

Case Study Series

**AFGHAN RETURNEES FROM  
NWFP, PAKISTAN,  
TO NANGARHAR PROVINCE**

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Gulbadan Habibi, April 2006

## Glossary

<i>Afs (Afghanis)</i>	Afghan unit of currency; approximately 50 Afghanis = US\$1
<i>chawk</i>	crossroad
<i>gujar</i>	a semi-nomadic group which raise livestock
<i>hujra</i>	guestroom for males separated from household's main living quarters
<i>jihad</i>	holy war
<i>khpilwan</i>	relatives
<i>khwastgari</i>	process of arranging a bride for son
<i>malik</i>	community leader
<i>mujahedin</i>	holy warriors, resistance groups
<i>pashai</i>	herders, farmers from Nuristan
<i>pashtunwali</i>	Pashtun code of honour
<i>qaum</i>	tribe
<i>spin zheray/rish-safid</i>	old man or "white beard"
<i>wasita</i>	social connections

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## Abstract

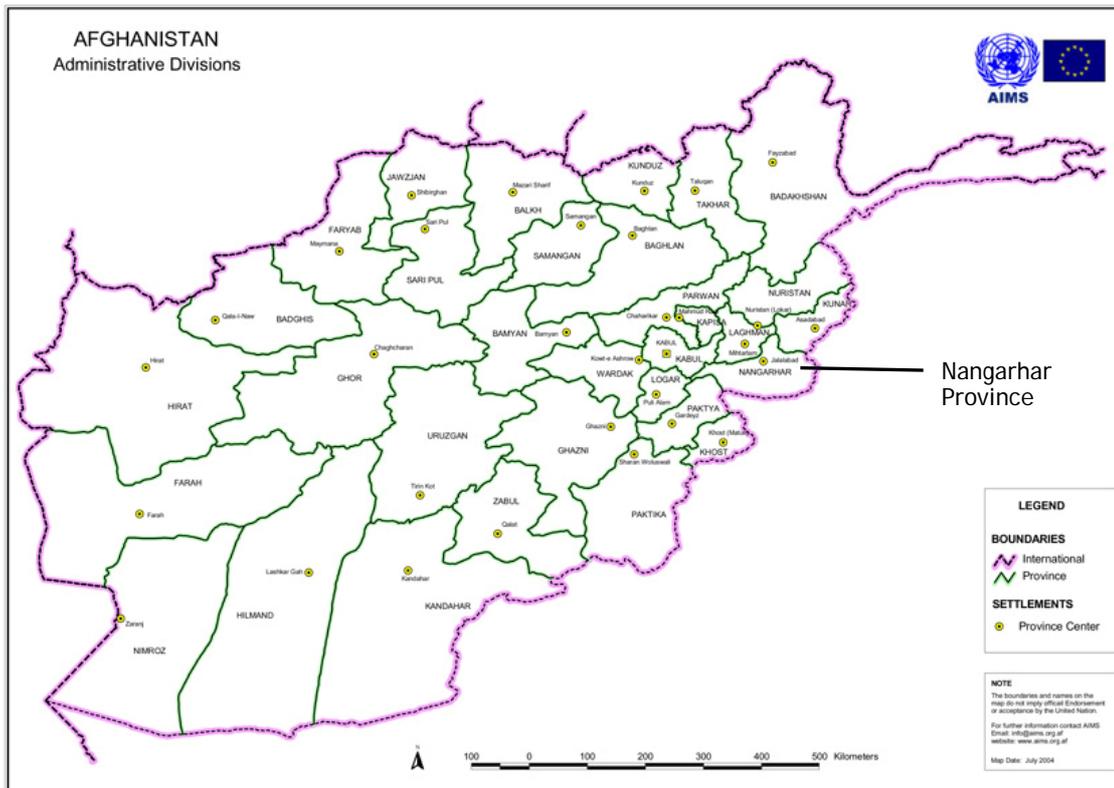
This study examines the livelihood strategies of returned refugees who left Nangarhar Province (mostly from the city of Jalalabad or its surrounds) during the conflict years and settled as refugees in nearby Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), Pakistan, mostly in or near the city of Peshawar. They left Afghanistan as family units at different stages following the Soviet invasion in 1979, lived as refugees in Pakistan in both camp and city, and have returned to their home province in recent years – households largely intact. In both Pakistan and on return, they have been surrounded by relatives (*khpilwan*) and kinspeople (*qaum*) who have provided much social support. Their transnational networks have never been extensive, only a minority have relatives still in Pakistan, and just a few receive intermittent remittances from abroad.

The returnees interviewed are generally positive about having returned to their homeland and have reintegrated well, with the economic situation of the majority better now than it was in Pakistan. However, the livelihoods of the poorer returnees are precarious, and the sustainability of their reintegration is questionable. Lack of proper housing is a primary concern, along with lack of suitable employment opportunities, although they continue to hope for assistance from the government or other sources. Only a few expressed interest in returning to nearby Pakistan, but this situation could change with the deterioration of their current circumstances.

# 1. Introduction

This report presents the last of three case studies of returnees in Afghanistan,<sup>1</sup> which together form one component of a three-country study conducted by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit on Afghan population movements between Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran.<sup>2</sup> This report deals with Afghan returnees from Pakistan’s Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) who are currently living in Afghanistan’s Nangarhar Province, while other reports in the series have focused on Afghans living in the neighbouring countries of Pakistan and Iran.<sup>3</sup>

*Figure 1. Map of Afghanistan (courtesy: Afghanistan Information Management Systems)*



## 1.1 Description of the study area

Located in eastern Afghanistan, the province of Nangarhar shares a border with Pakistan’s NWFP. The majority of the population in both Nangarhar and NWFP are

<sup>1</sup> The other research areas in Afghanistan (field work undertaken in 2004–05) were Faryab and Herat; see E. Stigter, 2005, *Transnational Networks and Migration from Faryab to Iran*, Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit and E. Stigter, 2005, *Transnational Networks and Migration from Herat to Iran*, Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit

<sup>2</sup> *Taking Refugees for a Ride: The Politics of Refugee Return to Afghanistan* (D. Turton and P. Marsden, 2002, Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit) recommended more research on refugee decision-making, along with exploration of “the regional and transnational networks that sustain the incomes of Afghan households and families” (p. 56).

<sup>3</sup> CSSR, 2005, *Afghans in Karachi: Migration, Settlement and Social Networks*, Kabul: AREU; CSSR, 2005, *Afghans in Quetta: Settlements, Livelihoods, Support Networks and Cross-Border Linkages*, Kabul: AREU; CSSR, 2005, *Afghans in Peshawar: Migration, Settlement and Social Networks*, Kabul: AREU; University of Tehran, 2005, *Return to Afghanistan? A Study of Afghans Living in Tehran; Mashhad; Zahedan*, Kabul: AREU.

Pashtun and, on both sides of the international border,<sup>4</sup> most inhabitants share a similar tribal structure, language and religion, along with many cultural traditions. Nangarhar's capital city of Jalalabad lies on an ancient trade route leading from Kabul via the Khyber Pass to Peshawar and the Indian subcontinent.

The political events of recent decades have resulted in a different kind of migration across this border – the massive movement of households comprised of Afghan men, women and children seeking refuge from war and its related economic hardships in nearby Pakistan. As a result of the communist coup in Afghanistan in April 1978 and the following Soviet occupation of the country (1979–89), in 1990 approximately 3.3 million Afghan refugees were living in Pakistan,<sup>5</sup> not only in its cities but also in 300 refugee camps, most of which were in NWFP. Following the downfall of the Taliban, the Bonn Agreement of December 2001, and the subsequent establishment of the UNHCR-assisted voluntary repatriation in 2002, Afghan households returned in unprecedented numbers (an estimated 3 million in 2002–05) from Pakistan to their homeland.<sup>6</sup> A recent census of Afghans in Pakistan also indicates that over 3 million individuals remain there.<sup>7</sup>

This study explores the livelihoods of Afghans who left Nangarhar years ago, resided in NWFP as refugees, and have returned in recent years to their home province, primarily settling in or near Jalalabad City:<sup>8</sup>

- How have households made decisions about their transnational movements?
- How did they survive during their many years away from their home country?
- Of special importance, what are their livelihood strategies for survival in Afghanistan today, and what types of transnational networks persist between Nangarhar and Pakistan?

## 1.2 Methodology

The field work for this study was undertaken in Nangarhar Province in November and December 2005. The field team consisted of two female researchers (one expatriate of Afghan origin and one Afghan) and two male researchers (both Afghans) manager.

Field work was undertaken not only in Jalalabad City itself but also in periurban areas on the outskirts of the city and in more distant villages of up to one and a half hours from the city.<sup>9</sup> A total of 100 adult individuals were interviewed (75 males and 25 males) from 98 households,<sup>10</sup> all of whom had returned from Pakistan within the past 1–6 years. Households of recently returned refugees were identified initially

<sup>4</sup> Created by the British in 1893, the Durand Line separates Afghanistan from British India, in effect dividing the Pashtuns. In some locations, especially in the tribal territories to the west of NWFP, this border is still not recognised by the local population.

<sup>5</sup> UNHCR, 2000, *State of the World's Refugees 2000: 50 Years of Humanitarian Action*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>6</sup> Even by November 2002, about 322,925 refugees had repatriated to Nangarhar Province alone, which was second only to the number that had repatriated to Kabul Province (651,732) (Turton and Marsden, *Taking Refugees for a Ride*, p. 68). The figure of 3 million assisted and spontaneous returns is drawn from the UNHCR's weekly statistical report of 17 December 2005.

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON), Population Census Organization (Government of Pakistan) and UNHCR, 2005, *Census of Afghans in Pakistan 2005*. Islamabad, p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Recent population estimates for Jalalabad City range from 181,000 (Central Statistics Office, 2003/1382, *Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook*) to 500,000 (*Securing Afghanistan's Future: Accomplishments and the Strategic Path Forward*, Government of Afghanistan).

<sup>9</sup> These included villages in Surkhrod, (Char Bagh-i-Safa, Qala-i-Bakhtan and Naghrak), Behsood (Qasim Abad, Qala-i-Najarha, Qala-i-Janan) and Hada.

<sup>10</sup> Two pairs of a male and a female are from the same households.

through the *malik* or village elders, or through village shopkeepers. After interviewing poor returnees, subsequently individuals with higher education levels and those with business and property were included. They were located through word of mouth.

Approximately half of the interviews took place in or near Jalalabad City, with the remainder in rural communities. Interviews were conducted in both public and private settings,<sup>11</sup> including the following:

- at intersections or markets;
- in shops;
- in a community's *hujra* (guestroom for males only) or in the house of a *malik* (community leader);
- outside a house sitting on a *katt* (a traditional bed-like frame made of wood and rope);
- in a *kodala* (a windowless hut made of mud and cattails); and
- in private compounds.

Inquiry was primarily quantitative in nature, using a structured questionnaire. In addition, when specific topics warranted more discussion (such as gender relations), qualitative information was also gathered. When possible, observations were also made of the respondents' living arrangements and surroundings.

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<sup>11</sup> Discussions with men were conducted in both public and private locations; all discussions with women were in or near their homes.

## 2. The Respondents

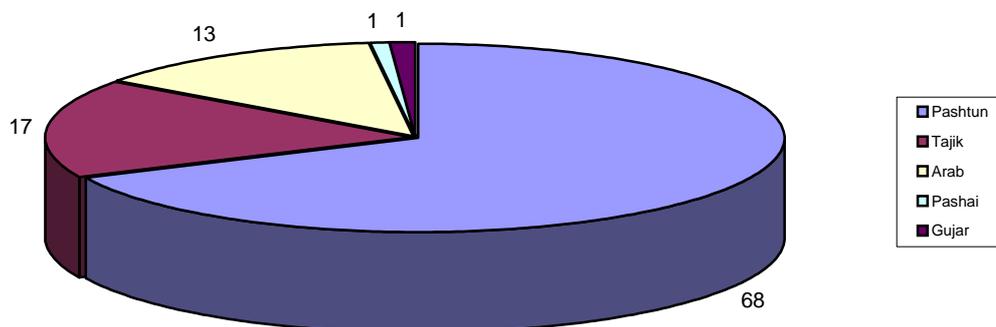
### 2.1 Ethnicity and demography

As illustrated in figure 1, the majority of the respondents were ethnic Pashtuns. A significant number were also Tajik and Arab,<sup>12</sup> with a small number of Pashai<sup>13</sup> and Gujar.<sup>14</sup> Almost all (98 percent) were originally from Nangarhar Province, with only one individual each from nearby Kunar and Nuristan. Around 48 percent of the sample was originally from rural areas, with the remainder from urban Jalalabad.

In the province of Nangarhar, the traditional Pashtun tribal code of honour, *pashtunwali*, applies, and it is respected by both Pashtuns and other ethnic groups in the region. The *pashtunwali* code is a set of commonly agreed and socially accepted values and common aspirations.<sup>15</sup>

**Table 1.** *The pashtunwali code of honour*

<i>Melmastia</i>	Hospitality, generosity
<i>Nanawati</i>	Asylum, acceptance of truce
<i>Badal</i>	Blood revenge
<i>Torah</i>	Bravery
<i>Nang</i>	Pride
<i>Hujra</i>	Traditional meeting place (for hospitality, conflict resolution, etc)



**Figure 2.** *Ethnicity of respondents*

The average age of the males in the sample was 50 years, while that of the female respondents was 40 years. Almost all were married, and the average size of their respective households was nine members.

The majority of the individuals in the total sample (61 percent) had no education at all. Among the 25 females, only three had any education (two formal and one

<sup>12</sup> The Central Asian Arabs are a Dari-speaking group who are mainly semi-nomadic. Although they continue to be identified as Arab, they have not been directly connected with the Middle East since the 14th century.

<sup>13</sup> The Pashai, farmers, are a minority ethnic group in eastern Afghanistan who speak a Dardic dialect similar to other groups in the Nuristani region.

<sup>14</sup> The Gujars are a semi-nomadic group specialising in livestock raising and the sale of dairy products.

<sup>15</sup> L. Dupree, 1980, *Afghanistan*, New Delhi: Rama Publishers, p. 124–6.

private schooling).<sup>16</sup> Among the 75 males, 33 had formal education ranging from grades 1–12 to a few with some teacher training college or university education; three had private education (table 2).

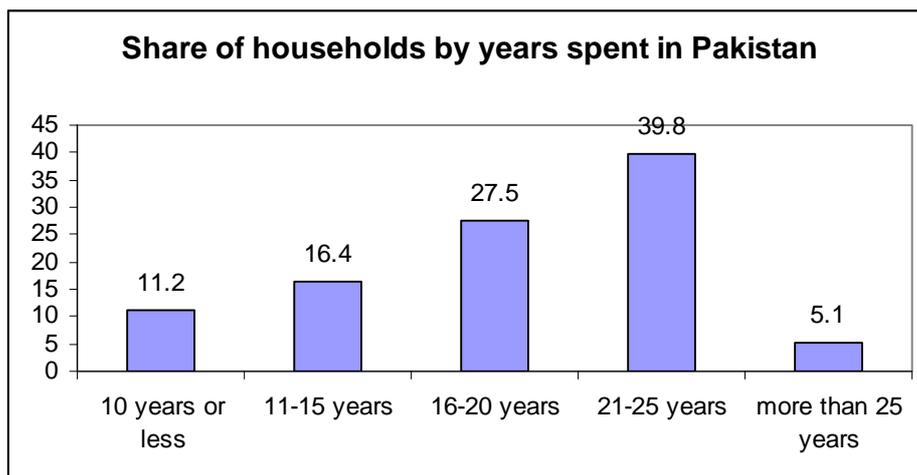
*Table 2. Number of respondents by sex and education*

Gender	Formal education	Private education	Uneducated	Total
Female	2	1	22	25
Male	33	3	39	75
Total	35	4	61	100

## 2.2 Length of time spent in Pakistan

Figure 2 illustrates the length of time the respondents spent in Pakistan. Most sought refuge shortly after the Soviet invasion of 1979 and the subsequent years; a smaller number left Afghanistan for Pakistan during the time of the Taliban. The average length of time they stayed in Pakistan was nineteen years. This is a considerable period of time – during which mature individuals grew old, children grew up and a new generation was born.

*Figure 3. Households' years spent in Pakistan*



## 2.3 A strong social support system

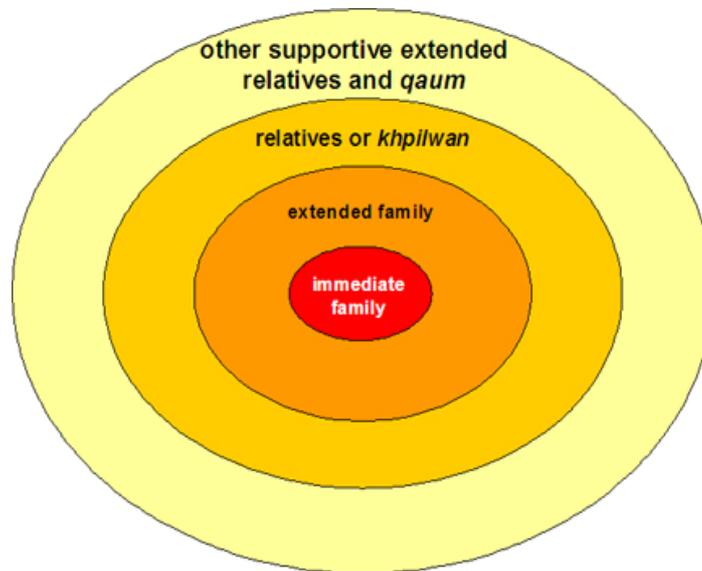
Throughout the past decades as refugees in Pakistan, and now as returnees in Afghanistan, the individuals in the study sample have been embraced and protected by a strong social support system, comprised primarily of relatives.

There is a striking stability to this extensive network of supportive relatives (*khpilwan* and *qaum*) over the years. Similarly to most Afghans, the respondents interviewed in this study are clearly:

*...conscious of belonging to a larger entity which takes the form of a more or less endogenous community (the qaum), whether its sociological basis is*

<sup>16</sup> Private education was a response given by older men and women who had studied in religious texts, Arabic, Farsi and literature in religious institutions.

*tribe, clan, professional group, caste, religious group, ethnic group, village community or simply an extended family.*<sup>17</sup>



**Figure 3.** *The social support system*

As indicated in the following discussion, the role of relatives<sup>18</sup> in the provision of assistance and protection in the livelihoods of the respondents is extensive, and the network of social obligations is especially dense. In general, it is primarily both paternal and maternal cousins, and uncles on both the paternal and maternal sides, who are mentioned as providing help in time of need; sisters and brothers are also noted, along with affines (son-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law) and other relatives (figure 3, table 3).

**Table 3.** *Social support networks on which refugees relied during time in refuge and on return*<sup>19</sup>

Type of relatives	Pashtu	English
Immediate family	<i>plar, khawand, zaamen, wroona and wrara</i>	father, husband (in case of woman), sons, brothers and nephews
Extended family	<i>tera or kaka mama tera or kaka zoi or zaamen mama zoi or zaamen benzoi</i>	paternal uncle maternal uncle paternal cousin(s) maternal cousin(s) stepson (in case of woman)
Relatives or <i>khpilwan</i>	<i>de plar tera or kaka and de plar mama, plar tera zoi khusurkhail (khusur, aukhshi and de khwashinai merra)</i>	parents' uncles, aunts and cousins, in-laws (father-in-law, brother-in-law and sister-in-law's husband)
Other supportive extended relatives	<i>plar, moor kaka, maama zaamen</i>	parent's second and third cousins, wife's uncles and cousins, and tribe
Tribe	<i>qaum</i>	tribe

<sup>17</sup> O. Roy, 1985, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 12.

<sup>18</sup> Neighbours and friends are also important, but to a much lesser degree. Many neighbours may often also be relatives.

<sup>19</sup> Interviewees' responses reflect the Pashtun kinship system.

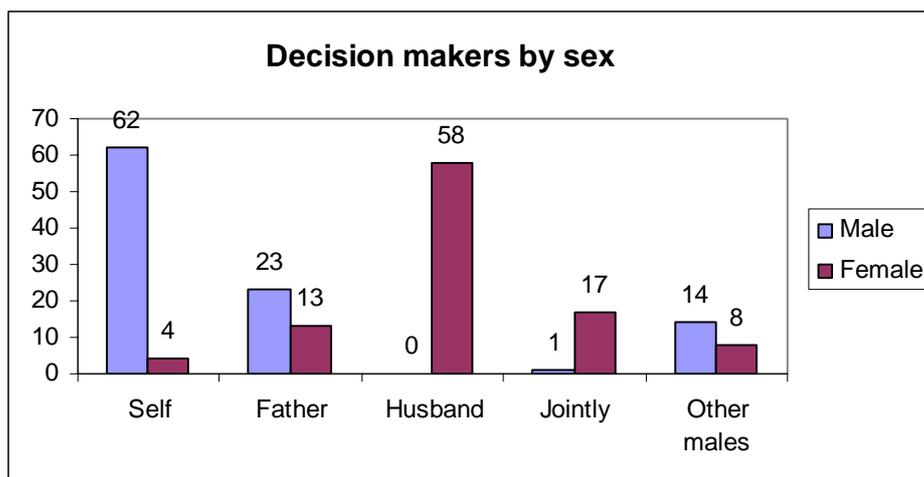
### 3. Seeking Refuge in Pakistan

None of the respondents had sought refuge in any country other than Pakistan. This can be explained by the short distance of Nangarhar from Pakistan (and, more specifically, from the Northwest Frontier Province). The international border is only about 70 km east of Jalalabad, and the city of Peshawar is just 55 km further. Around 55 percent of the respondents noted Pakistan's close geographical proximity, while others mentioned the presence of relatives who had already moved to Pakistan as reasons for seeking refuge there.<sup>20</sup> The similarity of language and religion was important, and a few individuals also said that they could not afford to go anywhere else.

In 93 percent of the instances the reported reason for seeking refuge in Pakistan was to escape from the war; Nangarhar was the site of heavy fighting and bombardment for many years, especially during the time of the communist government. Other reasons mentioned (multiple responses possible) were closely related to this: to escape from military service (5 percent); a deteriorated living standard due to the war (7 percent); lack of security (3 percent); a deteriorating economic situation (4 percent); and the lack of schools or poor quality of education (1 percent). Calling attention to the importance of social networks in tightly knit communities in this context of mass exodus, one male respondent simply stated the following: "Everyone else was leaving...so we did too."

Although the majority of the male respondents relate that they themselves made the decision for their household to move to Pakistan,<sup>21</sup> there are also some cases, primarily reported by women, in which discussion among household members did occur (figure 4). In 5 percent of all instances, and 17 percent of female cases, it was reported that all of the household members, including females, took part in the decision. One male head of household clearly remembered: "I discussed with my wife, and then we migrated to Pakistan."

Figure 4. Decision to seek refuge (percent of respondents)



Prior to the civil unrest that began in the late 1970s and their departure to Pakistan, a little more than half of the sample owned their own house (table 4). About a

<sup>20</sup> There is no indication that these transnational links with relatives existed prior to refugee exodus, nor with Pakistanis. There could have been some business-related links, but these were not mentioned by respondents.

<sup>21</sup> In this staunchly patrilineal society, this finding is not surprising.

quarter owned land; of these 58 percent were urban and 42 percent rural. Only in a few cases was this property rented out or looked after by remaining relatives after the refugees left for Pakistan. In most cases it was simply abandoned or destroyed. In only a few cases homes were confiscated by the government of the time.

*Table 4. Asset ownership prior to seeking refuge*

	Share of households
Owned home before seeking refuge	51%
Owned land before seeking refuge	27%
Rented house or relative looked after it while away	19%
Found property destroyed on return	71%

Current income status appears to be correlated with respondents' ownership of land prior to departure for Pakistan. While just over a quarter of all respondents reported owning land, 46 percent of those in the highest household income quartile reported owning land prior to seeking refuge, compared to 16–20 percent of those in the other income groups. Respondents from the upper two quartiles were less likely to find their land destroyed, but were the only groups to have had it confiscated.

### 3.1 Crossing the border and the costs involved

Crossing the border was not easy, and most respondents made the initial trip through the mountains on foot, with the assistance of donkeys, camels or horses. Some households sent individual males across the border to check the situation and make contact with relatives who had previously moved to Pakistan, but most families simply departed, perhaps *en masse*, with other relatives or villagers. Migration in search of refuge often occurred during periods of intense fighting between the government and various *mujahedin* factions,<sup>22</sup> and travel was often accomplished at night. Travel for women and children was especially difficult under these circumstances. Some families hired or bribed costly smugglers to assist them, while others were helped by *mujahedin* groups they knew or with whom they had party affiliation. Most, however, did not have any formal assistance and rather relied on fellow refugees and tribal communities along the way. One female respondent, who was only eight years old at the time of departure from Afghanistan, clearly remembers that difficult time:

*I was very young. We had no one to help us. We walked for two days and two nights through very tall mountains. My feet were hurting and had many blisters. Finally my father rented donkeys and put me and my brothers and sisters on the donkeys. My parents also put some of the loads they were carrying on the animals, and they themselves continued walking. I remember that this was a very hard trip...*

On the Pakistani side of the border, tractors or cars were hired to take them to their destinations in the NWFP, where kinspeople were often anxiously waiting to receive them.

<sup>22</sup> As the resistance against the communist government grew and became more organised, seven major political parties emerged, primarily based upon geographic location, ethnicity and religious sect. Most of these parties had their headquarters in Peshawar.

Data suggest that the total cost of crossing the border was high. The average cost of travel was reported to be 8,500 Afs (US\$160) per family.<sup>23</sup> Only in 3 percent of the cases was it reported that they did not have any money during their travels. For about half of the sample, savings was the main source of financing the move (table 5). Others sold either their productive (such as livestock) or non-productive assets, or borrowed from relatives.

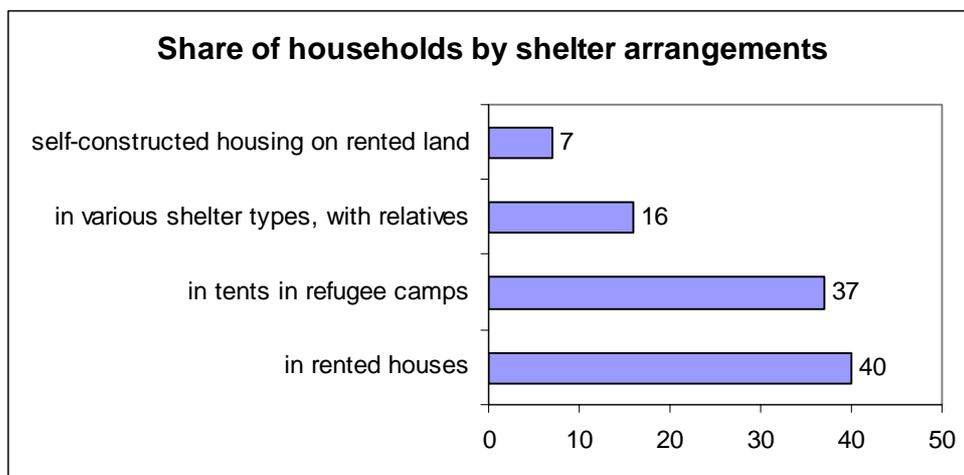
*Table 5. Strategies to meet costs of travel*

Method of raising funds to travel	Share of households
Savings	47%
Sale of asset	27%
Borrowed from relative	12%
Rented their house	2%
Combination of strategies	11%

### 3.2 Settling in Pakistan

The majority of the sample settled in refugee camps in or near the large urban centre of Peshawar, the capital of NWFP.<sup>24</sup> Others found refuge in camps within 50 km of the city,<sup>25</sup> while only a few settled further to the northeast in Haripur or Azad Kashmir. Around 8 percent travelled southwest to Kohat City, which is about 60 km from Peshawar, and the Khuram Agency.

*Figure 5. Housing in Pakistan*



The refugees settled into a range of living situations in Pakistan. As shown in figure 5, almost equal proportions either rented houses<sup>26</sup> or lived in tents in refugee camps, while 16 percent took up free residence with their relatives. A few constructed their

<sup>23</sup> This figure may be inaccurate due to different exchange rates, and the possibility that respondents reported the amount of money with which they arrived in Pakistan, and not what they had spent in the border crossing process.

<sup>24</sup> Some of the camps near Peshawar which were mentioned include: Kacha Garhi, Kababiyar, Silozo, Boot Camp, Nasirbagh, Khazana, Zanday, Shamsato, Tajabad, Wahid Garhi and Khorazan.

<sup>25</sup> Such as Charsada, Major Qala, Shakardara, Zazi and Warsak.

<sup>26</sup> For those living in Peshawar City, the average monthly rent was 525 Pakistani rupees. One respondent who had been a refugee in Kohat City recalled that five households had lived in one compound and had paid a total of 400 rupees for rent monthly.

own homes on rented land. Those in the lower two income quartiles were more likely to settle in camps than those in upper two quartiles.

Not all refugee camps were registered with the government; some were organised by various *mujahedin* factions or political parties for their supporters. In many camp contexts, refugees initially lived in tents but over the years constructed their own mud houses at the same locations. In this way, tent communities soon took on the appearance of settled villages, with streets and shops. With the interventions of UNHCR, other UN agencies and scores of NGOs (international and local), some refugee communities came to possess public and/or household water pumps and also electricity. The majority of respondents noted that they had both electricity (86 percent) and a nearby water source (87 percent) in these settings. Food rations were also distributed periodically in some camps.

*Table 6. Assistance in finding housing in Peshawar (n=49)*

Source of assistance	Share of households
Relatives	78%
Friend	10%
Property dealer	4%
Own initiative	8%

For the 49 respondents who settled in Peshawar City, relatives and friends were the main sources of assistance in finding accommodation (table 6). The majority mentioned that they found a place to live through their relatives, while a small number were helped by their Afghan friends. A few also found housing by themselves or through the services of a property dealer; only higher-income respondents (in the highest two income quartiles) used the services of a property dealer.

*Table 7. Residential histories*

Number of moves	Share of households
0	41%
1	11%
2	35%
3	5%
>4	8%

The residential histories of the respondents during their years in Pakistan are quite stable (table 7), and none of the respondents left the NWFP region to live on a long-term basis elsewhere in Pakistan. The average length of stay in one location was sixteen years; the major reason for this stability was the fact that relatives had generally settled in one locality as a group and there was no perceived need to move.<sup>27</sup> Sometimes marriage, better housing arrangements, better jobs<sup>28</sup> or eviction by a landlord did mean that households moved from place to place within the same general area. The poorest and wealthiest respondents were more likely to have moved: those in the lowest income quartile were more likely to have moved once,

<sup>27</sup> Of particular note, now that they have returned to Nangarhar, a slight majority of respondents (51 percent) still live close to the same relatives they lived with as groups of households in Pakistan.

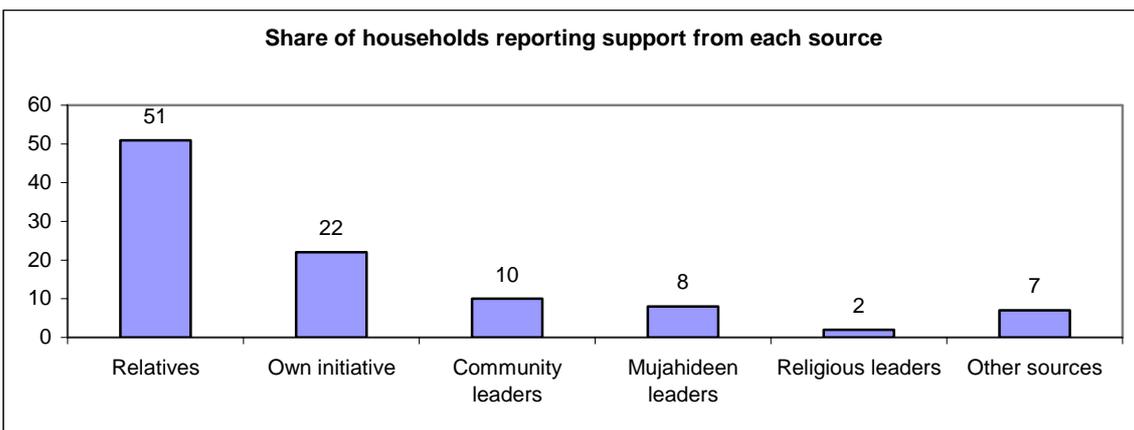
<sup>28</sup> For example, one Tajik father (who was a teacher) noted that when his two daughters were hired as teachers in a refugee camp school (run by the German NGO, GTZ), the whole household moved from Kohat City to the nearby camp.

and the wealthiest were more likely than those in other income quartiles to have moved more than once.

### 3.3 Social support and protection issues

During the past decades, the respondents in this study found assistance and protection within a strong social support system of relatives (*khpilwan*) and tribe (*qaum*), regardless of location. This is clearly illustrated in figure 6, which summarises the various sources of their support in Pakistan. Cousins and uncles were frequently mentioned, along with other paternal and maternal relatives, and affines or in-laws. Networks of social obligations, reciprocal in nature, were pervasive. In addition to furnishing houses and assisting the newcomers in finding shelter, types of support include giving loans, household effects and food, along with the provision of employment, help in finding work, assistance during family emergencies such as illness and funerals, and general guidance.<sup>29</sup> Living close together, households also provided each other with physical protection from thieves and other would-be attackers. One man recalled, "Peshawar was like our home – all our relatives were there!"

Figure 6. Sources of support in Pakistan



In this respect, the characterisation of the social networks of Afghan labour migrants in Iran made by Stigter and Monsutti<sup>30</sup> applies similarly to Afghan refugees' networks in Pakistan:

*Afghans' social networks in Iran function as sources of solidarity, credit, information on culture and practices in Iran, contacts with the labour market, and providers of initial accommodation as well as social and emotional support. These networks can be based on family connections, ethnic identity or acquaintances from the area of origin.*

Individuals in leadership positions were another major source of support for the refugees, as were community leaders, *mujahedin* leaders and religious leaders (figure 6). Especially in those refugee camps organised by the various political parties and *mujahedin* factions,<sup>31</sup> distinct patron–client relationships were formed.

<sup>29</sup> Following their return to Afghanistan, the same support mechanisms continued for the respondents in Nangarhar.

<sup>30</sup> E. Stigter and A. Monsutti, *Transnational Networks: Recognising a Regional Reality*, Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, p. 8.

<sup>31</sup> Respondents specifically mentioned their political parties and leaders as the following: Mahez Party/Gailani, Hezb-i-Islam Party, Khalis, Sayyaf and King Zahir Shah.

Camp residents gave the party their support, and males from their households periodically went back into Afghanistan on *jihad* (the holy war against the communists). Patrons (party leaders, of which there were many in each location) gave their followers physical protection in the camps, along with providing employment opportunities, rations, schools and clinics – although these services were not always equal in distribution, and often piecemeal in nature.

A little over half of the respondents (53 percent) did not have any official documents which would allow them to live or work in Pakistan legally, nor to access other forms of government and UNHCR support. The remainder had been given identification cards from the UNHCR, the Pakistani government refugee commission, or through different *mujahedin* or political party affiliations, which provided them with food rations, and freedom of movement without being harassed by the police and other authorities. In only two cases did respondents report that fake Pakistani ID cards were obtained.

*Table 8. Source of help in financial emergencies*

Source of help	Share of households
Relatives	79%
Friends	6%
Employer	4%
No one	6%
Combination	5%

Table 8 shows the sources of help to whom respondents turned in the event of a financial emergency; not surprisingly, it was most commonly to relatives. Friends, employers, or a combination of these were other sources. Some mentioned that they had no one to turn to for support while living in Pakistan, and the majority of these were poor, though not the poorest: four of the six respondents saying they had no one to turn to were in the second-lowest income quartile. Reliance on relatives in times of crisis is supported by the finding that for 83 percent of respondents, relatives were the main source of credit in times of financial emergency while living in Pakistan.

If any minor conflicts arose either between Afghans, or between Afghans and Pakistanis, the community leaders or elders (*spin zheray* or *rish-safid*, meaning “white beard”) were often the ones to solve the arguments before they escalated. It was reported that arguments and fighting often broke out between Afghan and Pakistani children playing in the streets, and in these cases the elders usually resolved the problem through the larger communities. In other situations involving adults (for example, when a refugee’s cow destroyed a local Pakistani’s crops), the elders coordinated with the relevant landlord to solve the conflict.

About a quarter of the respondents (21 percent) mentioned that they received support in terms of the campsites from the Pakistanis living in their neighbourhood.<sup>32</sup> However, many respondents (especially those who lived in the large refugee camps outside the city) had very limited direct contact with Pakistanis during their long

<sup>32</sup> In general, the Pakistani government and the general population welcomed Afghan refugees as part of the “brotherhood of Islam”, at least initially. Especially in the early years, traditional customs of hospitality (the code of *pashtunwali*) also played an important part. However, with the passage of time and changed political and social circumstances, this welcoming attitude has diminished.

refugee experience. Their social context was one comprised primarily of Afghan kinspeople and countrymen.

### 3.4 Livelihoods in Pakistan

Informal sector employment accounted for the key sources of income for most of the refugee households, as indicated in table 9. Daily wage labour in the construction sector was most often mentioned, followed by different types of small businesses or petty trading. A few respondents were also active in farming on land owned by Pakistanis.

*Table 9. Main source of income in Pakistan*

Occupation	Share of households
Daily wage labour	43%
Self employment/small business	37%
Regular salary work	15%
Farming	5%

Some respondents were involved in regular salary jobs such as teaching in schools for refugees or working in the refugee clinics in either a nursing or administrative capacity. Higher education or social links with the employer (*wasita*, meaning social connections) were critical to accessing these jobs.

In line with the findings noted in section 3.3, most respondents said that they accessed employment in Pakistan through their relatives (39 percent) or through friends (16 percent). A large proportion of the sample (38 percent) stated that they had found their jobs by themselves. This group of respondents was primarily involved in wage labour, hired on a daily basis from various *chawk* (crossroads) throughout the city of Peshawar.

In most cases, households did not diversify their income significantly while living in Pakistan, and in 61 percent of the units only one person in the household worked. Often the sons were too young, and there were strong social sanctions preventing most females from working.

As refugees in a foreign country, there were many restrictions on females in these households, especially pertaining to mobility in the public sphere. These restrictions severely limited their participation

*Box 1. Income-generating activities undertaken by female refugees in Pakistan*

- Two daughters in a Tajik family taught in a GTZ-sponsored refugee camp school (their father was also a teacher)
- The wife of an imam taught religious studies to girls in Haripur camp
- A wife gave private lessons to children in Kachi Garhi camp (she now continues to teach in Jalalabad)
- A wife did brickmaking with her husband
- A mother did brickmaking with her son
- A mother worked in the fields in Kohat during the harvest with her sons
- A woman did laundry and house cleaning for a wealthy Afghan refugee
- A woman worked on a hat-making project sponsored by a wealthy woman from Bajour, making 40 rupees each. Her brother did not agree – he beat her, and she stopped work (she had spent the money on her son's wedding). The woman also cooked and cleaned for cash.
- A woman did sewing in Pakistan (she now continues to do this in Jalalabad)
- A husband stated that "my children's mother" learned sewing (a special class for women in Khorasan camp), and she worked for money there (she has not been able to find similar work in Afghanistan, however).
- A woman worked as a tailor in the camp.

in the labour market and in education, as well as stifling social contacts with others outside the household. Freedom of movement for Afghan women and girls, either within the camps or in rented homes in the city, was very controlled and, without the permission of the male head of household, even a married woman could not usually visit her immediate relatives alone. Some of the reasons for this were traditional and cultural, for gender inequality had also existed in Afghanistan prior to seeking refuge. Other reasons were specific to the refugee situation, including a general fear of strangers, a perceived lack of security among the refugees, and the pervasive war-related atmosphere of danger.

In 88 percent of interview responses, male household members did not allow women to work outside the home (although numerous home-based tasks were undertaken). However, a review of the discussions revealed a number of income-generating activities undertaken by women in some of these families (box 1). Information about women's exact contribution to their household's economy in cash or kind was not gathered, but it is clear that in some families females did take part in generating income through a number of activities in both public settings (such as teaching, brickmaking, agriculture) and private settings (such as tailoring, working as a servant in another household).

Around 84 percent of the respondents mentioned that they and their family members (male and female) did not gain any skills while living and working in Pakistan. However, on review of the interviews, there were numerous mentions of new skills learned not only by men, but also by women (box 2). Rather than participating in any formal project, however, these skills were often acquired informally from family members and other Afghans, and also from Pakistanis. In some cases, returnees continue to practise their skills in Afghanistan now.

Well over half (64 percent) of the refugees interviewed stated that their children attended school while they were in Pakistan. These were predominantly boys, however, as there were many restrictions on girls' education in both the camps and the city. Only 3 percent of the households mentioned the attendance of their girls at school.<sup>33</sup>

The problems that were most commonly faced in Pakistan by the respondents are illustrated in figure 7. Simply living in a foreign country<sup>34</sup> and poor housing and living

*Box 2. New skills learned by refugees in Pakistan*

*Male responses:*

- *Learned shoe repair (now has shop in Jalalabad)*
- *Brother learned auto mechanics (was a student)*
- *Learned carpentry skills*
- *Learned mechanics from uncle*
- *Learned bakery skills*
- *Learned baking and shoe making, along with calligraphy*
- *A son learned masonry*
- *A daughter learned tailoring*

*Female responses:*

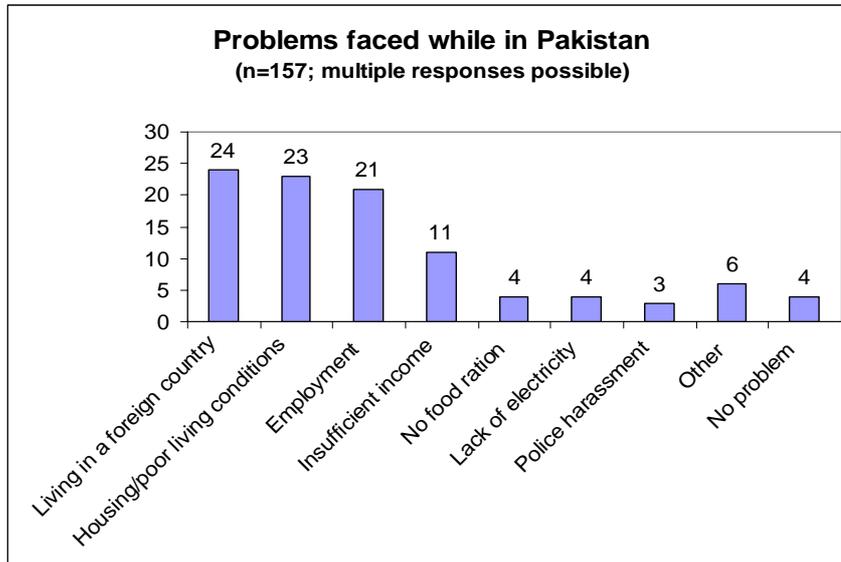
- *A son learned TV and radio mechanics from a friend*
- *A son learned machine embroidery with his cousins and he now does this work in Afghanistan; he also taught his mother*
- *A daughter learned tailoring*
- *A girl learned sewing in camp*

<sup>33</sup> Some reasons for girls not attending school included: "it's not the custom", poor security, fear of kidnapping, shame for family, household chores, school not necessary for girls and school too far away.

<sup>34</sup> This was a very common response from women.

conditions were most frequently cited, followed by lack of employment and insufficient income.

*Figure 7. Major problems faced by the refugees in Pakistan*



In spite of encountering many difficulties in Pakistan, a total of 80 percent of the respondents thought that they had earned sufficient income to maintain their livelihoods in Pakistan over their many years as refugees, and they had somehow survived. The response of many individuals was one of modesty: “We were patient, and we managed.”

### 3.5 Links with Afghanistan while living in Pakistan

During the extended period during which the respondents were living in refuge, almost all (99 percent) stated they were able to access information about Afghanistan. For 47 percent of respondents, the radio, especially the BBC Pashto and Dari services, was the most effective means of learning about the political situation there. For some, word of mouth or newspaper was their primary source, while others used a combination of all of these means. One respondent noted: “There were no phones like today.”

A little less than half of the sample (45 percent) kept in contact with relatives who had remained in Afghanistan, and a significant number of respondents (41 percent) did visit their homeland (irregularly) during their years of exile. Around 51 percent of those who did not visit Afghanistan during their time in Pakistan stated that they were too afraid of the communist government and its forces, while another 20 percent stated that they were afraid of the war and civil conflict in general. Around 12 percent said that they had no relatives remaining in Afghanistan, so they had no reason to visit. High travel expenses discouraged others from undertaking any cross-border movement.

*Table 10. Reasons for refugees’ visits to Afghanistan from Pakistan*

Meet relatives	35%
Attend family ceremonies	48%
Collect rent	8%
Look after property	2%

For those who did continue to visit their place of origin in Afghanistan during the period they were refugees, the major reasons are shown in table 10. Most respondents who mentioned that they had returned did so to meet their relatives, often to attend family ceremonies (especially weddings and funerals). A smaller proportion made the trip to collect rent from their houses or maintain their property. During certain times, travel along public routes was very dangerous (especially for young men who could be drafted into the army), and only old men and women tended to cross the border openly. Many able-bodied males participated in the *jihad*, however, and frequently travelled to and from Afghanistan more secretly; these men often relayed important information back and forth about relatives and communities.<sup>35</sup>

Concerning remittances, all but one household stated that they had never sent money to Afghanistan while they were living in Pakistan. Many of them had no immediate family remaining in Afghanistan, while in other situations it is likely that their precarious refugee livelihoods did not allow them to send money back.<sup>36</sup>

In conclusion, keeping abreast of political developments in Afghanistan was crucial for these refugees, however, while maintaining contact with relatives in Afghanistan and preserving social networks was also valued, it appears that this was not such an important survival mechanism during their displacement.

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<sup>35</sup> Only a few respondents mentioned that they had actively participated in the *jihad*.

<sup>36</sup> Cross-border remittances were only mentioned in one case: a father had remained in Afghanistan for a period and sent money to his refugee household in Pakistan.

## 4. Return to Afghanistan

Figure 8 illustrates numbers of respondent households which have returned to Afghanistan over the past five years (which have included the downfall of the Taliban and the 2001 Bonn Agreement bringing many political and social changes to Afghanistan).

*Figure 8. Number of years ago households returned to Afghanistan*

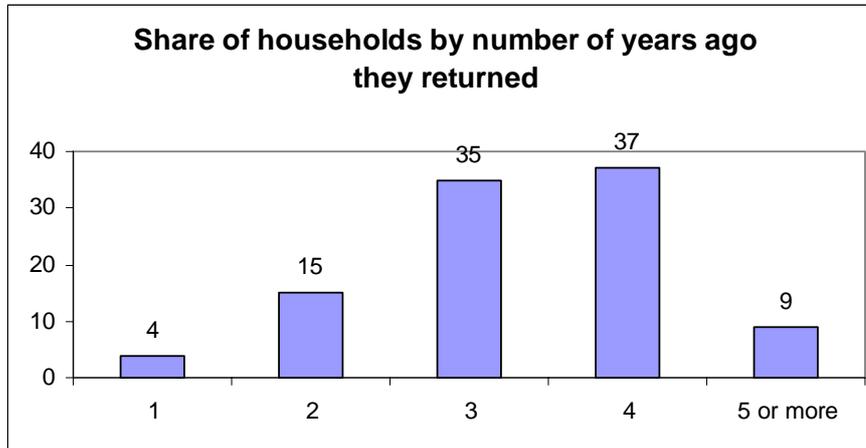


Table 11 shows some of the major reasons for these refugees' return to Afghanistan from Pakistan. Although there is undoubtedly complex interplay between the various push and pull factors, it seems that pull factors are generally the driving force behind the decision to return. Many respondents mentioned that the improved security situation in Jalalabad influenced them to return to their place of origin. Some respondents said they had had a desire to return for a long time, and when the situation improved, they quickly took the opportunity. Other pull factors include increased job opportunities in Afghanistan, the return of relatives and the perception that life in Afghanistan had improved. Among the push factors, harassment by the police in Pakistan was a primary concern, while another reason mentioned was the difficulty of finding work in Pakistan. Push factors included in the category of "other" include a feeling of lack of belonging, cessation of food rations and camp closures.

*Table 11. Major reasons for refugee return from Pakistan to Afghanistan (multiple responses possible)*

Major reasons for returning	Respondents
Improved security	21%
Increased job opportunities	16%
Return of relatives	11%
Desire to return to own country	35%
House and land is in Afghanistan	4%
Other	10%

The decision to return to Afghanistan was reportedly made by male heads of household in 81 percent of cases while, in some instances, all male members of the household participated (8 percent). In only some of the cases (7 percent) were female

members involved.<sup>37</sup> Interestingly, the majority (91 percent) of respondents stated that the decision to return was discussed among family members, and in 81 percent of the units the decision was unanimous.

Often a camp leader would make the decision for the whole camp population to repatriate.<sup>38</sup> In other settings, as more and more households made their individual decisions and departed, those who were left behind became concerned – as this male respondent recalls: “All our relatives came back, and we felt alone...so we came back too!” One woman noted the following: “My brother, who was born in Pakistan, didn’t want to come back with us, but finally he did...”

People attempted to make informed decisions about their return home; more than half of the sample (55 percent) consulted with their relatives in Afghanistan prior to departure,<sup>39</sup> and some households sent individual male members ahead to research the situation. Respondents’ primary concern in making their decision, as illustrated in table 12, was the job market. Housing was also a pressing concern for a majority of individuals in the sample, along with the security situation, facilities such as water and electricity, the quality of education, roads and communications.

*Table 12. Refugees’ major concerns about Afghanistan prior to departure (multiple responses possible)*

Concern	Share of households
Work opportunities	69%
Housing	62%
Electricity and water supply	38%
Security	19%
Quality of education	9%
Road quality/communication facilities	6%
Nothing in particular	6%
Other	10%

The UNHCR established a voluntary repatriation program in 2002 for refugees returning to Afghanistan in which assistance (US\$100 cash, wheat, cooking oil, blankets and plastic tarpaulin) was provided for each household. Some 80 percent of the sample noted that they had received this package, and all of them had spent the cash on return transportation costs. Depending upon the amount of household effects, a group of a few closely related households would often rent a truck for the transport of both their family members and physical assets home.<sup>40</sup>

Less than half (44 percent) of the respondents stated that they returned with cash savings. Those who had worked as daily labourers had little or no savings, and in the large majority (76 percent) of the households the total amount of savings was less than \$200. Only 9 percent reported that they returned with more than \$1,000, and these were people who had run a small business or in whose household more than

<sup>37</sup> In the Afghan context, results such as these are to be expected, especially when the respondents are mostly male.

<sup>38</sup> This was the case in some parts of the Kacha Garhi refugee camp. Similarly, Turton and Marsden (*Taking Refugees for a Ride*) note that, “in attempting to explain the decision to move or not to move, the relevant unit of analysis may not be the individual, or even the family, but a whole group of families” (p. 25).

<sup>39</sup> Some of these kinspeople had returned in recent years; others had never left Afghanistan.

<sup>40</sup> In most cases, returnees brought all of their accumulated household effects back to Afghanistan.

one member had been earning an income. The lack of ready cash among many of these returnees reinforces the importance of the social support system provided by kinspeople to assist the new returnees upon their arrival in Nangarhar.

In reflecting on the time they had spent in Pakistan, some respondents expressed gratitude that Pakistan had allowed to stay there for so many years. Some remembered that their Pakistani neighbours had even been sad to see them leave and, in one case, a respondent recalled that “they cried when we left...we had been there for twenty years.” However, the lengthy time spent in a foreign country was not always easy, and others clearly remembered the negative feelings they had had during their lives as refugees. Some comments include the following:

- “the general lack of belonging”;
- “being without a country and living among strangers”;
- “a lack of belonging and economic weakness”;
- “living in another country is like sleeping in a stranger’s bed”; and
- “a strange country is just like a graveyard to me”

#### 4.1 Resettlement and reintegration

The majority of the respondents in this study (63 percent) returned to the same location in Nangarhar where they lived prior to moving to Pakistan. For those who did not, many have settled in or near the city of Jalalabad where employment opportunities are greater than in their rural place of origin prior to leaving for Pakistan. In addition, low house rents in the city and its periphery were also attractive. As Turton and Marsden noted, the long refugee experience changed many returnees:<sup>41</sup>

*After 15 to 20-odd years in Pakistan, where they were not able to pursue an agricultural way of life, they have become used to urban conditions and occupations. They have taken on new attitudes and new expectations for themselves and their children.*

Almost all (93 percent) of the sample have settled close to their relatives and, in half of the cases (51 percent), they have settled close to the people with whom they lived in Pakistan. In this way, community members know each other very well (often having grown up together as refugees), and the majority (93 percent) stated that they have not felt isolated since their return to Afghanistan. Around 60 percent received support from their relatives in the form of the provision of accommodation upon their return,<sup>42</sup> and, as one individual who returned to his own home positively related, “The moment we returned, our neighbours invited us for a meal...”

Kinspeople are viewed as a major source of assistance during the process of resettlement and reintegration, and a variety of reciprocal social obligations exist between relatives. One of these is the provision of loans and, since their return, 26 percent of the respondents have borrowed money. In case of the need for loans, the great majority would prefer to borrow from relatives (86 percent) while fewer state that they would borrow from neighbours (3 percent), friends (8 percent) or employers (3 percent).

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<sup>41</sup> Turton and Marsden, *Taking Refugees for a Ride*, p. 27.

<sup>42</sup> In a few cases, friends and employers also furnished accommodation for the new arrivals from Pakistan.

Consumable items from shopkeepers were also borrowed, in some cases on a daily or monthly basis. Only in 7 percent of the cases did respondents note that they had been refused a loan by a member of their community. In total, half of the respondents currently have outstanding debt, and the median value of loans outstanding is 20,000 Afs (approximately US\$400).

Some of the more wealthy members of the sample had provided loans to others following their return to Nangarhar. Around 24 percent of the respondents stated that they had given cash loans to their poorer relatives and, to a lesser extent, to other community members. These loans tend not to have a specific deadline for repayment – the understanding is that funds will be returned whenever possible. However, loans are not the only assistance respondents provide to kinspeople: as one woman said, “We help needy relatives with other things like furnishings, not money.”

Social support also takes the form of assistance in finding employment, and 36 percent of the respondents noted that they had found their current job through their social networks, primarily relatives (24 percent) but also friends (8 percent) and former employers (4 percent). For example, if members of a household work in brickmaking, returnee male members of the extended family may also be absorbed into this type of work.

Among a strong social network of relatives, returned refugees generally feel secure, both emotionally and physically: the majority stated that they never feel insecure. If any problems arise (such as a theft), most said that they would rely on relatives and neighbours for help and protection, although a number of respondents (20 percent) added that they would also look to the police and the government for additional assistance. A male respondent summed it up this way: “We have good neighbours and no problems. My neighbours are also my relatives. We have no strangers among us here...”

In general, individuals in the sample voiced genuine happiness to have returned to Nangarhar, and many seemed to identify staunchly with both their province and nation. Many respondents expressed a feeling of relief at having come back to their homeland, as the following statements illustrate.

From male respondents:

- “I am from here, and will be from here.”
- “We wanted to return because we paid a price for the freedom of our country.”
- “We wanted to return because our government asked us to come back.”
- “This is our country, and we’re used to its soil, air, and water – we love it.”

From female respondents:<sup>43</sup>

- “This is *our* province...”
- “We do not want to be migrants any more...”

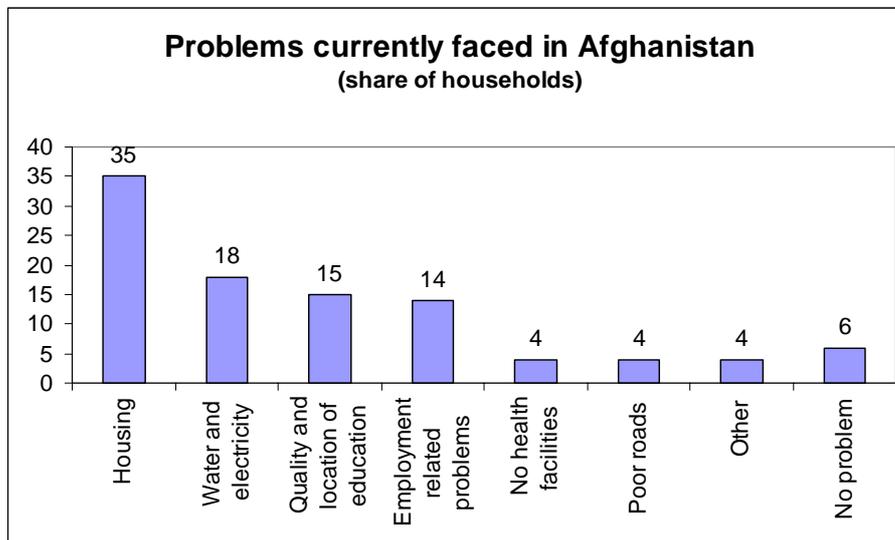
Only a few members of the sample (4 percent) stated that they wanted to settle somewhere else in Afghanistan, such as Mazar-i Sharif or Kunduz, “where there are jobs”. In addition, one respondent who was originally from Kabul felt “a little

<sup>43</sup> In general, women were relieved to have returned to Afghanistan because, in comparison, their mobility had been more severely restricted as refugees in Pakistan.

isolated” in Jalalabad, and had plans to return to the capital: “We will go to Kabul – we have relatives there, and the education system is also better.” Few respondents expressed intention to return to Pakistan: only 4 percent have possible plans return to Pakistan if they cannot find adequate employment in Jalalabad, and 3 percent stated that they plan to try to send their sons to Pakistan to work.

Overall, the findings suggest that most returnees are positive about their return to Nangarhar, and that they have so far successfully managed to reintegrate into life in Afghanistan. This general contentment expressed does not mean people have not faced problems on return, as figure 9 shows. Housing is the most frequently cited problem, listed by about twice as many households as the next most frequent problem, lack of water and electricity. Currently, education and access to employment are almost equally problematic. An important question to be asked is whether the apparently successful integration, especially for the poor, will be ongoing and sustainable.

Figure 9. Problems currently faced in Afghanistan



#### 4.2 Livelihoods and the household economy on return

The returned refugees were asked to compare their economic situation as refugees in Pakistan with their current economic situation in Nangarhar (table 13). The majority stated that their condition had improved. Almost one fifth reported that the household’s economic situation has remained much the same, while the fewest assessed their economic situation to have deteriorated.

Table 13. Change in household economic situation after return

Change	Share of households
Improved	67%
No change	19%
Deteriorated	12%

Those who said that their situation had improved were asked why, and the responses are detailed in table 14. Many noted that there was more employment in Nangarhar because of extensive road and building construction. In addition, there are now more wage-earners in some households as young sons have joined the labour market

after returning to Afghanistan. Better wages in Afghanistan compared to Pakistan were mentioned by about one third of the respondents reporting improvements,<sup>44</sup> and an almost equal share said there were more work opportunities available. For others, the reason was related to their housing situation – improvements were as a result of paying lower rent or no rent in Nangarhar.

*Table 14. Reasons for improvement in household economic situation in Nangarhar (multiple answers possible)*

Reason	Share of households (n=67)
No or lower house rent	37%
More workers in the household	48%
Better wages	31%
More work opportunities	32%

*Table 15. Reasons for deterioration in household economic situation in Nangarhar (multiple answers possible)*

Reason	Share of households (n=12)
Unemployment	75%
Income earner is sick, or no earner in household	25%
High cost of living	17%

For those reporting deteriorated economic situations, the major reason was unemployment (table 15). For a number of others, it was related to either not having an earner in the household, or the poor health of the primary wage-earner, who was usually the head of household. The cost of living was the third main reason given for the households' worsening economic situation. These households are generally very poor; they had owned no property in the form of either a house or land prior to their departure for Pakistan and, as refugees in Pakistan, they had mostly lived in Kacha Garhi Camp (now to be closed)<sup>45</sup> where a large proportion of the inhabitants had been poor. At present they are heavily dependent upon relatives for their survival, and many of their dwellings are constructed on public land. Many adults and young children in these households continue to undertake daily wage work, as they also did in Pakistan.

*Table 16. Employment of main worker in Pakistan and Afghanistan*

Type of employment	Pakistan	On return to Afghanistan
Regular salaried	15%	18%
Business	37%	47%
Daily wage	43%	28%
Farming	5%	5%

Table 16 supports the fact that economic situation of returnees is generally improved, in that a substantial share of households reported moving out of daily wage work on return to Afghanistan. Those who moved out of daily wage work tended to move into self employment and, to a much smaller extent, regular salary work. The movement into the former may reflect the greater market connections

<sup>44</sup> Respondents noted that in Afghanistan, NGOs pay higher wages for road construction jobs than in Pakistan.

<sup>45</sup> *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, 25 February 2006.

“at home” and the ability to own business and property – which Afghans are not permitted to do in Pakistan.

Table 17 shows some estimates of respondents’ monthly income. Half of the households earn less than US\$120, while a quarter earns only half this amount (US\$60). Low income is still a considerable problem for the respondent households, regardless of their reported improved conditions compared to Pakistan. Income inequality is evident, as 10 percent of households earn more than five times the monthly income of the lowest-earning 10 percent. In a few cases (3 percent), individuals mentioned that they had no source of income and that they survive through charity. This small group includes two widows and one disabled person.

*Table 17. Respondents’ incomes*

Median household total monthly income	6,000 Afs (US\$120)
Median per capita monthly income	600 Afs (US\$12)
% of households earning less than 2,000 Afs (US\$40) per month	10%
% of households earning less than 3,000 Afs (US\$60) per month	25%
% of households earning more than 8,000 Afs (US\$160)	25%
% of households earning more than 15,000 Afs (US\$300)	10%

The majority of people have managed to diversify the income of their households since their return to Nangarhar, and around 58 percent state that they now have more than one source of income. In most cases, male members are the income-earners, and in only 4 percent of the total sample do females work for an income.<sup>46</sup>

Among those who own their home (n=49), the majority of the respondents (69 percent) live in their ancestral homes. About 10 percent live in a house which they have purchased following their return from Pakistan, about 12 percent have constructed their temporary shelter on public land, and the remaining 8 percent live either on land donated by villagers, with their employers or on UNHCR land. The other half of the households do not own the house in which they live – they rent it or are living in it free of charge.

Only 44 percent of all respondent households returned from Pakistan with any savings; not surprisingly they are more likely to be better off, with 44 percent of them falling into the highest income quartile (earning over 8,000 Afs per month) and only 7 percent in the lowest income quartile (earning less than 3,000 Afs per month). Table 18 shows how respondents with savings used this money: because of the time taken to restart income-earning activities, consumption is not surprisingly the most frequently reported use of savings. This is followed by rebuilding of homes, starting businesses and house rent (another form of consumption). The use of savings for investment in a business coincides with the earlier reported result that some returnees were able to move into self-employment.

*Table 18. Use of saving among households returning with savings (n=43; multiple responses possible)*

Use of savings	Share of households
Consumption	35%
Rebuild housing	26%

<sup>46</sup> In two cases, women teach in Jalalabad schools; two other women do tailoring, one of whom makes 300 Afs per month making both quilts and clothing.

Start a business	21%
House rent	19%
Build a new house	12%
Transportation from Pakistan	7%
Invest in productive asset	5%

Twenty-two households continue to own land in Nangarhar Province, as they did prior to seeking refuge in Pakistan. Half of these live in urban areas and the remainder in rural areas; the same residential pattern prevailed prior to movement to Pakistan. Half of those who own land are in the highest income quartile, while only 9 percent (n=2) are in the lowest income quartile.

Although many respondents noted the importance of education for their children, it is difficult to generalise about the specific role of schooling in their households. Among those whose male children had been admitted to school in Pakistan, a total of 74 percent had also admitted them in Afghanistan. As to why the remainder had not been enrolled, this following comment by a male respondent about his present economic dilemma may hold a clue: "I don't know if I should educate my children, or pay back my debt."

Some households are able and willing to send both their boys and girls to school and, in these cases, the respondents (both male and female) note that this is a positive aspect of their return. Indeed, one father stated the following: "We came back to Afghanistan because the girls' schools were open." In contrast, however, is this response from another father of a very different standpoint: "I don't want my daughters to be educated – people laugh at us if females work outside the household..."

### 4.3 Transnational networks

The majority of returnees have settled close to their relatives in Nangarhar – often with the same people with whom they lived as refugees in Pakistan. Half of the sample mentioned that all of their relatives (wider kinship links) had already returned to Afghanistan, so many of their local social networks appear to be largely intact. However, 22 percent of respondents stated that they have one or two family members (closer kinship links) still in Pakistan, and in the majority of these cases, the individuals plan to stay there as long as possible. Some noted that they have not returned yet because of the lack of suitable housing or land in Nangarhar, and that "they still look for opportunities here". Others, particularly young men, have remained because of their job there. Examples include:

- A son who is a nurse in a hospital for refugees whose father stated that "he will stay there until he can make a good living here".
- Another married son who is involved in business (selling used clothes) with his in-laws, whose father said his wife's family "will not allow him to return".

#### *Box 3: Remittances received from abroad*

1. A son who has a shop in Pakistan sends money to his family in Nangarhar.
2. In another household, "sons in Pakistan" send remittances.
3. The son who is a nurse in Pakistan sends remittances.
4. The son of a well-off respondent who lives in the USA sends money home.
5. One respondent has two sons in Saudi Arabia who send money home.
6. A son in Iran sends money once a year.

Receiving remittances from relatives who live in either Pakistan or further abroad was not reported as a common occurrence, and in only 8 percent of the cases do respondents receive this type of assistance from their family members (box 3). In three cases relatives live in Pakistan, and in four cases it is relatives in other countries who provide periodic financial assistance to their family in Nangarhar.

Of those who do have some relatives still in Pakistan (22 percent of the total sample), 83 percent mentioned that they keep in close contact with them. Noting the importance of these transnational relations, one individual said, "For any emergency situation, we keep up contact and relations with our relatives there." Out of those who maintained these communications, it is mostly done through personal visits to Pakistan. Others keep in contact through mobile phone.

Around 53 percent of all respondent households had visited Pakistan after their return to Nangarhar, for various reasons. These days travel is easy, with many forms of both public and private transportation available (buses, mini-vans and taxis). In all cases, returnees went back to Pakistan for very short periods of time. The main reason they crossed the border again was to attend family ceremonies (such as funerals, weddings or holiday celebrations, table 19). In addition, many reported going to Peshawar for medical treatment, while a few reported going simply "to meet their relatives" or buy goods for their businesses in Jalalabad. For example, one mother had made numerous visits in order to organise a bride for her son (*khwastgari*), while one man regularly imports shoes and shawls from Pakistan for his business.

*Table 19. Returnees' major reasons for cross-border travel back to Pakistan (n=52)*

Reason for return to Pakistan	Share of households
To attend ceremonies	52%
Medical treatment	25%
To meet relatives	12%
To buy goods for business	8%
Other	2%

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The majority of the Afghan returnees interviewed in this research appear to be progressing well in the complex process of successfully reintegrating into the sociocultural context of Nangarhar. In most cases, this is being accomplished with the assistance of strong social support systems: long-standing and extensive social networks comprised primarily of close relatives. These relatives are not only emotionally and genealogically close, but also geographically – in many cases, they were with the respondents and their households prior to departure, as refugees in Pakistan, and now once again in their home province of Nangarhar.

Currently the returnees interviewed do not express any interest in returning to Pakistan. Having left Afghanistan with their families often decades ago and come back with their families in recent years, their return indicates a “linear movement along with a degree of finality”<sup>47</sup> – in distinct contrast to many Afghan labour migrants to Iran, Pakistan and other countries. The majority of the sample assesses their present economic situation to be in Afghanistan better than when they were refugees, and most respondents are positive about having returned to their homeland.

In their analysis of Afghan refugee return in recent years, Turton and Marsden believe that: “...refugee decision-making is determined by a rational calculation of costs and benefits, and not by a nostalgic longing for home.”<sup>48</sup> The findings of this research clearly support the first part of this statement, however, both men and women also relate that as refugees in Pakistan they did have deep longing for their home, province and country. This should not be overlooked, as such feelings played an important part in the decisions of many refugees to return.

A small percentage of this study’s sample has not fared as well as others on their return to Nangarhar. They are from poor households, they have been unsuccessful in finding viable employment and they lack suitable housing. Their previous situation as refugees in Pakistan appears to have been similarly dismal. Primarily located in informal settlements in the city of Jalalabad, they now comprise communities of desperately poor people. In this respect, Jalalabad is similar to other Afghan cities:

*...there has been insufficient economic growth in urban centres to absorb the increased number of Afghans needing work.*<sup>49</sup>

It is groups such as these urban poor which fit the characterisation of those who returned to Afghanistan with unrealistic expectations of housing, land and employment – those who have been “taken for a ride” by the government, the international community and others.<sup>50</sup>

Whether successful or unsuccessful in their return, this study’s sample of returned refugees appears not to rely heavily on transnational networks for their survival and protection. A minority does have some relatives still in Pakistan, but only a few young males provide their immediate families in Nangarhar with any remittances. Sources of economic support are much more local in nature, and include extensive borrowing between relatives.

<sup>47</sup> Stigter, *Transnational Networks and Migration from Herat to Iran*, p. 1. In the case movements back and forth to Iran, the author was making the point that movement was *not* linear.

<sup>48</sup> Turton and Marsden, *Taking Refugees for a Ride*, p. 33.

<sup>49</sup> Stigter and Monsutti, *Transnational Networks*, p. 3.

<sup>50</sup> Turton and Marsden, *Taking Refugees for a Ride*.

As has existed for centuries, there is currently much movement back and forth across the border with Pakistan; Afghans travel there on short trips to visit remaining kinspeople, for medical treatment or to carry out business transactions. A range of easily accessible road transport options exist and, after their extended time in Pakistan, returnees “know the territory” on the other side of the border well.

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are made:

- **Housing:** There is a severe shortage of basic housing, especially for the urban and periurban poor.
  - In coordination with the local municipality of Jalalabad and the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing, selected informal settlements should be regularised, and inexpensive basic housing should be made available to be constructed on a self-help basis.
  - Similar construction projects should also be established to assist those who have returned to damaged or destroyed homes – in both urban and rural areas.
- **Employment:** For many returnees, the lack of job opportunities is a pressing concern.
  - Small-scale government and non-government projects should be developed which particularly encourage the participation of the vulnerable poor – in both urban and rural contexts (for example, the establishment and fostering of small businesses).
  - Research indicates that many women are able and willing to work, but they cannot find suitable ways to generate income for their households. Small-scale government and non-government projects should be developed which are custom-made for these eager participants, as well as being acceptable to their households.
- **Community participation:**
  - Development activities in a range of sectors should build upon the close-knit nature of communities, neighbourhoods and villages in which many of the residents are related – stressing community participation and self-help.
- **Additional research:**
  - Existing labour markets in Jalalabad City, its periurban areas and surrounding rural regions will require further examination in order to develop relevant projects in the areas of employment and income generation.
  - The progress of returnees to Nangarhar should be monitored carefully over time in order to further examine the success or otherwise of the longer-term reintegration process. Research should look at factors involved in the sustainability of return, and conversely the reasons for moving back to Pakistan in the event that this becomes a trend among returnees.

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