around 400–500, and sold them in Afghanistan. I went through the Chaman border and up to Shebergan, my home town. (Sher Muhammad, 21, Saranan Camp)*

This last segment does not feature yet in any quantifiable research findings, but its presence means that there is at least a supplementary livelihood option to Afghan refugees living in Quetta, and a way of maintaining personal ties with Afghanistan.

## 6.3 Perceptions of security

Respondents display determination to find out what is happening in Afghanistan, and they exercise significant caution in considering repatriation.

*I myself went to Kabul twice during the time of the mujahedin to gauge the situation. It was not good. Then I returned during the time of the Taliban. Extreme Pashtun nationalism was being practised. Then I went again during this government but my heart was not satisfied. I am so afraid fighting might break out again. We are going to have elections soon. If they go well we will consider going back. (Abdul Hafeez, Killi Kamalo)*

Perceptions of ethnic tensions shape respondents' understanding of their vulnerability upon return to Afghanistan. Pashtun respondents in particular cited intimi-

dation by Uzbeks in Kunduz as a reason for not returning, explaining that certain tribes are closely linked (the Moghul, Berati and Taimuri) and enjoy greater protection. A Pashtun woman from Jungle Bagh explained that although Kabul is under government control, her particular neighbourhood is under Uzbek control and this would impact upon her own security. One respondent believed that government officials themselves are not free to move around in the country: "An officer of one ethnicity cannot go to an area of another ethnicity." A Pashtun from Shibirghan said that a Hazara police officer took a large bribe from his relative, and concluded, "They don't respect us at all. I think the Uzbek and Pashtuns can be friends, but it will take a very long time."

"Someone is always visiting every other month and we also go there. Some in the family believe the conditions are all right, others think they are still bad," said a man in Jungle Bagh. However, ease of travel and the level of detail available to inform the decision to return depend upon the place of origin. Some respondents stated that they dare not go back to their villages for a visit because they feel the situation "can change any time". In this way the lack of first-hand information can perpetuate a state of indecision.

Some male respondents from Jungle Bagh and Ghausabad said that they have no relatives in Afghanistan or no contact with extended family there at all. A woman from Jungle Bagh reported that she had repatriated for three months but returned because Uzbeks had taken over their area, "so there was no space for us anymore and finally we came back to Pakistan."

#### 6.4 Perceptions of political control

Respondents are consistent in their perception about the reach of government control in Afghanistan, stating repeatedly that they do not believe it extends beyond Kabul. There is some diversity of opinion about whether governance is improving in the southern provinces and certain districts, and whether other cities are also coming under the firm control of Kabul.

An effective government is strongly associated with the provision of basic services: these are a signifier of government control and ability to establish peace and security. It is primarily through relatives who have gone back to their place of origin that prospective returnees find out whether there are schools, hospitals, roads or even houses to live in. Yet since such services have historically been lacking in Afghanistan, even in times of relative peace, it can be argued that these views also reflect the expectations of the previously rural, now urbanised Afghan settled in Quetta.

Individuals have some detailed information about how political control is mediated in certain parts of the country, and larger conclusions are extrapolated from this.

*In Kandahar and Helmand, the commanders are Barakzais. Gul Agha Barakzai is the commandant of Helmand. In Spin Boldak, the commandant is Razik. If any Afghan wants to go to Spin Boldak, he has to accept Razik as his patron, pay his tax and do what he tells you to do. The same treatment is borne out to everybody, irrespective of tribal identity. The tribal structure in Afghanistan is breaking down. Even though Gul Agha is Barakzai, he is not merciful to all Barakzais. There are around seven branches of Barakzai. He is good to those belong to his sub-tribe, but not to others. He needs these men to be his army. From all the rest, he extracts money. This was not how it*

*was 20 years ago. Then he would have taken care of all Barakzais and not only of his next of kin.*

This respondent has anecdotal, if not personal, information about the border crossing from Balochistan into Kandahar. He believes it is risky unless you have money to pay the tax to the commander/warlord. Further, he says tribal identity can no longer be assumed to serve as a source of protection, which only increases the sense of vulnerability among Afghans in the new Afghanistan. There is a perception here – held by other respondents as well – that money is the key guarantor of security for the returnee.

Women's observations varied more widely than that of men. For example, a woman interviewed made the rare mention of radio as a source of information about Afghanistan, and that too as a source that confirmed the continuing tension in the country. Another woman argued that according to the reports on television, the situation was under control and she was satisfied with government initiatives. While restricted mobility may explain their reliance on media for information, there was a woman respondent from Jungle Bagh who said that, based on her own visit to Afghanistan recently, she felt that the new government was working for the poor and that Kabul was well under control.

## 6.5 Land issues

Respondents reported that if they had any land or other property, then some from among them would go back to Afghanistan to reclaim those rights or to protect them from loss. Another man from Pir Alizai Camp observed that 75 percent of the refugees have returned, saying that most had gone to prevent others from taking over their land.

Land disputes have a distinctly ethnic dimension. Pashtuns are accused of taking over Uzbek landholdings in Afghanistan, while Pashtun refugees fear that Hazaras will take their land in areas where they previously had holdings alongside those of the Hazara. Vacant land holdings are vulnerable to takeover by warlords, and it was said that some Afghans had been forced to go back to reclaim their land from Tajiks in Sari Pul. Respondents are concerned about how to access or reclaim their land, and then how to protect it in the face of extortion by ethnic groups and warlords. Families have sent members back simply to protect land they do have access to, and to pay commanders their regular "tax" charges to retain the property.

## 6.6 Gender dimensions

Among the benefits of life in Pakistan, women respondents identified the following: access to hospitals, bazaars and relatives, a greater perceived freedom of mobility and the possibility of moving around without wearing a burqa. Their concerns about returning in Afghanistan included: a feeling of insecurity, fear that the war will recur, fear of the Taliban and fear that they cannot move about safely in Afghanistan. Positive information about life in Afghanistan based on reports from relatives and hearsay included that women are attending schools and colleges again, working in offices and moving around cities with greater safety.

Perceptions about the relative freedoms women enjoy on both sides of the border vary depending on individual circumstances. In some parts of Afghanistan, such as the city of Lashkar Gah, women are believed to enjoy more security than in most



other parts of the country. This seen as positive, even by a woman respondent who said:

*Afghan women are bound to live in purdah no matter where they live, only in Pakistan they can move outside of the home without a burqa.*

## 6.7 Intergenerational observations

Respondents in Quetta were cautious when commenting on how Afghan youth view the issue of repatriation. They said, for example, that children born in Pakistan know little about Afghanistan. There are those who have never set foot in the country and some mothers claimed their children have no interest in returning. Behind this ignorance of Afghanistan among young people lies a fear of the unknown that parents are not necessarily in a position to address. While there are young respondents who say they do consider themselves Afghan citizens, it is unclear how this affects decision-making about returning: "Our children think that Afghanistan is their country, and they consider themselves Afghans. But they are very happy here also". One mother said that young people may be willing and interested to return, but they are unsure about when and how, and fear they will find themselves in a situation of war.

One young boy returned to Helmand with his father on a short visit and discovered how much he liked it. "It is very beautiful and green, not dry like it is here. There is also a lot of water, and lots of green fields." A father from Killi Kamalo relates: "Our kids envy our relatives there. They have cars there. Our children think that if they go to Afghanistan they will be able to buy cars and they will have their own orchards."

However unrealistic expectations may be nurtured under conditions of exile. A father speaks to his children about their country of origin:

*I often discuss Afghanistan with my children and I keep telling them that they will go back one day. When they do, they will have their own land and their own house there. My children often ask me how this will happen, and I tell them their government will give them all this, and they will go back when this happens.*

## 7. Conclusion

There are a number of significant policy issues that emerge from this study of Quetta-based Afghans. Their livelihood strategies are developed and decisions about movements in the region and beyond clearly taken within the context of significant transnational networks. The study highlights the presence of crucial cross-border activities and support networks, including:

- ethnic support networks in place prior to migration, facilitating relocation to Quetta;
- cross-border linkages for employment, trade, remittances as a livelihood strategies;
- local schooling which depends for its success and relevance on links with the education system in Afghanistan;
- repatriation strategies within extended families that rely on members residing in both countries;
- movement to third countries including Iran and further abroad, that are based on human smuggling networks; and
- extensive travel between countries, including repatriation and then return to Pakistan once again.

Transnationalism is not a distinct phenomenon, but rather it permeates the nature of Afghans' settlement patterns, livelihoods and support networks. The reality of the situation demands that existing classifications of Afghans into categories of "refugee" or "migrant" are revisited, and the relevance of efforts to achieve full repatriation questioned. The UNHCR has begun this process by acknowledging that cross-border networks may be critical to the livelihood strategies of many Afghans, including returnees.<sup>13</sup> It has proposed a new policy framework and supporting arrangements that incorporate these realities as well as the regional context, based on analysing the Afghan populations according to four general categories: those who wish to return to Afghanistan when conditions improve; those who need international protection and assistance; those in search of temporary employment or who have other legitimate claims to cross the border; and those who came as asylum seekers but have become economically reliant and wish to remain.

The findings from this study underscore the need for a revision of the policy framework, but at the same time they may complicate the proposed classifications developed to ease policy reform. For example, respondents in urban settlements have stated that their lack of documentation allowing them to live and work as temporary migrants or as permanent residents is a threat to their safety and ability to plan their futures. Furthermore, cross-border movement, including what is termed economic migration, may continue into the foreseeable future – making it almost impossible to predict future movements, or even for Afghans themselves to plan any permanent settlement. It is necessary for policies in the region to account for such unpredictable changes in status and categorisations of migrants.

The intergenerational differences highlighted in this study call for further research, as this issue will occupy a central place in any policy debate about Afghans living in Pakistan. Should second-generation refugees have more rights to legal documentation and stay in Pakistan, and should their range of options for the future,

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<sup>13</sup> UNHCR, *Afghanistan: Challenges to Return*, p. 1.

regarding education, employment and residency, not be greater? How can their rights be clarified, and how can they be offered greater security? Is not transnationalism an obvious strategy for the young to adopt as they negotiate a bewildering array of obstacles to planning their futures?

These issues present further challenges to policymakers in Pakistan, who must balance international concerns with domestic politics in those parts of the country where Afghans live in significant numbers. Ethnic politics are important in Balochistan, having prompted rebellion against the state and inter-ethnic riots in Quetta in the past. The numbers of Pashtuns in Balochistan is a sensitive matter, particularly to the Baloch who are in the minority but resist being politically dominated. The question of permitting Afghans, who are predominantly Pashtun in this province, to enjoy any sort of permanent residential rights leading to political influence is one likely to attract attention and heated debate.

Research shows that at the very minimum government policies must protect Afghans from harassment and extortion by state agencies – something which international agencies cannot ensure. Further, while questions of how to manage remaining Afghans may continue to be unresolved for some time, this study in Quetta shows an ongoing demand for education and health services and job opportunities among the Afghan population. Currently, the Pakistani government and the international community only partially address these demands – due to a mix of continuing policy uncertainties and financial constraints – preferring to focus most attention and resources on pursuing the policy of voluntary repatriation and eventual return of all Afghans. It is time to find a way for Pakistan and Afghanistan, with the support of donors and relevant assistance agencies, to meet the legitimate needs of Afghans in Pakistan for basic human development, which, if met, may well change the nature of their future planning and work to the benefit of both countries.

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