

Case Study Series

**AFGHANS IN PESHAWAR**  
Migration, Settlements  
and Social Networks

Collective for Social Science Research

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## About the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit

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# 1. Introduction

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 Peshawar, 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 very close to the Afghan border. 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.

## 1.1 Background

Over 2.5 million people of Afghan origin have repatriated to Afghanistan from Pakistan over the last three years, and many more are likely to take the route of voluntary return to their country of origin and citizenship. Nevertheless, a landmark census of the people of Afghan origin conducted by the UNHCR and the government of Pakistan in 2005<sup>1</sup> found that over three million Afghans remain in Pakistan, and 82 percent of them have no immediate plans of return.<sup>2</sup>

The policy of registration and voluntary repatriation agreed between the UNHCR and the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan clearly worked for a large proportion of Afghans in Pakistan. There are many others, perhaps a majority of the target population, who have not yet taken advantage of this policy, and whose status remains in a legal limbo, subject to any future agreements reached between the two countries and the international community.

## 1.2 Knowledge gaps

The three case studies of Afghans living in different locations in Pakistan are aimed at providing a better understanding of precisely this segment of the Afghan population. The following questions are particularly pertinent:

- What are the reasons for households to remain based in Pakistan?
- What livelihoods strategies do these households have?
- What links, if any, do they have to Afghanistan, and how have these varied over time (remittances, visits, work etc)?
- How do they see their long-term future in relation to Afghanistan?

While the years of conflict following the Soviet invasion prompted major population movements from Afghanistan to Pakistan, there is a growing realisation that the current population of Afghans in Pakistan also includes a significant number of economic migrants whose arrival in Pakistan might not have been the direct result of exposure to conflict or persecution, or natural disaster. Moreover, it is believed that there are many among the Afghans in Pakistan who are not one-time refugees or migrants, and have moved back and forth between the two countries on more than one occasion. A forward-looking policy debate needs to take into account the exper-

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<sup>1</sup> 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> SAFRON and UNHCR, *Census*, p. 8.

ience of such ongoing, multi-directional “voluntary” migration as well as that of displacement.<sup>3</sup>

It must be acknowledged that a realistic understanding of the experience of Afghans in Pakistan cannot be restricted to well-defined actors: individuals (refugees and/or migrants) on the one hand and state parties on the other. While it is indisputable that individuals and state parties are indeed the fundamental legal entities of concern, it is also obvious that there is much societal organisation that occupies the space between states and individuals. Social networks of various types – based on kinship, ethnicity, economic relations, faith and party politics – have been persistent features of the Afghan experience of displacement, migration and settlement in neighbouring countries.

These social networks have facilitated, protected and sustained large populations over long periods of time, even if they remain largely unacknowledged in the formal policy discourse. Where social networks straddle state boundaries – either in the shape of support systems between Afghans in Afghanistan and in the diaspora, or in the shape of support systems between social groupings consisting of Afghans and non-Afghans – they can be referred to as transnational networks.

An important motivation behind studies of Afghans in Pakistan is to identify, document, describe and analyse the various transnational social networks that deeply affect the lives of Afghan people in Pakistan, and that shape their links, perceptions and aspirations with respect to Afghanistan.<sup>4</sup> Realistic policy debate needs to have at least a map of the space between individuals and state parties.

### 1.3 Qualitative research methods

The case studies are based on qualitative research. A qualitative research methodology has several advantages, particularly for the type of insights that are required on Afghans in Pakistan. In comparison with quantitative research methods it allows for a more detailed understanding of processes, relationships and dynamics of change. It is useful also for exploring diversity of experiences, and in target populations about which there is limited prior knowledge, qualitative research can help to identify structure and variation.

Qualitative research methods have limitations which need to be acknowledged at the outset. They do not provide a statistically representative picture and the results cannot be interpreted in this way. The emphasis is on the *diversity* of patterns and experiences rather than on the relative prevalence of particular patterns or events. There are valuable sources of quantitative information – notably the Census of Afghans in Pakistan 2005, as well as other quantitative data on refugees and repatriation – which provide the context for the qualitative research reported here.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The boundaries between “voluntary” migration and displacement have become blurred because of prolonged periods of war and conflict – leading to social and economic collapse as well as exposure to violence and persecution. The original terms of reference for this study proposed a classification based on the period of migration: those who had arrived in Pakistan in or after 1996 were to be treated, in the first instance, as “migrants”.

<sup>4</sup> AREU’s Pakistan case studies will further the process of studying transnational networks among Afghans. See E. Stigter and A. Monsutti, 2005, *Transnational Networks: Recognising a Regional Reality*, Kabul: Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit.

<sup>5</sup> One of this research project’s Pakistan case studies (Karachi) pre-dated the 2005 Census, and drew upon other sources of information (e.g. Pakistan’s Ministry of Interior estimates of the number of Afghans in Karachi). The fieldwork for the subsequent two case studies (Peshawar and Quetta) was also

## 1.4 Defining the research population

The history of population movements between the territories of Afghanistan and Pakistan goes back centuries, if not millennia. Contemporary boundaries between the two states dissect cultural, ethnic and even kinship contiguities. The research population for this study consists of Afghans who are currently resident in Pakistan, and are not naturalised citizens of the country. This definition is somewhat broader than the current understanding of the UNHCR of the population for whom it is responsible. The 2005 Census, for example, defines refugees as people (and their descendents) who arrived in Pakistan on or after 1 December 1979. It further excludes those people who possess Pakistani National Identity Cards that have been acquired through legitimate means.

The definition of this study's subjects is broader in the sense that it includes all people of Afghan origin who do not have full Pakistani citizenship rights. They may include people who might have first migrated to Pakistan before 1979, and later became part of the "refugee" population. There are yet others who were displaced or migrated after 1979 and acquired Pakistani National Identity Cards in order to facilitate their stay in Pakistan, yet continue to be identified, and crucially, identify themselves, as Afghan citizens. This more liberal definition of the target population is useful as it allows the present study to take a dynamic and nuanced perspective on Afghan displacement and migration to Pakistan.

## 1.5 Defining the site

The "site" in the case studies is the city (Karachi, Peshawar and Quetta) and its surrounding areas where different types of Afghans reside. The Peshawar site was chosen in order to understand the experience of Afghans in the city of Peshawar as well as in the refugee camps and settlements outside the city in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and adjoining tribal areas of Pakistan. According to the 2005 Census, NWFP accounted for 61.6 percent (1.88 million) of all Afghans in Pakistan, and Peshawar district was home to the largest single concentration of this population (20.1 percent).<sup>6</sup>

The Peshawar "site"<sup>7</sup> was purposively divided into four types of sub-sites in order to reflect the diversity of the profile and experience of people of Afghan origin: (a) refugee camps; (b) mostly or exclusively Afghan urban regular settlements; (c) mostly or exclusively Afghan irregular settlements; and (d) mixed Afghan–Pakistani localities in the metropolitan area. Jalozi, the largest Afghan refugee camp in Pakistan, and Kacha Garhi, one of the oldest camps in Peshawar, were selected to represent the population in the refugee camps. Hayatabad and Yusufabad were selected to represent mostly or exclusively Afghan regular and irregular settlements respectively. A number of other clusters around the city of Peshawar (including Afghan Colony, Arbab Road, Sikander Town and Haji Camp) were taken collectively to represent Afghans living in mixed Afghan–Pakistani localities.

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completed before the results of the 2005 Census were known. The qualitative data collected in these two case studies have been analysed alongside the results of the 2005 Census.

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

<sup>7</sup> One sub-site (Jalozi Camp in Nowshera district) is outside Peshawar district.

## 1.6 Report outline

This report is divided into eight sections. Section 2 describes the overall context of Peshawar and the experience of Afghans there based on secondary sources of information. Section 3 provides an overview of the research methodology, including the process of site and informant selection. Section 4 provides a profile of selected Afghan communities resident in Peshawar in 2005, with an analysis and comparison across the different types of sub-sites. Section 5 discusses the reasons for displacement and migration and the importance of Peshawar as a destination and as a place of transit. Section 6 explains the life of refugees and migrants with respect to housing and security of tenure, livelihoods strategies and access to and utilisation of social services. The complexity of the decision to repatriate or to remain in Pakistan is examined in Section 7. The main conclusions of the report in terms of transnationalism and its policy implications are offered in Section 8.



## 2. The Context of Peshawar

Peshawar district was the most important centre for Afghan refugee settlements, and remains so today even after the height of conflict in Afghanistan has passed. The reasons for this are historical, political, economic and social. No other city or district in Pakistan has hosted as many Afghans, or been as greatly impacted by their presence, as Peshawar. As Table 1 shows, Peshawar district is characterised by an overwhelming presence of Afghans, and one out of every five people in Peshawar is of Afghan origin. This is particularly conspicuous when compared to the Afghan presence in NWFP in general, where only one out of every 12 people is an Afghan. Indeed, almost a third of Afghans in NWFP are concentrated in Peshawar district.

There are a number of possible reasons for such a presence. Peshawar is not only the largest city in NWFP, but also the largest urban site in close proximity to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). The FATA straddles the Pakistan–Afghanistan border, which, along the tribal territory, is considered to be fairly porous. The presence of a physical border is, to a certain extent, diluted by social and cultural continuity, and people across the border have traditionally maintained close social and economic links. Both the NWFP and the FATA are dominated by Pashto-speaking communities, and are considered by some to be the homeland of the Pashtun people. The NWFP has the highest percentage of Pashtun Afghans in Pakistan,<sup>8</sup> and it would, therefore, be reasonable to extrapolate that Afghans in Peshawar are also predominantly Pashtun.

*Table 1. Pakistani and Afghan populations in Peshawar district and NWFP<sup>9</sup>*

Region	Pakistani population in 2005 <sup>10</sup>	Afghan population in 2005	Share of Afghans in total population
Peshawar district	2,490,657	611,501	19.7%
NWFP	20,944,292	1,878,170	8.2%

Peshawar is unique in that it is very close to the border with Afghanistan, and that border itself is historically disputed between the countries. After Independence from British rule in 1947, Pakistan discovered that the government in Kabul did not recognise the nineteenth-century Anglo–Afghan treaties, in particular the Durand Line between what had been British India and Afghanistan. Kabul also supported demands for an independent “Pashtunistan”, or nation for the Pashtun people.<sup>11</sup> When Afghans began to stream over the border seeking refuge from Soviet occupation just over 40 years later, most of them were ethnic Pashtuns themselves. The border, contested as it was, was not a psychological barrier to their movement. Many shared not just tribal, religious and cultural bonds with Pashtuns in Pakistan,

<sup>8</sup> SAFRON and UNHCR, Census, p. 54

<sup>9</sup> Pakistan Population Census 1998 and SAFRON and UNHCR, Census.

<sup>10</sup> The latest population data, from the Pakistan Population Census, pertains to 1998. However, this Census also provided approximations of annual growth rates (at the district level) based on population growth since 1981. These growth rates were used to calculate the projected population in 2005. Furthermore, it is assumed that the Pakistan Population Census did not enumerate people of Afghan origin.

<sup>11</sup> Afghan incursions into Pakistani territory were a major reason for strained relations between the countries, particularly in 1961 after incursions into Bajaur Agency in NWFP (I. Talbot, 1998, *Pakistan: A Modern History*, London: Hurst and Company, p. 99). Years later, the Pakistani government learned that the Taliban-led government, which had the support of Islamabad, did not recognise the Durand Line and also promoted a broader Pashtun nationalism (A. Rashid, 2000, *Taliban: Islam, Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia*, London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, p. 187).

but also supported their nationalist agenda and did not see themselves as asylum-seekers in a foreign land.

Peshawar itself was also historically a hub of trade and culture, not just for the frontier region in Pakistan but also for Afghans living between Peshawar and Kabul to the west. It offered business opportunities to refugees and migrants, encouraging them to travel cross-border despite the conflict, and it attracted those in search of urban amenities such as hospitals and schools. Peshawar dominated the smaller urban centres in the region, which included Quetta in Pakistan, and Jalalabad and Kandahar to the west in Afghanistan. After Kabul, this was the next major city of opportunity for Afghans. And for Pashtuns on both sides of the border, this was the only major city dominated by their language and culture.

According to the 2005 Census, the total Afghan refugee population in the province in 1980 was 1.15 million, reflecting a massive inflow of just under 100,000 people per month. By 1981, over a quarter (292,917 individuals) of all refugees in the province were in Peshawar district.<sup>12</sup> The number swelled to over half a million registered refugees in 1989. The district population, including Pakistanis and Afghans, had doubled from one million in 1981 to over two million in 1989.<sup>13</sup>

*Table 2. Summary of Afghan refugee waves to Peshawar District, 1978 to date<sup>14</sup>*

Period	Ethnicity	Reason for migration	Settlement
1978	mixed	Fled government purges in Kabul	Peshawar city
1979–1989	predominantly Pashtun	Soviet occupation	Mainly in camps
1989–1992	mixed	Interfactional fighting among mujahedin groups, mainly in Kabul and urban centres; retribution for supporting communists	Mainly non-camp, Peshawar city
1994–2001	mainly non-Pashtun	1. Taliban persecution of ethnic groups, women and Shias 2. Drought, as of 1998 3. Economic reasons	Peshawar city, camps as transit settlements
2001–	mainly Pashtun	US-led invasion and overthrow of Taliban	Mainly in camps

Peshawar city is the provincial capital of the Northwest Frontier Province, and the administrative centre of what is otherwise a very rural population. Management of Afghan refugees became a provincial matter, falling under the responsibility of a powerful Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees (CAR). It registered the refugees and rendered them eligible for United Nations assistance. New arrivals were sent to camps, of which 64 were built in Peshawar district alone.

The politics of Pakistani–Afghan ties intensified with Islamabad’s support of the Afghan resistance to communist rule. The Inter-Services Intelligence Agency (ISI), under the Pakistani military, funded and armed over 400 commanders in the

<sup>12</sup> UNHCR, 1980, *Humanitarian Assistance Program to Afghan Refugees in Pakistan* (Report No. 9).

<sup>13</sup> P. Foley, 1991, *Hejrat: The Migration of Afghan Refugees to Pakistan, 1978–1990*, MA Dissertation. University of Hawaii, p. 106–7.

<sup>14</sup> Breakdown of years into periods is taken from UNHCR, *Afghanistan: Challenges to Return*, Geneva.

resistance until 1990, many of who lived in Peshawar.<sup>15</sup> In order for refugees to access rationed food and supplies in the camps in Pakistan, they had to join one of the six political parties favoured by the Pakistani government.<sup>16</sup> In fact, camps provided a backbone of security to mujahedin fighters, who would often bring their families to safety in Pakistan and return to their country to fight, a pattern that served the politics of all players in the resistance to Soviet presence in Afghanistan.

Hundreds of international non-government agencies (NGOs) came to the assistance of Afghans during the years of the anti-Soviet resistance, and their head offices were based in Peshawar. International donors worked out of Peshawar as well, conducting their own development work across the border and in refugee camps, and also funding Afghan and international NGOs. These agencies provided jobs for refugees, particularly in the city – contributing to a kind of secondary economy for Afghans within the city of Peshawar.

Very large sums of money were spent on arms and aid supply to Afghans. UNHCR spent over US\$1b on Afghan refugees in Pakistan from 1979–97. The aid from the US, through the CIA and USAID, was US\$4–5 billion from 1980–92.<sup>17</sup> Much of this money was spent in Peshawar, underscoring not only its political, but its economic and financial significance to the Afghan conflict.

The importance of Peshawar to Afghanistan's conflict has diminished for several reasons, although it remains the primary place of settlement for Afghans still in Pakistan. First, the number of refugees dropped dramatically as almost a million returned from Pakistan in 1992, supported by the UNHCR's encashment programme to encourage voluntary repatriation.<sup>18</sup> However, many of the 100,000 new arrivals fleeing the factional fighting in Kabul landed in Peshawar that year, and soon moved into the city from the camps. By the mid 1990s donor assistance began to be cut back, and by late 1995 UNHCR stopped registering refugees at camps, barring new arrivals who were registered at the Akora Khattak camp north of Peshawar.<sup>19</sup>

Second, the Pakistani government decided not to tolerate the free movement of Afghans in its cities any longer, and police harassment increased. In 1999, a police assault in Peshawar market, matched with instances of forced returns of refugees in Quetta, demonstrated this change of policy.<sup>20</sup> The next year 1,200 Afghan men from Peshawar were deported.<sup>21</sup> Yet there was no stopping the hundreds of thousands of new arrivals who fled Taliban rule in 2000–01 and the ongoing drought in Afghanistan, and the old Jalozai camp was ill equipped to support the 200,000 new arrivals. Their plight worsened as the Pakistani government resisted permitting their

<sup>15</sup> Gulbadin Hekmatyar, Burhanuddin Rabbani and Ahmad Shah Masoud fled to Peshawar in 1975 after the then President Daoud of Afghanistan turned against what he termed Islamic radicals. (D. Turton and P. Marsden, 2002, *Taking Refugees for a Ride? The Politics of Refugee Return to Afghanistan*, Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, p. 10.) Peshawar was a place of refuge for Afghans in political exile before the communist-led government in Kabul took hold in 1978. Pakistani's ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) support for mujahedin leaders was replaced by direct CIA supply of arms to these groups in 1990. (J.K. Cooley, 2000, *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America and International Terrorism*, London: Pluto Press, p. 232.)

<sup>16</sup> Kinship groups tended to be affiliated with the same *tanzim*, or political party (P. Hunte, 1992, *Social Communications and Afghans: Continuity and Change*, UNICEF, p. 18).

<sup>17</sup> See Turton and Marsden, *Taking Refugees for a Ride?* p. 11.

<sup>18</sup> US Committee for Refugees (USCR), 2001, *Pakistan: Afghan Refugees Shunned and Scorned*, p. 11.

<sup>19</sup> USCR, *Afghan Refugees Shunned and Scorned*, p. 22.

<sup>20</sup> USCR, *Afghan Refugees Shunned and Scorned*, p. 23, 38.

<sup>21</sup> USCR, *Afghan Refugees Shunned and Scorned*, p. 29.

registration, for fear it would encourage them to stay.<sup>22</sup> A compromise solution with UNHCR was reached eventually in April 2001, based on a proposed programme of screening for vulnerable refugees who would be eligible for aid. By 2003, UNHCR began to close refugee camps in Pakistan in parallel with its repatriation operation under the current Tripartite Agreement by UNHCR and the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The options for Afghans in Peshawar changed dramatically: if they were eligible for aid under the screening process they would need to move back into camps and lose their livelihoods and homes in the city. If not, they would risk harassment in the city. Instead, many chose to repatriate to Afghanistan under the voluntary repatriation programme, which raised questions amongst international human rights observers about whether their decision was made according to the programme's own principles of facilitating refugee return in safety and dignity.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> USCR, *Afghan Refugees Shunned and Scorned*, p. 5, 8, 33.

<sup>23</sup> USCR, *Afghan Refugees Shunned and Scorned*, p. 9.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Site definition and sub-site selection

Preliminary scoping fieldwork was carried out in Peshawar in order to identify different types of locations in and around the city that might represent the diverse profile and experiences of Afghans living there. The scoping exercise was based on secondary information as well as key informant interviews with representatives of the UNHCR, the Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees and several NGOs working with people of Afghan origin.<sup>24</sup> Preliminary field visits were made to several localities in and around Peshawar in order to corroborate, verify and refine the information received from non-community key informants.<sup>25</sup> This latter exercise was valuable in identifying and motivating local interviewees for subsequent in-depth research. The main aim of the scoping stage was to collect preliminary ethnographic information about the geographical spread of Afghan refugees and migrants in and around Peshawar, their ethnic diversity and their living conditions, as well as general information about their time of arrival.

Afghans were thought to be living in exclusively Afghan localities as well as in mixed localities alongside Pakistani citizens. High concentrations of Afghans could be found in three types of localities: first, refugee camps in rural and urban areas; second, regular urban neighbourhoods; third, irregular urban and peri-urban settlements. Finally, besides these three types of mostly or exclusively Afghan localities, large numbers of Afghans live in mixed Afghan–Pakistani localities in urban areas. The relative weight of population in these respective types of localities was not known at the time of the fieldwork, as this was before results of the 2005 Census were published. Secondary information suggested that initially most of the Afghans in Pakistan had lived in refugee camps, and that there had been a steady move towards regular urban and irregular urban and peri-urban settlements over time.<sup>26</sup>

The Jalozai refugee camp is located in a rural part of Nowshera district, some 40 km to the southeast of Peshawar city. It was selected to represent the Afghan population still residing in rural refugee camps. The 2005 Census found Jalozai to be the largest camp in the country with a population of over 119,000.<sup>27</sup> It had been set up in 1982 with UNHCR assistance and its development was closely linked to the progress of the Afghan resistance to Soviet military occupation (1979–89). In addition Kacha Garhi was selected as an urban refugee camp. This camp, thought to be the oldest one in Pakistan, is located around 4 km from the city centre.

The most prominent regular urban neighbourhood in Peshawar with an overwhelmingly Afghan population is Hayatabad. This neighbourhood, established in 1975 on the western fringes of Peshawar, had initially been planned as a middle- to upper-income colony to house the spill-over from the city. The Afghan presence here dated back to the late 1970s and early 1980s when the area became the home of the growing middle-class educated community from the across the border. Although the residents of Hayatabad differ greatly in their socioeconomic status from the majority of

<sup>24</sup> The NGOs included the ACBAR Research & Information Centre (ARIC), and the International Rescue Committee (IRC).

<sup>25</sup> Government, UNHCR and NGO key informants were “non-community” in the sense they were asked for a general overview of Afghans in Peshawar, and not to represent the specific conditions of any particular community.

<sup>26</sup> According to the 2005 Census, 58% of Afghans in Pakistan lived outside camps (SAFRON and UNHCR, p. 7).

<sup>27</sup> SAFRON and UNHCR, p. 31.

the Afghans in Pakistan, they constitute a strategically placed and upwardly mobile segment of the population. This neighbourhood, therefore, was a natural choice as a representative of Afghans living in a regular urban settlement.

Informal and irregular urban settlements make up a significant proportion of the urban population of Pakistan.<sup>28</sup> These are settlements that have sprung up on publicly or privately owned land, in violation, initially, of land use regulations. In the case of public land, the irregular settlements (*katchi abadis*) are mostly in low-income areas and have often resulted from illegal land-grab and squatter settlements. While short of legal recognition by the relevant government authorities, *katchi abadis* often persist and gradually acquire a sense of permanence and partial security of tenure<sup>29</sup> – usually through a combination of political mediation and the payment of bribes. It is common for residents in irregular settlements, for example, to acquire electricity connections from state-run power companies, even though they cannot claim legal ownership or tenancy rights. There are also many irregular settlements on privately owned land where the land has either been illegally grabbed from the original owner, or where the owner himself has allowed agricultural land to be converted illegally into residential and commercial use.

The immediate consequences of “irregularity” are that these settlements do not have full legal security of tenure, and they are not legally entitled to the provision of public infrastructure and social services. Many of these settlements are, nevertheless, “tolerated” by the authorities (usually through a combination of bribery and political lobbying) and acquire semi-permanent or even permanent status over the passage of time. Irregular settlements have been closely associated with the history of migration – both cross-border and internal – in Pakistan. For many cross-border refugees and migrants, the issue of their “irregular” or uncertain legal status is closely linked to the “irregularity” of their places of residence.<sup>30</sup>

In Peshawar the peri-urban locality of Yusufabad was selected to represent an exclusively Afghan *katchi abadi*. This settlement was located around 5 km from the old city of Peshawar, and is bounded on two sides by agricultural land. It was first settled in 1998 and was never officially recognised as a refugee camp. Its inhabitants included mainly low-income families who had moved out of recognised refugee camps such as Nasir Bagh which had been closed down and destroyed by the authorities.

There are many Afghans living in mixed Afghan–Pakistani localities. These individuals, families and clusters of households were spread all across Peshawar in neighbourhoods of various types. Four such localities were selected in different parts of the city: Afghan Colony, Arbab Road, Haji Camp and Sikander Town. All of these localities are 2–4 km from the old city centre. Arbab Road and Sikander Town are established regular settlements. Haji Camp was the site of an old transit camp for pilgrims to Mecca that was abandoned in favour of a new site. Afghan Colony was formerly agricultural land that was converted to residential and commercial use

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<sup>28</sup> While no formal survey has been carried out on this issue, it is widely believed that in the large metropolises such as Karachi, as many as half of all residents live in irregular settlements (see H. Gazdar, 2005, Karachi, “Pakistan: Between Regulation and Regularisation”, in M. Balbo (ed.) *International Migrants and the City*, Venice: UN-HABITAT, p. 151–85).

<sup>29</sup> The government has announced “amnesties” from time to time; for example, the landmark amnesty in March 1985 when it was declared that *katchi abadis* established to that date would be regularised and converted into regular settlements with full property rights awarded to those in possession of land.

<sup>30</sup> See Gazdar, “Pakistan: Between Regulation and Regularisation” for a detailed treatment of this issue with respect to migrants and urban governance in Karachi.

without official sanction in the 1970s. The initial settlers were Pakistanis – Afghans began arriving in this locality from the late 1980s onwards. These four areas were collectively taken to represent Afghan residents of Peshawar who live in mixed Afghan–Pakistani neighbourhoods.

### 3.2 Research tools, informant selection and documentation

The research questions addressed in this case study required information to be gathered at several levels. It was important, first and foremost, to gain a clearer picture of the community and socioeconomic contexts in which Afghans in Pakistan find themselves. For this purpose the investigation needed to focus on the community level: the identification of the broad contours of communities of Afghans in Pakistan, and an understanding of the dynamics of change in these communities. The ultimate focus of the research, however, was the individual refugee or migrant and his or her household, requiring attention to individual and household level experiences and perceptions.

Once the preliminary scoping exercise (based primarily on key informant interviews) had been completed and sub-sites identified, three specific types of research tools were used to collect qualitative data in the sub-sites:

- Social mapping and community profiling exercises;
- Group-based interactions; and
- Individual interactions.

#### **Social mapping and community profiling exercise**

This included an introductory exercise conducted with key local informants (individuals) and small groups identified through local resource persons. The purpose was to map out important details about the locality, its meeting places, areas of female mobility and other information pertinent to the research goals. The exercise also helped researchers to break the ice with community members and begin to select potential participants for group-based interactions and respondents for individual interactions. A detailed social, economic and political profile of each locality selected for fieldwork was then prepared on the basis of interviews, observations and background information on the sites.

#### **Group-based interactions**

Single-gender groups consisting of five to ten community members were engaged in interactions lasting one to two hours in facilitated and moderated discussions. The key questions raised by the facilitators related to the contours of communities and sub-communities, collective histories and experiences of displacement or migration, life in Pakistan, group perceptions of life in Afghanistan, and group views on repatriation or future in Pakistan.

#### **Individual interactions**

Individual men and women from various socioeconomic classes, educational backgrounds, ethnic groups and places of origin were selected and asked about their lives with a particular emphasis on their experiences of displacement and migration. These interviews documented the experiences of the informants with respect to livelihoods, family formation and links with Afghanistan. Informants were asked to

reflect upon the prospects of return to Afghanistan or a future in Pakistan or elsewhere.

The selection of group participants and individual informants for group-based and individual interactions respectively was based on loosely structured criteria. These included a balanced representation of men and women, and the inclusion of individuals with different levels of education and belonging to different socio-economic classes. Care was taken to ensure inclusion of people belonging to different ethnic groups and religious sects, and from different places of origin in Afghanistan. While the criteria for informant selection could not be expected to yield a statistically representative sample of Afghans in Pakistan, it did aim to ensure that none of the key segments of the population were excluded.<sup>31</sup>

Table 3 provides a summary of the type of research exercise or interaction by sub-site and gender. A detailed account of informants and interactions is provided in Appendix A.

*Table 3. Type of exercise/interaction by sub-site*

	Social mapping and community profiling		Group-based interaction		Individual interaction	
	F	M	F	M	F	M
<b>Jalozai</b> <i>Rural refugee camp</i>	3	3	5	3	2	4
<b>Kacha Garhi</b> <i>Urban refugee camp</i>	1	1	2	2	1	1
<b>Hayatabad</b> <i>Predominantly Afghan regular settlement</i>	3	3	3	5	2	4
<b>Yusufabad</b> <i>Predominantly Afghan irregular settlement</i>	3	3	4	4	2	3
<b>Various</b> <i>Mixed Afghan–Pakistan localities</i>	0	0	6	7	3	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>15</b>

<sup>31</sup> In effect, the emphasis on ensuring the representation of different educational levels and ethnic groups would have yielded disproportionate numbers of non-Pashtuns and educated individuals. It was clear from the outset, however, that statistical representation was not an objective of the qualitative survey and that the results could not be interpreted as statistical inferences.



## 4. A Profile of Diverse Afghan Communities

This section provides community profiles of the four types of sub-sites selected for the Peshawar case study, briefly describing the localities, their histories of settlement as well as the dynamics of the Afghan presence. A comparative analysis across sub-sites is presented at the end of the section to draw out the diversity and some of the complexity of the Afghan experience in Peshawar.

### 4.1 Afghan refugee camps

Afghans are most commonly perceived to be residing in refugee camps. However, the 2005 Census shows that even if this were the case in the past, today a majority of the Afghans actually reside in cities and rural areas outside camps. Camps, nevertheless, represent over 40 percent of the estimated Afghan population in Pakistan.<sup>32</sup> Camps differ in their proximity to major population centres, their socio-economic conditions and their relative sizes. Even though the legal and administrative frameworks governing officially recognised refugee camps are uniform, there are important differences between camps in their histories and politics of settlement.

The main point of contrast in the two camps selected for investigation in the present study – Jalozai and Kacha Garhi – is their respective geographical settings. The former is located in a rural area about 40 km from Peshawar, while the latter can be regarded as being part of the city itself.

#### Jalozai camp

In terms of population, Jalozai is the largest Afghan refugee camp in Pakistan. In 2005, there were 119,964 individuals in 24,201 families living there, accounting for nearly a tenth of all Afghans residing in officially designated refugee camps.<sup>33</sup> The camp takes its name from the old Pashtun village of Jalozai which is located around 1 km from the camp. The original inhabitants do not regard the camp as part of Jalozai and simply refer to it as "*mohajir* camp" (refugee camp).

Although an officially designated "refugee camp", the locality has the appearance of a large, low-income, peri-urban settlement. There are no obvious signs of camp paraphernalia such as boundary fences or entry or exit restrictions. Most of the dwellings are *katche* structures made of mud, thatch and timber. There are also a number of *pukka* (brick, concrete) buildings; these are mostly official and public facilities, houses of community leaders and some shops in the main market. The camp is supplied with electricity and has public tubewells and private handpumps for fresh water. There is no proper drainage system, though there are open drains running along streets and lanes, which discharge waste water into neighbouring fields.

The camp is currently divided into over 50 distinct (though contiguous) localities called *mohallas*. A *mohalla* is generally defined with reference to the name of the main mosque serving it, as well as by the ethnic background of its residents. Most *mohallas* are ethnically homogenous, though there are some lanes, streets and localities that are also ethnically mixed. The camp is bisected by an access road

<sup>32</sup> SAFRON and UNHCR, Census, p. 7.

<sup>33</sup> SAFRON and UNHCR, Census, p. 23.

running through it, and this road is lined on both sides with shops that also constitute the main market of the camp.

Before the Afghan presence, the land on which the camp is located was in agricultural use. The first Afghans arrived here in 1980 and were given land to live on by local landowners Pir Mohammad and Badar, both from the Khattak tribe. It is reputed that this initial plot of land was made available for free in a spirit of Islamic and Pashtun solidarity with Afghan displaced persons. The very first arrivals here were all ethnic Pashtuns from various provinces close to the Pakistan–Afghanistan border. These initial refugees are thought to have had personal links with the landlords in the area.

Some months later, Ustaad Abdul Rab Rasool Sayyaf, an emerging leader of the Afghan resistance to the Soviet military intervention, came to the area and established the presence of his party, Tanzeem-e-Ittehad-e-Islami (TII), here. Haji Dost Mohammad, a cousin of Sayyaf, emerged as a key figure then and continues to be recognised as a leader in the camp. Sayyaf received generous financial assistance from Saudi Arabian sources and was able to purchase a large plot of land from local landowners close to the original refugee settlement.

TII went on to purchase more contiguous plots of land, and more refugees were settled in clusters on this new land. A large plot of land (around 10,000 square metres) was reserved by TII for a hostel and seminary (*madrassa*) for single young men. In the meantime other Islamic organisations also started to establish a presence in and around the Afghan refugee settlements. These included Hizb-e-Islami, Mahaz-e-Milli, Harkat-e-Islami, Harkat-e-Mujahid, Dawat-ul-Jihad, Rabita-e-Alam-e-Islami and Al-Khidmat.<sup>34</sup> These organisations followed the pattern set by TII – making land available for housing, providing tents and other relief, and establishing basic infrastructure such as water pumps.

UNHCR started its work in the area in 1982. This was the first time that the Afghan refugee settlements near Jalozai acquired official recognition as refugee camps. Before the arrival of UNHCR, the settlements and their residents were tolerated (and even encouraged) by Pakistani authorities, but did not have any legal status. With the UNHCR came an official system for administering the camp. Formal authority of the camp was placed in the hands of the Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees, an agency set up by the Pakistani government to deal with all matters relating to Afghan refugees.

The various political and religious organisations, notably TII, remained active in the day-to-day running of the camp. Other official organisations and NGOs also started their activities in the provision of relief and physical infrastructure. Perhaps the most important form of provision was the basic ration, consisting of staple foods and other essentials.

Over time the camp acquired a definite structure. The system of acquiring land, dividing it into small residential plots and then allotting these plots to refugees had already been under way before the official recognition of the camp. UNHCR leased more land from local landlords and gave allotments to new refugees. The land purchased by TII and other Islamic organisations for settling refugees remained the

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<sup>34</sup> The former five were Afghan resistance organisations. The Rabita-e-Alam-e-Islami is a Saudi Arabia-based pan-Islamic organisation. Al-Khidmat is the welfare wing of the Pakistani political party Jamaat-e-Islami, which was an ally of the Pakistani government of the time, and became quickly involved in providing and channelling support to particular Afghan resistance groups.

property of these organisations. As far as the registration and ration entitlements of the refugees were concerned, no distinction was made between people living on UNHCR-leased land and those living on land provided by political and Islamic organisations.

Before the official recognition of the camp, two patterns of residential clustering were already visible: ethnicity/kinship and organisational affiliation. Refugees preferred to settle close to their own relatives and extended kinship groups. This, in effect, created an ethnic clustering of families. Distinctive localities of Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks and Turkmens emerged relatively quickly within the camp,<sup>35</sup> and ethnic segregation played itself out within the broader context of political and religious organisations. Access to land and services was mediated through these organisations, and different organisations had stakes in various parts of the “pre-camp”. There were clearly distinguishable clusters associated with TII and other organisations.

Ethnic segregation was highly conspicuous in the initial period when land was relatively abundant and people were able to exercise choice over their residential location. The various clusters that emerged through the exercise of such choice were often separated by open spaces. As the population grew and the camp area became congested, however, the physical distance between kinship and ethnic groups literally disappeared.

Even a brief history of the Jalozai camp would remain incomplete without an account of the Turkmen Camp. This is a settlement of at least 10,000 people located around 5 km from the main Jalozai camp on an unpaved track.<sup>36</sup> The Turkmen camp is not an official refugee camp, and its residents are not represented in the Islahi Committee of the Jalozai camp. There are two important connections between the Turkmen and Jalozai camps: first, the residents of Turkmen camp are former residents of Jalozai; second, physical access to the Turkmen Camp is only possible through Jalozai camp, and the residents rely on Jalozai camp for much of their physical infrastructure and other economic requirements.

### Kacha Garhi

Kacha Garhi is one of the oldest official refugee camps in Peshawar. It is located close to Hayatabad, on the main road leading out of Peshawar city towards the Afghan border, around 4 km from the old city centre. At the time of its establishment in 1981, it was situated outside the city but over time has merged into the city. The 2005 Census found the population of the camp to be 51,014.<sup>37</sup> The residents are almost exclusively ethnic Pashtun.

The infrastructure in the camp is similar to Jalozai camp. Most of the buildings are *katche* mud structures. There are public facilities such as schools and clinics as well as offices of various organisations that are housed in more durable buildings. The camp is connected to the electricity grid. There are four public tubewells that are used to fill up water reservoirs, from which households draw water manually or

<sup>35</sup> Key informants reported the following ethnic breakdown of the population: Pashtun 80%; Turkmen 14%; Tajik 5%; and Uzbek 1%. The proportion of Pashtuns was similar to 2005 Census findings for the Afghan population in Pakistan as a whole at 82% (SAFRON and UNHCR, Census, p. 15).

<sup>36</sup> It is not possible to give a precise figure for the population of the Turkmen Camp. A community profiling exercise found that there were at least 2,000 families living there. A very conservative estimate of the population would be 10,000.

<sup>37</sup> SAFRON and UNHCR, Census, p. 31.

through motorpumps. Many people also rely on private handpumps in their own homes. Waste water is drained through *katche* drains into open ditches around the camp.

The Kacha Garhi camp, at its peak, consisted of six “sub-camps”. These were known by serial numbers. One of the “sub-camps” (known as Camp No. 6) was shut down and razed in 2004. Part of Camp No. 5 was also evacuated and demolished at that time. Some portions of the camp are on privately owned land, which was formerly in agricultural use.<sup>38</sup> Other portions are on publicly owned land, some of which is thought to belong to military authorities.<sup>39</sup> State-owned land was leased for the refugee camp through the Afghan Commissionerate.

The early history of the camp is similar to that of the Jalozai camp described above. The initial Afghan settlers were those who had been displaced by the war and Soviet military occupation. Afghan resistance groups with financial supporters in Arab countries soon made their presence felt in the camp. In Kacha Garhi the dominant group was the Hizb-e-Islami led by Gulbadin Hekmatyar.

Unlike Jalozai, some of the land in Kacha Garhi was government property. The legal process for its conversion into a refugee camp involved the award of a lease for the use of the land to the Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees. Local informants were of the view that some of the land was then acquired on 25-year leases. They believed that the camp evacuation and demolitions of 2004 were the result of the lease period coming to an end. It was also reported by camp residents that leases on other parts of the camp would come to an end in 2006. They anticipated camp closure and demolition as a result.

It was reported that nearly all of the residents of Kacha Garhi (99 percent) were ethnic Pashtuns. They belonged to various tribes and sub-tribes including Hussainkhel, Mehmoodzai and Ahmedzai. When Kacha Garhi was formally recognised as a refugee camp, the status of land lease changed. Also, the refugees were registered and became entitled to UNHCR relief supplies and rations. As in the Jalozai camp, the resistance parties and Islamic groups (in this case Hizb-e-Islami) continued to play a crucial mediatory role in the administration and governance of the camp.

Kacha Garhi provides a useful case of the process of a camp being shut down and razed. As mentioned above, Camp No. 6 and parts of Camp No. 5 were closed and the land repossessed by government authorities in 2004. Although camp closure occurred at a time when a repatriation policy was in place, there seems to have been only a very loose linkage between the two processes. While some of the former residents of Camp Nos. 5 and 6 did indeed repatriate to Afghanistan, many others took up residence in other locations in Peshawar. The sequence was not “repatriation, camp closure and demolition”; rather it was “eviction, demolition and partial repatriation”.

## 4.2 Predominantly Afghan regular urban settlement

### Hayatabad

Hayatabad is situated to the northwest of Peshawar city on along the main road towards the Afghanistan border. It was planned in the early 1970s as a “satellite”

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<sup>38</sup> The landlords are referred to as “*arbab*”.

<sup>39</sup> Formally speaking, the provincial government is the residual owner of state land in Pakistan. The military might lease land from the provincial government for extended and renewable periods.

town of Peshawar which would accommodate the growth in the city's population and commercial and industrial activities. In fact, the original name of the settlement was Satellite Town. The name was changed to Hayatabad in 1976 to honour the memory of Hayat Sherpao, a leading NWFP politician and governor who was assassinated in a bomb attack on a public meeting.

Satellite Town or Hayatabad was designed, in line with similar urban developments in other Pakistani cities, as a middle- and upper-income area with provisions for the civic and public facilities necessary for modern urban living. The development consisted of 23,000 residential, commercial and industrial plots of varying sizes, and it was thought that it would become an important hub of Peshawar's business and professional elite, and the city's rising middle classes. In line with other urban developments of this type in Pakistan, the development agency allotted or sold individual plots of land and left the job of construction to the private sector.

In terms of physical infrastructure, Hayatabad is on a par with any modern residential area in a developing country. All houses are made of bricks and concrete, and the provision of public amenities and municipal services such as electricity, water supply, drainage, paved streets and street-cleaning is taken for granted.

The development of Hayatabad, however, became closely linked with the arrival of displaced Afghans in Peshawar in the early 1980s. While people from rural areas in Afghanistan, or those with few assets, were constrained to subsisting in squatter settlements (many of which evolved into official refugee camps), there was also a demand for more formal and better quality housing and employment infrastructure. Hayatabad offered one of the few possibilities to meet these needs, and it quickly attracted the more affluent Afghan families as well as Afghan and international organisations basing their aid operations in Peshawar.

Property ownership laws in Pakistan make it difficult for Afghans to own land. Since Hayatabad is a regular urban settlement and property transactions must be conducted within a formal system, there are few Afghans who actually own land or houses there.<sup>40</sup> Hayatabad is, therefore, largely a tenant-occupied neighbourhood that caters not only to the well-off, but also to middle-class and even lower middle-class families of Afghan origin.<sup>41</sup>

While precise figures are not available, it is believed that up to 80 percent of Hayatabad's residents are Afghan. The vast majority of these are Pashtun and Tajik, but there are also Hazara and Uzbek people. Residents include, and have included, some of Afghanistan's leading professional, business and political figures.<sup>42</sup> Many households receive remittances from family members in Europe or America. Hayatabad residents are predominantly from families that were relatively strong in economic terms even prior to displacement or migration, and they include many whose experience of displacement does not include ever having registered or resided in refugee camps.

<sup>40</sup> There are exceptions, of course, since it has been possible for Afghans to acquire (unauthorised) Pakistani citizenship documents such as identity cards.

<sup>41</sup> Rankings such as "middle class" and "lower middle class" are somewhat arbitrary. People in white-collar, low-income jobs, such as clerks, or those with small businesses, such as small retail outlets, could be classified as "lower middle class" for present purposes.

<sup>42</sup> It is one of the sad ironies of the Afghan experience of conflict and displacement that people who fled persecution for their association with a previous regime were later joined by associates of the successor regime which was in time overthrown. The officials of this regime then fled from persecution and found shelter in neighbourhoods like Hayatabad.

### 4.3 Predominantly Afghan irregular settlements

#### Yusufabad and Nekabad<sup>43</sup>

Yusufabad, situated to the northwest of the city centre, is an irregular settlement (*katchi abadi*) of around 330 Afghan families, which was originally settled in violation of land zoning laws.<sup>44</sup> The formerly agricultural land had been divided into lanes and blocks by a local landlord, made residential plots of 5 *marlas*<sup>45</sup> each, and individual plots leased out to families for residential purposes. The tenants then constructed mud houses on these plots using their own resources.

The houses are all *katche* structures and have the appearance of being make-shift shelters. There is informally supplied electricity and drinking water, for which the mediator is the landlord himself. There are no proper drains, and waste water drains into an open sewer near the settlement.

Yusufabad was initially divided into three parts and each part became known as a "camp": Camp No. 1 housed 150 families; Camp No. 2 housed 100 families; and Camp No. 3 housed 80 families. These camps are ethnically segregated: Camp Nos. 1 and 3 were inhabited by ethnic Pashtuns, while Camp No. 2, which was set around 100 metres away from the other two camps, was almost exclusively Tajik. After the fall of the Taliban most of the Tajik residents of Camp No. 2 repatriated to Afghanistan. Their places were taken by other Afghans, mostly Pashtuns, who were evicted from official refugee camps such as Nasir Bagh and Kacha Garhi.

Currently, the landlord charges a monthly rent of 250 rupees per plot. If a tenant wishes to move out, he needs to return the possession of the plot back to the landlord, who compensates the tenant for part of the investment made in the mud house, and then charges a lump sum amount for the structure to any incoming tenant.

The residents of Yusufabad were among the most socially and economically marginalised people in the sub-sites researched for the present study. None of the households had any remittance-sending member abroad, and most relied on the casual labour market for sustenance.

### 4.4 Mixed Afghan–Pakistani localities

Scoping work for the research indicated that there were many Afghans scattered across the city in mixed localities. Data on the number or proportion of Afghans in such mixed settlements were not available from secondary sources. This segment of the Afghan population, even if it turns out to be relatively minor in numerical terms, is significant because of two reasons: first, these Afghans are likely to be more integrated into Pakistani society and economy than their counterparts living in refugee camps or in predominantly Afghan neighbourhoods; second, the 2005 Census used prior information about locations with high concentrations of people of Afghan origin in order to select its target areas – that methodology would, in principle, tend to under-represent Afghans living in mixed Afghan–Pakistani localities.

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<sup>43</sup> Names of these settlements have been changed to protect the identity and security of respondents.

<sup>44</sup> There are other *katchi abadis* that are irregular because they are based on the illegal occupation and use of state land. Yusufabad does not fall into that category.

<sup>45</sup> 1 *marla* = approximately 25 square metres.

Four mixed Afghan–Pakistani localities in Peshawar were treated collectively as one of sub-sites of the Peshawar case study. These are all regular or regularised settlements where Afghans live in close proximity to local citizens.<sup>46</sup> Four such localities were selected for fieldwork: Afghan Colony, Arbab Road, Haji Camp and Sikander Town. The selection process was purposive: the Afghan Colony and Arbab Road areas were already known to have a mixed population of ethnic Pashtun and non-Pashtun Afghans, while Haji Camp and Sikander Town were known to have concentrations of Hazara Shias and Afghan Ismailis respectively.

### Afghan Colony

Afghan Colony emerged as an extension of an older residential area called Ittehad Colony located around 4 km east of the old city of Peshawar. Ittehad Colony was a lower middle-class Pakistani neighbourhood before the arrival of Afghan refugees. Some Afghan refugees settled in Ittehad Colony, and eventually adjacent land was developed into a predominantly Afghan enclave of Ittehad Colony. Over time this came to be known as Afghan Colony.

Afghan Colony, like Ittehad Colony, is a regularised *katchi abadi*. Most of the houses are built of durable *pukka* materials. The lanes and streets are paved and there are covered drains which discharge waste water into a main open sewer alongside the colony. All civic and public services are provided by relevant authorities such as the Peshawar Development Authority (PDA), and the public sector electricity supply corporation. There are twelve distinct “blocks” in the Afghan Colony, with 120 residential plots measuring 125–250 square metres in each block. Most of the plots have double-storeyed houses, with a family generally occupying one floor of the house.

It is estimated that around two thirds of the families in Afghan Colony are people of Afghan origin, the remainder being Pakistanis. Virtually all Afghans are tenants of Pakistani landlords. A few, who have acquired Pakistani National Identity Cards, have purchased their own homes. These are generally regarded as being the better off Afghan residents. Various Afghan ethnic groups are present in the Afghan Colony, including Pashtun, Uzbek, Turkmen and Tajik. While precise figures are not available, well-informed local sources report that these four groups are present in roughly equal numbers here.

### Arbab Road

Arbab Road is situated in the main city, and the road lends its name to one segment of University Town through which it runs. University Town in general, and the Arbab Road area in particular, have large-size plots and are known to be among the most affluent areas of the city. There are also clusters of low-income families on and around Arbab Road – and these mostly constitute small vendors and workers in the commercial area servicing the affluent locality. The fieldwork for this study mainly focused on this latter segment of Arbab Road. This segment too, however, is an established and regular urban settlement, well-served by all civic amenities.

This locality differs from Afghan Colony and Hayatabad in that the residential area was already well established prior to arrival of the Afghans. Pakistani homeowners and tenants gradually made room for Afghan families, who mostly live as tenants.

<sup>46</sup> “Regularised” here denotes localities which might have started out as irregular settlements, but were then officially recognised and given legal status by the authorities.

The main ethnic groups among the Afghans residing here are Pashtuns and Tajiks, with both groups thought to be present in equal proportion.

### **Haji Camp**

Haji Camp is situated near the Peshawar bus terminal within municipal limits. The locality takes its name from a transit camp and hostel for Hajis or Muslim pilgrims to Mecca. The area surrounding the Haji Camp was an exclusively Pakistani lower middle-income residential area which included a small population of Hazara Shias of Pakistani nationality.<sup>47</sup> For Hazara Shias among the Afghans arriving in Peshawar, this area was a natural first stop where they could expect to receive support through ethnic links. The new arrivals started renting properties from Pakistani landlords, and over time they reportedly came to constitute over two thirds of the population. There are very few non-Hazara Shia Afghans in this locality.

The locality is a regular urban neighbourhood with formal public provisioning of all civic amenities. The ethnic and sectarian identity of the Afghan residents of Haji Camp plays an important role in their access to public services and their community organisations. There is an Islahi Committee of the Hazara Shias – somewhat along the lines of what exists in official refugee camps. This committee has 12 members representing various lanes and streets where the Hazara Shias reside.

There is also an organisation called the Qalb-e-Asia (literally, heart of Asia or Central Asia) Cultural Centre that organises and provides a range of educational and social services. Qalb-e-Asia runs schools and a community centre in the area where health facilities and vocational training are also provided. In the past this organisation used to publish a magazine. Qalb-e-Asia was established in 1996 and received financial assistance from various Shia Islamic foundations in Iran until around 2004. Many of the residents of Haji Camp arrived in Peshawar via Iran. The schools run by Qalb-e-Asia offer a choice of Iranian and Afghan curricula to the pupils. There are other schools in the area which offer the Afghan curriculum exclusively.

### **Sikandar Town**

Sikander Town is a regular urban settlement located around 2 km from the old city of Peshawar. This neighbourhood was first established in the early 1990s by Ismaili community organisations (Pakistani and international) in order to accommodate Ismaili internal migrants from Pakistan's northern areas. The neighbouring Aman Colony was also established by the Ismaili community organisations for this purpose. Land had been acquired by these community organisations, developed into plots and provided at subsidised rates to Pakistani Ismailis.

A large open space between Aman Colony and Sikander Town was converted in 1996 as a reception area for Ismaili refugees from Afghanistan.<sup>48</sup> This was done in response to the influx of Afghan Ismailis into Pakistan following religious persecution at the hands of the Taliban government. The Ismaili community organisations extended the existing colonies and added 240 residential plots specifically for Afghan Ismailis. These plots, measuring 100–125 square meters, were then sold at highly subsidised rates to Afghan Ismaili families on which to construct their homes.

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<sup>47</sup> The Hazara Shia community in Pakistan traces its origins to Afghanistan, but has been settled in parts of Pakistan for over a century. Most of this community is in Quetta, although there are smaller pockets elsewhere.

<sup>48</sup> The body that facilitated Afghan Ismaili refugees was Focus Pakistan, an organisation affiliated with the Aga Khan, the spiritual leader of Ismaili Muslim community.



Respondents in the community reported that the Ismaili community organisations pursued a policy of facilitating the further migration of Afghan Ismailis to other locations in Pakistan and to third countries.<sup>49</sup> Many of them were resettled in Karachi, and others were helped to settle in Europe and North America.

#### 4.5 Analysis and comparisons across types of sub-sites

The Afghan communities selected for this study do not, obviously, exhaust the range and diversity of the Afghan experience in Peshawar and its surrounding areas. They do, however, provide the possibility of comparisons across four important types of communities present here.

##### Socioeconomic class

Socioeconomic class was an important source of differentiation in the Afghan population in Peshawar. The contrast between Hayatabad on the one hand and Yusufabad on the other was stark. Living conditions in Hayatabad were on a par with affluent urban neighbourhoods in developing countries, with municipal amenities and services, while irregular settlements and refugee camps had very basic provisioning, much of it acquired through informal channels. The two types of localities implied very different lifestyles and aspirations.

Class differentiation within the Afghan population in Peshawar and its surroundings has been largely shaped by the conditions that these families left behind in Afghanistan. The residents of refugee camps and irregular settlements (Jalozai, Kacha Garhi and Yusufabad) were mostly from rural areas of the country, while many of those living in Hayatabad had come to Peshawar from Kabul. Informants in Hayatabad included former senior government officials, highly skilled professionals and people with established businesses in Afghanistan prior to displacement. The typical residents of refugee camps were farmers and labourers in Afghanistan.

In terms of socioeconomic status, the Afghan communities in sub-sites such as Afghan Colony, Arbab Road, Haji Camp and Sikander Town might be ranked between the residents of Hayatabad, and those of the refugee camps and irregular settlements. These were mostly mixed Afghan–Pakistani communities with middle and lower-middle class populations,<sup>50</sup> with signs of upward mobility (for example in choices made about children’s education).

##### Refugee camps and irregular settlements

Over two fifths of the Afghans in Pakistan live in refugee camps. Even though precise figures are not available, a substantial number is thought to live in irregular urban and peri-urban settlements (*katchi abadis*). Taken together, refugee camps and *katchi abadis* probably account for the bulk of the Afghan population in Pakistan.

The community profiles above highlight close parallels in the evolution of refugee camps and Afghan irregular settlements. The two refugee camps selected for in-depth study (Jalozai and Kacha Garhi) both started as irregular settlements. Displaced Afghan families had already arrived and settled at the sites of the Jalozai

<sup>49</sup> On the Afghan Ismaili presence in Karachi, see this research project’s case study on Karachi (Collective for Social Science Research, 2005, *Afghans in Karachi: Migration, Settlement and Social Networks*, Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit).

<sup>50</sup> Usually this socioeconomic class would be associated with self-employment, skilled blue-collar work and low-end white-collar work.

and Kacha Garhi camps prior to any organised camp infrastructure being in place. In this regard their geneses were no different from predominantly *katchi abadis* such as Yusufabad, or indeed, Pakistani *katchi abadis* in general. Land was acquired through commercial transactions or on the basis of solidarity with local landlords.

Afghan families settled in these “pre-camps” using their own resources in the first instance. The resistance organisations arrived and were able to acquire more land from local landlords, and acted, essentially, as intermediaries between the displaced persons and the landlords. They were, in effect, social and political entrepreneurs who facilitated collective action among the residents, and transactions between the residents and other service providers.

Both Jalozai and Kacha Garhi started out as irregular settlements and were later given the status of official refugee camps. There are, of course, refugee camps that were set up in the first instance by relief organisations. The Jalozai and Kacha Garhi pattern of an irregular settlement being later recognised as a refugee camp is also likely to have been widespread. The case of the Turkmen Camp in Jalozai shows the reverse process – the transition of a refugee camp population into an irregular settlement.

### **Nodal versus individualised relations with Pakistanis**

The sub-sites provided interesting variation in the forms of interactions – commercial, social and political – between Afghans and Pakistanis. In principle, the Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees was the central point through which all interaction between Afghans and Pakistanis was to be mediated. In practice, of course, this was not the case, since a majority of the Afghans were not even living in officially designated refugee camps.

In general, Afghans in Peshawar and its surroundings interacted relatively freely in the wider economy and society. The fact that so many resided outside camps in rented accommodation (in both regular and irregular settlements) was evidence of the lack of obvious and overt restriction on the freedom of movement or choice of residence. Even the officially designated refugee camps were not enclosed entities but relatively open places where Afghans and Pakistanis could freely intermingle, socialise and do business. Jalozai was a thriving market and Afghan traders and shop-keepers rented properties from Pakistani landlords to carry out their small and large businesses.<sup>51</sup>

The community profiles indicate that while interaction with the host economy was pervasive, it was also structured in many cases. There were many instances, of course, of individual-level interactions between Afghans and Pakistanis – as buyers and sellers, tenants and landlords, clients and service providers, and employers and employees. This was particularly the case for people residing in regular settlements, or in mixed Afghan–Pakistani areas. These individualised interactions, however, were only one end of the spectrum, and for many Afghans and Pakistanis mutual interaction was not personalised but mediated through “agents” and middlemen.

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<sup>51</sup> The issue of livelihoods, integration within the local economy, and the effect of restrictions and regulation are taken up in greater detail in Section 6.

## Types of social organisation

The profiles of the research sub-sites revealed interesting variations in the types of social organisation prevalent among Afghan communities. The “sub-camp” and the “mosque-*mohalla*” structure of the refugee camps, which functioned under the patronage of resistance and Islamic organisations in the past, had acquired a dynamic of its own in the 1990s. These structures had been integrated into camp governance through the formation of the Islahi Committees. The Islahi Committee model, moreover, was replicated even in non-camp sub-sites such as Haji Camp and Turkmen Camp.

Kinship, ethnicity and religious sect, as expected, were important axes along which Afghan communities developed structures and organised their collective activities. These three fundamental features of identity appear to have remained robust in the face of other forms of social organisation that might have been instituted from “above”. Camps, for instance, were segmented initially along the lines of kinship and ethnicity, even though kinship and ethnicity had little to do with the professed ideologies of the resistance and Islamic organisations that wielded so much influence in the camps. In fact, the weakening of these organisations over time revealed that kinship and ethnicity-based clustering had always been accommodated and endorsed.

Religious sect affiliations appeared to play an important role in the case of minorities such as the Shia and Ismaili Muslims. In the case of both these communities, close ties were also evident with non-Afghan adherents of the respective sect. The Hazara Shia Afghans had received much initial support from the Hazara Shia Pakistani residents of Haji Camp. They had also developed close links with Shia Muslims foundations based in Iran who had financed some of their social and cultural activities. The Ismaili Muslim Afghans were assisted by international and Pakistani organisations of their fellow Ismailis.

## 5. Displacement and Migration to Peshawar

### 5.1 Reasons for displacement and migration

Direct experience of violent political conflict, or the threat of such violence, was a powerful force that drove most Afghans out of their country (see Table 2). During the early years of the Soviet invasion, heavy fighting in the eastern provinces pushed residents into Pakistan. Respondents who arrived after 1992 included many who fled the vicious fighting in Kabul city after the Soviet withdrawal. War was not only responsible for the deaths of many Afghans' close relatives, but it also disrupted traditional livelihoods and economic opportunities. The drought and deepening economic crisis inside Afghanistan added further complexity to the migration pattern, and after 1998 it became difficult to differentiate economic migrants from refugees.

#### Conflict violence

For the first wave of Afghans, the level of violence experienced at the hands of the Soviets was often related to the province of origin rather than any other factor, particularly ethnicity. This makes sense since different regions would have experienced different levels of conflict at different times, but the extensive use of aerial bombing and tank attacks ensured that killing was across ethnic and communal divides, and not targeted towards one particular community.

*Our village faced a lot of Soviets brutalities. There was much bombing. Even the animals could not escape their cruelty. A majority of the houses was bulldozed...leaving us with the only alternative of migrating to Pakistan.*  
(Muneeba, 18, Yusufabad)

*During the Soviet war a missile struck our home and I lost my eyes.*  
(Noor Begum, 42, Yusufabad)

The household interviews enumerated similar experiences of violence across Pashtuns, Tajiks, Turkmens and Uzbeks from Logar, Kapisa and Kunduz provinces, among others. Most households reported the loss of at least one close relative. Many respondents narrated recollections of Soviets invading their villages: "They searched homes, assaulted women, burnt our homes and destroyed our fields" (Rana, 40, Yusufabad). Among those respondents who reported witnessing conflict violence were those who had been actively involved in the resistance.

Testimony of mishandling and indiscriminate bombing by Soviet forces usually came from respondents who had migrated from rural areas. In urban centres such as Kabul, violence often took another shape. A few respondents, for example, claimed to have been public servants in Kabul. The multiple regime changes during communist rule meant that detentions and interrogations of officers were routine. One such respondent reported being imprisoned for six years; such officers then fled Afghanistan for fear of further retribution.

Another threat to the lives of Afghans was the abduction of young men and boys to serve as soldiers in the Soviet-backed Afghan army. The nomad population (*kuchis*) was exempt from military service before this period, but not during the time of the Soviet-backed government. In these circumstances, refusal would often lead to imprisonment of the potential recruit and violence to family members.

*Two of my brothers were killed, and the soldiers took my elder son away and forced him to fight for them.* (Bakhtawar, 54, Yusufabad)

The case of Ajmal Khan in Jalozai camp is illustrative. Ajmal was a male nurse employed in a Kabul hospital. During Babrak Karmal's term in office, he refused to join the army and was subsequently jailed. He was released after just one night and was expected to have changed his mind, but instead escaped to Jalozai. As punishment, his father was jailed for six years. While other respondents did not narrate such extreme cases of retribution, some respondents did report having being jailed, even if for a short period.

Some men migrated to avoid serving the Soviet-backed army of Afghanistan. Akhtar Khan, 40, was a Pashtun forced to join the military. He had hoped to be released after the completion of a one-year term but he was never allowed to leave. Finally, during his third term, he fled to Pakistan as a refugee.

### Resistance to Soviet occupation

A Pashtun woman from Charikar told a remarkable story of how her village *jirga* (council of elders) responded to the war crisis. She said that in response to the burning of houses, killing of men and assaults on women, the *jirga* decided that all men of the village should take part in the jihad (holy war) against occupation. As men left for war, only women and children were left in the village. It was difficult for women to support themselves in these conditions, and they left to protect their security and ensure their survival. The refugee camps across the border, especially with their system of rationing, were the best choice.

### War and reduction of economic opportunities

The destruction of infrastructure brought about by the war also worsened conditions in Afghanistan, so that refugees went to Pakistan for overlapping reasons that included conflict, politics and lack of economic security. The accounts of early refugees and migrants from the provinces of Kabul, Paktia and Nangarhar, are particularly insightful: respondents reported that the Soviets had purposefully burned down their farms, and more importantly destroyed the *karez* (irrigation channels). Moreover, with the destruction of the transport infrastructure, seed availability decreased. The breakdown of traditional agriculture finally displaced them from their homes and country.

Also among the respondents who cited strong economic motivations for coming to Pakistan, there were government servants who lost their jobs with regime changes under communism, and feared for their security under changed circumstances.

Finally, there were war widows who arrived alone or with their extended families to camps, which posed specific problems for security within a refugee community that was organised primarily in terms of male heads of household.<sup>52</sup> Widows were often, but not always, protected by relatives. In the Taliban era, educated women, unable to work in the cities, also came to Peshawar.

## 5.2 Peshawar as destination and transit

One of the main attractions in Peshawar for Afghans was the existence of refugee camps close enough to facilitate male participation in the *jihad*. This attraction

<sup>52</sup> Women and children made up more than half of the refugee population during the peak years, but the voices of women were absent from decision-making regarding camp organisation and aid distribution (A. Khan, 2002, "Afghan Refugee Women's Experience of Conflict and Disintegration", *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism*, Wesleyan University Press, 3(1), p. 89–121).

seems to have continued beyond the era of the Soviet invasion, and well into late Taliban times. A key informant from Hayatabad suggested that the Taliban fighters took similar decisions to come here when they were confronted by the American offensive in 2001.

International aid agencies and donors, along with the international NGOs from both Muslim and western countries, had achieved a broad consensus that support to Afghan refugees fleeing Soviet occupation was necessary. Funds for projects in camps and jobs in NGO offices ensured that for many refugees there was not only some means of survival and but also of employment in Peshawar.

Business links with Peshawar before the war also helped in the decision to come to this city. Amina's father was a rich Tajik carpet trader living in Kabul with his family. Well before the Soviet invasion, he would buy woven carpets and bring them to Peshawar where he had established a carpet shop. When the fighting broke out the entire family decided to migrate to Peshawar; although they didn't have any relatives there, it was a city Amina's father knew well. In another instance, Habiba came to Peshawar from Herat. Her husband was a carpet trader living in Iran, but when she preferred to move to Pakistan it was easy to convince him to join her because of the business opportunities in Peshawar.

A continuity of culture and ethnicity across the Pakistan–Afghan border was also instrumental in attracting Afghans. Cultural similarity and common language were the first reasons given by many of the Pashtun respondents for coming here. "We came to Pakistan because of same language, culture and norms to some extent" (Aziza, 30, Jalozai). Tribal links among Pashtuns on both sides of the border ensured that many Afghans also felt protected in the Northwest Frontier Province and the surrounding tribally administered agencies.

## 6. Life as Refugees and Migrants

This section presents an analysis of the lives Afghans as refugees and migrants in Peshawar and its surroundings, based on the findings of the qualitative fieldwork in the sub-sites identified and described above. Much of what has happened in the lives of Afghan people in Peshawar – in terms of living conditions, livelihoods and social development – is part and parcel of the broader story of Peshawar itself. A majority of Afghans lived outside designated refugee camps, and even those who lived within refugee camps appeared to be able to travel, work and do business freely in Peshawar and other parts of Pakistan. Afghans in Peshawar were closely integrated into the economic life of the host community, even if the interaction between the communities was often mediated through nodal points (see Section 4).

Even within a relatively open, unrestricted and unregulated market economy, Afghans faced limitations by the very fact of being refugees and migrants. What were the more conspicuous ways in which these limitations manifested themselves, and how did they shape the socioeconomic outlook of the Afghans in Peshawar? The analysis is centred on four themes: (a) housing and security of tenure; (b) livelihood strategies; (c) access to social services; and (d) security and vulnerability.

### 6.1 Housing and security of tenure

Afghans are not legally entitled to purchase land and immovable property, and one implication of this restriction is that the Afghan community is a major source of demand in the property rental market. Rental agreements are made formally on stamp paper, and the market is sufficiently well organised and of a high enough volume to ensure competitive (and broadly speaking fair) practices. Afghan interviewees who were asked about vulnerability to landlord abuse due to their “foreigner” status indicated that they were sufficiently protected against exploitation by their own business and social networks.<sup>53</sup>

While legal restrictions limited outright ownership, there were several ways in which Afghans managed to acquire property rights. First, it was possible to acquire properties by proxy, in the names of Pakistani associates and business partners. Second, some Afghans had acquired (unauthorised) Pakistani citizenship documents such as National Identity Cards (NICs) in order to carry out transactions in their own names.<sup>54</sup> Both such types of transactions, however, are fraught with risks, and in the case of a dispute the Afghan party would always be in a weaker legal position. The security of transactions, therefore, depends upon the ability of a party to use its financial power to bribe officials, or its ability to influence outcomes through political and social connections. In this way Afghans face higher transactions costs in securing and maintaining property rights, and continue to rely on the more competitive rental market.

Afghans’ relatively weak and insecure property rights undoubtedly play an important part in shaping their perceptions about their economic outlook. At the same time, it needs to be acknowledged that the above discussion relates to only a relatively

<sup>53</sup> Property agents revealed that one reason why Pakistani landlords prefer Afghan tenants was the perception that they would not assert rights of possession – something that they feared in prospective Pakistani tenants.

<sup>54</sup> There were several instances of such transactions in the fieldwork. It was reported, moreover, that the acquisition of National Identity Cards (NICs) and the acceptance of unlawfully acquired NICs became more difficult in the 1990s when the Pakistani government’s attitude towards Afghans became more strict.

small, albeit influential, segment of the Afghan population. For the vast majority, the main constraint to transacting in the formal property market is not institutional or legal, but financial. Just like Pakistani low-income families and rural–urban migrants, this segment is constrained to operating in the informal sector.

The Afghans, in fact, might have had an advantage over their Pakistani counterparts during the early phase of their displacement and migration, when their irregular settlements or *katchi abadis* were tolerated by state authorities.<sup>55</sup> The residents of official refugee camps did not have property rights, of course, but they did have considerable security of tenure, and were able to make the transition from makeshift shelters (tents) to *katche* structures (mud houses). The transactions with landlords were conducted either by powerful resistance and Islamic organisations (through their local partners), or by international organisations (like the UNHCR) through the Afghan Commissionerate.

Irregular urban and peri-urban settlements such as Yusufabad replicated some features of the refugee camps, in that the primary transaction with the Pakistani landowner was a relatively secure one. Its security was based on the partnership between the landowners and the Afghan entrepreneur. Afghan residents of the settlement, however, only had relatively insecure rights of tenure. In comparable Pakistani *katchi abadis*, residents could expect to acquire pseudo-property rights over the passage of time. Insecurity of tenure and vulnerability to exploitation by landlords was a feature of even long-settled refugee camps such as Jalozai. There were still segments of the camp, particularly the main market area, that were being leased on an individual basis from the local landlord by Afghan shopkeepers. Respondents reported frequent threats of eviction, and even acts of violence coinciding with periods of lease renewal.

The position of Afghans in some of the mixed Afghan–Pakistani sites such as Sikander Town and Haji Camp were relatively secure. In both these localities the security enjoyed by the Afghans was a function of their close ties with local counterparts – in Sikander Town the Pakistani Ismaili Muslim community organisations were active in providing housing to displaced Afghan Ismailis, while in Haji Camp the Pakistani Hazara Shia community had been instrumental in facilitating property transactions on the behalf of the Afghan Hazara Shia families.

## 6.2 Livelihoods strategies

### Employment profile of Afghans

This study was not designed to provide a statistical representation of the Afghan population. The informants interviewed for the study as well as other cases documented during the course of the fieldwork did, nevertheless, represent a wide variety of livelihood strategies and economic conditions. At the low end there were families in Kacha Garhi that made ends meet by begging, while at the other extreme there were wealthy merchants in Hayatabad with business interests spanning several countries. In terms of incomes, a large proportion of the informants were from families that subsisted on less than \$50 a month, while there were also households whose average monthly remittance earnings from members abroad amounted to over

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<sup>55</sup> This was an “advantage” only in the sense of being allowed to set up homes (often simply tents) in violation of existing regulations. The Afghans were, of course, extremely disadvantaged in the broader sense (as discussed in Section 5 above), given that they had suffered the trauma of war, death and destruction of their homes and displacement.



\$400. The activities documented in the fieldwork sub-sites were reflective of the qualitative complexity and income ranges found in the Peshawar economy in general.

The residents of the refugee camp of Kacha Garhi and the irregular settlement of Yusufabad were among the poorest segment of the Afghan population found in the fieldwork. In Yusufabad, for example, a majority of the informants and other documented cases were daily wage labourers and petty vendors. The only respondents in Yusufabad with salaried jobs were two young women who worked as teachers in a private school in a nearby locality. In Kacha Garhi the most common sources of employment were daily wage labour and petty vending. The camp is known in Peshawar city as a centre for the supply of unskilled construction labourers on daily wages.

The Jalozai camp, located in rural NWFP, displayed diverse livelihood activities including wage labour, carpet-weaving, the timber trade, retail and wholesale markets, transport as well as employment with the Tanzeem-e-Ittehad-e-Islami. The Jalozai camp, in fact, was arguably the second largest urban area in Nowshera district, only marginally smaller than Nowshera city itself. Carpet-making was known as being particularly associated with ethnic Turkmen – mostly residents of the Turkmen Camp – and was home-based work in which the entire family participated. A seasonal niche activity in Jalozai camp is connected to the timber trade. Workers from the camp are hired by contractors to harvest timber in various parts of Punjab. The wood is brought back to timber yards and sawmills in Jalozai where it is sorted, and sold onwards as construction material and firewood.<sup>56</sup>

The residents of mixed Afghan–Pakistani sub-sites (Afghan Colony, Arbab Road and Haji Camp) were clearly better off than those of the camps and irregular settlements. Self-employment in various sectors – notably carpet-making – was the most important source of livelihood there. The types of work reported in these sub-sites involved higher levels of skill and investment. A conspicuous difference between these mixed Afghan–Pakistani settlements and the refugee camps and irregular settlements was the reliance of significant numbers of families on remittances from family members abroad. Informants in these localities reported that more than 40 percent of the families relied on such remittances.

Hayatabad was not only the most affluent sub-site in terms of infrastructure, its relatively better-off position was reflected in the types of economic activities reported by informants and documented as part of the fieldwork. Cases of manual work were rare exceptions compared with the other sub-sites (particularly the refugee camps and the irregular settlement) where they were the norm. Hayatabad residents could, justifiably, be thought of as belonging to middle and upper classes of the Afghan population in Peshawar. Salaried jobs, skilled professions (teachers, doctors, engineers) and small as well as large businesses were common among Hayatabad families. One of the most conspicuous types of economic enterprise in Hayatabad was educational institutes, including schools, English language centres, tutorial colleges and small computer training institutes. These were mostly Afghan-owned, and employed educated Afghan men and particularly women.

<sup>56</sup> There are 12–15 timber yards and sawmills in Jalozai camp, all owned and operated by Afghans.

The above descriptions, based on qualitative data, provide a picture of the range of activities in which Afghans in Peshawar are involved, from which certain patterns are discernible.

First, Afghans have relatively open access to the labour market in Pakistan, as workers, employers and self-employed people. There appear to be few visible restrictions on the types of activities or sectors in which Afghans are involved. The only people in the fieldwork sites that consistently reported any restriction on mobility were the ethnic Turkmen in Jaloelai camp. They claimed that their distinctive appearance made them stand out in public and thus vulnerable to police extortion. As a consequence they limited their movements close to their own settlement and camp.<sup>57</sup>

Second, there were jobs in relief organisations or community services – opportunities that had been open to educated Afghans during the 1980s and the early 1990s. The reduction in relief activities had serious repercussions for educated Afghans. There were also jobs, however, in refugee camps (for example in Jaloelai) in politico-religious organisations (or the former Afghan resistance). At the time of the fieldwork the TII still maintained some presence in Jaloelai and employed security personnel on monthly salaries.

Third, besides certain niche sectors such as carpet-making or Persian-medium teaching, Afghans generally operated in the same sectors and types of activities as the host population in general. Their prior endowments of financial, human and social capital shaped their economic opportunities in Peshawar. The population was large enough, however, to be a major source of demand for labour, professional services and business activities of its own community.

Fourth, there appears to have been a major transformation in the economic profile of Afghan refugees and migrants after their arrival in Pakistan – away from agricultural and rural activities and towards non-agricultural sectors including construction, transport, trade and other service sectors. Even in the rural refugee camp of Jaloelai, there were very few people who were engaged in the agricultural sector. The Afghans observed in and around Peshawar – whether they resided in cities or in rural or urban refugee camps – were essentially urbanised and non-agrarian. There were exceptions such as the *kuchis* (who maintained livestock herds) but these exceptions simply highlighted the qualitative transition that had occurred in the rest of the population.<sup>58</sup>

### Casual labour

As revealed by the 2005 Census, and also by the qualitative work undertaken by this study, casual wage labour was one of the most important sources of livelihoods for Afghans.<sup>59</sup> A hugely disproportionate number of Afghans families reported casual or daily wage labour as their main source of income. In fact, while Afghans only made

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<sup>57</sup> Other Afghan ethnic groups with a distinctive appearance were Uzbeks and Hazara Shias, who nevertheless did not face similar forms of harassment or extortion.

<sup>58</sup> In the fieldwork sites there were *kuchi* families in Yusufabad and around Jaloelai camp who continued to tend livestock. Even these *kuchis*, however, had undergone a transition from a mostly nomadic to a mostly settled lifestyle.

<sup>59</sup> The term “casual” labour (known as *mazdoori* or *aam mazdoori* in Pakistan) is often used to denote work with low pay, low skill requirements and low levels of contractual security. There are many types of casual labour, for instance low-wage, low-skill, piece-rate work in construction or haulage, that is not strictly speaking “daily wage” labour.

up 20 percent of Peshawar's population, they constituted 34 percent of its casual workforce.<sup>60</sup> Empirical work on poverty in Pakistan invariably shows casual labour is a reliable predictor of a household's poverty status.<sup>61</sup> This is not surprising, given that casual labour implies a bottom-line activity with minimal use of physical, financial, human or social capital. Reliance on casual labour signals the absence of other, more remunerative, economic opportunities.

The fact that the Afghan population was so overwhelmingly reliant on casual labour implies that in spite of no obvious restrictions on work and mobility, their economic opportunities were limited compared with the host population. It is possible, of course, that the Afghans on average were less educated than the host population, but the major driver of the difference in employment profiles of the Afghans from those of comparable host communities (i.e. rural Pashtuns in Pakistan) was the availability of agricultural livelihoods to the latter. It is also clear that despite the relative openness of the economy and the ability of Afghans to conduct transactions (particularly in the informal sector), transaction costs for Afghans were higher in general than their Pakistani counterparts. The transition to higher-level activities such as self-employment was, therefore, costlier for Afghans than for Pakistanis with similar endowments of financial and human capital.

Furthermore, the labour market position of Afghans appears to have undergone a dramatic change over time. Even in the early years of displacement and migration in the 1980s, it was widely held that Afghan labourers were willing to work for lower wages than their Pakistani counterparts. It was believed that Pakistanis were "priced out" of many sectors and activities. A closer examination of the types of jobs that Afghans took up simply reveals that Afghans made inroads into some of the most marginalised activities, such as rag-picking.<sup>62</sup> Afghans also began to appear in sectors such as brick-making which were formerly the preserve of socially marginalised Pakistani communities.<sup>63</sup>

In the early period of Afghans in Pakistan, the willingness to accept lower wages needs to be seen in the context of other sources of sustenance: most prominently, the ration entitlement in refugee camps. For a family of seven, the monetary value of the daily ration entitlement was 26 rupees in 1980–81 prices.<sup>64</sup> The average daily

<sup>60</sup> Authors calculations; Pakistan Integrated Household Survey 2001–02, Federal Bureau of Statistics, Government of Pakistan 2002; SAFRON and UNHCR, 2005.

<sup>61</sup> See, for example, H. Gazdar, 2004, *Labour Markets and Poverty in Pakistan: Institutional Arrangements and Policy* (Working Paper 2), Islamabad: ILO, CRPID and UNDP.

<sup>62</sup> Rag-picking was a common activity for male child workers in Kacha Garhi and Yusufabad, both poor urban sites.

<sup>63</sup> A. Ercelawn (2004, *Labour, Debt and Bondage in Brick Kilns*, Islamabad: Ministry of Labour) finds that brick kiln workers in Punjab, for example, are mostly "low caste" Muslim Shaikhs or Musali and Christians, who by the virtue of the caste position are treated as "bonded labourers". Afghan labourers in the same regions, however, are employed as free, piece-rate workers. It is a measure of their marginalisation that they are engaged in work that was previously the preserve of the most dispossessed segments of Pakistani society. They do not, however, face the types of social oppression or loss of personal autonomy that characterise the condition of the Muslim Shaikhs. In NWFP, Afghans work in brick kilns alongside local Pashtun workers. Pakistani Pashtun workers in the NWFP kilns enjoy much better conditions than the traditional "low caste" Pakistani workers do in Punjab. Also Afghans were found to be far less dependent on their employers than their Pakistani counterparts in both Punjab and NWFP. In the fieldwork sites brick kiln workers among ethnic Turkmens were found in Jalozaï, who were all free, piece-rate workers.

<sup>64</sup> This estimate is based on the per capita ration amounts reported in Foley (1991, *Hejrat: The Migration of Afghan Refugees to Pakistan*) and the average prices for the respective ration items in Peshawar in 1980–81 (Government of Pakistan [Federal Bureau of Statistics], 1997, *50 Years of Pakistan in Statistics*).

wage rate for an unskilled construction worker in urban Pakistan in that year was 26 rupees.<sup>65</sup> The ration entitlement for a family of seven, therefore, happened to be exactly equal to the daily wage. Since the ration was not an unemployment benefit – that is, employment did not disqualify a family or individual from the ration entitlement – it would have been possible for Afghan workers to accept jobs at below-subsistence wages. In effect the Afghans in the refugee camps enjoyed a “ration cushion” in comparison with the Pakistani workers.

In the later period with the decline and then the stoppage of rations, however, the situation was dramatically different. Afghan workers and Pakistani informants interviewed for this study concurred that Afghan labourers received lower wages than their Pakistani counterparts, and worked in the least skilled segments of the casual labour market. The reported wage gap was as great as 20 percent.<sup>66</sup> Afghan workers believed that Pakistani employers discriminated against them and systematically underpaid them compared to Pakistani workers. Pakistani informants claimed that Afghans were willing for work for lower wages because they were refugees and were able to subsist on lower incomes than the Pakistanis because they did not have to “keep up appearances”.

### Self-employment

The self-employment activities of Afghans in the Peshawar sub-sites were dominated by the service sectors. Besides carpet-making, virtually all self-employment activities in the Afghan sub-sites were in different segments of the service economy including cross-border trade, transport, wholesale, retail and educational services. Carpet-making might be counted as a traditional craft rather than a part of the manufacturing sector. Service sector activities typically require lower levels of fixed investment. The fact that Afghans had less secure property rights would have been a factor in the relative tilt towards service sector activities.

Afghan service sector activities were very largely linked to the Afghan community in Peshawar, or connected in some way with Afghanistan. Many service sector activities were based on the local Afghan community as the market. The community was large enough to generate demand for a range of services – in retail, education, personal services and others – and this demand was met mainly by Afghan suppliers.

Some of the most successful entrepreneurs among Afghans in Peshawar were businessmen who were involved in large-scale cross-border trade. Much of this trade was in manufactured goods such as electronic appliances originating in third countries – Afghanistan was a transit point and the Afghan merchants had cornered a market position on the strength of their ability to conduct business with Afghanistan. Many of the businesses had been built on the basis of intra-family transactions across borders. There were other forms of cross-border trade such as the export of timber from Afghanistan to Pakistan that involved lower-value commodities. Peshawar had emerged as a hub of cross-border trade and its commercial sector benefited greatly. Afghans were an integral part of this story.

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<sup>65</sup> H. Gazdar, 1999, “Poverty in Pakistan: A Review,” in Shahrukh Rafi Khan (ed.), *50 Years of Pakistan's Economy: Traditional Topics and Contemporary Concerns*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>66</sup> At the time of the fieldwork daily wage rates were 90–120 Pakistani rupees in Peshawar, depending on the type of work. It was virtually the market norm that Afghans would accept (or be constrained to) 20 rupees less than the regular wage.

## Remittances

Remittances from male family members in third countries, and, increasingly, back in Afghanistan, were found to be an important source of sustenance for Afghan families in Peshawar. While displacement to Pakistan had been a survival strategy, onward migration to other countries had become a livelihood strategy for many. This was not surprising, given that Afghan displacement and migration to Peshawar coincided with a period of large-scale economic migration of Pakistani workers abroad.

Changes in the global labour markets that created new opportunities for upward mobility of Pakistanis (particularly those in the NWFP) might have been expected to act as channels of mobility for the Afghans too.<sup>67</sup> While Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states were the predominant destinations for the host population, the Afghan communities in Peshawar relied mostly on remittances from family members in industrialised countries in Europe, North America and East Asia. In the fieldwork sites the main recipients of foreign remittances were to be found in Hayatabad, Afghan Colony, Arbab Road and Haji Camp.

The reported proportion of families receiving remittances in the refugee camp and irregular settlement sites was much smaller, and the main source of remittances for these sub-sites was Afghanistan itself. Male family members had gone back to Afghanistan in the recent period and sent remittances to their families in Peshawar. These included educated men who had found employment in the development sector, as well as those with little or no education who had joined the construction sector. There were also instances of people receiving shares in earnings from joint assets being managed by family members living in Afghanistan.

The fieldwork suggested that there were important differences in the migration and remittance economies of the Afghan and Pakistani communities in Peshawar. While systematic analysis of these issues would require statistical survey data, it is important to highlight some preliminary findings:

- Migration to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf continue to be significant sources of earnings and economic mobility for the rural population of NWFP;
- Male workers with little or no education are able to migrate and find low and semi-skilled work in these countries; but
- For Afghans with similar human capital endowments and from comparable backgrounds these options appeared to be very limited.

## Women and labour

Gender is perhaps the most pervasive source of labour market segmentation in Afghan (and Pakistani) society. Women's work is generally confined to the context of the family – in the shape of home-based work or as part of unpaid family labour in family-run farms and enterprises. The transition of largely rural Afghans to urbanisation through life in refugee camps and other urban settlements radically altered the environment for women's remunerative activities. While women were able, and required, to work on family-managed farms or to help look after livestock in the rural agrarian economy, their economic role in an urbanised setting was unclear. The option of undertaking remunerative economic activities outside the family context is

<sup>67</sup> For a recent overview of Pakistani labour migration abroad in the 1980s, see H. Gazdar, 2003, *A Review on Migration Issues in Pakistan* (paper prepared for the Regional Conference on Migration, Development and Pro-Poor Policy Choices in Asia 2003), Dhaka: Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit and Department for International Development.

severely conditioned by strong patriarchal norms governing women's mobility outside the home.

There were somewhat predictable contrasts between fieldwork sub-sites in women's access to public places and their ability to work outside the home. While in the relatively affluent and urbane setting of Hayatabad women were mobile, educated and employed, female segregation and seclusion were the norms in the refugee camps and irregular settlements. There were interesting ethnic differences, however, in the mobility and work participation of women:

*Pashtun women stay inside the houses and do not work, whereas the Tajik women go out to work. The educated women teach and work in factories. The uneducated ones work as domestic help in Hayatabad.* (Abdul Jamil, 30, Yusufabad)

While socioeconomic class was a factor in women's mobility – the more affluent sub-sites exhibited greater female mobility – ethnic Pashtun women were less mobile than their non-Pashtun counterparts across all sub-sites. Even in Hayatabad, where Pashtun women appeared to have greater access to public spaces (as compared with the Jalozai camp where only non-Pashtun women were visible outside the home), women's employment was a mostly non-Pashtun phenomenon. At the other end of the socioeconomic spectrum, Tajik women from Yusufabad went out of home to work as domestic staff in Hayatabad. For their Pashtun neighbours this would be out of the question. Ethnic Pashtun women were hardly visible outside their own homes, let alone in a different neighbourhood.

In the refugee camps and irregular settlements, women's remunerative activities were mostly around home-based work. Carpet-making was an important source of income. This was also, primarily, an ethnically segmented activity. The Turkmens (in Jalozai) and other non-Pashtuns such as Uzbeks in Arbab Road were actively involved in carpet-making. In Kacha Garhi some Pashtun women had also started carpet-weaving, mostly through interaction with their non-Pashtun neighbours.

### 6.3 Access to and utilisation of social services

Three sets of issues were expected to be significant in the accessibility and quality of social services such as health and education by Afghans:

1. **Pakistani public services:** were there any restrictions on Afghans using these services? More importantly perhaps, how did these services compare with other alternatives (e.g. in the private sector) in terms of quality and cost? This latter question would be relevant equally for Afghan and Pakistani users.
2. **Exclusively Afghan public services:** were there services direct and targeted at the Afghan population, and how did their quality and accessibility change over time?
3. **Private sector service providers:** were there discernible patterns in the utilisation of private sector services by Afghans?

Before discussing the research findings it is useful to note some widely acknowledged trends in the quality and utilisation of public services in health and education in Pakistan as a whole. First, the quality of public provision of health as well as

education services has undergone a steady decline over the past two decades.<sup>68</sup> Second, there has been a dramatic rise in the use of private sector alternatives.<sup>69</sup> Third, community organisations (and recently NGOs) have been an important source of provision.

## Health

The health services Afghans use are as diverse as their socioeconomic backgrounds and geographical locations in and around Peshawar. While the affluent reported using well-established private medical facilities that charge high fees for their services, most others reported using either subsidised facilities, government-provided facilities or those supplied by community organisations or NGOs.

*Normally all people go to Sherpao hospital. The Afghan Clinic is charging a nominal amount but we don't feel satisfied there. So that's why we prefer to go to Pakistani hospitals.* (Noor, 40, Yusufabad)

*In the last three years all Afghan clinics funded by international NGOs have been closed down. That's why poor people are facing lot of problems. They can't afford checkup fees and medicine expenditures at private clinics.* (Kubra, 35, Hayatabad)

The range of services available to Afghans has reduced dramatically, particularly in the post-Taliban era. Initially, UNHCR, in cooperation with NGOs and other organisations, provided these services in various hospitals in and around the official camps. Arab governments and local as well as international NGOs also played a major role. Examples of such services are the Kuwait Hospital in Peshawar, the Nasir Bagh hospital in Nasir Bagh camp and the Jihad Hospital in Jalozai.

Whereas the Kuwait Hospital is still functioning, the Nasir Bagh hospital has closed down. The Jihad Hospital is still functioning, but its capacity has been reduced from 300 full-time doctors to just 25. This hospital used to provide free services, but of late it has started charging fees, though these are still less than those charged by private clinics. From operating as a general hospital this facility has been reduced to the equivalent of a large health centre.

Some respondents maintain that some clinics are still offering subsidised services. Respondents mentioned two clinics that had been set up by Afghan politicians, one by Sayyaf in Jalozai, and another by a former governor of Herat, Dr Abdullah, in Hayatabad. Some sympathetic Pakistani doctors and small local hospitals provide treatment to Afghan refugees at discounted charges. Respondents concurred that the quality of treatment in Pakistani hospitals is better than in Afghan hospitals. It is worth noting that Pakistani hospitals were not limited to private set-ups, but also included public sector hospitals.

The Aga Khan Foundation's Hospital in Aman Colony close to the fieldwork sub-site in Sikander Town was a non-profit facility catering to Afghans and Pakistanis alike. Initially set up for the Ismaili community residents in Aman Colony, the hospital services were extended to the Afghan Ismailis who were facilitated to settle in

<sup>68</sup> SPDC (Social Policy and Development Centre, 2001, *Social Development in Pakistan: Growth, Inequality and Poverty*, Karachi: Oxford University Press) finds that while health facilities increased in number their overall quality suffered a decline. See World Bank, *Pakistan Poverty Assessment for education*.

<sup>69</sup> On the rise of private schools, see World Bank, *Pakistan Poverty Assessment*.

Sikandar Road. The hospital not only provides free clinical facilities but also medicines.

## Education

Poverty notwithstanding, the Afghan community has extremely high aspirations regarding education. Afghans send their children to a variety of schools. Those who are unable to do so are primarily poor households where the opportunity cost of sending the child to school was very high. These children were often instrumental in supporting their families through their work either as carpet-weavers or garbage collectors. Issues of livelihood support were particularly critical for female-headed households that did not have male support. Often, respondents revealed that they considered it more important to hold girls back for carpet-weaving work than boys. Many felt that formal schooling was redundant for girls. These households preferred to send girls to madrassas for some Quranic education. Others denied their daughters access to school because they considered the premises to be too far for girls to walk un-chaperoned. Yet others thought that the Afghan society was modernising and as it did, the gender gap in education was reducing.

*While my daughters do not go to school, they are reading the Quran in the madrassas. Our community does not permit us to send girls to schools and colleges, so we do not give them worldly education. (Ashfaq, 46, Hayatabad)*

*Earlier there were more restrictions on women's mobility and wearing veils was obligatory for them. Now these restrictions have been softened and it has brought about a positive impact on girls' enrolment in schools. (Safeena, 17, Jaloza)*

Those who did educate their children considered it instrumental in increasing their children's opportunities for work later in life.

Interesting contrasts could be found in the respondents' preferences regarding the language of instruction. Some believed that a sound grasp of Urdu would allow their children to access the local labour market and perhaps help them assimilate in Pakistan. Others, however, thought a curriculum based in Persian would not only connect their children to their roots, but also provide them with future opportunities in Afghanistan. Since Afghans were mostly excluded from government sector jobs in Pakistan, it was not surprising that they chose Afghan schools over Pakistani ones, even on purely economic grounds.

These preferences indicate people's hopes about Afghanistan and their future as its citizens. While opportunities of an education in Persian exist in what respondents termed "Afghan schools", it is more difficult to access an Urdu education. Since this was offered only in Pakistani private and public schools, respondents reported that they could not enter public schools due to their ethnicity, and could not afford the high fees of the private schools. The fourth category of schools was that of madrassas, which provided Quranic and Arabic education. Although Afghans are known to have studied in madrassas over the last two decades, very few respondents claimed to have an active interest in them.

The demand for various types of education has given rise to many centres for higher technical education in Peshawar. Afghans operate their own computer centres and English language institutes. Perhaps their lack of access to public sector institutions such as the University of Peshawar has contributed to the profusion of such centres.



These privately run centres can be seen as a response to the aspirations of young Afghan men and women who see the value of these skills in Pakistan, Afghanistan and in the global labour market.<sup>70</sup>

Afghan schools have faced increasing difficulties over the last five years. In some cases these schools had previously been financed by grants from foreign governments and non-governmental organisations.<sup>71</sup> They did not charge tuition fees and children often free received books and uniforms. Lately, funding has dried up and these schools have either shut down or started charging fees. Given some families' inability to pay fees, the effect of this on enrolment as a whole would undoubtedly be negative.

The "war on terrorism" had a further effect on opportunities for Afghans' education. Respondents reported that a "university" called Dawat-ul-Jihad located in Jalozai had been shut down because it allegedly trained Al-Qaeda activists. Local informants claimed that it had been a place of higher learning where Afghans had the opportunity to study disciplines such as political science and economics.

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<sup>70</sup> It was not a coincidence that Hayatabad had so many families that relied on remittances from young male family members in industrialised countries, *and* boasted a range of language and technical training centres.

<sup>71</sup> In the refugee camps, international relief efforts through the UNHCR had sustained many schools. Other schools were financed by Arab supporters of the Afghan resistance. In the mainly Hazara Shia neighbourhood of Haji Camp, an Iranian Shia Muslim charitable foundation had provided support to Persian medium schools that taught Afghan and Iranian curricula.

## 7. Considering Repatriation

### 7.1 Insights from the Census of Afghans in Pakistan 2005

At its peak in 1990, it was estimated that population of registered Afghan refugees in Pakistan number was over 3.27 million. It was widely believed that around half as many more Afghans resided in Pakistan but were not registered; the total Afghan population could therefore have been around 4.5 million. A voluntary repatriation programme began after the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan in 1988. Between 1988–89 and 2000 a total of 2.9 million refugees repatriated to Afghanistan from Pakistan, of whom 2.19 million were “assisted”, and therefore officially recorded as having returned to their country.<sup>72</sup> With the descent of Afghanistan into a series of civil wars in the 1990s, new waves of Afghans arrived in Pakistan even as some were opting to return to their homes. A new repatriation programme launched after the overthrow of the Taliban regime in 2001 resulted in the return home of around 2.5 million by the middle of 2005.<sup>73</sup> A total of 5.4 million had undergone voluntary repatriation from Pakistan to Afghanistan between 1988–89 and 2005 – the figure exceeded the peak population of Afghan refugees by nearly 1 million.

The Census of Afghans in Pakistan 2005 did not exclude those Afghans who had not been registered, and therefore overcame one of the major drawbacks of refugee reporting in the past. It found that there were still 3.05 million Afghans in Pakistan in 2005 despite some 5.4 million having returned to Afghanistan since 1990.<sup>74</sup> The Census revealed that previous data sources must have underestimated the peak number of Afghans in Pakistan and/or overestimated the net outflow during the repatriation phase. Even after taking account of natural population growth, census data found between 2 and 2.5 million “extra” Afghans.<sup>75</sup> This ought to be a matter of reflection, not only for historical purposes but also as a warning about the quality of voluntary registration-based data on migration and repatriation, and hence on future assessments of policy impact.

Using Census data, Table 5 suggests that the majority of the Afghans in Pakistan do not intend to go back to Afghanistan. The proportions vary between different segments of the population: for example, Afghans living in NWFP are less inclined to go back compared to the overall population. In fact, this figure would be even lower if one were to discount Peshawar, residents of which show a relatively higher inclination to repatriate. One would expect willingness to return to be lower in urban centres where Afghans have become accustomed to urban services. This is supported by the low willingness of Nowshera’s Afghans, but Peshawar’s urban Afghans, who form the largest group of Afghans in Pakistan, seem much more disposed towards repatriation.

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<sup>72</sup> Afghan Refugee Statistics, 2001, [www.un.org.pk/unhcr/Afstats-stat.htm](http://www.un.org.pk/unhcr/Afstats-stat.htm), 6 May (accessed 28 October 2005).

<sup>73</sup> Redden, 2005, “Afghan Returns from Afghanistan Cross 2.5 million Mark”.

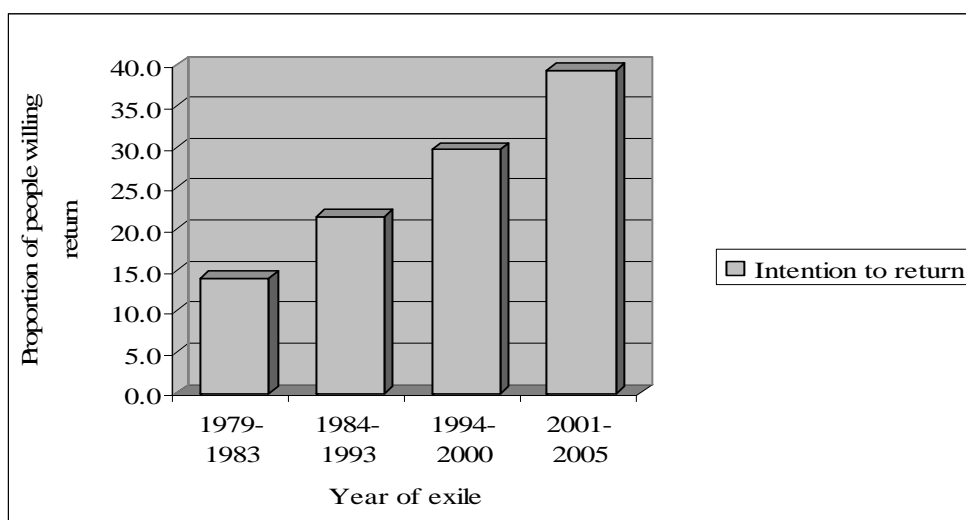
<sup>74</sup> SAFRON and UNHCR, Census.

<sup>75</sup> See Appendix 2 for details.

*Table 5. Willingness to return to Afghanistan (% of Afghans in Pakistan)<sup>76</sup>*

Location in Pakistan	Proportion of Afghans willing to return by the end of 2005
Pakistan	17.4%
NWFP	12.8%
Non-NWFP	24.9%
Peshawar	18.7%
Nowshera	2.9%
Camp	10.7%
Non-camp	22.4%
Ethnicity	
Pashtun	16.3%
Non-Pashtun	22.5%

Figure 1 uses Census data to map the relationship between the length of stay in Pakistan and willingness to repatriate. A secular trend supports the claim that people become much less inclined to repatriate with time. This corroborates the data in Table 5, as well as those of this qualitative survey. Issues of livelihoods and shelter would be increasingly pressing as Afghans, over time, spend physical, financial and social resources to create a niche for themselves in the host society. Furthermore, particularly for those who migrated in the early 1980s, the generation of Afghans raised in Pakistan might be more accustomed to the urban services and relative peace their stay in Pakistan has afforded them. Repatriation may not be a particularly desirable option for this segment of the population.

*Figure 1. Intention to return by length of exile*

Families who stated that they did not intend to return to Afghanistan in the near future were asked to indicate their main reason for not wanting to repatriate. Some of these responses are summarised in Table 6 in order to set the context for reporting the findings of qualitative data collected for the present study in Peshawar.

Firstly, shelter appears as the predominant reason for not repatriating (57 percent), irrespective of ethnicity and place of residence. However, the relative importance of shelter in comparison with other reasons varies, particularly across provinces of residence. Afghans in NWFP, for example, assign a much higher priority to shelter when compared with the general population of Afghans in Pakistan. Correspondingly, low priority is accorded to issues of livelihoods and security. In the other parts of the country taken together, under two fifths of the Afghans reported shelter as their reason for non-repatriation, compared to two thirds of the NWFP Afghans.<sup>77</sup> The

<sup>76</sup> SAFRON and UNHCR, Census, p. 25, 38, 41, 45.

<sup>77</sup> The greater emphasis on shelter in the NWFP compared to other provinces is confirmed by the Quetta case study.

higher overall importance of shelter over other issues is, therefore, determined largely by Afghans in NWFP.

Secondly, the importance of livelihoods appears to be much lower among camp residents compared with non-camp residents, corresponding to the lower priority accorded to shelter by non-camp residents. Our fieldwork suggests that non-camp dwellers (particularly those in regular settlements) belong to higher socioeconomic strata compared with the camp residents. Poorer Afghans – mainly casual daily wage labourers – would expect to work in similarly low-wage activities in Afghanistan. For them, the main difference between life in the two countries would be the cost of setting up a home in Afghanistan. For the more affluent and educated Afghans who have become accustomed the rental market in Peshawar, the main issue would be find a well-paying job or a profitable enterprise.

*Table 6. Reasons for not wanting to return (% of Afghans not intending to return)<sup>78</sup>*

	Personal animosity	Security	Livelihood	Shelter	Other
Pakistan	3.1	17.8	18.2	57.2	3.7
NWFP	3.1	13.9	13.0	67.0	3.0
Non-NWFP	3.1	25.1	27.9	39.0	4.9
Camp	2.3	18.1	12.5	64.3	2.9
Non-camp	3.9	17.5	23.1	51.2	4.3
Ethnicity					
Pashtun	3.2	18.2	18.2	56.9	3.5
Non-Pashtun	2.6	15.7	18.3	58.7	4.7

The remainder of this section attempts to build upon the statistical findings of the 2005 Census using the results of fieldwork in Peshawar. There are insights to be found in the qualitative research on the decision to repatriate, perceptions about life in Afghanistan, hopes and apprehensions, and actual experiences of repatriation in the past. Peshawar's Afghans perceive the issue of leaving for Afghanistan or staying in Pakistan not only in the discrete options offered in large-scale surveys; the process of decision-making and the types of considerations that matter are nuanced, and these nuances have a bearing on outcomes. Qualitative data also allows the opening up and elaboration of the problem of shelter in Afghanistan, which dominates all other possible reasons for choosing to remain in Pakistan. Finally, qualitative work enriches the findings of the 2005 Census by documenting previous experiences of Afghans repatriating to Afghanistan and then returning to Pakistan.

## 7.2 Thinking about leaving or staying

### The decision-making process

The process of making a decision about staying in Pakistan or leaving for Afghanistan is a complex one. Up to nearly three decades of displacement, migration and settlement in a foreign country implies that people have rebuilt their lives around a wide range of opportunities and constraints. Their ways of thinking about the future might be expected to reflect the specific personal circumstances in which they find themselves. While for many the decision to leave Afghanistan was a traumatic but

<sup>78</sup> SAFRON and UNHCR, Census, p. 26, 43, 45.

simple one – they were simply forced to flee conflict and immediate danger – the reverse decision need not be taken under conditions of such stark choices.

Broadly speaking, two factors play a significant role in the decision-making process: (i) general conditions in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and (ii) personal and family circumstances. Our respondents viewed the decision to repatriate primarily in terms of the latter set of factors. This remained true across sub-sites, socioeconomic classes and ethnic groups. Informants were asked about their intentions to leave or stay, and their reasons for any particular choice. It was striking that while the reasons for wanting to stay were mostly to do with perceptions of conditions in Afghanistan, reasons for wanting to go were mostly about personal circumstances. The former were mostly in line with the findings of the 2005 Census: shelter, land, security, stability, facilities and jobs.

The fact that general conditions dominated personal and family circumstances in the narrative of people wanting to stay in Pakistan has an interesting implication: people of Afghan origin generally regard a return home – even if it happens some time in the indefinite future – as inevitable and unproblematic. Despite a long period of exile and settlement in Pakistan, there were very few informants who did not contemplate ever returning home. For these people, the reasons were mainly personal and to do with specific circumstances and aspirations for themselves and their children.

The discussion on repatriation highlighted the different perspectives within families. This was clear not only with reference to older and younger people – the latter obviously having fewer direct links to Afghanistan than the former – but also between men and women. The findings of the 2005 Census are about the intentions of families. Our fieldwork suggested that while a decision about repatriation, staying back, or adopting a mixed strategy, would be taken for families, intra-family dynamics of arriving at those decisions are not well understood. Women informants widely reported the decision would be taken by the male head of the household. Many of the male household heads expressed the opinion, however, that the interests and views of children were very important in shaping the decision regarding repatriation.

### **Perceptions about Afghanistan**

Afghans in Peshawar have active links with Afghanistan through travel and trade. Family ties, too, benefit from this ongoing bond with Afghanistan: respondents stated that marriages within extended kinship networks often entailed a bride moving from Peshawar to Afghanistan or vice versa for marriage. Visits and contact with relatives in Afghanistan have had important effects on perceptions of Afghanistan and these feature prominently in their decision to return or not. This is particularly so for the younger generation: in absence of any memories of pre-war Afghanistan, these links have helped maintain some bond between them and their country.

The media and UNHCR information are additional important sources of detailed news about conditions in different parts of the country. The net effect is that the Afghan population in Pakistan have a nuanced understanding of the social, economic and political life in Afghanistan. While maintaining strong allegiance to their country of birth, they are nonetheless firm in their assessment of why they are unable to return at present.

Factors that appear to influence this decision included education and income levels of respondents, as well as their length of stay in Pakistan. Research findings pertaining to repatriation presented variations according to research sites and gender. Among the more prosperous Afghans, the research found that the emphasis on lack of shelter as an obstacle to repatriation was not as great.

In the refugee camp and irregular migrant sub-sites (particularly Jalojai and Yusufabad), there was a predominantly negative view about repatriation to Afghanistan. The most important reason cited for this was the lack of shelter.<sup>79</sup> In the other sub-sites, although shelter was still important, the range of factors cited was more diverse.<sup>80</sup> The issue of shelter had diverse meanings across and within sites, and this is discussed in greater detail in the next sub-section.

Issues of shelter were dominant, but within a diverse set of responses to the question of repatriation.<sup>81</sup> For example, respondents' optimism about accessing job opportunities varied. Some thought that there were opportunities only for skilled workers in the new Afghanistan, and were frustrated if they lacked the skills needed to make use of the limited employment opportunities. Some were worried about uneven development in Afghanistan and considered these opportunities to be limited to a few urban centres. "They are developing areas where Americans see profit. They are not giving proper attention to all Afghanistan" (Latifa, 26, Jalojai). Lack of skills and opportunities compelled such respondents to stay in Peshawar, where they could continue to work as casual labourers and afford the cost of living in the city. At the same time, it must be pointed out that some respondents from lower income communities expressed some optimism about making a living in Afghanistan, even if they were unskilled labourers.

In Hayatabad, respondents interpreted the question of repatriation more as a comment about their lives in Pakistan. They argued they were relatively content and prosperous in Peshawar, and the thought of moving back to Afghanistan did not seem as attractive. Indeed, they are reasonably entrenched in Peshawar's economic life and are reputed to have a substantial amount of control over Peshawar's smuggler's market, Bara Bazaar. They also maintain high levels of trade with Afghanistan.

The threat of insecurity in Afghanistan is clearly combined with an appreciation of the benefits of urbanisation in this respondent. Any move back to rural areas, where access to residential land may be affordable, would nonetheless be fraught with the problems of unemployment and absence of utilities.

*In Pakistan, we have facilities of electricity, gas, telephone, parks, education centres and more. If these are provided in Afghanistan, we will go there.* (Muhammad Jamil, 22, Hayatabad)

Most Afghan respondents, irrespective of their ethnicity and province of origin, appeared to have high demands for urban services such as electricity, gas, water

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<sup>79</sup> Although this study was not designed with the objective of statistical representation, it is nevertheless important to note the relative frequency of various responses. In Yusufabad and Jalojai, the frequency of shelter being cited as a reason for non-repatriation was 50% and 30% respectively.

<sup>80</sup> This study's findings were in line with the results of the 2005 Census cited above, that shelter was a more important reason among camp residents than non-camp residents.

<sup>81</sup> This diversity is underscored by the fact that some families felt that repatriation would be a risk because they believed Afghanistan was turning into a "westernised and un-Islamic" country. These families worried that Islamic laws were no longer applicable there, and that people were indulging in drinking and gambling. These concerns were particularly pronounced among parents who worried their children would "westernise" in Afghanistan.

supply and medical facilities. This was particularly so for women, who say they would greatly miss utilities such as natural gas used for cooking. Many Afghans who migrated or were displaced from rural areas have begun to realise the value of education and are sending their children, both boys and girls to school. This is particularly so for the non-Pashtuns and the relatively well-off Pashtuns.

There is a belief that the authority of the Afghan state does not extend beyond certain urban areas, and it could not protect its citizens beyond these limits. A related view held by many was that warlords had not been de-militarised, and that it was not a state priority to do so. "If they collect all weapons from all homes in Afghanistan, peace will come; then we will go home" (Maimona, 35, Yusufabad). Political stability was a widely cited reason for non-repatriation in Yusufabad, Kacha Garhi and Jalozai camp, but not in Hayatabad or the mixed Afghan–Pakistani sub-sites. This variation between sub-sites might be due to different perceptions and political ties across socioeconomic classes.

Informants viewed political stability and security as distinct but connected issues. Security was discussed most frequently with respect to the vulnerability of women to abuse and harassment. Women felt strongly that there was greater security and opportunity for their children in Peshawar. Respondents of both sexes said the risk of abduction for young girls was very high in Afghanistan. This insecurity was cited as a reason for not returning, even if male relatives were already earning in Afghanistan. "Women are not secure in Afghanistan; families with young girls will never go back" (Qudrat, 35, Yusufabad). Hayatabad residents had radically different perceptions. In fact, they had their own seasonal migration patterns that included sending women to relatives in Afghanistan to avoid the summer heat in Peshawar.

Perceptions of insecurity were partly shaped by ethnicity, region and political affiliation in Afghanistan. While respondents expressed satisfaction with the ethnic mix of the Kabul government, they regarded their own security as being linked to the precise ethnic and political background of key government officials in their area. In particular, Pashtun informants from non-Pashtun majority provinces cited insecurity based on ethnic discrimination in their home areas, while accepting the "Pashtun credentials" of the national government due to the ethnicity of President Karzai.

The question of repatriation engaged respondents with some urgency because it forced them to articulate their hopes and aspirations for their children, and also to explain how their children felt about the issue. Remaining in Pakistan, at least for the time being, was important for reasons of educating children and providing them with job and training opportunities.

Children, too, had impressed upon their parents their wish to remain for these same reasons, and also out of their fear of insecurity in Afghanistan. One man from Yusufabad wanted to repatriate – he even owned land in Afghanistan – but was helpless in the face of his children's refusal. They would not give up the security, employment and education facilities of the city of Peshawar in return for political instability and the absence of services (Mohammad Ali, 50, Tajik). Unless Afghanistan can match those opportunities it appears that some second-generation Afghans will not choose to return.

### 7.3 Shelter

This study's findings expand upon the concept of shelter in the Census by revealing how Afghans relate the concept of having a home to the conditions of owning property, of having the finances to build on it or conduct repairs as necessary, and/or of being able to afford rental housing if necessary. The latter figures prominently among those seeking gainful employment, not agricultural work, in Afghanistan, as it compels them to move to an urban centre. The main urban attraction for potential returnees interviewed is Kabul, the only city that could offer satisfactory employment to educated Afghans, but also the place where less educated returnees can have enjoy some of the same benefits of urbanisation that they experienced in Peshawar.

But return to Kabul city is fraught with problems, and respondents mention in particular high rental costs that deter them from moving and encourage them to stay in Pakistan. Kabul is indeed struggling with lack of shelter to accommodate the floods of returnees; about 40 percent of them moved to the partly destroyed capital in 2002. Ironically many found themselves living in tents provided by aid agencies yet again.<sup>82</sup> The difficulties of making a living in Kabul, particularly with a family, are clear to respondents who may have explored the possibility already and returned to Peshawar, or those who know through their own information sources that a move at present is not viable.

Among residents of Yusufabad and Jalozai Camp there was a predominantly negative view about repatriation to Afghanistan. Both men and women repeated that they could not return because they lacked a home in Afghanistan.

*My house was ruined in the war, it was hit by ten rockets. If I could survive even a little bit in my house I would not live here even for a day.* (Haji Mohammad, 62, Yusufabad)

Other reasons related to this were the absence of landholdings (on which to build a home and cultivate) and the high cost of renting.

*I plan to go back, but I do not have a house or land or enough money to start work over there. My family also wants to go back but I do not have the strength to bear the expenses alone.* (Ghulam Sultan, 27, Yusufabad.)

If they did have access to land, respondents still claimed that they could not afford to build, or re-build, homes on their property. There are no easy ways to address this problem.

*If the government were to provide us with a house and money then we would go back, otherwise Pakistan or Afghanistan are similar to us.* (Wali, 31, Yusufabad)

After years of living as refugees, it seems that Afghans remaining in Pakistan may be those who are least likely to give up the homes they still have in Pakistan, and risk homelessness yet again by returning to Afghanistan. Unless the state, the symbol of highest authority over the people, can provide shelter to these people, they will not move.

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<sup>82</sup> Refugees International, 2002, "Lack of Reconstruction Assistance Jeopardizes Afghan Repatriation", [www.refugeesinternational.org](http://www.refugeesinternational.org), 6 May (accessed 12 January 2005).



## 7.4 Repatriation and return

The experience of Afghans in Pakistan clearly shows that neither displacement nor repatriation can be seen as one-time events. There were notable cases in the fieldwork of families having repatriated to Afghanistan only to return to Pakistan by the force of circumstances.<sup>83</sup> Two such cases illustrate how people displaced once might get trapped into further cycles of displacement: (a) Turkmen families in Jalozai; (b) Pashtun families in Yusufabad.

- (a) In the late 1980s following the end of the Soviet military occupation of Afghanistan, several thousand Turkmen families living in the Jalozai camp repatriated to their home region in northern Afghanistan. Many returned to Pakistan within a few years, however, due to the continued civil war in Afghanistan. The Turkmen repatriates felt that they were singled out for persecution by political, ethnic and factional rivals in their home region. While some remained in Afghanistan, others moved back to different locations in Pakistan (such as the cities of Peshawar, Nowshera and Mardan), and around 4,000 families attempted to return to their former homes in the Jalozai camp.

There they found that the camp authorities were no longer willing to accommodate them.<sup>84</sup> They were, however, able to lease around 150 acres of land for residential use about 5 km from Jalozai camp. This new settlement came to be known as Turkmen Camp, even though it was not an officially recognised refugee camp. In the early 1990s, there were around 4,000 families living in Turkmen Camp. Over time many have repatriated once again to Afghanistan or they have migrated to other places in Pakistan, leaving behind up to 2,000 families.

- (b) There were several informants in Yusufabad who had repatriated to Afghanistan and then returned Peshawar:

*Three years ago I visited Afghanistan to look for work. I worked there for a year and when the job ended I returned here. (Amanullah, 30, Tajik)*

*We first came to Pakistan 20 years ago and settled in Kacha Garhi camp. After living there for 15 years we went back to Afghanistan and spent some time there. But the political situation was not encouraging at that time with the Taliban government there, so we returned to Pakistan. (Mahnaz, 42, Tajik)*

*Our family went to the Nasir Bagh camp when we first arrived in Pakistan. After two years there in difficult economic conditions we decided to return to Afghanistan in the hope of better employment opportunities. Our hopes were not fulfilled and we returned to Pakistan and settled down in the Nasir Bagh camp. We came here to Yusufabad when Nasir Bagh was shut down. (Lalarukh, 18, Tajik)*

*My family went back to Afghanistan in Mojadadi's time and came back within a year. The environment and lifestyle was tough over there. There was conflict, and our life was tough. We did not have other assets*

<sup>83</sup> In fact, the issue of "extra" Afghans noted above might have arisen precisely because repatriated people returning to Pakistan were not being counted.

<sup>84</sup> Ethnic discrimination was cited as one possible reason for the absence of cooperation on the part of the influential players, such as the former resistance organisation that "managed" the camp.

*that we could survive on and neither was there any work. Our house had been destroyed and we did not have the capacity to rebuild it so we came back.* (Hamza Gul, 62, Pashtun)

*When the Karzai government came into power in Afghanistan I decided to go but I came back due to the high cost of living and not finding any work.* (Haji Fazal, 42, Pashtun)

These cases from Yusufabad and the experience of the Turkmen of Jalojai highlight three points. First, these cases represent failures of previous repatriation policies, and future policymaking would be well served by taking the experience of the returned persons more fully into account. Second, there were not only significant financial costs of failed repatriation: the failed repatriated persons often found that they had lost their homes in Pakistan and had to accept even lower living standards than the ones they had left behind. Third, the “demonstration effect” on other Afghan refugees and migrants was considerable. Rapidly changing conditions in Afghanistan implied that reasonably held expectations were frequently unrealised.

## 7.5 Back and forth

For many respondents the question of repatriation seemed to be a settled one, at least for the time being, because some family members had already repatriated. The strategy of dividing an extended family reduces the economic risk of return: some men return to cultivate the land while other relatives remain in Pakistan to work. It also nurtures regular cross-border travel and information-gathering about particular localities. Many respondents said that they visit each other often with great ease of travel.

Respondents described a pattern of travel across the border – a kind of transnational living – that seemed to meet their needs and minimise their concerns. This strategy allows them to monitor how conditions develop inside Afghanistan and keep their options open in response to these. The poorest families, however, cannot afford to travel at all, especially without a home or land to cultivate in Afghanistan. This pattern must also be distinguished from the options available to the wealthier or more educated Afghans, who could afford to return and access highly skilled job opportunities in Kabul.

This quote from a physician in Jalojai camp captures other significant aspects of coping strategies and thinking about repatriation:

*We visit our home province often. Recently my sister, cousin and niece went to a marriage in our home town. There are no barriers to travelling back and forth, and we travelled without a passport.* (Dr Sajid, 40, Pashtun)

Peshawar’s proximity to Afghanistan and the relative ease of travel means that the costs of maintaining active social ties with their families and communities are low. It is not uncommon for Afghans in Peshawar to make day trips to Kabul. There are regular daily bus services from Peshawar to the border.<sup>85</sup> Even the Jalojai camp, which is located around 40 km east of Peshawar city (away from the border), had at least two regular buses as well as private chartered vehicles to the border.

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<sup>85</sup> There were even buses with special permits that ran to various towns and cities inside Afghanistan. The one-way bus fare to Kabul from Kacha Garhi is under 600 rupees. By way of comparison, the fare from Karachi to Kohat, a major source of migrant workers in Karachi, is around 700 rupees.

Life in Peshawar is as close as it could be to Afghanistan in cultural, economic and social terms. Their foreigner status notwithstanding, the situation of Afghans in Peshawar is not dramatically different from that of internal migrants within Pakistan, who simultaneously manage family connections and economic interests in their places of migration and origin.

## 8. Conclusion: Transnationalism and its Policy Implications

This study of Afghans in Peshawar and its hinterland has attempted to document the experiences of diverse segments of the population with respect to displacement, life as refugees and migrants, and aspirations and apprehensions regarding the future. It has complemented larger quantitative data sources – notably the Census of Afghans in Pakistan 2005 – with qualitative information based on community profiles, group-based interactions, individual interviews and case studies. An important premise of this study was that attention to transnational networks is crucial for a full understanding of the Afghan experience of displacement and migration. “Transnational networks” were taken to mean social networks of various types – based on kinship, ethnicity, economic relations, faith and party politics – that straddle state boundaries.

The research findings have borne out the importance of these social networks. Even under conditions of war and trauma, or perhaps particularly in those conditions, Afghans relied on their social networks across borders to guide them to locations where they could expect to be safe. The emotional and physical transition from being temporary displaced persons to the realisation that exile would be prolonged – symbolised in refugee camps by the move from tents to more home-like *katche* structures – was attended by the presence of transnational social networks. Moreover, current thinking about the future in Pakistan or Afghanistan is fashioned by transnationalism of the most profound type: the assumption that it is not only possible but also desirable to maintain a presence in both countries and, circumstances permitting, even in a third country. Transnationalism, therefore, is a state of being which is facilitated by the existence of transnational networks.

This concluding section summarises the main findings of the case study on the precise nature of transnationalism and transnational networks that have been, and will continue to be, important for Afghans in Peshawar. It then draws implications from these and other findings of the case study for policy and political dialogue. Three aspects of transnationalism were conspicuous in the Afghan experience in Peshawar:

- cross-border Afghan networks and strategies;
- Afghan–Pakistani networks; and
- transnational living between Peshawar and Afghanistan.

### 8.1 Cross-border Afghan networks and strategies

The first cross-border “strategy” for most displaced Afghans was to leave their homes and to cross the border to relative safety in Pakistan.<sup>86</sup> Even in this early phase of displacement the move to Peshawar was premised on a strategy of splitting families and communities – with some people (women, children and the elderly) moving to Peshawar while others (able-bodied men) staying back or returning to Afghanistan to take part in the resistance to the Soviet military intervention. The family remained the most fundamental unit of networking and strategising for Afghans on the move – as, of course, it would be for Afghans and Pakistanis in

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<sup>86</sup> The word “strategy” is not used here to suggest any long process of deliberation – as this was clearly not possible for people who faced imminent violence and destruction due to war. Displacement was a response, but the precise way in which displacement was managed involved a strategy.

general. During the period of the resistance many Afghan families became cross-border units with the men fighting in Afghanistan and the women and children living in camps and elsewhere in Peshawar.<sup>87</sup>

Displacement, settlement and repatriation were actions that often involved not just one or two families but an entire extended kinship group. Family and wider kinship relations were crucial in the choice of destination in Pakistan, and became important factors in how people adapted to life in camps or outside. These extended family and kinship networks remain important factors in the repatriation decision.<sup>88</sup>

The experience of displacement brought Afghans in close contact with wider networks than their immediate and extended kinship groups. For many who were accustomed to isolated rural conditions, these were new experiences. Ethnicity emerged as a conspicuous factor in the ordering of social affiliation. Afghans in refugee camps, as well as those outside, became physically clustered around kinsfolk and then people of the same ethnic group. The segregation of camps along ethnic lines was largely a consequence of the preference for proximity to kinsfolk, and such clustering reinforced ethnic ties. Given the greater numbers of Pashtuns than other ethnic groups, ethnic networks appeared more active among the non-Pashtuns, while tribes, kinship groups, clans and sub-clans were conspicuous markers of social organisation among the Pashtuns.

War and displacement also gave rise to new forms of affiliation and identity. Political parties, resistance groups and Islamic organisations were active in providing support and relief to Afghan refugees. The relationship between the refugees and these organisations and their leaders was often structured as a patron–client network. The patron–client network remained important after the conflict, even as the initial rationale, legitimacy and coherence of resistance organisations eroded. Cross-border patron–client networks were important factors in perceptions and expectations about life and opportunities inside Afghanistan. It mattered to Afghans in Peshawar whether the current leader or official in their area of origin in Afghanistan was someone with whom they might have a political connection.

## 8.2 Afghan–Pakistani Networks

Afghan transnational networks were not only restricted to cross-border linkages within and across families, kinship groups and political affiliates. The ties with a range of Pakistani (and international) counterparts were key to the Afghan experience in Peshawar. The fact that Peshawar and its surroundings (NWFP and FATA) were predominantly Pashtun areas with close ethnic, tribal and even kinship ties with Afghans across the border is obvious. For Pashtun Afghans, Peshawar and its surrounding areas were familiar in terms of language and culture. There were also close religious ties that were strengthened during the course of the war, as the Deobandi Sunni sect increased its influence among Pakistani and Afghan Pashtuns alike. Most importantly, a number of Pakistani politico-religious parties developed close ties with their Afghan counterparts during the resistance period and beyond.

<sup>87</sup> In the sub-sites in this study the Jalozaï camp and its residents provide many examples of this phenomenon.

<sup>88</sup> The instances of repatriation documented here (including those who returned to Pakistan) included many who actually moved in family groups. The influence of extended family groups was also important in the way that Afghans in Peshawar accessed and processed information about conditions in Afghanistan.

Cross-border ties based on ethnic and religious identity were not limited to the Pashtuns. Hazara Shia refugees received strong support from Pakistani Hazara Shias. In the case of the Afghan Ismaili Muslims, the bond of a common religious community was strong enough to generate support and protection on the part of the Pakistani and international Ismaili Muslim community.

There are strong and stable economic connections between Afghans and Pakistanis. Many of these ties are based around cross-border economic activities – both legal and illegal. Trade markets in and around Peshawar dominate the commercial sector of the city, and these are all based upon cross-border trade and smuggling, and Afghan traders and smugglers are involved in partnerships with Pakistani traders and officials. There are entire sectors – such as carpet-making – that involve Afghan and Pakistani networks.<sup>89</sup> In some cases the economic relationship does not involve trade but intermediation; this is particularly the case in transactions involving land use.<sup>90</sup>

Afghan–Pakistani networks worked not only to the advantage of the Afghan refugees and migrants. A proper appreciation of their resilience, and therefore the resilience of the Afghan presence in Peshawar, requires some attention to the advantages gained by their Pakistani counterparts. This is simple enough to see with respect to the business and trade networks. There are profits to be made in commercial activities – legal as well as illegal – and the successful operation of these activities requires the involvement of both Afghans and Pakistanis.

### 8.3 Open borders, linked economies, weak states

Transnationalism implies networks and strategies across borders. It might also imply that within their borders states play an active role in the lives of residents, and it therefore matters greatly if a person is a non-citizen, a foreigner, a refugee or an irregular migrant. Transnationalism, in the absence of borders, is an empty concept. And borders would matter little if the entities that they mark out (i.e. states) have little effective role in the lives of people. What can be said, then, about the Peshawar situation, where though borders officially exist, they appear to matter little in terms of the mobility of people and goods?

The fact is that Peshawar and its surroundings, and the bordering regions of Afghanistan, are virtually a single market. Borders are open not only for the movement of people but also for the movement of goods. There is arbitrage in prices of basic commodities across the border: an increase in demand for a commodity in Afghanistan has an immediate impact on its price in Pakistan. Not only that, but there appears to be close arbitrage even in the casual labour market.<sup>91</sup>

The writ of the state is weak or ineffective not only with respect to border control; even within the main population centres, it is clear that most Afghans and Pakistanis alike are sustained by informal sector. Casual labour is entirely undocumented and unmonitored by government authorities. The state sector is increasingly being replaced by the private sector in the provisioning of essential social and public

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<sup>89</sup> Other lower-value activities documented in the fieldwork, such as the timber trade, would also not be possible without the collusion of Pakistani officials and middlemen.

<sup>90</sup> In the case of Haji Fazal in Yusufabad, the Afghans are in a close partnership with the landlord in a relationship that is highly profitable for both. Similar arrangements were found to be common even around refugee camps (Jalozai). Afghans account for a major proportion of tenants in the home rental market in regular settlements too.

<sup>91</sup> The casual daily wage rate in Kabul reported in Stigter and Monsutti, *Transnational Networks*, was equivalent to \$2–3. In Peshawar it was slightly below this level.

services. Land-use laws are routinely flouted by landlords and lessees alike. Entire markets, even within the district of Peshawar (let alone the unregulated neighbouring tribal areas), are based on the trade of illegally imported goods.

Afghans in Peshawar faced clear disadvantages in largely those transactions and activities where the state was an important mediator. They could not have access to government jobs, they could not buy or sell land, and they faced greater difficulties in acquire travel documents for third countries. These disadvantages were not insignificant. At the same time, however, Afghans were able to travel freely to and from Pakistan, were able to own and manage businesses, and even dominate entire markets in Peshawar.

## 8.4 Implications for policy and politics

The findings of this study demonstrate that Afghans in Peshawar do not repatriate because of many varied reasons. While absence of home, land and shelter remains the most dominant, they also cite lack of security and employment, and the benefits of urbanisation in Pakistan, among their other reasons.

The strength of transnationalism – and the limited ability or willingness on the part of the Pakistani state to prevent it – is a crucial determinant of the realism or otherwise of various policy options. This widely understood though rarely acknowledged fact has several implications. First, by default or design, the Pakistani policy towards Afghans has allowed them to exercise transnationalism as a strategy for survival and sustenance. Proposed changes in the policy regime need to be cognisant of the positive aspects of what already exists on the ground. Second, it would be impossible to reverse the transnationalism of Peshawar without causing serious disruption to its economy and society in general, let alone the lives of the Afghans. Third, there are strong relations of mutual advantage between Afghans and Pakistanis – economic ties as well as linkages based on segmented sub-national identities. These would make any radical reversal of the Afghan position in Pakistan politically infeasible.

### Unresolved status

While Afghans in Pakistan are able to exercise transnationalism as a strategy, they are nevertheless locked in a position of relative disadvantage and uncertainty. Transnational living allows them to subsist but not necessarily to grow. Afghans are in low-skill, low-wage jobs, in the informal sectors of the economy. Despite their close social and cultural ties with the host population, and despite the weakness of the Pakistani state to document and identify Afghans, they are nevertheless conspicuous as refugees and migrants.

Their uncertain status, partly a function of uncertainty about conditions inside Afghanistan and partly due to the absence of clear rights and entitlements in Pakistan, has left them in limbo. The challenge ahead is to provide a truthful answer to Latifa, aged 27, a resident of the Jalojai camp who says:

*We don't have any Pakistani card or Pakistani citizenship. I have completed my MBBS but cannot work in the government sector because of I am not a citizen. The Pakistani government has to take some decision about us because we have spent most of our lives in Pakistan. But we still feel like guests here. (Latifa, 27, Jalojai)*

## Need for interim solutions

The position of the Pakistan government is driven by domestic political considerations among other things. Any decision about the legal status of Afghans in Pakistan would require the building of a political consensus, which is likely to take time and effort. One implication, therefore, is to promote a frank and open debate and dialogue within and across states. The former would require serious consideration of all points of view inside Pakistan, and the latter would involve political and civil society dialogues between Pakistanis and Afghans.

Given the strong opinions and interests on both sides of the debate inside Pakistan, it is likely that the situation will remain at a policy impasse that allows for Afghans to exercise transnationalism, but otherwise leaves them in a position of uncertainty and disadvantage. It is useful, therefore, to think in terms of interim solutions that could protect the welfare of the Afghans while remaining mindful of political sensitivities in Pakistan.

## Local communities

Afghans selected for this research lived in diverse socioeconomic conditions that were in stark contrast to each another. Class differentials were quite largely shaped by conditions that these families left behind in Afghanistan. Those from predominantly rural areas were living in camps and irregular settlements, while urban refugees were living in formal rented accommodation in the city (the majority of refugees in Peshawar). The process of land acquisition and the terms of tenancy for irregular settlements are similar around Pakistan's urban sites, and the Afghan settlements under study are not substantially different. But Afghans cannot look forward to owning property legally (even if the government regularises a settlement), because they have no property ownership rights. They remain vulnerable to police harassment and eviction, and the landlord or middleman who runs the settlement retains full and indiscriminate powers over their tenure of housing. In such conditions of insecurity, the social bonds and hierarchy that were at play in the development of such settlements are further strengthened, not challenged.

This issue falls directly within the responsibility of urban policymakers in Peshawar. It demands that general issues of irregular settlements be addressed, not only to ensure some sort of security of tenure for inhabitants but also to intervene where social hierarchy violates the human rights of residents. The state, too, has to question whether denying Afghans property rights has served any positive function. For those who remain in Pakistan, and the next generation born here, the right to own property would facilitate not only their own security but also allow the state to benefit more directly from regularised housing.

## Relations with Pakistanis

The sub-sites provided interesting variation in the forms of interactions – commercial, social and political – between Afghans and Pakistanis. In principle, the Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees (CAR) was the point through which all interaction between Afghans and Pakistanis was to be mediated. In practice, of course, this was not the case since a majority of the Afghans were not even residing in officially designated refugee camps. Afghans have relatively open access to the economy and society in Peshawar, permitting business and trade ties with local individuals. These individualised interactions, however, were only one end of the spectrum, and for many Afghans and Pakistanis mutual interaction was not personal-



ised but mediated through “agents” and middlemen. These middlemen hold substantial power over refugee communities, not only in housing arrangements but also through facilitating trade activities within Pakistan.

The question here for policymakers is two-fold. Is the category of refugee sufficient for the government of Pakistan to manage the complexity of Afghan activities in Pakistan? And secondly would it not be both more realistic and also more beneficial to the state to recognise their economic contribution and attempt to formalise these activities? The more informal these economic activities remain, the less benefit to either state involved, and also the greater likelihood of extortion of individuals.

Afghans in Peshawar work mainly as casual labourers, and they are predominantly locked into a lower-wage profile in some of the most marginalised areas of work. These labourers earn inadequate amounts to save for the cost of repatriation, they own no agricultural land in Pakistan which could supplement their income, and they have little opportunity for upward economic mobility. They are, in this way, even more vulnerable than Pakistan’s own poor casual wage workers, and they appear to have little opportunity to improve their lives.

How could policymakers address their issues? For one, work permits and some legal rights as local labourers may permit some relief. Second, programmes and projects designed to increase their skills would not only offer some possibility for an exit from poverty while in Pakistan, but it would also give them the option to consider the possibility of repatriation.

## **Education**

It is important for policymakers to understand that education remains a key demand among Afghans, who clearly see this as a means to resolving many of their deprivations. Funding for Afghan schools in Peshawar is on the decline; if basic schooling is not easily available, it limits the options of Afghans yet again, and certainly does not contribute towards repatriation. Mainstreaming Afghans into the local education system needs to be considered in detail, as do the benefits of supporting Afghan schools in Peshawar despite any changes in political circumstances in Afghanistan.

## Appendix: Reconciling 2005 Census Results with Earlier Data

Two factors need to be considered before the figures on refugee numbers and repatriation can be reconciled. First, and most obvious, is that the peak estimated population of 4.5 million refugees was the *stock* in 1990, whereas repatriation figures are based on annual flows. If refugee arrivals continued after 1990, and the inflows were greater than the outflows, it would be possible to end up with a stock of 3 million refugees in 2005 even after accounting for the repatriation. Refugee flows did, indeed, continue after 1990. The 2005 Census found that of the 3 million people remaining in Pakistan in 2005, around 425,000 or 14 percent had arrived in or after 1990. This continued inflow, while important, would not have been sufficient by itself to account for the residual stock.

Second, it has been suggested correctly that the Afghan population in Pakistan could not remain static, but was subject to growth in much the same way as any other population with high fertility rates. Indeed, a peak population of 4.5 million in 1990, increasing at an average growth rate of 3 percent per year would have risen to over 7 million by 2005. This hypothetical growth rate (which is also suggested by the 2005 Census as a way of explaining the anomaly) is close to Pakistan's average rate of population growth during the period in question, and appears to be a reasonable extrapolation. But such a calculation does not taken into account the fact that 2.5 million are reported to have repatriated by as early as 1995. Taking this fact as well as the continued inflow into account, there ought have been just over 3 million Afghans in Pakistan by 2001. Assuming high natural growth rates between 2001 and 2005, the residual population in 2005 should have stood at between 500,000 to 1 million.

There were therefore, some 2 to 2.5 million "extra" Afghans in Pakistan in 2005 compared with expectations based upon official data on refugee registration and repatriation, and "guesstimates" of the non-registered population. The census methodology and reach was clearly far more reliable than the previous figures based on voluntary registration and extrapolations, and the census results are being rightly treated as the authentic benchmark on Afghans in Pakistan. If anything, the census figure are likely to under-estimate rather than over-estimate the number of Afghans since the number of "extra" Afghans is likely to be even higher. This is so because the census methodology would under-represent those Afghans who do not reside in well-known Afghan clusters, and excludes those Afghans who claim to have Pakistani National Identity Cards.

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