

## **Migration, Education and Development in South Asia: A Case Study of Merged Districts and Afghan Refugees**

Fazlur Rahman \*, Farid Ullah Khan†

### **Abstract**

*The paper tries to develop links between migration and education in the merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and 1.6mn Afghan refugees in Pakistan in the context of remittances sent by immigrants abroad. To attain SDGs, numerous programmes were initiated to motivate targeted people in the merged districts and Afghan Refugee Villages (RVs) by expanding primary and vocational education. Vocational education, however, developed more interest in migrants in the merged districts and Afghan RVs. Refugees send their children abroad both by legal and illegal means to acquire education and earn money. No mechanism exists at the State level to utilize remittances and support education and its delivery. The empirical data shows mixed responses regarding migration in merged districts and Afghan refugees, somewhere leading to new ideologies of 'progress' and mobility or decreasing the value of education, especially when migration takes place towards Gulf States. Afghans have invested around PKR. 18bn in Pakistan, while PKR. 255m are shared as remittances. The highest remittances are shared by Afghanistan i.e. 26.4%; followed by Iran and Saudi Arabia. The paper tries to explore ways and means, the investment pattern of migrant workers' remittances that can influence education and its impact on mobility. Particular emphasis has been placed on remittances and economic share of Afghan refugees in relation to investment in education endeavors. Respondents were reluctant to share information due to weak monitoring system to record quantitative output of remittances. This proved to be a major limitation that was addressed using confidence building techniques.*

**Key Words:** Migration & Displacement; IDPs, Immigrants & Expatriates; Development & Education; Remittances & Economic Share; Afghan Refugees

### **Introduction**

*Migration*

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Migration is a global phenomenon and will continue to upsurge with globalization. Globalization has not only increased flow of goods, ideas, information, and capital across borders but has also increased the flow of people. It may have been marred by crises and an inequitable world economic system, there are obviously rich dividends of globalization as well. An international migrant is defined as, 'the person who stays outside his usual country of residence for at least one year' (Koser, 2007, p. 4). 'Recorded 154mn (1990) and 175mn (2000), in 2013, the number of international migrants worldwide reached 232mn. In 2010, its rate accelerated reaching 2.3%.' (UNDESA, September 2013, p. 1). Historically migration has played significant role in enriching cultures, nation building and economic growth, and is proved to be an agent of social change.

### *Research Background*

The main aim of this research is to explore the nexus that exist between migration, education and development overall, and in the most neglected areas of merged districts of KP and Afghan refugees, in particular. It has focused on the following research questions;

- How important are remittances in the merged districts and Afghan refugees, especially in terms of their survival in the relentless crises? What is the share of these remittances in the economy?
- Do remittances positively contribute to horizontal and vertical rise of education level?
- Which particular social groups benefit from the remittances?
- Have remittance patterns changed after 9/11 in terms of the channels used?
- How well do assessment methodologies define the role of remittances?
- Are there ways in which policy makers could support and facilitate remittance flow towards education? If so, how?

### **Methodology**

The paper has three main elements;

- Literature Review
- In-depth Interviews, Data Collection and
- Focused Group Discussions

Though plenty of online and printed research is available, regarding migration and education, their linkages with livelihood, poverty alleviation and brain-drain, no significant empirical data is available on the people of merged districts and Afghan refugees in the context of

migration, education and development.

To fill the gap, alongside review of available literature, field research was conducted for six weeks, and response was recorded from interviews and focused group discussions. Experts on the subject of merged districts and Afghan refugees, especially key Government officers in Afghan Commissionerate and SAFRON were interviewed in Peshawar and Islamabad. An empirical survey was carried out in RVs, IDP camps and in Hayatabad, Peshawar.

#### *Challenges and Limitations to the Methodology*

Pakistan's government has tried its level best to curb the illegal services of transfer of remittances i.e. hundi or hawala (Kiran Hunzai, ICIMOD, 2010, pp. 8-9); however, it has achieved petite success. Agents offering hundi and hawala have been successful in getting hold of a large numbers of customers (Javed, 2014). Due to weak monitoring system, one fails to grasp quantitative output from such remittances. The respondents targeted for this research were reluctant to share information due to dubious nature of means of transfer. Careful discussion and interest in education built their confidence regarding confidentiality and independence of this research.

#### *Internal and International Migration of Merged Districts and Afghan Refugees*

Urdu proverb, [*safar waseela-e-zafar*] or 'journey opens avenues of fortunes,' aptly applies to the people of merged districts and Afghan refugees. Their nomadic nature pushes them to move periodically for centuries (Rahman, 2012, p. 321). Due to global political changes, the immigration policies are adversely affecting the immigrants.

The plight of certain migrants in the Middle East is a viable example in this regard (Malik, 2014). Internal migration and displacement of tribals and Afghan refugees rapidly increased, especially after 9/11<sup>2</sup>. Mass migration of tribals and Afghans towards Middle East and Pakistan were witnessed during the 70s and 80s, after 'Saur revolution' in Afghanistan, the Russian invasion, the post-soviet withdrawal era, Afghan civil war, emergence of the Taliban and subsequent US attack on Afghanistan in 2001.

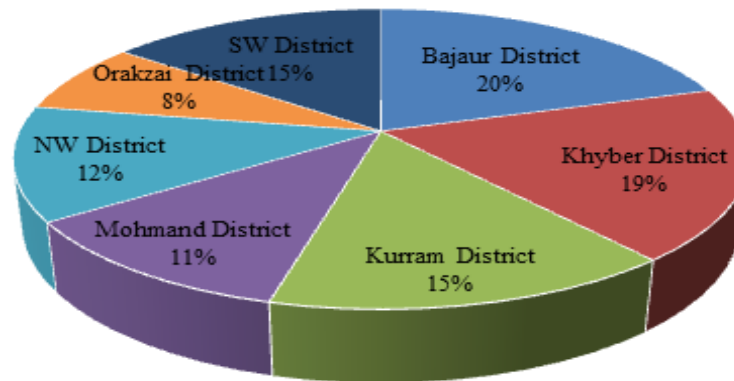
Pakistani workers in the Gulf States and other international returnees have shaped tribal society and this will play a vital role in country's future development (Addelton, 1992, pp. 20-26). However, changes in immigration rules and its impact especially on Afghanistan, merged districts and Middle East have casted a cloud of uncertainty over the future of remittance-dependent communities<sup>3</sup>.

### Case of Merged Districts

Merged districts are a theatre of decisive events in mankind's history (Toynbee, 1961). The seven tribal districts are administered through Frontier Crimes Regulations promulgated in 1901, with minor amendments in 2012. With total area of 27, 220 sq.km (including six Frontier Regions), and population of 3.2mn, it has a pathetic literacy rate i.e. 36.66% (males) and 10.5% (females) respectively (FATA Secretariat, 2014).

Since independence of Pakistan, merged districts were deprived of the same constitutional status as the rest of Pakistan, and are kept low in priority in terms of the development process. This flawed/ad hoc approach deprived large segment of population from social uplift, and economic empowerment (Draft of FATA Youth Policy). **Figure: 1** reflects the demographic distribution in merged districts.

**Fig: 1 Chart showing Population of Merged Districts**



<sup>2</sup> Since 2008, due to conflict, nearly 1.1mn people were displaced in KP and merged districts. In addition, 1.64mn registered Afghan refugees received humanitarian assistance, and more than 1.3mn people who have returned to merged districts since 2009 (UNOCHA, 2013). Up until Aug, 2020, 1,422,588 registered Afghan refugees were recorded by UNHCR (2020).

<sup>3</sup> 41% of applications for family visitor visas from Pakistan were rejected in 2008; the highest amongst all nationalities (UK Immigration comments on Pakistani Visa Refusals, 2009).

**Area of Seven Merged Districts in Sq.Km**

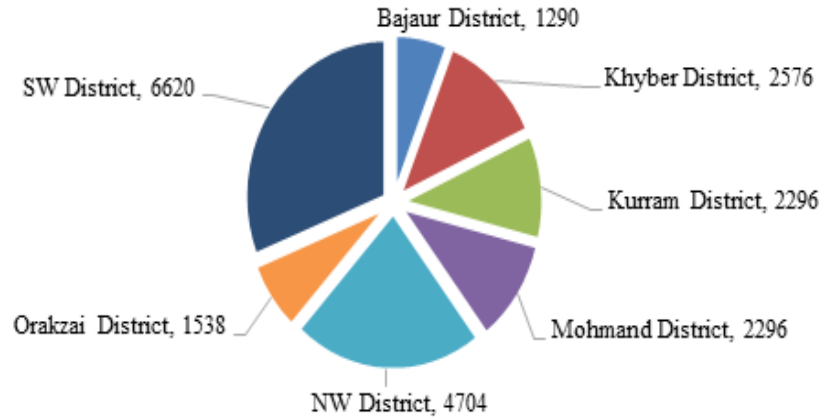


Fig: 2 - Source: FATA Secretariat, <http://fata.gov.pk>

The Bhutto government encouraged tribal people in particular to travel to the Middle East as labour (Mongabay.com, 1994). The flow got momentum during 80s, when 2414 people migrated to the Middle East through Overseas Pakistani Foundation (OPF Headquarters, 1981-2012). In 2012, 29022 registered labourers of merged districts were recorded in the Middle East (Fig: 3 & 4). Unfortunately, no record is available with OPF regarding flow of tribal people towards Europe and USA.

FATA Secretariat and FATA Development Authority (FDA) were established by the government to address their issues. FDA enhanced skills of the youth through extensive skill development programmes including a 3-6 months internship programme. 5916 youth had completed training; while 2847 youth were planned to get on-the-job training till June, 2014. Similarly, 4200 women were planned to get trainings through CBOs.

MERGED DISTRICTS	1981	2012	Total
Bajaur	-	4071	26366
Khyber	638	4226	46752
Kurram	426	4560	54680

Mohmand	254	2381	23940
N. Waziristan	567	5500	65256
Orakzai	247	2736	28548
S. Waziristan	282	3824	36931
F.R Bannu	-	577	1603
F.R D. I. Khan	-	94	747
F.R. Kohat	-	530	1924
F.R. Peshawar	-	523	2072
Total	2414	29022	288819

Fig: 3 - Source: Research Wing OPF Headquarters Islamabad

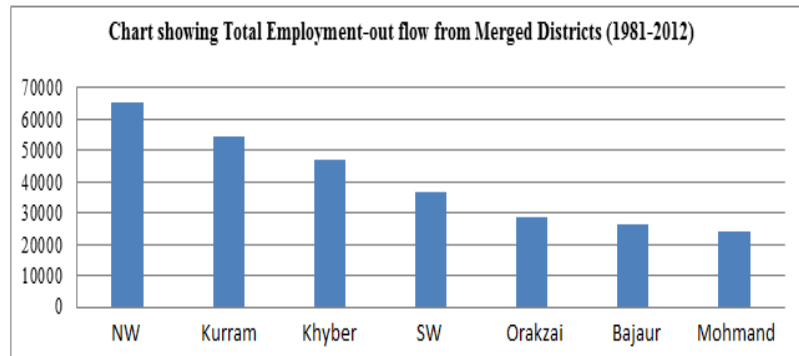


Fig: 4 - Source: OPF Headquarters, Islamabad

### Case of Afghan Refugees

After 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, many Afghans crossed the porous border of Pakistan and decided to stay here till the situation improves. To raise their living standards, many went beyond and explored Europe, North America and even Australia, the process of their diaspora has continued. During the last refugee wave, nearly 300,000 Afghans

reached Pakistan; particularly after 9/11. Pakistan currently hosts 1.7mn registered Afghan refugees, who mainly live in KP and Baluchistan. According to UNHCR, there are 82 RVs in the country - 71 in KP, 10 in Baluchistan and 01 in the Punjab (Din, 2010).

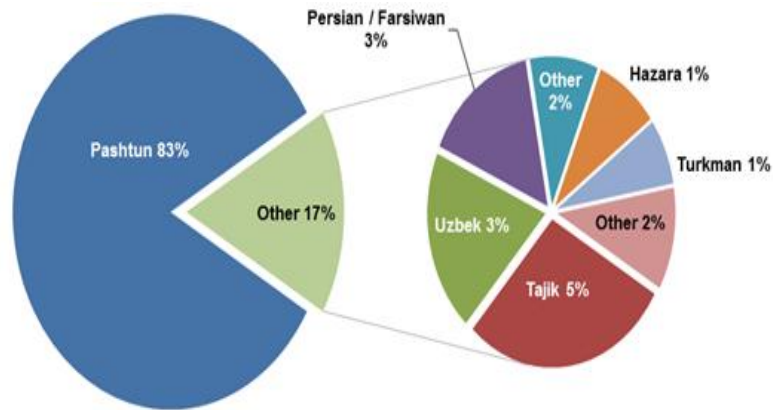


Fig: 5 - Percentage Distribution of Afghan ethnicities in Pakistan

Afghanistan produces 7% of the world’s total number of asylum seekers. In addition to their internal displacement<sup>4</sup>, they are spread over 44 industrialized countries (IRIN, 2011). See Fig: 6 for a brief overview.

Fig: 6 - Sources: Data compiled Electronically from the Websites of Embassies of UK, Norway, Afghanistan and UNHCR

Country	2013	Country	2013	Country	2013
Iran	8,040,90	India	18,000	UK	56,000
Pakistan	1600000	Canada	16,240	Australia	19,416
UAE	300,000	Sweden	6,904	Norway	12403

Germany	126,334	Tajikistan	3,427	Malaysia	10,000
USA	90,000	Qatar	2,600	Turkey	300

Afghan migration can be classified into several categories; labour, internal, and international.

#### *Labour Migration*

Trend of migration in Afghans and tribals is a centuries old tradition. Major migration to the Middle East and other countries started from 70s onward, but they returned after a short stay because of Poor skills, low literacy, and fake documents (Nordland, 2013).

#### *Internal Migration/ IDPs*

From 1979 onward, conflict, calamities and natural disasters were major causes of internal displacement and migration. Around 650,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) are currently residing in Pakistan and may increase further (UNHCR, 2014). Europe and the US have also accommodated some of the asylum seekers<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>4</sup>The 2011 industrialized country asylum data notes a 30% increase in applications from Afghans from 2010 to 2011, reflecting unwillingness of Afghans to return to their country of origin (Prisca Benelli, 2012).

<sup>5</sup>More than 30,000 Afghans applied for political asylum worldwide in the first eleven months of last year – a rise of 25% than 2011 - UN (Farmer, 2012). Moreover, details of Afghan who crossed borders of EU (through Land, Sea, and air) are: in 2009 (14539), 2010 (25918), 2011 (22994) and 2012 (13169), while asylum seekers (EU) in these years respectively are 24699, 21552, 29672 and 27630 persons (Frontex Risk Analysis Unit, 2013).



### *International Migration*

Human trafficking is one of the major reasons of international migration in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran (Shah Mahmud, 2014). From 2008-2010, 140,940 Afghan migrants attained refugee status in Europe (Siegel, Understanding Afghan Migration, 2013). Most of them migrated for safety reasons. In 2010, 4,425 cases of similar nature were reported (Nordland, 2013).

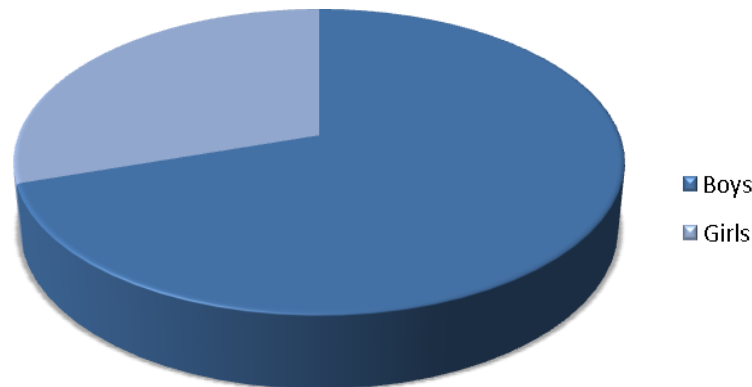
### *Repatriation/Deportation*

Highest number of repatriations to Afghanistan took place after 2002 i.e. 6mn; with most of them from Iran and Pakistan. In 2011, 211,000 Afghans were forced to return and re-repatriated to Afghanistan by Iran (Siegel, Understanding Afghan Migration, 2013).

### *State of Afghan Refugees in Pakistan*

#### Education

There are 437 schools in the RVs of Afghan refugees in KP. Out of these, 243 schools are run by the communities themselves, 129 primary schools by the NGO (BEFARe) with the funding of UNHCR, and 15 schools by IRC<sup>6</sup>. Among 1,750 refugee families, 70% of the enrolled students are boys (BEFARe, 2010). There is no vocational training institution in most of the Afghan RVs except one in Mianwali District (Rahman, Vocational/Skill Education, 2014). See **Fig: 7**.



**Figure: 7** - Gender Distribution of Students in Afghan Refugee Schools

Out of 33.6% total literate Afghan population, male dominates with 75% of the share (UNHCR, 2011). Only 1.74% students are enrolled in religious and 98.26% in non-religious facilities. 4.78% of students have acquired higher level or technical education and 57.72% students are enrolled at the primary level. 4-5 seats are reserved for them in KP Medical Colleges.

They feel that the time spent at schools can be utilized to acquire vocational skills to help them earn some income (Rahman, Educational Status of Afghan Refugees Children, 2014). 29% net enrollment ratio (NER) of the Afghan students and 56% of Pakistani students were recorded in a PPVR survey<sup>7</sup>. 10.46% male and 7.93% female Afghans opted to acquire skills to make them technically sound to earn well in future.

#### *Remittances & the Economic Share*

Afghanistan has no mechanism to report data on remittances to the IMF. According to The World Bank survey, 15% of the rural Afghans are banking on remittances. During 2005-2006, the contribution of remittances to the country's GDP clicked 29.6% (US\$ 2.5bn) (IFAD, 2007). Remittances from Iran comprised 6% of the Afghanistan's total GDP in 2008 - UN reported. Iran and Pakistan are the major recipients of Afghans remittances i.e. nearly 31%. In 2008, US\$ 75mn (from US and Canada) and EUR 101,664mn (from Germany and Netherland) remittances were received by Afghanistan (Siegel, Understanding Afghan Migration, 2013). Currently 1.7mn registered Afghans<sup>8</sup> can work and acquire education in Pakistan (News, 2013). Afghans have invested around PKR. 18bn in Pakistan, while PKR. 255m are shared as remittances. The highest remittances are shared by Afghanistan i.e. 26.4%. It is followed by Iran (25.5%) and Saudi Arabia (22.2%).

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<sup>6</sup> The Government of Pakistan closed down all Afghan refugee schools in the KP province in March 2006, because of budget constraints. However, upon the request of Afghan refugee community, these schools were re-opened in April 2006 on a self-help basis and in October 2008, funding/donation was extended by Germany (ICMAP, 2013)

Table: 8 depict the comparison of remittances of countries with major share of contribution. Saudi Arabia (25.06%) contribution is the highest followed by Afghanistan (21.07). Expatriates who share such a handsome amount are refugees residing in three major cities of KP – Peshawar, Mansehra and Haripur (UNHCR, 2012).

Country of Remittance	Amount Received PKR	% age share
Saudi Arabia	6,407,658	25.06
Afghanistan	5,388,109	21.07
UK	4,112,320	16.08
Iran	4,106,583	16.06
Other Europe	1,979,537	7.74
Gulf states	1,825,657	7.14
Other country	782,722	3.06
US/Canada	678,927	2.66
Australia	251,887	0.99
Japan	29,000	0.11
No Response	5,500	0.02
Don't know	2,600	0.01
Total	25,570,500	100

Table: 8 - Distribution of Inward Remittances/ Economic Share by Country of Origin

### *Key Findings and Recommendations*

Remittances received from abroad were mainly spent on maintaining household and purchasing land. However, in merged districts, there is growing trend of acquiring vocational education and getting some marketable skills (Rahman, Repatriation of Afghan Refugees, 2014). In merged districts, youth showed a greater tendency for acquiring skills in civil engineering, mason, electric engineering, mining and carpeting. Military operations, internal displacements, and miserable life in the settled areas have an impact on tribal youth migration (Rahman, Changing Trends in FATA, 2014). Despite despondency for State's organs, numerous tribal people are still inclined to invest remittances in educating their youth; particularly to learn English language, computer literacy courses, and IT-related soft and hardware. After 9/11, xenophobia towards foreigners portraying them as terrorist has created problems in labourers' mobility. Migration can pacify the widening in-equalities at global level (Catton, 2006). Militancy and the counter military operations lead to increase in number of refugees. UN 'Education for all' goal could be achieved if the skilled youth are provided with a job opportunity through a robust mechanism.

The government can tax highly-skilled migrants. An exclusive fund could be set-up for these returnees with the help of UN meant for supporting refugee's education. In case of merged districts and Afghan refugees, this step can benefit both the returnee and the communities. Skilled workers should be regulated to bear their own expenses, and the government expenditure remains unharmed even if he decides to leave country of origin (Rieger, 2010, p. 5). There seems to be lack of trust on both sides. Afghan refugees do not consider themselves as inhabitants of Pakistan. They prefer to fly abroad or return to their homeland. Besides ensuring security for investors of merged districts, overseas tribesmen can be motivated to pour their share through public-private funding to boost the local economy.

### ***Conclusion***

Remittances are the back bone of the economy and it helps in uplifting the living standards of the tribal and Afghan refugees both; however, some grey areas need State's attention for grievance redressal. The foremost is the trend of migration both in merged districts and Afghan refugees. Within cultural boundaries, strong monitoring mechanism is required to trace down the flow, education and employment-related needs of the youth; particularly vulnerable females<sup>9</sup>. Moreover, strong advocacy campaign is needed to utilize remittances and invest it in skill-based education. Overseas investors and Afghan refugee's elders need to be consulted for introduction of education programmes through public-

private partnerships in the targeted areas.

In Pakistan, an independent welfare fund has been established to provide basic facilitation to the refugees, such as, vocational trainings, loans and repatriation aid. In line with the aspirations of the tribal elders, there is a need to establish a welfare fund for Afghan refugees. Interest-free investment schemes and special bonds channeled towards funding of public sector projects are some of the key initiatives of the government customized for migrants. Such schemes could be introduced for Afghan refugees.

Community Driven Development (CDD) and adoption of a decentralized approach could help putting the communities at forefront of development to directly govern funds, and exercise their own will to develop a new infrastructure and improve self-wellbeing<sup>10</sup>. The government can provide guidance in prioritizing vocational and skill education. However, the devolution process must provide tangible benefits and access to the poor households in the migrant communities. Local leadership can determine the outcome of CDD projects, especially CBOs; influential individuals, tribal elders, educated youth in merged districts and Afghan refugees (Jean- Louis Arcand, 2010).

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<sup>7</sup>NER at primary level is the ratio of total number of children of official school age 5-9 years enrolled in primary classes to the total population of children of the same age group - Population Profiling and Verification of Afghan Refugees (PPVR Survey).

<sup>8</sup>Approximately 1mn un-registered Afghan refugees living in Pakistan in addition to 1.6mn registered (UNHCR). Up until Aug, 2020, 1,422,588 registered Afghan refugees were recorded by UNHCR (2020).

<sup>9</sup>Melissa Siegel, though has focused on Moldova in 'The effects of migration on children and the elderly left behind in Moldova', however, her research can help in making contrast of merged districts, Afghan Refugee Children and elderly with Moldova (Siegel, Blog, 2013).

<sup>10</sup>Merged districts and FR both have plenty of un-explored resources where remittances can be utilized meaningfully and again poured in education and development. Around 5850mn tons of minerals are available in Bajaur District. 230mn tons industrial grade limestone and 120mn tons gypsum is in Sherani area of FR D.I.Khan, where industries like cement, fertilizers and plaster of Paris could be established. Linking remittances with explorations and ultimately with education can lead the area towards hub of peace and constructive engagement in development (Iqbal, 2011).

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