

Case Study Series

**TO RETURN OR TO REMAIN:  
THE DILEMMA OF SECOND-GENERATION  
AFGHANS IN PAKISTAN**



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## About the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit

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

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

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This study is completed entirely due to teamwork. Drawing these second-generation Afghans' dilemma was only possible, because our skilled interviewers were also Afghan youth, who willingly shared their own stories growing up in the past decades. Anil Ahmad Shaheer took the lead in the research team, and Khalida Ghafuri committed to direct the female team. Shafiq Ayub, Baser Nader, Muzhgan Nuzhat, Shamsul Haq, Hamed Ihsas, Abdul Hai Sahar, and Ali Mehdi Zeerak, all contributed to the process of consolidating data with great patience.

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Mamiko Saito and Pamela Hunte, May 2007

## Glossary

<i>gelam jam</i>	refers to a thief or a greedy person; the term has been used to refer to a mujahidin group, which swept into people's houses and took everything, including even the <i>gelam</i> (flat-weave rugs) on the floors
<i>hujra</i>	A guest room for males only; a traditional meeting place
<i>katchi abadis</i>	<i>irregular settlements</i>
<i>mohajer(in)</i>	refugee(s)
<i>mota'asib</i>	someone religiously conservative
<i>mujahidin</i>	"holy warriors"; a resistance movement
<i>PK Rs.</i>	Pakistani rupees, currency in Pakistan: Rs. 60 is approximately equivalent to US\$1

## Acronyms

AGEF	Association of Experts in the Field of Migration
AREU	Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
ARRC	Afghan Refugees Repatriation Cell
AWN	Afghan Women's Network
BEFARe	Basic Education for Afghan Refugees
CAR	(The Government of Pakistan's) Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees
EC	European Commission
IRC	International Rescue Committee
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education
MORR	Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation
NSDP	National Skills Development Programme
NWFP	North West Frontier Province
PoR	Proof of Registration
SAFRON	(The Government of Pakistan's) Ministry of State and Frontier Regions
SES	socio-economic status
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

\* Transliterations in this glossary, as well as in the text, are spelled according to AREU's editorial policy and do not reflect the opinion of the author(s).



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## Executive Summary

This paper is the first in a series of three country case studies of second-generation Afghans in neighbouring countries: Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan. Funding for the studies has been provided by the European Commission (EC), administered through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). AREU's previous research on Transnational Networks highlighted the existence of a specific information gap regarding the experiences and interests of the large group of second-generation Afghans residing in Pakistan and Iran, which initiated this research. These second-generation Afghans are defined in this study as those males and females aged 15 to 30 years who have spent more than half of their lives in Pakistan or Iran. Also of interest to the study are those same second-generation Afghans who have now returned to Afghanistan and spent at least six months in their homeland.

According to data from the Registration of Afghans in Pakistan (2007), 74 percent of Afghans in Pakistan are less than 28 years old. The majority of them were born in Pakistan, have never experienced life in Afghanistan, or did so only at a very young age, and grew up in a very different environment from that of their parents and peers in Afghanistan. Therefore, to understand the characteristics of this large group of young Afghans in Pakistan and their perceptions toward return and reintegration has critical importance for policy making, informing debates about how to facilitate repatriation and reintegration processes, and how to best manage the Afghan population remaining in exile and the continuous movement across the border.

The aim of this case study is to provide such understanding by exploring beneath the surface of the Yes/No responses about return intention, represented in existing quantitative data: Census of Afghans in Pakistan 2005 and Registration of Afghans in Pakistan 2007, to illustrate what struggles exist in return decision making among youth and young adult Afghans living in mostly urban areas of Peshawar, Quetta, and Karachi. The report's strength lies in its use of narratives and direct quotes from the purposively selected 71 respondents having varied backgrounds across gender, education level, socio-economic status, degree of assimilation in host communities, etc.

### Key Findings:

- The process around deciding to return is highly complicated for second-generation Afghans. Various factors influence the decision – from material comforts (life facilities, shelter, and work opportunities) to the complexity of socio-cultural and emotional concerns, and the crucial interrelations between these – all of which change in relative importance over time in response to internal preferences and perceptions, and external events.
- Ideas about return are in constant flux reflecting changes in both individual experiences and regional dynamics. The majority of the respondents are observing the situation in Afghanistan and waiting for the right time to return; those having a clear negative perception of return are a minority. The option to repatriate is open-ended, with the time of action only coming when the balance of factors affecting that individual and/or family shifts to reduce the perceived risks of return.
- Although respect for elders shapes household power dynamics and the return decision making process, second-generation male heads of households and eldest sons tend to have the actual control over initiating and framing return

discussions. In contrast, a limited group of single and married young females who have high interactions with external society – through work and education – also appear to possess a high level of involvement in decisions to return. Thus providing these groups with accurate information about life and opportunities in Afghanistan is important to swaying their and their families' decisions to return.

### Recommendations:

In formulating the voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration policies, the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan, along with the international community should work toward:

- Improving the quality and relevance of information available about Afghanistan prior to return, especially among youth who are less familiar with the situation in their homeland, to remove perceived misconceptions and minimize the gap coming from idealistic expectations.
- Providing an intensive package of services to the poorer and less educated Afghans in Pakistan, including vocational training, housing, cash grants, and labour intensive work, to reduce their risks of failed return.
- Ensuring young returnees can access demand-driven skills development programmes linked to current market needs in both urban and rural areas, to reduce risks of un- and under-employment, especially for those who have low levels of education, skills, capital and connections.
- Expanding small business/enterprise development skills training and access to micro-credit for second-generation Afghan returnees.
- Ensuring an expanded supply of quality primary and secondary education (formal and religious), including in rural areas in Afghanistan, and improving teacher salaries to attract qualified personnel to assist in meeting the demand for education among returning second-generation Afghans and their children.
- Clarifying accreditation/certification procedures for students and disseminating the information widely to ensure transparency and accessibility.
- Reducing the supply constraints in higher education in Afghanistan to meet the increasing demands from young Afghan returnees over the long term, and decreasing population movement among educated Afghans in pursuit of higher education.
- Formalising the status of long-staying Afghan populations in Pakistan, regarding the right to work temporarily and clarifying the procedures for access to higher education.

## 1. Introduction

This research on second-generation Afghans<sup>1</sup> in Pakistan and their orientations toward return to Afghanistan was directly informed by AREU's previous research on Transnational Networks.<sup>2</sup> This earlier work brought out the striking lack of specific information dealing with the large group of Afghan youth and young adults presently living in Pakistan and Iran.

To address the information gap, this research programme was initiated in 2006, with funding provided by the European Commission (EC), administered through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The goal is to understand the life experiences and return intentions of second-generation Afghans remaining in Pakistan and Iran, as well as the integration experiences of those who have recently returned.<sup>3</sup> This report presents the results of the case study of second-generation Afghans in Pakistan.

According to Registration of Afghans in 2007, 74 percent of the Afghan population in Pakistan is less than 28 years old and the majority were born in Pakistan and have never lived in Afghanistan.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, more than half of Afghans in Pakistan (55%) now reside outside of camps, where there is more access to urban facilities in a context quite dissimilar to that in which their elder generation resided. This large number of second-generation Afghans in Pakistan have also faced different opportunities in exile compared to those of their peers in Afghanistan<sup>5</sup>, and are expected to play a key role in the development of Afghanistan<sup>6</sup>. Furthermore, some transformation of educational attainment appears to occur across generations during exile, which may continue in the future, with implications for education demand in the home country.<sup>7</sup> Thus understanding the characteristics of this large population of second-generation Afghans in Pakistan, as well as their perceptions of return and expected reintegration challenges, is of critical importance to on-going policy debates.

Qualitative analysis<sup>8</sup> of the narratives of both male and female second-generation Afghans illustrates the personal struggles they experienced while living in the urban study areas of Peshawar, Quetta, and Karachi (see the profiles of each study site in Appendix 2). It also highlights the pressing dilemma they face about their future. Do they

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<sup>1</sup> As defined in this study, second-generation Afghans are those males and females who are 15 to 30 years of age and have spent more than half of their lives in Pakistan. Many have been born in Pakistan, while others have grown up in that country from an early age.

<sup>2</sup> For a summary of this project, see Monsutti, A., 2006, *Afghan Transnational Networks: Looking Beyond Repatriation*, Kabul: AREU.

<sup>3</sup> This Pakistan case study is one in a series of three; another case study was also conducted in Iran by the University of Tehran, in partnership with AREU, and a third in Afghanistan by AREU targeting returned second-generation youth.

<sup>4</sup> Government of Pakistan and UNHCR, 2007, *Registration of Afghans in Pakistan 2007*, Islamabad: GoP and UNHCR.

<sup>5</sup> Returnees remark both positive and negative impact during exile. Gains during exile are noted like new skills (46%) and education (23%), while losses are cited as peaceful living (59%) and social relations (32%) among 600 returnee households' interviews. Altai Consulting., 2006, *Integration of Returnees in the Afghan Labour Market*, Kabul: Altai Consulting.

<sup>6</sup> Afghans in Pakistan represent 8 percent of the estimated population of Afghanistan, *Registration 2007*.

<sup>7</sup> Despite the fact that over 70.3 percent of Afghans in Pakistan are not educated, Registration 2007 also shows the gradual transition of non educated ratio through generations: 93.1% no education (over 60 years old), 84.5 % (18-59 years old), 61.6% (12-17 years old), 50.2% (5-11 years old).

<sup>8</sup> Qualitative research provides in-depth analysis utilizing a relatively small sample of respondents to arrive at basic themes, in contrast to quantitative survey research, which provides statistically significant data.

(and their households) remain in Pakistan? Or, do they cross the border to reside in Afghanistan, their homeland, a country many of these young people have never visited and have no memory of?

This study finds that a number of economic, political and socio-cultural/emotional factors enter into their individual struggles. The general situation for Afghans as non-residents in Pakistan is extremely fluid and changeable and, similarly, the present-day conditions in Afghanistan are constantly in flux. Respondents and their households are monitoring the state of affairs in both countries carefully, and are continuously weighing and re-weighing the many factors influencing their decision to either remain in Pakistan or *return*<sup>9</sup> to Afghanistan. When they or their families perceive that the balance of factors has changed in a way that supports movement to Afghanistan, they may *take action* toward return. Indeed, in spite of the fact that growing up in Pakistan has often resulted in more extensive integration of these youth into the local context, unlike their elders, the majority of the young respondents are not extremely negative toward return. However, the balance of factors must be “right.” Their present dilemma comes from the constantly changing influence of various factors leading to shifts in personal opinions about return: internal household disagreements over the decision to return or not; and frustration or feelings of responsibility depending on the degree of individual participation in household discussions about return.

Since the publication in 2002 of AREU’s initial report pertaining to Afghan refugees, *Taking Refugees for a Ride? The Politics of Refugee Return to Afghanistan*,<sup>10</sup> the euphoria and optimism accompanying the return of more than 1.5 million Afghans in 2002 from Pakistan has decreased considerably. This has been attributed to returnees, as well as those remaining in Pakistan, realizing the harsh realities of daily survival in slow-to-be reconstructed Afghanistan.<sup>11</sup> With decreasing pull factors toward Afghanistan, a much smaller total of 133,338 Afghans returned in 2006,<sup>12</sup> while 2.15 million registered and some 0.3 million estimated unregistered Afghans still remain in Pakistan today.<sup>13</sup> Respondents in this study are members of this huge group of non-residents, and largely from Afghan families who arrived in Pakistan many years ago, primarily from the late 1970s to the mid-1990s due to a variety of civil conflicts, namely the Soviet invasion, *mujahidin* unrest and the rise of the Taliban. In recent decades, the status of many of these long-term residents in Pakistan has changed significantly:

*...due to the protracted nature of their refugee situation, (Afghans) have moved from being refugees in need of substantial humanitarian support to being migrants seeking some form of legal status and secure livelihoods in their country of residence.*<sup>14</sup>

In addition, the warm welcome initially provided for millions of Afghans by Pakistanis upon their arrival has cooled with the passage of time, and asylum fatigue on the part of

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<sup>9</sup> The term *return* is used throughout this paper to refer to the movement of the respondents and their households from Pakistan to Afghanistan, in spite of the fact that many of them are not actually *going back* to Afghanistan — many never having ever lived there in the past.

<sup>10</sup> Turton, D. and Marsden, P., 2002, *Taking Refugees for a Ride? The Politics of Refugee Return to Afghanistan*, Kabul: AREU.

<sup>11</sup> The most significant factor related to this large population surge across the border in 2002 was “great, but misplaced, expectations about the level and early impact of international assistance (Turton and Marsden 2002:33)” to be found in Afghanistan.

<sup>12</sup> UNHCR, 2006, *Operational Information Summary Report Update, March 2002-December 2006*, Kabul:UNHCR. The total number of refugees having returned from Pakistan since 2002 now stands at 2.8 million.

<sup>13</sup> *Registration of Afghans in Pakistan 2007*.

<sup>14</sup> Monsutti, op cit., 37.

both the government and the general public has set in due to economic, political, and other reasons. International assistance for refugees has been reduced significantly, and some refugee camps have been closed. At the time of the fieldwork for this study, strains in relations between the two nations had increased due to accusations from both sides about cross-border insurgent movements. It was also rumoured that all Afghans were to be formally registered by the Pakistani government/UNHCR<sup>15</sup>. All of these fluctuating factors lead to increased tension and insecurity, confounding the daily personal struggles of expatriate respondents in Peshawar, Quetta, and Karachi.

The 2005 Census of Afghans in Pakistan, conducted by the Government of Pakistan and UNHCR,<sup>16</sup> indicates that 17 percent of the sample intended to return during that year, while 83 percent did not. Likewise, 84.2 percent of registered Afghans in 2007 showed no intention of returning to Afghanistan in the near future. Major reasons given in 2007 for not being willing to return are poor security (41.6 percent), and lack of shelter (30.7 percent) and livelihoods (24.4 percent) in their homeland. Compared to the 2005 Census, insecurity is now considered as the main constraint to return; which illustrates how the factors influencing repatriation are continuously changing. To complement these quantitative data, and to go deeper beneath the yes/no response to questions about return, this study provides in-depth detail from the perspective of Afghan youth in Pakistan — both male and female — about their lives and identity formation as second-generation Afghans and how this influences ideas of homeland and return.

This report shows that the decision-making processes pertaining to return are highly complex and cannot be simplified into a straightforward rational consideration of material push-pull factors (e.g. lack of shelter, livelihoods). The determination of their course of action is considerably complicated by an additional array of socio-cultural and emotional individual concerns, such as the presence/absence of relatives, feelings of belonging/exclusion, patriotic sentiments, etc. Employing an in-depth qualitative approach, this study considers all of these factors together. It also analyses the varying degrees of participation exhibited by these young second-generation individuals in the decision-making processes of their households, along with any internal household struggles around considerations to repatriate.

In order to understand the multi-faceted challenges of the study group, two interrelated analytic perspectives are utilized: (i) an examination of their social networks; and (ii) a study of issues concerning their self-identity. These approaches are quite closely connected, as “identity is grounded in social relationships, which are formed through the interaction and participation in... social networks.”<sup>17</sup>

Focusing on return considerations, the individual’s degree of embeddedness in various types of social networks — not only with Afghans in Pakistan but with Pakistanis as well — is outlined and contrasted. These second-generation Afghans (both male and female) frequently voice positive sentiments of belonging, including being part of an extensive kin group, having a friend, being a member of an informal group, etc. Other

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<sup>15</sup> The Proof of Registration (PoR) cards valid until 2009 were provided to Afghans during October 2006 and February 2007, and “it will be regarded by concerned authorities of the GoP as a valid registration document recognising the bearer as an Afghan citizen temporarily living in Pakistan” as stipulated in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by Pakistan’s Ministries of Interior, States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON), and UNHCR on 19 April 2006.

<sup>16</sup> Government of Pakistan and UNHCR, 2005, *Census of Afghans in Pakistan 2005*, Islamabad: GoP and UNHCR.

<sup>17</sup> Christou, A., 2002, “Geographies of Place, Culture and Identity in the Narratives of Second-Generation Greek-Americans Returning Home,” Sussex Centre for Migration Research, Working Paper No. 6:10.

transnational networks linking them with relatives and friends inside Afghanistan and further abroad are also ascertained. With access to various networks, these second-generation Afghans are members of “social worlds that span more than one place,”<sup>18</sup> and that is part of their dilemma. All of these social relations include a number of associated rights and obligations, and the roles these play in decisions to repatriate or not are reviewed in detail. Involved in these interpersonal ties are a variety of different types of factors — both material and emotional:

*Return may as well be an expression of an adherence and reconfirmation of social networks that provide physical, social and legal protection and give meaning to the individual's life.*<sup>19</sup>

During their long period of exile, refugees struggling with their identity in Pakistan have been a persistent concern for many researchers having long-standing ties with Afghanistan. The cultural identity of those residing in Afghanistan has also been examined.<sup>20</sup> This research builds upon these studies, while providing a new and specific focus on the self-identity of Afghan youth/young adults in Pakistan. Findings in this area are often complex and contradictory in nature, with respondents' identities constantly evolving in the exile context of uncertainty and indecision. Their models of *what it means to be Afghan* are constructed through an ongoing dialectic between external (ascribed by others — both Afghan and Pakistani) and internal (self-attributed) forces.<sup>21</sup> Most of these individuals are surrounded by dense kin networks which are saturated with traditional Afghan values and norms, many of which are religious in nature. They have vivid impressions of Afghanistan's colourful history and oral traditions passed down through stories and narratives by their parents and elders when they were children in exile:

*Identities are constructed in the space between past and present, the two representing a continuum, rather than separate worlds.*<sup>22</sup>

Most males and females identify staunchly with *being Afghan*. However, in part due to their youth and forces of modernity in the urban Pakistani context, struggles between self and the larger Afghan socio-cultural context in both Pakistan and in Afghanistan are apparent, at times.

Respondents have formed positive social relations with members of their host country. However, growing up as refugees/migrants within the wider Pakistani milieu of Peshawar, Quetta, and Karachi, their identity as *Afghan* has emerged largely “in the context of exclusion and difference.”<sup>23</sup> There are many strains inherent in the juxtaposition of Afghan and Pakistani, and these conflicts also figure into their individual equations of various factors pertaining to return. In general, these young adults do not want to “become Pakistani,” and their host country remains foreign to them. Issues of

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<sup>18</sup> Vertovec, S., 2001, “Transnationalism and Identity,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 27(4):573-582.

<sup>19</sup> Stigter, E., “Afghan Migration Strategies — An Assessment of Repatriation and Sustainable Return in Response to the Convention Plus,” *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, vol. 25(2):109-122.

<sup>20</sup> Dupree, N., 2002, “Cultural Heritage and National Identity in Afghanistan,” *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 23(5):977-989; Centlivres, P. and Centlivres-Demont, M., 1988, “The Afghan Refugee in Pakistan: An Ambiguous Identity,” *Journal of Refugee Studies*, vol. 1(2):141-152; Central Asian Survey, 2000, *State, National Awareness and Levels of Identity in Afghanistan from Monarchy to Islamic State*, vol. 19(3/4):419-428.

<sup>21</sup> Vertovec, op. cit.

<sup>22</sup> Thapan, M., 2005, Introduction, “‘Making Incomplete’: Identity, Women, and the State,” in *Women and Migration in Asia*, vol. 1:55, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

<sup>23</sup> Christou, op. cit., 10.

state identity<sup>24</sup> are crucial in this context and, indeed, the term *Afghan* as utilized by respondents refers to their nationality.

In short, employing a gendered focus, this case study outlines the degree of integration of both Afghan males and females in the three Pakistani research sites through analysis of social networks and an exploration of identity issues, along with ascertaining their perceptions of their potential (re)integration in Afghanistan. In this process, the complexity of the strategies presently being employed by these young adults is illustrated in detail. A better understanding of second-generation livelihoods in Pakistan enables the delineation of a series of recommendations for future policy and programme development. These recommendations provide a means by which to encourage young Afghans and their households to return to their homeland with success. And, recognising that many may continue to reside in Pakistan, the recommendations provided in this study also furnish guidelines on how to minimize the challenges they face in following this path.

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<sup>24</sup> M. Chaudhuri, 2005, "Betwixt the State and Everyday Life: Identity Formation among Bengali Migrants in a Delhi Slum," in *Women and Migration in Asia*, vol. 1, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

## 2. Methodology

Fieldwork for this qualitative study was conducted for a period of 12 weeks, from April to early September 2006, in Peshawar, Quetta, and Karachi, Pakistan (see Appendix 2). This period excludes the time spent on preparing the research team (hiring and training) and initial trips to the locations to organise required meetings and logistical arrangements. Fieldwork was conducted by a male team and a female team, each comprised of two members.<sup>25</sup> The work of both teams was overseen by an expatriate supervisor and a senior research manager was in charge of the entire project. The team conducted a total of 71 individual, semi-structured interviews (see Table 1), 12 focus group discussions<sup>26</sup>, and four parental interviews.<sup>27</sup> The discussions produced a collection of detailed life histories and rich narratives capturing the struggles of second-generation Afghans in Pakistan.

Information about the community, local schools and other local conditions was also documented, along with informal field notes including impressions and insights of the interviewers. Each individual interview usually lasted between two and two-and-a-half hours. One interviewer led the conversation, while another took detailed notes. Transcribing the field notes and typing them up in English took more than a half-day per interview.

*Table 1. Second-generation Afghans (N=71)*

	FEMALE		MALE		TOTAL
	Single	Married	Single	Married	
Peshawar	10	10	8	10	38
Quetta	4	3	3	4	14
Karachi	7	3	5	4	19
TOTAL	21	16	16	18	71
	<b>37</b>		<b>34</b>		

The research team selected the three locations of Peshawar, Quetta and Karachi for a range of reasons. Peshawar and Quetta were selected primarily for having a heavy concentration of Afghan populations. Karachi was chosen for its diversity in ethnicities and languages, as well as a large presence of Afghans.<sup>28</sup> All three were also the research

<sup>25</sup> All the team members, except one male permanent AREU staff, were Afghans living in Pakistan. Given that work required familiarity with four languages (Pashto, Dari, Urdu, and English) and the need to conduct in-depth interviews with various respondents and hence build rapport, Afghan interviewers were selected. Most of them were young and similar in age to the respondents, which helped to develop rapport. One male and one female team member remained with the study throughout, which helped to maintain continuity and data quality.

<sup>26</sup> Each team conducted six focus group discussions in three cities (3 Peshawar, 1 Quetta, and 2 Karachi). The average number of participants was seven people. The discussions usually continued for around three hours.

<sup>27</sup> Initially, interviews with a few of the second-generation respondents' parents were also conducted. However, striking differences in responses were not received. In addition, some interviews were conducted with the respondent's parent present. Therefore, individual interviews with parents became less of a focus later on.

<sup>28</sup> The Census of 2005 shows that 48.1 percent of all Afghans reside in five districts in Pakistan: Peshawar (20.1%); Quetta (11.1%); Nowshera (7.6%); Pishin (5.1%) and Karachi (4.3%). Similarly, the Registration 2007 also shows that 56.3 percent of all registered Afghans reside in five districts in Pakistan including the



sites of AREU's transnational migration study conducted in 2004-2005, in partnership with a Pakistani research institution.<sup>29</sup> Urban areas within these sites were the ones mostly visited, although a few rural (camp) locations were included in the fieldwork in Peshawar. Each city is described in more detail in Appendix 2.

Fieldwork started in Peshawar in April and moved on to Quetta in mid-May. Work in Quetta was unfortunately suspended after two weeks due to local political tensions and legal administrative problems. Fieldwork in Karachi was carried out from early July to August. The team later returned to Peshawar and spent two more weeks there to compensate for the shorter time spent in Quetta.

## 2.1 Selecting the community

Fieldwork in each location was facilitated by host organisations that have been working with Afghans in Pakistan for extensive periods and have accumulated much experience and local understanding.<sup>30</sup> In each city, AREU's research team was provided office space, logistical support, and access to communities and security advice in conducting fieldwork. Given that AREU does not have any field office in Pakistan, the advice and support from the host organisations were invaluable.

When the team started fieldwork in Peshawar, the first task was to list major Afghan-dominated neighbourhoods in consultation with the host organisation. Information from UNHCR, government offices, NGOs and local Afghan communities was also taken into consideration. These neighbourhoods were then ranked according to economic status, along with geographical and community characteristics. The team then visited these areas to triangulate the collected information from physical observation and informal discussion within the communities.

Initially the research team had also wanted to select a variety of sites: urban, peri-urban, and rural. However, as fieldwork continued, the strategy was modified according to the situation. For example, Peshawar fieldwork revealed that the experiences of Afghans are influenced by whether they live in a homogeneous Afghan community or in an area that provides more exposure to Pakistanis. Thus, site selection changed to primarily consider the heterogeneity of the neighbourhoods. In addition, due to limited logistics and the security situation, only two camps in the Peshawar vicinity were selected.

In summary, in Peshawar six urban communities and two rural areas were selected; in Quetta three urban areas were chosen; and in Karachi one major section of the city in which Afghans reside was the focus of the study.

## 2.2 Seeking respondents in the field

The main criterion for selecting second-generation Afghan respondents, both male and female, was that they were between 15 and 30 years old, and had spent more than half of their lives in Pakistan. In addition, these three criteria were crucial for respondent selection:

- Single or married;

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selected research sites in this study: Peshawar (27.1%), Quetta (10.9%), Nowshera (9.2%), Haripur (4.8%), and Karachi (4.2%).

<sup>29</sup> Collective for Social Science Research, 2005, *Afghans in Karachi: Migration, Settlement and Social Networks*; *Afghans in Peshawar*, 2006; *Afghans in Quetta*, 2006, Kabul: AREU.

<sup>30</sup> Host organisations for this study were: International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Peshawar; Save the Children USA in Quetta; and FOCUS Humanitarian Assistance in Karachi.

- Economic status of the household; and
- Educational level of the respondent.

With these multiple considerations throughout the fieldwork, identifying “the ideal respondent” was always challenging. First, keeping a good balance between single and married respondents was important, based on the assumption that singles in their teenage years and those in their late twenties with children could have very different ideas about the future and whether/when to return to Afghanistan. Economic status<sup>31</sup> and educational level were also essential because opportunities and experiences within Pakistan were expected to vary by these characteristics, potentially affecting the decision to return.<sup>32</sup>

Initially the male team spent time in the community, talking to elders, shopkeepers, property dealers, restaurant workers, and others. They asked if anyone knew any Afghans living in Pakistan for a long time. The female team initially approached any females or children on the street, or sometimes chose a clinic or a school as an entry point. If there was no suitable subject on the street, the female team sometimes knocked on the doors of homes they had observed. Introductions from NGOs, government organisations, and community leaders were also very helpful.

One of the basic problems faced in the field was the identification of Afghans. The team could ascertain who was Afghan in Peshawar, but it was more difficult to do so in both Quetta and Karachi. In many parts of Karachi, Afghans looked very similar to Pakistanis in their physical appearance and manner of dressing. Fear and suspicion toward the research team, linked to the political context, also served as a major obstacle. The respondents’ reluctance to talk was related to their ambiguous refugee status; they were reluctant to talk with the team for fear of being deported, caught by police, or sent to jail. This was especially the case among the low income groups, as well as wealthy people. For some successful businessmen, revealing their status as Afghans was sensitive. At the same time, people living in irregular settlements (*katchi abadis*) sometimes hid their identities as Afghans from the researchers and claimed to be Pakistanis. Following is how a female interviewer describes the situation in Quetta in her field notes:

*When we entered the muddy pathway, we knocked on some doors and asked if they were Afghans. They first replied that they were Afghans. But when we introduced ourselves and the study, they changed and said that they were Pakistanis. After a while, a man with white turban and a long beard yelled at us very angrily and said, “There is no Afghan around here. All the people are Pakistanis, and we have ID cards. No need for people like you to be here. Now get out of this area!” When the man left, we started searching again, knocking on doors. We encountered one real Pakistani house, and they said that they were the only Pakistanis in the area. We asked them the reason why people do not want to identify themselves as Afghans. They said, “Last year two girls like you tried to get information from this area. After talking with the Afghans, they said that they should leave Pakistan because the situation in Afghanistan is better now. So these people are now afraid that you may kick them out of here.” Finally when we knocked on a door, a girl came and said that she was an Afghan, while her sister-in-law was saying that they were Pakistanis born in that area. After a long discussion, the girl finally invited us into the room (HH-Matrix, QF-05).*

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<sup>31</sup> The economic status of the respondents was arrived at through an examination of their economic activities along with those of their household members. In addition, in cases where the interviews were conducted in the homes, observation of household assets was undertaken. Respondents’ dress and behaviour also furnished information.

<sup>32</sup> Ethnicity and relationship with host community were also criteria for selecting the respondent. However, criteria were always compared with the set of prioritised elements.

The male team encountered the same challenge when they tried to contact a garbage collector<sup>33</sup> in Karachi. They went to the prescribed garbage disposal site before sunrise, based on a casual appointment set up previously, and the Afghan youths met the researchers with hostility. Later, the male interviewer of the team gave up the process of formal interviews and instead engaged people in informal conversation, especially in cases where the team had no particular introduction and the target respondents were suspicious toward the research. Informal discussions often turned out to be more effective in obtaining the feelings and insights of Afghans, as the following field notes of one male interviewer in Karachi illustrate:

*I was trying to locate Afghan beggars, but due to rain and mud, none of them were to be found. When I stopped by a nearby Afghan hotel, the restaurant owner welcomed me, and asked me what he could serve me. I asked him for a cup of tea. "There is no Pakistani style tea available here," he said. "Doesn't matter — we are Afghans, we like our own style," I said. I told him that I came from Kabul 20 day ago, and then I told some stories about Kabul. The owner said, "I really do like to hear about Kabul. Whenever new customers like you arrive from Kabul, I smell Afghanistan's dust."*

In summary, developing rapport and creating trust required considerable time. In spite of the teams' efforts, some communities and respondents remained suspicious of the purpose of the research and feared possible government involvement. Thus, as time went on, the teams increasingly employed snowball sampling techniques in which additional individuals were located through social networks. This included exploring possible respondents through introduction by local residents, elders, organisations, Afghan schools, Afghan shops, etc. The team paid frequent visits to the communities just introducing themselves and gaining trust, prior to the formal interviews.

### 2.3 Research tools

A series of semi-structured interview guides was prepared for the interviewers by AREU staff. Each guide contained highly specific probing questions, and was slightly modified according to gender and marital status of the respondents.

In addition to key informant interviews, a total of six male and six female focus group discussions was conducted during the fieldwork. Access to participants was often facilitated by Afghan schools and organisations, while sometimes a key informant kindly organised the discussion by assembling peers.<sup>34</sup> During the interviews and group discussions, it was important to find a suitable place free from interference by others, noise, and heat in summer (e.g. in homes, classrooms, tea shops, etc.). Interviews were most often conducted in Pashto or Dari and, in some cases, a mixture of Urdu and English. The high quality and diversity of the Afghan interviewers' language skills was of great importance for the success of this study.

Along with interviewing, brief but intensive participant-observation was also conducted in both communities and households.

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<sup>33</sup> A member of a group representing Afghans with low socio-economic status.

<sup>34</sup> Afghan organisations include Afghan Women's Network (AWN) in Peshawar; an Afghan student association in Quetta (where unfortunately the team could not conduct a discussion due to sudden suspension of the fieldwork); and an Afghan English course in Karachi. In addition, a male student at a private Pakistani university in Peshawar and a shopkeeper in Karachi kindly asked their friends to gather for discussion.

During the in-depth interviews, often contradictory statements were made by individual respondents. These statements, which especially pertain to return to Afghanistan, illustrate the struggles of both males and females. Due to time constraints, there was a limit to how much the teams could explore these contradictions and the respondents' internal dilemmas in depth. These contradictions, at times, highlighted the complexity of youth identity.

The collected data are the reflection of particular aspects of these respondents' lives, specifically at the time of interview. In addition to the fluid nature of youth identity in general, the surrounding political environment for these second-generation Afghans is always changing. Due to recent incidents in Pakistan, such as worsening security in Afghanistan and the commencement of Afghan registration in Pakistan, their ideas about return are in constant flux and under the influence of regional dynamics.

### 3. Characteristics of the Sample

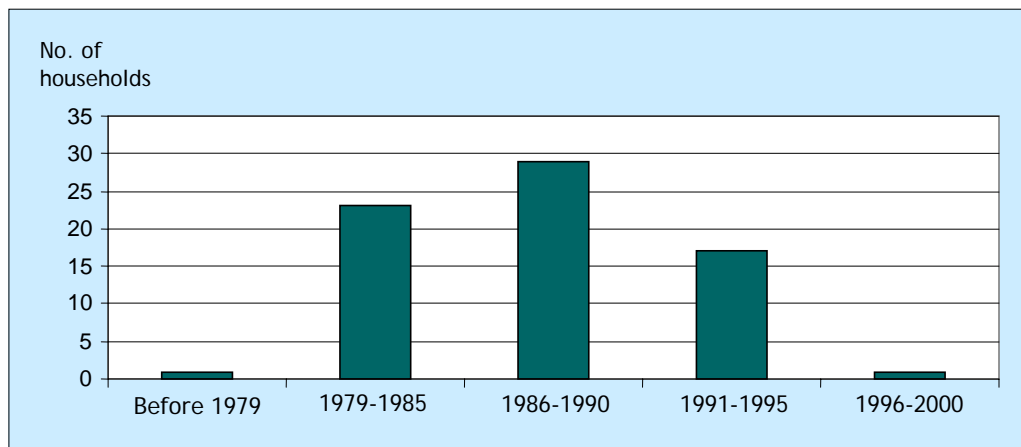
This section is an overview of the basic household and individual level characteristics of the 71 second-generation Afghans in the sample from Peshawar, Quetta, and Karachi. Since this study is qualitative in nature, it seeks to understand the background, the present environment, and the future plans of the selected respondents, without representing the experiences of all Afghans in Pakistan. Given that the findings are based on a purposively selected sample, this section will also compare the characteristics of the sample with data from the 2007 Registration of Afghans in Pakistan.

#### 3.1 Household level

##### Period of first arrival in Pakistan

Figure 1 presents combined information on the year of arrival of all respondents' households. It shows that they came to Pakistan in large numbers between 1980 and 1995. Breaking the data down by site, no particular year of migration stands out for either the Peshawar or Quetta households; respondents are evenly distributed across arrival dates from the period of the Soviet invasion in 1979 to the early 1990s. However, in the case of Karachi, more households arrived in Pakistan after 1986. According to the 2007 Registration of Afghans, 73 percent of the Afghan population in the country arrived between 1979 and 1985. Among this study's sample, however, only 24 out of 71 households falls in this category, and the majority arrived at later dates. It should be noted that Afghans residing in remote camps were not included in the sample. In the case of Karachi, some seven households migrated to that city from other areas in Pakistan mainly to seek work opportunities. In addition, three households — two from Peshawar and one from Quetta — repatriated to Afghanistan once in the 1990s, but returned to Pakistan to escape insecurity and seek employment.

Figure 1. Period of first arrival in Pakistan



##### Province of origin in Afghanistan

More than half of the respondents originate from three provinces: Kabul (N=18), Nangarhar (N=14) and Kunduz (N=13), with the remainder coming from provinces throughout Afghanistan.<sup>35</sup> The respondents came from urban areas (N=37) and rural areas

<sup>35</sup> Some major provinces of origin in the 2007 Registration are: Nangarhar (21.0%), Kabul (11.2%), and Kunduz (9.7%).

(N=34). This is a general classification, however. The respondents from rural areas are those from provincial districts and/or those whose livelihoods depended on agriculture.

### Residence in refugee camps or non-camps

Due to constraints of time and security, the study focused on respondents residing in urban areas in Pakistan. Camp respondents comprise only about one-fifth of the sample (N=17), which includes residents of three officially recognised camps, a former camp and an unofficial camp.<sup>36</sup> The 2007 Registration shows that about 45 percent of Afghans in Pakistan are living in camps. Thus, the study sample is more representative of the urban Afghan population, excluding those residing in more distant rural areas.

### Ethnicity

As illustrated in Table 2, both the Afghan population included in the 2007 Registration and the study sample consist of nearly 90 percent Pashtuns and Tajiks. However, the share of Tajiks in the study sample is considerably higher, perhaps due to the preponderance of urban communities included in this research. Indeed, 2007 Registration shows that the majority of camp populations (93%) are Pashtuns, while the majority of Tajiks, Hazara and Uzbeks in Pakistan live in towns and cities. The teams tried to obtain a variety of ethnic groups in the sample, but ethnicity was not one of the major criteria for selection.

*Table 2. Comparison of ethnicity between the 2007 Registration and the study sample*

2007 Registration of Afghans in Pakistan		Study sample	
Pashtun	83.6%	Pashtun	57.8% (N=41)
Tajik	7.2%	Tajik	32.4% (N=23)
Hazara	2.5%	Hazara	5.6% (N=04)
Uzbek	2.3%	Uzbek	4.2% (N=03)
Turkmen	1.9%	Turkmen	0
Baluchi	1.0%	Baluchi	0
Others	1.5%	Others	0

### Household structure

The average household comprised of nine members, with a range of 1 to 30<sup>37</sup> in the studied sample; while the average was 5.5 in the 2007 Registration. Regarding household structure, there is not much difference by location. More than half of the respondents live in nuclear households, containing only parents and children (N=40).<sup>38</sup> Fewer live in generationally extended units, which usually contain three generations (N=15), or collaterally extended households of married siblings with children (N=13). Finally, only three respondents reside in mixed collaterally and generationally extended households.

<sup>36</sup> Officially recognized camps are those under the official supervision of UNHCR (Jalozai, Barakai, and Kababian camps in NWFP), while Nasir Bagh in Peshawar is a former camp. In Karachi, Camp-i-Jadeed is a self-sustaining settlement rather than a camp, although it is called a camp. Local people, both Pakistani and Afghan, also refer to it as the *mohajer camp* (refugee camp).

<sup>37</sup> The one-person household is composed of a single male in Karachi, who migrated there alone to pursue higher education, after he failed the Konkur examination in Kabul.

<sup>38</sup> Even decades ago, nuclear households comprised the majority in Afghanistan. Hunte, P., 1975, *Familial Structure and Fertility in Afghanistan*, Masters Thesis, Northern Illinois University.

Six households in Peshawar also include cases of polygynous marriage (a male with more than one wife).

### Socio-economic status

During fieldwork, the socio-economic status (SES) of the sample households was roughly categorized into three groups: High, Middle and Low. During data analysis, however, these categories were expanded to five levels, ranging from Poor to Rich (see Table 3). Refer to Appendix 3 for a more detailed explanation of the criteria used for the categorization of individual households. Given that there was only one interview conducted for each respondent, the data collected does not include extensive or longitudinal information about household livelihoods. Because this is a purposive sample, with SES as a major selection criterion, respondents are rather evenly distributed across categories, except for a few more included in the highest level.

Table 3. Socio-economic status of sample households (N=71)

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Poor	Below average	Average	Above average	Rich
N=14	N=15	N=09	N=12	N=21

### Relatives abroad

More than one fifth of the respondents have either close family members or more distant relatives living in Western countries (N=16). Some but not all of these households receive financial assistance from these individuals. There are also some regional labour migration cases, in which male household members are working abroad either in Arab countries and Iran (N=08) or in Afghanistan (N=07).

## 3.2 Individual level

### Age of the respondent

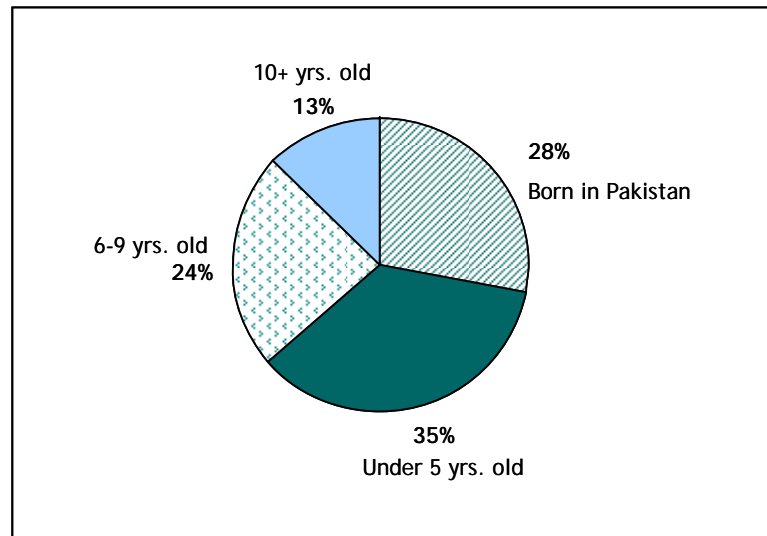
The core criteria used to characterize second-generation respondents are: that they fall within the age group of 15 to 30 years; and have spent more than half of their lives in Pakistan. The respondents' average age is 22 years (M: 24 years; F: 21 years). In terms of age upon arrival in Pakistan (see Figure 2), there is no particular difference by gender or location. The majority of the respondents were either born in Pakistan (28 percent) or migrated there at the age of under 5 years (35 percent). The mean age of arrival (excluding those born in Pakistan, N=20) was six years old. Among married respondents (N=34), the average age at which they got married was 19 years (M: 21 years, F: 17 years); which was similar to the data in 2007 Registration (M: 21 years, F: 19 years).

### Language

Urdu is the official language of Pakistan, while Pashto is widely spoken in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) as well as in Baluchistan. Some language differences by gender and location are apparent among the respondents. For example, all males understand Urdu except a few low-income cases in Peshawar. In comparison, many females do not speak Urdu (5 out of 7 in Quetta; 8 out of 20 in Peshawar; 2 out of 10 in Karachi). Lack of familiarity with Urdu among females appears to be related to the restricted mobility of women. For example, those females who do not understand Urdu in Karachi do not even interact with their Pakistani neighbours. In terms of Pashto, all males speak the language, except for two high-income cases in Karachi who speak Dari. Females in

Karachi only speak Pashto if it is their mother tongue; two females in Quetta and one in Peshawar speak Dari and not Pashto.<sup>39</sup>

*Figure 2. Age upon arrival in Pakistan*



## Education

As illustrated in Table 4, nearly one-third of the sample does not have any formal secular schooling (N=23; M:10, F:13), which does not include any religious education they may have obtained. There is not much significant difference by gender throughout the whole sample because the research team intentionally tried to keep a balance of educated and less educated males and females. Overall, the average educational attainment among those with some schooling is ninth grade. Thus, the educational attainment of the studied sample differs from that of the total Afghan population in Pakistan. According to the 2007 Registration 87 percent have either no education (70.3%) or only informal education (12.0% secular; 4.6 % religious).

As fieldwork progressed, one of the key concerns to emerge from discussions for both males and females was education. Thus, further education-related exploration was made during the last period of fieldwork in Peshawar. This included research on second-generation individuals who have studied only in Pakistani schools/universities; second-generation respondents who have shifted from Pakistani to Afghan schools or vice versa, and those third-generation Afghans (children of the respondents) who are going to Pakistani schools.

<sup>39</sup> Concerning English, a total of 14 males and seven females in our sample have taken formal English courses; however, their level of competence is unclear.



**Table 4. Educational attainment**

	Male	Female	TOTAL
No formal secular education	10	13	23
6 <sup>th</sup> grade or less	06	07	13
7-12 <sup>th</sup> grade	14	12	26
12 <sup>th</sup> grade and above	04	05	09
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>71</b>

**Occupation**

Figures 3 and 4 illustrate the current occupations of these youth and young adults, both male and female. In contrast to males engaged in various income generating activities (N=26; 76 percent), less than half of the female respondents work for income (N=16; 43 percent). Those who do not work for income include students who do not need to work, those females who do house work at home, and the jobless (N=02). Half of the females working outside their homes have more than 12<sup>th</sup> grade education. There is a high proportion of female teachers in the sample because schools were often entry points into the Afghan community, and the teams often found respondents with the target educational criteria among teachers.

**Figure 3. Current occupation of the male respondents (N=34)**

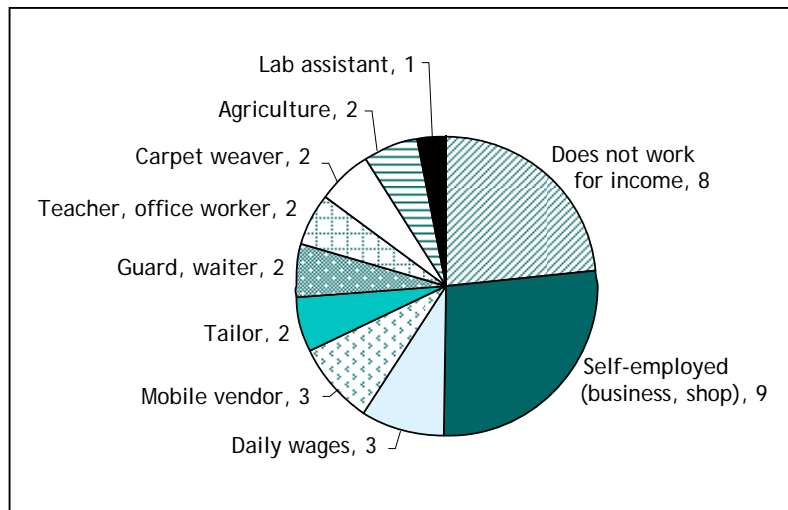
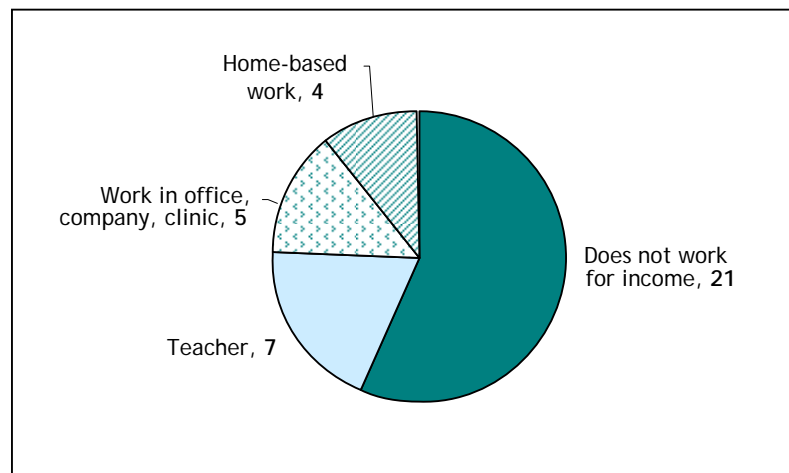


Figure 4. Current occupation of the female respondents (N=37)



### Visiting Afghanistan

More than one in every four individuals in the sample has never visited Afghanistan (N=20), either after arriving as a child or having been born in Pakistan. Among these, the majority does not remember, or has few memories of life in Afghanistan. Among those having visited Afghanistan (N=52; M=28, F=24), males tend to have visited several times, while more than half of the females have only visited once (N=14). The reasons for travelling to their homeland include marriages, funerals, checking on their property, exploring opportunities for higher education, fleeing from summer heat in Pakistan, and generally examining the options of return. Many have visited after the establishment of the new government in 2001 (N=40), followed by those who did so during the Taliban regime (N=18), and those who made a trip during the *mujahidin* period (N=04).<sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Some respondents provided multiple answers, having visited during different periods of time.

## 4. Key Findings

Presented in this section is an analysis of some of the major factors influencing the complex answer to the question of whether second-generation Afghans in the study will return to their homeland or not. As indicated by the Registration of Afghans in Pakistan conducted by the Government of Pakistan and UNHCR from October 2006 to February 2007, the majority (84.2 percent) of Afghans had no intention of returning to Afghanistan in the near future. However, this quantitative survey was not able to explore the issue of repatriation in necessary depth. In contrast, in this qualitative study it has been possible to discuss in detail with both males and females their orientations toward return, including not only physical and economic factors but also emotional ones, and the crucial interrelations between these.

Voluntary migration is often explained through “push” and “pull” factors in the places of origin and destination. Push factors refer to negative — at times even life-threatening — conditions, which force people to leave their homes. Pull factors, on the other hand, represent the resources and opportunities that draw people to a location. When potential migrants make their decision, they weigh the advantages against the obstacles, examining which place offers better security, livelihoods, access to affordable health and educational facilities, among others.<sup>41</sup>

Turton and Marsden<sup>42</sup> support this view in relation to Afghan refugees, noting that their decision making about return is more based on “a rational calculation of costs and benefits” rather than emotional attachments to homeland or negative social experiences in their country of asylum.

As Monsutti<sup>43</sup> has found, in the context of Afghan families choosing to remain in Iran or Pakistan, the pull factors of better work opportunities and facilities appear to be stronger than the push factors. Despite the host governments’ inclination to pressure Afghans to repatriate by tightening regulations, closing refugee camps, reducing services and creating an increasingly less-hospitable environment, more than 2.15 million registered Afghans have stayed back in Pakistan as of 2007.

And, as noted by Stigter,<sup>44</sup> the decision to return to Afghanistan is more complicated than the initial decision to flee to Pakistan because many of the families, and particularly the younger members, have become accustomed to living in Pakistan. Practical environmental conditions such as availability of services, shelter and work, and social factors all affect attitudes toward return.

The decision to remain in Pakistan may be the outcome of rational judgment considering all the known options. However, this does not mean that attachment to Afghanistan and other emotional considerations have no role to play in this decision. Indeed, the findings of this study indicate that respondents are struggling with many disparate issues — both material and emotional — to make this complex decision. The outcome of these processes depends upon the balance of the various factors, which may change over time.

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<sup>41</sup> See Richmond, A. H., 1993, “Reactive Migration: Sociological Perspectives on Refugee Movements,” *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 6(1):8-24.

<sup>42</sup> Turton and Marsden, op. cit., 33.

<sup>43</sup> Monsutti, op. cit.

<sup>44</sup> Stigter, op. cit.

This study captures the complexity of such processes by examining in detail the return-related struggles of second-generation Afghans in Pakistan. Findings will provide guidance for policy makers and other practitioners as to how to facilitate the repatriation process from Pakistan to Afghanistan and how to best manage the Afghan population remaining in Pakistan and the continuous population movements across the border.

#### 4.1 To return or to remain: Behind the dilemma

Table 5 presents a broad categorization of the 71 respondents' attitudes toward return. It includes three main categories, although there is significant diversity within each group. The first group (N=11) includes those who are in the process of *taking action* to return to Afghanistan.<sup>45</sup> Some of these cases of return are not the outcomes of an individual respondent's desire, but rather that of their household and extended relatives. The second large category (N=50) includes those who are *not taking any action* to return to Afghanistan at present; they are not taking action for a wide range of reasons, making it difficult to generalize about them.

*Table 5. Respondents' positions on whether to return or to remain (N=71)*

Taking action to return to Afghanistan	Not taking action, staying in Pakistan (N=50)		Planning to go abroad
	Struggling with the decision	No intention to return	
11	44	6	10

The first sub-group (N=44) is made up of those who are struggling with the decision; some are strongly expressing aspirations to go back to Afghanistan, while others are more negative toward return at the moment, but have some hope for future repatriation. The common feature of this sub-group is that they are observing the situation in Afghanistan and waiting for a time when the balance of factors relevant to them individually will lead to a decision to go back. In the second sub-group of this category are six respondents who have no intention of returning to Afghanistan.<sup>46</sup> Finally, the fourth category (N=10) is made up of individuals whose current attention is neither toward Afghanistan nor Pakistan, but toward planning, with some possibility, to go abroad. Some of them still express the long-term dream of someday returning to Afghanistan, while others have no desire to do so (see Box 1).<sup>47</sup>

Table 6 represents an aggregation of the major positive and negative factors mentioned by the 71 respondents (both male and female) regarding their perceptions and experiences of Pakistan and Afghanistan with the order and the size of print indicating

<sup>45</sup> This includes individuals who are in the process of repatriating; those whose family members are currently visiting Afghanistan to organise arrangements for return; and a young girl engaged to her relative who lives in Gardez.

<sup>46</sup> Included here are four female respondents (none have visited Afghanistan, all have limited mobility and little education, and have received negative impressions of the country from relatives); one highly educated woman born in Pakistan who is well-integrated into society; and a woman who is married to a Pakistani with children of Pakistani nationality.

<sup>47</sup> This group mainly includes those having close relatives in Western countries; those wishing to raise their children in the West; those females going abroad for marriage; and some single males wishing to go to Saudi Arabia for Islamic study and work.

the relative importance of each factor (with the most prominent in order and size being the most significant to the respondents).<sup>48</sup> The Table shows the complex combination of different types of factors — economic, political, social, cultural and emotional — raised by the respondents. It is the balance or imbalance of these factors which underlie their opinions about return and hence their positions in Table 6. Many are experiencing internal conflict between the positive and negative factors of both countries, the balance of which changes with time, due to experiences of the individual and the shifting environment of Afghans in Pakistan. Indeed, even among those respondents who are *taking action* to return to Afghanistan, these contradictory factors persist.

For example, the somewhat contradictory statement of this 21-year-old girl, a 12<sup>th</sup> grade graduate in a camp near Peshawar, who is waiting to return to Afghanistan for the first time in two days, illustrates her internal conflict:

*I think I will feel more comfortable in my village than here, because we have a big house to live in there. Women are like prisoners here, living in a cage. We cannot forget that we are refugees and Pakistan is not our country. I have heard from my relatives and friends that in Afghanistan there is a shortage of facilities and people often ride on donkeys. In Pakistan, we have all the facilities like electricity. Girls here are educated, but I don't think it is the same situation there. (PF-15)*

The major difference between those who are *taking action* for return to Afghanistan and those who are not, is the balance of these factors; it is not that conflict and contradiction do not exist in those opting to return, but that overall, the positive features of return outweigh all others.

It is also important to realize that one long-standing push factor in Afghanistan, mentioned by the respondents as shown in Table 6, has been the presence of foreigners, beginning centuries ago, including the Soviet invasion in the late 1970s,<sup>49</sup> and continuing into the present with a variety of international forces and organisations. Although many respondents generally support the present Karzai government in Afghanistan, others — both males (N=16) and females (N=18) in all three research sites — express serious cross-cultural concerns about the direction they perceive their country is going (i.e. the “non-Islamic environment” which contradicts their national and religious identity), and these worries enter into their decisions (individual and household) about return. Some of their feelings about the presence of foreigners are described in Box 1.

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<sup>48</sup> It should be noted that some of these topics were asked about directly in the interview guides (e.g. questions concerning opinions of peers, and where the respondents want to raise their children) while others came out as free responses to more general questions.

<sup>49</sup> Edwards, D.B., 1986, “Marginality and Migration: Cultural Dimensions of the Afghan Refugee Problem,” *International Migration Review*, 20(2):313-325; Centlivres, P. and Centlivres-Demont, M., 1988, “The Afghan Refugee in Pakistan: An Ambiguous Identity,” *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 1(2):141-52; Dupree, op. cit.; Boesen, Inger W., 1990, “Honour in Exile: Continuity and Change Among Afghan Refugees,” in *The Cultural Basis of Afghan Nationalism*, Anderson, E.W. and Dupree, N.H. (eds), 160-174, London: Pinter Publishers.

Table 6. Respondents' perceptions of Push and Pull factors in Pakistan and Afghanistan

Pakistan PUSH	Afghanistan PULL
<p>Not a citizen of Pakistan, not our country</p> <p>Hot weather</p> <p>Not know homeland, have lost identity, not patriotic, weak national language</p> <p>Limited opportunity as Afghan (education, employment)</p> <p>Far away from kin</p> <p>Police harassment, Pakistanis do not like us</p> <p>Fee for education, poor remain uneducated, students drop out</p> <p>Social pressures as refugees; bad reputation of Afghans</p> <p>Money problems, high cost of rent, utility</p> <p>Fear of deportation, closure of camps</p>	<p><b>GOOD WEATHER, BEAUTY OF COUNTRY/NATURE</b></p> <p><b>DREAM TO RAISE CHILDREN IN OWN COUNTRY</b> (among relatives; will know culture, be healthier and stronger)</p> <p><b>Chance to own land and house</b></p> <p><b>Better peers</b> (know culture, are patriotic physically strong, pure language)</p> <p>Reconstruction going on (better government, war finished, more work opportunities, etc.)</p> <p>Hospitality, respect of others/elders</p> <p><b>Freedom</b> (more independence for women, right to education and employment)</p> <p><b>Better relatives (more educated, rich)</b></p> <p>Conservative (pure) Islam</p> <p>Want to serve to country, help others</p>
Pakistan PULL	Afghanistan PUSH
<p><b>EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY</b> (quality, English language, Islamic education, skill learning, access to information)</p> <p><b>FACILITIES</b> (electricity, gas, sanitation, roads, entertainment)</p> <p><b>Comfort, no harassment, now familiar</b></p> <p>Have work and place to live, can survive</p> <p>Pakistanis are kind, do not discriminate</p> <p>Better peers (better manners, more sophisticated, etc)</p> <p>No tensions, peaceful</p> <p>Islamic environment</p> <p>No ethnic discrimination</p> <p>Cheaper costs</p> <p>Rights of women, law, freedom</p>	<p><b>Lack of place to live</b></p> <p><b>Lack of facilities</b> (electricity, gas, sanitation, etc.)</p> <p><b>Lack of opportunity for education</b></p> <p><b>Lack of work</b></p> <p>Negative characteristics of peers (uneducated, rough, no respect, do not know Islam, aggressive)</p> <p>Insecurity (suicide attacks, kidnapping, fighting, robberies)</p> <p>Expensive</p> <p>Corruption, bribery</p> <p>Ethnic/religious discrimination</p> <p>Presence of foreign troops/foreigners, NGOs' greed for money)</p> <p>Non-Islamic (no prayer, sinful free women, do not know Islam, improper gender relations, alcohol/drugs)</p> <p>Social pressures, gender honour, restricted environment</p> <p>Enmity, family problems</p>

In general, the majority of the second-generation respondents are struggling, and their decisions have not yet been finalized. Existing studies as well as this one have demonstrated that concerns about lack of shelter, basic services, work, and security are major reasons why Afghans in Pakistan do not return to Afghanistan. However, if these were the only considerations, the decision not to return might be less conflict-ridden, and that is not what this study found, as illustrated through the contradictory factors in Table 6. Therefore, this study aims to look beyond material considerations to the complex influences of social networks, identity and belonging, and educational aspirations on perceptions of homeland and host community.

*Box 1. Push Factors in Afghanistan: The presence of foreigners and Western influence*

The basic negative paradigm of their homeland that these young adults of males (46 percent of N=16) and females (50 percent of N=18) relate pertains to both their national and religious identity, and involves these interrelated issues (in order of number of mentions):

- The presence of foreign troops/foreigners;
- Improper dress especially in Kabul (females and males);
- Lax adherence to Islamic tenets;
- Improper gender relations among youth;
- Use of alcohol and drugs by youth;
- Presence of foreign NGOs (improper gender relations/greed); and
- Lack of Islamic education.

Many youths are from households which left Afghanistan decades ago during the Soviet invasion, and a central characteristic of their existence as *mohajerin* (refugees) in Pakistan continues to be an ongoing conflict for “homeland and Islam” with what they perceive to be an invading, contaminating, non-believing Western other. For example, a 29-year-old married male with 12<sup>th</sup> grade education, who is running a PCO shop in a camp, in Peshawar, does not want to return because of the following reasons:

*The responsibility of Afghan youth is to form an Islamic government and to expel the foreigners... we became refugees (in 1980) because there were non-Muslims in our country, and at that time it was only the Russians. Now there are more than 20 foreign countries present there, so I will not go back. If an Islamic government comes to power, I'll return happily... but for the time being none of our family members are willing to go... The youth there don't pay attention to Islamic values — they're always after girls, and they drink alcoholic beverages. (PM-13)*

This 16-year-old girl with 3<sup>rd</sup> grade education, in Quetta wants to return herself; she does not like the fact that many Afghans in the neighbourhood pretend to be Pakistanis, and she is proud to be Afghan. However, concerning their return, her father has other ideas:

*My father says there is no Islamic culture in Afghanistan, and that the schools here in Pakistan are better. Both Pakistani and Afghan schools here have different Islamic subjects: Hadith (teachings of the Prophet Mohammad), Tafsir (explanation of the Quran), Tajwid (correct recitation of the Quran), Aqayed (a deep belief in Allah), and Fiqa (jurisprudence). The schools in Afghanistan have only two Islamic subjects: the Holy Quran and Tawhid (the oneness and unity of Allah). (QF-05)*

The rest of the section will examine these key factors behind the struggle facing second-generation Afghans in Pakistan. Thus, their emotional attachment and internal conflicts are examined through analysing their social networks, social context, and identity formation.<sup>50</sup> The issue of education, an important theme raised by the respondents, is also discussed to understand how lack of transparency in certification systems and questions of the future of their children add to their decision-making dilemma. In order to understand the role of young Afghans in household decisions about return, a detailed examination of their households' decision making processes and the respondents' degree of involvement is provided. In conclusion, the characteristics of a sub-sample of respondents and their households, who are presently *taking action* for return to Afghanistan, are reviewed.

## 4.2 Afghan social networks with Pakistanis

To understand the levels of social networks established by Afghans in exile, it is crucial to consider the context in which they live, which includes both their physical and social environments. In general, most of the respondents living in Peshawar, Quetta, and Karachi — both male and female — have some links with Pakistanis. For analytical purposes, their level of interaction may be classified into three categories: High, Middle and Low (see Table 7).<sup>51</sup>

Individuals in the High category (N=30) frequent areas with predominantly Pakistani populations. This also includes Afghans who have developed close friendships with Pakistanis. Those in the Middle category (N=23) have relations with Pakistanis, but these are not as intense as in the High category. Finally, those in the Low category (N=18) have limited interactions, both due to circumstances (i.e. not living or working in the same vicinity) and intentionally avoiding social contact. The remainder of this section describes the respondents at the two ends of this spectrum, since social relations of those in the Middle category are similar to those in the High category, but are less intense.

### 4.2.1 Respondents with high-intensity social networks with Pakistanis (N=30)

There are common features among those males and females who have social networks of high intensity with Pakistanis, with no gender difference in these patterns:

- Urdu-speaking<sup>52</sup>;
- Non-camp residents<sup>53</sup>;
- Tend to be educated and/or of high socio-economic status<sup>54</sup>; and
- Feel comfortable in Pakistan.

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<sup>50</sup> To understand the social context and social networks of various individuals, it is vital to comprehend how they weigh complex factors, and make the decision to return or not. These factors vary depending on the individual and his/her environment and experiences within it, affecting opinions about return. For example, Table 6 consists of contradictory statements representing a range of different young Afghans; one respondent felt that Kabul was non Islamic — use of alcohol, foreigners, less people offer prayers, etc. (Afghanistan PUSH), while another voiced that relatives in Kandahar follow pure Islam (Afghanistan PULL).

<sup>51</sup> Although a structured social network analysis was not conducted, following the detailed daily movements of the respondents and detailed discussions with them, revealed various patterns of intensity of social interaction with Pakistanis. After a thorough review of the data, the three categories in Table 7 were established.

<sup>52</sup> Except two females whose Pakistani friend or relative speaks Pashto.

<sup>53</sup> Except for one male who commutes from camp to city daily.

<sup>54</sup> Some 21 respondents here are above average in SES, and 20 have 9<sup>th</sup> grade education or above.



Life in Pakistan is physically comfortable for this group of people, who have better educational opportunities, relatively stable livelihoods, and reside in higher-income sections of the cities. For most of these Afghans, their general opinion of Pakistanis is positive.

Table 7. Social networks with Pakistanis

Level	Key indicators	Cases
High	Have a Pakistani friend <sup>55</sup> Have daily interactions with Pakistanis (e.g. having spent a considerable amount of time in a Pakistani school, college, or work place) Close family member married to a Pakistani	Total N=30 <sup>56</sup> M=15 F=15
Middle	Interaction with Pakistani neighbours Having business interactions General interaction at Pakistani course with students and teachers	Total N=23 M=11 F=12
Low	Limited social interaction Purposely avoids interaction	Total N=18 M=8 F=10

In spite of these positive aspects of their lives, respondents in this category still face struggles as Afghans in exile, and often feel that they do not “belong.” For example, a 27-year-old businessman in Peshawar, who had no education and who is in partnership with good Pakistani friends, reminisces about his childhood in Pakistan and his shock at realizing he was a refugee:

*When I was a child, I was thinking that I was from this community; it was just normal for me. One day, I had a small fight with a Pakistani boy and he told me, “You are mohajer! Get out of my country!” It was really shocking for me. I went to my mother and asked why that boy had said that to me. She explained that Pakistan is not our country, and there is fighting going on in our country... now we are living in Pakistan, which belongs to Pakistanis. From that time on, I realized that we had our own customs and culture, which were different from the people living here... (PM-06)<sup>57</sup>*

Today the term, *mohajer*, which has been used to refer to refugees who flee their homes to avoid religious oppression or persecution<sup>58</sup>, has a negative connotation throughout Pakistan. For the respondents – even those who have established good relations with Pakistanis – being referred to as a *mohajer* is derogatory, and is tantamount to being called a thief or a cheater. According to some male respondents, this inferior con-

<sup>55</sup> As one of our male respondents in Peshawar states, a *friend* is “someone with whom you can share secrets, happiness, and sadness.” In general, males tend to have several friends, with whom they go to parks, participate in sports, and sightsee. Females usually have one single friend they meet at school or in their homes.

<sup>56</sup> Out of N=30 having high-intensity social networks with Pakistanis, N=20 have Pakistani friend(s), N=09 have official/neutral relationship, and N=01 has a Pakistani husband. There is no gender difference in these patterns.

<sup>57</sup> This respondent expresses a longing to raise his children in his homeland; his elder brother is currently in Kabul making arrangements for housing and the establishment of business, in consultation with relatives.

<sup>58</sup> Centlivres, P. and Centlivres-Demond, M.; Edwards, op. cit.

notation has led to police harassment, with Afghans unjustly profiled by the authorities as the instigators of riots and incidents.

These feelings of social exclusion are in contrast with these second-generation respondents' stated levels of comfort in Pakistan, due to having grown up there and being familiar with the environment. This 17-year-old-girl, who has been studying in a Pakistani college in Peshawar, voices her internal conflict between being an Afghan and having social links with Pakistanis:

*We celebrate Afghan Now Roz, preparing seven fruits. But I don't celebrate Pakistani Independence Day, because I feel Afghan... (PF-16)*

However, she continues:

*I have never been to Afghanistan, and am not interested in learning anything about Afghanistan. My ideal husband is a man who has a good personality, and he must be a Pakistani. This is because I spent most of my time with Pakistani people, and I am used to their habits.*

Having a Pakistani friend does not necessarily mean that they have friendly feelings toward Pakistanis in general. Some respondents differentiate their Pakistani friends from others who regard Afghans as the enemy. Friendship with Pakistanis starts from school and with neighbours in many female cases, while half of the males found Pakistani friends through their work relationships.

Apart from those having close Pakistani friends, some individuals in this High category of social intensity also have frequent and daily official interactions with Pakistanis at colleges, universities, and offices. In spite of good relations, being in such an environment does not necessarily result in having Pakistani *friends*. "I do have Pakistani colleagues but I do not have Pakistani *friends*," says a 23-year-old single male with 12<sup>th</sup> grade education, who is an office worker in Quetta. Others, especially males, also differentiate between Afghan and Pakistani friends in that they usually visit the homes of Afghan friends, but only meet in public places with Pakistani friends.

#### **4.2.2 Respondents with low-intensity social networks with Pakistanis (N=18)**

Among females having low social encounters with Pakistanis (N=10), only four understand Urdu and only at a very basic level. In comparison, all males with low Pakistani social networks (N=08), except for one, are conversant in Urdu. Thus, for females language acts as a barrier to knowing Pakistanis. Certain factors make Urdu familiarity gender-specific: physical mobility, school attendance, access to information, and other general gender norms. However, place of residence (camp/non-camp) does not correlate with the degree of Urdu spoken among respondents for either males or females.

##### **Females**

For those females with low-intensity social networks with Pakistanis, many also have limited interaction with their Afghan neighbours. For example, a 16-year-old girl with no formal education, who was born in Now Abad,<sup>59</sup> Karachi, and has never visited Afghanistan, says:

*Elder women are allowed to go outside to meet their friends here, but it is not allowed for young girls. I have no extra time, but sometimes I do watch Afghan movies on television at night once a week. We (sisters) are not allowed to watch other channels on television because my father says, "If you watch Pakistani television, you will become like Pakistani girls." (KF-01)*

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<sup>59</sup> In this heavily Afghan-concentrated area, many households come from the same village in Afghanistan; there are also some Pakistani houses in the neighbourhood.

Her mother, who was present during the interview, adds her thoughts concerning female mobility vis-a-vis family honour in the community:

*Girls are not allowed to go outside or to meet friends. They cannot do anything here without permission from their elders. If we let girls go out, others (i.e. Afghan neighbors and relatives) would think badly about our family. They would say, "Dokhotar-i-chashm sefid."<sup>60</sup>*

Isolation and desire to preserve their Afghan identity is a common trait among the female respondents (both single and married) with low-intensity social networks with Pakistanis. Most of them state that they do not have any close friends — either Afghan or Pakistani. Regardless of being in an urban area, these women live in Afghan enclaves, where social expectations from families, relatives, and neighbours influence their behaviour and perceptions.<sup>61</sup>

### Males

In contrast to the limited choices and social networks of their female counterparts, second-generation male Afghans tend to have more individual options when it comes to establishing relationships with Pakistanis. They acquire Urdu skills through working in the public sphere and their wider exposure and interaction with Pakistanis, including in formal schooling.<sup>62</sup> A 29-year-old Afghan male, without education, works in his electric repair shop in Quetta and serves mostly Pakistani customers. But while his work and social exposure have allowed him to blend in and interact with many non-Afghans on a daily basis, his experiences have resulted in a strong hatred for Pakistanis:

*I have 25 Afghan Pashtun friends, and we used to go out on Thursday nights before I got married three years ago. Now I'm busy with my shop and have family responsibilities. But, when I do have free time, I visit my friends or they come to my shop. I don't have any Pakistani friends because I dislike them. Pakistanis make friendships for a purpose, either they are after your money or your female members. I have heard a lot of stories about relations between Afghan girls and Pakistani boys. The boy at first shows that he is in love with the girl and promises marriage, but after sometime he forgets about her.<sup>63</sup> (QM-02)*

The Afghan males with low-intensity social networks were not only suspicious of Pakistanis but of others as well. Some of them do not allow themselves to trust anybody, including fellow Afghans, due to negative personal experiences (i.e. robbery) and the insecurity of their living environment.

The opportunity cost for socializing is another obstacle for men, particularly for those in the lowest income households. For example, this 26-year-old married man without education, who depends on daily wage labour in Quetta has no close contacts with neighbours or relatives:

*I do not have free time except on Fridays, when I am at home, where I just sleep, play with my two-year-old-son, or listen to radio. I do not have the financial ability to go for*

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<sup>60</sup> This means that the girl is careless and does not think of the family reputation.

<sup>61</sup> Their ideas toward return are thus formed in this limited context. For example, the girl quoted in the above narrative has only negative images of Afghanistan largely created by stories from family members (e.g. lack of drinking water, poverty, insecurity). She is not interested in going back.

<sup>62</sup> Among those having low-intensity social networks with Pakistanis (8 males and 10 females), more females (N=07) have not gone to school than males (N=03).

<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, this respondent *wishes to stay in Pakistan* because of his children. He criticises the non-Islamic situation and low quality of education in Afghanistan, although he also misses his relatives there.

*picnics or sightseeing. I have never made any friendship with Pakistanis or Afghans. I am always busy with work. Friendship needs some money and time*<sup>64</sup> (QM-05)

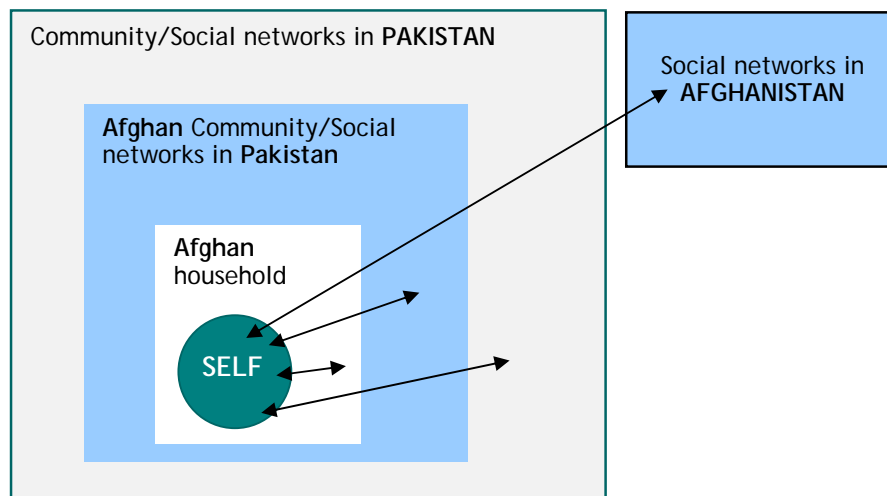
### 4.3 Being Afghan: Identity and context

The process of identity formation of second-generation Afghan youth and young adults in Pakistan is complex and in constant flux (see Figure 5). In this section the core identity of self as Afghan for both males and females is presented first. Secondly, the influences of Afghan society in Pakistan upon the individual are presented, along with some inherent contradictions voiced by the respondents. Finally, the second-generation Afghan individual in Pakistani society is analysed.

#### 4.3.1. Self as Afghan

In respondents' discussions of different aspects of their lives as second-generation individuals living in Pakistan, a number of key characteristics of "what it means to be Afghan" emerge. Presented here is a generalized model of these young adults' self-images — as related by both males and females. Their individual models, which are often inconsistent and ambiguous, are constructed through an ongoing dialectic between external (other-ascribed) and internal (self-attributed) forces.<sup>65</sup> In the contexts of Peshawar, Quetta, and Karachi, they are acutely conscious of the fact that they are readily perceived as *Afghan*<sup>66</sup> by the local Pakistani populace. Correspondingly, the respondents clearly perceive themselves, their families and, in many cases, their communities in Pakistan to be Afghan, regardless of place of birth.<sup>67</sup>

*Figure 5. Process of identity formation*



<sup>64</sup> This respondent voices concerns about raising children in Pakistan, where non-Islamic information is easily available through media; he is also afraid that his children will not respect elders. *Thus he wants to go back to Afghanistan.* Although he has inherited land in his village near Kandahar, he can not farm the land due to ongoing fighting in the area.

<sup>65</sup> Vertovec, op. cit.; Brubaker, R. and Cooper, F., 2000, "Beyond 'Identity,'" *Theory and Sociology*, vol. 29(1):1-47.

<sup>66</sup> The term *Afghan* as utilized by our respondents refers to their nationality — to either being born in Afghanistan or being members of households from Afghanistan.

<sup>67</sup> Personal and collective identities of these Afghans are closely intertwined with one another, and are transnational in nature. They live "in social worlds that are stretched between, or dually located in, physical places and communities in two or more nation-states" (Vertovec 2001:578).

In spite of many tensions resulting from their present status and their indefinite future, respondents generally appear to possess a relatively stable sense of *self as Afghan*, which is largely due to their strong institutions of household, extended family, and community. In discussions, both males and females stereotypically characterize what it means to them to be an Afghan man or woman, most frequently using the following descriptions:

#### For Males

- Brave<sup>68</sup>
- Patriotic (to love, serve and defend their country)
- Honest
- Hard-working
- Kind/sympathetic

#### For Females

- Respectful of elders
- Wear Afghan clothes
- Decent/modest
- Educated
- Know Islam

Although internal *self* values may sometimes be contradictory to those appearing in the above lists (as discussed in the following pages), most respondents consider these characteristics to be the core of *being Afghan* — the composite ideal toward which they strive, in spite of facing numerous challenges and deterrents over the years of growing up in Pakistan.

In her discussion of cultural heritage and national identity in Afghanistan, Dupree notes that Afghans in Pakistan “cling tenaciously to their national identity, upholding traditional values and customs that distinguish them from their neighbors” (2002:977). Indeed, these second-generation individuals appear to be carrying on this process. Centlivres and Centlivres have also called attention to the generally positive collective image Afghans in Pakistan possess, which may even express itself as “the basic superiority of being Afghan... even in the absence, or at a distance, from the territory of a nation state” (2000:427).

#### 4.3.2 Self in the context of Afghan societal norms in Pakistan

In spite of the fact that respondents identify with *being Afghan* in Pakistan, there are some contexts in which internal self-values contradict Afghan norms (i.e. those of family, community and the wider Afghan society). This phenomenon was shared by respondents and also came up in discussions in the research sites — even in metropolitan Karachi — and is most common in areas with high densities of Afghans. Included in Table 8 are three examples provided by different individuals, showing how their own opinions are opposed to the social expectations of other Afghans.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> The term *baghairat* was commonly used by males; this refers to bravery and the ability to defend one’s country, land, property, women, etc.

<sup>69</sup> This is a sensitive issue; others may experience such conflicts but may not have felt comfortable enough to share them with the research teams.

**Box 2. Learning about Afghanistan: The reproduction of Identity**

Both male and female second-generation Afghans relate that they first learned about their homeland years ago as young children from their family—primarily from their parents but also from other extended family members and elders. For many, these nostalgic refugee narratives provided them with an idealized picture of Afghanistan as they were growing up in Pakistan and helped them to form their Afghan identity. The household of this 19-year-old girl with 5<sup>th</sup> grade education, who was born and raised in Peshawar, had left Logar shortly after the Soviet invasion:

*My grandfather, parents, and uncles used to talk about Afghanistan and, when my grandfather came back from there he explained to us that there was snow there in winter, and in summer the trees were green and the weather was warm. There was a beautiful garden, fruit trees, cows, fresh milk, and people were making yogurt. (PF-01)*

Stories told by family members about the country's rich history and the bravery of its leaders such as Ahmad Shah Baba (1747-1772) especially influenced males, such as this 29-year-old married electrical good shopkeeper without education in Quetta, who now longs to return to Afghanistan:

*My father told me many victory stories about Afghanistan, and these formed my concept of the country. ...Physically I'm here in Quetta, but my soul is flying in Afghanistan. (QM-02)*

And, in some cases such as the following selection from a discussion with a 19-year-old male youth, a college student, in Karachi, information transmitted through these narratives has influenced their long-term plans of whether to return or not.

*When I heard stories (about the wars in Afghanistan), I got upset about all of the families whose sons were martyred or disabled, and this made me not want to go back to Afghanistan. But then when I would listen to stories about the hospitality of Afghans and their friendliness, I became convinced to go back someday. (KM-05)*

Those who have attended Afghan schools in Pakistan have also gleaned information about Afghanistan's history, geography, language, and literature. Another source for information exchange is discussion at the local mosque, along with news and gossip transmitted through cross-border social networks. Modern technology in the form of television, radio, and computers also help, as noted by this 27-year-old married male restaurant worker in Quetta, who recently attended an English course after dropping out of school at 8th grade:

*Since I learned computer and internet skills, I often visit different Afghan websites. I learned most of the ancient stories and history from the internet. (QM-07)*

**Table 8. Some reflections illustrating how the respondents' ideas about being Afghan often clash with the social expectations of other Afghans in Pakistan**

Respondent	Individual Opinion	Afghan Societal Norm
Case 1: 18-year-old single female in Karachi	"I want to be free like a Kabuli girl — she wears a small scarf and jeans."	Young Afghan females must cover their faces in our local Afghan communities.
Case 2: 17-year-old single female in Quetta	"I wouldn't have had to drop out of school if I lived in Afghanistan."	Afghan girls after puberty should not go to school.
Case 3: 20-year-old married male in Karachi	"Pakistanis can take their wives and children to the park on Eid days, but I can't because I'm Afghan and I have to follow what other Afghans do."	An Afghan male should not take his wife to a public park.

As illustrated by the three cases above, external Afghan pressures often occur in relation to gender mobility and behavior in order to preserve the honour of the household and its

members. As Case 1 in Table 8, an 18-year-old female teacher in an Afghan school in Karachi, elaborates:

*If women go outside alone in this neighborhood, people think that they may have some negative purpose (i.e. to meet with males; to have an affair). I have never been to Afghanistan, but I always wished to grow up in Kabul, because girls have more life opportunities there. My uncle's family visited here a few years ago, and I learned that girls in Kabul wear short dresses with small chadars, while I have to wear a long dress and cover my face here. My cousin said that women in Afghanistan are independent; they can work and get education. Afghanistan is our homeland, so women can do anything freely there. Pakistani women are independent, too, but Afghan women in Pakistan are not independent because it is not our country.*<sup>70</sup> (KF-03)

In Pakistan the social pressures of a female living in an Afghan community often relate to their insecure status as *mohajer* (refugee), in which they may face harassment by Pakistani males in the public sphere. For example, in Case 2 in Table 8 this 17-year-old girl in Quetta, who studied until 10<sup>th</sup> grade but is now at home, was told by her mother:

*You are mohajer and staying in a foreign country. Why do you try to be educated — why do you go outside?*<sup>71</sup> (QF-01)

Afghan male respondents also note the vulnerability of the Afghan female in Pakistan in relation to their overriding concern with *honour*. A 22-year-old single male in a Peshawar camp, who studied until 7<sup>th</sup> grade and is currently jobless due to a health problem, relates the following with pride:

*When I was about 15 years old, fighting broke out in the bazaar between Afghans and Pakistanis because the Pakistanis were teasing Afghan girls. I also participated in the fighting — I couldn't control myself when I saw that they were teasing Afghan girls. We really beat those Pakistanis. All that day I was so proud that we Afghans are so brave.* (PM-07)

As discussed previously, identity is not fixed, and self-expectations may change through the influence of social norms, a process that occurs over time. A 17-year-old female respondent, who was born in Quetta and has never visited Afghanistan and has never been to school, shares the changes in her mobility after losing her father:

*My father was killed when I was 12 years old. Since then, my mother has not let me go outside. She said, "You don't have a father. If you go out, people will talk badly about our family. You are a girl." (I used to go to visit my relatives' houses but,) as time went on, I lost my interest in going outside. My uncle and my brother bring us anything we need from the bazaar.* (QF-03)

The above case illustrates the process of interest formation, which is influenced by gendered norms and structures. Comments on gendered mobility were mostly raised by female respondents. However, this quote from a 20-year-old male shopkeeper in Karachi, who has no education, captures the fact that male behaviour and ideas are also framed in relation to Afghan females (see Case 3, Table 8):

*On Eid days, we prepare nuts and cookies, visit our elders and friends. But Pakistanis celebrate in a different way. They just give a call, congratulate each other, and take female family members to parks and go for a picnic. We do not have any tradition of*

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<sup>70</sup> This female is interested in going to Afghanistan; however, her family members are negative about return, mainly because of the problems of housing and work opportunity in Afghanistan.

<sup>71</sup> The mother's attitude toward her daughter's schooling had changed after an Afghan classmate had eloped with a Pakistani male, defying her family's wishes. This female respondent wants to go back to Afghanistan because her close cousins and relatives are there, but her parents are negative due to bad memories of the past, along with lack of suitable working opportunity for her father.

*going for a picnic here because our elders never did anything like that. We also feel embarrassed to do so because our community people would say, "The son of so-and-so takes his family for a picnic."* (KM-02)

In short, Afghan social norms put pressure on individual behaviour, which sometimes contradicts with one's preferences and may even, over time, shape these preferences.

Lastly, in cases where Afghan values become a significant part of one's identity, they tend to be transferred to the third generation. This narrative of a 23-year-old man with 10<sup>th</sup> grade education in Quetta, who sells vegetables and is the father of an 18-month-old baby boy, alludes to this:

*I respect my father and mother. There is a special custom in our tribe that we should obey whatever our parents say. Our parents have raised us. They showed us the right way. I respect my elder brother as well, because he is older than me. If we do not respect our elders, our children will not respect us in the future.*<sup>72</sup> (QM-04)

Respect for parents, which is also an Islamic tenet, is extremely common among respondents. This 20-year-old woman without education in Peshawar also expresses her future expectations of her three-month-old baby-girl:

*An Afghan girl should always cover her hair, even at home. She has to wear a big chadar outside. She should not speak to unknown males, and she should accept her parent's selection of her husband. We should all follow our culture. If we don't, it will be destroyed and our children will not know it. Now I have my daughter, and I want her to follow our culture when she grows up.*<sup>73</sup> (PF-04)

Basic Afghan values are thus being transferred to the next generation — the reproduction of Afghan identity. Although they are living in Pakistan and many of them interact daily with Pakistanis, findings show that they are surrounded by Afghan values and have not been, and generally have not wanted to be, transformed into Pakistanis.

#### **4.3.3 Being Afghan in the context of Pakistan**

This section presents an analysis of the respondents' external environment in Pakistan, where contradictions often exist between the wider Pakistani society and the Afghan exile community. Indeed, individuals frequently exhibit shifts in behaviour depending on the context: where they are and whom they are with. Living in a foreign country, they sometimes face occasions when they try to assimilate and adjust themselves in order to "belong." Still, their values are more or less shaped by Afghan norms, and their behavior, especially in the Afghan domain, is defined by family, relatives, and community.<sup>74</sup> For example, this 23-year-old single male in Peshawar, who completed his 12<sup>th</sup> grade education and speaks four languages, shows his respect to parents through language (see Case 1, Table 9):

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<sup>72</sup> This respondent shows strong hatred toward Pakistanis, due to his personal experiences. However, he plans to raise his children in Pakistan, where they can learn in a peaceful situation and obtain more Islamic teaching. He wants to go back to Afghanistan when an "Islamic government" arrives, and work and house are available.

<sup>73</sup> She has never visited Afghanistan, and has only heard negative stories from her uncle's family who is not happy in Afghanistan (too expensive, lack of security). Her family has never discussed about returning to Afghanistan, and she feels Pakistan is her country because she always stays at home safely, and no one has harassed her.

<sup>74</sup> See Ahmed, 2005, for a discussion of an individual's core identity, which largely remains unchanged.



*I am always free and exercising at a Pakistani gym twice a day. My coach and the owner are Punjabis, so I speak Urdu at the gym. ... (but) My sister and I do not speak Urdu and English at home because we should follow our culture.*<sup>75</sup> (PM-11)

A sixth grade Tajik girl, 17 years of age, who is studying Urdu at a BEFARe<sup>76</sup> school in a camp in Peshawar, narrates a similar experience concerning the situation in her household:

*Only Afghan people are living in this area, so I do not have any Pakistani friends. In my free time, I read Pashto and Urdu magazines. My brother sometimes brings them from the bazaar, and my classmates also bring and we exchange and read together. I get a lot of information from Urdu magazines. I also learned spoken Urdu from TV. I like to improve my English, and so I watch a cartoon TV programme for children with my small brother. When we chat at home and sometimes use some English or Urdu words, like "Shut up!" my mother gets angry. She says, "You are Afghans, so you should speak your native language."* (PF-08)

Both cases illustrate the inter-generational difference in language familiarity and how language use changes depending on the space and who occupies it.<sup>77</sup>

Table 9 includes further examples of how Afghans change their behavior in different contexts in Pakistan. Striking variations exist between the conservative Afghan context and the comparatively more liberal Pakistani milieu. Language (Case 1) is not the only adjustment respondents make between the public and private spheres, but also behaviour (Cases 2, 3, 4).

In addition, both males and females respect the authority of parents and relatives in general. For instance in Case 2 in Table 9 a single male with 12<sup>th</sup> grade education in Quetta likes to listen to Indian pop music, but can only listen secretly at home or with his Afghan friends outside his home. His uncle is religiously conservative (*mota'asib*) and, along with not allowing a TV in the household, he forbids such music. Still, this second-generation youth enjoys watching Indian dancing himself, along with viewing American movies at an internet café with Afghan friends to improve his English ability.

Afghan females alter their mobility, sometimes depending upon if the context is specifically Afghan or Pakistani. In Case 3 (see Table 9) a young woman, who speaks fluent Urdu, is studying at 11<sup>th</sup> grade, and works as manager in a Pakistani company in Karachi, returns home from work by herself each evening. Nevertheless, she usually takes her mother or sister whenever going anywhere else outside, especially visiting relatives' homes. She thinks that her Afghan relatives would speak badly of her if she travels alone, although she does not worry about her Pakistani neighbours and colleagues.

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<sup>75</sup> The household of this individual speaks both Pashto and Dari at home.

<sup>76</sup> Basic Education for Afghan Refugees (BEFARe) is an independent Pakistani organisation whose main office is in Peshawar; it has worked in Afghan primary education since the early 1980s, initially as a bilateral development aid project between the Government of Pakistan and Germany. Urdu is one of the subjects taught in their schools.

<sup>77</sup> Not only the language itself but also the retention of the Afghan accent was one of the important issues recognized by respondents as part of *being Afghan*.

Table 9. Behavioural changes in different contexts in Pakistan

Respondent	The Afghan Context (Private Sphere)		The Pakistani Context (Public Sphere)	
	Place/People	Behaviour		Place/People
Case 1: 23 year old male in Peshawar	At home, parents	Speaks Pashto or Dari	Speaks Urdu or English	In gym/club, Pakistani friends
Case 2: 23 year old male in Quetta	At home, religious uncle	Not allowed to watch TV at home; listens to music secretly	Listens to Indian music	Friends' homes or Internet café, Afghan friends
Case 3: 26 year old female in Karachi	Relatives' houses	Always accompanied by family member (male or female)	Travels alone to and from work daily	Office, Pakistani colleagues
Case 4: 23 year old male in Quetta	At home, father	Never tells his father that he pretends to be a Pakistani	Pretends to be a Pakistani	Public sphere, Pakistani police

For some respondents, the social pressures within Afghanistan, where they have many relatives, are perceived to be even more restricting in the areas of female mobility and educational opportunities.<sup>78</sup> A 21-year-old male who is studying at a Pakistani private university in Islamabad and just came back to Peshawar to spend time with his family during holidays, talks about return to Afghanistan and his sisters:

*All of our family members do not want to go back to Afghanistan at the moment because of the lack of housing, high unemployment, and poor security. My father has employment here, and I can get an education here, both of which are not available in Afghanistan. If we return (to rural Nangarhar), our family situation would be changed. My sisters would stop schooling in Afghanistan. There is no tradition in our tribe for females to go to school or to work. None of our female relatives in Afghanistan attend school. But my father enrolled my three sisters (except the eldest one) in a school here in Peshawar. He's educated and decided to let them learn at least how to read and write. (PM-18)*

Around one-third of the male respondents reports having to pretend to be Pakistani in one context or another, mainly in order to avoid police harassment. Some of them (e.g. Case 4, Table 9) do not share the experience with their fathers for fear of their anger. In front of the police, others dare to declare that they are Afghan and pay bribes instead of disgracing their honourable Afghan name with a lie.

In contrast to males, the female experiences of direct harassment in public do not come from police but from general oral harassment by Pakistanis, such as being called *mohajer*

<sup>78</sup> This is in direct contrast to the Case 2 example in Table 8 (p. 28); educational opportunities for females in Afghanistan are context-specific — urban/rural, tribal/family norms, etc.

and *gelam jam*.<sup>79</sup> Only three females throughout the cities admitted to claiming to be Pakistani: one of them said her reason is for her children to be enrolled in a Pakistani school; another one wanted to avoid friction with Pakistani neighbours believed to have negative feelings toward Afghans; and the third one wanted to hide her identity and whereabouts from an abusive former spouse.

Hence, the space where and with whom the respondents interact affects their perceptions of how to appropriately behave to fit their self-image, Afghan norms, as well as the norms of the environment or society they are in. The Afghan norms come not only from kinship relations living in Pakistan, but also from relatives and tribes beyond the border. Furthermore, Afghan norms are pervasive to some extent, regardless of family norms (liberal/religious), individual education, and socio-economic status of the household, as they define how communities perceive that household and its members.

#### 4.4 Education

As shown in Table 6, many respondents — both males and females, educated and uneducated — raised concerns regarding education. It is one of the major factors influencing the decision to return. Not only their own education is a concern, they also expressed interest in the future environment for their children — where to live and educate them. This section first reviews the types of educational institutions available to the respondents in Pakistan, along with household preferences. Next, the discussion goes to the perceptions of respondents about where to get the best education, including religious education and options in the West. Lastly, higher education opportunities and decisions to return to Afghanistan are examined.<sup>80</sup>

##### **Types of educational institutions: Afghan and Pakistani**

Table 4 in Section 3 (Characteristics of the Sample) presents a summary of the respondents' education. This is a purposive sample where education was one selection criterion. Thus it contains a wide array of educational attainment for both males and females. Among the 71 individuals, 23 have never received any formal secular education; 48 have attended formal secular schooling, with 9 cases reaching 12th grade and above, including those currently attending school.<sup>81</sup> Table 10 contains specific information on the type of educational institutions attended by the sample. The majority has attended Afghan schools in Pakistan,<sup>82</sup> while others have gone to Pakistani private and government schools. Generally, the higher the household's economic level, the more educated the individuals in the sample tend to be.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> The term *gelam jam* refers to a thief or a greedy person. It originally started as an insult against a mujahidin group, which swept into the houses and took everything including even the *gelam* (flat-weave rugs) on the floors.

<sup>80</sup> Registration 2007 demonstrates that only just over 2 percent of Afghans in Pakistan have completed secondary or university education or vocational/technical training. However, it also demonstrates an increasing trend in educational attainment across generations depending on the opportunity available. (See footnote 7, page 1.)

<sup>81</sup> A total of 20 cases dropped out of school with less than 10<sup>th</sup> grade education.

<sup>82</sup> In this study, Afghan schools include CAR schools and BEFAre schools, where students learn Urdu as a subject, as well as other Afghan registered and non-registered schools, where students usually learn Pashto/Dari and English, but no Urdu. Fees of Afghan schools range from Rs.10 to Rs.50/month for NGO-assisted schools, and around Rs. 200/month for self-sustaining schools.

<sup>83</sup> Among the uneducated (N=23), more than half (N=16) are less than average-income households (Levels 1 and 2; see Appendix 3). Among the educated with over 10<sup>th</sup> grade education (N=28), more than half (N=18) are above average-income households (Levels 4 and 5).

*Table 10. Types of educational institutions respondents attended (N=48 individuals; multiple answers)*

	Male	Female	Total
Afghan school in Pakistan (all level)	17	18	35
Pakistani private school (all level)	7	8	15
Pakistani government school (all level)	2	2	4
Education in Afghanistan, prior to arrival in Pakistan	6	5	11

Two reasons have driven the decision to send children to Pakistani schools: either there is a perceived higher quality of Pakistani schools or a lack of Afghan schools in the neighbourhood. Afghan schools are primarily available in refugee camps and areas with a high concentration of Afghans.

Furthermore, sending children to Pakistani schools has been an important coping strategy for Afghan households in Pakistan, where the local language is often different from their mother tongue.<sup>84</sup> While adults may take time to acquire foreign languages, children learn easier and quicker, and school enrolment fosters language acquisition.

Compared to Pakistani government schools where the language of instruction is primarily Urdu (or Pashto), Pakistani private schools are often more attractive to Afghans because English is the language of instruction. The importance of English in relation to future job opportunities is commonly recognized by the respondents.<sup>85</sup>

There appears to be no fixed enrolment regulations for Afghans in the Pakistani schools the respondents attended. Some individuals were refused admission to Pakistani schools because they lacked Pakistani ID cards, while others faced no difficulties in admission, especially if they were enrolled in lower grades. Pakistani private schools charge fees, which generally range from Rs.300 to Rs.500 per month; most government schools are free except some which may charge minor annual fees. Thus, attendance in Pakistani private schools is usually limited to those households that can afford it.

In spite of the fact that a large proportion of the sample has attended Pakistani schools, there are concerns about either themselves or their children “becoming Pakistani.”<sup>86</sup> This 19-year-old youth in Quetta, who is studying in an Afghan school, mentions his concerns about his peers who are studying in Pakistani schools:

*Most of the Afghans here go to Pakistani schools, which has affected them a lot. They cannot speak their own languages, and do not know about Afghan traditions. During conversations, they use Urdu or English words while we who go to Afghan schools use the pure Pashto language. It makes me cry – why are they acting like Pakistanis? One day it was Afghan Independence Day, and I was watching the parade in Kabul on TV. My Afghan friend, who attends a Pakistani high school, was also with me. He became bored*

<sup>84</sup> For example, Dari as a mother tongue in Urdu/Pashtun communities, and Pashto as a mother tongue in Urdu communities. On the other hand, having a shared mother tongue with the host community (e.g. Pashto in Peshawar and Quetta) is also an advantage for Afghans in Pakistan in areas of education, employment, etc.

<sup>85</sup> Two males in our sample, who had dropped out of school to work, are attending private English courses.

<sup>86</sup> Wilder, A., 2006, Needs Assessment Exercise of Education Sector (Draft Report), Inception Phase of the Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas (RAHA) Initiative. Islamabad: CCAR-UNHCR.

*watching the ceremony and said, "What the hell are you watching? Change the channel and find the cricket matches!" (QM-FGD-01)*

In spite of any negative effects, there are also many perceived advantages to being educated in Pakistan — in either Afghan or Pakistani schools. However, the opportunity is not available to all respondents. Those whose household economy is not sufficient to afford the school fees and opportunity costs remain uneducated or must drop out of school, as do those girls who had to drop out in order to preserve family honour in exile. A 23-year-old girl, who studied in a Pakistani college in Karachi, compares education for Afghans in Pakistan and their homeland:

*In Afghanistan, there is no difference among poor and rich students because there is no school fee. In Pakistan, poor students are always worrying about the fees.<sup>87</sup> (KF-04)*

### *Box 3. Respondents' skills*

Half of the male respondents possess some specific skills, while the majority of females do. The major skills of males include carpet weaving (N=06) and tailoring (N=06), and a few mechanical/electrical repair, etc., which are mostly learned through apprenticeships, or an NGO project/school. Only a few special skills such as a jeweller have been transferred from one generation to another in a family business.

On the other hand, females have primarily learned their skills from family members, as well as from a few courses — private/NGO and school. Embroidery (N=20) and tailoring (N=14) are the major ones, along with some carpet weaving. All except one of the female respondents, who have no formal secular schooling, possess some specific skill.

However, these skills are not always utilized for income generating activities. For example, there is a female head of household in Peshawar who is washing clothes in a neighbouring Pakistani house for income. However, her second-generation daughter has learned carpet weaving at an Afghan school during her childhood, but does not work for income because she has no materials and tools. In addition, some respondents see the utilisation of their skills as purely for themselves and their families: tailoring of family clothing, and embroidery of *jehez* (dowry). In such families, male members often consider that it is shameful for women to earn money.

Yet, in general, skills are regarded as the means by which to obtain income for many of the respondents. Some males were not allowed to attend school by their fathers and were rather sent to acquire specific skills, because of the belief that education is worthless for exiled Afghans; educated or not, refugees cannot find good work. Encouraging skills learning and income generation for widows/separated woman by their male family members is also common.

The skills of English language competency and computers enable one to obtain a high income, and the desire for these timely skills is pervasive among second-generation Afghans. Twice the number of males (N=14) has attended English courses as compared to their female peers (N=07). Yet, some educated respondents also criticise the current situation in Afghanistan, where such skills are highly valued. This 29-year-old married woman in Peshawar *gave up the hope for return to Afghanistan*, because her husband could not find suitable NGO work there due to the high competition in these skills areas:

*NGOs have wrecked Afghanistan. All the people there want to work in an NGO because of the high salary. There is no one who wants to work for the government because of the low salary. The UN and NGOs don't pay attention to Afghan education. The youth have become crazy for dollars, and do not pay attention to education any more. (PF-11)*

<sup>87</sup> This Tajik female respondent could not continue further higher education in Pakistan, because she had no Pakistani ID card. Therefore, she planned to come back to Kabul to continue higher education. Because she could not write her mother tongue, Dari, she started learning Dari with the help of her mother and elder sister. However, due to her recent engagement, she is now planning to go to America in the near future.

### **Which offers the best education — Afghanistan, Pakistan, or the West?**

As mentioned above, for most of the respondents the educational opportunity available to them and their children is a major concern influencing their decision to return or not. The majority of the respondents expressed more positive comments about the quality of all types of schools — secular and religious, public and private — in Pakistan as compared to those in Afghanistan. One of the major perceived differences has to do with the type of facilities and resources available (e.g. building, furniture, learning materials, etc.). In addition the teaching methods in schools in Afghanistan are usually said to focus more on memorizing than those in Pakistan, where practical work complements theory.

Acquiring English at a younger age is regarded as another benefit available in Pakistan.<sup>88</sup> Some respondents also mention that the history textbooks in Pakistan are more interesting, covering recent history, while Afghanistan's textbooks are more focused on ancient history. In addition, teachers in Pakistan are perceived to be more reliable as compared to educators in Afghanistan, who are often described as not paying their students adequate attention and are prone to absenteeism.

The quality of religious education in Pakistan in both secular and Islamic schools is also believed to be of higher quality than that available presently in Afghanistan.

Looking further afield, the general perception of these second-generation Afghans is that schools in the West are far superior to those in both Pakistan and Afghanistan (see Box 4). Among those having links to Western countries, many wish to raise their children there because they believe that they will thus be able to obtain a better education. And, even among those who do not have any links abroad, interest is shown in sending their children overseas for university education. This belief is found especially among educated females, such as this 29-year-old teacher in Peshawar, who completed 12<sup>th</sup> grade here and is the mother of five children:

*It is my wish that my children will complete 12th grade in Afghanistan. Then, if it is possible, I want them to be educated in foreign countries for higher education. I've heard from my colleagues that the system of higher education is better abroad. If they complete their higher education, they should then come back to Afghanistan and work for the Afghan people.<sup>89</sup> (PF13)*

### **Higher education and its influence on decision to return**

Similar to young adults throughout the world, the second-generation Afghans in the sample face many dilemmas concerning their future. Central to many of these problems are considerations about their education and future employment. Especially for those teen-aged youth who want to pursue higher education, decisions concerning a university are crucial, and thus decisions are complicated by the fact that they are unsure as to where they will live in the future.

Qualifications approved in one country are not always recognized in another. When people move across borders, they take with them certain skills, but their official qualifications may become just pieces of paper with no validity. The more time and money these people invest in formal education, the more returns they expect. Therefore, work availability and recognition of degrees obtained are fundamental

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<sup>88</sup> In Afghanistan, teaching English starts from the seventh grade. (However, some Afghan schools in Pakistan teach English from an earlier grade.) In Pakistani private schools, the language of instruction is usually in English.

<sup>89</sup> However, she is in a dilemma about returning to Afghanistan. She is the only income earner in her household, and teachers' salaries are higher in Pakistan. Survival in Afghanistan is more difficult due to higher prices.

priorities among educated Afghans in Pakistan, and are important factors entering into their return decisions.

**Box 4. Looking abroad to Afghans in the West**

A total of 23 percent (N=16) of the sample have close relatives (primarily brothers and sisters) presently living in the West (Europe or America), the majority of whom periodically send valuable remittances back to their households. Frequent contact through email, telephone, and video cassette preserves these transnational connections, and plays an important role in maintaining their collective identities of *being Afghan*.

Some respondents (14 percent; N=10) are presently biding their time in Pakistan, anxiously waiting to go to the West as so many Afghans have previously done during the past few decades. For example, this wealthy 23-year-old male in the Peshawar suburb of Hayatabad is supported by remittances from his siblings in Germany and England, and wants to join them soon:

*Now I can't imagine living in Afghanistan... my brothers and sister have told me that they will find an Afghan girl who's a citizen of a European country for me to marry...and I want my children to be raised in Europe (where) their educational level is very high. (PM-11)*

Others also admire the educational standards of the West, but fear the loss of *being Afghan* that migration abroad may bring for themselves and their family. In these cases, the crucial identity markers of language and ritual are often mentioned. This mother of three, whose husband cannot find suitable employment in Kabul, waits with trepidation to join her sister and brother-in-law in Canada:

*If I do go to Canada, I'll never forget that I'm an Afghan. ...at night (in Canada) I'll teach my children Dari because I don't want them to forget their language. And I'll celebrate Eid days just like we do here. We should never forget the customs of our homeland, and one day we'll come back to Afghanistan. (PF-11)*

When considered in juxtaposition to Western ways of life, various features of individuals' identities as Muslims are reinforced. Indeed, in spite of their acknowledgement of numerous economic opportunities and better education for their children abroad, many second-generation Afghans (especially females) also express a definite ambivalence toward the changing lifestyles of their relatives in the West. Negative impressions pertain primarily to 1) raising children abroad, and 2) female garb, which are key features of their core Afghan identity closely entwined with Islam (i.e. respect for parents; female propriety). A 25-year-old single female teacher in Peshawar shares this critique:

*London is not a good place to raise children—they grow up as foreigners and have no respect for one's father and mother. When they get to be 18 years old, they leave home and their parents are all alone. That's no way to live. ... (in addition) even when an Afghan woman is abroad, she should keep her hair covered, especially during Ramazan and Moharram. ... In the future, if not in Pakistan or Afghanistan, I want to raise my children in an Islamic country. (PF-06)*

## Education in Pakistan

Students who complete 12<sup>th</sup> grade in Afghan schools in Pakistan have limited opportunities to continue further study in Pakistan. There is no registered Afghan university there, though in Peshawar there is one Afghan institute of higher education, Ariana University, which was not registered with either the Pakistani or Afghan government. Although there are some scholarship opportunities for Afghan students<sup>90</sup> the fees of Pakistani universities are prohibitive for many households.<sup>91</sup> In the study sample, those

<sup>90</sup> UNHCR, with the help of the German government, launched the DAFI Scholarship Programme, also known as the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative, in Pakistan in 1992. It provides scholarships for post-secondary education, and a total of 826 students have participated since 1992 (as of 2003). In 2006, 76 scholarships (M:37; F:39) were awarded out of 500 applicants. (Discussions with UNHCR Peshawar; 28/08/06).

<sup>91</sup> These fees may range from Rs.1,000 to Rs.5,000/month. In some private medical universities, annual fees are over US\$5,000/year.

who could afford to attend Pakistani higher education institutions are usually from high-income households, or are receiving external support.<sup>92</sup>

Apart from the costs, other obstacles to enrolment include lack of established regulations for Afghans to gain admission to higher educational institutions, and the difficulty obtaining admission without an ID card.

Another considerable barrier to university study in Pakistan is the need for those who studied in an Afghan school to obtain equivalency certificates from the Government of Pakistan (Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education). This provides proof that foreign students (i.e. those who have studied in a different education system) have sufficient educational ability to study in higher education institutions in Pakistan. However, the procedures for this examination are not always clear to the applicants in the sample. While Afghan students would be allowed to study in Pakistani universities without this certificate, no degree would be awarded at the time of graduation, and their investment in higher education would be in vain.

### Education in Afghanistan

Some respondents related that it is difficult to gain admission to universities in Afghanistan because of limited seats and high competition.<sup>93</sup> In addition, those returnee students who are not familiar with Dari and/or Pashto languages are usually required to enroll in lower grades than their equivalent in Afghanistan. For instance, a 23-year-old Tajik girl who went to an Afghan school in Peshawar, is interested in going back to Afghanistan because of her high expectations of finding work as a young English-speaking female. However, her two brothers who have been studying in the Pakistani educational system are opposed to returning to Afghanistan.<sup>94</sup>

*Only my brothers are not happy about going back. They say that they have been studying in Pakistani schools and now in a Pakistani university. If we go to Afghanistan, they will have to study from 12th grade in an Afghan school, which is difficult for them. There is no value in Afghanistan for education received in Pakistan. My brothers cannot read and write Dari--they did not go to any private Dari course (which is our mother tongue). Thus, because of my brothers, our family has not gone back so far. (PF-19)*

In addition, after paying visits to Afghanistan, some 12<sup>th</sup> grade graduates in the sample, who had studied in Afghan schools in Pakistan, have returned to Pakistan disappointed because of factors relating to education. Reasons for returning to Pakistan include: (i) problems obtaining certificates; (ii) low quality of education in Afghanistan due to poor facilities and lack of qualified instructors; (iii) perceived inappropriate learning environment at Kabul University (i.e. boys teasing girls); and (iv) scoring low in the Konkur exam.<sup>95</sup> In relation to certification a 21-year-old married student, who is now studying at a Pakistani university and who had previously studied in an Afghan high school in a camp in Peshawar, relates why he did not go to Kabul University as desired:

*After the fall of the Taliban I went to Kabul to get my certificate because when I finished school, the Afghan consulate sent a copy of my certificate to the Ministry of Education in Afghanistan. I went to get approval from the Ministry of Education (so I*

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<sup>92</sup> Those who have studied in Pakistani private schools/colleges/universities and have 10<sup>th</sup> grade and above education (N=12) are all from households with above average SES (Levels 4 and 5 in Appendix 3), except for three who have received support from organisations (religious groups and UNHCR DAFI scholarships).

<sup>93</sup> For example, in early 2007, 60,000 individuals in Afghanistan were demanding higher education, but the government system can only absorb 22,000. Education Sector Summary Notes presented at the CG Education Meeting, 20 January 2007, p.1.

<sup>94</sup> Because of the high fees involved in sending a student to Pakistani schools, her parents had sent only her brothers, while she was enrolled in a less-expensive Afghan school.

<sup>95</sup> Highly competitive placement test required for students pursuing university degrees.



*could take the Konkur exam), but they did not give it to me. I had to pay a bribe, which I could not afford. My school was being supported by a Pakistani political party and thus, the Ministry of Education said that they could not approve such a case because it relates to politics. (PM-16)*

Thus, the primary factors for educated youth in deciding whether to remain in Pakistan or not are: the opportunity for quality higher education; official recognition of degrees; and obtaining appropriate returns from investment in education (i.e. jobs).

**Box 5. Questions about teacher qualifications**

A-28-year-old married female works as a teacher in an Afghan camp school in Peshawar. Her husband is running a small pharmacy in the camp, which by itself does not provide sufficient household income. She does *not want to go back to Afghanistan*, because of worries that she may not be able to continue as a teacher after return *due to her lack of qualifications*:

*I dropped out of school in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade when my Afghan school started charging fees. It was free before, but a foreign organisation stopped supporting our school (around mid-1990s). I could not continue my education because of economic problems. I was at home for one year, but one day my friend (who was working as a teacher in an NGO supported school) told me that they were looking for another teacher. I took an examination and became a teacher here.*

#### 4.5 Decision making about return

The previously cited data from the *Census of Afghans in Pakistan 2005 and Registration of Afghans in Pakistan 2007*, reporting that the majority of respondents were not willing to return to Afghanistan does nothing to shed light on the specific processes involved and participants in these many decisions. In contrast to such survey data, this qualitative study examines the decisions of second-generation Afghans and their households, focusing on the role of the youth. Presented here is detailed information about the extent to which respondents are involved in household decision-making processes regarding return to Afghanistan.

##### **Level of involvement<sup>96</sup>: Key decision makers and those consulted**

As shown in Table 11, the youth included in the sample participate in varying degrees in their households' <sup>97</sup> important decision-making processes concerning return. Respondents can be categorized into two main groups: those who are involved in the decision (N=46), and those who are not (N=20). <sup>98</sup> Within the first group there are two categories: the key decision makers/power holders (N=22), and members whose opinions are sought (N=24). The first category has considerable influence over decision making, while those in the latter category only offer comments and options to other household members. Lastly, there are those who mention that they are not involved (N=20). They only receive information from other household members. In some cases, they are not even aware of discussions taking place in their own households.

Among the male respondents, the majority are involved in return decision making (N=28), and more than half (N=16) have classified themselves as final decision makers. Usually, the decision makers are heads of households or elder family members. The important

<sup>96</sup> Wilcox, D. "Framework for Participation," <http://www.partnerships.org.uk/guide/ideas.htm>, (accessed, 18 December 2006).

<sup>97</sup> Decisions about return most often occur within the household. However, these are usually influenced by the opinions of the larger kin group, especially where related households live in close proximity.

<sup>98</sup> Data insufficient in two cases, and in three cases no discussion concerning return has occurred to date (total sample=71).

responsibility of the eldest son is common throughout the samples. A-25-year-old married male in Karachi with only 1<sup>st</sup> grade education, who is the eldest son of the household living in a household of three generations, exemplifies this:

*My father discusses his ideas about going back to Afghanistan with my mother and me, as I am the eldest son. Then through the combination of all three of our ideas, my father makes the (household) decision. (KM-07)*

Some male respondents with no fathers in their households (through death or separation) note that their widowed elderly mothers are the major decision makers, especially among the younger single respondents. However, if older sons are present in the household, they tend to make the decision.

**Table 11. To return or to remain?**  
*Respondents' degree of involvement in household decision making*

Involved in household decision making  Total=46 M=28; F=18	Key decision makers, power holders  Total=22 M=16; F=06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make decision alone or together with other family members having power</li> <li>• Hold control</li> <li>• Has an influential position in household and/or among kin</li> </ul>
	Members whose opinions are sought  Total=24 M=12; F=12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asked to offer comments and options</li> </ul>
Not involved in household decision making  Total=20 M=04; F=16	Members excluded from decision making process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have no means by which to communicate with decision-makers</li> <li>• Some receive information from others</li> <li>• Some are provided with no information at all</li> </ul>

In contrast to the majority of the males, about half of the females acknowledge involvement in return decisions (N=18); these females tend to be educated and from households with better economic situations.<sup>99</sup>

Out of this group of females, a total of six women play a role as key decision makers/power holders in their households, but they make decisions jointly with other male members. Indeed, this is a major gender-based difference: males take decisions by themselves, while females enter into decisions with other male household members. These females are either highly educated, significantly contribute to the household income, and/or have families with liberal ideas.<sup>100</sup> For example, a single female who is a principal at an Afghan school in Peshawar, and the eldest child in the household (whose younger brother is still studying at a university), mentioned that her parents always discuss with her and accept her ideas about return because she is the eldest child. Another 29-year-old married teacher in Peshawar, who is the only breadwinner of a

<sup>99</sup> Among these 18 females, 15 belong to the SES Level 3 and above (Appendix 3), and 13 of these respondents have an education level of 10<sup>th</sup> grade or above, or are currently attending school.

<sup>100</sup> A liberal family is one which allows a single female to work among Pakistanis alone; a single female to have a male friend; and a single female to sometimes walk outside without covering her head.

three-generational household (her husband is disabled) and the mother of five children, describes her position in the household vis-à-vis their return decision:

*Both my husband and I always talk about it together. My mother in law says, "Everywhere you are happy, I will follow you." (PF-13)*

In many households, respondents noted that they are consulted about return by their family members (N=24). For example, married males, particularly those whose households are relatively small or nuclear units, consult their wives. However, not all wives appear interested in taking a key role in return decision making due to their perceived lack of information. A 30-year-old wealthy businessman with 7<sup>th</sup> grade education in Peshawar, who is head of a nuclear household remarks:

*I make the return decision in the house, but in consultation with my wife. But she does not have any specific ideas. She says, "I really do not know the situation because you are out in public with people. You know better than me." (PM-17)*

Respect for elders, parents and senior male members of the family often override the personal preferences of young and/or female members of the households, as illustrated in the comment of a 19-year old female with 5<sup>th</sup> grade education in Peshawar, who was preparing to return to Logar the day after the interview:

*First my grandfather talked with my father and uncles about our return. Then my father asked me how I felt. I replied that anything that makes my father comfortable, I will agree with. Every day my father grows older. If we go back, we have land and our own house. In our village he will not have to work from morning to night (as he does here). This move (to Afghanistan) is good for my family. I agree with my family. (PF-01)*

Some of the male respondents replied that their female household members were also involved in consultation,<sup>101</sup> but it is not clear to what extent their opinions are actually taken into consideration, as illustrated in this statement from a 27-year-old married Hazara head of household with 8<sup>th</sup> grade education in Quetta:

*Everyone, including females, participates in our decision, and their ideas are accepted if they're correct. Otherwise we just listen to them, and then act on our own intentions. (QM-07)*

### Internal struggles in the household

Seven respondents note that there is significant internal disagreement between members of their household.<sup>102</sup> In four cases, the first generation is interested in going back to Afghanistan, while the second-generation does not agree. In two cases parents are more negative about return. Such differences are due primarily to the type of memories of Afghanistan the first generation possesses — positive or negative. There is also one case of conflict between second-generation siblings.<sup>103</sup> Details are as follows.

Nostalgia about the homeland influences the first generation's desires to go back to Afghanistan, while their children do not necessarily have such emotional attachment to Afghanistan. As described above, heads of household usually have control over decision making, but in some cases they take into consideration other member's expectations more than their own. This is exemplified in the situation narrated by a 29-year-old married woman without education in Quetta, who has never visited Afghanistan after

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<sup>101</sup> It was sometimes a challenge for male interviewers, bound by cultural sensitivity, to explore female household members' participation in-depth.

<sup>102</sup> There is no pattern among these households in SES or educational achievement.

<sup>103</sup> See Page 38, Education in Afghanistan.

migrating to Pakistan at the age of seven. She explains how in her household, feelings about returning are mixed:

*I don't have enough information about Afghanistan, but according to my cousin, if we go back to Afghanistan my children's behaviour will not be good due to the non-Islamic situation there. While, our economic situation will improve if we return, because every one who comes from Afghanistan says that there are a lot of work opportunities there. For myself, I don't want to go back because it's non Islamic. All family members have the same ideas that I have. Only my-father-in-law wants to return to Afghanistan, because his old friends call and request him to come back. If he makes the decision to return we all will follow him. But he knows that the other family members do not agree, so therefore he does not take his decision. He says, "Because of my own self, I will not make all of you sad."*(QF-04)

In contrast, a 16-year-old girl with 3<sup>rd</sup> education in Quetta hears mostly about the dark past of Afghanistan from her parents. Having no access to TV or radio, restricted by strict religious values and isolated from male members of the family who do not interact with the females, she does not have much information about Afghanistan, except for the war stories of her mother. The more current positive changes, such as peace and increase in work opportunities, she only hears from relatives visiting from Afghanistan:

*When my family came to Pakistan (from Kunduz), I was not born yet. My mother told me the stories about fighting in Afghanistan — rockets were falling down on our house and everything was destroyed. Therefore, my family decided to flee to Pakistan. My family has no plan to go back to Afghanistan. They say that we have already settled in Pakistan and we do not have anything left in Afghanistan. All our things are gone. We didn't have good past in Afghanistan. But I want to go to Afghanistan because I really love my country. I don't like to live in Pakistan because all the Afghans in this area say, "We are Pakistanis." I don't know why they say that, and I don't like such behaviour.* (QF-05)

The above two cases illustrate that the younger generations' perceptions of the homeland does not always fit with the information transferred from parents. Indirect information obtained from relatives coming from Afghanistan and other personal experiences are also significant factors in constructing one's own ideas about Afghanistan. However, the extent to which this influences return depends on the individual's position in the family, which is largely determined by gender and age.

### **Respondents excluded in decision making**

The majority of those who are not involved in return discussions are female (N=16 of 20), many of them have low mobility due to restrictive gender norms. In addition, these females are mostly uneducated and live in low-income households.<sup>104</sup> They are usually excluded from household income generation activities and often segregated from external society. For instance, the young girl in the above example, who is interested in returning regardless of her mother's negative stories of Afghanistan's past, talked about power relationships in her household:

*I can't share my ideas with my family about return, but my brothers can. Their ideas are accepted because they are breadwinners for our family. Women's ideas are not shared and accepted because we don't earn any money. We girls don't talk to our father a lot. If we talk to him and laugh, it would be an insult to him. We can laugh in front of our mother, though. I can tell my problems to my mother, but not to my father. My parents talk to each other, but they never joke. My mother always respects my father. In our culture, all the women respect their husbands, the ones who bring food into the home.* (QF-05)

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<sup>104</sup> Some 12 of the 16 females are from households with SES Level 3 and less (Appendix 3) and are either uneducated or dropped out in early grades.

Another 15-year-old Pashtun girl without any education, living close to her twelve relatives in the same neighbourhood in a camp in Peshawar, echoes the gender segregation of physical household space. She does not have any information regarding her household's return plans:

*Our male family members never sit together with us female members. We even eat separately from the males. They eat in the hujra,<sup>105</sup> while we eat in our own houses. We females even don't bring food to the hujra — only boys do that. In our family, females and males don't talk much together. They always sit in the hujra — and they don't discuss anything at home. If they decide (to go back to Afghanistan), we can't say anything. Women are not that much bright-minded to think of our future. When women sit together, we just think of engagement of children. (PF14)*

**Box 6. Gender and return**

Thapan (2005) describes the environment of women who migrate to other countries as follows:

*The experience of women in the host society, to a large extent, continues to be shaped according to their position in the native structural and cultural setting, gender relations being fundamental to the process of identity construction.*

Indeed, our respondents' gender-related beliefs and behavior in Pakistan are largely shaped by Afghan norms and customs, with an overlay of Pakistani regulations pertaining to *mohajer* women. Some major themes emerging from this study are as follows:

- There are many social regulations/expectations for an individual to behave as an honourable Afghan girl/woman, regardless of location (home, work, school, etc.) in both Pakistan and Afghanistan;
- There are many concerns from both males and females about "free Afghan women" and improper gender relationships in Afghanistan, and especially in Kabul and in international UN/NGO offices;
- Generally, females have limited participation in the household decision-making process concerning return to Afghanistan, but some do take part. Others may have the option, but would rather defer to their husbands; and
- The lifestyles of those women who are living in Afghan enclaves in Pakistan reflect little influence of Pakistani society.

#### 4.6 Taking Action toward return to Afghanistan

Out of the total sample of 71 respondents, the households of 11<sup>106</sup> of these second-generation Afghans are presently taking action for repatriation to Afghanistan. For these Afghans, after weighing the various factors involved, the balance has tipped in the direction of repatriation. *Taking action*, as defined at the time of the interview, includes the following:

- Immediate travel to Afghanistan (within a few days of the interview);
- Making personal trips and/or sending family member(s) to Afghanistan to check out conditions for return (e.g. arranging house, checking land, examining work opportunities, visiting/consulting with other family members); and

<sup>105</sup> A guest room for males only; a traditional meeting place.

<sup>106</sup> One is from Quetta, two are from Karachi, and the remainder is from Peshawar (both city and camp); included in those from Peshawar is an engaged female who is going to Afghanistan for her marriage.

- Making definite plans for future return (e.g. will wait until spring and then depart).

Although the specific array of push-pull factors involved varies by household, those included in this group share some common characteristics. They do not belong to the lowest SES level in the sample, and family members perceive that they will be able to establish a viable existence in Afghanistan upon their return. Most are returning to their original land/house, while a few plan to purchase/rent new homes in either rural or urban settings. They also perceive a potential for employment in Afghanistan,<sup>107</sup> some having accumulated savings during their years in Pakistan.

Concerning their transnational networks, most of these households have extensive links with relatives and friends in their places of destination in Afghanistan, some of whom have returned in recent years from Pakistan and are successfully reintegrated. Respondents note that those who have already departed are sorely missed by themselves and other family members, and they will join them in Afghanistan.

None of these soon-to-be returnee respondents have strong negative feelings toward Pakistan and Pakistanis, however. Indeed, they are generally comfortable in their existence as exiles and most, except for those residing in camps, have formed social networks with local people. All respondents, except for two females, speak Urdu, and the majority has not experienced direct police harassment.

Most households have members who have made visits to Afghanistan, including almost all of the respondents. Thus, they know the reality of living there, including both positive and negative issues, and are ready to take on the risks involved.

As far as the specific combination of push-pull factors, two broad categories emerge:

- Those households who primarily perceive that the situation in Afghanistan has improved sufficiently (pull factors) to make the move homeward, including not only security, work opportunities and living arrangements, but also the presence of family, a positive place to raise children, the ability to help their country, good weather, etc.; and
- Those households which perceive that the situation in Pakistan as an Afghan is sufficiently negative (push factors) to prompt the move homeward, including lack of relatives, discrimination against Afghans, children do not learn Afghan culture, hot weather, etc. Two sub-groups include:
  - Those who are primarily motivated by the inability to find suitable employment in Pakistan according to their expectations; and
  - Those whose predominant feeling is that the political situation/environment for Afghans in Pakistan is changing for the negative, and that sooner or later all will have to leave (sense of not belonging).

In conclusion, the following brief case study for one of the second-generation respondents, who is taking direct action himself to return to Afghanistan, illustrates not only the specific push-pull factors and various obstacles involved, but also his perseverance (see Table 12 and Box 7).

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<sup>107</sup> For example, some family members in these households speak English; others have professional skills (e.g. a teacher, physician, businessman, and tailor).

Table 12. Perception of Push and Pull factors of a 27-year-old married male<sup>108</sup>  
(a resident of a camp in Peshawar; a native of Nangarhar)

Pakistan Push	Afghanistan Pull
<p>Limited work opportunity as Afghan</p> <p>Educated but works as a sharecropper</p> <p>Afghan peers are not patriotic</p> <p><i>Pakistanis make friendship for a purpose (Father)</i></p>	<p>My country; <i>We are Afghans (Father)</i></p> <p>Uncles' family in Afghanistan; <i>My cousins are my best friends (Father)</i></p> <p>Reconstruction process</p> <p>No hope for work as a teacher</p> <p>Dream to raise children in homeland</p> <p>Want to serve country</p>
Pakistan Pull	Afghanistan Push
<p>Quality education</p> <p>Comfortable life (material)</p> <p>Pakistani friends (ex-colleagues)</p> <p>Having different ethnic friends</p> <p><i>Can survive (Father)</i></p>	<p>Low quality of education</p> <p>Corruption, bribery</p> <p>Presence of foreign troops</p> <p>Many areas destroyed</p> <p>Slow pace of reconstruction</p> <p><i>No house, no land (Father)</i></p> <p><i>No working opportunity (Father)</i></p>
<p>Major Obstacles: Unreliable vacancy information of Ministry of Education, Unsure of acceptance of teaching qualifications, Housing</p>	

<sup>108</sup> Factors mentioned by the respondent's father are in italics.

*Box 7. Taking action to become a teacher in Nangarhar*

Karim, a 27-year-old Pushtun near Peshawar, is a 12<sup>th</sup> grade graduate from an Afghan school, but he is presently working as a sharecropper with his father. His three-generation household consists of 10 people; Karim and his wife have a baby daughter. The family arrived at this location from Sorkh Rod in Nangarhar in 1980 when he was one year old.

Having obtained a 12<sup>th</sup> grade certificate, along with attending a private English course for three years and also a teacher training seminar, Karim is extremely dissatisfied with his working situation and lack of job opportunities in Pakistan, and thus he is trying to obtain a teaching position in Afghanistan. After hearing about vacancy announcements on the radio, he has made three separate trips to the Provincial Education Department of the Ministry of Education in Nangarhar. However, they always tell him that there is no vacancy available. Not losing faith, he says, "*Teaching is the job of the prophets, and a good teacher can help to build a good society – a good country.*"

With many paternal and maternal relatives in the area, Karim is not alone when he visits there, and he has plans to move back with his young wife and child, as soon as he obtains the teaching position. Concerning the rest of his extended household:

*My father doesn't have any intention to return to Afghanistan unless the government provides shelter and work opportunities, but I plan to return as soon as I get a job teaching. I've discussed my return plan with my father and other household members, and they've agreed to it. If I return, my life situation is in my own hands. If I work hard I can have a good income and have a good life.*

Karim's father, 60 years of age, was initially a daily wage laborer in Peshawar when his family was small; now he sharecrops a small plot of land with his sons. He also wants to return but for him the time is not right yet. In addition, he has received negative reports from relatives who have already made the move home.

*I want to return to Afghanistan, but since I don't have my own house and land, I can't go now. None of the people (Afghans) living around here are happy to be here – we cannot forget our country. My cousins who were living here returned to Afghanistan three years ago. Now they've leased some land back in Sorkh Rod, and they're very sad that they returned. There is not enough water for irrigation, and they have a bad living situation there. They advised us to stay in Pakistan and don't return until the Afghan government gives us land, shelter, and working opportunities. ....(only) my elder son who is educated and married wishes to return and become a teacher. I've told him that for the time being, you go alone, find a job and a place to live, and then take your family. He wants to serve his country.*



## 5. Conclusions

The aim of this case study is to delve beneath the surface of the Yes/No responses about return to Afghanistan, represented in the quantitative data collected by the 2005 Census and 2007 Registration of Afghans in Pakistan, to illuminate what struggles exist, specifically among Afghan youths, in thinking about return. Quantitative study has its strength in representing the entire population, however, it can mask the complexity of individual and household return decision making processes. Thus this study brings to light issues underlying these decisions which have previously not been well understood.

The target group of this qualitative study is defined as Afghan males and females aged between 15 and 30 years old, who were born or spent at least half of their lives in Pakistan. The 2007 Registration data show that the vast majority of Afghans in Pakistan (74 percent) is less than 28 years old. This age group is expected to take up the reconstruction of Afghanistan in the future, and they have grown up under different circumstances during exile than what their elder generations experienced. Hence generating knowledge regarding their context, experiences, return perceptions, and reintegration expectations and experiences is essential for informing ongoing policy debates.

This qualitative study has focused on the less tangible push-pull factors influencing thoughts of home and return, moving beyond material comforts of basic services, shelter and jobs, to understand how social networks, identity and educational aspirations lead to, at times, conflicting desires within Afghan young adults in Pakistan. The report's strength lies in its use of narratives from young Afghans themselves — male and female, educated and uneducated, rich and poor — to illustrate the internal conflicts they face as they and/or their families constantly monitor the situation in Afghanistan, and assess the shifting balance between positive and negative characteristics of homeland and host community. Most of the respondents face a dilemma in deciding about return — influenced by constantly shifting circumstances. This implies that openings exist to influence return decisions; the weight of factors influencing second-generation Afghans' decision making can be changed to support repatriation. What is clear is that most, if not all, have strong feelings about being Afghan, and that many express a desire to return, if the balance of factors affecting that individual and/or family shift to reduce the perceived risks of return.

This section will draw out key points from the analysis to inform policy and programme development aimed at shifting these factors in favour of return and fostering positive (re)integration experiences. This is done with the clear recognition that not all Afghans in Pakistan, elders and youth alike, may return to Afghanistan in the near future — it will not be possible to shift the balance in favour of return for all individuals under the current situation in Afghanistan. Thus, the lessons drawn from the study also include means of improving life and livelihoods for those who may remain in the host country for longer periods, in order to empower refugees to be less dependent on continuous assistance and to be prepared for repatriation when the right time comes. This pragmatic view also acknowledges that Afghanistan at present does not have the absorptive capacity to integrate all Afghans in neighbouring countries, such that a phased return over the medium to long term, supported by the current three-year residence period afforded to Afghans who have registered in Pakistan, is necessary.

## 6. Recommendations

Tipping the balance in favour of return to Afghanistan, and ensuring that favourable environment (in terms of security, livelihoods, education and services) is sustained, are crucial for encouraging the voluntary return of young Afghans and their successful reintegration. Considering that the majority of second-generation Afghans remaining in Pakistan have not lived in Afghanistan for a long time and are mostly poorly educated with low skills, the key issues to address in order to facilitate their return include:

- improving the quality and relevance of information available about Afghanistan prior to return to remove perceived misconceptions and minimize the gap between expectations and reality;
- providing a package of services to poorer and less educated young returnees as a priority, including vocational skills, housing, cash grants, and labour intensive work to reduce their risks of failed return;
- ensuring demand-driven skills development programmes, linked to current market needs to reduce risks of un- and under-employment, especially for those with low levels of education, skills, capital and connections; and
- addressing the lack of quality education (secular and religious), including in rural areas, the problems related to obtaining accreditation/certification, as well as the supply constraints in higher education;
- formalising the status of long-staying Afghans remaining in Pakistan, reducing the perceived strain associated with this population, and increasing stability in the entire region.

### 6.1 Improve the quality and relevance of information

Second-generation Afghans in Pakistan, both educated and not, who are unfamiliar with life in their homeland, expressed a lack of accurate information concerning:

- job opportunities in Afghanistan;
- educational requirements for employment; and
- educational requirements/certification procedures for schooling.

Perceptions of Afghanistan are often formed through indirect information, which are at times exaggerated and inaccurate. Being uninformed or poorly informed increases one's anxiety around deciding to return, and idealistic expectations created by inaccurate information may lead to failure of reintegration after return. NGOs, in partnership with the relevant Afghan government ministries (supported by the United Nations), should ensure that accurate information is disseminated, for example, by establishing information centres/consultation points in Pakistan. The existing Afghan organisations (schools, courses, associations, etc.) would also be effective means through which to share information. For educated Afghans with computer access, the internet should also be used to disseminate information. For those who are not computer literate and for less mobile women, the radio is also a powerful tool by which to communicate. Access to more accurate and appropriate information may reduce the likelihood of re-migration after return. AREU will have more to add to this after the conclusion of the Afghan portion of the three-country study, which investigates in-depth the experiences of young returnees.

Many young Afghans in Pakistan are media savvy — exposed to Pakistani and Indian television serials, Hindi films and the like. Therefore, communications strategies aimed at influencing this sub-group should reflect this. However, the diversity among Afghan families in Pakistan must also be acknowledged, with some more conservative youth likely to be repelled by too “modern” a campaign. Thus, investment into developing creative and diverse means of delivering information is necessary.

In addition to information about education and work opportunities, and improvement in the overall situation in their homeland, another incentive for landless refugees, in particular, is land ownership in Afghanistan. Therefore, updated and realistic information about land allocation processes in native provinces could be disseminated, also targeting young adults given the fact that male heads of the households and elder sons tend to have significant control over return discussions. More externally mobile females, such as teachers at Afghan schools and employees of Afghan organisations, could also be targeted as they also have a considerable influence on return decisions.

## 6.2 Provide an intensive package of services to poorer and less educated second-generation returnees

Among our low income respondents, a lack of shelter, land, basic services and jobs in Afghanistan, all form a barrier to return, as does a lack of means to take action for return. Thus, continuing existing shelter programmes, such as the one run by UNHCR through which over 1 million returnees acquired housing since 2002, is essential.<sup>109</sup> Similarly, ongoing interventions of land allocation and township development schemes, especially those including basic service provision — water, sanitation, education, health, livelihoods and transportation, etc. — need to be further promoted and extended. Attention should not be drawn away from supporting returning Afghans even with decreasing rates of return. Programmes supporting return must continue, even if on a smaller scale and this period should be used to plan for what may be a large influx of returnees in the future, particularly when the residence period allowed by Pakistan registration expires after 2009. Attention must be given to Afghan male and female returnees whose circumstances may involve more risks than others endowed with greater human and physical assets. This group may require skills training prior to return and follow up after return, cash grants, and access to labour-intensive emergency employment to support the family immediately on return, until some members obtain longer term employment.

## 6.3 Ensure demand-driven skills development and employment opportunities

One major risk related to return, particularly for the less educated and skilled, is unemployment. A period of unemployment could deplete the small store of assets poorer families may have accumulated in Pakistan — if they were able to do so. Hence ensuring access to employment — to a secure livelihood — is a necessity to increase both the possibility of return and of successful reintegration among the poor and less skilled. This is supported by a recent study of returnees which shows that reintegration is influenced primarily by one’s individual assets, social networks and conditions of return, and secondarily by external support and the macro-economic environment.<sup>110</sup> Therefore, vulnerable populations having low levels of education, skills, capital and connections, require extra focus to minimise the risk of unemployment upon return.

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<sup>109</sup> UNHCR, 2007, Briefing Notes, 16 January 2007 (available online; see References for website address).

<sup>110</sup> Altai Consulting, 2006.

Such vulnerable population actually compose the majority of Afghans in Pakistan. UNHCR return statistics indicate that the majority of returnees are unskilled, with only 33 percent of returnees who returned between March 2002 and December 2006 from both Pakistan and Iran being labelled skilled, and 80 percent considered uneducated.<sup>111</sup> In light of these statistics, skills development, linked to employment demand in Afghanistan, is a clear need to support livelihood security upon return and reduce the risk of re-migration.

The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MORR) recognizes this need, and skills development and employment facilitation, as well as access to micro-finance, are among the means the Ministry is using to operationalise the Afghanistan Compact benchmark of providing assistance for return, rehabilitation and integration in local communities for returnees and IDPs by end of 1389 (2010). MORR also has a branch of the AGER employment support facility within its compound, to assist returnees in accessing employment.

Even more proactively, the Afghan and Pakistan governments, donors and NGOs can support practical vocational skills training within Pakistan prior to return, linked to current market needs and characteristics both in rural and urban areas, information about employment in Afghanistan and even linked to recruitment drives — this is a longer term option, that should be linked to the development of a larger national employment generation strategy where required skills are identified for emerging sectors of employment growth, training provided and employment linkages established for the trainees, both female and male (the initial stages of establishing a process to formulate an employment strategy are underway). Small business/enterprise development skills training and access to micro-credit should also be expanded.

Currently, the National Skills Development Programme (NSDP) has begun and males and females are receiving training. However, the lack of labour market information in Afghanistan means that a more holistic and integrated skills training and employment promotion model is not yet in place. Thus, there is a great need to gather labour market information to feed into skills training to ensure labour supply meets employer requirements. The collection of such data is another Afghanistan Compact benchmark, and it is scheduled to begin in 2007.

#### 6.4 Promote quality education, transparent accreditation procedures, and increased access to higher education

Although the vast majority of Afghans in Pakistan are uneducated, our respondents — both educated and uneducated — raised strong concerns over education particularly about the quality of education available to themselves and/or their children (in secular and religious schools). Additionally, for educated Afghans — who are a minority but whose potential to play a significant role during reconstruction makes their interests also important — the issues of transparency in procedures for qualification certification and access to higher education are central concerns, which considerably affect their willingness to return. Thus, while employment generation requires more immediate attention and investment, this cannot completely preclude planning for and initiating efforts to invest in improving quality of education and expanding access to higher education.

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<sup>111</sup> UNHCR, 2006, op. cit.

Concern about the quality of education available in Afghanistan compared to Pakistan, in both religious and secular schools, was a negative factor expressed across our respondents influencing many to remain in Pakistan. Materials and practical applications were perceived to be better in Pakistan and the range of topics covered in *madrasas* more extensive. This implies that the Ministry of Education, supported by the donor community, must continue their efforts to not only support the building of schools and increased enrolment for boys and girls, but also to improve the quality of what is taught in schools (i.e. to promote ongoing teacher training, curriculum development, etc.).<sup>112</sup> Recently-implemented improvements in teacher pay, along with further efforts to avoid delayed payment, may increase the skills of those applying for teaching positions and the commitment of those already teaching. Increasing dialogue and shared learning between government and NGO-supported, community-based schools may also increase quality, drawing more Afghans back to their homeland. Similarly, efforts are underway in the MOE to improve religious education in Afghanistan, including constructing religious schools in all 34 provinces and enabling diplomas from religious schools in Afghanistan to be valid abroad and to attract Afghan students in the country.<sup>113</sup> Both male and female second-generation Afghans in Pakistan expressed interest in continuing religious study for themselves or their children, or teaching in such schools. Thus, improving this system of education in terms of outreach and quality can also foster return, if these improvements are communicated effectively.

Among those respondents who have studied in Pakistan to advanced levels and who wish to continue further education after return, the recognition of education qualifications is another major concern. The procedures for this must be clarified and made transparent to reduce both uncertainty among returnees and opportunities for rent-seeking among Ministry staff. A one-stop shop in the MOE should be established, staffed with knowledgeable personnel who can provide accurate information about recognition of qualifications and process certifications efficiently, and which should be openly accessible to students seeking consultations. A representative office of the MOE in the Afghan consulate in Peshawar, with joint efforts of the Afghan Embassy and other Consulates, would also facilitate further information dissemination and certification. The MOE would take the lead in this action.

Finally ensuring access to higher education in Afghanistan also requires attention. The Afghan government, together with the international community, needs to make commitments toward making access to education extend beyond essential primary education, which is where most of the humanitarian agencies tend to focus. There are clear increasing demands of quality education across the second-generation respondents for themselves and/or their children. Yet, the opportunity of pursuing higher education for Afghans in Pakistan is limited. Therefore, some of our respondents attempted to repatriate and study in universities in Afghanistan, which sometimes ends up with disappointment relating to the limited capacity available in their homeland. The demand-supply mismatch affects all young educated Afghans both returnees and long-term residents: only 23,000 new students were accepted out of over 60,000 applicants in 2006. In fact, the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) estimates that over 100,000 students will wish for access to higher education by 2010, and it is aware of the coming challenge of meeting the increasing demands of 1 million high school graduates by

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<sup>112</sup> Oxfam GB, 2006, "Free, Quality Education for Every Afghan Child," Briefing Paper 93.

<sup>113</sup> Ibrahim, S. Y., 2006, "Reclaiming the Other 'Taliban,'" *Afghan Recovery Report*. Institute of War and Peace Reporting (available online; see References for the website address).

2014.<sup>114</sup> As a long-lasting investment, increasing places in higher education facilities will also help minimize migration from Afghanistan to other countries in pursuit of educational opportunities.

Thus, MOHE and the donor community must intensify efforts to upgrade universities across Afghanistan (not just in Kabul), attracting qualified Afghans to teach and perhaps linking with regional universities to more quickly expand this enrolment potential. Physical infrastructure must also be expanded to match any increased enrolment, particularly dormitory facilities for males and for females, as some will likely return to take advantage of educational opportunities without their families, and classrooms and labs.

In order to increase equitable access to overseas higher education, scholarships to study at the master/doctorate level overseas should especially target those high performing students who attend provincial universities for their undergraduate degrees, under the condition that they return for a fixed period to teach in the university in future. This will assist not only in attracting students from different areas, including Pakistan and upgrading the quality of universities, but also in lessening the urban/rural divide. Again, in order to increase equity in access to higher education overseas, opportunities to attend universities in Iran for those who are not familiar with English, and to travel to Arabic countries especially for religious education, should also be encouraged. This would then produce a cadre of Afghan professionals speaking local languages, which may reduce the excessive focus on English skills among many employers, including those in the development field.

In light of some of the language-related challenges highlighted in the report, investment is also necessary in language training (Dari, Pashto) to facilitate the return of those not educated in Afghan schools in Pakistan for higher education in certified university programmes in Afghanistan. Such training can also be supported within Pakistan, supplied by NGOs providing language skills and information about certification and university registration procedures.

Finally, returns to investments in higher education are always a concern. Thus, linking returnee youth enrolled in university to practical work experiences in Afghanistan — in the private sector, NGOs and in the state — may reduce the chance of re-migration after completing their degree programmes. However, efforts must be taken not to give preferential treatment to English speaking returnees, or to over-emphasize and promote the opportunities for them to work in the NGO sector. Some of our non-English speaking respondents expressed the concern that there is excessive attention to English language skills, particularly in Kabul. More opportunities must be made available to non-English speaking, skilled Afghans to encourage their return to their homeland and their ability to create a secure livelihood there.

## 6.5 Formalise status of long-staying Afghans remaining in Pakistan

AREU's previous migration research, among other work on Afghan refugees in neighbouring countries, recognizes that repatriation does not automatically lead to the end of population movement and not all Afghans will necessarily return to their homeland voluntarily; the balance of factors will not shift to support return for all.<sup>115</sup> Therefore, policy and programming must also consider how to formalise the status of

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<sup>114</sup> Government of Afghanistan, MOHE, 2007, *Ministry of Higher Education Strategy for Afghan National Development Strategy*, Kabul: MOHE.

<sup>115</sup> Monsutti, op. cit.

those who prefer to remain in Pakistan beyond the validity of Proof of Registration (PoR) cards, reducing the perceived strain some associate with this population and increasing security and stability in the entire region.

Considerations to support those who may be reluctant to return in the near future include:

- providing them the right to work temporarily to control access to employment and provide security of work and residence for Afghans who stay, including a regularised status for those highly qualified to work officially in Pakistan;
- clarifying procedures for access to tertiary education in Pakistan, including the role of the new registration and identification system in accessing educational and other services; and
- providing skills and asset acquisition support to vulnerable individuals, especially less mobile uneducated females, to enhance livelihood security and extend coping strategies, both of which might enable them to take the risk of return.

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## Appendix 1. Locator Map: Study Sites in Pakistan



Source: CIA World Factbook

## Appendix 2. Location profiles

### Peshawar

Over the past decades Peshawar district has been the most important centre for Afghan settlements in Pakistan, and 27.09 percent of all Afghans in Pakistan presently reside here.<sup>116</sup> The North West Frontier Province (NWFP) — with Peshawar City as its capital — is traditionally home to Pashto-speaking people and shares a long border with Afghanistan. Historically, Pashtuns living along the border have maintained many common social and economic ties. When civil strife began in earnest in the late 1970s, large numbers of Afghans, mostly of Pashtun ethnicity, took refuge in NWFP and were initially accepted as honoured guests. However, over time, Afghans have gradually come to be perceived as burdens to the local communities.<sup>117</sup> Peshawar is on the Grand Trunk Highway, which leads north toward Jalalabad and other points in Afghanistan.

### Quetta

Following Peshawar, Quetta hosts the second largest Afghan population in Pakistan (10.93 percent of the total).<sup>118</sup> Baluchistan — with Quetta City as its capital — is Pakistan's largest province in land size (44 percent of the national total), but only seven percent of the country's population lives there. It is the least developed province in Pakistan, with many environmental, economic, and human development challenges: harsh dry weather; inaccessible geography; limited water resources; and lack of schools and health facilities. However, it is rich in natural gas. In part, this has resulted in political and security tensions in relation to the central government, with conflicts arising from its Baloch and Pashtun nationalists.<sup>119</sup> Quetta is on the direct route to the Afghan-Pakistan border city, Chaman, which then leads northward to Kandahar.<sup>120</sup>

### Karachi

Karachi is the largest city in Pakistan, estimated to have a population of more than 12 million. It is the centre of financial and industrial activities, and therefore has historically attracted migrants both from inside and outside the country. According to the 1998 Census of Pakistan, nearly half of the residents in Karachi spoke Urdu as their mother tongue, followed by Punjabi at 14 percent and Pashto at 11 percent.<sup>121</sup> Compared to the rest of Pakistan, Karachi offers relatively more economic opportunities for migrants and has better infrastructure in general. Indeed, nearly one-third of the Afghan respondents in Karachi had moved from other areas in Pakistan, largely due to the perception that they would have more employment opportunities.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Registration of Afghans in Pakistan 2007.

<sup>117</sup> D. Edward, 1986.

<sup>118</sup> Registration of Afghans in Pakistan 2007.

<sup>119</sup> P. Titus and N. Swidler, 2000.

<sup>120</sup> In recent years sources suggest that Quetta has also become the residence of many Taliban from Afghanistan (A. Tim. Wounded Taliban treated in Pakistan, *The Sunday Times*, 19 November 2006)

<sup>121</sup> H. Gazdar, 2005.

<sup>122</sup> Some seven respondents out of our total of 19 in Karachi had moved from other areas (4 from Quetta; 2 from Peshawar; and 1 from a village in Sindh province).

### Appendix 3. Socio-economic status of the respondents' households

<i>Categories →</i>	Poor	Below Average	Average	Above Average	Rich
<i>Levels →</i>	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
<i>Number of cases →</i>	N=14	N=15	N=09	N=12	N=21
<i>Livelihoods</i>	Unskilled labour Self-employed  Household depends on female/ child work (N=06)	Unskilled labour Self-employed Weekly/monthly salary (N=07)  Only one breadwinner (teacher)  Sharecropper (N=02)	Self-employed  Employed by shop, factory, restaurant; teacher  In some cases, more than one breadwinner	Labour migration (NGO in Afghanistan, N=03)  Labour migration to Middle East (N=05)  Female professional (doctor's assistant, company employee, etc.)	Self-employed/business Labour migration (Afghanistan (N=04) Middle East (N=01)  House/land lease rent (N=07)  Relative in the West (N=16) (some remittances)
<i>Living area</i>  <i>House rent</i>	Pay no rent, katchi abadis/camps (N=09)  Rs. 70-500/month (N=04)  Rs. 1000 (N=01)	Pay no rent (camp/ex- camp/charity) (N=06)  Rs. 800-2000/month (N=09)	Pay no rent (N=01/katchi abadis)  Rs. 2,000-3,500/month (N=08)	Camp/ex-camp (N=05)  <i>katchi abadis</i> (N=02)  Around Rs. 2000/month (N=04)	Posh area Around Rs. 5,000- 10,000/month  (N=01 in camp)  (N=01 bought a house for US\$10,000)
<i>Property in Afghanistan</i>	All have no house in Afghanistan  Poor quality land in home province, unable to cultivate (N=02)  House/land in home province, but unable to live there due to family conflict (N=01)	No house/land (N=09)  House/land in home province (N=03)  Land in province (N=03)	N.A. (N=02)  House (N=03)  Land (N=04)	No house/land (N=04)  House (N=02)  Land (N=05)	Have house and/or land and receive benefits(N=16)
<i>Key Asset</i>	(No mobile phones)	Mobile phone (N=08)  No mobile phone (N=07)	All have mobile phones and/or computers	All have mobile phones and/or computers	All have mobile phones and/or computers
<i>Estimated monthly income</i>	Rs. 3,000-5,000	Rs. 5,000-10,000	Rs. 7,000-12,000	Rs. 15,000 (US\$300) -	US\$500-to over \$1,000 (highest \$7,000)

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