

# AFGHAN REFUGEES IN PAKISTAN: LIVES IN LIMBO



Research on the main humanitarian and information needs of newly arrived Afghan refugees in Pakistan



# Afghan Refugees in Pakistan: Lives in limbo

Research Manager:  
**Iqbal Khattak**

Lead Researcher:  
**Zaigham Khan**

Associate Researchers:  
**Aneesur Rehman, Gohar Ali, Syed Ali Shah & Hassan bin Zahid**

Steering Committee Members  
**Adnan Rehmat, Najeef Ahmed & Said Nazir**

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# Acronyms

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CAR	Commissionerate Afghan Refugees
CSO	Civil Society Organization
FN	The Freedom Network
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
INGO	International Non-Government Organization
SHARP	Society for Human Rights and Prisoners, Aid
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organization
SAFRON	The Ministry of States and Frontier Regions

# Executive Summary

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The collapse of the Afghan government under Ashraf Ghani in August 2021 has forced hundreds of thousands of Afghan citizens to leave their country. According to an estimate, no less than 300,000 Afghan citizens have fled to Pakistan. However, unlike in the past, Pakistan is not willing to take another influx and refuses to recognize them as refugees. As a result, no official support has been made available to them and due to the denial of refugee status, neither Commissionerate of Afghan refugees, nor civil society organizations are able to extend any support. While Pakistan has been reluctant in openly stating its policy – perhaps to sustain plausible deniability for strategic reasons – this research reached out to the relevant state authorities to tease out the ground situation.

This research is an effort to provide an insight into the current situation of Afghan refugees and identify their needs. The research initiative included a quantitative survey involving Afghan refugees as well key informant interviews of representatives of civil society organizations, international aid groups, state officials and members of host communities.

The survey is based on a convenience sample of 20 Afghan refugees from Islamabad, Peshawar and Quetta. Nine key informants from the host communities were also interviewed through a semi-structured/open ended questionnaire. These respondents are influential members of the host communities including community level public representatives. For key informant interviews, 15 respondents were interviewed from Islamabad (3), Quetta (6) and Peshawar (6).

To get an insight into the official policy, seven officials and experts were also interviewed through open-ended questions. These officials included chief refugee commissioner in Ministry of SAFRON in Islamabad, official from Afghan Commissionerate in Peshawar, spokesperson of the UNHCR as well as managers of NGOs working for Afghan refugees. Findings in these reports are not statistically representative of all Afghan refugees in Pakistan who arrived here after 15 August 2021 change of government in Kabul. However, they fill an important information gap by indicating trends and providing a snapshot of the issues faced by them.

More than 90% of the respondents of our survey are accompanied with more than two family members. In Pakistan, they are facing a host of problems including difficulty in getting visas, for example 70% face the difficulty of getting visas. The refugees are also facing daunting challenges in continuing their education and accessing healthcare services.

Since Afghan refugees have entered Pakistan at a time of financial crisis, a large majority of respondents (80%) feels affected by inflation. The inflationary spiral has also compounded liquidity problems faced by 95% refugees. No less than 90% Afghan refugees have no external financial support available to them as they are financing themselves.

Most respondents use the internet to access current information (63%) and 47% use social media for this purpose. After online sources, radio is the largest source of information used by 47% respondents. Only 21% watch television and 16% read newspapers.

# Methodology

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Since it was not possible to draw a random sample of Afghan journalists, the research team decided to rely on a sample of convenience. For this research, 20 Afghan refugees were interviewed in three cities i.e., Islamabad (5), Peshawar (5) and Quetta (10) through a structured questionnaire. Nine key informants from the host communities were also interviewed through a semi-structured/open-ended questionnaire. These respondents are influential members of the host communities including community level public representatives. For KIIs, 15 respondents were interviewed from Islamabad (3), Quetta (6) and Peshawar (6).

To get an insight into the official policy, seven officials and experts were also interviewed through open-ended questions. These officials included chief refugee commissioner in Islamabad, official from Afghan Commissionerate in Peshawar, the UNHCR as well as official of Islamabad-based civil society organization “Inspire Pakistan.”

Findings in this report are not statistically representative of all Afghan refugees in Pakistan. However, they fill an important information gap and by indicate trends and providing a snapshot of the issues faced by them. Survey of Afghan refugees:

# 1. Afghan Refugees in Pakistan

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Due to geographical proximity and cultural affinity, Pakistan has been the preferred destination for millions of Afghan refugees during the last four decades. Pakistan, on its part, was a welcoming host to Afghan refugees after the start of the Soviet–Afghan War in 1979. By the end of 2001, there were over four million Afghan refugees in Pakistan. Most refugees have returned to Afghanistan since 2002 but by the start of 2022 around 1.4 million registered Afghan refugees remain in Pakistan. According to some estimates an equal number of unregistered Afghan refugees may also be present in the country.

According to UNHCR, more than 300,000 Afghans have fled to Pakistan since the Taliban took over their country.<sup>i</sup> The UNHCR said that some 117,000 Afghans seeking asylum have arrived in Pakistan since January 2021, though the overall numbers might be higher. “According to reports, the majority of these refugees have crossed into Pakistan during the second half of 2021,” stated the UNHCR. It can be noted that only a section of Afghan migrants applies as asylum seekers with UNHCR.

However, the government does not appear to agree with these estimates. “According to our unofficial assessment, almost 60,000 to 70,000 new Afghans have entered into Pakistan after 15 August 2021, when Afghan Taliban took over control of Afghanistan,” Abbas Khan, the Commissioner for Afghan Refugees in Peshawar said. “Majority of these new Afghans have entered Pakistan through valid documents as some of them had obtained Pakistani visas in Kabul.”

## 1.1 PAKISTAN’S POLICY TOWARDS NEW AFGHAN REFUGEES

The Refugee Convention of 1951 and Refugee Protocol of 1967 define the term ‘refugee’ and outline rights of refugees as well as legal obligations of states to protect them. Since Pakistan is not a signatory to these documents, the country is not bound to accept any refugee. Having received millions of Afghan refugees in the past four decades “on humanitarian grounds”, Pakistan appears reluctant to take more refugees or grant refugee status to Afghans who have moved to Pakistan recently.

Pakistan expressed its reluctance to accept new Afghan refugees openly months before the Ashraf Ghani government was toppled. Pakistan’s Prime Minister Imran Khan stated in June 2021 that the country would seal its border with Afghanistan in the event the Taliban took control. Mr Khan told *The New York Times* that Islamabad did not want another influx of refugees from its neighbour as officials were struggling to cope with the estimated three million Afghan migrants already residing in Pakistan.<sup>ii</sup> In case Afghan refugees could not be stopped from entering the country, Pakistan had prepared a “comprehensive strategy” to isolate refugees in temporary camps near the border – a move to prevent large numbers going further into Pakistan.<sup>iii</sup>

Pakistan’s policy towards new refugees was elaborated to Freedom Network by Saleem Khan, chief commissioner Afghan refugees in an interview for this research. “We have a clear policy that is: no new influx is accepted. Rather, efforts should be made by the International

Community to assist them in their own country by providing food, and necessities. Pakistan asserts that unlike the past, threats of persecution or threats to life and property to the people of Afghanistan do not exist. Rather, Afghanistan is currently facing shortage of food, medicines, and other needs due to the financial situation and droughts. This situation requires assistance from the International Community within Afghanistan.<sup>iv</sup>"

Replying to a written questions from the research team, the UNHCR informed that "to date the Government's position has not been in favour of accepting any new Afghan asylum seekers." Reluctant to refer to these Afghans as refugees, the UNHCR stated: "Currently we are having discussions with the Government on measures and mechanisms to support those vulnerable persons who have protection needs."

However, the UNHCR stressed that "the principle of non-refoulement, which asserts that a refugee should not be returned to a country where they face serious threats to their life or freedom, constitutes a cornerstone of international refugee protection, which is now considered to be part of customary international law."

UNHCR referred to a "Guidance Note on the international Protection Needs of People Fleeing Afghanistan issued in February 2022. This Guidance note calls on all countries to allow civilians fleeing Afghanistan access to their territories and to always ensure respect for the principle of non-refoulement.

### **1.1.1 OFFICIAL ASSISTANCE FOR AFGHAN REFUGEES**

Since the Commissionerate Afghan Refugees (CAR) deals with registered refugees only, the new refugees are not getting any information or support from the institution with the mandate to support them. "In absence of a clear policy or guidelines, the Commissionerate has not been able to provide any support to the newly arrived Afghan refugees," says Abbas Khan, Commissioner Afghan Refugees in Peshawar. "The Commissionerate has no shortage of resources, but we can only help Afghan refugees when we receive instructions from the ministry of SAFRON [States and Frontier Regions], Islamabad," he adds. According to Mr. Khan, there are many donors, who may help. However, no steps can be taken until the government issues a policy or guidelines.

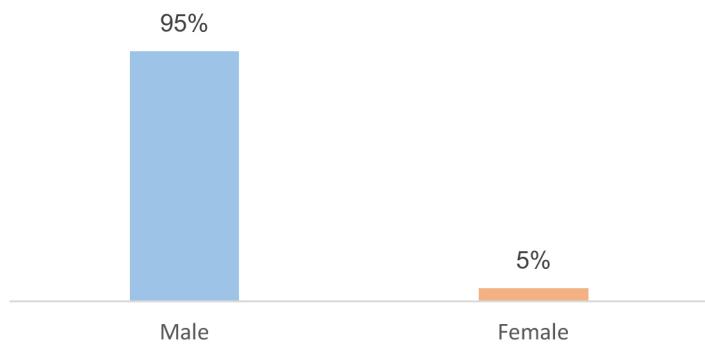
### **1.1.2 ASSISTANCE BY THE CIVIL SOCIETY**

Civil society organizations also express their helplessness in providing support to new refugees in absence of a clear policy or guidelines from the government. According to the Commissioner Afghan Refugees in Peshawar, "NGOs are awaiting a government policy towards refugees. Both the Commissionerate as well as NGOs refer the new refugees to SHARP, a UNHCR partner NGO, to enable them to get a UNHCR card. According to a civil society activist: "The UNHCR is issuing asylum seeking certificates to these refugees. After receiving these certificates, refugees become eligible for UNHCR card. To get this card, refugees must approach the UNHCR partner SHARP."

## 2. Survey of Afghan Refugees (Excluding Exiled Journalists)

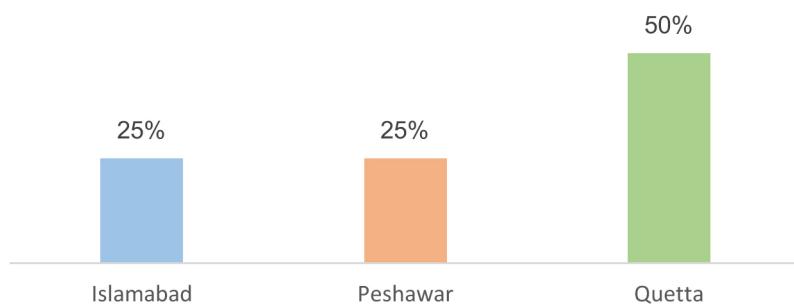
### 2.1 ABOUT RESPONDENTS

#### 2.1.1 GENDER



While 71% respondents for this survey were men, 29% were women. This sample hints Respondents of this survey were mostly men. This was due to the difficulty to access Afghan women and their reluctance to join the study.

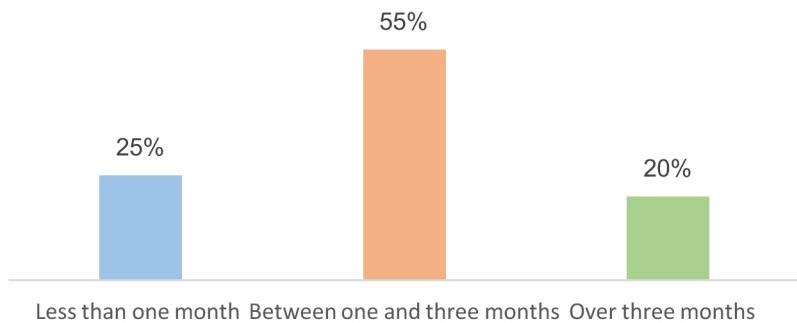
#### 2.1.2 CURRENT LOCATION



The sample for this survey was also drawn from these cities because most newly arrived Afghan refugees are concentrated in three major cities i.e., Islamabad, Peshawar, and Quetta. According to an NGO working for refugees, Afghans with Tajik and Uzbek ethnic identities are staying in Rawalpindi/Islamabad while Pashtun Afghans are mostly staying in Quetta and Peshawar.

#### 2.1.3 DURATION OF STAY IN PAKISTAN

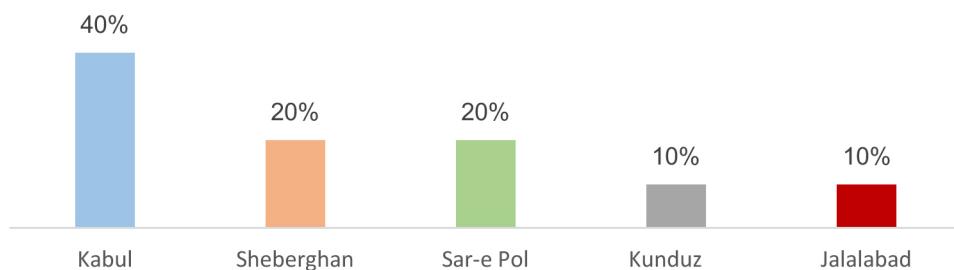
How long have you been in Pakistan?



Most respondents have moved to Pakistan in three months before January 2022. Only 20% moved earlier than three months.

#### 2.1.4 AREAS OF ORIGIN

Where were you based in Afghanistan before arriving in Pakistan?

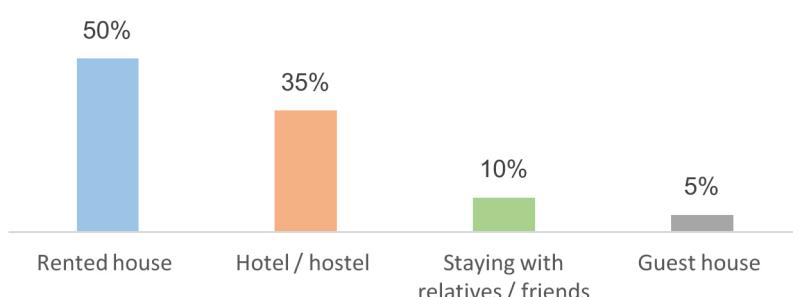


The largest segment of respondents (40%) has migrated from Kabul. Almost 50% belong to various cities in Northern Afghanistan including Sheberghan and Sar-e-Pol, while 10% belong to the Southern city of Jalalabad.

### 2.2 Challenges, concerns and aspirations

#### 2.2.1 ACCOMODATION

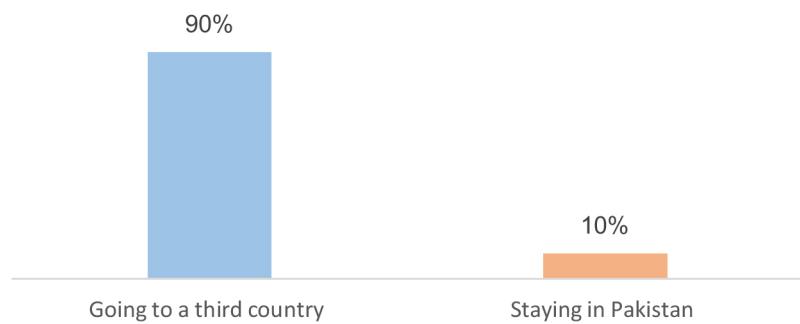
WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT LOCATION IN PAKISTAN?



Only 10% of the respondents reported staying with relatives or friends. The remaining respondents mentioned various residential arrangements including rented houses (50%), hotels/hostels (35%) and guest house (5%). Almost half of the respondents share rented houses or rent a portion of a house because other forms are a lot costlier and harder to access.

## 2.2.2 FUTURE PLANS

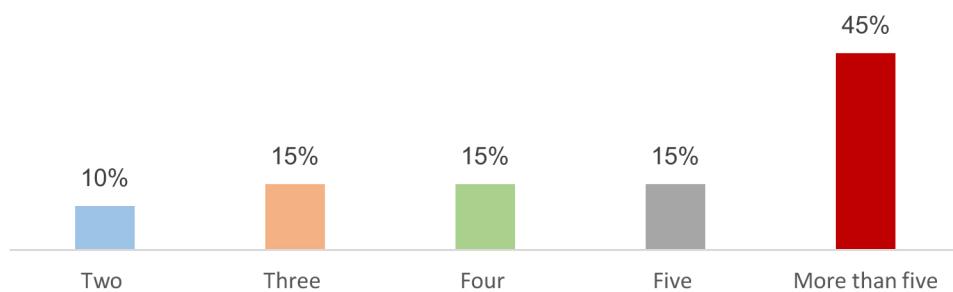
What are your future plans?



A very large majority of Afghan refugees (90%) want to move to a third country while only 10% wish to stay in Pakistan.

## 2.2.3 FAMILY SIZE

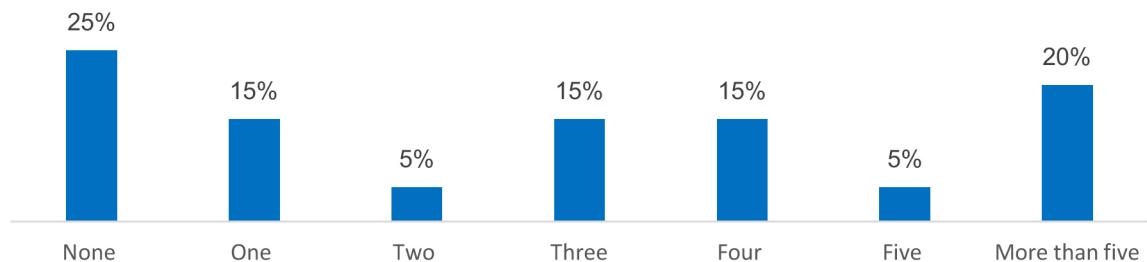
How many family members are you looking after / in-charge in Pakistan?



Most respondents have moved to Pakistan alongside some of their family members. While 90% respondents are accompanied with more than two family members, 45% are accompanied with more than five family members. According to the Commissioner Afghan Refugees KP, "Seventy percent of Afghan migrant families comprise women and children."

## 2.2.4 Family members left behind

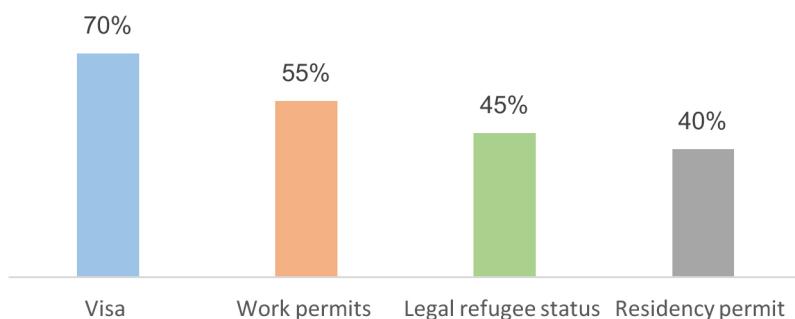
How many members of your family are left behind in Afghanistan?



Only 25% respondents have been able to migrate alongside all family members, leaving no one behind; 20% have left behind one or two family members, while 55% have left three or more family members in Afghanistan.

## 2.2.5 LEGAL CHALLENGES IN PAKISTAN

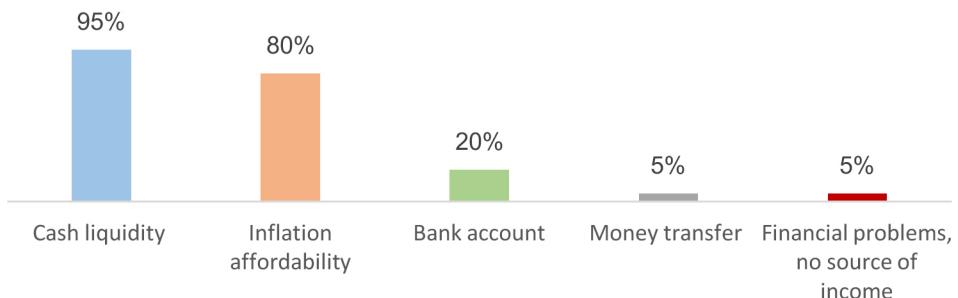
What legal challenges do you / your family face as a refugee in Pakistan?



Afghan refugees face numerous challenges in Pakistan. Top problems cited by respondents include difficulty in getting visas (70%), work permits (55%), legal refugee status (45%) and residency permits (40%).

## 2.2.6 FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

What financial challenges do you / your family face as a refugee in Pakistan?



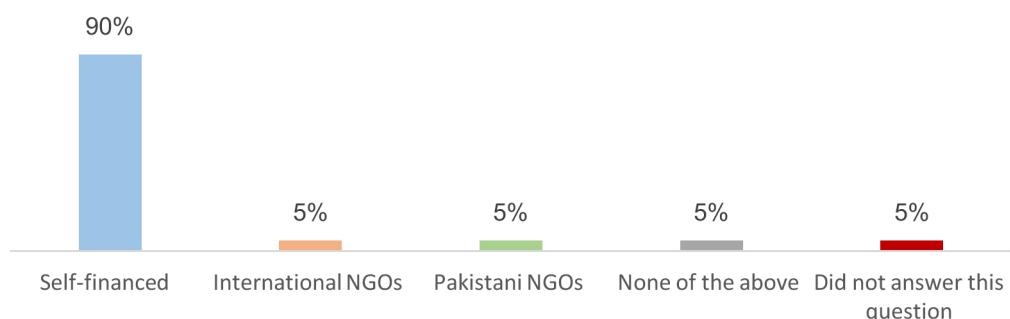
Afghan refugees have entered Pakistan at a time of financial crisis. A large majority of respondents (80%) feels affected by inflation. The inflationary spiral has also compounded liquidity problems faced by 95% refugees. Other financial problems include lack of bank accounts (20%), difficulty in money transfer (5%) and absence of a source of income (5%).

## REACTION FROM HOST COMMUNITIES

Members of the host communities show concern for financial wellbeing of the new wave of Afghan refugees and emphasise the need for creating job opportunities for them. “How will they eat if they can’t make a living,” said a member of a host community in Islamabad. Some interviewees even expressed the need for providing financial opportunities to Afghan refugees at par with Pakistani citizens.

### 2.2.7 MEANS OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT

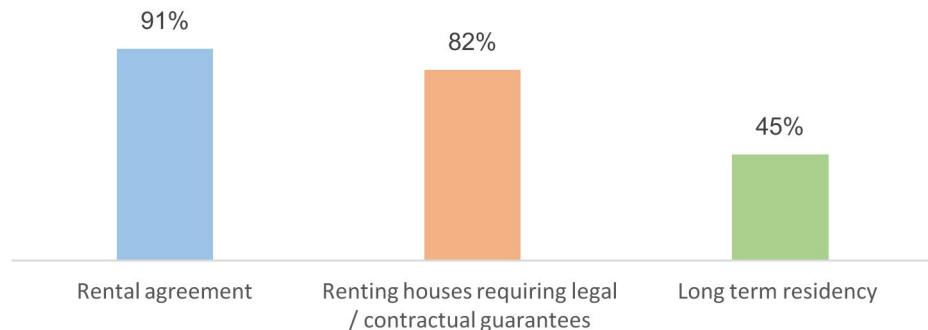
What are your current means of financial support in Pakistan?



No less than 90% respondents have no financial support available to them as they are financing themselves; 5% have found support from national or international NGOs, while 5% have some other source of support that they did not want to specify.

### 2.2.8 HOUSING CHALLENGES

What housing challenges do you / your family face as a refugee in Pakistan?



Housing is a major challenge for Afghan refugees because all legal documents including rental agreements in Pakistan require CNIC. While foreigners may rent a house, most stringent legal requires often apply. 90% respondents face problems in contracting rental agreements, while 82% face problems in providing contractual guarantees. 45% face difficulty in getting long terms residency.

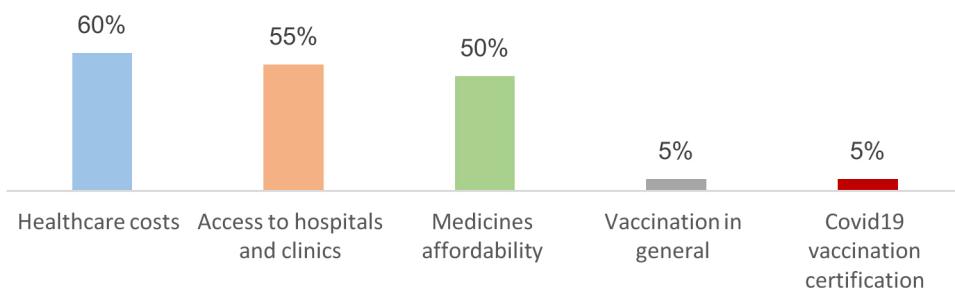
### VIEWS OF HOST COMMUNITIES

The sudden influx of Afghan refugees has created a surge in demand for housing units, resulting in spike in rents. "Rents have almost doubled in some areas of Peshawar after arrival of new refugees," a member of the host community informed the Freedom Network research team. A similar inflation in rental prices have been observed in parts of Islamabad as well.

Host communities suggest making appropriate housing arrangements for new refugees. Some citizens, fearing high rentals, think that the government and INGOs should establish camps to house Afghan refugees.

### 2.2.9 HEALTH CHALLENGES

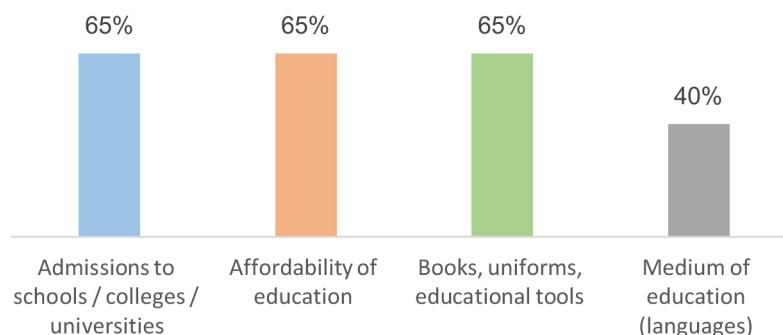
What health related challenges do you / your family face as a refugee in Pakistan?



Respondents face numerous challenges related to health services in Pakistan including healthcare cost (60%), access to hospitals and clinics (55%), medicines affordability (50%), vaccination in general (5%) and Covid vaccination certification (5%).

## 2.2.10 EDUCATION RELATED CHALLENGES

What education related challenges do you / your family face as a refugee in Pakistan?



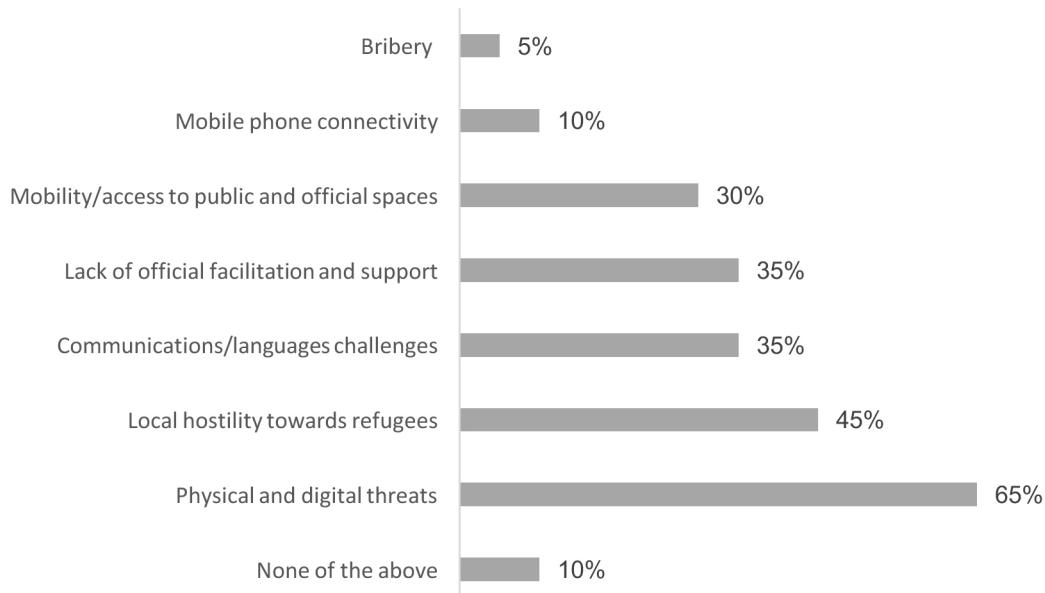
Afghan refugees face daunting challenges in continuing their education. Their main challenges faced by respondents include admission at schools/colleges/universities (65%), affordability of education (65%), books, uniforms, educational tools (65%) and medium of education (40%).

## VIEWS OF HOST COMMUNITIES

Host communities feel that Afghan children should be admitted at government schools and assisted through subsidized education. “Either they should be allowed to study without the fee or should be helped through subsidized education,” said a community member.

## 2.2.11 SOCIAL CHALLENGES

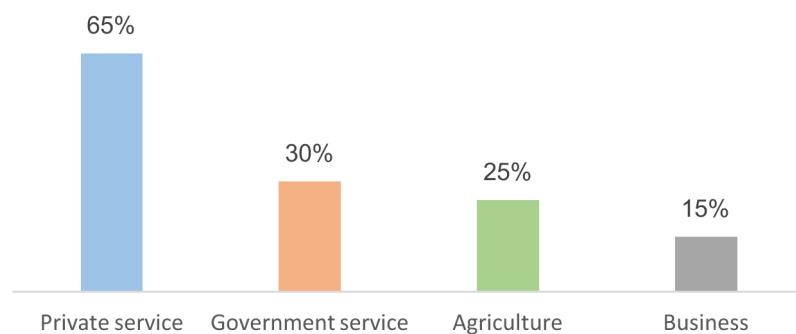
What social challenges do you / your family face as a refugee in Pakistan?



New refugees are facing a host of social problem in Pakistan. 65% respondents cited physical and digital threats, followed by local hostility towards refugees (45%). Other problems include communication/language challenges, lack of official facilitation and support (35%), Mobility/access to public and official spaces (30%), Mobile phone connectivity (10%) and Bribery (5%).

### 2.2.12 PROFESSIONS BEFORE LEAVING

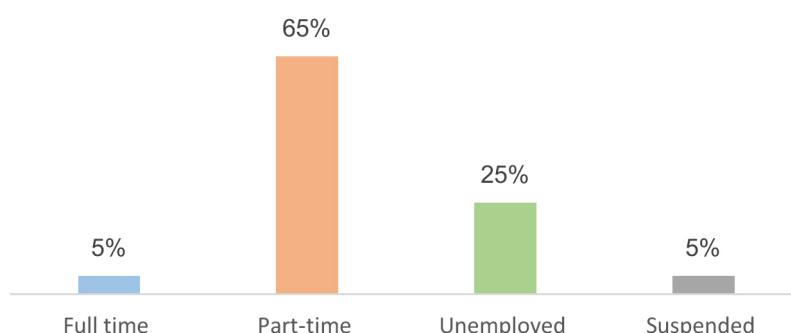
Before arriving in Pakistan which profession were you engaged in?



Before arriving in Pakistan, 65% respondents worked in the private sector while 30% were employed in the government sector. Of those who worked in the private sector, 25% were in agriculture while 15% were in business. The fact that 30% refugees have a government background shows a very high level of fear among those who worked with state institutions before the Taliban took control of Afghanistan.

### 2.2.13 CURRENT EMPLOYMENT STATUS

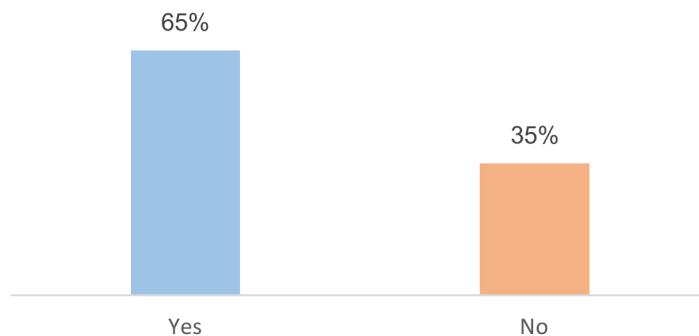
What is your current employment status after 15th of August 2021?



While most respondents (65%) have found part time work to sustain themselves, a quarter (25%) remain unemployed. Only 5% have found full time work while 5% say their jobs have been suspended.

## 2.2.14 RELEVANCY OF CURRENT SKILLS

Do you think, your current skills will be adequate to allow you to continue outside Afghanistan?

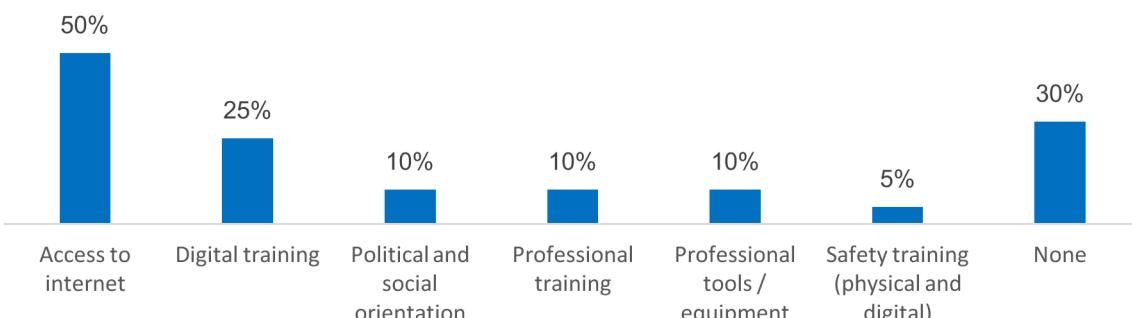


While most respondents think that their current skillset can help them to find jobs outside Afghanistan, almost one third (35%) believe that their skills aren't adequate for finding gainful employment outside Afghanistan. All respondents who said no to the above question agreed to the statement that they needed additional skills to survive outside Afghanistan?

## 2.2.15 NEED FOR PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES

If open to options of working in Pakistan, what assistance would you need?

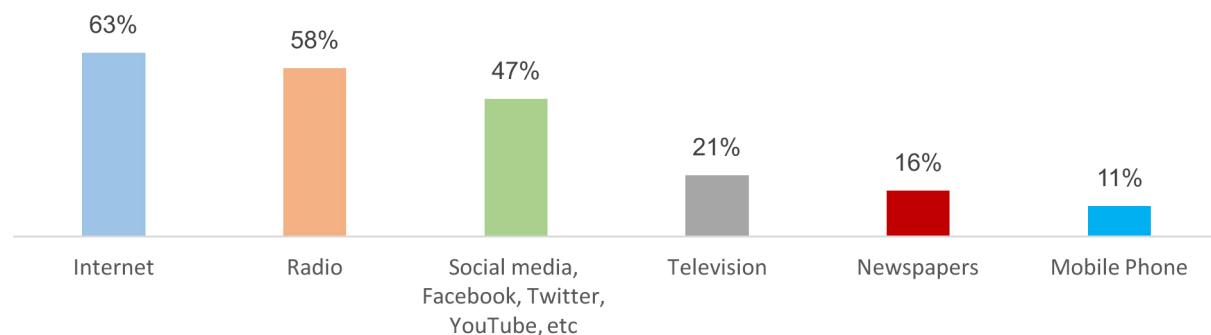
Professional resources:



A large majority of respondents (70%) expressed the need for various professional resources. 50% expressed the need for access to internet, while 25% felt that they needed digital training; 10% said they needed professional training; 10% expressed the need for professional tools/equipment; 5% said they needed safety training. Almost one third (30%) felt no need for assistance.

## 2.2.16 CURRENT INFORMATION SOURCES

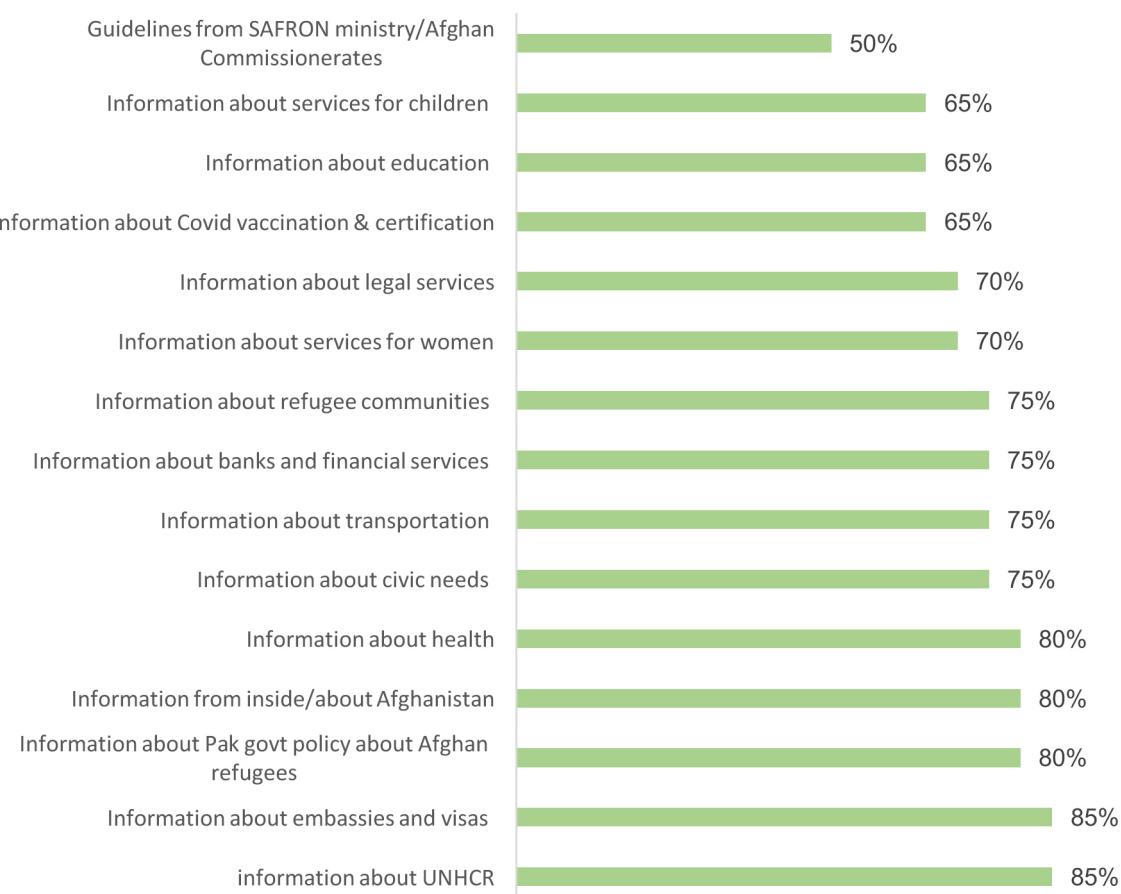
What are your current information sources?



Most respondents use internet to access current information (63%) while 47% use social media for this purpose. After online sources, radio is the largest source of information used by 47% respondents. Only 21% watch television and 16% read newspapers.

## 2.2.17 INFORMATION NEEDS

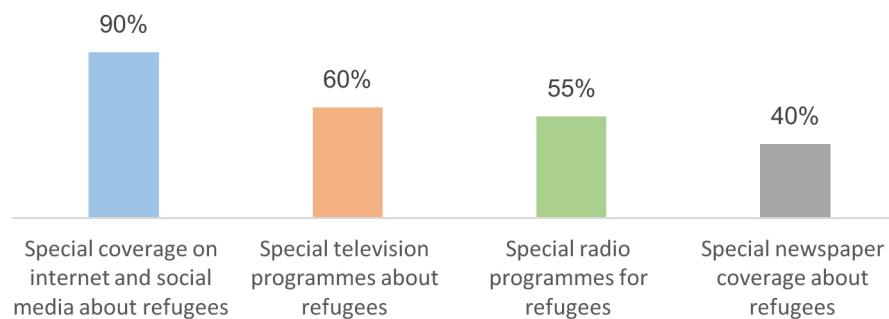
What kind of information do you currently need?



The chart above shows how respondents ranked importance of diverse information needs while staying in Pakistan.

### 2.2.18 NEED FOR MEDIA

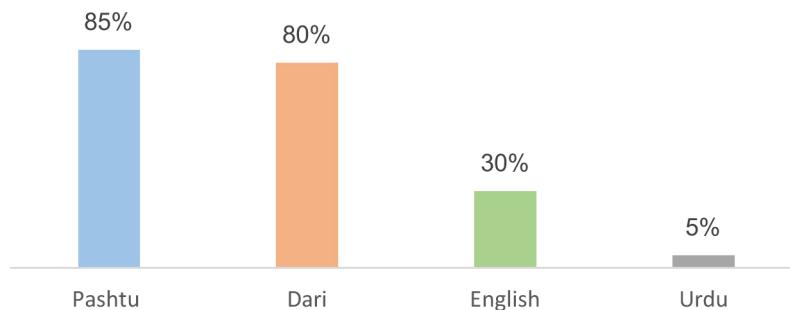
What kind of media will address your specific information needs?



To get information about Afghan refugees, 90% respondents rely on the internet and social media while 60% watch television programmes about refugees; 55% tune into radio programmes and 40% read newspaper coverage about refugees.

### 2.2.19 LANGUAGE FOR MEDIA

In what language special coverage of refugees would you prefer?



It appears that most Afghan refugees are bilingual in Pashtu and Dari as 85% listen to coverage of refugees in Pashtu and 80% in Dari; 30% follow news in English, while only 5% follow media coverage in Urdu.

## VIEWS OF HOST COMMUNITIES

Community members feel that Afghan refugee are at a disadvantage due to lack of command over Urdu and English, Pakistan's lingua franca and official languages respectively. They feel that Afghans should be helped in learning these languages.

## **2.3 CONCERNS OF HOST COMMUNITIES**

### **2.3.1 COMPETITION IN JOBS**

Some members of host communities fear that Afghan refugees will compete with them in the job market that can diminish their employment opportunities and bring down wages. “They will compete with us in jobs while there aren’t enough jobs in Pakistan,” said member of a host community in Quetta.

### **2.3.2 HIGHER RENTS**

Some community members expressed the concern that rents are going up because of Afghan refugees who are willing to pay more because “they have dollars” and they need housing urgently. “If this situation continues, it will become very difficult for us to get a house on rent,” said a host community member in Peshawar.

### **2.3.3 RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM**

Some members of host communities feel that Afghans refugees may try to force their own interpretation of religion upon them, and it may further exacerbate religious extremism in the country.

### **2.3.4 NEED FOR SUPPORT**

Host communities explained that they have tried their best to support the new Afghan refugees. However, they felt that with their limited resources, their support cannot go a long way and the government and humanitarian organizations must come forward to support these refugees.

## **2.4 VIEWES OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY**

### **2.4.1 PRIORITY NEEDS OF AFGHAN REFUGEES**

Civil society organizations think that security is the most important need of Afghan refugees followed by shelter, livelihood, health, and education.” Since most of these newly arrived Afghan refugees are women and children, their protection is extremely important,” said a civil society activist.

Other immediate needs included food, shelter, and livelihood. CSOs also emphasised the need for providing skills training to these refugees to enable them to make a living. Some CSOs suggested setting up camps for new Afghan refugees near border areas.

### **2.4.2 LIMITED COMMUNICATION**

In absence of a clearly spelled out government policy, NGOs avoid communication with new refugees. “We cannot do anything for them, and we think that our communication with them will only raise their expectations,” explains an NGO official. NGOs themselves rely on

UNHCR to get updates and data about new Afghan refugees.

#### **2.4.3 INADEQUATE MEDIA COVERAGE**

Both the civil society activists as well as government officials interviewed by Freedom Network felt that the local media had not adequately covered the problems faced by newly arrived Afghan refugees.

### 3. Recommendations

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This research compendium clearly indicates at least the following informational and sociological **patterns** that may hold for at least the medium term:

1. The lives of Afghan refugee families are in limbo and face multifarious sociological challenges that require addressing (for personal redressal) and highlighting through media (to generate sympathy and support among policymakers, humanitarian actors and host communities).
2. A large majority of respondents access information through the internet (which is cheap and widespread in Pakistan), including through mobile telephony (also cheap and widespread) but do not generally find information about their own communities in local media or Afghan voices that can relate with.
3. Local media acknowledges being incapacitated to produce adequate coverage catering to information needs of refugee communities and Afghan audiences – as well as serving as an information bridge between the refugees and national and international authorities. The media offers enthusiastic willingness to engage with exiled Afghan journalists as potential content producers to be the voice to the cause of refugees.

# Annex: Methodology

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## Backdrop

This study was designed as twin research initiatives, first focusing on determining the principal challenges facing newly arriving refugees from Afghanistan and their information needs and the second focusing on identifying the challenges of Afghan journalists-turned-refugees and mapping their professional needs and options or rehabilitating them. The following are the outlines for these two separate initiatives:

## Research #1: The state of newly arrived Afghan refugees in Pakistan

### Thematic research focus – principal questions

The following principal questions were examined as the main thematic focus of this research:

1. **Quantum:** How many newly arrived Afghan refugees are there in the early stages?
2. **Route:** Through which routes and means they are arriving?
3. **Settlements:** Where are the arriving refugees settling?
4. **Shelter:** What form of housing is available to the refugees?
5. **Primary challenges:** What are the main difficulties/issues/risks arriving refugees are facing?
6. **Restrictions:** What main restrictions, including legal, are refugees faced with?
7. **Information:** What primary information needs are the arriving refugees facing?
8. **Native language:** Which languages do the refugees communicate in: Pashto, Dari or both?
9. **Origin:** From which area of Afghanistan they are migrating?
10. **Duration:** For how long they intend to stay in the host country?
11. **Media:** Which mediums or platforms do the refugees use to get relevant information?
12. **Access:** Which devices or means of information access are the refugees using?
13. **Narratives:** What are host state sensitivities on information narratives vis-s-vis refugees?
14. **Coverage:** How is Pakistani media covering the refugee arrival situation?
15. **Host info:** What are the principal information needs of host communities related to refugees?
16. **Comparison:** What are the similarities and differences in the info needs of hosts and refugees?

### Research target groups

The following primary stakeholders served as the target groups of this research:

- Newly arrived refugees
- Host communities – in regions where the refugees are settling
- Relevant government authorities – e.g., Commissionerate of Afghan Refugees (CAR), Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON)

- Relevant civil society organizations – e.g., Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP)
- Relevant UN agencies – e.g., UNHCR
- Relevant subject experts
- Media (For constructive coverage of the refugees in general)

## Research #2: The state of Afghan journalists exiled in Pakistan

### Thematic research focus – principal questions

The following principal questions were examined as the main thematic focus of this research:

1. **Quantum:** How many Afghan journalists are there in Pakistan?
2. **Origin** From which areas of Afghanistan the journalists have fled?
3. **Destination:** In which regions are they arriving in and aiming to base themselves in Pakistan?
4. **Primary challenges:** What are the main difficulties/issues/risks arriving journalists are facing?
5. **Restrictions:** What main restrictions, including legal, are the exiled journalists faced with?
6. **Professional options:** What options exist for the exiled journalists to continue their journalism careers in Pakistan – working for Pakistan-based, Afghanistan-based or international media?
7. **Language:** In which language and medium they were doing journalism?
8. **Native language:** What is the native tongue and which other languages they speak?
9. **Professional needs:** What technical support or resources do the exiled journalists need to continue their journalism work while in exile in Pakistan?
10. **Journalism challenges:** What possible challenges – including sensitivities and perceptions about Afghanistan of host communities – the exiled journalists may face?
11. **Legal media restrictions:** What difficulties do the exiled journalists foresee in terms of media related and legal aspects of freedom of expression and access to information if they operate as journalists within Pakistan?
12. **Information sensitivities:** What is the government stance – declared and undeclared – regarding the prospects of exiled Afghan journalists operating from Pakistan?

### Research target groups

The following primary stakeholders served as the target groups of this research:

- Exiled Afghan journalists in Pakistan
- Local media houses – radio, television, newspapers, digital, press clubs in Peshawar, Islamabad & Quetta
- Government officials – Federal Ministry of SAFRON and Federal Ministry of Interior in Islamabad
- Chief Afghan Commissioner in Islamabad
- Chiefs of Afghan Commissionerate in Peshawar and Quetta
- UN Refugee agency - UNHCR
- International non-governmental organization

- Pakistani civil society organizations
- Host communities in Peshawar, Quetta and Islamabad

## **Oversight and Quality Assurance**

The whole process of research from designing to data collection, data analysis and report writing was done by a team of seasoned researchers who enjoy wide experience of qualitative and quantitative research. Means of Verification (MOVs) were built into each questionnaire to avoid possibility of ghost interviews and ensure that right kind of respondents are enlisted.

The whole process was overseen through a Steering Committee. The committee regularly held online meeting with the research team to supervise the progress and ensure the quality outcomes.

## **Sampling Framework**

Since it was not possible to draw a random sample of Afghan refugees, the research team decided to rely on a sample of convenience. Respondents for this survey were selected because they were found to be convenient sources of data. However, an effort was made to make this sample as representative of Afghan refugees as possible.

For this research, 20 Afghan refugees were interviewed in three cities i.e., Islamabad (5), Peshawar (5) and Quetta (10) through a structured questionnaire. Nine key informants from the host communities were also interviewed through a semi-structured/open ended questionnaire. These respondents are influential members of the host communities including community level public representatives. For KIIs, 15 respondents were interviewed from Islamabad (3), Quetta(6) and Peshawar (6).

To get an insight into the official policy, 7 officials and experts were also interviewed through open ended questions. These officials included officials from Afghan Commissionerate in Peshawar, representative of UNHCR as well as managers of NGOs working for Afghan refugees.

## **Challenges**

The research team faced several challenges in getting appointment for interviews from the officials of the Ministry of SAFRON and Federal Ministry of Interior. However, these officials were reluctant to meet the team. Chairperson of the Standing Committee on SAFRON agreed for the interview but later declined. A member of the committee was interviewed but he later advised that the data from his interview should not be used for the report. Luckily, officials of the Afghan Commissionerate spoke candidly on the official policy and the UNHCR also responded to the written questions from the research team. This report also relies on the secondary data to outline Pakistan's policy on the recent Afghan refugees.

Since respondents feel insecure due to their differences with the Taliban government and also due to their precarious legal status in Pakistan, they were reluctant to be interviewed. It demanded a lot of assurance and convincing from the research team to bring them on

board and involvement of Afghan intermediary helped build trust among the respondents and Freedom Network's research team members.

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<sup>i</sup> Pakistan Issues Identity Cards to More Than a Million Afghan Refugees, Lisa Schlein, Voice of America, Januar 8, 2022, <https://www.voanews.com/a/pakistan-issues-identity-cards-to-more-than-a-million-afghan-refugees/6388197.html#:~:text=The%20UNHCR%20reports%20more%20than,may%20be%20liable%20for%20deportation>.

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/8/18/which-countries-will-take-in-afghan-refugees-and-how-many>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/8/18/which-countries-will-take-in-afghan-refugees-and-how-many>

<sup>iv</sup> Interview with the Afghan Refugee Commissioner



## About Freedom Network

Freedom Network (FN) is an award-winning Pakistan-based independent media and civil liberties organization registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP). It was awarded the French Human Rights Award in 2017 by the Government of France for standing out in defending freedom of expression and human rights agendas in Pakistan.

### **Vision**

To defend and promote civil liberties by championing and assisting an informed society that sees media as a key partner in an open, democratic, pluralist and inclusive Pakistan.

### **Mandate**

To DEFEND and promote *freedom of expression*; STRENGTHEN safety of journalists, information practitioners and rights activists; FACILITATE *media professionalisms* including independent digital *public interest journalism*; and SUPPORT *gender mainstreaming and pluralism* in media.

## About DW Akademie

DW Akademie is Deutsche Welle's center for international media development, journalism training and knowledge transfer. Our projects strengthen the human right to freedom of expression and unhindered access to information. DW Akademie empowers people worldwide to make independent decisions based on reliable facts and constructive dialogue.

DW Akademie is a strategic partner of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. We also receive funding from the Federal Foreign Office and the European Union and are active in approximately 60 developing countries and emerging economies.