

HPG Report

The impact of displacement on gender roles and relations

The case of IDPs from FATA, Pakistan

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Acronyms

CNIC	Computerised National Identity Card
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FCR	Frontier Crimes Regulations
FGD	Focus group discussion
IDP	Internally displaced person
JFS	Joint family system
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
MYHF	Multi-year humanitarian financing

Executive summary

As part of a four-year thematic study of the potential contribution of multi-year humanitarian financing (MYHF) towards building resilience, Valid Evaluations has been undertaking primary research in Pakistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia and Sudan to better understand what factors determine how well people cope with the difficulties of life. Unsurprisingly, gender power relations have been one of the most important factors in shaping individuals' resilience in all four countries.

It is natural to assume that the experience of crisis, and displacement in particular, would lead to changes in gender roles. Crises cause disruption to normal economic and other living conditions, while simultaneously disrupting the social structures (including family) that pass on and enforce social norms, creating opportunities for rapid change to take place in people's roles. This seems an obvious topic for study, particularly for those interested in the well-being and resilience of those affected by crises and displacement. Surprisingly, such literature is hard to find. Valid Evaluations aims to contribute to filling this evidence gap with a case study into how displacement affected women's roles among Afridi internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Khyber Agency who were displaced to Peshawar District, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province in Pakistan. The study is based on 98 individual interviews and 63 focus group discussions (FGDs) with men and women, girls and boys living in 14 Union Councils in Peshawar District. Participants and interviewees, from unmarried adolescents to the elderly, spoke of changes in their lives as a result of displacement, and compared their own lives to the generations before and after them.

The study shows how the lives of women and girls have been limited and controlled by a network of different factors – social, legal, cultural, economic, physical geography, etc. – which interact to create a set of gender rules that 'fit' with those factors. Looking at how displacement caused fundamental changes in various factors (physical geography, economics, social imperatives, etc.) allows an understanding of how it was possible for a new logic of gender rules to emerge that fit the new circumstances.

The IDPs were predominantly from two sub-districts (*tehsils*) in Khyber Agency: Bara and Tirah. Khyber Agency is a part of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), whose distinct relationship to the state has created conditions for an extreme form of patriarchy. The normal rule of law has not run in FATA since colonial times, where authority, including the ability to use coercive force (normally the monopoly of the state), was handed over to local leaders. The effect on women of this special status has been catastrophic. Robbed of any protection by the state, and living in a culture where a notion of 'honour' obliges men to kill women for even the suspicion of breaking a strict code, they live under sufferance, subject to the will of those who control them. Locally, authority for settling disputes is given to the *jirga*, a council where women are never represented and where they are not allowed to bring any complaints or be heard. In the absence of state law, lives are ruled by the cultural rules set by the *jirga* and the (male) elders, a code known as *Pakhtunwali*.

Most girls were betrothed at a very young age, and married as soon after puberty as possible, with no possibility to express any opinion about their husbands. Living in a joint family system (JFS), where often upwards of 20 people lived together and shared a household economy, girls were largely controlled by their mothers-in-law and their husbands spent most of their time in the male domain.

Before displacement, Afridi in Khyber Agency mainly lived in small dispersed settlements, often far from non-family members. As a result, the strict code of *purdah* was not broken by girls and women when moving outside, close to the house. From a young age, with no access to school, girls had an immense and physically demanding work burden, combined with their domestic duties. Women were not allowed to go out to markets, and had no control over any resources – even remittance money sent by their husbands would be taken by their brothers- or mothers-in-law.

The shock of displacement was traumatic, with many forced to flee on foot with no notice, leaving behind all their possessions. Most of those who went towards Peshawar went to stay with relatives and, unless they moved into camps, then found

places to rent in the villages around town, living in communities almost entirely comprising fellow Pashtun, and often many Afridi.

Subsequently, and although their household economies were much poorer than before, displacement was hugely positive for many women in several respects. Their roles and status changed because of changes in the underlying material circumstances in which they lived, and five changes can be traced as fundamental.

1. Huge houses for a large JFS were simply not available in Peshawar District, so people lived in smaller family units. Many women did not live with their mothers-in-law and, since men had to go out to work, they no longer faced constant control over their behaviour. Men no longer inhabited a purely male domain, and instead talked more to their wives and children, many of whom spoke of coming to know each other for the first time.
2. Displacement caused a degree of dispersal of tight-knit communities, and their dilution within a much larger host society. The peer pressure and fear of condemnation that had kept men in line weakened, and men felt able to follow their own principles to a much greater degree. These living conditions imposed an increasing need for women to cover themselves with the burqa outside the home – which in turn made it possible for them to move (albeit not freely) to markets, hospitals, etc.
3. With the loss of land and agricultural production, IDPs became dependent on a wage economy. Economic activity thus became an individual (each person's work brought in an independent stream of income) rather than a collective endeavour. Economic hardship made it imperative for women to remain economically active, but they now had their own role (e.g. bringing in cash from sewing) rather than 'supporting' the household's (i.e. men's) farming economy. Many were given – and some demanded – a new respect as independent providers for their families.
4. Outside FATA, IDPs enjoyed the basic amenities that others in Pakistan took for granted. Piped water was available in close proximity; cooking gas, and sometimes electricity, took away so much of women's domestic burden that other life-changing transformations were permitted. Girls could go to school, partly because their huge labour burden was reduced and partly because all-girls' schools were available. Moving to a wage/urban economy also made education a much higher priority for both boys and girls, leading to many secondary effects beyond job prospects.

5. Living with relatives from Peshawar District exposed IDPs to people who shared their culture but who lived very differently. This facilitated the speed with which the behaviour of so many IDP men transformed. Their local relatives sent their daughters to school with no loss of honour – almost immediately, they too did the same. Domestic violence was also less acceptable.

No IDPs, men or women, mentioned that a different rule of state law now applied compared to in FATA. In theory, this should have played a significant role in changing the lives of women (e.g. with regards to fear of honour killings, the end of underage marriage, inheritance rights for women, the opportunity to take legal action for violence). However, because these issues continue to exist in other parts of Pakistan to some degree, despite their formal illegality, this was not a factor of change.

Beyond the myriad specific changes detailed in the paper, several general lessons were striking.

There is debate regarding the degree to which challenging gender norms in different societies is a cultural imposition of one's own values. Although Afridi IDP women and girls in Peshawar had a vision for the roles of women and men in society that is much more gendered than in (for example) Western Europe, the extreme forms of gender inequality that they suffered was clearly not regarded by them as a part of their culture. Women and girls of all ages found it oppressive, as something which caused them misery, and which was *unfair*, justified neither by their religion nor by their culture. Previously, if they accepted it, it was because they felt powerless to change it. Many now are now anxious to secure, and feel some hope for, changes in future.

Education may be a key factor in longer-term change. There has been a clear attitudinal change vis a vis education for girls by almost everyone and many now spoke with regret of previous decisions to deny their daughters an education. Greater economic independence and professional success even for a few women may provide role models for further change. Many spoke of the transformative power of education in giving girls the ability to express a voice and know their rights.

Gender outcomes are not a zero sum game. Gains for women were not seen as a loss for men, and most men spoke positively about the improvements in the lives of their wives and daughters. They spoke of having their eyes opened; of being relieved of the pressure

(‘backbiting’) to conform to standards they had never really liked by their communities. These changed male attitudes were instrumental in facilitating change.

Much too has not changed, or is changing only slowly. Marriage still commonly occurs at a young age and with only minimal consent, if any, from girls. Purdah remains strict. And even after the significant changes to the lives of women and girls, gender inequality remains high.

Change is taking place within Pakistan society at many different levels. There are clear intergenerational differences in the aspirations of both males and females, with younger generations tending to expect a greater role for women (girls to be educated to a greater, if not equal, degree; some possibilities for women to work; greater voice for women regarding marriage). Though much depends on future security considerations, the situation in FATA may be transformed in the medium term: a political revolution is bringing it legally into mainstream Pakistan; a possible economic revolution with new transport and communication links may integrate it with the national economy; and, if investment in services is made, health and education in FATA could rise to the levels of the rest of the country. Such changes are taking place within timeframes that are medium term (10 to 15 years) and long term (one to two generations). Those interested in change, such as those working

for development or humanitarian causes, need to analyse change and the potential for change on these same timeframes, not in the short term (less than 10 years).

There are few signs that aid programmes for women in displacement have been important in changing gender relations. The aid they reported receiving was largely restricted to food rations. The agents of change for gender power relations were almost entirely within the host environment.

Understanding the *logic* of gender relations conveys a huge explanatory power. Gender reports that describe the symptoms of gender inequality (e.g. counting the hours that each sex works or listing the tasks which each does) do little to help us understand why those rules exist, what keeps them in place and where the potential for change could come from. Studies which go beyond this simple description, and which explain the logic of gender inequality in a given society, are not yet common in the humanitarian world.

Aid programmes for returnee IDP women to FATA are not engaging sufficiently with gender relations, let alone with an analysis of the potential for changing them. It is hard to see how severe gender exploitation is challenged by interventions that aim to increase the economic productivity of women’s labour in enterprises that are controlled by men (e.g. agricultural production).

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the study

Valid Evaluations is undertaking a four-year thematic study for DFID of the potential benefits from managing humanitarian funding over longer timeframes for improving both cost-efficiency and effectiveness. In particular, the study is examining how far such multi-year humanitarian financing (MYHF) can help address underlying causes of vulnerability and help to ‘build resilience’. The study approaches the question by examining separately where people find resilience in the face of crises; and then analysing how far features of MYHF enable aid agencies to intervene better to support those factors from which their resilience and agency are drawn (Gray et al., 2014). The study is taking place in Pakistan, Sudan, Ethiopia and DRC. In all four countries, gender relations in society and within the family were found to be critical in shaping vulnerability and resilience.

It is natural to assume that the experience of crisis, and displacement in particular, would lead to changes in gender roles. Crises cause disruption to economic and other living conditions, while simultaneously disrupting the social structures (including family) that pass on and enforce social norms, creating a need or incentive to change roles and creating opportunities for more rapid change in norms to take place. This seems an obvious topic for study, particular by those who offer assistance to those affected by crises and displacement. Surprisingly, such literature is hard to find. Searches revealed literature or assessments on topics such as violence against women, and papers presenting a generic situation where displacement inevitably leads to greater vulnerability for women,¹

but descriptions and explanations on women’s changing roles in specific situations are absent. Valid Evaluations therefore decided to contribute to filling this evidence gap² by conducting its own research into the changing roles of women as a result of crises among Afridi IDPs in Peshawar, Pakistan and among women of the Hadandawa community in Kassala, Sudan. Unfortunately, the field research team in Sudan did not get permission to ask detailed questions about gender in Kassala, and so this paper focuses solely on women and girls displaced by conflict from Khyber Agency to Peshawar District, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Province in Pakistan.

Following a description of the methodology in Section 1.2, Section 2 sets out the differences in the lives of males and females as they existed before displacement. It presents the logic, revealed in the interviews, which explains the features of their society that created and maintained those differences, describing the logic of gender inequality³ pre-displacement.

Section 3 examines how that logic of gender inequality has changed since displacement, describing how the lives of women and girls have transformed, but also describing changes that have taken place in the factors that shaped the differences between the lives of males and females. It thus offers an explanation of changes in the roles of women and girls by showing how a new logic of gender inequality has been created as a result of displacement.

Sections 4 and 5 look respectively at likely future trends, and the implications of the evidence for supporting the lives of IDPs.

1 Gururaja (2000) is a fairly typical example.

2 The design of the overall thematic study by Valid Evaluations included provision for three studies which undertook an in-depth examination of particular issues that proved to be important for understanding resilience and where there was an evidence gap. The other two studies look at the role of early emergency response and of investments in resilience in helping avoid losses for people affected by the 2014–2016 drought in Ethiopia (Levine et al., 2017); and the costs of ill-health in North Kivu, DRC (Levine and Kusnierek, 2019a) and in West Darfur, Sudan (Levine and Kusnierek, 2019b).

3 In theory, differences in gender roles do not necessarily equate to inequality. In the case of Afridi in FATA and Peshawar, they do.

1.2 Methodology⁴

Because of the lack of published evidence or analysis of changing gender norms in displacement, this study was necessarily exploratory. Only two in-depth studies of gender norms in FATA were found (Khan and Samina, 2009; Khan 2012), which were used to help understand the interviewees' stories and to inform Section 2.1. A further study (ICG, 2015) examines the legal status of FATA from a gender perspective. No openly accessible, published paper was found on the roles of IDP women after displacement in Peshawar, or of changed roles in comparable situations of displacement elsewhere in the world.⁵

The study approached the examination of changes in the role of displaced women with as few preconceptions as possible. No specific gender framework was used; no pre-identified theory of change was tested; and interviews and discussions did not direct people to talk about specific features of their lives, assumed as key to understanding gender roles. Males and females of different ages gave their stories, and the study team then looked at what people said to find patterns of change and for explanations of those patterns.⁶ Interviewees and participants in group discussions brought up a range of themes when asked about their lives: the society and culture in which they grew up or lived; marriage arrangements and relations within marriage; family structures and roles within the family; livelihoods and economics; how time was spent; education; movement, socialising and information (including, post-displacement, the use of phones and TV); decision-making, the ability to speak and have a voice heard; and diet, health and healthcare.⁷ In total, 63 group discussions and 98 individual interviews were held with IDPs. The analytical team aimed for a balance of insider and outsider perspectives, combining the insights of Pashtun researchers familiar with life in Peshawar with the external eye of an international researcher.

All interviews were carried out in Pashto, the first language of interviewees and interviewers.

In examining change over time, we wanted to distinguish changes due to displacement from other changes that were due to people getting older or changing status, e.g. from child to parent. Interviews and FGDs were therefore constructed in two ways. In some, people were asked to make comparisons over time (before, during and after displacement); and in others, people reflected on cross-generational comparisons, e.g. the difference between their lives, aspirations and expectations and those of their daughters and mothers. Discussions and interviews were held separately with males and females, and in three broad age groups: adolescent and unmarried girls and boys (aged from 14 to 17); young married adults with young children (often aged in their late twenties or thirties); and older people, usually grandparents, aged from 50 to over 70.

The study spoke with IDPs from a range of environments in Peshawar District.⁸ Some lived in villages on the outskirts of Peshawar city or University Town (with its own population of around 25,000, some 10 km from Peshawar) in the first half of July 2017. These people had easier access by foot or public transport to Peshawar, electricity and a reasonable education infrastructure. Others lived in more rural villages, further from services, with fewer schools, no electricity and a more rural economy. Remoteness was not simply a matter of physical proximity: some areas close to town were made more remote by insecurity and fear of violence. Achini Payaan (Upper Achini), for example, is separated from University Town by a wall, and is poorly served by assistance or government services, partly due to fear. In each site, IDPs were identified using snowballing sampling, where IDPs led the researchers to other IDPs and to areas in the village or community where the IDP concentration was high, with the guiding principle that the study

4 Thanks are due to Kanwal Ahluwalia for her assistance in developing a methodology for capturing gender differences and the dynamic of change, for which the work of Jackson (unpublished) was important.

5 Much time was invested in this search for literature. Internet searches were conducted; libraries of displacement literature and journals dedicated to displacement were searched; and experts in the field of displacement and of gender were consulted. We found two publicly available studies of how gender roles have changed as a result of displacement: Pirtskhlava (2015), writing about Muslim Meskhetians from Russia who migrated to the USA, and Franz (2003), writing about the adaptation of Bosnian refugees to life in Vienna and New York.

6 This parallels the way in which Valid Evaluations researched and analysed resilience.

7 Once the interviews have been anonymised, Valid Evaluations hopes to make them available for research purposes, subject to data protection legislation.

8 Individual interviews and group discussions were held in UC Khazar Khawani, UC Peshtakhara, UC Sufaid Dheri, UC Mera Surizai, UC Achnee, UC Achnee Bala, UC Larama, UC Pajaggi, UC Harayana, UC Mera Kachoori, UC Daag, UC Deh Bahadur, UC Bahadar Kalley and UC Spena Warai.

aimed to sample as wide a diversity of people and situations as possible. No attempt was made to create a representative sample.⁹

IDPs came predominantly from two sub-districts (or *tehsil*) in Khyber Agency: Bara Tehsil and the recently created *tehsil* of Tirah, previously part of Bara Tehsil. At the time of the study in July 2017, many IDPs from Bara and Tirah had returned from displacement. It is difficult to quantify exactly how many people had returned to Tirah and Bara. Official figures from August 2017 (e.g. USAID, 2017) stated that over 80% of households displaced in KP Province and FATA had returned, with just 46,000 out of just over 300,000 households remaining. Caution is needed in interpreting these figures, though. First, IDMC (2018) warned that IDP figures may not be accurate as they only include registered households. Many IDPs, possibly as many as half, chose not to register. Second, there is wide variation in rates of return depending on the security, or the perception of security, in the place of origin, so the overall return rates may not reflect the position for particular places (e.g. Tirah Valley). Third, the simple division into returned households and remaining (displaced) households does not correspond with how displacement and return occur in real life. It is well-known from other displacement situations that families do not simply change from living in displacement on one day to returning home the next. The head of a family may register for return (especially where a resettlement grant is offered) but other family members may remain, and even the head may move between two locations. The local field researchers for this study informally estimated that a far higher proportion of IDPs from FATA were still living around Peshawar, possibly as many as half.

Since it was not possible to undertake field work in FATA with returned IDPs, this study only interviewed IDPs still living in Peshawar District. Return has depended partly on personal choice, which would introduce an inherent bias if the findings were presented as representative of the views of the

population which had been displaced as a whole. The paper must be read as a representation of changes in the roles of women still living in Peshawar District, from among IDPs from Khyber Agency.

1.3 The places of origin

The majority of the population of Khyber Agency are from the Afridi tribe within the Pashtun ethnic group. As mentioned, IDPs were predominantly from Bara and Tirah. Tirah Valley¹⁰ or Tirah Tehsil is the most remote part of Khyber Agency, on the border with Afghanistan. Although only around 60 miles (in a straight line) from Peshawar city, it was very cut off by a lack of passable roads, as well as by culture, politics¹¹ and insecurity. This remoteness from the rest of Pakistan has meant that trade was often easier between Tirah and Afghanistan, even by going over the mountains for two days with mules, than between Tirah and the rest of Pakistan. The high altitude and climate of Tirah (at around 2,300m above sea level) keeps it green in summer when much of Pakistan is dry; and very cold and covered in snow in winter. Tirah had very few services or amenities: no healthcare (not even any medically trained midwives), very few schools and no electricity. There were no permanent shops or markets, only weekly travelling fairs, where everything from livestock, food and clothes to the main cash crop, hashish, were traded. Bara Tehsil is much closer and better connected to Peshawar city (which has a population of around two million) and to Kohat city (which has a population of around one million). It also enjoys better services: some electricity is available, there is some healthcare and better education facilities (though secondary schools are few). Market infrastructure is also more developed. Bara is situated at a much lower altitude, and many Afridi spent summer in Tirah Valley, moving to Bara in winter. The population in Bara was displaced from 2009; displacement occurred more suddenly in Tirah in 2012.

9 In the absence of a sampling frame (i.e. a population list of all IDPs living in Peshawar District), this would have been impossible. A representative sample was in any case not necessary, since quantitative methods would not have been appropriate in the absence of any published exploratory research that would have enabled a study to know what would be useful to quantify.

10 Tirah Valley is the name given to the network of valleys of the upper tributaries of the River Bara.

11 Khyber Agency is designated as a 'prohibited area'. See also below.

Box 1: A methodological note: estimating prevalence from non-quantitative research

This study is an exploratory one, meaning that it is a first attempt to understand the issues in how women's lives have changed after displacement. In order to achieve this understanding it was necessary to talk to as diverse a range of people as we could find; and, while the agenda for the interviews was clearly set, we had to let people tell us what was important for them.

As a result, some interviews concentrated on a narrower range of topics or sets of experience than others, as was felt necessary to maximise our understanding of the picture of changing gender relations as a whole. Such an approach, though, makes it impossible to draw quantitative conclusions. The sample was deliberately diverse rather than representative; and because people were not asked the same direct set of questions, nothing can be concluded from the fact that

someone (for example) did not mention suffering domestic violence.

A different kind of study is needed to quantify the prevalence of any of the issues covered in this report – but such a study could not have been planned or designed without having first understood what the important issues were and how they can be identified. Nonetheless, it seems necessary to distinguish between statements that were only made by one or two people from those that were quite common. This paper sometimes refers to statements being made by 'many' or by 'a few' people. Such imprecision may be frustrating for those who want more precise quantification, but it would be meaningless to say how many people, or what percentage of interviewees had made a similar statement. Indeed, such false precision would only serve to mislead.

2 The structure of gender inequality before displacement

2.1 The socio-political background and role of Afridi women in Khyber Agency¹²

Women and girls in Khyber Agency lived in one of the most extreme patriarchies in the world today. Their situation was created by the unique legal situation of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, or FATA, of which Khyber Agency is a part.¹³ Discussions have been ongoing for some time on possible changes in the status of FATA. The Committee on Federally Administered Tribal Areas, set up by the Prime Minister in November 2015, made recommendations for their inclusion into the Pakistan mainstream by incorporating them into the Province of KP. These recommendations were approved by the Government in March 2017. The description below of the life of women in Khyber Agency relates to the time before their displacement, i.e. before such changes were being proposed. These changes, and their possible implications for women and girls are considered in Section 4.

Since the time of British rule, areas along the border with Afghanistan have been treated as a buffer region, never fully incorporated into British-ruled India or independent Pakistan. In common with such physically and culturally isolated – and economically marginalised – areas in other countries, they acquired a reputation for unruliness, and a way of life was sought where the ruling power had as little responsibility as possible for managing the domestic affairs of the inhabitants, in return for acceptance of its sovereignty over the area as a whole. The British

did not extend normal laws to the area, instead making inhabitants subject to a special legal code, the Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR). This was in essence akin to a form of feudalism that had not been seen in Britain for centuries, where autonomy was given to the lords (or *Maliks*) to rule over their lands largely as they saw fit, in return for overall allegiance to the Crown. On independence, Pakistan maintained this situation, and the territories are ruled by the FCR to this day,¹⁴ with the Political Agent, now the representative of the President rather than the British Crown, wielding powers that cross the lines of legislature (rule maker), executive and judiciary.

It may be convenient to represent this situation as tribal autonomy: the state leaves people to live as they wish, as long as trade is secured and overall peace maintained. (In FATA, apart from on government property, the State's law applies only on main roads and a hundred yards on either side of it.) However, what this freedom means for the citizens of Pakistan who live in FATA is that the protections of the Constitution do not apply to them; the Federal Parliament has no power to legislate for them; they have no recourse to the High Court or the Supreme Court for their protection; and until 1996 the population – apart from the *Maliks* – were 'free' of any right to vote for the Federal authority that ruled them. The population of Khyber Agency, almost entirely from the Pakhtun or Pashtun ethnic group, has been largely free of state investment in infrastructure and services since colonial times.

Special Status has been partially successful in inculcating a notion, Azad Qabail, of

12 This overview draws significantly on Kahn and Samina (2009), one of the only available published papers on gender roles in FATA, together with interviews from the primary research.

13 The FATA consist of seven Tribal Agencies, of which Khyber is one, and six Frontier Regions.

14 Although, as mentioned, the Federal Government agreed in March 2017 to the repeal of FCR and to the incorporation of FATA into KP Province, at the time of writing FCR is still in force, and the overall process is expected to take five years to implement.

autonomous (free) tribes, a misnomer as they are neither free nor tribes. In concrete terms this so-called freedom expresses itself as the freedom of colonial/Pakistani authorities from administrative costs and responsibilities. (Khan and Samina, 2009: 3)

The effect on women of this special status has been catastrophic. Robbed of any protection by the state, and living a culture where a notion of ‘honour’ permits – or, in some cases, obliges – men to kill women for even the suspicion of breaking a strict code, they live under sufferance, their very existence subject to the will of those who control them.

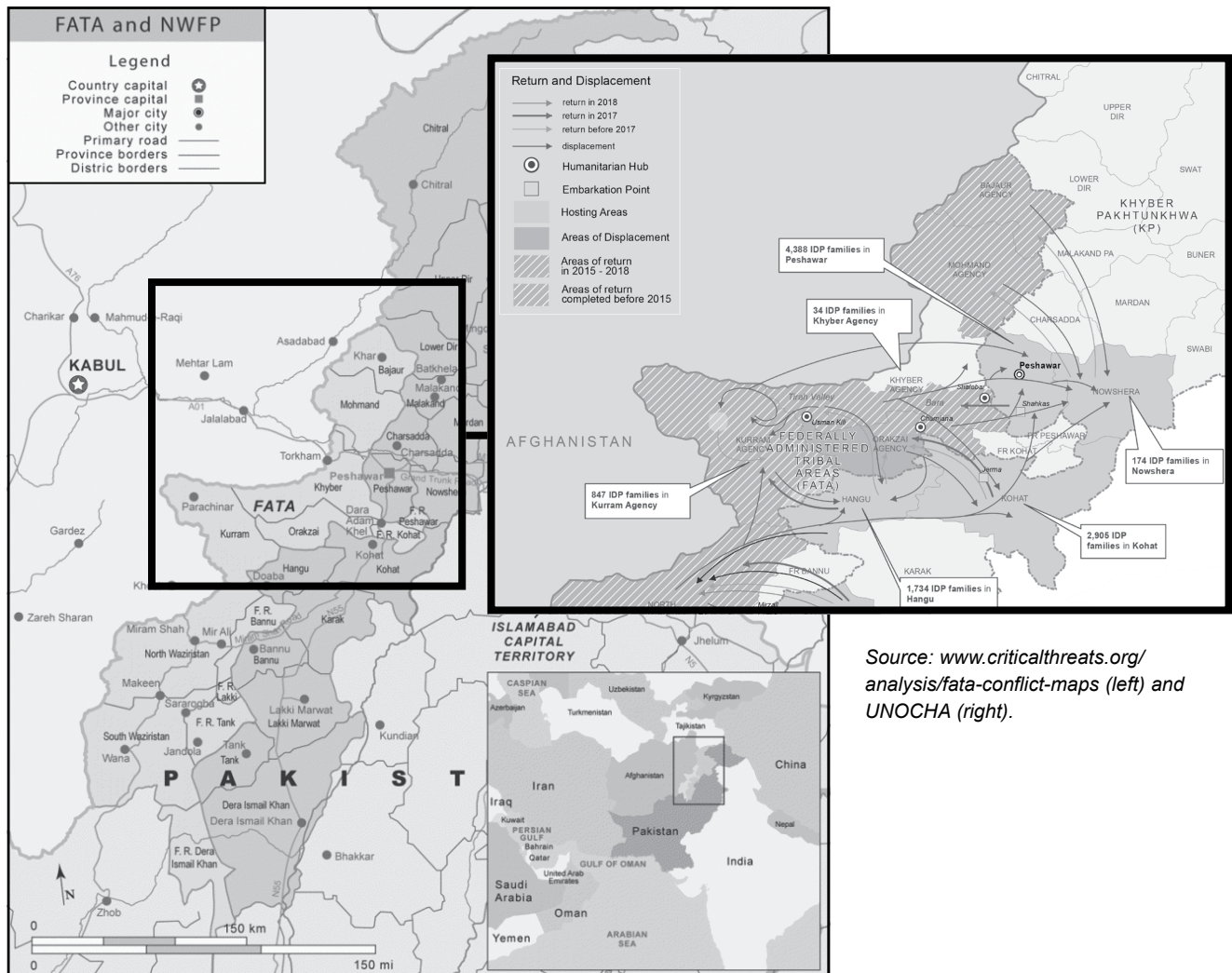
Locally, authority for settling disputes is given to the *jirga*, a council where women are never represented and are not allowed to bring any complaints or

be heard.¹⁵ In the absence of state law, lives are subject to the cultural rules set by the *jirga* and the (male) elders, a code known as *Pakhtunwali*. A full description of this system is beyond the scope of this paper, but a few elements are critical for understanding the changing role of women and girls with displacement.

Land can only be passed down a male line, and a family with no male heirs loses its claims to land. Strength is needed to protect land against challenges from rivals, often relatives. Such strength is manifested mainly in arms: education is regarded as bringing weakness, since it makes people ‘soft’, and less willing to kill or be killed in struggle over land.¹⁶

Revenge is either encouraged or required by the culture, and feuds between families can continue for generations

Figure 1: Map of FATA, Pakistan and of Khyber Agency



Source: www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/fata-conflict-maps (left) and UNOCHA (right).

15 If a woman wished to bring a complaint against her husband or in-law, she would have to find a ‘suitable’ male among her husband’s family to bring the case for her.
 16 The connection between education, more gentle behaviour and a perception of weakness was repeatedly made in interviews with both men and women.

(several of the interviewees for this study spoke of grandparents and other relatives who had been killed in such feuds). However, the culture also provides for conflict resolution, where one party admits wrongdoing and asks for forgiveness. Such a party may bring the feud to an end by offering a girl from the family in marriage (*swara*) to the offended family.

Notions of honour and self-respect are intimately tied to the strict rules of behaviour for women: a man's honour depends on the behaviour of his female relatives. For example, hospitality is a key virtue, given in a *hurja*, a place built outside the domestic home – and a male-only arena. However, although the giving of hospitality (food) is important for a man's respect, it is provided by women. Two aspects of female behaviour are critical: the absolute taboo not just of sex before or outside marriage but of any contact between a girl or woman and a man from outside her family; and perceived obedience to the decisions of the men in her family. Because there is no legal authority (or protection) outside *Pakhtunwali*, men have untrammelled power of coercion and punishment over women and girls who either transgress those rules or upon whom the slightest suspicion falls.

It is beyond the scope of this study to look in detail at the history of FATA as a whole or Khyber Agency in particular. One or two observations regarding changes over the past 30 or more years are, however, necessary. The 1980s saw the rise of religious adherence that increased until the much of the area became occupied by Islamic militants, whose control led to the military activity which caused the Afridi displacement. This was linked directly by some interviewees to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. These armed groups came from outside the tribal structure and did not seek to build power along tribal lines. They saw themselves in opposition to the tribal heads, the *Maliks*, many of whom they killed. The *Malik* was a hereditary office, with sons being gradually trained by their fathers for the role, and the assassination of many *Maliks* weakened the institution, undermining the authority which their children could claim in taking on the role. The 1980s was also the start of an economic boom for many in the area, brought about by the rise of the drugs (hashish) trade. This wealth, held at family level, also weakened the power of the tribal authority. Furthermore, this wealth enabled people to travel more extensively, for trade or for employment, also weakening the power of the *Malik* over the clan or tribe.

The rest of this section, based on the interviews from the primary research, examines how gender inequality is created and maintained. In the sub-sections below, various dimensions of gender inequality are discussed in turn: by analysing the relationship between these elements, the logic of discrimination is revealed.

2.2 Joint family system and the gender division of roles

The overall context of women's lives was set by the interplay between the politico-legal status of FATA and the highly patriarchal *Pakhtunwali* code: their day-to-day lives, their welfare and the rules that governed them were shaped to a large degree by the physical way in which they lived before displacement. A useful entry point to seeing how gender relations were shaped, and how changes have occurred after displacement, is to look at how different forces came together to create the Afridi JFS.

This JFS is rooted in physical, economic and social elements. Twenty or more people from three or four generations could live together in one large multi-storeyed house, built up over several generations. There are a number of drivers for this living arrangement. In an area covered in snow for several months of the year, there are practical reasons for preferring a single, multi-storeyed, multi-occupied structure over several smaller ones. Collecting firewood is a time-consuming task, and a single fire can warm more people in a JFS arrangement. Many families spend the summer months in areas such as Tirah Valley, but move to the lower and warmer areas in Bara for winter. One person can remain behind to ensure that snow does not damage the roof, therefore meaning that in a JFS one person can thus protect the home of more than 20 others. The JFS has cultural drivers too. There is strict enforcement of almost total separation of women and men from outside the family and a constant fear that family honour will be threatened by suspicion of a girl or woman coming into contact with 'outsider' men (this is discussed further below). It is easier to ensure that women are never left alone when they are living in the JFS with many other people.

However, the principle driver of JFS is probably the nature of family feuds and the need for 'strength'. People live together for protection from armed attacks and because it is necessary to have as many carriers of guns (i.e. males) as possible, to increase the likelihood of survival. This practical need creates the demand

for male children to be future claimants over land, defenders of the family's claims and armed protectors of the extended family.

Four elements have thus combined: a politico-legal system where a family's protection is its own responsibility, rather than of the state; a culture where honour and respect set rules for using violence, rather than seeking to avoid it; a cultural rule that inheritance passes only through males; and gender norms that create very different roles for males and females, such that women cannot take part in armed, physical defence of the family. The combination of these forces is a family need for boys rather than girls (who will in any case leave the home on marriage), and for as many of them as possible. This creates pressure on a wife to bear sons, her failure¹⁷ to do so probably resulting in strong social stigma and her husband taking another wife; it also means that girls

are pressured to marry and to start producing sons as soon as they are physically able to do so.

Early marriage¹⁸ of girls before they are 16 (the age of consent in Pakistan) is thus partly driven by the need to produce as many sons as quickly as possible. (A more important driver is the need for a girl to remain chaste until marriage, discussed below: the sooner she is married, the quicker the danger is over.) The economic arrangements of the JFS facilitate early marriage, which is often between girls of 13 to 14 years and boys from 15 upwards. Children of this age cannot be expected to be entirely economically independent and the JFS provides a single, shared economy, to which all contribute and from which the needs of all should be met. (Such a system also made it possible for families to cope with men who were less able to work because of addiction to the hashish which they produced.)

Box 2: What is strength?

Families need to be strong. They need to fight off attempts from rivals who may try and claim their land; and they need to fight off families with whom they (or the generations before them) have become embroiled in feuds. Just as importantly, exhibiting strength will deter such attacks.

Where then does strength lie? First and foremost, strength is in the number of sons who can carry guns, and in the number of males in the extended family who will carry guns on your behalf. Strength can lie in wealth, since this grants the ability to hire people with guns. People who have political connections may be strong, and in some areas connection to the police may also lend strength. Education, though, is seen as a sign of weakness. Many female interviewees spoke of the advantages of an educated husband, who behaves in a more polite and 'civilised' way. From another perspective, that means that education makes you a coward, less likely to be extreme in violence.

This permits the division of labour and facilitates a sharper division of roles between males and females than is often seen even in societies where gender roles are quite different. Women's movement is extremely restricted on the grounds of honour (see Section 2.4 below). Men were thus responsible for all tasks that involved moving outside the immediate settlement, which included everything from going to local market fairs, to trade (or smuggling), or working in the Gulf and sending remittances. The income from any such remittances belonged to the joint family, and the money was not paid to the wife but to the family patriarch, the father or the eldest son.

Men were also responsible for agriculture, and for processing the main cash crops: hashish and opium. Women 'assisted' their husbands with the farming and were responsible for looking after livestock. They were also responsible for all domestic tasks such as cooking and cleaning, and for looking after the men, as well as children, the sick and elderly relatives. Because the dispersed settlement pattern meant that there would usually not be any close neighbours other than relatives nearby, women and girls were also responsible for fetching water and firewood. The workload of girls and women was enormous and physically demanding, having to climb great heights

17 The implication that it is the woman's failure if no sons issue from the relationship is one held by the culture, not science.

18 The legal codes of almost every country include the concept of an age of consent, or legal minority. Inherent in this concept is the idea that a child, who cannot understand the implications of some decisions and who has to be protected from manipulation by adults, cannot therefore give consent to them. Such decisions include sexual relations, marriage or signing a contract. This means that any marriage that takes place with a minor is a marriage where one party has not given consent. Even if no threat, duress or physical force had to be applied to the minor, it is by its very nature a forced marriage. This paper uses the simple term 'early marriage' rather than 'early forced marriage', because it better reflects how informants spoke and their attitudes. Since child marriage is by definition forced marriage, this should not be seen as representing any other difference.

on steep slopes, often carrying heavy loads to find fodder for the animals, firewood for cooking and heating, and water for the family. Because girls were freer to move before puberty (see below), they often found themselves burdened with this hard physical labour. Men had far more time to socialise in the *hurja*, and boys regularly played while the girls were busy working for the family.

Two dimensions of this life need to be distinguished: the rural life from the gender relations. From the physical confines of peri-urban displacement (see below), many older women spoke with some nostalgia of their previous outdoor rural life, and of the health that they enjoyed in the fresh air, with clean water and physical exercise. At the same time, though, all women resented the inequality with which this physical burden was shared. Most older men, and some older women too, initially portrayed this pre-displacement life as one of harmony and mutual support between the two sexes, though in the course of the interviews, all the women and girls and many of the men and boys went on to explain and describe the inequalities of the JFS.

Box 3: Gender discrimination as ‘respect’: men’s views

‘Females in our society were respected in every way.’

‘Females in the past were the important part of a home. Females were respected, but compared to males they were considered inferior.’

‘Most decisions were taken without the consent of women, but women were considered the most important part of the society. They were respected and their needs were looked after. Responsibility for looking after their needs depended solely on the man.’

Inequality was not merely between the sexes. Just as overall authority rested with the oldest man, domestic authority lay with his wife – which, for most women, meant their mother-in-law. In the domestic realm her power was almost absolute, subject only to the intervention of her husband. A disfavoured daughter-in-law could be given a much greater burden

of menial tasks, and punishments, which included physical and psychological violence such as regular beatings and even denial of food.

2.3 Marriage

On marriage, a girl left her family to live with the family of her husband. Her own family were rarely permitted to help her, whatever troubles and abuse she faced from her husband’s family. Because life was governed by the JFS, a girl was marrying into a whole family. Indeed, several women interviewed spoke of having a good relationship with a reasonable husband, but a life made a misery by their mother-in-law and (older) brothers-in-law. All these observations on the institution of marriage would, of course, be equally true for many other girls and women in other parts of Pakistan.

Girls were not consulted in the choice of a husband (and his family) and were forced to accept whatever choice was made by their fathers. Boys too had to accept the bride chosen for them by their father or parents, but with this key difference: the boy remained living with his own family, and the marriage choice related only to his wife. For a girl, the choice of husband determined everything about the rest of her life. (Although everyone agreed that the final decision in marriage for children rested with the father, a number of interviewees reported that a mother may have some word in the decision, though others said that it was the father alone.) Several interviewees gave clues that suggested some difference in the way in which the autonomy of a male and female was seen, even if with little difference in practice. Everyone agreed that girls had no opportunity to offer an opinion over the choice of the husband, and no one would even think to ask their consent. On the other hand, a few interviewees said that boys were asked if they agreed with the choice of bride – but that it would be unthinkable for them to refuse, given the strict respect for elders demanded by the *Pakhtunwali* code.

Even if they had been asked, girls could not give informed consent because betrothal took place at such a young age, with marriage often following immediately after puberty¹⁹ and usually between the ages of 13 and 15. Before puberty girls were able to move fairly freely, but became severely restricted between puberty and marriage. This was the most

19 One interviewee suggested that, in the past, Afridi girls had married a little older, at around 18, and that very early marriage had begun some 30 or 40 years ago. It was beyond the scope of this study to investigate this, but it does warn against a too-easy use of words such as ‘traditional’.

dangerous time for a girl's family because any contact between a girl and a male outside the family would endanger the family's honour. Once married, the danger for her family was reduced. The danger for the girl herself would never be over, as the frequency of so-called honour killings demonstrates. Such murders could even be ordered by the only accessible law courts, the *jirga*. (So-called honour killings occur in many other parts of Pakistan, but they are, at least officially, illegal outside FATA. Reliable comparative data on prevalence is, of course, impossible to obtain.)

Girls were also married off early for economic reasons. The bride's family receive a payment, bride price,²⁰ on the marriage of the girl. In principle, women all said that this money is supposed to be used for the benefit of the bride; the bride takes possessions purchased with this money with her on marriage, and these remain her own private property. Bride price was also said to ensure a measure of respect for the girl, as a girl who is given away for free is said to be disrespected by the family into which she marries. However, all female respondents reported that only a fraction of this money is used for their benefit, and the rest was an economic profit the family.

We are sold to men like cattle in the name of marriage. So, we are treated like cattle.
(Young married woman, FGD)

Families that cannot afford to pay bride price to marry their son, or who wish to avoid paying the bride price, may instead offer a daughter in marriage, for example to the brother of the girl about to marry their son. This is known as an exchange marriage (*adal badal* or *badal*). Every report we heard of *badal* had been negative for the women involved. A woman married in *badal* is hostage to the treatment given to the other bride in the exchange. If her brother mistreats his wife, then she is almost certainly going to be mistreated in revenge.

The most pernicious form of marriage for a woman, though, was to be used as payment of recompense by a family requesting forgiveness to end the feud (*swara*). Although in theory such a marriage is supposed to end enmity, in practice every respondent reported that a woman married for *swara* was despised as the daughter of their enemies and perpetually mistreated by everyone in her new family.

2.4 Movement

In the days before the militants penetrated Khyber Agency and gained influence and control, women had greater freedom of movement in the area around their own settlement. Families lived in small villages, essentially groups of their own relatives, meaning that within the settlement and in the surrounding fields and forests there were no risks of a woman being seen by a male non-family member. She could thus visit the homes of her female relatives (wearing a *dupatta*, or head-scarf), and, more importantly for the family, she was able to move to collect firewood, fodder and water, and labour in her husband's fields unimpeded by the constraints of a burqa. After displacement, with the different set of restrictions that this imposed, there was some nostalgia for this, albeit very limited, freedom for a social life (see below).

However, movement beyond the immediate settlement was not allowed, unless escorted by a male family member. Women could not go to the regular market fairs in neighbouring villages, so had to request male family members to make purchases on their behalf, even for their own clothes. Even if young girls received some education, they were not allowed to travel to schools once they reached puberty, typically around grade 5 (but see Section 2.5 below on education). Women had to be escorted by a man if going to any health facility, where such existed. In Tirah Valley, healthcare was simply unavailable, for men or women. Many respondents spoke of the long trek by donkey to hospital in Peshawar town being a last resort for a patient who was very ill, and that 'usually they died on the way'.

With the arrival of the Islamist militants, much stricter rules on purdah and movement were enforced. Initially, the militants tried to ban all female movement outside the home without a burqa, but the men successfully argued against this, since it conflicted with their own interests: women could not work adequately in the fields or collecting fodder, water and firewood with the restricted physical movement that a burqa permits. The women's own opinion on the trade-off between having to wear a burqa (and having movement restricted) or having continued responsibility for the heavy workload of fetching fodder, water and firewood, was reportedly not a factor in the discussion.

20 This payment is referred to locally as 'dowry' in English. However, dowry is usually associated with a payment made by the bride's family to the husband's family, the common practice in South Asia. In order to avoid confusion, this paper uses the term 'bride price', one commonly used in parts of the world where payment is traditionally made by the boy's family on marriage.

2.5 Education

Education was not a high priority for most in Khyber Agency. Literacy rates were low, even for men, and were below 10% for females – and very much lower even than in Tirah Tehsil, by all accounts. In Bara, some girls – a significant number, though a minority – had more schooling, finishing primary or in some cases attending secondary schooling, though only very rarely beyond five years of primary education (it was not socially acceptable for girls to continue going to school once married and there was no provision of any education facilities for married girls or for adults). More boys attended school, and some from Bara even finished secondary school. Again, several factors can be seen to interact (and to reinforce each other) to create the situation where education was poor for boys, and for girls minimal.

The first explanation offered by most respondents for girls not being schooled, or for receiving only limited schooling, was the lack of schools. In Bara, some girls' schools were available, but not everywhere, and girls were not allowed to move far. In Tirah, secondary schools for boys were not available, primary schools for boys were not found everywhere and no respondent had a girls' primary school at an accessible distance, given the limited movement allowed to girls. Education opportunities for girls were further restricted in Bara after the militants assumed such a strong degree of power and control in the district. They placed a ban on schooling for girls, and although the reports from interviewees suggest that this was not completely followed, it did further narrow the few opportunities which had existed.

One of the reasons why there were so few schools, particularly in Tirah, was the historic opposition locally against any attempt by the state to introduce schooling. Several respondents spoke of the role of the *Maliks* in fomenting this opposition. Education was portrayed as foreign, Western, as something that would undermine the culture of the Afridi or that would undermine their religion. However, all respondents who mentioned this said that they had since realised that the *Maliks* had been sending their own children to school and even university, and that the people had been made fools of by the *Maliks* who wished to keep them ignorant.

There were no schools [back in the village]. The Maliks condemned schools as 'the education of the West'. But now we realise that their own

children were studying in schools in town. It wasn't 'the education of the West' for them.
(FGD 8, younger men)

...schools were only built on paper. The Maliks took all the funds and the poor people of the area remained ignorant.
(FGD 7, younger men)

Long before in our village, only the children of the Malik were educated. They opposed the promotion of education, because they didn't want our children to be educated and find good jobs for themselves. They wanted to keep us poor.
(FGD 1, old women)

We didn't study, because of our elders. They listened to the Maliks. The Maliks didn't allow schools or roads and anything like that. But the Malik's children studied abroad and now they are living happy life abroad, and we are where we were 50 years ago.
(Man, 70 years)

There were hints too, never fully expressed directly, of fears that education threatened the cultural status quo. Educated girls were considered to be at risk of becoming less obedient and compliant, and harder to marry off. (Other studies have suggested that one reason for preferring early marriage is that a girl is more pliable for her in-laws and husband:²¹ education would make a girl less pliable.) Several women, and surprisingly even adolescent girls, spoke openly about how they had been denied education to prevent them from knowing their rights, claims probably substantiated by the language of some of those who continued to oppose female education.

Men did not let women to go to school, because they feared that if they started going to school, they wouldn't work in the fields. They would revolt against the rules [about how women should behave], so they kept women suppressed and beat them, so that they would obey their orders without asking any questions.
(Adolescent girl, FGD)

Even where a male head of family did not personally want to reject or downplay the value of education for his daughters, he felt compelled to follow the cultural norms of the society. A large number of interviewees (mainly men) spoke of the problem of

21 '... a young bride is preferred, so that her personality can be moulded by both her husband and his parents' (Caldwell et al., 1983).

‘backbiting’ or malicious talk about those who did not rule their women strictly or those who allowed their children a voice. In a culture that places such a high value on honour – in a society where being perceived as ‘educated’, ‘civilised’ or a coward brings direct threats including armed threats to life itself – it is unsurprising that men were kept in line in denying or restricting education for their daughters.

The husband was not supposed to help his wife with her tasks. That was a sign of weakness and then people used to taunt that person.
(Adolescent boy, FGD)

However, availability of schools was only part of the story. There were few obvious advantages to education for anyone in Khyber Agency. There were no employment prospects, and education, perhaps beyond very basic literacy, was not seen as helpful in any of the functions of life, whether economic or social. Education or literacy was not a feature of participation in a *jirga*, and if anything, as mentioned above, men and women both reported that education would be seen to weaken a man rather than to empower him. This is taking a cultural view of strength and empowerment: among the interviewees, there were one or two examples of boys who had been educated and who were subsequently professionally successful. Many boys who were enrolled in primary school were often truant, preferring to play instead, and there had clearly been no pressure from their parents to attend.

It is common in many societies for families to prioritise education for their sons on what could be considered as rational economic grounds. Parents’ futures depended on their sons, while their daughters would leave the family on marriage and could not assist their parents’ welfare. This logic was regularly quoted by interviewees from FATA.²² Additionally, if there was a general perception that there was little reason for a boy to go to school, then there was a much stronger view that there was no advantage at all to educating girls, even for the families into which they would marry. Women had no opportunity for employment or for making use of (secular) education. Tight restrictions on their unaccompanied movement, even to markets, meant that was no advantage even to basic literacy, since they never had a need – or opportunity – to read or write.

Box 4: An exceptional case

‘My husband was involved in smuggling, so he was away most of the time. Whenever he was away, I felt insecure, because my in-laws started taunting and beating me. ... When my husband moved abroad in search of work, I was left alone with my child and my in-laws had a free hand then [to abuse me]. ... I learned tailoring from a neighbour, and started stitching clothes for myself and later on for others in the village to earn something for myself. Later on when I had saved some money, I took a huge step – I started a cloth business in Bara market. I was the first lady in whole of Bara to start my own business. Day by day, I became known in nearby villages, and I was encouraged by many other women. It was the only shop in the market run by a woman, so it was very easy for other women to come and buy from me. That market is still known by my name.

Some other women in my community were also encouraged and they also started their own businesses. ... When my husband came back from abroad, he found I had a booming business. He was happy and he decided to support me. We were earning well enough from my stall that my husband could leave smuggling, and he decided to stay here and work with me to improve my business. ... We were living a happy and prosperous life until Mangal Bagh [the leader of Lashkar-e-Islam militant organisation] came ... they were against women's education and their jobs outside home and I had no choice but to abandon my shop ... and move to Peshawar.’

Religious education was generally not seen in opposition to secular schooling, but as a complement or as an alternative form of education. If schooling was not possible, whether because of lack of availability, restricted access or lack of money, many girls and their parents would look for some religious schooling (madrassa) instead. Such schooling was contrasted with the simple rote learning to recite the Koran which girls would receive at the homes of some aunt or other relative. Madrassa education was not widely available before displacement.

22 The use of the term ‘rational’ does mean that it is fair, and in this sense, ‘rationality’ is consistent with the decision being the outcome of a highly discriminatory patriarchy.

2.6 Livelihoods

Before displacement women had no independent livelihoods in Tirah Valley: even in Bara, an independent livelihood for women was incredibly rare. (The interviews contained one single example: see Box 4.) Although women were heavily involved in economic activities, as described above, this was as a contribution to the household or family enterprises of agriculture and livestock keeping. Any trading from this, the act of bringing in income, was in the hands of men. In any case, without independent

access to any shop or market, women had few opportunities to use money independently even if they had earned it. Women had no opportunities for the other economic or productive activities that some men were able to engage in. They could only take part in activities within in the home, and this was almost entirely restricted to sewing. This was not viewed as a way of making money by the interviewees, however, which is unsurprising given women's limited access to money and the impossibility of a woman engaging directly in business with a man.

3 The changing role of women after displacement

3.1 The shock, displacement and the new situation

The shock of displacement was forced upon the local populations of Bara and Tirah in different ways – the areas fell under the control of different militant organisations with their own relationships to the state. Bara was occupied by a more anti-state faction: many fled progressively because of the nature of their rule, and these people were only considered as IDPs after the large wave of forced displacement in 2012. The military operation here was more gradual and those forced to flee had more warning and were able to make greater preparations before leaving. In Tirah Tehsil, a more pro-state faction held sway: military action by the army was more sudden, in response to a takeover of control by the anti-state faction from Bara. People’s stories from Tirah are shocking. Families were forced to flee for their lives in an instant, leaving everything behind and running at night with only the clothes they were wearing, carrying their children with them. Many (men and women) spoke of the difficulties faced by women, fleeing in groups including men from outside their families, and struggling to stay safe and protect their honour. There were stories of people dying on the journey, of people being captured by the militants, and of the desperate fears of rape.

Almost all those we spoke to initially stayed with relatives, where they arrived hungry, tired, penniless and with no possessions. Although their relatives often had little, and space in their homes was limited, every respondent expressed deep gratitude for the way their relatives had looked after them, sometimes for several months. As quickly as people could, they found work, registered to receive assistance and began to look for their own accommodation. Most women did not have Computerised National Identity Cards (NIC or CNIC), because there was no mechanism by which they would be allowed to go and register

(which also involved having their faces photographed) (Mosel and Jackson, 2013) and because they had little reason to apply before displacement. For most, the economic necessity for the household to gain access to a food ration outweighed any cultural sensitivity preventing them from applying and most women now have CNICs. Respondents to this study were still mostly living in rented accommodation in suburbs and villages in the peri-urban area around Peshawar, as described in the introduction above. A few successful IDPs have been able to buy property.

The contrast to IDPs’ livelihood situation before displacement was stark. They had lost their fields and livestock, and with it their near self-sufficiency in food and their sources of income. Instead, most survived by taking various forms of daily unskilled work. They had also lost their large houses in which they lived together in the JFS. Property of such size was simply not available for rent in the peri-urban area, even had they been able to afford it. They were typically spending around \$400 per month on rent, living in much smaller houses and, although they were not living as an entirely nuclear family, the family system was fragmented with typically only nine or ten people living together rather than the previous 20 or more.

Although in many ways IDPs were economically much worse off than before, they enjoyed the availability of basic services and utilities. Piped water was available nearby as well as electricity (although power outages were common in some areas) and there was gas for cooking. There were schools for both boys and girls; madrassas were also available; and healthcare was accessible, either from local health posts or from the main referral hospitals in Peshawar city. Men’s lives were very different after displacement, but for women and girls the transformation was almost total. Every one of the factors that had shaped people’s lives in Bara and in Tirah, discussed in Section 2 above, was changed by displacement, despite still living with people from their own ethnic group and culture.

3.2 Joint family system

The change in physical geography to one where joint family living was no longer possible on the same scale had far-reaching implications for women and girls. The subjugation of a married girl or woman to her mother-in-law was often broken and her husband no longer felt under pressure from his family (particularly from his elder brothers) to control his wife and daughters as they wanted him to. There had already been a few instances where a husband had disliked his family's treatment of his wife and so had broken with them by building a separate home and moving away. But this had been an extreme measure to take: the husband lost access to his livelihood (the family land), to any claim on the family for support and to his share in inheritance. A man could only undertake this in extreme circumstances and where he felt confident he could support his wife and children entirely on his own, for example if he returned from work in the Gulf with some savings.

[My grandfather] used to beat my mother every day. But my mother never complained to our father, because she thought our grandfather was the elder and had the right to beat her. My father ... knew what was going on at home, though, so he decided to separate his family, so that we could live without being tortured by our grandfather. ... It was a wonderful feeling for us to be in a separate family. Our mother was finally at ease, after long struggles in her life.

(Young married woman, FGD)

Several women spoke of how moving to Peshawar had made it easier to separate from the extended family, and how this transformed their relationships with their husbands. Their husbands were no longer spending all their time with their brothers and (male) relatives but were instead free to talk to them, and several women indicated that domestic violence had reduced. Although men remained the decision-makers, many wives spoke of now being able to discuss things with their husbands, e.g. about their children. It was clear from interviews with men that they were very aware of their wives' feelings on many subjects, and for many this was an important consideration in decision-making. The older woman in a household had always benefited from a particular status, with some say in the running of a household. Because displacement fragmented families' joint living arrangements, it meant that far more women are now 'the eldest woman' in their households.

This change was about more than women acquiring a voice – for many, it was a transformation in the relationship between a man and wife, as they became co-parents and, in some cases, co-providers for their families.

Right after we were displaced to Peshawar, I pushed my husband for us to live in a separate house, because I was tired of being abused by my mother-in-law. ... I am now living alone with my husband. I am very happy because I finally had a chance to develop an understanding with my husband, we've had an opportunity to get to know each other properly.
(Married woman)

After we started living separately, we saw such a change in how men behaved. In the village, our fathers would never ask about us or about our mothers. Living in the [extended] family, it wasn't done to take an interest in children or your wife. But when we came here, living now as a separate family, our father takes an interest in our lives. He takes care of us. We do miss our big house and the extended family, but we are so happy to live separately.
(FGD, adolescent girl)

The implications of a change from a joint family economy went further. Before displacement, a girl on marriage was given a number of tasks to support the family; and her boy-husband might contribute some labour to the family farming enterprises, but he had no overall burden of responsibility to keep a household. After displacement, a boy would find it much harder to marry without being able to care economically for his wife and, very shortly after, children. After just a few years of displacement it was already seen that both boys and girls were marrying at a slightly older age. (This study cannot be used to quantify such changes, but many reports suggested that marrying age was about two to three years older for both boys and girls.)

As discussed above, apart from the demands of the JFS, the role of women and girls within the family sphere had been shaped by a combination of the external economic realities and infrastructure (e.g. needs to collect water and firewood); social rules on their mobility; and the cultural norms of what was appropriate and valued for both men and women. Each of these factors was turned on its head by displacement. A woman no longer had to work in the fields or collect fodder for livestock – they had lost their land and livestock, and women could not move out of the

house freely to work in other ways. The hot climate of Peshawar meant that heating was not needed, and gas was available for cooking so females did not need to spend the day collecting firewood. Piped water was available near the house, and it was now the responsibility of boys to collect it as women were not able to move outside the house without a burqa.

These changes resulted in women having time on their hands but few ways to occupy it. This was not entirely positive. Most women complained that they had become lazy and overweight, that they were no longer strong and healthy as they used to be (from the hard physical activity of agricultural work, collecting water and firewood), that they were often bored, and they missed the social life of being able to visit their relatives nearby. On the other hand, girls now had time to go to school and women or older girls had time to engage in their own economic projects, even if the opportunities to do so were very constrained.

This increase in time has also brought about another change in women's roles: they are now more active as mothers.

Women [in Peshawar] take care of the home and also look after their children. Some of them also go out to work. We were very surprised at first, because it was so new for us. We always saw our mothers working, but they took care of their animals, not their children. They never cared for us the way they cared for animals. But mothers here work as well, and still take interest in their children. This is very good for a child's upbringing.
(Adolescent girl, FGD)

3.3 Livelihoods

Before displacement, women had no independent livelihoods: no independent ownership of productive assets; no independent income sources; no ability to spend money directly; and very little say, if any, in decisions of the joint family. They did have a major role in supporting the economic production of the family, although, apart from the elder woman of the family, no ability to choose what activities they engaged in.

Men remain as heads of household, including in the sense that they are expected to be the main breadwinners for their families. The woman's domain remains the domestic one. Post-displacement poverty is certainly a driver for women to take on their

own income-generating activities, because many men struggle to earn enough to keep their families. Change for women was possible because of the simultaneous changes in drivers and constraints that shaped social norms and this is true of women's working patterns too. The economic incentive alone might not have been enough for everyone, but because displacement fragmented their tightly closed communities, people were to some extent liberated from constricting peer pressure.

We are happy here because there is no backbiting and taunting if a woman works to support her family.
(FGD 2:1, old men)

There is no backbiting here and there is less interference in other people's lives. If I had worked in Bara, people would have made my life hell over it.
(Young married woman)

Economic pressure for women to work could be high. Rent was typically around PKR 5,000 per month: the typical daily wage was just PKR 500. An archetypal household or family unit has one or more male breadwinner, one or more women looking after the domestic sphere and children going to school or, in the case of daughters, helping their mothers. However, many households did not follow this pattern. Drug addiction had been very high pre-displacement as drugs were the main cash crop: availability was high, there was no direct economic cost and there was a degree of social acceptance. Several interviewees reported that drug use had gone down since displacement, and many women said that one of the reasons that they preferred living in Peshawar District and did not want to return was the lower availability of drugs and their belief that the cost of drugs would lower the risk of addiction. Nevertheless, addiction rates still appear to be high, though it was obviously beyond scope of this study to assess prevalence. Several women interviewed bore the main economic responsibility for their households, because their husbands were unable to earn money due to drug use. In the JFS, the loss of the labour of one adult male would be covered by the contributions of several others together. Many women now bear greater economic responsibility on their shoulders, as a result of the fragmentation of that system (whatever benefits its diminution has also brought) and because of the general loss of family wealth and income.

It would be wrong to portray this increased burden in a solely negative light, for two reasons. First, the

interests of women and their husbands should, of course, not be presented as in simple opposition to each other. Many women spoke positively of their ability to help their husbands and families, especially where they saw that their husbands were also working as hard as they could to support their families. Despite the overall characterisation of the community as patriarchal and deeply unequal to women, this does not exclude positive relationships between individual husbands and wives. Second, some women spoke of the change in the way in which they were regarded within their families due to the contributions that they were making. The same women had always been making an economic contribution to their family – before displacement they gave their labour in the fields and were responsible for collecting fodder for the family livestock. However, these fields and livestock were controlled by men and were not seen as women’s enterprises. Because all sales and production were controlled by men, women did not directly bring in money to the family. Their work was seen as a duty to assist in the enterprises of the husbands or their families (i.e. in-laws). Some women now took on income-generating activities in which men were not at all involved. Instead of handing over their labour to their husbands (or families), they were handing over the money that their labour had earned. Although in many ways this change in women’s economic contribution was one of perception, it has had huge implications for some women.

I keep the money I earn locked in a box in my room. Now I take the decisions at my home. Even my son listens to me. When I was first married, my husband treated me really badly ... I do not have teeth in my mouth, because my husband beat me so badly ... but unlike in the village, he cannot rule and abuse me anymore ... I am now earning and having money, and he knows it.

(Woman, 55 years old)

Despite this, women’s economic life remains highly restricted. The main constraint on women’s income generation was purdah. Women were now allowed out of the home without a male escort, but only when covered in a burqa and to a limited number of places, such as a market for clothes, or hospital. Most people still regarded it as wrong for a woman to work somewhere with other men or for a woman to move freely outside the home. Behaviour continues to be controlled by the same fear as before, the threat

to a girl’s marriageability: ‘We can’t allow our girls to have jobs because in our society it is considered bad for a female to work. Those girls are not accepted for marriages’.

Women were allowed to engage in very few activities. One or two worked as domestic servants but, because of their lack of education, almost the only opportunity available for women to earn money from within their homes was by sewing. This limited their potential earnings and, although it was an expressed aspiration of many women and girls to learn sewing, the lack of alternative opportunities also meant that there was a limit to the number of women able to earn money.

One or two professions were regarded by some as acceptable and indeed desirable for women. These including teaching (at a girls-only school), working as a doctor (for women patients) and one or two young men or adolescents also included work as a civil servant as a profession they would allow their wives to take up. However, all of these opportunities require a high degree of education, a level almost totally lacking among the IDPs. Apart from any ongoing restrictions on post-primary education, it will take several more years for any girls who started their education after displacement to reach higher education. (And as discussed above, only a very few will as yet be able to enjoy such opportunities.)

Very few other opportunities are currently possible, with the strict code of purdah as currently practised (see below). It is possible for some women to run small kiosks from a window in their homes opening out on to the street. Such kiosks are only frequented by female clients or children and so are acceptable; but this means that potential takings are relatively small, since major purchases are still made by men.

Apart from the limitations imposed by purdah and a lack of education, there may be a degree to which opportunities are constrained by a limited vision of what is possible. Women themselves spoke of little apart from sewing, and most of the aid projects that they spoke about had also focused on sewing.²³ Some women have access to mobile smartphones, and thus internet access (see Section 3.6) and this could potentially open up a whole area of at-home employment as girls and women gain in education. However, this does not appear to feature either in women’s awareness or in the interventions of the aid agencies they spoke about.

23 This study was not designed to examine aid interventions, and organisations working for women’s economic empowerment were not interviewed.

3.4 Education

By all accounts, the changes in attitudes towards girls' schooling took place very quickly, within just a couple of years. From the interviews it seems to be the case that most girls, though not a large majority, now attend school at least until grade five (typically the age when they reach puberty after which they tend to be married quickly). Girls are not allowed to attend school after marriage, but because betrothal takes place slightly later, far more girls are at least able to reach this level. In a few places girls are still limited by the availability of girls only primary schools, but this is less common than before displacement. Despite the huge change in girls' education, gender equality has not been achieved. The revolution in attitudes to education in general has been just as strong, if not stronger, regarding boys, most of whom now attend school. Many see education as their way to progress in life and, although rare for girls, most boys were able to attend secondary school. State education is free, but the quality of education in these schools is lower than private schools. Most families cannot afford to pay for schooling, but some that could afford to send their boys to private schools were doing so; but those same families were sending their daughters to a local state school. Boys were thus receiving both more years of schooling and, in some cases, higher quality education.

Both our sons are studying in a [fee-paying] private school, and our daughter is studying in a [free] government school. We can't pay fees for a private school for our daughter. We have to find a way to pay the fees for our sons, because they will support us in the future. Our daughter, though, will get married one day and will join another family.
(Woman, 25 years old)

The economic logic that made it rational to spend resources on sons rather than daughters has not entirely changed. Nonetheless, the increasing possibility of girls' schooling and its growing place in discussions within families have been of enormous consequence, as discussed further below. The reasons given by interviewees for this change in attitude reflect the cultural, economic, social and religious reasons for constraints in girls' education pre-displacement (as detailed above).

The overall neutral or negative attitude to education had almost totally disappeared, even among the elderly. Again, several factors helped bring about this broad change. IDPs were now living outside FATA, in territory governed by the laws of Pakistan and under

the authority of the forces of law and order. This change, combined with the move away from their lands towards engaging in a wage economy, mean that wealth and power no longer come from the ability to hold on to land through force of arms. It was now less of a worry that education would make a person appear weak; instead, the ability to integrate into and advance in the new community was enhanced by literacy and the respect given to education.

The very rapid change in attitude to education was largely facilitated by the influence on the displaced families of the practice of the host community.

We saw that here children go to school, so we also sent our children to school.
(Young man)

Schooling for girls, at least to primary level, was normal in the areas around Peshawar. In other situations, it has been noted how displaced populations often work hard to maintain their culture in the face of a foreign host community, resisting assimilation, through which they fear loss of identity. However, the Afridi IDPs are staying with a host community that are from their own culture, and even made up of their own relatives. It is striking how many men, in particular, spoke about having their eyes opened when they saw how their relatives in the peri-urban areas lived, particularly in relation to education for girls and marriage.

Overall, the changing economic circumstances brought about by the move to a peri-urban economy meant that education is now highly prized for boys by everyone we spoke to, young and old, men and women alike. Many boys expressed aspirations to become educated and get professional jobs, e.g. as doctors or engineers. Education is perceived as the root to economic advancement, replacing the economic advantage of being 'strong' (hence preferably uneducated) to hold on to productive assets. More than one adolescent boy explicitly used the language of competing in association with education.

When we have children, we want them all, boys and girls, to study and get government jobs or private jobs like other people. In order to keep up with the competition in this world, you have to become like everyone else.
(Adolescent boy)

Nowadays, people don't mind their girls studying. Before they would have taunted her and looked down on her, education was seen

*as the teaching of Angreerz ('the white man').
... Now everyone knows the importance of
education, they also want to get qualified so
they can compete in society.*
(Adolescent boy)

Many men and boys, and almost all women and girls, saw a value in girls receiving at least some basic primary education. The economic incentive for girls to have primary education is more difficult to pinpoint. Certainly, many spoke of the advantages for women and girls being able to read and write so that they could negotiate their way around a city in which they were to some extent able to move unaccompanied by men (though still with strict restrictions, see Section 3.5).

The overall change in attitude to education, and the recognition of how much the life of a married woman has changed due to displacement, appears to have brought an appreciation of the value of some education for girls before they marry. Some adolescent boys were very clear that they would prefer to marry a well-educated girl, though others said that they could not allow a future wife outside the home and were perhaps fearful that education would threaten their own status. Although socially unacceptable for a well-educated girl to marry a man less educated than herself, there were suggestions that an educated girl could attract a higher quality husband. Well-educated, professional husbands are attractive economically and were also regarded as treating their wives better. It is again striking how far change can occur when several interacting factors shift simultaneously: a strategy of allowing a daughter some education in order to attract a better marriage partner in turn made very early betrothal less likely.

Very few interviewees (limited to a few older men) expressed any idea that secular education was in any way foreign or wrong. As mentioned, most people openly admitted that they had changed their mind and that they had now learned the value of education, and that when the *Maliks* had opposed it, it had been for their own interests.

Two more factors were critical in facilitating the rapid change. As discussed, gender norms had been strictly maintained before displacement, by a combination of open criticism or contempt ('backbiting'), by threats to the honour of the family and even in

extreme cases by orders of the *jirga* that included capital punishment ('honour killing'²⁴). The power of this social condemnation, in a small, closed and isolated community, is evidenced by the number of interviewees and FGD participants who brought it up in conversation. The fragmented family system post-displacement allowed individual men to make their own decisions and removed constraints in listening to their wives or daughters, indirectly giving many women a greater voice. Several men spoke of being happy that they were now able to do what they had always wished and give their daughters an education. This also played out at a wider, societal level, because previously tightknit communities became spread out across several villages as men travelled into town to work and were mixing to some degree with their host community. The social pressure to keep the cultural rules from Khyber Agency became diluted. Not everyone wanted to change, but many of those who did – from a combination of changed incentives, changed opportunities, learning from their relatives, etc. – were able to do so.

Second, there was a virtuous circle, as (some) women began to feel they had more voice, and felt able to take part in the decision to educate their daughters. What this woman said is revealing:

*I did not have any education whereas my
brother studied up to eighth grade. I felt the
discrimination, so when I had daughters I
enrolled them in schools.*
(Old woman)

She did not say that she asked her husband to send the girls to school: she quite naturally and unthinkingly referred to it as a decision that she had taken.

3.4.1 Religious education

There is sometimes a preconception in the West that religious, Islamic education is, in some senses, in opposition to secular ('Western') education, or at least, that it is in such a different dimension that it is not education in the same sense at all. The evidence from the study was that religious education was usually seen as an alternative form of education. Many girls who could not go to school did, at least, attend madrassa in Peshawar, which had not been widely available before displacement. This education showed a clear impact in raising the awareness of girls

24 E.g. 'A teenage girl was reportedly murdered by her relatives allegedly on the orders of a tribal *jirga* in Khyber Agency on Friday', *Dawn Newspaper*, 30 June 2017.

and young women about their rights, as enshrined in Islamic law.²⁵

The concept of full equality in women's rights was not present in the religious law being taught at madrassas. Nevertheless, they found revolutionary the notion of women as individuals with some rights, and as people whose welfare and respect mattered; perhaps most significantly, girls and women started to talk about their right to make claims on men. The three key areas that women and girls brought up were inheritance, marriage and bride price. They were now taught that Islamic law gives daughters a share of the inheritance of their parents: although this was not an equal share (it is one half of that given to sons), previously women in Khyber Agency had been given no inheritance rights. The importance of inheritance may well go beyond the actual value of what they would receive: it fundamentally changes the cultural notion of property and assets as a male-only domain.

The madrasa education also taught girls that forced marriage – including all child marriage – was against Islamic law. It would be wrong to exaggerate the extent to which this had brought about changed practice: a few groups and interviews with girls raised this as something vital they had learned, rather than recounting many success stories of challenging forced marriages. However, as one of several factors leading to changes in marriage, it may well help girls (and their mothers) if they can call on a code to which their parents subscribe. It may also help fathers to resist the social condemnation that would have accompanied a refusal of a marriage offer for their very young daughters from close relatives.

3.5 Marriage

We have identified the institution of marriage as one of the main ways in which girls' rights were violated and (for many) their lives forced into subjugation and misery. Changes in formal arrangements around marriage have perhaps not been as sudden or as dramatic as those regarding girls' education, but nonetheless there are clear signs of shifts in several of the underlying attitudes and practices that shaped marriage norms. These will be dealt with in turn, looking at the changes which are being seen and how changes in the overall situation of Afridi IDPs has made those changes possible.

3.5.1 Marriage partners

Previously, almost all marriage was contracted between close relatives, often first cousins, and there was a deep suspicion of marrying into families from outside the community. This practice has not disappeared, but more girls are marrying outside the very close family circle, as a result of two changes. First, IDPs' wider families may now be more dispersed, making it harder to find cousins and arrange marriages. This also may be linked to the role of feuds in determining life. Marriages were often linked to feuds (and to the threat of feud if a marriage offer, *gagh*, were rejected) but, as discussed above, this feud culture is weakening in displacement for several reasons.

All IDP families are now also exposed to a much wider community than previously. Many of the marriages that have taken place since displacement were already contracted, so change is taking some time, but it appears that there is a widening of the circle within which families look for partners for their children. In a few cases, this has been with girls from families from outside the immediate community, i.e. girls from families living in Peshawar, but none were found of girls being married to boys from outside the community. The change, limited as it is, has been facilitated by the greater voice that some children, especially boys, are claiming in relation to their own marriages, even though these remain a minority.

I argued many times at home. My father said that they had not even been asked when they got married. So, I replied that when he got married it was the 80s, and now it's the modern age. I am now engaged to a girl from Peshawar.
(FGD 4:3, adolescent boy)

This young man was an exception, though: several others in the group discussion said that their fathers had already chosen brides for them. 'There is no question asked. This has always been the way. We have to marry someone. It's better to marry according to your parents' will.' Some boys were showing a preference for girls with some education, and this too could be a factor in widening the scope of potential marriage partners to those outside the narrow circle. As girls became more educated, they were also able to attract potential matches from a wider circle.

Education is the fundamental part of life nowadays. No one prefers to marry an uneducated girl.
(FGD, young married men)

25 For a fuller discussion on contradictions between Islamic law and the Paktunwali code, including inheritance, consent in marriage and accusations of immodesty, see Qadeer (2014).

If your wife is educated, then all your coming generation will be educated.
(FGD, young married men)

Before displacement, neither girls nor boys were asked for their consent to the marriages arranged by their fathers. Broadly speaking this is still largely the case, but some clear cracks are showing. Some boys are claiming a right to a say in their marriages; many mothers too are becoming more important players in decisions; and some specific marriage practices are changing. Change will take some time to be felt, however, especially because many betrothals were arranged when girls were very young, and, whatever changes in attitude are taking place, if the father has already given his word on a marriage, this cannot be broken. One 17-year-old girl had been promised at birth in an exchange marriage (*adal badal*) with a man who has since had an accident and become paralysed. There is no way for her to avoid going through with the marriage. This voice of an uneducated and illiterate adolescent is worth hearing in full:

I do not know how I will raise my children alone with a paralysed man. My family doesn't care about any of that, though, because my brother [with whom she was exchanged in marriage] is very happy with his wife and children. My family traditions have spoiled my life and I can do nothing about it. My life has been sacrificed on the rules of my family's culture. Because of these so-called cultural traditions, I wasn't allowed to have any worldly education. If I were educated, I could take my own decisions about my life, but as I am, I can't do anything. I am at the mercy of my family – that is, my father and brother. And later on my owner will be the husband to whom I will be married.

I am uneducated but I am a normal human being. I could have received another good [marriage] proposal from any good family, but my father decided my fate when I was born. I was at an age to be playing with dolls, not to be swapped for my brother's bride. ... No one cares except my mother. I can only shed my tears in front of her, but she is also afraid of my

father, because she has no right to go against the decision of her husband.

Because I am not educated, I can't decide my own future for myself, but I will not let this happen with my daughters. I will educate them, so that they can have the possibility to make their own decisions about their lives. They won't have to obey the decisions of their elders and parents. I want to see my daughters self-sufficient and empowered. I want my children to get an education – girls and boys – so that both can take a stand for themselves. ... And I will not have a dozen children. You shouldn't have more children than you can raise easily and look after properly.

Swara (or offering a girl to an aggrieved family as a peace offering or compensation to end a feud) was another pre-displacement practice, but everyone spoke of this in the past tense, and it seems that it is no longer practised at all. It is unclear whether it had entirely died out before displacement or whether this played a part in bringing about its total demise.

3.5.2 Early marriage

As discussed, very early marriage appears to be diminishing, with marriages now tending to take place when girls and boys are slightly older.²⁶ It would be wrong to paint too clear a picture of the situation though: some interviewees spoke of significant changes in marriage, while others were categorical that things had remained the same. There is no reason to believe that both views are not accurate within their respective social spheres.

Some women and girls were starting to see both child betrothal and child marriage as a consent issue as a result of the religious education that they had started to receive. They had clearly been taught that Islamic law demanded that marriage could only be between a consenting man and woman; since a child was not old enough either to offer informed consent or to have the power to make her lack of consent known, both child betrothal and early marriage were against *sharia*.²⁷

After displacement, some girls have even broken off engagements, arguing with their parents that

26 Early marriage remains fairly common in other parts of Pakistan, but there has a trend towards later marriage taking place for the past 50 years or more. Between 1950 and 1998, the average age of a girl on marriage in Pakistan rose from 16 to 22 (Sathar and Kiani, 1998). However, in 2014, 15% of girls across Pakistan were still married before they reached 15 (Plan International, 2015).

27 It was unfortunately beyond the scope of this study to interview religious teachers and to investigate in proper detail the full role played by religion and Islamic law in marriage in Pakistan. Some religious elites disagree with the interpretation given by the IDPs, and the Council of Islamic Ideology, the constitutional body responsible for giving legal advice on Islamic issues to the government and Parliament, recently forced the withdrawal of a Bill outlawing child marriage on the grounds that it was 'un-Islamic' and 'blasphemous'.

according to Islamic Sharia it is their choice who to marry, and they did not want to marry the person who had been chosen for them.
(Married woman)

Although this argument was offered by both women and girls, it does not appear to be the driver of the current trend, and indeed consent and child marriage are not always linked.

There is still no consent taken from the girls about a marriage proposal, but, yes, there is decrease in childhood engagements.
(Old woman, FGD)

It is more likely that the overall slow change in attitudes is allowing women and girls to speak openly in such terms. If this continues, it may, in future, become a force accelerating the change in early marriage.

There does not appear to be any single driver of the change in marriage age, which is affecting both boys and girls. The impact of the weakening of the JFS (meaning that children need to be more independent on marriage) has already been discussed. However,

Box 5: Marriage consent: a diverse picture

'I have told my parents, please don't arrange an engagement for my younger brother until he is old enough, and completes his education. I want them to realise that getting engaged in childhood is wrong. Let children grow up and then decide about their engagement and marriage. My parents have accepted my argument.'

'Boys, especially, are now refusing early marriages.'

'Early marriages are still common. Girls are still not asked for their consent.'

'Now there is a visible decrease in early marriages. Parents are now asking their children before engagement – both girls and boys.'

'There is a practice of early marriages among the Afridi which we dislike. We want to get educated first, but our elders don't allow it.'

'Every person has the right to choose who they marry, a girl has the right to choose too. But only in certain limits.'

several informants linked the change more to an overall broadening of attitudes: wider opportunities for life choices are on the table (especially education), families now discuss things to a greater degree than before and more voices are considered.

Officially, the choice of marriage partner still rests with the father, but the influence of the mother is possibly underappreciated. (Women would be unlikely to speak very openly about their influence over their husbands, since social acceptability relies on such influence being applied discretely and gently, and its use denied.) Several younger informants spoke of being unable to argue directly with their fathers, so they would talk to their mothers instead – implicitly acknowledging their mothers' influence over the decision. Several mothers spoke of what they would or would not accept for their children, again, strongly implying that they believe they have some influence over decisions. This influence appears to be much greater than before, probably linked at least in part to the changes in the JFS discussed above.

It must also be acknowledged that being asked to give consent is not necessarily the same as having a real say over marriage. Before displacement, some informants described a situation where a daughter was not asked at all about a marriage proposal, whereas a son was asked if he consented – but he did not dare refuse his father's wishes. Now, some are describing a situation where a son is often asked his opinion: some feel it right to accept anyway, some feel they can give a genuine opinion. Girls are now starting to be asked, but 'she would be considered shameless if she didn't agree' (interviewee, 15-year-old girl).

3.5.3 Bride price

Many interviewees spoke of holding on to their culture unchanged. This was also raised specifically in regard to marriage, because the local Peshawar custom is for dowry (paid by the bride's family) and not for bride price (paid to the bride's family). The Afridi IDPs are, on the whole, maintaining this practice but some changes are taking place. Importantly, for women, exchange marriages (*adal badal*) are decreasing. As discussed above, these are a lifelong potential threat to women, making them hostage to the perceptions of their in-laws of their sister-in-law's behaviour, and this view was widely shared by men and women alike. This is significant, as it implicitly recognises that the welfare of a girl on consequence marriage is in itself of some value.

The study was not able to get such a clear picture regarding trends in bride price. Women and girls were

very vocal and articulate in condemning the system, which seems to be a recent development, the fruit of their expanded horizons. Older women reported that ‘even our girls themselves say that we shouldn’t take bride price from the groom’s family. They say that it’s like you are selling us’, evidence that this relates to changes in the overall family dynamic, with young people able to talk more freely to parents, and women to men. In the face of this ever-increasing open hostility, it is possible that the future will see a major change in bride price as currently practised.

3.6 Movement and communication

The limits of freedom of movement for women, described in Section 2.4, had been predominantly set by the interaction of four factors: the requirements of purdah; patterns of settlement, where small populations of relatives lived in close proximity but largely isolated from any others; the economic and practical needs of the family (seen most clearly when men negotiated with the Islamist militants around the use of the burqa), with the demand for female labour in the fields and forests around their homes; and the fact that there was nowhere for women to go without going far. The first of these four factors has remained largely unchanged since displacement: culturally, the host community is similar in this regard and the same principles continue to apply. However, changes to the other three factors have meant that the application of these same principles have led to very different rules on women’s and girls’ freedom of movement in the host communities, which the displaced Afridi now also follow.

Population density is much higher and villages much bigger in Peshawar. Displaced Afridi families no longer live surrounded only by their family members and the economic necessity for women to move outside has also disappeared, because, as discussed, all those outside tasks have disappeared. Movement outside the home is now much more limited.

Even with the burqa, excuses are found to rationalise why women are not allowed to move alone:

‘Women can’t visit markets, or go shopping. There are many reasons for that. One is the security issue, blasts happen all the time. Second, women are not that literate. So, they can’t go alone.’
(Adolescent boys, FGD)

This explanation is striking for two reasons. First, it is clearly not rational (illiterate men are not banned from going to markets). Second, the fact that it was offered demonstrates how far men realise that gender discrimination has to be given such pseudo-rational cover. It is difficult to know how this can be reconciled to the fact that most local women among whom they are living have more freedom to move to markets than the women from the displaced Afridi community.

Women have lost a social life – limited as it was pre-displacement. They have also lost their access to the outdoors, which, even if this represented hard physical labour, has been replaced with a large degree of confinement to the home. (Almost all adult women spoke nostalgically of their previous strength and good health from an active outdoor life, even as they complained of the difficulty and unfairness of their workloads.) The psychological impacts of this confinement and the loss of their previous family social networks are not within the capacity of this research.

The same factors have brought about some positive changes in women’s freedom of movement, however, and on balance most of the women interviewed – which, it should be restated, are all from families who had not returned to their previous homes – felt that the positive changes in displacement outweighed those advantages. The burqa is confining but, once protected from the gaze of men, women are alleviated of some of the restrictions on movement beyond the immediate home where non-relatives are absent. The peri-urban areas offer more possibilities for women’s movement. Although they would still not go to the main markets, they now live within easy reach of female-oriented markets, such as those for clothes, and more women had some independent income that they could spend there. Health services are now easily accessible by public transport or short taxi ride. Peshawar city boasts women-only parks, which permit women to move around and socialise freely, and though such facilities did not exist in any of the peri-urban villages or suburbs that formed part of this study, one NGO had created indoor centres for women to receive training and advice. (These centres were only run as part of a specific short-term aid project, though, and none were intended to have any longer-term existence.) Coupled with these changes, because women are no longer surrounded by their male relatives, meaning that there are fewer possibilities for men to accompany their women if they need to move, more women are now allowed to travel unaccompanied by males. They would still not move alone – culturally, even a woman who worked in Peshawar among men would not choose

to go to the hospital without an escort²⁸ – but could be accompanied by an elder woman. On balance, it might be argued that practically women enjoyed less freedom of movement than before displacement; but that a deeper shift may have opened up more space for women to think of independent movement, and of enjoying more independent lives.

Life in displacement also offers more possibilities for communication without movement, through television, internet and telephones. Pre-displacement, any television would be in the *burja*, the male-only domain. Now it is widely accessible, with perhaps half of all IDP homes having a TV. In the host community, women's access to TV is high, and, though not all IDP women are able to watch, many are. It is hard

to imagine quite how liberating this must have been for women from isolated communities. For the first time for many women, their access to information and ideas is not controlled through men. Many children are not allowed to watch television, but some have phones and can secretly watch films on these. Access to phones is not equal: boys are more likely to be allowed to use them, as there is a fear that girls may use them to communicate with boys. The situation for women varies: some must ask permission from their husbands to use their phone, others have less restricted access. Receiving a call would always be a matter of more concern than making a call. Nonetheless, even limited access for some women in the community represents a communication and information revolution for IDP women as a whole.

28 It may be tempting to argue that this is not a true choice of women, but rather a case of 'internalised discrimination' where women have been conditioned by cultural pressure to choose to accept restrictions, perhaps not even realising the nature of the discrimination. However, life is rarely so simply defined. How should we interpret the actions of a policewoman in the study area, the friend of one of the study team, who, by her own choice, would not go to a health centre without being escorted by her son or younger brother? 'I am the one who protects all the citizens here,' she would joke, 'but I still take this young boy to protect me!'

4 Return and the future

The study population from Khyber Agency was forcibly displaced by insecurity and military action against militants. The displacement is supposed to be temporary: as is usual in such situations, there is an implicit assumption by those dealing with them that once the specific acute cause of displacement is over, the displaced populations ought to (and will) return home. Ongoing relief assistance (largely, food aid) for IDPs has ended, and grants to assist with return and reconstruction are being progressively made available. As mentioned above, official figures claim that over 80% of all IDPs in KP and FATA had returned home, though there are reasons to treat such figures with caution.

4.1 Return

The first big question is around who will return home and who will stay in the Peshawar District. This study only interviewed people who had not (yet) returned home from displacement and so they are not a representative sample, at least on this issue. The majority of people that we spoke to were not looking to return, though a sizeable minority, and perhaps half of the men, did regard return as a future option. It is difficult to interpret an expressed desire to return, accompanied with raising reasons to delay: is the wish to return in such cases genuine – or perhaps a more accurate framing would be, is return in such cases likely?

For most people, the incentive to return was economic. People were struggling to pay for rent and food in displacement, and yet they owned fertile agricultural land and had owned big houses. A few people wanted to return because they were missing the life there – the community (though only males spoke of this), or life in nature, with fresh air, a good climate and clean water (both men and women). Some, particularly women and the elderly, accepted that they might have to return because the decision would be taken by other members in their families. Some men, too, though, acknowledged that their wives would not want to return.

In Bara there was an appreciation that services were now much better than they had been and that it was now possible to enjoy a good life back home.

There is now a good network of roads to our village. We have schools, colleges and hospitals. Before displacement, we had no hospitals and only a few schools, where the education was poor – not comparable to what you get in Peshawar.

(Married man, aged 22)

Of those who expressed a vague preference for returning, most qualified this immediately, saying that return would not yet be possible, because they had no means to rebuild their lives there. Most said that their houses had been completely destroyed and they did not have the resources to rebuild them. The assistance offered by the government was regarded as hopelessly insufficient for this. Money was not the only difficulty in rebuilding. The houses they left had been built up over generations and could not quickly be replaced. The construction season, especially in the higher altitude of Tirah, is short, and the other demands on returnees' time are huge. Their fields have become overgrown and the labour required to produce food quickly will leave little time for rebuilding large houses. The difficulty of feeding a family during the period of preparing the land, planting and harvesting is already a major constraint on return. The financial assistance is not sufficient even for materials, let alone for paying builders to work for those who need to farm.

A majority of interviewees felt that the education opportunities for themselves and their children in Peshawar were reason enough to prefer to remain. Some from Bara said that if schools were built, and schools for girls were specifically mentioned by some, then they would look forward to returning. The availability of health services in Peshawar was another reason for wanting to stay. Some women also mentioned the advantages of living with basic utilities, which had reduced the burden on them considerably. Some spoke simply of having adapted to a different way of life, and not wanting to go back to the old way. Older people rarely spoke of this for themselves, but did talk of how life had changed for their children

and grandchildren, that they had become used to a life with mobile phones, facilities and opportunities, and would not want to return. Those now dependent on their children recognised that decision-making had passed to those who are supporting them, and even if they wished to return, they might not be able to do so.

It was clear that there was a role for women in the decision to return or stay. This was seen in two ways. Most men spoke as if it would be their decision, but many mentioned the preferences of their wives, and had clearly taken this into consideration:

Our women don't want to go back because they have facilities here, like hospitals, electricity, gas and water at home. ... They can contact relatives on mobile phones and travel easily with vehicles. They are getting empowered here.
(Old man)

Most women also spoke in terms of what they wanted for their future, with very few speaking in terms of following whatever their husbands decided. Some talked of telling their husbands what they preferred; others simply spoke of the desire to stay, apparently taking it for granted that they would be able to do so; and a few women even said that they would simply not accept a decision to return even if their husband wanted this.

I want my son to go to school and get an education. I would like to stay in Peshawar, even if I had chance to go back to my village. I will not agree to go back, because here I have facilities like school, electricity, hospitals. I want my children to have the same facilities, so I have decided to stay here in future.
(Married woman)

I want to stay here, but I will definitely make visits [to Bara] from time to time. That is my home, where I am from. And I would rather spend summers there, as it is hot in Peshawar, but cool there.
(Young married woman)

From everything that we heard, from old and young, from men and women, it would have been unthinkable for most women to have spoken in this way before displacement.

4.2 Family splitting

One way of dealing with the competing demands of short-term economics (the need to gain income from the land assets owned in the village) and of the longer term (opportunities for advancement through education) or the need to be able to access health services, is for different members of an extended family to live in different places. Family splitting is normal among displaced populations and it is a common strategy for progressive return. However, in this case, something other than a temporary coping arrangement seems to be at play. Several interviewees spoke of the likelihood that in future some family members may return to farm, while others would remain in Peshawar District, especially children (and their carers) who would be able to continue with schooling. It was common previously for some men in the joint family to go away to earn money, e.g. to the Gulf, and some suggested that movement to the home village could be similar to this. Women were far more likely to suggest that they would stay while other family members returned.

4.3 What they are returning to

Decisions on whether to return, and what kind of life to rebuild if return is chosen, would have to consider the nature of the place to which they are returning. Many spoke of the physical change in their villages – the destroyed houses, abandoned fields – and how this would make return more difficult. Others, especially in Bara, spoke of improved services since they lived there before, and how this would facilitate return. However, none of our interviewees engaged with the bigger question of how life in Khyber Agency was likely to change in the coming years. Any analysis of the likely future situation for IDP women must not only consider whether they return home, but also, should they go back, the likely changes that will occur to the places that they return to.

It is difficult to imagine how pre-displacement life can be recreated – for reasons internal and external to Afridi society. For example, it is unclear how the JFS will be re-established without the short-term availability of large extended houses. There will be certainly many who try to re-establish it, particularly those who previously held power in this arrangement. However, having had a taste for life in smaller family units, it is possible that many women – and some men – will find greater freedom in continuing in this way.

From the external perspective, major changes are taking place in the governance of Khyber Agency and its infrastructure, which are likely to lead to transformations in livelihoods, society more generally and how families live together. Life was shaped by a culture that had grown up in a large degree of isolation, and which was adapted to marginalisation though an extreme and jealously guarded self-sufficiency. The government is now planning to end the previous situation of a lack of externally imposed law, the absence of external judicial institutions and the unavailability of basic services and utilities. It is planned that FATA, including Khyber Agency, is about to be incorporated into KP Province in some way.²⁹ It is not yet clear exactly what will replace rule under the Frontier Crimes Regulations. A proposed Rewaj Act will give traditional customs legal status and so could mean relatively little change in practice. (*Rewaj* means customs or traditions. Discussion of the Rewaj Act and subsequent proposals for FATA reform are beyond the scope of this paper, but should be of central concern for anyone interested in the future rights and welfare of women in FATA.)

Debate is taking place and women's voices are trying to make themselves heard and to prevent a continuation of rule by 'elders' (in other words, men), but these topics were not raised by interviewees in the primary research for this study. It is possible that previous power holders, those who would traditionally be part of the *jirga*, would fight to re-establish the power and influence of such old institutions, and it is easy to see how this would be attempted under the banner of 'culture'.³⁰ It is difficult to know how successful this will be, and how much untrammelled power the old institutions will have, but a change in governance does at least provide the opportunity for the state to extend to the local population the protection it has offered other citizens through its laws and through the institutions of justice and law and order, highly imperfect though this has been.

At the same time, the state is seeking to bring the territory more into the mainstream of Pakistani life and the economy. A road is being constructed from Peshawar to Tirah Valley, the furthest part of Khyber Agency, which will cut journey times to around two hours, bringing opportunities for regular public transport and the easy movement of trade. Culturally,

this brings even the most remote parts of Khyber Agency closer to mainstream Pakistani society. This will work in both directions. Not only are citizens living there likely to become culturally and socially closer to society in Peshawar, but there is likely to be greater penetration of mainstream Pakistani society into Khyber Agency. For example, it will probably be easier to recruit teachers and other civil servants to live there.

An unknown dimension on which everything else depends is the future security situation in FATA. Much of the discussion around the economic development and the political mainstreaming of FATA seems to assume that the security situation will remain favourable. This may be much hoped for, but is hard to guarantee. The marginalisation and political isolation of FATA have probably been an important factor in making the spread of militancy possible, and the attempts to bring FATA into the mainstream may owe much to a desire to prevent its return. This cannot be taken for granted. A return to insecurity may have a highly prejudicial effect on political and economic regeneration.

The full impact of all of these changes on the economy, society and on the lives of girls and women is thus impossible to predict, and it is in any case beyond the scope of this study to analyse. Potentially, everything changes. The previous mainstay of the local economy in Tirah was hashish production, and this is already falling under greater restrictions by state authorities. How far the state will try (and succeed) to control drug production remains to be seen, as do the consequences for livelihoods. Already, restrictions were being cited by some interviewees as a reason for not being able to afford to return home. Other economic opportunities are likely to become available, from supplying the urban market of Peshawar with vegetables and other agricultural crops, to the possibilities of (internal) tourism. Quick transport in and out of the area will also open up the possibility of new relationships between people and their land (e.g. greater family splitting while maintaining economic support within the family, the possibility of different age groups living in different places, the ability to manage the cultivation of land back home while spending most of the week near town, etc.).

29 This will be an extremely complex process and it is already a contested one, beyond the scope of this paper to discuss. It is intended that the merger begin by next year, and that Khyber Agency be 'mainstreamed' within five years.

30 There are attempts by some women's forums, such as the newly-formed Qabaili Khor, to ensure that in the future every *jirga* has female representation. See for example 'Tribal women seek representation in *jirga*, reject "Riwaj Act" in FATA reforms', *Tribal Post*, 15 March, and 'Tribal women seek political, social rights in FATA', *Pakistan Forward*, 28 March 2017. It is unfortunately beyond the scope of this paper to look at women's engagement in this political process or changes in their voice at national policy level.

Such economic changes may bring far reaching consequences, which are impossible to predict. If the economic value of land changes, and if there is an ability to exploit that economic value even when living in town, then it is likely that there will be pressures on the land tenure system. There may be pressures for a land market to develop, allowing the concentration of land in the hands of the economically powerful; or the culture of feuds and the aggressive seizing and holding of land though

arms may allow the concentration of land in the hands of those with a different kind of power. It is quite possible that the extent to which laws of the state are imposed on the territory will be influenced to a great degree by the competing interests of different power holders.

The nature of the paths chosen in all of these dimensions will largely shape the possibilities and constraints for further changes in women's roles.

5 Conclusions

5.1 The positive story of displacement

Displacement is often treated as a problem to be solved: displaced people tend to be seen as victims, and an end to displacement as the solution. The IDPs from Bara and Tirah Tehsils certainly suffered an initial catastrophe in their sudden forced displacement. The shock of displacement was intense and overnight they went from being self-sufficient to a position of complete dependence. Most households never reached the degree of comfort that they had enjoyed before. This holds for the IDP population as a whole. However, this inherently relates to men, even if it was presented as a gender-neutral statement about households, as women did not enjoy the same levels of comfort as men pre-displacement.

Women shared the economic difficulties of displacement with men to some degree, but the loss for men was greater for three reasons: women had not shared equally in the benefits of their pre-displacement livelihoods; men still feel the responsibility and difficulties for providing economically for their families; and women have enjoyed far more non-economic benefits from displacement than men have.

The tendency to focus on needs and losses is a natural one for the humanitarian sector. Because the sector prioritises the most urgent and basic needs, it is unsurprising that the focus of assessments – and of most relief aid – is on the material side of life, e.g. livelihoods (or food security) and housing. The narrative that emerges, of difficulties in the lives of IDPs and of IDPs as victims, dominates how displacement is addressed by aid agencies. It is an important narrative, but it is only part of the story. More pertinently, for the reasons outlined above, it is disproportionately the story of only part of the population (a male story, though one with the appearance of a gender-neutral analysis). Although various tools exist within the humanitarian sector for conducting gender analysis, such analyses (if done at all) commonly exist as a complement to the main needs assessments, which are presented as

Box 6: Aid and women in displacement

Although this study is a part of a larger research project looking at how best to use humanitarian aid resources, it tells the lives of people in their own terms, and avoids taking the aid-centric perspective which is so common in studies undertaken by and for the sector. A discussion of the role of aid in the lives of men or women was therefore not initiated by interviewers in talking to the IDPs. Some IDPs chose to bring up the subject. Most people spoke warmly and spontaneously of the help that they had received from family members, especially in the first weeks and months after displacement. Many also mentioned the importance of receiving food assistance from the government, or talked of their difficulties in obtaining the identity card necessary to claim this assistance. Beyond this, little was mentioned. Two people mentioned distributions of various household items. One man spoke of NGOs forming committees and running a cash for work project; and one woman knew of some other women who had benefited from a tailoring project, where an NGO had paid the women for sewing blankets. If aid has played any role in helping address gender inequality, the IDPs appeared to be unaware of it.

being gender-neutral. Even within gender analyses, there is often an expectation that women will be victims in a crisis such as displacement: the language to describe women taking on new roles is often one of ‘increased burden’, and increased vulnerability to sexual violence. Mosel and Jackson’s (2013) study of IDPs and refugees in Peshawar is rare in finding that ‘[s]ome female IDPs reported seeing displacement as a blessing in disguise, allowing them better access to services and education and exposing them to a whole new lifestyle’.

A gender analysis may result in some initiatives for women³¹ but they are limited in the degree to which they influence the dominant narratives of

31 It should not need stating that a true gender analysis is no more about women than it is about men: it is the analysis of how gender shapes people’s lives. Anyone familiar with the humanitarian sector will know, though, that practice is often different.

humanitarian need. The interviews for this study, conducted with men and women, girls and boys, made it clear just how inappropriate it would be to programme any interventions without giving equal consideration to how the lives of the female half of the IDP population have been shaped.

A gender perspective of displacement from Khyber Agency shows that much has improved in the lives of women and girls, and, from a non-economic perspective, for many boys and men too. For women, the physical act of displacement created an opportunity. It enabled them to leave behind a highly exploitative and often cruel way of life, that was maintained by a mesh of interwoven forces that determined the logic of the JFS and supremacy of males. It was also an opportunity to engage in new experiences: to see and learn from different ways of living, to take advantage of education, services and utilities as were available, and to construct a new way of living together, with less exploitation. It has also transformed their relationship as citizens to their state. Women now possess CNICs, giving them a formal independent identity, and they are increasingly seeing state services as their right as citizens.

A cautionary note needs to be maintained in describing the huge advances which women and girls have made since displacement. To some extent the lives of women and girls from FATA have become much more like those of the women and girls from the peri-urban areas of KP Province. If this is a vast improvement, the huge inequality that continues to exist between the sexes in the host community must also be recognised. A central argument of a previous paper from this study programme (Valid Evaluations, 2016) was that one of the key factors shaping vulnerability among the host community was rampant gender inequality.

5.2 The logic of systems

Again and again, this paper has shown how a status quo has been created and maintained through the interaction of many forces, political, cultural, economic, geographic, etc. Systems have a logic, as do patriarchal systems, and the various smaller systems through which women and girls are discriminated against and exploited. Change after displacement did not come about simply because some people wished it to, but because change became possible: new circumstances provided a logic that made their wishes feasible. This was clear from how quickly some

people, including men, embraced the possibility to change. However, change only became possible when the logic behind the status quo ante broke down, when the combination of forces that created and maintained it were themselves changed.

Such a perspective offers limited encouragement. It suggests that isolated external interventions to improve the lives of women and girls may often come to nothing, if they are opposed by strong logic and many interacting forces maintaining a status quo. When trying to raise women's awareness, or to campaign against domestic violence, success may well be limited by the opportunities for change that a logic of the current status quo permits. Women and girls all made it clear that they did not lack awareness that there were suffering discrimination before displacement. What they lacked was the power to do anything about it. On the other hand, it should be encouraging to note that the major victories achieved by women and girls were not dependent on the interventions, priorities or culture of any external agents in trying to change a conservative, traditional society. When the status was disrupted by circumstances, the changes that followed were the result of people's own preferences in what is, in many ways, a highly dynamic society.

Some features of the previous society have remained, some of which may be labelled 'conservative', e.g. purdah. However, if properly considered, these elements do not have to prevent change. Women's economic opportunities are currently highly constrained, as discussed above, because there are so few ways in which they can make money while staying at home. It is possible to support those who are challenging some of the restrictions of purdah, especially when limits on freedom of movement for women are imposed less strictly upon the host community than for IDPs from Khyber Agency. Looking carefully at how women are allowed to move around shows that the religious/cultural norms of purdah can still be respected while engaging in economic activities – as long as women have the necessary skills and if economic arrangements can be consistent with the rules of purdah. The existence of women-only parks in Peshawar demonstrates that it is possible to create public spaces where women can interact and socialise freely, without compromising the norms of their religion/culture. Women-only (indoor) spaces could allow economic activities to take place, and increasing access to mobile phones and internet opens up possibilities for women to engage with clients or colleagues without the risk of coming

into physical contact with men.³² As more girls gain higher levels of education and as women broaden their horizons on the kind of skills they can acquire, new forms of economic activity are likely to emerge if fundamental infrastructure and opportunities are created. Such activities do not need to be determined in advance by an external agency, but there are myriad opportunities for them to support and encourage transformation where they see that the logic of change is already at work.³³

This kind of analysis does not yet appear to be a mainstream approach to gender programming in the humanitarian sector. In its livelihood support for return and recovery, the UN is proud that it includes ‘Empowering women in Bara’ in its gender programming (FAO, 2017) but it is unclear what power analysis underpins such an intervention, since it consists of its standard farmer field school approach to teaching better vegetable farming, only targeted at women. This remains a typical approach to ‘gender programming’ – ensuring that a programme, designed with little or no gender analysis, will have a minimum percentage of beneficiaries who are women. The assessment of returnees to FATA by the Food Security Cluster (FSC, 2015) was in many ways similar, despite a dedicated chapter to gender and protection. Gender concerns were raised regarding the ability to implement standard programmes with women – was it acceptable to give girls at school a take-home food ration? Should a food aid ration be given to men or women? What is the food security of female-headed households?

5.3 Whose culture is it anyway?

People’s right to their own culture is enshrined in international law. It is understandable that governments wish to show respect for the rights of citizens to practise their own cultures; it is even more understandable if those working with people of a different culture – outsiders, such as international agencies – hesitate to support efforts which are deliberately aimed at changing people’s culture.³⁴

The discussions currently taking place in Pakistan with regard to the proposed changes in the status of FATA show just how delicate the balance is between respecting the autonomy of different cultures within Pakistan, and the right or duty of a state to extend its rule of law across its entire territory. People’s way of life includes the way in which men and women relate to each other. Outsiders may hesitate, asking themselves if they have a right to work to change (or undermine) a culture, when they feel that the way in which men and women relate to each other does not conform to their own cultural values.

The testimonies and stories collected for this study answer that question very clearly. It was argued in Section 5.1 that it is a frequent mistake to present a ‘gender-free’ description of how a population live when it is only a description of half the population at most – the part capable of capturing the narrative. The same applies to a description of culture. The subjugation, mistreatment and denial of rights of women in Khyber Agency and, albeit to a lesser extent, in displacement in Peshawar, is not a foreign or Western characterisation of their situation. It was the opinion and analysis of almost every single female spoken to in this study, from the youngest to the oldest. It was also the description of very many of the men and most of the boys spoken to, though they too do not have the power to own the narrative of their people, or to represent them when future relations between the state and the populations of the so-called tribal areas are being argued over. It is no more the culture of Afridi women to be sold by their fathers, deprived of education by their families, beaten by their mothers-in-law and denied any right to complain by their societies than it is the culture of livestock to be kept in confinement, fattened up and slaughtered (the comparison of their situation with livestock is that of Afridi interviewees, not of the authors of this paper). The choice of a minority of a population to use their power to force half of its members to be reduced to their servants cannot and should not be described as the culture of the population as a whole.

32 This does not mean having to accept that rules preventing women and men from coming into contact have to be maintained, but merely that many women will continue to feel themselves bound by such rules for the foreseeable future, and it would be fundamentally wrong to ignore any possibilities for improving these women’s lives in the name of demanding more revolutionary paradigm changes.

33 Valid Evaluations’ forthcoming summative report for the thematic evaluation of MYHF will use this analysis of changing gender relations in its consideration of the potential roles of aid in relation to resilience building in Pakistan, including for displaced populations.

34 See, for example, the discussion in Benjamin and Fancy (1998: 16–17).

5.4 Gender relations in future Afridi society

It may be tempting to imagine that the improvements which women and girls have experienced due to displacement are irreversible, and are the first steps along an inevitable path towards greater equality. That would of course be naive. If most people do have to return home, it is possible to imagine that over time previous norms and power relations will be re-established. Nevertheless, there are also reasons to believe things will not return to exactly as they were.

Wider changes being brought about as a result of the greater integration of FATA into mainstream Pakistan have been discussed above. Hopes for a longer-term improvement in the lives of women and girls rest on four other changes being harder to reverse.

Many people, including several men, spoke of changing their attitudes while they were living with their relatives in Peshawar District. Men often spoke of their regret about previous behaviour or decisions and, perhaps more revealingly, women and girls also spoke about changes in men's behaviour.

I think that life [in Tirah] was wild, but it's now that I am living in Peshawar after displacement that I see that. After being in Peshawar for seven years, I now see that our attitude to our women was wrong.
(51-year-old man)

When you grow up in a certain environment you don't question whether a tradition is right or wrong because you are so used to it. That's how we were. After coming to Peshawar, we saw that we had been living like animals. We didn't know anything about the world we lived in. After seeing Peshawar, we became aware of how much we had been left behind.
(Young woman)

We learned a lot from this society [in Peshawar]. Our men behaved badly in many ways, but this is because it was the culture in our village, so we do not blame them as individuals. After living here, they changed their way of thinking. Now they are not the same. Twenty years ago, men used to beat their wives and think she can be controlled by being beaten. ... after living for several years in Peshawar they now understand that a woman is not just for beating, so [domestic violence] is

slowly disappearing in our men. They also love their wives like people in cities do. Even though we women feel shy when our husbands express their feelings, but still it is good. And better than beating her instead!
(Married woman)

If this is true (though there is always a danger that we take things at face value when people are telling us what they think we want to hear), then it may be hard for people to deliberately re-close their minds when they return home. The greater willingness to educate girls and the small increase of space around consent in marriage, for example, might be reversed over time, but it would demand the powerful logic of an economic and power system to revert to its previous position.

Education is potentially another game changer. More boys are now receiving higher quality and higher levels of education, which is changing their outlook on life and hopes for the future. In some respects inequality in education may be increasing, but higher levels of education for men may become an important factor in helping women to improve their lives. More girls too have received education, and as they grow up they may be able to fight harder for the education of their daughters than previous generations. More fundamentally, both men and women have seen that girls' education can be encouraged, albeit to a limited degree, within a strict Islamic framework. If the various drivers that were seen to promote girls' education continue to exist, this too may be irreversible.

Although females of all age groups tended to share a similar analysis of gender relations and aspirations for the future, adolescent boys had a very different, and more egalitarian, outlook on life from their parents, and young married men had very different perspectives and aspirations for themselves and their children from the older generation. If the current status quo is maintained for a few more years, more of the power holders in families will be from these new generations. Attitudes varied enormously even among boys and young men: while some wanted their wives to go out to work and wanted to marry educated girls, others forced their parents to prevent their sisters from becoming more educated than they were. However, there was a wide acceptance that girls had at least some rights, and very little said about the positive nature of the society which they had left. They had seen a more modern world and they preferred it. For things to revert back to the pre-displacement situation, the perspectives of young people would have to somehow be changed to those of the grandparents.

Attitudes can change over time and, if their economic interests changed due to a move back to the village, their attitudes to power relations might also change. It is not naive, though, to think that future change will lead to a different reality than to that of the past and is highly unlikely to be as bad for women and girls as the past was.

The fourth possible factor would be the most encouraging. Even more than boys' and men's attitudes changing, those of girls and women have been transformed. The next generation of girls talk of equal rights as a 'fact' that their parents were ignorant about. They are quick to analyse discrimination not in terms of culture or religion but of power, as this group of adolescent girls illustrates:

Men didn't allow women to go to school, because they feared that if they started

schooling, they wouldn't work in fields for them. They knew they wouldn't accept their rules, so they kept women suppressed and beat them, so that they would obey their orders without asking any questions.

More and more IDP women are claiming a voice within their marriages and families. Those voices are limited, and, with the exception of some of the younger voices, there remains an implicit acceptance by almost all of a high degree of inequality. Nevertheless, there is a hope that attitudes have changed on a wide enough scale and to a deep enough extent that women will not easily accept the return to the pre-displacement life. Rather, having seen the possibilities of an alternative, they may continue to strive to create new lives and opportunities for themselves and their families.

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(pictured with her young son) and
her family were displaced from
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