

# Barriers to Access Education for Afghan Refugees

in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa  
(KP), Pakistan



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# Acronyms

ACC	Afghan Citizen Card
ADSP	Asia Displacement Solutions Platform
ALP	Accelerated Learning Program
ANR	Afghan National Registration Database
AR	Afghan Refugee
CAR	Commissionerate of Afghan Refugees
COPE	Community Oriented Participatory Education
COVID	Coronavirus disease
DA	District Administrator
DAFI	Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (German Government Graduation Scholarship Program for refugees)
DRF	Document Review Framework
E&SE	Elementary and Secondary Education
EAQE	Enhance Access and Quality of Education
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GOP	Government of Pakistan
GSP	Girls Stipend Program
HBS	Home Based Schools
ICMC	International Catholic Migration Commission
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
KII	Key Informant Interview
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PITE	Provincial Institute for Teacher Education
PKR	Pakistani Rupee
PMEP	Prime Minister's Education Program
POR	Proof of Registration
PPS	Proportionate to Population Size
PSB	Primary School for Boys
PSC	Primary School Coeducation
PSG	Primary School for Girls
PTC	Parents Teacher Council
QCF	Qualitative Coding Framework
RAHA	Refugee Affected Hosting Area
RI	Relief International
RV	Refugee Village
SSAR	Support Strategy for Afghan Refugees
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WATSAN	Water and Sanitation
WB	World Bank
RVA	Refugee Village Administrator

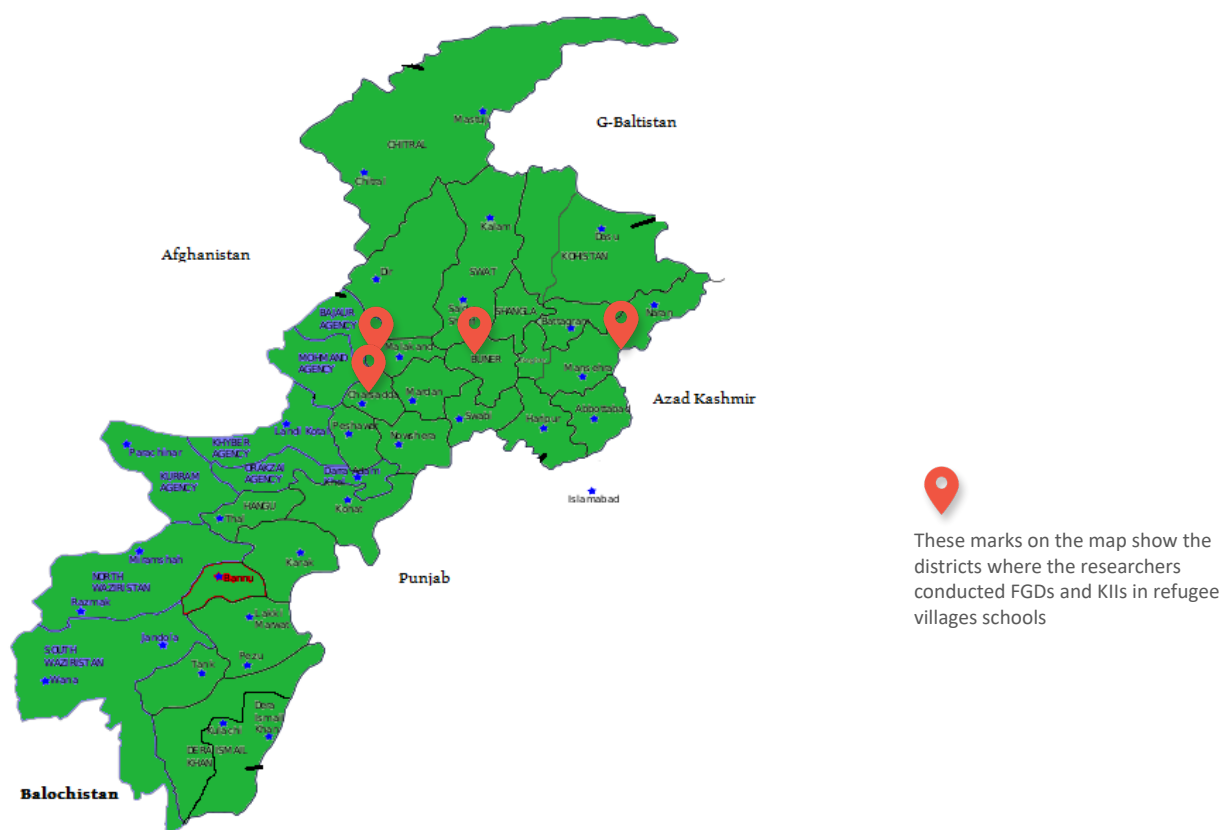
# Introduction and background

Pakistan has been hosting Afghan refugees for nearly four decades, with the first wave of refugees arriving in 1979, followed by subsequent influxes in 1992 and 2001. More than 4.4 million Afghans<sup>1</sup> sought refuge in Pakistan between 1979-2001<sup>2</sup>, with over 3.2 million refugees in the country at the height of the displacement. As a result, Pakistan has ranked as the world's top refugee hosting country for 22 out of the past 37 years. In addition, approximately 3.9 million refugees have returned to Afghanistan since 2002, following the largest ever voluntary repatriation programme in UNHCR's history<sup>3</sup>.

As of 31 June 2021, Pakistan hosted 1.44 million registered refugees<sup>4</sup>. Of this number, approximately 1.43 million are Afghan refugees who hold a Proof of Registration (POR) card. The majority of these Afghan refugees live in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The map below indicates the districts where the research team conducted FGDs and KIIs with teachers and community members.

According to Center for Global Development estimates, there are approximately one million more unregistered Afghan nationals in the country. The majority (68 percent) live in urban areas, with 32 percent living in "refugee villages"<sup>5</sup>.

An overwhelming majority (80%) of Afghan refugees are out of school. The remaining 20% of Afghan refugee children are attending public or private schools. Lack of documentation, a pressure to earn money to support their families, language problems and poverty are just some of the reasons that keep refugee children out of school<sup>6</sup>.



- 1 M Ansari, 'Cities for Children', in *Refugee in Towns*, viewed on 25 October 2021, [https://www.refugeesintowns.org/islamabad#\\_ftn1](https://www.refugeesintowns.org/islamabad#_ftn1)
- 2 Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Humanitarian Response Plan: Pakistan, OCHA, April 2021, viewed on 10 October 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/pakistan-humanitarian-response-plan-2021-april-2021>
- 3 Abdul Quadir Baloch, 'Statement by His Excellency Lt Gen (R) Abdul Quadir Baloch, Minister for States and Frontier Regions, Pakistan 67th Meeting of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme', in UNHCR, 3 October 2016, viewed on 11 October 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/57f252f67.pdf>
- 4 UNHCR, 'Operational Update Pakistan: January-June 2021', UNHCR, June 2021, viewed on 29 October 2021, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/Pakistan%20operational%20update%20Jan-June%202021.pdf>
- 5 D Amparado., H Dempster., & I Khan Laghari, 'With US Withdrawal, Rights of Afghan Refugees in Pakistan Hang in the Balance', Centre for Global Development, 25 August 2021, viewed on 11 October 2021, <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/us-withdrawal-rights-afghan-refugees-pakistan-hang-balance>
- 6 Department of elementary and Secondary Education Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 2019, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Education Sector Plan 2020/21 - 2024/25.

Table 1: Key statistics about Afghan refugees (UNHCR Refugee updates, August 31, 2021)

Key statistic	Value
<b>Total refugees registered in Pakistan</b>	1.44 million
<b>Total Afghan refugees registered in Pakistan and holding POR</b>	1.43 million (99%)
<b>Total unregistered Afghan refugees</b>	1 million <sup>7</sup>
<b>Asylum seekers (not yet completed the Refugees Status Determination process)</b>	10,245 <sup>8</sup>
<b>Afghan refugees living outside of refugee villages</b>	69.4%
<b>Afghan refugees living inside refugee villages</b>	30.6%
<b>Gender breakdown of Afghan refugees</b>	53.6% male; 46.4% female
<b>Average household size for Afghan refugee families</b>	6.9 individuals per family
<b>New arrivals (as of Nov 15, 2021)<sup>9</sup></b>	7,227 households 36,995 individuals 52% men; 48% women
	<b>Monthly arrival of Afghan people (Year 2021)</b>
	<b>Pre August</b> 5,875
	<b>August</b> 18,843
	<b>September</b> 9,716
	<b>October</b> 2,041
	<b>November</b> 520

Education is a fundamental right for all human beings, as set out in Article 28 of the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*<sup>10</sup>. For children whose lives are disrupted by emergencies and displacement, education can be a source of stability. Education serves as a protective function by meeting cognitive and psychosocial needs, as well as providing the foundation needed to access sustainable livelihoods later in life, thereby offering pathways to a better future<sup>11</sup>.

The Government of Pakistan (GoP) has committed to providing education for all, including refugee children, as enshrined in Article 25A of the Constitution. This was reaffirmed in the *Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2012* that was adopted by Pakistan's National Assembly that stipulated "every child, regardless of sex, nationality or race, shall have a fundamental right to free and compulsory education in a neighborhood school"<sup>12</sup>. However, there remains numerous barriers to education for Pakistani and Afghan children at all levels.

Pakistan has the second-highest population of out-of-school children in the world, with an estimated 22.8 million children aged 5-16 not attending school. This represents 44 percent of the total population in this age group not receiving an education<sup>13</sup>. The inability for children to access education is multi-faceted, and is resultant from numerous factors including social, economic, cultural [including language, traditional roles, & religious factors], and physical impediments such as distance to school and security.<sup>14</sup> Amongst international partners, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is the primary agency assisting Afghan refugees living in Pakistan to access education facilities

7 D Amparado., H Dempster., & I Khan Laghari, 'With US Withdrawal, Rights of Afghan Refugees in Pakistan Hang in the Balance', Centre for Global Development, 25 August 2021, viewed on 11 October 2021, <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/us-withdrawal-rights-afghan-refugees-pakistan-hang-balance>

8 10,100 from Afghanistan, 31 from Myanmar, 30 from Yemen, 26 from Somalia, 17 from China, 13 from Islamic Republic of Iran and 28 from other countries.

9 New arrival of Afghan into Pakistan since the Taliban took over the government; <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/89753>, accessed November 30, 2021

10 UNICEF, 'What is the Convention on the Rights of the Child?', UNICEF, 2021, viewed on 29 October 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/what-is-the-convention>, viewed October 2021

11 S Dryden-Peterson, 'Refugee Education: A Global Review', University of Toronto, November 2011, viewed on 29 October 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/4fe317589.pdf>

12 National Assembly Pakistan, The Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2012 (No. XXIV of 2012), National Assembly Secretariat, p. 1329

13 UNICEF, 'Education', UNICEF, 2021, viewed on 16 August 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/pakistan/education>

14 D Shah., G Haider & T Taj, 'Causes of Dropout Rate at Primary Level in Pakistan', *International Journal of Curriculum and Instruction*, Vol. 11 No. 2, 2019, pg. 40

– primarily inside the refugee villages<sup>15</sup>. UNHCR continue to assist students in obtaining quality education through the provision of textbooks, learning materials and uniforms, as well as scholarship support for those seeking higher education. UNHCR also supports teachers’ salaries, education advisors and support staff (but does not support school property rentals in refugee villages nor the salaries of school watchmen). As part of a long-standing partnership with the Government of Germany’s Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative Program (DAFI) – a scholarship programme that offers refugee students the possibility to pursue an undergraduate degree in their country of asylum – by 2019 UNHCR had provided a total of 536 Afghan refugee students scholarships, including 97 girls<sup>16</sup>.

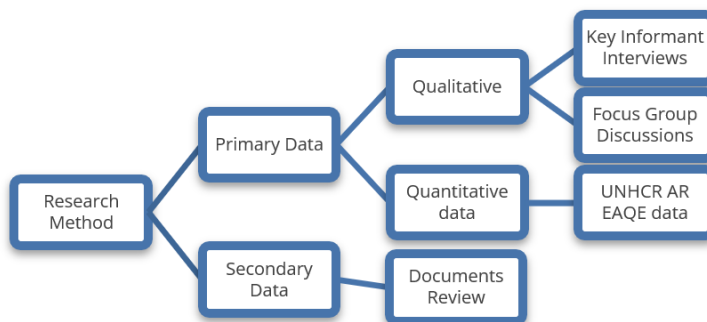
Despite these and other investments into access to quality education for refugee and host populations in recent years, the COVID-19 outbreak has ignited a major global education crisis. According to UNESCO, more than 800 million learners from around the world have been affected, 1 in 5 learners cannot attend school, 1 in 4 cannot attend higher education classes, and over 102 countries have ordered nationwide school closures<sup>17</sup>. For millions of children, the pandemic has taken away their classrooms for nearly 18 months (March 2020 to August 2021). Schoolchildren worldwide have lost a combined 1.8 trillion hours of education.<sup>18</sup> The crisis is exacerbating the risk that inequalities in education will further increase. The closure of schools, universities, technical & vocational training institutes, and traditional education services has also affected refugee learners and students. Progress made towards increased enrollment rates (up 6% in 2018-19 from 2017-18)<sup>19</sup> may be eroded.

## Research objectives

The Asia Displacement Solutions Platform (ADSP) funded this research to assess the existing barriers to accessing education for Afghan refugees living in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province of Pakistan, and why humanitarian aid has not been able to effectively address these barriers. The research is aligned with and will support in advancing the objectives of the Global Compact for Refugees and the Support Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) in the region. Further, it will help to improve programming by development stakeholders, as well as provide recommendations to donors, UNHCR, and government stakeholders for designing future education programs for Afghan refugees.

The specific objectives of this research were to:

- Provide a detailed and comprehensive analysis of the underlying barriers for Afghan children to access education.
- Conduct a detailed comparative analysis of Afghans’ access to education in urban centres and refugee villages and to identify gaps in education services available to Afghan refugees.
- Assess strategies of civil society, government, and UN agencies etc. that have effectively reduced barriers to education in similar contexts, and why existing strategies in Pakistan seem to be inadequate.
- Gauge the secondary impact of COVID-19 in students’ ability to access school, and analyze other unintended impacts of COVID-19 on school-aged children.
- Highlight the programs being implemented or planned by civil society organizations and the United Nations for Afghan refugees’ education mainly in primary and secondary education.
- Provide recommendations that can contribute to productive policy discussions, improved programming and strengthened decision-making, that can increase access to education for Afghan refugees specifically in Pakistan.



This research was aimed at seven specific focus areas (see research TOR in Annex 1).

15 Pakistan’s refugee camps are called refugee villages. They are open camps and have developed into fully-fledged settlements with hard infrastructure since their establishment in the 1980s. Currently, UNHCR is maintaining 54 refugee villages in Pakistan.  
 16 UNHCR, ‘DAFI Annual Report 2019 – Refugee students in higher education’, UNHCR, 2019, viewed on 29 October 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/5f5a7b784.pdf>  
 17 Global Campaign for Education, ‘#Coronavirus: Don’t let our children down’, Global Campaign for Education, March 2020, viewed on 30 October 2021, [https://campaignforeducation.org/en/2020/03/18/coronavirus-dont-let-our-children-down/?gclid=CjwKCAjw\\_L6LBhBbEiwA4c46ulZJ1hfDIK-LZlclqRierFJL6oNtjFlbpbqE17-CJMjz96gdCjfw7TLxoCSb4QAvD\\_BwE](https://campaignforeducation.org/en/2020/03/18/coronavirus-dont-let-our-children-down/?gclid=CjwKCAjw_L6LBhBbEiwA4c46ulZJ1hfDIK-LZlclqRierFJL6oNtjFlbpbqE17-CJMjz96gdCjfw7TLxoCSb4QAvD_BwE)  
 18 UNICEF, ‘#ReopenSchools’, UNICEF, viewed on 29 October 2021, [https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/reopen-schools?gclid=CjwKCAjw\\_L6LBhBbEiwA4c46ulZJ1hfDIK-LZlclqRierFJL6oNtjFlbpbqE17-CJMjz96gdCjfw7TLxoCSb4QAvD\\_BwE](https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/reopen-schools?gclid=CjwKCAjw_L6LBhBbEiwA4c46ulZJ1hfDIK-LZlclqRierFJL6oNtjFlbpbqE17-CJMjz96gdCjfw7TLxoCSb4QAvD_BwE)  
 19 Government of Pakistan, ‘Pakistan Economic Survey 2019-20’, Finance Division, page 201, table 10.2, viewed on 30 October 2021, [https://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapter\\_20/PES\\_2019\\_20.pdf](https://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapter_20/PES_2019_20.pdf)

# Research methodology and scope

This research study is based on a mixed method social research approach, primarily for its ability to provide a better understanding of the research problem and complex phenomena, when compared to applying a single qualitative or quantitative research method<sup>20</sup>. This method has the potential to offer more robust research findings because it gives more insight into the research problem and allows validation from other sources. This offers an opportunity to triangulate research findings<sup>21</sup>. The findings of mixed method research have robust validity and reduce overall systematic research biases<sup>22</sup>. Furthermore, data collected through a mixed method approach is rich and comprehensive, thereby allowing for stronger research findings and recommendations<sup>23</sup>.

The primary data was collected in person through 16 (50% male, 50% female) focus group discussions (FGDs) and 44 key informant interviews (KIIs-see annex-2 for details). A total of 71 adult males and 63 adult females attended the FGDs, whereas 23 of the KII respondents were males and 11 females. Altogether, the primary data was collected from 168 individuals (94 males (56%) and 74 (44%) females). The research team commenced the project by reviewing documents on themes related to barriers to education, education strategy for Afghan refugees, dropout (hereby referred to as 'truancy') rates, access to education, quality of education, enrollment of Afghan refugees, mainstreaming of Afghan refugees into public education, and past education programs for Afghan refugees amongst others. Annex 3 contains the complete list of documents reviewed by the research team. The key informant interviews were conducted with a variety of stakeholders including government officials, civil society, UNHCR, community actors (both women and men) and schoolteachers / headteachers. The FGDs were conducted with parents and caregivers of Afghan refugee children.

*Table 2: Geographical scope of research for KIIs and FGDs*

District	FGD	KII	Total
Haripur	4	5	9
Kohat	4	6	10
Nowshehra	4	3	7
Peshawar	4	13	17
Islamabad	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>44</b>

The research team relied on 31 January 2021 Afghan National Registration Database (ANR) information for selecting the most populous refugee villages for data collection purposes. The KIIs and FGDs were conducted in refugee villages where at least 10% of the population living in these districts were Afghan refugees. Accordingly, the research team conducted primary research in Peshawar, Haripur, Kohat and Nowshehra districts.

20 J. Creswell & V. Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*, SAGE, London, 2007, pg. 606

21 L. Hurmerinta-Peltomaki & N. Nummeia, 'Mixed methods in international business research: A value added perspective', *Management International Review*, Vol. 46, 2006, pg. 439-459

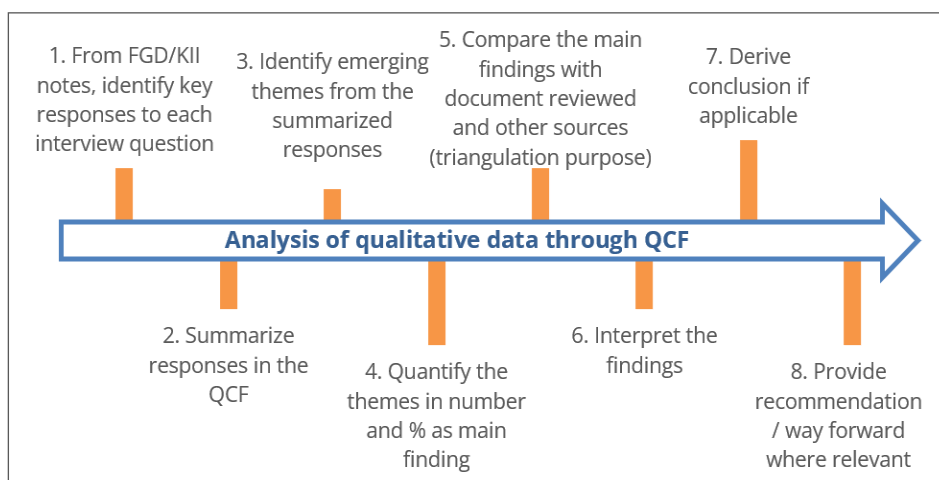
22 M. Zohrabi (2013), *Mixed Method Research: Instruments, Validity, Reliability and Reporting Findings I*, Theory and Practice in Language Studies, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 254-262, February 2013

23 J. Wisdom & JW. Creswell, 'Mixed Methods: Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis While Studying Patient-Centered Medical Home Models'. Rockville, MD: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, 2013. AHRQ Publication No. 13-0028-EF.



# Data Analysis

The qualitative data derived from KIIs and FGDs were analyzed through a “**Qualitative Coding Framework (QCF)**”. The figure below illustrates the key steps of the qualitative data analysis through QCF.



The secondary data was analyzed through a “document review framework (DRF)”. The DRF extracted key themes from different documents. Some of the themes included key needs, key skills, challenges, types of education, enabling and hindering factors, inclusion, exclusion, dropout, barriers, access, disability - each related to access to and quality of education.

# Research Ethics

The research team followed the following research ethics.

**Comprehensive and systematic inquiry:** the research team ensured the maximum use of existing information and tried reaching to different stakeholders available at the time of the study. During the inception meeting with the client, an agreement was made regarding interviewing the relevant stakeholders.

**Expression of limitation:** the report has listed key limitations (see next section). The report has made it clear how these limitations have or may have affected the findings and their interpretation.

**Competence:** The research team have more than 18 years of combined education. In addition, the team collectively brought 36 years of professional experience. The profile of each team member was shared with the client.

**Honesty and integrity:** The research team declared no-conflict of interest.

**Respect for people:** The research team ensured respect, security, dignity, and self-worth of respondents. Furthermore, the research team ensured that:

- the principles of Human Rights and Gender Equality at all stages of the study. Female researchers conducted interviews with females, and the results are disaggregated by gender where possible.
- local culture, beliefs, customs, and values were respected during fieldwork.
- informed consent and confidentiality of respondents was maintained throughout the research.

The research team and the research report followed additional ethics of social research mainly but not limited to anonymity of respondents, providing the purpose of the research to respondents, voluntary participation in the research, clarify to the respondents that they can withdraw any time from the research and that they can refuse to answer any question(s).



# Research limitations

This research has some limitations listed below.

- Community perceptions regarding different aspects of education like access, quality, barriers, and affordability are the views of adults (male and female) and no interviews or FGDs were conducted with students. During the inception phase, it was agreed with ADSP to not conduct interviews or FGDs with students as a result of certain sensitivities.
- The research team did not collect primary quantitative data due to time and budget constraints and the research methodology being agreed with the ADSP. However, UNHCR and CAR (Commissionerate of Afghan Refugees) provided the quantitative data of the number of refugees' schools with students' enrollment and staff/teachers information.
- Broadly this research is based on qualitative method and hence the findings are not statistically representative. Also the findings should be considered as opinions and judgments and should not be considered as mathematical or statistical results.

## Key findings

### Research Area 1: Available education interventions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan for Afghan refugees and host communities in urban centres and refugee villages

Following is a broad-based desk review which determined that there are a range of education programs available for Afghan refugee children. Some of these education programs include:

#### 1.1 UNHCR refugee village schools

UNHCR is one of the key actors who have been running education programs for Afghan refugee children since the early 1980s. It has set up camps, and now operates schools in the registered refugee villages (see annex 4 for the list of 44 refugee villages in KP). Some of the predominant modalities include home-based schools, community oriented participatory education program for Afghan refugees, and accelerated learning programmes especially for girls. The focus of these education programmes has been to provide education opportunities for Afghan refugee children living in KP and Baluchistan. Currently, UNHCR is providing education at the primary level in refugee villages under the program title **“Enhancing Access and Quality of Education (EAQE) for Afghan Refugees”**. Two implementing partners, namely the Initiative for Development & Empowerment Axis (IDEA) and the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC)<sup>24</sup> are running these refugee village schools. As of June 2021, UNHCR has established 100 refugee village schools and is providing education to 31,266 Afghan refugee children from kindergarten to grade 6<sup>25</sup>.

UNHCR is gradually reducing the number of refugee village schools as part of its Pakistan Refugee Education Strategy 2020-2022<sup>26</sup>. UNHCR aims to facilitate transition into nearby public schools for Afghan refugees to avoid provision of parallel education systems, better utilise resources, and encourage peaceful co-existence amongst refugees and local children. At present, all UNHCR led primary schools follow the Pakistani curriculum.

24 ICMC has ceased many activities in Pakistan as per directives from Pakistan's Interior Ministry. UNHCR is in the process of replacing ICMC as an education partner, but at the time of this research, UNHCR yet has not finalized the selection of a new partner.

25 UNHCR EAQE project data, June 2021

26 UNHCR, 'Refugee Education Strategy – Pakistan 2020-2022', UNHCR, February 2020, viewed on 29 October 2021, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/73890>

Table 3: Enrollment of children under UNHCR EAQE for Afghan refugees (as of June 2021)

School type	Girls enrolled <sup>27</sup>	Boys enrolled	Total enrollment
Boys school	472	15,421	15,893
Co-education school	3,146	4,776	7,922
Girls school	7,288	163	7,451
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>10,906 (35%)</b>	<b>20,360 (65%)</b>	<b>31,266</b>

## 1.2 Formal education in public, private and Afghan Consulate registered schools

In addition to UNHCR refugee village schools, in theory Afghan refugee children have equal access to Pakistani public institutions, Pakistan private schools, Afghan private schools and Afghan Consulate registered schools that are locally called “Lesas” and are registered with the KP Private School Regulatory Authority (KP PSRA). Generally, these institutions are considered to offer higher-quality education than refugee village schools. Various KII respondents and FGD participants reported a number of education options for Afghan refugees in Pakistan. They referred to institutions both inside and outside of refugee villages. Options for Afghan refugees to access education inside refugee villages are at UNHCR refugee village schools, UNHCR Accelerated Learning Programme centers and some other small education programs provided by different donors. Outside of refugee villages, Afghan refugee children have several other options to access education. These include Pakistani public schools, Pakistani private schools, Afghan Private Schools, Madrasas for religious education and the Lesas. These education options have also been identified by academics such as Madeeha Ansari.<sup>28</sup>

## 1.3 Strengthening Education and Health Services (SEHS) for Afghan refugees

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ), the German Government’s development agency, has recently initiated the SEHS program for Afghan refugees. The education component of SEHS includes strengthening districts’ education development plans, as well as capacity building of education officers and management. It focuses on primary and secondary school education in Peshawar, Nowshera and Haripur. SEHS is working with 20 schools in each district (14 primary, 4 middle and 2 high schools). These will be the schools where Afghan refugee children are enrolled. Overall, the education component of the SEHS focuses on access to education and enhancing the quality and role of Parent Teacher Committees and the District Education Department. At present, the project is in the inception phase, and will conclude in 2023.

## 1.4 UNHCR Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) centres for girls

As of August 2021<sup>29</sup>, UNHCR is running 18 primary-level accelerated learning centres in various districts within KP, and has enrolled a total of 457 girls. One female teacher runs each centre, and on average there are 25 girls enrolled in each ALP centre (25:1 student to teacher ratio). Generally, the community and students prefer female teachers for female students, and this is also aligned to the social norms of the community. By utilizing female teachers, the community has accepted the ALP centres as a source of respected education for girls within the community. The teachers are not state licensed teachers because the ALP centres are not considered as part of the formal education system.

UNHCR has adopted the JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) ALP curriculum<sup>30</sup>. The JICA ALP curriculum comprises of three packages namely package-A (8-month curriculum that is equivalent to nursery to grade 1), package-B (8-month curriculum that is equivalent to grade 2 - grade 3) and package-C (14-month curriculum that is equivalent to grade 4 - grade 5)<sup>31</sup>. The centres enroll girls or offer accelerated education to out of school girls, who have either never attended school or have dropped out and no longer meet the public school admission criteria, for whom commute and

27 Despite being designated for girls, the UNHCR and school management have allowed boys to enroll. The same is true for girls being allowed to enroll in boys schools.

28 M. Ansari, Cities for Children: A Case Study of Refugees in Towns, UNICEF, viewed on 30 October 2021, <https://www.refugeesintowns.org/islamabad>

29 UNICEF, A review of Alternative Learning Programmes in Pakistan, UNICEF, viewed on 23 October 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/pakistan/reports/review-alternative-learning-programmes-pakistan-2014-15>

30 UNHCR, ‘Operational Update Pakistan: January-June 2021’, UNHCR, June 2021, viewed on 29 October 2021, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/Pakistan%20operational%20update%20Jan-June%202021.pdf>

31 Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), ‘Advancing Quality Alternative Learning Project (AQAL) in Islamic Republic of Pakistan’, P no. 48., viewed 30 October 2021, <https://openjicareport.jica.go.jp/pdf/12345831.pdf>

proximity to schools is challenging. The curriculum focuses on functional literacy, numeracy, and some basic technical skills. UNHCR has collaborated with the Elementary and Secondary Education Department (ESED) of KP to align ALP packages to primary-school level education grades. The ESED issues equivalence certificate of grade 5 for girls who complete package-C. Of the 18 ALP teachers, about 56 percent (10 out of 18) of the teachers are Pakistani and 45 percent (8 out of 18) of the teachers are Afghan. The unavailability of adequate Afghan teachers is the key reason for the low percentage of Afghan teachers in ALP centers. During the KIIs, a UNHCR representative expressed that the agency prefers to recruit Afghan teachers because they are more aware of the local culture and speak the refugee girls' language. However, qualified Afghan teachers are sometimes difficult to find. To ensure the continuation of the education program for Afghan girls, the agency then hires the services of Pakistani teachers from surrounding areas.

## 1.5 UNHCR tertiary-level scholarships for Afghan refugees

Through the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI), UNHCR facilitates scholarships for Afghan refugees across a range of disciplines including medical and health sciences, commercial and business administration, engineering, social and behavioral sciences, education science, and teachers training<sup>32</sup>. Beneficiaries of the DAFI scholarship are generally aged between 17-30 years old. In 2019, a total of 536 students including 90 (17%) girls received the DAFI scholarship. Pakistan is amongst the top five countries for persons receiving the DAFI undergraduate scholarships.

## 1.6 Relief International education programme

With the support of the United States Government's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (BPRM), Relief International's education programme in Pakistan works to improve Afghan refugees' equitable access and enrollment in primary education in Pakistani government schools. The programme has a particular focus on Afghan refugee girls and vulnerable families and seeks to increase their enrollment and retention in Pakistani government schools. The programme operates in Swabi, Nowshera, and Peshawar districts of KP, and supports students and teachers in 70 government schools. Schools are selected within a three-mile radius of under-served refugee villages. The programme also runs campaigns with Afghan communities and parents to enroll students in government schools. The key aims of these campaigns are to increase awareness and understanding of the importance of education, the procedures for enrollment, the benefits of education, and to address particular concerns (religious or cultural) through the use of role models and understanding the curriculum.

## Research Area 2: Capacities and gaps in accessing primary education institutions in refugee villages & government institutions, particularly for Afghan children

### 2.1 Existing capacities in accessing education

Inside refugee villages, UNHCR funded schools are currently the main option available to Afghan refugees to access education. As of June 2021, UNHCR has 100 primary schools across the 44 refugee villages in KP. A total of 31,266 Afghan refugee children (20,360 boys and 10,926 girls; 65% boys, 35% girls) are enrolled in these schools<sup>33</sup>. The enrollment is free, and students are provided with books, stationery, workbooks, school bags and uniforms. The teachers are qualified and have received teaching training from the Provincial Institute for Teacher Education (PITE) as well as continued support through the Elementary and Secondary Education Department of KP. Although exceptions exist, most schools provide essential minimum facilities such as drinking water, toilets, and electricity. In areas where electricity lines are not available, UNHCR has provided solar panels and batteries.

There does not appear to be any significant barriers to registration and enrollment of Afghan children in refugee village schools. A distinct precondition is that the child must be a PoR (Proof of Registration) card holder. The school administration through the Parent-Teacher Committees run an enrollment campaign and sensitizes parents to enroll their children in refugee village schools. According to teachers, government officials, UNHCR representatives, NGOs' respondents and community members that were engaged during KIIs and FGDs, persons living in the refugee villages all possess PoR cards, hence had no issues in fulfilling admission/enrollment requirements. In cases where prospective student(s) may not hold a valid POR card, schools generally ask for a school leaving certificate. In cases where parents are unable to provide a school leaving certificate<sup>34</sup> for their child, schools conduct placement tests to enroll children.

32 UNHCR, 'DAFI Annual Report 2019 – Refugee students in higher education', UNHCR, 2019, viewed on 29 October 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/5f5a7b784.pdf>

33 UNHCR EAQE project data and analysis conducted by research team

34 When a student leaves school, the school will usually issue him/her a school leaving certificate which records the grade level and particulars of the student e.g., name, father's name, date of birth, and the student's school registration number.

As part of UNHCR's mainstreaming policy of teaching the Pakistani syllabus in refugee schools, UNHCR has hired new teachers who are more qualified and hold a bachelor level degree or higher. In addition, in line with the official retirement age in Pakistan, teachers above 60 years of age have been phased out or retired and replaced with more qualified teachers. This has been done to enhance the quality of education in schools, and to foster greater confidence and trust amongst community members and parents.

Generally, refugee village schools are located a short distance from refugee housing, and the route to and from school is considered quite safe as they are in the same residential neighbourhood. As the majority of teachers are local Afghans and Pakistanis, the community has trust in the refugee village school system. The certificates issued by refugee village schools are widely accepted for entrance into Pakistani public schools, Afghan private schools and Afghan Consulate registered schools.

Schools operating outside of the refugee villages and in urban areas are accepting Afghan refugee children for admission, subject to them meeting the enrollment criteria, as well as the school having the space for new students. In this setting, Afghan refugee children have equal access to school facilities, they study the same curriculum, and they take part in the same assessments / exams as their local peers.

## 2.2 Gaps in accessing education

This research identified several gaps in the capacities of education institutions especially inside refugee villages which has affected access to education for Afghan refugees. Some of these gaps include:

- **Socio economic:** Many FGD respondents shared a range of socio-economic factors that reduce access to education for children. This included factors such as poverty, high cost of education, child marriage, the preference of poor parents to send their children to work to earn money, structural issues i.e. lack of middle schools for girls, limited transportation options, and sub-standard quality of teachers.
- **Gender disparity:** the education facilities available for Afghan refugees largely target boys. Resultantly, access to education is far easier for boys than girls. Currently, UNHCR's education programmes inside the refugee villages broadly focus upon boys over girls e.g. (65% boys enrolled, 35% girls enrolled; 42% boys' schools, 27% girls' schools, 31% co-education schools)<sup>35</sup>. This means that the current education programmes for Afghan refugee education lacks inclusiveness for girls<sup>36</sup>.
- **Closure of schools due to COVID-19:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, schools were closed; remote learning was not available or accessible to marginalized children including Afghan refugee children as many did not have access to remote learning tools such as internet, computers, tablets, and smart phones. Also, at the beginning of the 2020-2021 academic year (April 2020), UNHCR directed all refugee village schools not to enroll new kindergarten students due to the potential impact of COVID-19 on young students. The decision created a gap in grade 1 after the transition of grade 1 students to grade 2, as there were no students in kindergarten to be promoted to grade 1. Only students who failed or were required to repeat were in grade 1 in 2021. This policy clearly curtailed access to education for students who had already reached 5 years of age, and were willing to be enrolled in refugee village schools.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a deterioration of access to and quality education. As per government directives, during March 2020 to February 2021, schools in Pakistan were closed for 137 days<sup>37</sup>. Under the same government directives, schools shifted to providing only three hours of instruction instead of the usual six hours to reduce physical interactions between students and teachers to mitigate COVID-19 transmission. This resulted in a truncated curriculum being offered, and hence students did not receive the same breadth of education they would have normally received.

- **Lack of conducive operating environments for INGOs:** The Ministry of the Interior, which grants permission to INGOs to operate in Pakistan and perform field level project implementation, recently directed UNHCR's implementing partner ICMC to rollback their activities in Pakistan by June 2021. Therefore, these schools are

35 UNHCR primary data, July 2021

36 Interpretation of research findings by researchers

37 UNESCO and UNICEF, 'Situation Analysis on the Effects of and Responses to COVID-19 on the Education Sector in Asia', conducted jointly by UNESCO and UNICEF, October 2021, viewed on 29 October 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/eap/media/9316/file/Southeast%20Asia%20Situation%20Analysis%20of%20the%20Impacts%20of%20COVID-19%20on%20Education.pdf>

currently not monitored and facilitated by partner organisations and are currently operating solely under the supervision of the school headteachers. Therefore, the role of partner organisations has been curtailed whereby they cannot monitor field level activities and provide any additional support for the promotion of education for Afghan refugees. UNHCR is in the process of selecting a partner agency to replace ICMC. It is pertinent that UNHCR focuses on these schools during its staff monitoring and follow-up visits to ensure the schools are open, school managements are delivering quality education, and teachers and students regularly attend schools.

- **Lack of extracurricular activities:** None of the 11 refugee village schools visited by the research team (boys and girls) reported extracurricular activities being offered. This has limited the development of students' skills in non-academic activities. Resultantly, many students reported feeling deprived and suffering from loss of confidence.
- **Lack of girl-specific schools:** Separate girls' primary schools are not available in certain districts of KP where refugee villages are established (see table below), instead, UNHCR has opted for co-education schools. However, UNHCR has committed to providing separate latrines for girls where possible. Many parents are not comfortable sending their daughters to co-education schools. The number of registered students in co-education schools is low (256 students of both sexes) when compared with single gendered schools for boys (378) and girls (276). The table below shows the distribution of UNHCR's 100 schools across various districts in KP.

*Table 4: UNHCR Refugee Village schools in KP*

District	Number of schools			
	Boys school	Co-education school	Girls school	Grand Total
Bannu	0	1	0	1
Buner	0	1	0	1
Charsadda	1	0	1	2
DI Khan	0	2	0	2
Hangu	2	2	0	4
Haripur	11	3	7	21
Kohat	4	2	3	9
Lakki Marwat	1	1	0	2
Lower Dir	3	3	5	11
Malakand	0	1	0	1
Manshera	0	7	0	7
Mardan	0	4	0	4
Nowshehra	0	1	0	1
Nowshera	5	1	1	7
Peshawar	8	0	5	13
Swabi	7	2	5	14
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>100</b>

- **Interrupted power supply at schools:** refugee village schools are located in areas with severe electricity, shortages especially during summer. UNHCR provided solar panels and batteries to schools to ensure uninterrupted power supply during school hours and provide a comfortable environment for enrolled children. However, almost half of the visited refugee village schools reported that the batteries provided under UNHCR's solarization scheme are not functional and fail to provide power supply for sufficient electricity on cloudy days. UNHCR and its implementing partners IDEA and ICMC, shared that they do not have resources to replace the

batteries due to a funding shortfall of nearly 50 percent,<sup>38</sup> and are currently unable to access the required multi-year funding needed to ensure smooth school operations.



Students sitting on the floor in a RV school; they have taken off their shoes outside of the classroom

We have 9 rooms for 668 students (74 students per room on average). KII with head teacher of PSB 191, Kohat

- Lack of student furniture at schools and small classroom area:** There was no furniture (see picture to the right) for students in any of the visited schools in five refugee village schools. Resultantly, the students sit on the floor. Also, the class space is quite confined (small classroom size) to the number of students in each class, and it is difficult for the school management to ensure physical and social distancing in the classroom. Even in a case whereby furniture could be provided, the schools' administration cannot put them in the class because they will be unable to accommodate the enrolled students, and the teacher would be unable to reach each student to provide individual support. In addition, in some cases, the roofs are *katcha* (un-cemented) and water enters the classroom – particularly in the rainy season. The school administration either closes that class on a rainy day or merges it temporarily into another class. Therefore, on rainy days, teachers are often required to conduct multi-grade teaching which inhibits the delivery of quality education.
- High teacher-student ratio:** most of the visited schools have high teacher-student ratio that places extra pressure on the teachers to manage large classes and meet students' individual academic needs. Resultantly, the quality of education that students receive is markedly below the country-wide, regional, and global grade average. Moreover, the number of schools in each refugee village is also disproportionate to the population of the refugee village. For example, the refugee village of Shamshatoo has a total adult population of 10,000, but it has one boy's school<sup>39</sup>. During the KII, the headteacher shared, "we have 376 students. A total of 5 teachers are teaching these students. This comes 1 to 75 teacher-student ratio. This is quite evident that the teacher cannot focus on quality and cannot give enough time to each student. Resultantly, the quality of education is quite poor".
- As of June 2021, UNHCR has 613 teachers who are responsible for teaching 31,266 students across all target resident villages<sup>40</sup>. On average, each teacher is responsible for 51 students. As head-teachers are usually not involved in direct classroom instruction, the real student to teacher ratio is 1:61. This ratio sits well above OECD averages, that generally consider 1:15 as an optimal amount and 1:30 for non-OECD states. Other studies for example Nizamettin Koc and BekirCelik (2015)<sup>41</sup> and Blatchford, P., & Lai, K.C. (2012)<sup>42</sup> have noted that there is a significant improvement in educational yields when the student-teacher ratio is 1:18 or lower. The teacher-student ratio in KP public schools is quite high i.e., 1:41<sup>43</sup> but still lower than the said ratio in refugee village schools. Compared to the teacher student ratios in refugee villages' schools, the schools in KP are significantly better.
- Delayed distribution of books and learning materials to students:** According to parents and teachers, distribution of books is quite slow, and the number of books does not match the number of students. Most school administrations are using out-of-date books provided by UNHCR i.e. generally the books are 'handed down' from students who have graduated to higher grades. In most cases these books are damaged and create a sense of deprivation amongst students that receive the sub-standard resources.

38 UNHCR, 'Funding Update 2021', UNHCR, 31 July 2021, viewed on 3 October 2021, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/fundingupdates/2021-07-13/Pakistan%20Funding%20Update%2013%20July%202021.pdf>

39 KII with head teacher in Shamshatoo refugee village

40 UNHCR EAQE project data and researcher analysis

41 N Koc and B Celik, 'The Impact of Number of Students per Teacher on Student Achievement', *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Vol 177, 2015, pg. 65-70

42 P. Blatchford & K.C. Lai., 'Class size: arguments and evidence. In B. McGraw, E. Baker, & P. P. Peterson (Eds.), *International encyclopedia of education (3rd ed.)*, 2012, Oxford, UK: Elsevier.

43 Z. Shah, 'Analysing the performance of education in K-P', *The Express Tribune*, viewed on 22 October 2021, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1443456/analysing-performance-education-k-p>



Table 5: Number of teachers in UNHCR schools

Nationality / Gender	Head Teacher	Teacher	Grand Total
<b>Afghan</b>			
Female	10	36	46
Male	52	218	270
<b>Pakistani</b>			
Female	18	106	124
Male	18	155	173
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>515</b>	<b>613</b>
Average teacher-student ratio including head teachers			<b>51</b>
Average teacher-student ratio excluding head teachers			<b>61</b>
<i>Source: Author calculation from UNHCR data of 100 Refugee Village schools</i>			

### Research Area 3: Existing and past education interventions - what worked and what didn't work, in improving access to, retention and completion of formal primary education for Afghan refugee children.

#### Aspects of past interventions that went well

Following are some of the different aspects of past interventions that went well in terms of improving access to, retention and completion of the formal primary education.

- Inside the refugee villages, the UNHCR funded EAQE programme is the main ongoing education intervention for Afghan refugee children. The program works well in terms of provision of access to education (at the time of this research, 31,266 students were enrolled in these schools including 10,906 (35%) girls). It has now adopted the full Pakistani curriculum i.e. an essential step for integration and mainstreaming Afghan refugees' education. The program is enhancing access to education for boys (65% enrolled students are boys) more than girls (35% enrolled students are girls) and persons with disabilities.
- The Refugees Affected Hosting Areas (RAHA) programme was rehabilitating and, in some cases, re-constructing schools in hosting areas. The schools were supposed to enroll Afghan refugee students as per a mutual understanding between UNHCR and the Elementary and Secondary Education Department of KP. However, in most cases, the rehabilitated and re-constructed schools were a significant distance<sup>44</sup> from refugee villages and the areas where Afghan refugees were residing. Later during the RAHA implementation, UNHCR began to rehabilitate and reconstruct schools nearer to refugee villages and the areas where Afghan refugees were living outside of refugee villages. This proved successful in terms of increasing access to education for Afghan refugee students. RAHA constructed or rehabilitated more than 700 schools and benefited over 590,400<sup>45</sup> students. The rehabilitated

#### Keeping Refugee Children in School and Out of Work: Evidence from the World's Largest Humanitarian Cash Transfer Program

Refugees in Turkey are supported by the world's largest cash transfer program for refugees, the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN). The results of an impact evaluation show a large effect on child labor and school enrollment among both male and female refugee children. Being a beneficiary household reduces the fraction of children working from 14.0 percent to 1.6 percent (a decrease of 89 percent of children not going to work) and the fraction of children aged 6–17 not in school from 36.2 to 13.7 percent (a reduction of 62 percent of out of school children are now in schools). The results proved that ESSN cash transfers become a significant part of a household's income, substantially alleviate extreme poverty, and reduce a family's need to resort to negative coping strategies. Investigating the reasons for children not attending school, the study found that the beneficiary households become more likely to send children to school because the cash transfer addresses both the opportunity cost and direct cost of schooling.

*(IZA Institute of Labor Economics, discussion paper number 1453), June 2021.*

<sup>44</sup> KII with senior UNHCR officer, 2021.

<sup>45</sup> UNHCR, 'RAHA – Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas Programme', viewed on 22 October 2021. [www.rahapakistan.org.pk/sites/default/files/RAHA-Brochure-June-20161.pdf](http://www.rahapakistan.org.pk/sites/default/files/RAHA-Brochure-June-20161.pdf)

and reconstructed schools by RAHA assisted in reducing some of the transition challenges, such as the need to make a clearer link between physical distance from schools to positive education outcomes from primary to secondary and higher secondary level education<sup>46</sup>.

- Incentive-based education for Afghan refugees in the past proved successful in terms of enhanced enrollment, attendance, and retention. Afghan refugees living in refugee villages are marginalized and the provision of incentives will enhance enrollment of children in school. The Provincial KP Government currently operates a Girls Stipend Program (GSP) for host community children. The stipend of PKR 400/month is provided directly to the student's family is conditional on enrollment and regular (80%) attendance at school. Similar incentive-based education schemes have been used across the world to improve enrollment of male and female students, including in countries such as Turkey (see text box to the right). Similar programs may also yield positive results in Pakistan for Afghan refugees and host communities, and therefore it is suggested that this model is further explored.
- UNHCR is also running the Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) in KP province. As of August 2021, there are 18 ALP centres with 457 girls enrolled (see section 1.4 of this report for details). The girls are provided with literacy and numeracy skills training along with some key technical skills such as embroidery and tailoring. An evaluation of the programme has not yet been conducted, but secondary research shows that ALPs are promising initiatives. For example, a study conducted by Institute of Rural Management (IRM)<sup>47</sup>, Pakistan found that 100% of ALP girls qualified for the state standard examination, and 992/1,000 were mainstreamed into formal education. The UNHCR ALP proved successful for the girls (in terms of attending the ALP centres regularly and remaining at the centres<sup>48</sup>) who were either not allowed to be enrolled in refugee village schools, or if the school was located too far away. Continuation of such education for girls will help them build their literacy, numeracy, and technical skills. Upon successful completion of ALP/home-based schools, girls are more likely to access sustainable livelihood opportunities and earnings in the future<sup>49</sup>. In addition, the ALP will further contribute to their empowerment and their ability to support their families' basic needs and future education requirements.
- Education programmes (for example the Prime Minister's Education Reform Program-PMERP) that focus on the upgrading of dilapidated school buildings, provision of missing facilities and quality training had a profound impact on access, enrollment, punctuality, and regularity of students<sup>50</sup>. In addition, holistic teacher training<sup>51</sup> imparted by the provincial Teacher Training Centres had a positive impact on learning outcomes, motivation, and ethical / moral development of the students<sup>52</sup>. Current and future education programmes for Afghan refugees can benefit from programmes similar to PMERP. Programmes like EAQE should foster synergies, modalities, and strategies to benefit from the experiences of other programmes.
- Upgrading key facilities i.e., enough classrooms, safe and clean drinking water, gender sensitive latrines, boundary walls (especially in girls' schools), and furniture & facilities for disabled children i.e. ramps and disabled bathrooms, will enhance enrollment in schools. For example, three schools in Swabi witnessed a 31 percent increase in students' enrolment rate after UNHCR's intervention to address inadequate facilities<sup>53</sup>. This means upgradation and provision of the lacking facilities is proving well in increasing students' enrollment.
- Long-term and consistent programmes help in supporting Afghan refugee education, enhancing their trust in the programme, and ultimately helping them stand on their feet. Policymakers, donors, and UN agencies especially can learn from the DAFI program. The DAFI has been implemented since 1992 and it has supported more than 18,000 young refugee women and men to pursue their undergraduate degrees. The DAFI remains the longest-running and largest standalone tertiary scholarship programme for refugees and returnees, currently supporting Afghan refugee students undertaking their undergraduate studies across 54 countries.

## Aspects of past unsuccessful education programmes

Following are some of the key aspects of different education programmes that did not improve access to, retention, quality of education and completion of formal primary education.

- In terms of educational quality (please refer to 6.2 for details), the EAQE programme fell well below the expectations for most FGD and KII respondents and they shared concerns over the quality of education in refugee village schools. One of the FGDs participants shared, *"my child is in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, but she faces hurdles in reading a paragraph and understanding and solving basic words and mathematics questions"*.

46 KII with UNHCR official, August 2021

47 Institute of Rural Management (n.d)- "Accelerated Learning Program", Directorate of education FATA, viewed on November 3, 2021, <https://pdfslide.net/documents/accelerated-learning-irmedupk-of-rural-management-irm-in-collaboration-with.html>

48 KII with UNHCR official, June 2021.

49 KII with representative of CAR, June 2021

50 M. Shaheen, 2017, "Effectiveness of Prime Minister's Education Reform Program- a case study from Pakistan", *Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad*, No. 35, pg. 36

51 Besides core academic aspects like teaching methodology, teachers are trained on understanding students' psychology, emotional and ethical needs

52 Gulzar Ahmad (2015), 'impact of in-service teacher training at elementary level in Sindh, province'.

53 UNHCR, 'Swabi schools witness 31 per cent increase in students' enrolment rate after UNHCR's intervention', UNHCR, viewed on 22 October 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/swabi-schools-witness-31-cent-increase-students-enrolment-rate-after-unhcr-s>

- The RAHA program is aimed at rehabilitation and/or construction of schools, additional classrooms, boundary walls, playgrounds, provision of school furniture and other missing facilities<sup>54</sup>. The program is also aimed at improving teacher capacities and social mobilization of building the capacity of parent-teachers associations. However, the major focus of the RAHA program has been on infrastructure related aspects. Some key respondents like the Commissioner of Afghan Commissionerate and Program Advisor (Education) of UNHCR suggested that in future, programs like RAHA should equally focus on the quality of education and other soft components like intensive teachers training, strengthening of parent teacher committees, advocacy, and improvement of students' assessment systems.
- Focusing on enhancing enrollment of host and Afghan refugee children, without first enhancing the physical capacity of public schools, produces insufficient results in terms of enrolling new students. This is primarily due to the lack of key facilities including physical space for additional / new students. Relevant stakeholders like donors, development partners and the KP Education Department should first focus on key facilities like adding new classrooms, hiring new staff, and ensuring adequate washrooms. They should improve the physical capacity of public education institutions and should improve readiness for the accommodation of new students.
- There was a lack of complementarity and coordination amongst development organisations that provided interventions and programmes at refugee schools. As a result of these siloed approaches, the intended results of their interventions often remained unaccomplished. For example, some organisations installed handwashing stations in a number of refugee village schools to address health concerns related to COVID-19. However, in some instances these handwashing stations resulted in drainage and sanitation issues around the school. These drainage issues were caused because water and sanitation programmes were either not specifically focusing on interventions in refugee village schools, or, their programmes focused on different schools in the refugee villages. Ergo, given the two actors were not coordinated in their efforts, and their programme designs were not aligned, interventions often did not achieve the desired results.
- From 2004 to 2016, UNHCR through BeFare operated schools in refugee villages up to grade 8. However, due to funding constraints, since 2016 the schools were reclassified to only offer primary level education. Parents withdrew their girls from school because they were of the view that the refugee village schools were degraded and they were not willing to send girls to distant schools outside of the refugee villages. This decision to reclassify schools, constrained access to lower secondary education especially for girls.
- The RAHA programme remains the largest programme in Pakistan in terms of funding (US\$ 220M)<sup>55</sup> and duration (over a decade) in different sectors including education. Since its inception in 2009, RAHA has benefited 12.4 million individuals including 85 percent Pakistani citizens and 15 percent Afghan refugees. However, most benefits went to hosting communities. For example, RAHA health projects benefited six million people but only 18 percent were Afghan refugees. The RAHA Education projects benefited 780,000 people with only 16 percent Afghan refugees. Similarly, the WATSAN and livelihoods projects benefited 2.4 million and 470,000 people respectively, with only 15 percent and 10 percent Afghan refugees respectively (various RAHA projects factsheets). Focusing proportionately on the population size of Afghan refugees may have brought different results in terms of enrollment, retention, and transition of Afghan refugee children. The FGD and KII participants believed that the RAHA was primarily geared towards supporting the host community.
- The Government of Pakistan also offers a variety of higher education scholarships for Afghan nationals (those who are either living in Afghanistan or who have a valid Pakistani visa and are living in Pakistan). Two of the most important scholarships include the Allama Muhammad Iqbal Scholarship programme (operating since 2009) and the Prime Minister's Scholarship Program (operating since 2010). However, the number of scholarships currently offered to Afghan nationals who hold valid visas, and Afghan refugees, is quite distinct. For example, it is evidenced<sup>56</sup> that the GOP has offered thousands of scholarships to Afghan nationals, but just 14 scholarships to Afghan refugees. It is likely a bias exists regarding the greater government support towards Afghan nationals over Afghan refugees.
- Currently, 536 Afghan refugees are enrolled in Pakistani universities – 90 girls and 446 boys<sup>57</sup>. This represents a considerable disparity, and the program is lagging behind its own policy objective of providing equal access to education for women and men, empowering young women and men equally, and promoting gender equality in higher education for refugees<sup>58</sup>. The DAFI report has not mentioned the reasons behind this gender inequality. However, the researchers are of the view that factors like only a small number of girls are fulfilling the scholarship criteria, few girls possess higher secondary level education, parents are unwilling for their daughters to pursue higher education, and in some cases, girls are forced into early marriages are the important reasons for the low proportion of girls in DAFI scholarship programme for Afghan refugees.

54 UNHCR, 'RAHA – Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas Programme', viewed on 22 October 2021. <http://www.rahapakistan.org.pk/sites/default/files/RAHA-Brochure-June-20161.pdf>

55 UNHCR, 'RAHA – Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas Programme', viewed on 22 October 2021. <http://www.rahapakistan.org.pk/sites/default/files/RAHA-Brochure-June-20161.pdf>

56 M Khan, 'Pakistan's urban refugees: steps towards self-reliance', *Forced Migration Review*, February 2020, FMR 63, pg. 50-52

57 UNHCR, 'DAFI Annual Report 2019 – Refugee students in higher education', UNHCR, 2019, viewed on 29 October 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/5f5a7b784.pdf>

58 UNHCR, 'Albert Einstein Refugee Academic Initiative DAFI Programme - Policy and Guidelines', UNHCR, 2019, viewed on 30 October 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/568bc43a6.pdf>

## Research Area 4: In the context of COVID-19, what were the best practices to prevent truancy of Afghan refugee students that were studying in formal schools? What worked well in the collaboration between the Pakistani formal system, and local and international education actors during the pandemic?

In the context of COVID-19, the research highlighted the high truancy rates of students from schools. Various factors played into this including:

### Long-term closure of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic

The long-term closure of schools during the pandemic resulted in a significant increase in the number of students leaving school. For example, in Shamshatoo refugee village (PSB 143), the number of students reduced from 670 (pre COVID) to 270 (at the time of research's team visit-July 2021). This represents a 40.29 percent dropout rate of enrolled students in a one-year period. The head teacher of PSB 279 reported that about 140 (36 percent) of students did not return after the resumption of physical schooling. He further noted that the dropout ratio in the higher grades was even more significant. According to him, the dropout rate of students for in grades 10 through 12 is nearly 80 percent. The regular dropout rate for this schooling level at public education institutions is 40 percent. During the KIIs, a teacher shared, ***“we had 525 students prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. We now have 374 students. This means we lost 29 percent of our students”***. Similarly, a high-ranking UNHCR official noted that prior to COVID-19, a total of 36,000 students were enrolled in the 100 refugee village schools. This number dropped to 32,000 when schools re-opened, representing an 11 percent decrease in student numbers.

The key factors that contributed to the marked dropout of students include poverty, inability to access a supportive education environment at home, illiterate parents, migration, distance of schools from people's place of residence, and the preference of parents for children to work. He further noted that on average, there is only one Lesa (Afghan Consulate registered school) per eight refugee villages. The students who are interested in the Afghan curriculum prefer Lesas because the teachers are Afghan nationals/refugees and Lesas follows the Afghan curriculum. However, the Lesa is quite far, and it has no proper capacity to enroll large numbers of students. Resultantly, students do not transition into elementary and middle schools.

The dropout rates for primary level students in refugee village schools are more or less the same as the ratios in public schools. The public schools witnessed a 46 percent dropout rate for host communities<sup>59</sup>.

### Distance of schools

In some refugee villages, schools are located a significant distance away from residents' households. Therefore, it can be quite difficult for students – especially girls – to regularly attend school. For example, a PSB (primary school for boys) teacher shared that their school was 5 km away from some student households. The children from these households are either not enrolled or are attending schools irregularly (referring to high absenteeism). A respondent of the FGD in Baddbher shared, ***“This RV has 6 clusters. There is only one refugee village school in cluster # 3. This school for some Afghan refugee households is 15 km away. How can we expect young primary level students to travel to such a far-flung school? Also, the transportation cost is quite huge for us. Resultantly, marginalized children are deprived of their basic right to education”***.

### Difficulties in reintegrating students who have dropped out into formal education system

For students that have officially dropped out of school, there are a range of challenges to reintegrate back into regular classes. Generally, children who have left school have done so either as a result of financial constraints, or because their parents have prioritized them joining the labour force. COVID-19 has exacerbated financial needs and reprioritization within families when it comes to education. Some KII participants such as CAR and UNHCR partner organisations suggested that existing and future education programmes and projects should support and facilitate the re-enrolment of students that have dropped out.

59 KP Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2017-18 annual statistics report of the government schools, viewed on November 3, 2021, [http://175.107.63.45/newimwebsite/images/reports/ASC2017-18Final\\_new.pdf](http://175.107.63.45/newimwebsite/images/reports/ASC2017-18Final_new.pdf)

## Seasonal migration prevents continuation of students' education

Seasonal migration amongst Afghan families is common, with movement in search of livelihood opportunities a regular occurrence. The enrolled children of these families are compelled to migrate with them to their new destination and resultantly, they discontinue their education and lose interest in furthering their education.

## Poverty and lack of affordability

Afghan refugees, especially those living in refugee villages, are characterized by extreme poverty, with most refugee village inhabitants surviving on less than USD\$1 per day. In addition, 72 percent live in mud/temporary houses, 60 percent of men and 78 percent of women have no-education, and 45 percent of the labor force are employed as daily labourers<sup>60</sup>. As such, many parents from underprivileged backgrounds prefer for their young boys to work and earn money, and for their daughters to remain at home and perform household chores such as cooking, cleaning, and looking after their siblings. Overall, this research found that education is not a priority for poorer families and the opportunity cost of education is high for households that fall in the low-income quintiles and often compel parents to include their children in income generation activities to make ends meet.

Most private schools in refugee villages collect a monthly fee of PKR 50 to 80 from each student. These funds go towards paying the salaries of watchmen and in some cases school rental fees. For parents, this is a sizeable monthly expenditure – especially when multiple children are enrolled (the school charges a fee per child). UNHCR's Enhance Access to and Quality of Education for Afghan refugees education program is not financing these expenses.

## Other factors that contribute to discontinuation of education

Cultural practices both of host and Afghan refugee communities discriminate between girls' and boys' education. The parents either do not enroll girls or the parents/guardians withdraw the girls from schools when they reach puberty. The dropout of students is increasing with an increase in grade<sup>61</sup>. The boys mainly leave school and start unskilled work. The girls mostly either stay at home and are involved in domestic chores and get married. Early marriages are one of the top dropout reasons for girls<sup>62</sup>.

The pedagogical techniques used by teachers is quite rudimentary, with teachers generally reading from a textbook, and the students repeating the stated facts. The teachers generally lack experience and the ability to deliver lessons with engaging and innovative techniques. Often, children lose interest during class time, often resulting in a general disinterest in learning and subsequent dropping-out from school.

None of the research respondents mentioned the concept of "compensation classes or catch-up classes" in host and refugee village schools. The students who score low on learning outcomes go with this limitation during higher grades. This compounds students' weaknesses over time. The students with cumulated weaknesses are less likely to continue their education<sup>63</sup>.

This research also identified various measures which could have contributed to reducing the dropout rates of students, with participants flagging the following measures:

- FGD and KII participants, including parents/caregivers and school administrators, largely supported the Government of Pakistan's policy that mandated the temporary closure of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. From March 2020 to February 2021, schools in Pakistan were closed on an ad hoc basis for a total of 137 days<sup>64</sup>. Whilst parents acknowledged the GoP's risk prevention strategy, they were left in a state of limbo – unsure when schools would be open or for how long. As such, many parents did not initiate other activities like income generation. When schools reopened, students and parents were ready to recommence school attendance. This helped to avoid higher numbers of students dropping-out from schools.
- UNHCR in its 2020-2022 Education Strategy for Afghan Refugees in Pakistan, articulated their desire to "use

60 World Bank Group; UNHCR. 2019. *Living Conditions and Settlement Decisions of Recent Afghan Returnees: Findings from a 2018 Phone Survey of Afghan Returnees and UNHCR Data*. World Bank, Washington, DC. World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/31944>

61 A Yusufzai, 'School Dropout Rate Soars for Afghan Refugees', Inter Press Service, 2014, viewed on 23 October 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report-pakistan/school-dropout-rate-soars-afghan-refugees>

62 S Sikander, 'Afghan refugee girls: Child marriages stifling education plans, says UN report', The Express Tribune, 2016, viewed on 31 October 2021, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1112708/afghan-refugee-girls-child-marriages-stifling-education-plans-says-un-report>

63 KII with senior officials of UNHCR, CAR and UNHCR partner organizations for the EAQE project in the refugee villages.

64 UNESCO and UNICEF, 'Situation Analysis on the Effects of and Responses to COVID-19 on the Education Sector in Asia', October 2021, viewed on 29 October 2021, [www.unicef.org/eap/media/9316/file/Southeast%20Asia%20Situation%20Analysis%20of%20the%20Impacts%20of%20COVID-19%20on%20Education.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/eap/media/9316/file/Southeast%20Asia%20Situation%20Analysis%20of%20the%20Impacts%20of%20COVID-19%20on%20Education.pdf)

*Afghan refugee youth as role models to encourage the participation of girls in schools to help reduce the high truancy rate at the primary level<sup>65</sup>*. The agency planned to use DAFI scholarship alumni as role models to encourage Afghan refugees to continue their education during the COVID-19 crisis. However, the activity is still ongoing, and as such no formal assessment has been conducted to demonstrate the impact of the activity on the reduction of dropout rates. Apart from one school in Gamkot Kohat, none of the 10 visited schools by the research team reported the visit of DAFI alumni to their respective schools. However, UNHCR keeps high hopes that DAFI scholarship alumni can have a positive impact on Afghan refugees' education.

- The installation of handwashing stations at schools, in addition to the implementation and adherence to government SOPs such as the wearing of face masks, enhanced the trust of students, parents and teachers. This trust resulted in students being ready to return to school almost immediately after government directives announced it was safe to do so. The parents and students were reassured about the safety measures available at school. The schools' respective administrations including teachers and parents, also identified numerous other activities which helped to reduce the student dropouts. Other activities mentioned during the interviews include implementation of sanitation procedures (i.e. instructions on the cleaning and disinfection of potentially infected areas) and equipping schools with items such as soap, face masks and thermal guns.
- While federal and provincial governments introduced several remote learning methods, a survey conducted by the Malala Fund<sup>66</sup> showed that only 20 percent of students were able to access e-learning, educational TV and educational radio. This was primarily due to issues with accessing devices, competing for demands on time and, in the case of internet access, affordability of data. None of the eleven visited refugee schools reported the use of online teaching during the school closure period.
- Running a 'second shift' in existing boys' schools for girls i.e. after the school closure time for boys, the same school was run for girls education – proved effective in terms of easy provision of access to education for girls, reducing the average fixed cost of the school, and ensuring inclusive education for girls with no additional cost on school infrastructure. The schools were having different teachers –
- mainly female for the girls' school session – and hence this avoided over-burdening teachers who were teaching boys in the morning. UNHCR's EAQE project is practicing this and is providing a base to other developmental and humanitarian organisations to take guidance from the project model of running a second shift in the same school. This is especially pivotal in the perspective of displacement, marginalisation, and an emergency situation because it provides expanded access to education.
- Different best practices which helped bolster student retention were reported by respondent organisations. For example, the World Bank response<sup>67</sup> categorized positive practices into three phases namely coping, managing continuity, and improving/accelerating. Under each phase, the World Bank listed best practices which help in the reduction of students' dropout and improvement of students' learning outcomes (see table below). However, primary data shows that schools that have Afghan refugees enrolled have applied very few of these evidenced practices. Room exists for those responsible for the education of Afghan refugees i.e. UNHCR, CAR and the Elementary and Secondary Education Department of KP to sensitize school management, teachers and policymakers to adopt these best practices for the reduction of student dropouts and improving learning outcomes. The table below has mapped the World Bank best practices and the practices adopted by the schools interviewed during this research.












In the interviews conducted with headteachers, it was highlighted that teachers were largely available to lead classes during the pandemic. However, they were not allowed to come to schools as per the Pakistan Government's school closure policy. Upon being able to return to the classroom, many teachers adopted an abridged curriculum to 'make up for lost time', especially as they were unable to pivot to online teaching during the COVID-19 restrictions.

65 UNHCR, 'Refugee Education Strategy – Pakistan 2020-2022', UNHCR, February 2020, viewed on 29 October 2021, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/73890>

66 Malala Fund, 'Girls Education and Covid-19 in Pakistan', Malala Fund, viewed on 30 October 2021, [https://assets.ctfassets.net/00an5gk9rgbh/5NY-WB1DMSyo5a8VaQfOg7t/0386baa8673eef0c4589be9f5c1be73/Pakistan\\_Report\\_16\\_ME.pdf](https://assets.ctfassets.net/00an5gk9rgbh/5NY-WB1DMSyo5a8VaQfOg7t/0386baa8673eef0c4589be9f5c1be73/Pakistan_Report_16_ME.pdf)

67 World Bank Group, 'The World Bank's Education Response to COVID-19', December 2020, viewed on 30 October 2021, <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/487971608326640355-0090022020/original/ExternalWBEDUResponsetoCOVIDDec15FINAL.pdf>

Table 6: Best practices adopted by schools to continue education during COVID-19

Phase	Key best practice	Adoption status by schools in Pakistan	Adoption level <sup>68</sup>
Coping	Protect health, safety and nutrition	Schools remained closed and shielded children from health and safety related risks	
	Prevent learning losses through remote learning	None. Government schools and refugee schools did not opt for remote learning due to students' lack of online learning tools. The schools' adhered to the government's policy of partial closure, which allowed schools to open with 50% class sizes for three hours daily (instead of 6 hours daily). Students came to school on alternative days.	
Managing continuity	Ensure safety of students	Installed sanitizing stations Instructed staff and students to wear face masks and wash hands regularly Provided personal protection equipment (PPE) such as soap, sanitizers and thermal guns. Some NGOs like Sarhad Rural Support Program (SRSP) installed hand washing stations in refugee schools. None of the 11 schools visited by the research team conducted fumigation procedures due to resources constraints.	
	Prepared for staggered and partial reopening of schools	Schools fully adopted government instructions regarding closure and opening of schools They acted according to the 'smart' <sup>69</sup> lock down approach, as well as reduced the daily tuition time from 6 to 3 hours.	
	Prepared teachers to assess learning losses and close learning gaps	Teachers adopted a selective curriculum, focused curriculum, and priority curriculum.	
	Provide adequate financing for recovery needs, especially for disadvantaged students	None, due to school resource constraints	
Improving and accelerating	Scale up COVID-19 response approaches (e.g. incorporate remote learning, teach at the right level, track at-risk students to prevent dropouts)	Followed prioritized curriculum as per government instructions  Other aspects (e.g. incorporating remote learning, teaching at the right level, and tracking at-risk students to prevent dropouts) were not followed due to capacity and resources limitations of schools.	
Engaging students during school closure	Provide homework to students to keep them engaged in continuation of education.	Very few schools and mainly Primary Schools for Girls (PSGs) practiced this. None of the visited Primary School for Boys (PSBs) reported home assignments for students/boys while schools were closed.	
<b>Additional measures/best practices adopted by different organisations and schools<sup>70</sup></b>			
Back to school campaigns		None of the visited schools reported this in the refugee villages. The Education Sector Working Group did engage in some activities in this regard such as training of teachers on safe reporting and operation of schools, as well as preparing an Education in Emergency Response plan <sup>71</sup> . However, none of the 11 visited schools by the research team were aware of this group or the activities it was engaging with.	
Catching up on lost learning opportunities:		Many schools have adopted selective and focused curriculum, but no catch-up classes were referred to in the visited schools	
Using digital, online and connected education resources		None of the 11 schools visited by the research team reported this. They were of the view that most students don't have access to laptops, tablets, or smart phones and so this would not be feasible.	

68 Green means fully adopted, yellow means partially adopted, and red means was not adopted at all.

69 The 'smart lockdown' was a process of selectively closing the areas experiencing the outbreak of the pandemic. The purpose of a smart lockdown was to provide relief and ease restrictions for the working class to ensure economic survival. The government divided areas into clusters and announced lockdowns in particular clusters based on the number of positive COVID-19 tests.

70 COVID-19 Emergency Education Response Update UNHCR, 2020, viewed on November 3, 2021, [https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/UNHCR%20MENA%20COVID-19%20emergency%20Education%20response%20update%20-%202019%20November%202020\\_0.pdf](https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/UNHCR%20MENA%20COVID-19%20emergency%20Education%20response%20update%20-%202019%20November%202020_0.pdf)

71 Education Sector Working Group bulletin no. 1, January-March, 2021, viewed on November 3, 2021, <https://educationcluster.app.box.com/s/mfeniznoppghmzfx9c5b7m7fq8tfoi8/file/805202610901?sb=/details>





## Research Area 5: Lessons learned for refugee education that can be drawn from education programmes in KP, Pakistan

This research identified the following lessons regarding the provision of access to education for Afghan refugees.

- UNHCR – under their current EAQE project – used existing boys’ primary schools for female students in the latter part of the day, once boys’ classes had finished. This allowed UNHCR to quickly provide education opportunities to marginalized girls and ensured the best utilization of scarce resources. It also managed to generate improved return on investment by reducing the average fixed costs of education provision i.e. the fixed cost remained the same but the average fixed cost was lowered with an increase in outputs and operation. Also, the said program proved that in the context of displacement and conservative cultural practices towards girls’ mobility and education, providing schooling opportunities is possible and the **EAQE program proved that co-education can work for primary level education**. The Government of Pakistan is now adopting a universal coeducation policy at primary level for all newly constructed schools. The same is happening in KP but it is at the discussion stage, and no formal approval has been made so far. Also, only female teachers will be hired for this coeducation at primary level. The government of Balochistan has already approved coeducation at primary level in all public schools. UNHCR under the EAQE program established 31 percent coeducation schools in different refugee villages. UNHCR EAQE in refugee villages is playing an important role in educating Afghan refugee children, however, room exists for further improvement. Increasing educational access for girls in refugee villages and improving the quality of education for Afghan refugee children needs special attention from UNHCR, its partners, CAR and other humanitarian and development organisations who are working in education for marginalized people and in the context of displacement and refugees.
- EAQE is the primary education program that is currently providing education to Afghan refugees inside refugee villages. The program has ensured access to education, however, there remains a need to further improve the quality of education in these schools. To meet the educational needs of marginalized populations, education programs should focus on both access and quality. Meeting one without the other is not sufficient. The equal focus on quality and access determines the true value of the investment and the resources being utilized. Currently, the EAQE project improves access but not the quality to the level it should be. Resultantly, the transition of students from the current grade to the next grade and from primary level education to lower secondary and higher-level education is substandard. This leads to the inefficiency of resource utilization and lowers the return on investment.
- The frequent and long-term closure of schools due to COVID-19 meant that students were not able to complete their grade-specific syllabus/curriculum. The schools’ management shifted to an abridged syllabus that covered only ‘core learning areas’. However, this has a negative impact for learners, who have lost out on “non-core” curricula exposure and learning. This adaptation proved useful in the context of the provision of emergency short-term education and the loss of schooling due to school closure.
- UNHCR’s education programmes in refugee villages have an unequal gender representation in enrollment (65 percent boys vs 35 percent girls enrolled; and 42 percent boys’ schools, 27 percent girls’ schools, 31 percent co-education schools). It is apparent that the programme requires additional resources and improvements to make it more inclusive. In addition, schools in refugee villages lack essential facilities for disabled children. UNHCR’s program is making a positive impact upon access to education, however greater work needs to be done to support marginalized groups such as girls and people with special needs through things such as designated toilets, wheelchairs and ramps. The findings of this research indicate that girls are most likely to be out of school; other children at risk broadly include disabled children, those living in rural areas, Kuchi (nomadic) children, children from poor households, children whose head of household has no formal education, and children in insecure areas. The following groups of children have been identified as excluded or at high risk of exclusion from education:
  - Out of school **primary school-aged children** including; children that are working, children that exceed the school’s enrolment age limits, and girls & children with special needs.
  - Secondary school-aged children, especially girls and children with special needs.
  - Primary school-aged children at risk of dropout
  - Secondary school-aged children at risk of dropout
  - Primary and secondary school-aged children who are studying in low quality schools

Girls and women face considerable constraints in accessing education and employment. Gross enrollment rate for refugee girls is around 34 percent compared to 87 percent for males. Livelihood opportunities for refugee women are limited, often due to constrained mobility (and social segregation between men and women in the public domain) and lack of financial means to establish and maintain a small business.

*(Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Human Capital Investment Project June 02, 2020- Project Inception Document by World Bank*

Various government policies and legislation (see research area 6 for details) currently support Afghans to access different levels of education. However, on the ground implementation of these policies and laws needs improvement. For example, there is a need to increase awareness amongst marginalized Afghan refugee communities about their legal right to access education in public institutions. The government should share policy briefs which promote education

for Afghan refugees with district education officers. This will enhance the understanding and awareness about key policies that promote education for different segments of the population including Afghan refugees. Currently, it is the combination of a lack of awareness amongst the communities about their education rights (especially in the context of displacement), and a lack of readiness of public institutions to accommodate new enrollments of marginalized groups including Afghan refugees.

The likelihood of enrolling children in schools is positively correlated with factors including reducing the distance to schools, parental education level, the confidence of parents and the community in the quality of education, and the trust that education is leading to economic gains. Enrollment rates for girls - especially for adolescent girls - are likely to increase if separate schools for girls are available. In the context of Pushtoon and Afghan culture, separate schools for girls and incentives to girls for attending schools is increasing the enrollment ratio of girls in schools.

Last year an Afghan refugee student was ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> in the S&HS Board of Mardan. He was enrolled in Pakistan higher secondary school.

Parental engagement with their children in school-homework, and follow-up with the school management regarding their child's progress shows positive results in students' performance - especially as it relates to improved attendance, retention, and transition. According to research respondents, high-performing children usually have parents who are literate and engage with their children and their child's school.

*Access by Afghan registered refugee students to Pakistan schools is broadly unhindered, and granted on an equal basis to the host community. In GGPS No. 02, out of 158 enrolled girls, 150 are AR girls (KII with UNHCR partner).*

Appropriate and timely investment in lower-level education feeds into higher-level education. The performance at higher level education is dependent on lower-level education. FGD participants in all visited refugee villages shared that primary level education serves as the nursery for subsequent education.

Overall, access to education for people with disabilities both inside and outside refugee village schools is quite poor. This is due to the unwillingness of parents to educate disabled children, lack of school facilities for disabled students, and a lack of teachers' capacity and skills to teach persons with disability. This is quite evident from the situation observed at 18 refugee village schools (9 boys, 3 girls, 6 coeducation schools) in KP's southern region (Kohat, Bannu, DI Khan and surrounding districts). A total of 5,237 students (1,450 girls (28 percent), 3,789 boys (72 percent)) are enrolled and there are only 47 (9 girls, 38 boys) children with special needs are enrolled. Overall, the research found low levels of inclusive education for children with special needs and that the likelihood of enrolling disabled girls is quite low.

IDEA (UNHCR's partner for the EAQE in refugee village schools) has enrolled about 15,000 students from August 2019 to June 2021 in 55 refugee village schools (40 formal and 15 non-formal/ALPs). There are 40-50 disabled students (0.33 percent) but still, the schools do not provide any special facilities to them.

## **Research Area 6: The significance of education for longer-term integration success and durable solutions**

### **6.1 Political and legal perspective regarding the status of Afghan refugees and their access to state services including education**

Pakistan is not a party to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, nor has it enacted any national legislation for the protection of refugees. This is despite the fact that Pakistan is host to the second highest number of refugees over the past four decades. Pakistan has also not established procedures to determine the refugee status of persons who are seeking international protection within its territory. Such persons are therefore treated in accordance with the provisions of the Foreigners Act, 1946. While the Pakistan Citizenship Act of 1951 states that any person born in Pakistan shall be a citizen by birth, this has not been true for the children of Afghan refugees born in Pakistan. The government of Pakistan through the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) has begun issuing biometric identity smartcards to the 1.4 million Afghan refugees already registered in the country. The upgrade came from an agreement between Pakistan's Ministry of State & Frontier Regions (SAFRON) and the UNHCR. Although officially no changes were made to the Citizenship Act to account for Afghan refugees, the government uses discretionary policies to determine this population's citizenship rights. Given the Citizenship Act guidelines, a person born in Pakistan should be eligible to ob-

tain citizenship. Citizenship has been refused to many Afghan refugees who were born and raised in Pakistan. As a result, Afghan refugees have little hope of obtaining Pakistani citizenship and are only allowed to stay temporarily. There is an expectation that they will return to Afghanistan when the situation improves.

In the absence of a national legal framework, UNHCR conducts refugee status determination under its mandate (Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees adopted by the General Assembly Resolution 428 (V) of 14 December 1950) and on behalf of the Government of Pakistan in accordance with the 1993 Cooperation Agreement between the Government of Pakistan and UNHCR. Pakistan generally accepts UNHCR decisions to grant refugee status and allows asylum-seekers (who are still undergoing the procedure) as well as recognized refugees to remain in Pakistan pending identification of a durable solution.

However, Pakistan does provide some services to Afghan refugees, primarily as a result of the country's ratification of various international treaties. These include:

- The right to education as a result of Pakistan's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990. Article 28 confers this right.
- Pakistan is a State Party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) which stipulates in Article 13 the right "...of everyone to...Secondary education in its different forms, including technical and vocational...generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education".
- Pakistan ratified the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1996 and is obliged under Article 10 to "... take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education". The international treaties do not accept discrimination on the basis of a child's status as a refugee.
- The Government of Pakistan renewed its commitment to ensuring unhindered access of Afghan children to Pakistani schools at the Leaders' Summit on Refugees, hosted by the US President Barack Obama on 20 September 2016

## 6.2 Afghan refugees' access to education

This research found that according to the current policy and legislative environment, Afghan refugees with PoR cards have comparable access to education as host community populations in Pakistan. This of course does not play out in implementation. For example, the Constitution of Pakistan (1973) directs the state to provide the right to education to all persons within the nation's borders. Article 25-A of the Constitution states, "*The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to sixteen years in such manner as may be determined by law.*". Access to education is irrespective of nationality and residence status. The Constitution also talks about its responsibility to eradicate illiteracy and provide free education at least up to the secondary level.

Youth empowerment through education, skills and livelihoods is also an overarching thematic priority of the regional multi-year Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) implemented jointly by the Governments of the Islamic Republics of Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa *Free Compulsory Primary and Secondary Education Act 2017* focuses on inclusion for all types of children including Afghan refugees. This legislation theoretically guarantees access to education for Afghan refugees, however, there has been several issues that has precluded its effective implementation. For example, school headteachers can restrict the enrollment of new students if they believe that the school does not have enough space for new students.

Prior to 2019, the KP Education Department classified non-Pakistani students as "foreign students" in its monitoring of the public education projects in the province and in its Education Management Information System (EMIS). However, the monitoring and EMIS was not able to distinguish between refugee and non-refugee students as every non-Pakistani student was recorded/counted as "foreign student". In order to have better tracking of the refugee students in the province, the KP Education Department in its ***Education Sector Plan for 2020/21 – 2024/25*** has a separate category for Afghan refugees. This will help to track the number of Afghan refugees in the education sector and to plan for them in terms of resource allocation and teacher training. The said plan has mentioned a variety of factors to promote the education of Afghan refugees. Some key features include:

- Under ***priority area I***-improving access to education, through the periodic survey (every 4 years) the KP Education Department provides an estimation for the number of Out-of-School Children (OOSC). To ensure

access to education for Afghan refugees, the department will now include Afghan children who are out of school in the survey. This will help in understanding the situation of Afghan refugees and to plan for improved access to education, and to mainstream OOSC into formal education.

- As part of the inclusive education (**section 2.2.5 of the plan**) priority, the KP Education Department is focusing on inclusive education and aims to facilitate the enrollment of marginalized, disabled and refugee children. Further, it will ensure the provision of free textbooks to children enrolled in refugee village schools on par with local children and the enhancement of public-school infrastructure to accommodate more refugees in hosting areas. Also, as part of the inclusive education initiative, the Government of KP has mandated the Education Department to integrate refugee children into public schools.
- Under **priority area II** related to enhancing quality and relevance of education, the KP Education Department is focusing on the capacity building of teachers working in refugee village schools (with the support of UNHCR and other development partners). The department is doing this under the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) framework.
- After the 18th Amendment to the Constitution, curriculum development, its amendment and implementation is the mandate of provincial governments. The Directorate of Curriculum and Teacher Education (DCTE) is the responsible body for curriculum development, review of textbooks and ensuring alignment of all textbooks with the curriculum. The Single National Curriculum (SNC) is being developed to provide equal opportunity to all children (including foreigners and refugees) to receive quality education. As part of the single national curriculum and integration of refugees into public schools, the KP Education Department and UNHCR signed a Letter of Understanding (LOU) in September 2019 to mainstream Afghan refugee children into public education. As part of this LoU, the KP Education Department has taken the following steps regarding the education of refugee children in its **Education Sector Plan for 2020/21 – 2024/25**.
  - UNHCR in agreement with the KP Education Department has adopted the Pakistani curriculum in all refugee village schools.
  - The Department has allowed inclusion of Afghan refugee children during the annual school census which takes place every four years.
  - Like host students, the department is providing free textbooks to Afghan refugees in all public schools (UNHCR is providing such books in refugee village schools)
  - The department has informed and oriented district education officials to facilitate admission/enrollment of Afghan refugee children in primary and secondary schools. As per the guidelines and policy of the KP Education Department, refugee children can take admission in any public school.
  - The GoP has directed all public schools to enroll the maximum number of students possible so that the GoP meets the target of SDG 4 to ensure inclusive and quality education for all. This proved an enabling environment for the enrollment of Afghan refugee children as schools are struggling meet their respective enrollment targets. A respondent of an NGO has termed this quite conducive for improving access to education for Afghan refugees and he believes that this will ensure “Reaching the unreached and making the ordinary extraordinary”.

However, some of the respondents did share concerns regarding the implementation of these policies and regulations on the ground. During a KII, one UNHCR partner declared that *“some Pakistani schools are unwilling to enroll Afghan refugee children due to the likelihood of their dropout from schools and their low scores during examinations. Besides enrollment figures, the school management also keeps in mind the other targets such as dropout rates, graduation rates and repetition rate for the school. So they are favoring Pakistani students over Afghan refugee students to be enrolled in the school”*. A respondent employed by another UNHCR partner shared similar views, noting that *“policy is always positive towards education for Afghan refugees. However, the implementation of policy on the ground and the different narratives by public officials are making the environment less favorable for Afghan refugees”*.

The FGD participants were of the view that they had comparatively easier access healthcare services than education services. At health care centres, they don't ask for documentation such as a PoR card or other forms of ID. In schools, the administration asks for a PoR card, school leaving certificate and they are required to take the competency test of the enrolling students. In some cases, the children are unable to meet the education institution requirements and resultantly, the kids are deprived of an education. A teacher during an interview with the research team quoted, *“It is quite easy for the parents and community to enroll their children in RV schools. The students are extremely poor, but this is not the case for the students who are going to schools situated outside of the refugee villages like urban areas. Host communities have accepted Afghan refugee children, they do respect them. Government has allowed enrollment of AR children in public schools”*.

An FGD participant in Kohat Gamkol RV shared, “Enrolling our children in primary and secondary level schools is easy. However, the difficulty of enrolling our children increases for higher education. Academic institutions usually don't accept POR cards and they demand a NOC from the Afghan government. It is quite laborious and almost impossible for us to get a NOC from the Afghan government. We have to go back to Afghanistan and surrender our PoR cards. The fear of losing refugee status compels us to compromise on our children's education especially for higher grades (above the secondary level of education)”.

This means the provision of NOC for parents and students is the key a barrier for admission in higher education. Another participant of the FGD in Haripur shared, “We are thankful to the government of Germany and UNHCR for awarding DAFI scholarships to AR students. However, largely, the scholarships are for science subjects. Our students wish to graduate in Pashtoo, Islamiyat, Denyat and history. The preference of DAFI on science subjects has reduced the opportunities for higher education for AR students who wish to graduate in arts subjects”.

Schools do not have restrictions on the enrollment of children with disabilities. However, schools have no special arrangements such as separate toilets, rails to assist with walking etc. to meet the needs of children with disabilities. A teacher from Gamkol refugee village shared that he accompanies another student with the disabled child and helps him visit the toilet. Most schools have an extremely small number of children with disabilities enrolled, despite the school having an equal policy for the enrolment of able-bodied and disabled children. However, parents themselves are not enrolling disabled children, especially female children with special needs. A KII respondent from PSB 142 reported zero disabled students at his school. The PTCs (parents teachers committee) can play an important role in sensitizing parents regarding the right of education for disabled children and the PTC members should persuade parents in this regard (see recommendation). A senior official from CAR suggested that UNHCR should undertake a complete profiling of disabled refugee children to know about their population, their living locations, type of disabilities and their education needs and challenges to accessing education and other services. This will help UNHCR, CAR and other development organizations to better plan, design intervention and meet the needs of disabled children.

*PWDs of Pakistani/host community has quite limited access to education. The access of education for AR disabled children is even worse. Teachers lack skills of inclusive teaching pedagogy, and they are unable to fulfill the education needs of disabled children. Also, the schools lack key facilities for disabled children. The textbooks are also not inclusive from a disability perspective. Books lack workable activities for children with disabilities.*  
**(KII with NGO official in Peshawar)**

A KII respondent in Kohat (PSB 191) shared that “we have one disabled student. His father brings him to school on his back. We don't have any facility for him in school. I do acknowledge that our school is not inclusive of disabled children. It is beyond our capacity to look after disabled students and teach them in a conducive environment.”

Another community respondent in Haripur shared, “It is quite unlikely that children with disabilities start school and if they do, usually they are not transitioning to secondary schools. They have limited access to the school due to different reasons including but not limited to a lack of understanding about their needs, lack of trained teachers, lack of classroom support and lack of learning resources and facilities” (FGD with AR community in Haripur).

### 6.3 Quality of education available to Afghan refugees

Respondents comprising mainly of teachers, CAR representatives, partner organisations and community members shared mixed views regarding the quality of education in refugee village schools. They listed numerous factors that contribute to the low quality of education provided. Some of these factors include the unavailability of qualified and experienced teachers, and the lack of grade and age-specific learning materials (books, workbooks, stationery). Some respondents shared positive views about the quality of education. According to them, were Afghan refugee children who received primary education from refugee village schools, continued their education in public, private and Afghan Consulate schools and are now serving in different sectors as doctors, engineers, teachers and other professional careers. One of the teachers from the refugee village shared, “I am a graduate of this RV school and now I am teaching at the same school”. Another participant shared, “the kid of my neighbor reads in class 3. I take my mobile to him and he reads the SMS for me from my mobile”. A female FGD participant in Shamshatoo shared, “when we were kids, we were unaware of the importance of education but as we grow up, we feel like nothing, we can't read numbers on mobile, nor we can read any signboard to find any health facility in case of need. If men are not around, we feel helpless. I am glad that my kids are not facing the same issues and they have received basic education in Pakistan”.

A senior CAR official noted that, “Participants from the RAHA program constructed classrooms for Afghan refugees. There are no policy barriers to Afghan refugees’ enrollment in public education institutions. They even have designated places set aside for higher education. However, they face language issues especially in English and Urdu and have a tough time in completing higher education. This is mainly due to the low quality of education they are getting at the primary and secondary levels”.

The same CAR official also mentioned that CAR has an MOU with the University of Engineering and Technology, Peshawar. Under this MOU, the university will accommodate 72 Afghan refugee students, to provide skill equivalency certificates related to engineering fields like road surveying, electrical engineering, telecommunications, and mechanical work. The CAR representative stated that the GOP has offered thousands of scholarships to Afghan nationals. However, the number of scholarships for Afghan refugees were just 14. This shows the access to higher education for Afghan refugees is quite a big obstacle both from economic perspectives such that the refugees are unable to afford higher education and from policy perspectives that the government is more supportive of Afghan nationals than Afghan refugees.

The majority of the respondents showed dissatisfaction with the quality of education Afghan refugees have access to, and especially the education in refugee village schools. According to them, the teacher-student ratio is quite large, with countless examples of there being more than 70 students in a classroom. A lack of appropriate classroom furniture, as well as school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic are the dominant reasons of low-quality education the Afghan refugee children are receiving. One FGD participant shared, *“I know students who are in grade 3 and above but they are facing issues writing their names and the name of their schools”*. Another FGD participant shared, *“it is quite hard for our children to get a job after graduation. Variety of factors play role in this but in many cases, the host people supersede them in job competition”*.

Overall, most respondents were of the view that the quality of education is better at private and public schools in comparison to refugee village schools. Different respondents expressed their concerns about the capabilities of teachers. They were of the view that only people who were not suitable for other jobs teach at refugee village schools. The FGD participants in Baddaber refugee village shared, *“teachers don’t give homework to children and if they give homework, they (the teachers) don’t check. This has adverse effects on the quality of education. Also, some of the students don’t have books or have old books but they are damaged and often have missing pages”*.

A high-ranking UNHCR official shared his concern on the quality of education Afghan refugees are receiving inside refugee villages. On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 minimum and 10 maximum), he categorized the quality of education for grades 1 & 2 as a six, for grades 3 & 4 he assigned score of four, and for grade 5 he assigned a score of three.

UNHCR has taken different steps to improve the quality of education. As part of the UNHCR’s global strategy<sup>72</sup>, and UNHCR Refugee Education Strategy<sup>73</sup>-it has planned to mainstream refugee village schools into Pakistani formal education. It has also adopted the Pakistani curriculum for all refugee village schools.

All schools are now utilising the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Textbook Board and Directorate of Curriculum and Teacher Education approved books. This ensures the inclusion aspects of educating the host and Afghan refugee community. Prior to the adoption of the Pakistani curriculum, some of the teachers were matric (10 grade) qualified and were teaching in RV schools. UNHCR now have strict education criteria for teachers. It has replaced all teachers (host and Afghan) who did not possess graduation level education. Also, UNHCR has facilitated the retirement of teachers aged 60 years and above as per Pakistan’s national retirement age.

UNHCR has also increased the number of teachers to better serve students and improve the teacher-student ratio. A female respondent from Kohat shared, *“the teachers have increased since November 2020, and previously there were only 2 teachers; now there are 5 teachers. I am confident the induction of new teachers will contribute to the enhancement of quality education”*.

UNHCR has allowed refugee schools to set up multiple sections of the same grade/class in case of a higher number of students to improve the teacher-student ratio. Certain schools in refugee villages run two and three sections of the same grade.

72 UNHCR, ‘Refugee Education 2030: A Strategy for Refugee Inclusion’, UNHCR, 2019, viewed on 30 October 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/5d-651da88d7.pdf>

73 UNHCR, ‘Pakistan - Refugee Education Strategy (2020-2022)’, UNHCR, 2020, viewed online 30 October 2021, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/73890>

An overwhelming majority of the respondents were of the view that access to education is decreasing with an increase in education level and this is even more pronounced for girls and children with disabilities. Largely the access to school is not inclusive for disabled children and marginalized girls.

## Research Area 7: Potential measures to ensure that displacement affected children are enrolled in schools and provided with learning opportunities

### Key barriers to education faced by Afghan refugees

This research found a variety of barriers faced by Afghan refugees in accessing education. The barriers are categorized into demand and supply-side barriers, and are as follows:

Table 7: Demand and supply side barriers Afghan refugees are facing in accessing education

Demand side barriers (mainly from the communities and families)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less educated or illiterate parents often do not recognize the importance of education</li> <li>• General poverty and lack of affordability; Children particularly from age 8 and above commence working due to economic necessity. They are either truant from school, or have a high rate of absenteeism, thereby resulting in lower education outcomes.</li> <li>• Opportunity cost of attending schools i.e. children that are currently working will have to cease this in order to be able to attend school. In addition, the families of these children will consider school attendance as an additional expense, and hence they may not see the value of this opportunity cost.</li> <li>• Early marriage of girls is one of the key reasons for the discontinuation of girls' education.</li> <li>• Community members have different preferences when it comes to following either the Afghan or Pakistani curriculum; Afghan refugees prefer the Afghan curriculum, whereas UNHCR has adopted the Pakistani curriculum in all refugee village schools as per its agreement with the Elementary and Secondary Education Department of KP.</li> <li>• Pressure on parents for youth to contribute to household finances rather than continue education</li> <li>• Lack of academic certificates required for admission into higher education</li> <li>• Household and community attitudes towards education (especially for girls and persons with disability)</li> <li>• Seasonal migration: Over time, some refugees have migrated from refugee villages to urban centers, while others have remained in rural areas. Migration has posed significant challenges for refugee education, as it has become increasingly difficult for UNHCR to ensure access to education for children who are outside of refugee villages</li> </ul>
Supply side barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of employability after completion of education reduces parents' desire for educating children</li> <li>• Distance of schools from villages meant that parents generally don't send their children to schools located far away, particularly girls.</li> <li>• Perceived lower quality of education at schools by parents</li> <li>• Lack of necessary facilities especially for girls and persons with disability</li> <li>• High teacher to student ratios</li> <li>• Lack of engaging learning materials</li> <li>• Uncertainty about POR cards renewal</li> <li>• Lack of exclusive girls' schools in the context of refugee villages</li> <li>• Insufficient access to secondary and higher education due to low quality primary education</li> <li>• UNHCR's significant funding gaps</li> <li>• Teachers are unprepared to teach a diverse, multicultural, and multilingual student population</li> <li>• A disproportionate number of scholarships between Afghan nationals and Afghan refugees</li> <li>• Less than conducive classroom environment (students are sitting on the floor)</li> <li>• Overcrowded classroom settings (no space for additional students)</li> <li>• Lack of education institutions that provide support to students who may have dropped out</li> <li>• Lack of proper infrastructure and WASH facilities</li> <li>• Lack of qualified female teachers</li> <li>• Lack of school supplies, equipment, basic furniture, electricity</li> </ul>

**High cost of education:** Overall, for many displaced families, the cost of educating their children is too high, and attending school also has a high opportunity cost for families, especially as teenage males may often dropout of school to work and support their families.

**Expenses on various school items/factors hamper students' retention.** These factors include costs incurred on items such as uniforms, transportation, and meals/pocket money at school time, but also indirect costs such as the opportu-

nity cost of a child's time spent in education (they could otherwise be working for money/wages). They are substantial barriers to retention, especially for poor families. Furthermore, many children dropout after the early years of schooling (prior to reaching 6 grade) because there are no secondary schools or high schools in their area. Poor school infrastructure and sub-standard facilities also prevent children from staying in school. Many studies, including by the World Bank found that there is strong evidence that factors including the provision of and access to basic services, such as water, sanitation, waste disposal and electricity all positively increase the chances of pupils and teachers attending school, remaining healthy at school, and, in the case of teachers, staying in their profession.

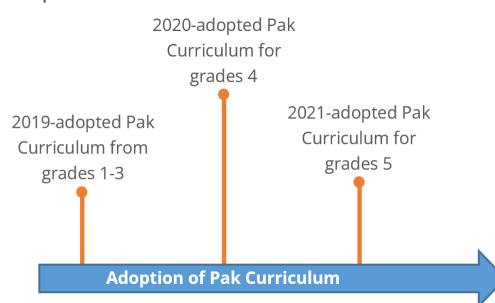
**Poor school management and governance** also affect the number of teachers in school and therefore learning. Poor supervision was cited by some respondents as a reason for low motivation and teacher absenteeism in government schools.

**Poor teaching skills:** The data collected from teachers, FGDs and KIIs shared that the main barrier to learning was a lack of teaching capacity. This is due to a lack of available teaching materials combined with outdated teaching pedagogy often referred to as the Ratta system (rote learning/memorization). This system consists of memorizing information through repetition. Concepts that are learned are not contextualized or explained further so children cannot apply them to real-life situations. A teacher respondent of KII in Akora RV shared, "a student of grade 4 can solve the question of five-minus-three equal two ( $5-3=2$ ) but if he/she is asked that you are five years of age and your brother is two years of age, how older you are from your brother? According to him, the student is unable to solve such questions".

**Poor quality of education:** An NGO respondent working with Afghan refugees providing education programmes shared that the poor quality of education is an important barrier to learning in Pakistan. Low teacher motivation, inappropriate teaching methods and absence of teaching materials reduce children's opportunities to learn and discourages them from staying in school. Those who complete a particular level of education are often lacking key skills and knowledge to successfully enter the job market. This skills deficiency extends from the written application, interview, and ability to convert knowledge to a workplace environment. Resultantly, employers are not satisfied with these graduates and often they lose their jobs.

**Poverty is one of the key barriers to education for Afghan refugees:** The costs of sending children to school and/or the opportunity cost of the children not participating in an income-generating activity are reportedly too high for some families.

**Ancillary costs as an economic barrier:** Although education is free in public schools both for host communities and Afghan refugees, families still face financial barriers in the form of ancillary education costs. For many poor families it is not the direct costs of education, but rather indirect costs, such as school supplies, transport and food that render education unaffordable. **The lack of documentation, pressure to earn, language barriers, insufficient number of schools especially for girls and PWDs, migration and poverty are some of the reasons that keep refugee children out of school.**



**Adoption of single national curriculum:** One of the major barriers reported by the Afghan refugee community is the shifting to the Pakistan curriculum and the adoption of a single national curriculum. This research found different views regarding the adoption of a single curriculum. UNHCR as part of the letter of understanding with the E&SE adopted in stages the Pakistani curriculum in all refugee villages.

Mainly, government officials and NGOs favor the Pakistani curriculum because it is aligned to priority area II of the *enhancing quality and relevance of education of the KP Education Sector Plan 2020/21 to 2024/25*.

CAR, the Education Department of KP and UNHCR are in favor of the Pakistan curriculum. They are of the view that running a parallel education system in refugee villages and private Afghan schools is not aligned to the needs of the market, the interest of

*Initially AR families refused to receive primary books of Pakistani curriculum. later Afghan Shura intervened and convinced AR community to accept the books as this is important for the children of AR to continue their education (interview with one of ex-UNHCR partner) partner in implementing education program in RVs).*



the KP Education Department, or the number of available resources. They are of the view that the quality of education of the Pakistan curriculum is superior to the Afghan curriculum. A high-level CAR official shared, *“it is best practice internationally to adopt the host country curriculum for displaced and refugee populations. We should follow this, and we should have followed this since the arrival of Afghan refugees in Pakistan (referring to 1979-80)”*.

Refugee children will receive government of Pakistan certificates demonstrating their proficiency at primary, secondary and college levels. Refugee students will obtain accredited examinations and certification that will enable them to continue their higher education or compete for employment in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. The Pakistani curriculum uses English as the medium of instruction for all subjects except Urdu language and Islamic studies. Learning English also has the potential to open other opportunities for work and study.

Afghan communities mainly favor the Afghan curriculum. They believe that their students perform well in this curriculum. Also, the adults and parents are able to complete homework with the children. It is either not possible or extremely difficult for them to do homework with children who are/will be studying Pakistani curriculum.

A teacher respondent in Kohat shared that 95% of Afghan refugee children are going to Afghan schools (private Afghan schools and Afghan Consulate registered schools (Lesa after primary graduation. Keeping this reality in mind, Afghan refugees have reservations on the adoption of Pakistani curriculum in refugee schools. Participants of FGDs in Nowshehra, Haripur and Peshawar shared that neither UNHCR nor CAR nor E&SE department consulted the Afghan community regarding this change.

The Afghan Consulate in Pakistan also prefers and allows only Afghan curriculum in its registered schools. During FGDs with the Afghan refugee community and KIIs with teachers and head teachers, they shared the following concerns on the adoption of the Pakistani curriculum.

- The children will ultimately go to Afghanistan, and they will face issues if they have received education in the Pakistani curriculum.
- Parents of Afghan children who are encouraged to enroll in state schools and learn in Urdu/English may feel that their children will be disadvantaged upon return and entry into the Afghan school stream, in which Dari/Pashto are the languages of instruction.

Almost 100% of the FGD participants in all five refugee villages shared that the government of Pakistan is taking the fundamental right from children by preventing education in their mother tongue.

**The misalignment of grade 6 between Afghan and Pakistani curricula:** Primary level education in Afghanistan is from grade 1 to 6. The primary level education in Pakistan is from grade 1 to 5. The lower secondary education level starts from grade 7 in Afghanistan and grade 6 in Pakistan. Students who complete primary level education in Pakistani curriculum and would like to go to Afghan curriculum schools for secondary level are unable to do grade 6 because they have to be enrolled in grade 7 i.e. bypassing grade 6 (as secondary level starts from grade 7 under the Afghan curriculum). Similarly, primary level students in Afghan curriculum school who wish to transfer to Pakistani schools for lower secondary level education will be admitted to the 6<sup>th</sup> grade and hence the student effectively needs to repeat one year of education as they have already covered grade 6 in Afghan primary education. The repetition of grade 6 is considered as a 'lost academic year' for students. This is quite a big issue for the students and both Pakistani and Afghan schools. Discussions are ongoing amongst UNHCR, CAR and E&SE (elementary and secondary education) and Afghan Consulate to resolve this issue but it stands as it is while we were doing this research. Afghan Consulate has shown willingness to start its secondary level education from grade 6 from next academic year but no formal arrangement or approval has been made so far.

# Recommendations

## Recommendations for CAR, UNHCR and donors

- 1. Set up separate girls' schools:** CAR and UNHCR should focus on refugee villages where there are no schools for girls. The lack of schools in RVs and the presence of far-flung schools mainly outside of the RVs are the dominant factors of low girls' education. Provision of schools for girls and co-education schools in RVs will tremendously enhance access to education. UNHCR may adopt the model of running two shifts (one for boys, one for girls) in schools. This way, girls will have easier access to education, will make UNHCR's approach more inclusive for girls, and will reduce the average fixed costs of boys' schools. The establishment of non-formal schools in remote areas can be encouraged; these schools should be formed with the help of community leaders and community participation.
- 2. Making access to education inclusive for disabled children:** At present, refugee village schools have a negligible number of enrolled students with disabilities. There are no restrictions from schools regarding their admission, but broadly it is the choice/decision of parents not to enroll them in the schools. The PTCs can play an important role and they should follow up with parents and include a message during the enrollment campaigns regarding enrolling children with disabilities. Also, UNHCR should take complete data of the disabled children in RV schools and should plan for filling the gap of key facilities especially lavatory for disabled children. Making schools inclusive must be part of the ongoing and upcoming education programs for both host and Afghan refugee communities. The education systems at provincial, district and refugee village levels should ensure and promote inclusion and equity in their education programs. This will ensure that all children enjoy their basic human education rights without discrimination. Donors should prioritize providing grants for implementing education projects that promote gender equality and inclusion of PWDs.
- 3. Improve the effectiveness of Parent Teacher Committees:** Some of the visited schools (for example PSB 279) reported that PTCs exist, but it is not effective in maintaining the school property, following-up with parents who are not sending their kids to school, and engaging with parents who don't actively participate in yearly enrollment campaigns. UNHCR through its implementing partner (IDEA and the replacement partner for ICMC) can work with the school administration to enhance the effectiveness of PTCs.
- 4. Reduce distance to schools:** UNHCR in consultation with CAR and its implementing partners should consider the issue of far-flung RV schools in each refugee village. They should jointly agree on a minimum average distance of the school from Afghan refugees' households and should communicate with government and plan jointly with the provincial government to set up schools at a minimum average distance. This will ensure and enhance access to education for marginalized students who are usually deprived of education due to their physical distance from school. Further, the idea of community-based education should be promoted as such education in the past has worked well especially in the context of insecurity and Afghanistan. For example, during 2014-19, USAID in partnership with the Afghan Ministry of Education implemented a Community Based Education program. The program established a total of 6,334 community-based schools and accelerated learning centers, enrolled a total of 148,368 (including 72,596 girls) students and trained a total of 5,994 teachers and 1,527 school management Shura members<sup>74</sup>.
- 5. Capacity building of CAR staff:** The CAR staff work directly with Afghan refugees. The staff capacity especially of Refugee District Administrator (RDA) and Refugee Village Administrators (RVA) needs improvement. These people mainly focus on the movement of Afghan refugees inside and outside of refugee villages and grant access to and monitor the activities of visitors, researchers and development and humanitarian practitioners. Enhancing the capacity of RDAs, RVAs and the staff working under them the education sector will have a direct and immediate impact on the access to and quality of education for Afghan refugee children.
- 6. Donors' coordination with private schools especially with Afghan refugee owned private schools:** In the case whereby Pakistani schools are located a significant distance away, and Afghan refugee communities prefer the Afghan curriculum, private Afghan schools are providing the best alternative education to Afghan refugee families. However, these schools charge a fee – on average 450 rupees per month per student. The majority of Afghan refugees living in refugee villages are economically marginalized and they face issues in paying private school fees especially when they have three or more children of school age. Education programs and donors who are interested in the continuation of education for Afghan refugees can coordinate with these private schools in the form of grants, scholarships, and vouchers to students. These measures will help private schools to meet their expenses and will provide accessible education to Afghan refugee students.
- 7. Supporting the reduction of child marriage:** The practice of child marriage is deeply rooted in social norms and traditions of some segments within the Afghan refugee community and is one of the key barriers to the continuation of girls' education. This requires high-level political commitment and community mobilization to

74 Community based education in Afghanistan-<https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/fact-sheets/community-based-education-cbe>, accessed December 9, 2021

promote change. Financial incentives for poor rural girls for the continuation of their education will delay early marriages. The full pledge implementation of child labor laws will have an impact on the continuation of children's education. The donors of education programmes should allocate some funds for the social mobilization aspects and awareness about the negative consequences of early marriages on girls with special reference to their education.

8. **Availability of data on disability:** the schools the research team visited are not maintaining proper records relating to disabled students. UNHCR is in the process of compiling data on disability in refugee village schools. Overall, accurate data on the number of disabled students is not available either through UNHCR or refugee village schools. Proper data on PWDs will allow education programmes to plan properly and design and implement education programmes for PWDs. This will help policymakers and donor agencies to ensure access and participation barriers are mitigated for all disabled students, and that programmes are inclusive for people with special needs.
9. **Inclusion of Afghan refugee students in Annual Status Education Report (ASER):** Idara-e-Taleem-o-Agahi (ITA) conducts an annual assessment countrywide regarding the access, quality and learning assessment of students. It publishes reports on an annual basis and disaggregates findings by gender, class/grade, academic subject, geography, age and district. However, ASER is administering its survey with Pakistani students only. The findings of ASER in many cases can be used as proxies for Afghan refugee children but proxies lack the potential to truly assess the education status of this cohort. The findings of this research recommend the inclusion of Afghan refugee schools in the annual ASER assessment. UNHCR, CAR and E&SE of KP can play a role and should coordinate with ITA to include Afghan refugee students in its annual ASER assessment.
10. **Barriers to accessing lower secondary and above level of education:** Overall, Afghan refugee children have access to primary-level education, however there are barriers to progressing past this level. Donors such as UNHCR, USAID, FCDO, EU etc. should think of the provision of lower secondary (middle-up to grade 8), secondary (up to grade 10) and higher secondary (up to grade 12) level education to Afghan refugee students. This will ensure the continuation of their education from the post-primary level. Their future programming planning should prioritize access to lower secondary, secondary, and higher secondary level educations.

## Recommendations for government and policy makers

11. **Recruiting and training female teachers:** Girls are less likely to transition to lower secondary education and specific measures to improve their completion of the basic education cycle are crucial. One particular concern in the Afghan context remains the relatively low percentage of female teachers. Recruiting and training female teachers for both primary and secondary levels would strongly contribute to improving the perception of schools among communities and households.
12. **Developing pilot Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programmes** to address vulnerable households for whom economics and ancillary costs are the primary drivers of OOSC. Several studies on cash transfer (incentives-based education) for improving enrollment in schools have proved the positive correlation of enrollment with incentive-based education<sup>75</sup>. The current KP government Girls Education Stipend program should be extended to refugee village schools.
13. **Re-integration of former students into education:** A significant number of students ceased their education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Sizeable resources have been spent on educating these students, however they discontinued their education due to school closure and are now engaged in income-generating activities. Present and upcoming education programmes should seek to re-engage these former students. They already have some education, and it will be relatively simple and cost-effective to incorporate them into future education programmes. The implementation agencies of such education programs may utilize and benefit from the RV schools' data of former students. The schools in refugee villages, UNHCR and CAR have detailed data of former students. Education programmes and education agencies should take guidance from the UNESCO worldwide "girls back to school campaign"<sup>76</sup>. The guide aims to help policymakers and practitioners in Ministries of Education and their partners address the gender dimensions of COVID-related school closures. It provides targeted recommendations to ensure continuity of learning while schools are closed, and to establish comprehensive, timely and evidence-based plans for reopening schools in a way that is safe, gender-responsive and child-friendly, and meets the needs of the most marginalized students including girls<sup>77</sup>.
14. **Tracking Afghan refugees' education status:** The district education department conducts regular reviews of the education system and progress. But it has no specific indicators for Afghan refugee students. Since the majority of registered Afghan refugees are living in KP, it is important that the district government develop and track key indicators for Afghan refugees living in the province and especially in the context of education

75 Ministry of Education, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Samuel Hall, *All in School and Learning: Global Initiative on Out-Of-School Children – Afghanistan Country Study*, Ministry of Education, UNICEF, Samuel Hall and USAID, Kabul, 2018

76 UNESCO (August 2020) Building back equal-Girls back to school guide.

77 <https://en.unesco.org/news/launch-building-back-equal-girls-back-school-guide>, viewed October 2021.

for displaced people. The Education Sector Development Plan of KP's Education Department has developed a separate disaggregation of students by residency status (host, asylum, refugee) and it should direct the district education departments to trace the education status of Afghan refugees in their respective districts.

15. **Focus on improving quality of education with access to education:** FGD and KII respondents suggested various measures to improve the quality of education for Afghan refugee students. After careful analysis of their responses, this research is recommending the following two types of strategies for the improvement of the quality of education. The provincial government with the help of district education departments can play pivotal role in this regard.
  - **Bottom-top approach/push strategy** that should focus on the quality of primary level education, sensitize parents and community on the importance of education, and encourage parents to be actively engaged in their child's education. This will have a positive association with the retention, transition, and increased learning outcomes of the students.
  - **Top-bottom approach/pull up strategy** that should focus on provincial advocacy to sensitize government officials on a child's right to access education – with special reference to the right of education for refugee children. Also, the government should disseminate its key policies and regulations which promote education for Afghan refugee children e.g., the government should increase the capacity of public institutions to accommodate Afghan refugee children in Pakistani schools. This is especially important for schools situated near RVs and areas outside of the RVs that have sizable populations of Afghan refugees.
16. **Create a supportive legal framework to encourage the incorporation of migrant/refugee children into formal schools:** Residency status and documentation requirements should not be barriers for migrant/refugee children to enroll in school. Standardized placement exams can be used to determine the grade level of migrant/refugee students who lack records of past studies and/or proof of age and earlier qualification. The National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC) has now legally adopted the concept of RPL (recognition of prior learning) for assessing the technical capabilities of persons and awards technical education levels accordingly. Similar initiatives with the help of UNHCR and the Elementary and Secondary Education Department can enhance the transition and enrollment of Afghan refugee children who are unable to provide a certificate of previous education/learning. The KP Education Department should assess this and approve the enrollment of Afghan children into schools according to recognition of prior learning, rather than solely through the provision of certificates.
17. **Training for teachers on selected and prioritized curriculum:** The closure of schools due to COVID-19 resulted in significant lost time within the academic year. After schools reopened, teachers were not able to cover the full curriculum and hence they had to teach according to a trimmed syllabus. Teachers need training to select topics, prepare lesson plans and deliver the selected syllabus. Currently, there are no such training planned. The research recommends that the Education Department plan such training for teachers. The department can design a separate training or can include extra modules for teachers to build their capacity and to recover the lost time to the extent it's possible.

## Recommendations for the school administration

18. **Ensuring girls' learning environments meet basic security needs and facilities:** schools should have walls, closed toilets, handwashing stations and stable and easy access to drinking water. Lack of toilet facilities at schools is the single largest barrier to girls' inclusion in education. This is a priority in girls' schools, as girls are currently going back and forth to their homes just to use the toilet. This is embarrassing for girls, and, wastes their school time. School administrators should resolve this issue and should coordinate with the district education department for the release of funds to operationalize the WASH facilities at schools.

# Annexes

## Annex-1 Research Terms of Reference (TOR)

The Asia Displacement Solutions Platform (ADSP) is a joint initiative of three member organizations, which aims to contribute to the development of solutions for populations affected by displacement in the region. ADSP engages in evidence-based advocacy initiatives to support improved outcomes for displacement-affected communities. ADSP members work closely with displaced populations and the communities that host them and are therefore able to contribute a distinctive, field-led, perspective to policy and advocacy processes. The ADSP will contribute to the understanding of the complex displacement dynamics at play across Asia. With a focus on the Rohingya and Afghan displacement axes, ADSP is contributing to the creation of a clear evidence base to inform advocacy, support effective programming interventions, and bring a field-led perspective to policy processes.

### Research Study in Pakistan

Pakistan hosts more than 1.4 million registered Afghans who have been forced to flee their homes. The majority of them live in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, located along the Afghan border. Pakistan has an estimated 22.8 million children aged 5-16 not attending school. Among Afghan communities residing in refugee villages (RVs), the figures present a bleak situation. An analysis of population and enrolment data from 5 selected RVs in Peshawar district suggests that up to 85% of school aged children are not attending school. Out of 16,533 primary aged children, only 2,397 are enrolled in RV schools. Furthermore, there are no facilities available in the RVs for post-primary education, suggesting that most, if not all, Afghan children aged 12-17 are not attending schools in those areas. Where children are enrolled in RV schools, data indicates a high dropout rate. Refugees residing in RVs have received sustained funding from UNHCR and other humanitarian actors for more than four decades, therefore it warrants research into the barriers preventing children from accessing education and the reasons explaining the failure of humanitarian and education actors to even slightly advance SDG4 in RVs. Lack of access to education acts a significant barrier to the attainment of all durable solutions. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, risks of school truancy across the world are extremely high, and even higher for refugee girls and boys who are already facing numerous barriers to education.

This research supports a long-term approach to several of the objectives within the Global Compact for Refugees (GCR) including easing pressures on host countries, enhancing refugee self-reliance, and expanding access to third-country solutions. These are also aligned with the objectives within the Support Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR).

ADSP believes that education offers long-term opportunities to build the resilience of people and communities. This approach fosters strengthened linkages between humanitarian aid and development cooperation, and, operationalizes the Triple Nexus Approach.

The following indicators contained within the GCR are also pertinent to this research, and if successful follow-up occurs, will be contributed to:

- Proportion of refugees and returnees who have access to decent work
- Proportion of refugee and returnee children enrolled in the national education system (primary and secondary)
- Proportion of refugees, returnees, and host community population living below the national poverty line

## Proposed Research Overview

ADSP is interested in conducting a qualitative and quantitative research study that seeks to:

1. Provide a detailed and comprehensive understanding of the underlying barriers for Afghan children to access education, both in RVs and host communities in KP province. Of relevance is a comparative analysis between Afghan's access to education in urban centres and refugee villages. This would assist to identify the gap in education for Afghan refugees in each community, and, assess strategies that have effectively reduced this gap in similar contexts; as well as analyse the reasons why strategies promoting access to education appears to be failing in RVs. All data should be disaggregated by age and gender.
2. Impact of COVID-19 in accessing school (any need for remote learning, remedial classes, needs for protection material, economic impact increasing child labor? etc.)
3. Set out recommendations aimed at ensuring displacement affected children in KP that have legal access to education in RVs, are able and willing to access said education.

The findings will strengthen members' advocacy for improvements in basic services for, and meaningful engagement with Afghan communities, particularly in education. Furthermore, the research will inform members' education programming in KP targeting displacement affected Afghan children.

The consultant will undertake the following research:

1. Undertake a broad-based desk review of available education interventions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan for Afghan refugees and host communities in both urban centres and RVs. Data should be disaggregated by gender.
2. Identify current capacities and gaps in access to primary education institutions in RVs and government institutions, particularly for Afghan children.
3. Conduct analysis on existing and past interventions - what worked, what didn't work, in improving access to, retention and completion of formal primary education for Afghan refugee children.
4. In the context of COVID-19, what were the best practices to prevent truancy of Afghan refugee students that were studying in formal schools? What worked well in the collaboration between the Pakistani formal system, and local and international education actors during the pandemic?
5. What are the main lessons learned and recommendations for refugee education that can be drawn from education programs in KP, Pakistan? (i.e. in a protracted crisis and displacement context, and when a pandemic hits).
6. How significant is access to education for longer-term integration success and durable solutions? Do children acquire the needed skills to help them integrate into the labour market?
7. Based on the analysis of the barriers that displacement affected children face to have access to education and learning opportunities, which measures could be put in place to ensure that all displacement affected children are enrolled in schools and provided with learning opportunities? Are there policy gaps preventing displacement affected children from being enrolled in schools?

## Methodology

The study will be based on secondary data analysis, and qualitative data collection. Interviews and focus group discussions will be carried out respecting COVID-19 protocols and restrictions. The consultant will engage with a range of stakeholders, including: refugee male and female caregivers, refugee school- aged girls & boys, male & female teachers, school principals, refugee community representatives, Commissionerate of Afghan Refugees (CAR), Ministry of Education, UNHCR representatives, Ministry of Health, donors, etc.

## Annex-2 Summary of KIIs and FGDs

District and Activity	FGD	KII	Grand Total
Haripur	4	5	9
FGD with female community members	2	0	2
FGD with male community members	2	0	2
KII AR	0	1	1
KII with CAR representative-DA Haripur	0	1	1
KII with NGOs/INGO	0	1	1
KII with teacher/head teacher	0	2	2
Kohat	4	6	10
FGD with female community members	2	0	2
FGD with male community members	2	0	2
KII AR	0	1	1
KII with NGOs/INGO	0	1	1
KII with teacher/head teacher	0	4	4
Nowshera	4	3	7
FGD with female community members	2	0	2
FGD with male community members	2	0	2
KII with CAR representative	0	1	1
KII with teacher/head teacher	0	2	2
Peshawar	4	13	17
FGD with female community members	2	0	2
FGD with male community members	2	0	2
KII Afghan refugees	0	3	3
KII with CAR official	0	1	1
KII with CAR representative	0	1	1
KII with NGOs/INGO	0	3	3
KII with Refugee Village Administrator	0	1	1
KII with teacher/head teacher	0	4	4
Islamabad	0	1	1
KII with NGOs/INGO	0	1	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>44</b>

## Annex-3 List of documents reviewed

1.	DAFI 2019 Annual Report
2.	Education in Places of Temporary Asylum: The Case of Afghan Refugees Living in Peshawar-MA Education Thesis at University Montreal, Quebec, Canada by Maryam Kakar, 2000
3.	Effectiveness of Prime Minister's Education Reform Program: A Case Study from Pakistan, published in September 2017 by Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad, Pakistan
4.	IBT (Idara Baraye Taleem-o-Taraqi,2017) Baseline Study on State of Girls' Education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
5.	Impact Evaluation Report of FCDO funded IIM Ideas II program, prepared by Tetra Tech International (formally known as Coffey International), September 2019
6.	UNHCR RAHA Fact Sheets Papers (different components including education)
7.	Letter of Understanding between UNHCR and KP Elementary and Secondary Education Department), September 2019
8.	Lifting Barriers to Education during and after COVID-19 by UNICEF, March 2021
9.	Market Systems Analysis for Afghan Refugees in Pakistan by UNHCR and ILO, 2018
10.	The World Bank's Education Response to Covid-19, December 2020
11.	UNESCO Inclusion of Afghan Refugees in the National Education Systems of Iran and Pakistan, 2019
12.	UNHCR Covid-19 Refugees' Return to Schooling Guidelines, December 2020
13.	UNICEF Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children, 2018
14.	World Bank project appraisal document of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Human Capital Investment Project, June, 2020
15.	UNHCR Mapping of Education Facilities and Refugee Enrolment in Main Refugee Hosting Areas and Refugee Villages in Pakistan
16.	UNHCR COVID-19 Refugees' Return to Schooling Guidelines
17.	Save the Children Strategy Paper on Education for Afghans, 1998
18.	UNHCR 2021 Funding Updates
19.	UNHCR 2021 Operation Updates Pakistan

## Annex 4: list of refugee villages in KP with the population

District	RV Name	No. of Individuals
Peshawar	Khurasan	2,996
	Kababian	8,407
	Badaber	17,600
	Khazana	4,908
	Mera Kachori	2,882
	Naguman	2,482
	Shamshatoo	36,009
Charsadda	Utmanzai	3,347
	Munda	5,248
	Hajizai	0
Nowshera	Akora Khattak	30,419
	Khairabad	14,209
	Turkmen	0
Hangu	Lakti Banda	4,158
	Kata Kanri	6,926
	Kahi	4,237
	Darsamand	3,574
	Thall	9,311
Kohat	Gamkol	31,860
	Oblan	9,316
	Ghulam Banda	8,926
	Chichana	3,588
Mardan	Jalala	9,845
	Baghicha	1,870
Swabi	Barakai	21,210
	Gandaf	11,281
Malakand	Zangal Patai	118
Lower Dir	Chakdara	13,267
	Timer	10,850
	Toor	3,389
Upper Dir	Barawal	301
Chitral	Kalakatak	1,796
Mansehra	Khaki	9,448
	Ichirian	2,437
	Bareri	7,243
Bannu	Bizen Khel	1,685
Lakki Marwat	Gandhi Khan Khel	4,655
Haripur	Panian	44,060
	Basu Mera	4,561
	Padhana	7,740
Tank	Dabara	778
D. I. Khan	Zafarabad	3,424
Buner	Koga	8,968
<b>Total KPK- Refugee Villages</b>		<b>379,329</b>



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