



Report on the existing skillset and main psychosocial conditions & needs of young refugees in Pakistan

Desk and Field Research Report



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Project Number: 610243-EPP-1-2019-1-EL-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP



Identification of the existing skillset and main psychosocial conditions and needs of the target groups in Pakistan

The purpose of desk and field research is to identify existing skillset of the target group in Pakistan, and their main psychosocial conditions and needs in Pakistan.

1 Brief Summary of the Desk Research

Worldwide effects of war, violence and persecution has increased the refugee population to nearly 70.8 million. This forced displacement has affected developing countries the most including Pakistan which is the second-largest country in terms of hosting refugees. Since 2002, with steady but continuous repatriation of Afghan refugees, the total number has dropped from 3 million to around 1.4 and Pakistan hosts 210,465 household of 1,420,673 Afghan refugees which are spread around the country with majority of the population sheltered in 54 recognized UNHCR Refugee Villages (RVs) with about 70 percent of registered Afghans residing in urban areas. In addition to that, an estimated 500,000 refugees are staying undocumented in the country. Other refugees/asylum seekers include Bangladeshi and Burmese migrants with illegal status. With respect to age and gender distribution, more than 47% of Afghan-refugees are young adults and are above 18 years of age with the majority of the males. Children and Youth (24 years of age and below - nearly half of them girls) constitute 64% of the entire Afghan refugee population. 74% of Afghan refugees are the second or third generation born in Pakistan.

The Afghan refugees have been part of Pakistani society and affected the economy directly or indirectly in different ways. Together with the challenges that arose due to the refugee presence in the country, there are evident positive effects too. Provinces with a majority population of refugees like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Baluchistan including the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) have seen economic boom by the inflow of aid funds. The operation of UN and other private voluntary organizations in the refugee camps not only created jobs targeting minimally skilled Pakistanis and professionals like doctors, pharmacists, engineers and teachers but also offered additional trainings. The majority of the refugee population is generally involved in elementary occupations and hardly employed in any formal public or private organization. A fair number of refugees also work as daily wage labor in construction works such as masons, carpenters, electricians, painters, auto mechanics, tailors and drives etc.

A report on refugees with disabilities shows that 3.3% of all Afghan refugees suffer from chronic diseases whereas 8.2% of all Afghan refugees, and 15% of adults (18 years and above) have



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disabilities. The most reported disabilities among the Afghan refugees include poor sight, hearing problems and problems with walking which includes the majority of women over the men. Reading glasses were the most commonly requested assistance (16% or 12,700 pairs of glasses), followed by financial support, institutional care, psycho-social counselling and wheelchairs or walking frames.

It has been more than 40 years since 1979 when millions of refugees entered in Pakistan through the Torkham Border. Throughout this time the refugees have been hosted very generously. The camps provided most of the facilities to refugees including food, education, health care, water, sanitation services, and vocational training. The refugees are in good terms and receive monetary along with non-monetary help from their hosts in their community. During the repatriation process, when the Pakistan government decided to close major refugee camps in 2009, the residents resettled in urban areas of Pakistan and this brought them closer to native residents by providing them support system in the form of friends and neighbors which enabled them to survive in the host society efficiently.

The majority of the registered Afghan refugees are ethnic Pashtun (85%) with smaller numbers from other ethnic groups, including Turkmen, Uzbek, Tajik and Hazara. Traditionally Afghans are used to protect the honor of the women and privacy of the household. This results in limiting the contact of refugees with native residents. One of the studies in Punjab reports restricted movements of Afghan refugees within the host community and preferring to meet any friends outside the house only. Outdoor activities of Afghan women are limited, and they are only allowed to go out in case of emergency with a proper veil.

For promoting empowerment and self-reliance of refugees in Pakistan, recent livelihood strategies of UNHCR propose that refugees should be placed in formal job markets after getting the right to work by the Government of Pakistan. The refugees are provided with self-employment opportunities and permitted for registering their business. By including refugees in the national "poverty graduation approach", 2,000 households were supported through the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund. As a result of similar strategies Afghan refugees have been included in the National Vocational and Technical Training System (NAVTTTC) where 3,300 youth were trained and provided toolkits. As a result of increased access of refugees to financial services, seven hundred Afghan Refugees applied for opening bank accounts.

Refugees in Pakistan often live in regions where governments are already struggling to educate their own children. Those governments face the additional challenge of finding enough space in already overcrowded schools, providing trained teachers and learning materials for hundreds of thousands of newcomers, who often do not speak the language of instruction and have missed



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out on an average of three to four years of schooling. As of 31 May 2017, 39% of the (544,102 out of 1,402,180) Afghans registered with UNHCR in Pakistan are school-aged children between 5-18 years old. Of these registered school-aged children, 22% (119,403) children received a formal education last year in the UNHCR mapped 25 high density Afghan refugee population districts and 45 refugee villages in Pakistan as per the findings of UNHCR’s mapping exercise. This number does not reflect all the children enrolled in school as UNHCR mapped only schools in a 5 km radius of the refugee villages in the districts where there is a high concentration of Afghan refugees.

The integration of refugees in mainstream society not only spans their livelihood but also health and education. As per the most recent statistics by UNHCR, total number of 38 health facilities and 146 schools accommodated 5,288 patients and 56,000 refugee students, respectively. For the first two months of 2020, 6,587 births among Afghan refugees were registered. The teacher student ratio as in February 2020 stayed at 1:41. UNHCR currently supports 433 DAFI (The Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee initiative) scholars. In addition to traditional schools, the refugees in Pakistan are studying in 30 satellite classes and 51 home-based schools.

2 Field Research

In Field research, we conducted 15 on-line surveys with educators working with refugees, 6 interviews with professionals working with migrants and refugees, and 5 targeted consultations with ICT training providers who are providing trainings to the target groups.

2.1 On-line survey key findings

Online survey was conducted to get information from educators working with refugees. A total of 15 participants took part in this survey. Out of 15, 9 were full-time education professionals while 6 were IT professionals but teaching as part-time faculty members. Google form was used to fill out the survey. Following responses were collected (number shows that total participant selected this option)

	1 (Not Important)	2	3	4	5 (Extremely Important)
A. Information and data literacy					
Browsing, searching and filtering data, information and digital content		1	4	4	6



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Evaluating data, information and digital content		2	3	7	3
Managing data, information and digital content		1	4	7	3
B. Communication and collaboration					
Interacting through digital technologies		1	5	4	5
Sharing through digital technologies		2	3	1	9
Engaging in citizenship through digital technologies		1	2	3	9
Collaborating through digital technologies		2	0	8	5
Netiquette		1	3	3	8
Managing digital identity		0	4	4	7
C. Digital content creation					
Developing digital content		1	5	4	5
Integrating and re-elaborating digital content		1	5	3	6
Copyright and licenses		3	5	2	5
D. Safety					
Protecting devices		1	6	3	5
Protecting personal data and privacy		1	0	7	7
Protecting health and well-being		1	2	3	9



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Protecting the environment		1	2	3	9
E. Problem solving					
Solving technical problems		2	0	7	6
Identifying needs and technological responses		2	0	6	7
Creatively using digital technologies		2	0	5	8
Identifying digital competence gaps		1	2	5	7
F. Social Media	1	0	7	5	2

Table 1: Importance of Skills and Competencies

- All were agreeing the importance of communication and collaboration.
- Problem solving skills were selected as most important skill to learn
- Information and data literacy are also important for migrants to learn
- All of them agreed that right now there is no service as such available that is trained to focus/work with non-Pakistani students. Migrants are usually having stress, fear and communication barriers.
- Faculty members suggested that faculty might be trained to empathize with them.

2.2 Key findings reached through interviews with Professionals working with target groups

We took 6 online interviews with recognized experts and representatives of the ICT market to analyze the existing skills of migrants. Findings are the following,

- It doesn't matter how much effort is being done, migrants always have a difficult time getting used to a new environment.
- Financial burden in a new country of course is a big deal especially when it's harder to get jobs.



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- Language barrier is another issue they often face as its harder for them to communicate with locals and with teachers.
- Another issue they often face is culture difference
- Main challenges migrants face is Emotional pressure. For people to be at their best, they need to be mentally unburned and have as less emotional turmoil as possible so they can focus on the task at hand. People cannot be at their best when they're emotionally disturbed.
- Training should be conducted regarding soft skills as well. Emotional Intelligence in particular.
- Refugees should be provided psychological support. Our society may have acceptance of people that have “alpha characteristics” and less with those who are brave enough to share their vulnerabilities.
- The most common psychosocial issues that the refugees face is emotional withdrawal. This affects people greatly and as a result, they're not able to be at their best.
- Training workshops for emotional intelligence, soft skills can be extremely beneficial for them. I think institutes need to be more involved and create awareness among locals regarding how they can contribute, be compassionate and help out their fellows in need.

2.3 Key findings reached through interviews with young migrants/refugees

15 migrants/refugees from Afghanistan were interviewed to get information about their skills. Out of 15, 8 came to Pakistan after completing their 12th grade education. While others were here before 12th grade. Every year, International Islamic University enrolls around 25 Afghan nationals as a student. We contacted those students to contact other Afghan Nationals living in Pakistan. Following are the important findings,

- All of them agreed that right now there is no service to reduce their stress, fear and communication barriers.
- Only 2 migrants got ICT training before coming to Pakistan.
- Few of them faced difficulties with providers of support like job and scholarship refusal.
- Most of them reported average knowledge about information and data literacy.
- Mostly know the importance of problem-solving skills but majority said they are lacking in this skill quite significantly



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Overall results are quite matching with the findings of the interviews with ICT market representatives working with refugees/migrants

2.4 Key findings reached through targeted consultation with ICT training providers

- According to ICT Training providers, the following ICT related skills migrants need to improve in order to be integrated in the labor market
 - Problem solving skills
 - Communication skills
 - Data creation and evaluation skills
- 2 out of 5, ICT training providers have already provided short courses for migrants and internally displaced persons.
- All of them are willing to provide skill-based trainings in the future.

3 Conclusion

This research is to profile the basic skills and competencies existing in the refugees and required by the national ICT labor markets. Communication and culture barriers are two the main issues migrants often face as its harder for them to communicate with locals and colleagues. Because of this, migrants face emotional pressure. There must be trainings regarding soft skills as well. Refugees should be provided psychological support. These psychosocial issues affect them greatly and as a result, they're not able to be at their best. According to the ICT Training providers, problem solving, communication and data creation & evaluation are one of the important ICT skills that migrants may need to improve in order to be integrated in the labor market.

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