Changing gender relations on return from displacement to the newly merged districts of Pakistan

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Acronyms

CNIC	computerised national identity card
DRC	Dispute Resolution Councils
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FCR	Frontier Crimes Regulations
FGD	focus group discussion
GAM	gender with age marker
HPG	Humanitarian Policy Group
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	internally displaced person
JFS	joint family system
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
LRRD	linking relief, rehabilitation and development
NGO	non-governmental organisation
PA	Political Agent
PTM	Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement
SGBV	sexual and gender-based violence
TQK	Takrah Qabailee Khwenday
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Executive summary

In 2017, Levine et al. (2019) studied how the lives of women and girls had changed following forced displacement to Peshawar from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan. A surprisingly positive picture emerged, despite the pervasive discourse in the humanitarian sector that displacement made women more vulnerable.

Several factors worked together to transform gender roles in displacement. For instance, the unavailability of large houses for extended ('joint') families forced people to disperse into smaller family units. This led to stronger personal relationships between husbands and wives, and between fathers and their children, and also freed women from the often oppressive authority of their mothers-in-law and resulted in reduced levels of domestic violence. Living in displacement among their relatives in a society where education for girls was accepted, and where girls and women were freed by the supply of utilities from the onerous tasks of collecting water and firewood, girls began to go to school, women began to earn money and with it found greater voice inside their families. Many did not want to go back to FATA.

By 2019, most families had returned. HPG decided to visit the returned population to see how the lives of men and women had changed, and whether the transformation in gender relations that had occurred in displacement was continued; or whether old hierarchies were being re-established and the advances that women – and men – felt they had made in their lives were being pushed back. This is the first case study in HPG's research project 'How gender roles change in displacement', which is part of the 2019–2021 Integrated Programme on inclusivity and invisibility in humanitarian action.

Overall, across ages, both men and women were happy that the changes in gender relations that had occurred during displacement remained

in return and were even being consolidated. This paper adopted the same approach and qualitative methodology as the previous study, which allowed males and females of different ages to talk individually and in small groups about the changes and continuities in their lives over time and across generations, focusing on what was most important to them. By listening to their stories, we can analyse the changes between genders and how this affects their roles.

Most families had preferred not to re-establish their large extended families, often because of women's preferences – itself an illustration of women's voice that would have been unimaginable before displacement. The old family patriarchs had also not regained their previous power, for several reasons. There had been an economic shift away from the importance of agriculture towards a greater market economy, including for labour: whereas farms had previously been family collectives, under the authority of the family head, wage income was now individualised. This opened up possibilities for some women to earn their own money: before displacement, they had not even been allowed to buy their own personal things. Authority, too, had been dispersed among heads of much smaller family units, and husbands are now choosing to support their wives rather than obey their mothers, transforming the previous intergenerational power structure. Decision-making is thus now being taken by people much closer to those affected, e.g. parents (rather than a more distant relative) deciding about the education of their own children.

The study traces in detail the interplay of the different causes necessary to bring about such changes. For example, increased education for girls going was possible due to decisions made by their parents (itself a result of changed living conditions in displacement) and to fathers seeing their children as individuals. However, this change

was also driven by a growing market economy, a greater need for education and the reduced demand for girls' labour as well as by investment in more girls' schools and women teachers, by people seeing the first role models of professional women, and by the experience of having seen their relatives sending children to school.

Deeper cultural changes are also apparent. Women speak happily of their husbands helping them in the house and being proud to be seen playing with their children, both things previously considered unmanly. Songs sung at weddings to extol the virtues of the groom are now less about bravery and valour in fighting, and more about kindness. The study documents several other changes taking place in the society, including in the institution of marriage, women's freedom of movement and possibly ambiguous developments in the protection of widows.

Underlying political changes have also underpinned this cultural revolution. The old tribal structure, which in FATA had almost total authority, had been weakened with the rise in power of armed militant groups over several years, but displacement brought a much more definite break. The state has now brought the border territories within the mainstream political system for the first time. For example, in recent elections, communities could not discourage women from voting, because all votes at a polling station would be void if the percentage of women's votes fell below a 10% threshold. Even if tribal elders make up much of the personnel of the new Dispute Resolution Councils, which serve to provide local justice, they do so according to rules set by the state. In parallel, a rise in access to more structured Islamic education in displacement, especially for women and girls, created an alternative source of knowledge of Islam and thus a rival source of authority.

Much is still in flux in what are now called the 'newly merged districts'. New opportunities may be opening up for women, accelerated by urbanisation and greater connections between Khyber District and the urban economy and society of Peshawar. Continuation of the current trend may depend to some degree on how far the state plays its role as a provider of personal security, failing which people may possibly revert to the tribal structures; but for the moment, the trend is strong.

This story, summarised very briefly here, has significant lessons for those supporting reconstruction in the newly merged districts, some of which are also relevant globally. An understanding of the ways in which people (men and women) are using and expanding their own agency allows for external support to be directed to support their efforts and to take advantage of the spaces they are opening up for themselves. More broadly, the insights that a study of change opens on a society raise questions as to why they are so rare in the humanitarian sector, particularly in the area of gender, for which no recent studies exist from the newly merged districts.

The study of the changing lives of women in displacement (Levine et al., 2019) showed that listening to people's own stories very quickly dispelled many humanitarian perceptions, such as that displacement made women more vulnerable. This study raises further questions about the ways in which the humanitarian sector struggles to take gender issues seriously, despite years of investment in gender mainstreaming and a suite of tools. The explanation offered by national staff working on gender and in the humanitarian sector in Pakistan was that the hierarchy as a whole did not allow global generic preconceptions to be challenged by staff who had greater understanding of the societies where support was being given. At the very least, the study brings home the need for the aid sectors to seek to understand gender in ways that come to terms with the forces driving changes, rather than just by documenting the differences between the lives of men and women.

1　Introduction

1.1　Background to the study: the need to understand change

Crises can bring about fundamental changes to how people live and how they live together. Humanitarian assistance is usually based on studies of needs taken at a particular point in time. There are several reasons to believe that a dynamic understanding of how communities experience crisis would help in supporting positive change, first and foremost because a study of social change is a study of *agency*. Understanding more about how people affected by crises are trying to improve their lives, and where they face constraints in doing so, opens up ways of supporting people that go beyond providing material relief for their immediate needs.

There is widespread acceptance, in theory at least, that analyses of crises must include an analysis from a gender perspective: understanding how and why changes are occurring in gender roles and gender norms as a result of crises should, therefore, be a high priority in the sector.

HPG is undertaking a two-year research project on changing gender roles in displacement. A study of the relevant literature found that such analysis

of changes in gender roles and norms is yet to happen to any significant extent. The gender perspective most often comes from a protection angle, focusing often on vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Beyond that, several studies have documented a changing workload for women and a few have discussed the disempowerment of men.[1] However, this latter literature mainly documents specific changes (e.g. to women's participation in community decision-making or in household decision-making), and covers only a small minority of humanitarian crises.[2] Far fewer studies have attempted a broad causal analysis of change regarding gender roles or to understand the processes that accelerate and/or constrain change as a result of crisis. HPG's project on changing gender roles in displacement, for which this paper represents the first case study, is a contribution towards filling this gap in our understanding.[3]

In 2017, Valid Evaluations conducted a study, published by HPG, of the impact of displacement on the lives of women and girls in northern Pakistan (Levine et al., 2019). In some parts of the then-Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in Pakistan, entire communities had been displaced suddenly and forcibly to Peshawar District and surrounding areas as a result of conflict.[4] That study presented a strikingly positive

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1　See Holloway et al. (2019) for a comprehensive review of this literature and of the humanitarian sector's engagement with gender issues.

2　E.g. Cardoso et al., 2016; Kaya and Luchtenberg, 2018; Ritchie, 2018.

3　Other case studies are planned for northern Uganda, and on Venezuelan migrants in Colombia.

4　FATA had a distinct colonial-era legal, administrative and political status outside of mainstream Pakistan until the enactment of the Twenty-Fifth Constitutional Amendment in May 2018, which allowed for the region's merger with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province. Before this merger, the former-FATA region was managed through state-appointed Political Agents (PAs), who were under the supervision of the provincial governor of the KP province. The governor, in this capacity, was acting as the agent to the President of Pakistan. The framework also meant that under the colonial-era Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR), the jurisdiction of the country's judiciary did not extend to FATA, with the PA functioning as the judge and jury for their respective tribal agencies. These areas have now been incorporated into KP Province. (See Khan and Samina, 2009; Yousaf et al., 2018; Levine et al., 2019; and Yousaf, 2019 for more detailed discussions).

picture of the impact of displacement for women and girls, contradicting common assertions from within the humanitarian sector that displacement made women and girls more 'vulnerable'. This raised fundamental questions about how the humanitarian sector thinks about gender, assesses the situation of women and of gender relations, and designs interventions accordingly.

Since 2016, many people have been returning to their homes in what was FATA (since 2018 known as the 'newly merged districts'), and a majority of the population has now returned in some form.[5] This offered an opportunity to follow up the previous study in order to examine what happened to changed gender relations when people went home. A study of return serves both to offer a specific analysis of the lives of returnees in northern Pakistan and also to examine broader analytical questions about how change happens, how long it lasts and how power dynamics on the one hand affect change and, on the other, are themselves affected by change. This paper presents the findings and analysis of that study.

1.2 Methodology

This study, a follow-up to Levine et al. (2019), adopted the same approach and qualitative methodology (see ibid.: 2–4). The study allowed people of different ages, from adolescents to the elderly, to talk individually and in small groups about the changes and continuities in their lives over time and across generations, focusing on what was most important to them. Most had been back in Khyber District for less than four years at the time of interviewing.

The research took place in October 2019 in Tirah Valley and Bara in Khyber District, now part of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province, which was formerly known as Khyber Agency when it was part of FATA. These two sub-districts (*Tehsils*) were selected because they were found to be the original homes of the displaced interviewees in the previous study in Peshawar District; this allowed the current study to

re-examine the earlier interviews to understand their lives before and during displacement.

Informants were selected to give the widest possible diversity of viewpoints. This was done in several ways:

- Geographical sampling.
- Sampling by age and gender.
- Targeting specific individuals on the basis of their leadership roles and/or experiences.

Villages were selected to maximise geographic diversity across the two *Tehsils* but studying only those areas where the entire population had been displaced. Areas in the north of Bara Tehsil, where there was less systematic displacement, were not included. Areas classified at the time of the research as insecure ('red'), to where return had not been permitted, were also excluded.

Interviewees were selected in three age or generational cohorts:

- People without children (adolescent, young adult unmarried or recently married).
- Parents with children at home (typically aged 30–45).
- Grandparents or the elderly (typically aged 50–70).

Small group discussions were composed of either men or women from the same generational cohort. Table 1 shows the number of interviewes and group discussions by age/generation and gender.

Additionally, a small number of interviews and discussions were arranged to capture particular experiences and perspectives. These included female religious scholars and Quranic teachers, religious minorities, a woman running a business, a local poet (e.g. to understand the changing culture and norms expressed through songs), a *malik* (a clan or tribal leader) from a family that is still politically influential and the president of the teachers association.

Interviews and group discussions took two different forms. Around a third asked people to make comparisons between their own lives and those of their parents' (of the same sex)

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5   The Twenty-Fifth Constitutional Amendment in May 2018 incorporated FATA into KP Province, removing the direct control of the Federal Government through the FCR. Khyber Agency became Khyber District.

Table 1: Number of interviews and group discussions, by generation, sex and location

	Male individual		Female individual		Male group		Female group		Total individual			Total group		
	Bara	Tirah	Bara	Tirah	Bara	Tirah	Bara	Tirah	Bara	Tirah	Total	Bara	Tirah	Total
Young	3	1	7	2	1	1	3	0	10	3	13	4	1	5
Parent	9	16	9	7	2	5	4	0	18	23	41	6	5	11
Grandparent	4	1	5	1	4	1	2	0	9	2	11	6	1	7
Subtotal	16	18	21	10	7	7	9	0	37	28		16	7	
Total	34		31		14		9				65			23

and children's generations. The other interviews and discussions asked people to reflect on differences in their lives before displacement, during displacement and since return. In semi-structured interviews, interviewees discussed the dimensions that they felt were most important in their lives, as well as being asked about key areas of change identified in the first study: marriage and betrothal, education, freedom of movement, family living, intra-household personal relationships, women's economic life and voice (Levine et al., 2019).

There were four main limitations to this paper. Understanding how men and women live together in society demands a deep understanding of their culture, language and society: this then needs to be 'translated' into the cultural language of readers. There is a risk that the research team will filter what they hear in interviews and how they analyse findings through their own cultural views. Although the author of the paper is from a very different background, the rest of the research team were all Pashtun and included people from the research area. Their responsibilities went far beyond the usual role of interviewing, to taking a lead role in interpreting the interviews and the overall analysis. None of us were immune from bringing our own cultural values into a presentation of other people's lives, but we feel we have done everything possible to reduce and mitigate that danger.

The second limitation relates to the strengths and weaknesses of adopting an exploratory approach to research. Being open to following conversations where people wish to lead them without imposing a particular theory or analytical framework in advance helps us to understand people's lives from their own perspective. However, this brings limitations both in interviewing and in analysis. Because interviewers cannot fully prepare for every possible path that an interview will take, there are inevitably areas where we would want to go back and ask more questions, which was not logistically possible in Khyber District. Although this means we can only offer tentative explanations for what is happening in a short case study, we hope that this opens up new paths for future research and will help others to prepare for more detailed research, whether in Khyber Agency or elsewhere.

Third, although we believe the study captures much of what is happening in the newly merged districts, we are not offering it as a complete explanation of life in Khyber District. As exploratory research, the aim is to present the causal threads of change that could be distinguished from just three weeks' fieldwork, in order to illustrate how much more informative a study can be if it goes beyond listing differences between men and women's activities, and tries instead to understand changes dynamically from the perspective of the people involved.

The fourth limitation relates to two methodological difficulties, which in some situations resulted in us hearing from fewer women and girls (see Table 1). Women in Tirah did not feel comfortable moving to other homes to take part in group discussions, and so only individual interviews were possible. It was also challenging to find older women or to engage with unmarried young women/girls in Bara and Tirah, so interviews were mainly with the middle

age group. However, since the study does not use any quantitative analysis, this should not unduly bias our analysis.

1.3 Life in Khyber Agency and in displacement

This study is best read as a follow-up to the initial study of changing gender roles in displacement (Levine et al., 2019), which also gives more detail on the unique situation of FATA within Pakistan and the extreme form of patriarchy that resulted. As part of FATA, Khyber Agency was largely isolated from mainstream Pakistani society in many ways – politically, legally, institutionally, culturally and economically.[6] Individuals had almost no constitutional or legal protection, and the population had access to few services from the central government. As a result, women and girls in Khyber Agency had no protection from the excesses of extreme patriarchy (Khan and Samina, 2009; Khan, 2012). Violence was also normalised between men in long-running family feuds, typically over land and resources, and threats would be increased by perceptions of weakness, such as being seen playing with children or not to be in complete control of one's wife.

Displacement brought a multitude of changes, including the transformation of the family and social structure and people's exposure to new ideas and practices from their hosts, as well as a different economic, legal and political environment.[7] Where these factors combined and interacted, rapid and transformative change in gender relations happened. Girls were sent to (primary) school; the age of marriage was becoming later; women and girls had more time; women had a greater economic independence; and relations within families were transformed, with domestic violence greatly reduced and women spending time talking with their husbands, leading to much greater voice in decision-making. 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 (Levine et al., 2019).

This analysis of changes in social norms raised one inevitable question: what would happen when people returned? How far would the improvements in the lives of women and girls continue, if most of the factors that had supported those changes were to return to the *status quo ante*?

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6   Khan and Samina (2009); Yousaf et al. (2018) and Yousaf (2019) further discuss the legal powers at work in the area.

7   For other discussions of life in displacement in Peshawar, see Mosel and Jackson (2013) and, particularly for the life of women in internally displaced person (IDP) camps, Khan (2015).

2 The lives of women and girls on return

Many women interviewed in 2017 had expressed a desire to remain living in Peshawar District because improved services (health, education) and utilities (electricity, gas, piped water) and a different family structure in smaller houses had transformed their lives (Levine et al., 2019). Many families have not returned to Khyber District, or have maintained a presence both in Peshawar and Khyber Districts, and, judging from the 2017 interviews, this may reflect the increased voice of these women. For those who did return and were interviewed in 2019 for this study, their gains have been largely maintained or even consolidated, at least in the short time that they have been back.

In this chapter, girls' education, women's economic life and women in society are discussed separately for the sake of clarity, despite the strong interactions between them. Chapter 3 includes a discussion on the relationships between husbands and wives, and chapter 4 on the institution of marriage as it affects both men and women. Our findings are organised to ensure that this study of change is not reduced to an inventory of *what* has changed, but tries always to find logic to *explain* a complex pattern of changes.

2.1 Education

Before displacement, girls' education was almost entirely absent in Tirah, and only a small minority attended primary schooling in Bara.[8] Our first study highlighted how displacement had brought a greater acceptance by some, and a positive desire of others, towards education in general for children, including the education of girls, with very few dissenting voices. There were nonetheless some clear limitations. Education beyond puberty, or secondary school, had been relatively rare for girls, and families that were not able to educate all their children tended to prioritise the education of their sons. The greater acceptance or desire for education had its roots both in the different economic life facing displaced people, who had a greater need of education in order to ensure their own livelihoods, and a cultural change following exposure of displaced people to the common practice of girls' education in host communities and among their own relatives in Peshawar District.

On return, far more girls are going to school in Khyber District than before displacement. This has partly been made possible by reconstruction investment in school infrastructure and the provision of teachers, which had reduced access for some. (There are fewer fears around boys walking far to school than for girls.) Progress is still partial. School coverage is not uniform across the District, and the less accessible parts of Tirah Tehsil, in the south bordering with Orakzai District, still did not have any state provision of education for girls. Where only private schools existed, there was a significant economic constraint to girls' education, since private schools cost $5–10 a month per child, and boys were still prioritised for education.[9] Improved availability of school is not enough on

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8   These findings are echoed by other research in FATA: see Naveed (2018), and Mohsin (2012), who describes how limited access to education for girls became worse during the period of what she calls 'the Talibanisation' of FATA.

9   To put this in context, a typical household income in peri-urban Peshawar is around $90–130 month (Levine and Sida, 2019). We do not have reliable information for pre-displacement Khyber Agency or current income in Khyber District.

its own to explain the change in girls' education, though. The main driver has been the change in attitudes. This is seen even in places with no state provision of schooling for girls, where more and more parents are sending their daughters to *madrassas* for religious education instead. Increasing attendance by girls at *madrassas* is seen to indicate that parents are more likely to send their girls to a state school as and when this becomes available, because a *madrassa* is not seen in opposition to the state education system but as another way of receiving formal education, as expressed by this young woman:

> To get religious education was not common but now there is an increase tendency towards religious and modern [i.e. state] education. I consider education being a key to bring all positive changes in life and in society. Islam teaches us to fight for your own rights and that is why the girls who are enrolled in madrassa are now aware of their own rights (young woman, focus group discussion (FGD), Bara).

Some men are even allowing their wives to continue with their education after marriage, where they study on their own and pay to sit their exams as private candidates. This, though, seems to be relatively rare.

The increased appreciation for education during displacement was in part due to the changed economic landscape. Prior to displacement, interviewees lived in a very isolated society, dependent on agriculture, and education served little purpose for boys or girls.[10] Local power holders such as *maliks* often wished to keep others in greater ignorance, and so, despite sending their own children to schools outside FATA, some presented education as a threat to their way of life, an intrusion from foreigners or an attempt by the state to influence their society (Levine et al., 2019: 11). In Peshawar, people saw that education helped in securing a livelihood. More than this, they saw that their relatives sent their children to school,

dispelling the idea that schooling was un-Islamic or necessarily foreign to Pashtun culture.

Return has been to a very different economic situation to that of the previous Khyber Agency, and education is seen as necessary for a secure future. Return has also brought a more positive citizen–state relationship than before. During displacement, people appreciated the benefits of state services, in many cases for the first time: however partial or inadequate, they benefited from health facilities, the provision of utilities, some form of public administration and institutions of law and order. Upon return, the provision of schools is no longer seen as a threat to their way of life but as a *service*, one of several of which people are demanding more from *their* state. Their broadened cultural awareness, and a more sophisticated appreciation of how they had been kept in ignorance, have remained with them. Return has also been to a changed cultural environment, and the perception that education undermines strength is diminishing (see chapter 4). All these factors have combined to change attitudes to education, and even though these factors do not all apply to girls – even the economic rationale for educating girls is much weaker – the general appreciation of education has opened up possibilities for them too. Parents speak of educating their daughters not for material advantage, but to improve their lives *as people* and to give them useful life skills such as basic literacy and numeracy. Others, most commonly mothers, have spoken of the importance of education for women's overall wellbeing and their ability to have a voice within the family and the community.

A more positive attitude to education and increasing educational opportunities needed a third set of factors to achieve transformation on the scale that has occurred, and these relate to decision-making at the family level. Changes to family living arrangements (see Box 1) on displacement and return have impacted this.

Continued dispersal of the family unit on return has played a critical role in increasing girls' education in two ways. It has continued

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10 See also Naveed (2018).

the process by which fathers get to know their children (both sons and daughters) more intimately as individuals (see section 3.3), which has increased their motivation to educate their daughters. Dispersal of the joint family has also decentralised decision-making. In the joint family, rather than a girl's own father or mother making decisions about a her life, these would be made ultimately by the family patriarch (and, to some extent, matriarch), often her grandfather or uncle, and almost certainly someone distant from her, who did not know her as an individual. On return, parents both have an increased interest in educating their daughters and greater freedom to decide things for their own children: if their own attitudes changed towards educating their daughters, it was simpler for them to make this happen.

One final ingredient making education possible is time. Before displacement, girls were kept busy working for the joint family. That work burden disappeared in displacement because of the availability of utilities and the smaller family units. On return, the demands on girls' time has not returned to pre-displacement levels, enabling progress on girls' education to continue (see section 2.2).

Had the changes around the economy and family living taken place in Khyber District without a period of displacement, it is likely that education for girls would have struggled to take off. One more element was needed and provided by displacement. The critical mass needed in order to gain societal acceptance of change would have been hard to achieve in the closed society of FATA, where conformity was demanded, and enforced partly through a fear of 'backbiting'.[11] In displacement, with the communities from FATA physically dispersed to different villages, people felt liberated to follow their own preferences to a much greater degree; this was helped because the host community already accepted this new way of living. On return, enough people had changed their attitudes to allow them to continue.

Box 1: The joint family system

Before displacement, most people lived in very large extended family units of 30 to 50 people, usually called the 'joint family system' (JFS), where married brothers and their own (nuclear) families lived almost entirely in a male domain under the direct authority of the family patriarch (usually their father, uncle or elder brother). Married women lived in a largely separate female domain under the effective authority of the matriarch, the patriarch's wife, even more than under the authority of their own husbands. In displacement, the large houses necessary to accommodate JFS living were not available and so people lived in much smaller family units, closer to nuclear families.

As described in detail by Levine et al. (2019), this was fundamental to the transformation of family life for men, women and children. Women were freed of the often oppressive and even abusive authority of their mothers-in-law and men began spending time with their wives and children. For many, this was the first time to get to know them as individuals, and one of the benefits in displacement for women was a huge reduction in domestic violence, both from mothers-in-law and from husbands (Levine et al. 2019: 15). Many decided to continue this new way of living on return. Several men interviewed indicated that the choice to reconstruct smaller family homes was, at least in part, influenced by their wives' preferences; indeed some wives made it a condition for their return to Khyber District.

We do not present this analysis in such detail with any claim to be offering the full and definitive sociological explanation of why more girls are now in school in Khyber District. Future studies will doubtless shed more light on the subject. Rather, we are concerned that the complexity of interactions between the different causal factors is appreciated, in order to guard against the easy acceptance any one simplistic

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11   The word 'backbiting' came up frequently in interviews and in the analytical discussion with the research team. The word may have particular resonance in Pakistan because it is a common English translation of '*gheebah*', the serious sin of speaking badly of another behind their back. People's fear of being spoken about badly was a major factor in enforcing social norms. Their relative liberation from that fear was crucial in enabling changes in behaviour during displacement (Levine et al., 2019: 12 and 19).

explanation. Such one-dimensional explanations risk leading to simplistic conclusions. Nor can we conclude that displacement in other situations is likely to lead to a similar change. The specific case of displacement from Khyber Agency to Peshawar District and subsequent return to Khyber District had all the elements for an almost perfect recipe for achieving positive change on girls' education.

2.2 Economic life

As mentioned above, time has been a crucial factor in enabling change in the lives of women and girls. Both women and girls' workloads were dramatically reduced in displacement, because they had access to utilities (gas for cooking instead of having to fetch firewood, piped water close to the home), their labour was not demanded for agricultural work and they had reduced domestic responsibilities in their more nuclear family setup. Return has created a situation that is somewhere between pre-displacement life in Khyber Agency and life in Peshawar District. Access to utilities has improved, although it varies, generally being greater in Bara than in Tirah, and more difficult the further one lives from an urbanised centre.

> We have an electricity supply, and piped water at home. Every house in our neighbourhood uses it when it's their turn to have water. Besides the electricity supplied to the home, we also use solar electricity, so life is not as hard here as it was before, even if it's not as good as it was in Peshawar (unmarried woman, 18, Bara).

> Families like ours have access to the basic necessities. Now there are washing machines, which has really reduced hardships. Not everyone has their own washing machines, but people use each other's. The electricity supply isn't regular, though, so sometimes they resort to the old means of washing clothes by hand (married woman, Tirah).

The improvement in utilities is not only because of provision from the state; families have now decided for themselves to reduce women's workloads, choosing to make investments that were not even considered previously.

> Most families have dug wells in their houses now, so women have easy access to water. Those who don't have a well at home take water from neighbours who do. In our day, we travelled long distances to fetch water (elderly woman, Bara).

The new tendency towards smaller family units, which has continued from displacement, has also eased women's burden. Women remain responsible for the domestic sphere and children, but they now have more freedom to manage how they do this rather than taking orders from their mother-in-law. If they are responsible to anyone, it is more often to their own husbands, with whom it easier to come to agreement than with their mother-in-law in the previous JFS.

The reduction in agricultural work for the household economy has removed some of the physical burden from women. However, the loss in agricultural income brings a significant economic cost, borne directly by men, who remain responsible for family income. In a small number of families, women have taken up some form of income generation to mitigate this loss of income, but they remain a minority. For those actively earning money, the main occupation is tailoring or embroidery, which women can undertake at home and can fit flexibly into their domestic work schedule. Although this may only bring in small amounts of income, it can still have a transformative impact on the woman and her family, including on domestic violence.

> We also have some needs of our own, but whenever we asked for money from our husbands, they would get angry and beat us … In Peshawar city survival was impossible without money in your pocket … We learned how to cut and stitch in Peshawar to earn our own pocket money. After that, when we didn't have to ask for money from our

> husbands, they stopped beating us and the environment became quite normal, comparatively (middle-aged woman, FGD, Bara).

This has become a major incentive for women to earn money.

> I want my daughters to have some skill so they earn some money, so that they don't have to face domestic violence in their in-laws' home – at least, not over money (middle-aged woman, FGD, Bara).

In urban centres, a few women have opened shops or market stalls, but for those with other capital or business skills, the only other avenues for earning income are tailoring or finding paid domestic work.

Some women had been involved in sewing or domestic work even before displacement for economic necessity when they had no male support: this had been accepted as permissible, although it involved some degree of shame. On return, the range of work that women could do in practice has not changed hugely (with the notable exception of opening businesses in some areas), but attitudes to women working are now markedly different.

Now, some husbands are not only happy for their wives to earn money, but also accept that she keeps some control over at least some of what she earns. It is hard to exaggerate the importance of this change, or what it reveals about the transformation in attitudes towards women's paid work. In some families, albeit a minority, there is now an aspiration that a girl should grow up and be employed – an aspiration shared by her father, her mother and herself, as well as by boys and their parents.

> Before [women working] was considered against our values. It was shameful if anyone's wife was working for money. But now … people want to educate their daughters so that they can also earn money. I see this as a big change … If people hadn't been displaced, this change wouldn't have occurred (middle-aged man, Tirah).

More professional role models are beginning to emerge. Currently, professional women working in Tirah are from outside the *Tehsil*, but their acceptance is the first step to local girls eventually aspiring to and taking on these roles.

> No lady doctor would have dared to come to Tirah and start practising here! Now we see lady doctors, female teachers and even the few NGOs have female staff … The lady teachers have moved to come and live in Tirah along with their families, and the lady doctors are living with their families in Tirah. People don't look at this as strange, as they used to (father, Tirah).

A few women are starting to speak of these as role models for their own daughters.

> There are no female teachers in our village. I want my younger daughter to be the first (young mother, Tirah).

> I would say that I felt bad for my uneducated self when I was in the [NGO training] centre. I was interacting with educated women. I truly admired them … I envied them and wished I had received the same level of education. I realised the difference between an educated and an uneducated girl. … I am really thankful to God, who blessed me with a loving family and especially my husband, but the regret, the words 'if only', is still there in mind around education. My daughters are very young but I am definitely going to put them in a school, no matter what (married woman with three young daughters, Bara).

It is too early to see these roles being taken on by women from Tirah, where secondary education for girls is rare, but these changing attitudes mean it is now possible to imagine in the future for some girls currently in primary school, even in Tirah. Girls' progress is no longer hindered entirely by an absolute ban from their families, and instead

comes from a lack of opportunities – and, for most, the lack of necessary skills or education. These constraints to progress are easier to address.

Increasing economic independence would be hugely transformative for women. Some women interviewees spoke of how previously they had to go out to work as a result of hardships after their husbands died or had not supported them. Now, many are speaking of earning money in a very different way.

> It is essential for girls to get an education and to understand the realities of life. From my experience of getting economic independence, at least to some extent, I can feel the empowerment it brings. It is a source of liberation from the cult of oppression at the hands of a man who only thinks on the lines of dominating women (mother of four, Tirah).

> I want all my daughters to be able to earn something for themselves so they don't have to be dependent on others for everything (mother, Bara).

It is possible to trace causal pathways back to a wide range of underlying causes, one of which is time, as discussed above. (Time was also an indirect factor as it enabled women and girls to pursue an Islamic education, which also led to an increased awareness of women's rights and an appreciation that the previous dictates from the *jirgas* (councils) were not the same as Islamic law.) The dispersal of the JFS has also been important. The reconstruction of family living in smaller units on return was largely the demand of women. Before displacement, it was unthinkable for them to have had so much influence in family decision-making.

> When the war ended my husband and my in-laws wanted to move back [to Bara Tehsil] but I was happy in Peshawar. I was not interested in going back, but I agreed on one condition: that I will not live with my in-laws. My husband agreed, and so we moved back to our village in Bara and started living as a nuclear family (mother of six daughters, Bara).

> The elders want to live in a joint family system while the girls want to live separately. Women of my age have also realised that separate living is far much better than joint family system due to the workload (middle-aged woman, Bara).

> My daughters, keeping in mind my situation, demanded from their husbands that they lived separately from the joint family… Previously, living in a joint family was obligatory, but young women saw that the basic reason behind their problems in life is due to the joint family. Now joint living has declined, because of the awareness of young women (grandmother, Bara).

By maintaining their improved living conditions away from the JFS, women have been able to keep their increased voice won during displacement. Had they returned to a JFS, it is hard to imagine them being allowed to go to work, much less to retain control over any money they earned. The breakdown of the JFS has contributed to these changes through other causal pathways, too. For instance, women's economic independence cannot be entirely separated from their freedom of movement. In a shared household, it was much easier to find an available male chaperone to accompany a woman when she needed to visit somewhere else, an important source of control over women's freedom of movement. In the new arrangement, with men often out of the house working, there are often no possibilities to arrange a male escort. It has become accepted, if only because of necessity, for women to have some (limited) unescorted freedom of movement outside the home, if only to go to a nearby shop run by a woman. This seems to have been hard for some men to reconcile with a code of modesty, rooted both in Islam and Pakhtunwali (Box 2 illustrates how a general loosening of social rules has had mixed impacts on women's freedoms). On the other hand, society has found it harder to respect the prescriptions of Islam where these give greater economic independence

to women through inheritance rights, as discussed in Box 3

Other causal chains leading to some degree of economic independence can be traced back to the displacement experience. Several women gained skills and experience in Peshawar District either via vocational training (often provided by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), at least in tailoring and embroidery), or from relatives in Peshawar. Again, it is important to stress that such skills could not have been acquired if women had not had time to acquire them.

Economic drivers alone cannot explain the change in attitudes towards women earning and controlling money. For instance, before displacement, few people, and almost no women, would ever have set foot outside of Khyber Agency (see Levine et al., 2019 for further discussion). There has almost certainly been some causal role, too, for a more subtle change between men and women in displacement, which has continued on return. As discussed below, as a result of men living intimately with their wives in ways they had never done before, they now have greater mutual understanding between them and more appreciation of each other as individuals, strengthened further by their acknowledging the way in which many women contributed visibly to the household economy with independent contributions for the first time. That greater relationship of trust for many seems to have survived return.

Box 2: The complexities of women's freedom of movement

Change is never linear or even unidirectional. Although many of the changes to people's lives in this study have had positive benefits, the same causal factors can have unintended contradictory effects.

The weakening power of what would often be considered conservative social institutions has in many ways given girls and women more freedoms. Unfortunately, at the same time, increasing individualisation and the weakening of enforcement of social conformity to norms is believed to have enabled the rise in drug-taking by young men, particularly of ice (crystal meth), which was previously shunned. This is having a constraining impact on women's ability to move freely.

> The fear of young men, addicted to drugs and idling on the streets has raised the fears of families for their daughters in going out, and has thus restricted their freedom of movement. The effect of drugs on the young generation is a real matter of concern. We can't move openly and freely as we used to in the past. Boys are standing outside of our homes and smoking. So, we have to stay inside our homes to avoid creating any problems for our families (adolescent girls, FGD, Bara).

> I am not allowed to go out for social gatherings. My husband thinks that there is too much harassment of women nowadays. Boys are so much into drugs these days, and that's why I can't go out (young married woman, Bara).

> The behaviour of the village boys has changed. Now, they stand outside of the house, staring and passing comments. Our father and brothers are worried about this, and so they don't let us go outside the house alone (young unmarried woman, FGD, Bara).

The same change has thus simultaneously created freedoms and also allowed conditions to emerge that then curtail them.

Box 3: When does change begin? Women's rights to inheritance

Traditionally in Khyber Agency, women had no rights to inheritance, either from their parents (whose family they effectively left on marriage) or from their late husbands.

In displacement, many girls and some women received Islamic education from teachers with a much higher level of Islamic education than teachers in Khyber Agency, where they learned that Islam decrees that women enjoy inheritance rights. Some have begun to speak about this.

We did not yet hear any stories of women benefiting from inheritance rights. One man did say that he would like to be able to give his daughter a share of his inheritance, but because he was poor, he was unable to do so.

On the one hand, we could say that change has not yet happened in this area, and may indeed not happen for many years, if at all. On the other hand, it is also possible to discern a more fundamental transformation, even if it has not yet had any material expression. The concept of a woman's inheritance has begun to gain acceptance, even among men. Women have not only learned the concept of women's inheritance but have used the language of rights to discuss it. Time will tell whether this represents the beginnings of an attitudinal landslide, and whether a door has been opened that cannot easily be closed.

> I do not know how long will it take, but the lives of females are going to normalise along the course of time. Now I know that women have a right to inheritance, but we still think of it as something not good. That's why I didn't ask my brother about my share of my parents' inheritance. The next generation, I think, might be able to get their inheritance rights from their brothers (mother of four, Tirah).

2.3   Women in society

Before displacement, women's role in the community was summed up succinctly in one (men's) FGD in Tirah:

> The role of women in Pashtun culture was only inside the house (middle-aged man, FGD, Tirah).

Some women commanded a degree of power and respect in the role of matriarch of a joint family, but even they had no place in public or communal life. If a woman had any influence, it was only by persuading her husband to advance her views on her behalf.

As we have seen, women's confinement to the domestic sphere is now being challenged by the development of a women's professional class of doctors, teachers and NGO staff working and living in the community. This includes women whose economic activity has increased to being paid for sewing in her home.

Previously, women were physically excluded from decision-making fora. The *hujra,* the room where social life was conducted, was out of bounds, unless they were bringing food for guests. They were not represented and could not bring a complaint in the *jirga*, the councils at various levels that *de facto* served as the legislative, executive and judicial authority in FATA.[12] Since the overall institution of interlocking *jirgas* was effectively the state

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12 See Khan and Samina (2019) and in particular Yousaf et al. (2018: 28–32), who also gives an explanation of the various levels of *jirga*. In areas controlled by militant groups, the tribal *jirga* system could be said to have been partly replaced by their *shura* in the way that the militants modified or co-opted the *jirga* (e.g. by including their own members in the councils). This did not lead to any greater place for women.

in FATA,[13] most women's first experience of any direct relationship with the state came in displacement when, on the encouragement of their husbands, they applied for computerised national identity cards (CNICs) in order to be eligible for registration as IDPs and official assistance. Once acquired, a CNIC made a woman a citizen of the state. The extension of national politics to the newly merged districts has opened up a new space for women to engage with, and have a voice in, society. Women have become increasingly active in public political expression on questions of the future of FATA, side by side with men, and this activism is being underpinned by the enfranchisement of women through the CNIC (ICG, 2018). That right has been exercised by many: in the 2019 election to the KP Provincial Assembly, although women voters were heavily outnumbered by men in the three constituencies of Khyber District, in the constituency containing Bara and Tirah Tehsils (PK-107 Khyber-III), 6,500 women voted (17% of all votes cast), and across Khyber District as a whole, more than 30,000 women voted, making up over a quarter of all voters (Yousafzai, 2019).

This development is not, of course, simply due to women's need for a CNIC in displacement. The relationship between state and citizens (discussed above) is changing; apart from taking some responsibility for providing services and infrastructure, the state is also increasingly active in the governance of the newly merged districts. The Federal Government had been pushing to increase women's participation in elections across Pakistan as a whole. Apart from requiring a minimum quota of women's representation, the Elections Reform Act (2017) required gender-disaggregated data on voter turnout from all polling stations. Perhaps more important than the four seats allocated for women from the newly merged districts in the KP Provincial Assembly (the first time women from FATA had any representation),

was the rule that in any polling station where fewer than 10% of votes were cast by women, coercion would be assumed and the entire return from that polling station could be nullified.[14] This meant that women's participation in the election was not merely about creating tokenistic representation, but about ensuring their mass participation in political decision-making. The symbolic statement of societal change made by ensuring women's genuine participation in public decision-making is far more significant than just the electoral choices that were affected by women's votes in this election or even by the individual contributions of the assembly members in the four places reserved for women.

The incorporation of the newly merged districts into mainstream Pakistan has inevitable implications for the *jirga* system. Dispute Resolution Councils (DRCs) have now been established instead in the newly merged districts and exist at *Tehsil* level. Nearly all the members of the DRCs were previously members of the *jirga* and there were no places for women, but despite this apparent entrenchment of the *status quo ante*, the DRC does nevertheless represent a potential shift (Khan, 2020). Unlike the *jirga,* DRCs were set up by and are subject to state law. (In fact, the rules by which members are selected by the Commissioners are already being challenged.) This means DRCs are part of a judicial system within which women have (some) rights, including potentially the right to bring complaints. Future legislation could decree that women have minimum representation on the DRC, something which would not have been possible under the old *jirga* system.

Furthermore, the *jirga* had powers of enforcement: DRCs do not. This creates a vacuum where patriarchal power previously had its source, which opens up hard-to-predict possibilities, whether for radical change or for the re-entrenchment of previous relationships. The difficulty of predicting how changes will play out

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13 This is in the sense that it was the institution that 'successfully claimed the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within the territory', Weber's (1919) famous definition of what makes a state.

14 'If the turnout of women voters is less than 10% of the total votes polled in a constituency, the commission may presume that the women voters have been restrained through an agreement from casting their votes and may declare polling at one or more polling stations, or election in the whole constituency, void' (Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Act 2017).

in the future and what their impact on people will be is illustrated in Box 4, which looks at another domain: the rights of women in widowhood.

The erosion of restrictions on women in male spaces was also seen closer to home and in smaller ways. During the research process, while waiting for interviewees, the women researchers on the team were invited to wait in the *hujra* of the interviewee family. The researchers had worked in that area prior to displacement and reported that, as women, they were not even allowed to pass near the *hujra* in those same villages before displacement. Now, they could conduct the interviews with women in the *hujra* (though they decided to interview women only in their homes).

Women's demand for voice in communal areas is increasing, though men's attitudes to women's participation are mixed. (The topic only arose in a few interviews.) Some men stated that women still had no say in collective matters.

> Usually, there is no say of women in collective matters even now (men's FGD, Tirah).

Others suggested that the outward appearance of women's absence from community or collective forums may be misleading: though their engagement may be constrained, some find ways to exercise some influence.

> We have a teacher's union and women teachers are also part of it, but no woman member participates in meetings with us jointly. They share their inputs in the meetings through the male teachers and school's owner (middle-aged man, Tirah).

Some negative attitudes clearly remained.

> Money and women are two evils for Muslims which have always created problems for Muslims (middle-aged man, FGD, Tirah).

However, this man was immediately challenged in the group discussion.

Most spoke more approvingly of women's greater role, which was directly related by them to the experience of displacement.

> We now believe that, like education, empowerment of our women is also very crucial for development. Living in Peshawar taught women their true potential. They don't want to sit at home idle now. They want to take charge of their lives and contribute to the development process in our village and in the country … women in our village are now becoming more active socially and the men are supporting them (father of three sons and two daughters, Tirah).

> The mindset of people has changed. Most importantly, the mindset of women has changed, which is the real game-changer in my opinion. Women are more outspoken now. They express themselves freely. They also actively participate in the decision-making process of the community and their households (father of two sons and three daughters, Tirah).

A reader might raise an eyebrow at the interviewee's suggestion above that women had ever been able to sit idly at home, and it would be naïve to think that all men support women's full emancipation; nevertheless, the fact that these words were even spoken is in itself a significant sign of attitudinal change.

Box 4: Vulnerability in flux: the changing lives of widows

Many women became widows at a young age due to pre-displacement conflict and violence. Their situation provides an interesting illustration of how difficult it is to see how various changes will affect people over time.

As in many cultures, among the Afridi in Khyber Agency it was not generally acceptable for a widow to remarry outside the clan. Before displacement, a widow had no rights of inheritance to claim agricultural land for herself. A widow remained a member of the family into which she had married and was often pressured to marry one of her brothers-in-law to cement her place within the family (i.e. levirate marriage).

As the land was owned by the joint family, the JFS maintained a widow's connection to food production. Her vulnerability lay in her lack of power to enforce this system of protection: not all families respected either widows or these principles, and the social code disapproved of widows receiving any support from outside their late husband's family, including even from their natal family, as this would reflect badly on their honour. The price of maintaining the connection to food production was an acceptance of the lack of freedom to choose her own life or a new partner. However, these were freedoms that women had never enjoyed at any stage in their lives.

With the weakening of the JFS, there is a risk that the widow's safety net has eroded. Levirate marriage has never been compulsory for a widow in Islam, but the practice appears to be becoming rarer. So far there are no signs that it is becoming more acceptable for widows to remarry outside the family or clan, or that even a young widow is considered a suitable bride – at least for a young husband.

It does at least appear to be more acceptable now for a widow to receive some material support from outside her late husband's family. This could be interpreted as the family imposing less control over the widow or taking less responsibility for her. The order in which one interviewee mentioned the sources of support for widows may be significant: 'many women are living as widows, forced to depend on the charity of help given by neighbours or relatives'. Interviewees' stories varied greatly. For some, the protection of the JFS was still working ('the sons of my mother-in-law help us with the farming'), while for others, it was not ('after my husband died, I had to bring up my children on my own, as my brothers-in-law refused to take any responsibility for me or the children'). Several widows, particularly in Bara, had to start earning their own living, one making food for her young son to sell in the market, another working as a domestic servant in town. The widowed daughter of another interviewee had been forced to move back in with her mother along with her two children.

The loosening of the JFS means that widows may have more liberty than when married if there is no male figure with authority over them. This appears to depend on several other factors, most notably age (young widows seem to be under more scrutiny than older women) and whether the woman has already given birth to sons. While having sons gives a widow greater respect within her late husband's family, her sons constitute competition for property rights: a widow who had borne no sons did not present a threat to the family's land.

As the nature of the agricultural economy and of the family as an economic unit is changing so rapidly and has not reached a stable equilibrium, like so much else in the newly merged districts of KP, it is impossible to say how this will play out.

3 The lives of men and boys on return

Changes to gender roles due to displacement and return do not only affect the lives of women and girls. Men have also felt the impact of changes within society. This chapter will look at the domains of men's life in society, men's economic life, marriage relationships and men's relationships with their children.

3.1 Men in society

Before displacement, men interacted almost entirely with other men either doing agricultural work or in the *hujra* with their male relatives from the extended family, where women were not allowed. The family *hujra* was not simply a place for leisure or receiving guests; it was where young men were socialised into the culture of their elders, where knowledge was transmitted and right and wrong were fixed, under the authority of the patriarch of the joint family.

This social life has been transformed for many by the decline in joint family living, which has had far-reaching impacts at the level of the wider society. In extended families that no longer live together, and where the role of *hujra* has diminished, men spend less time with each other and more with their wives and children and, perhaps most importantly, they do not live in a family where norms are constantly dictated by an authority figure above them.

> Living with our elders and extended family meant limited freedom to make our own decisions and for our wives and children. We have led a tough life where we weren't even allowed to choose our own clothes or shoes (father of four, Tirah).

Because there are more heads of (smaller) households, authority has been dispersed. But this dispersal indirectly brings another loosening of authority. Decentralisation of authority and creating more people with autonomy brings greater diversity. This dilutes the power of conformity, which always limited the autonomy of family heads, widening the space of what is considered acceptable behaviour.

Family elders' loss of authority is not only due to changes in physical living arrangements; their economic control over the family unit has also reduced due to a number of external factors. Before displacement, the family elder who owned the land controlled the family finances and held economic power. That power has been eroded by the loss of income from hashish (the price collapsed from Rs.60,000 per kg before displacement to Rs.15,000–18,000 on return) and the relative weakening of the importance of land compared to labour as a means of production (see section 3.2). Because so many people now work for cash income, economic power (and social status) is more evenly distributed across the family. Since different forms of power are inter-convertible, economic power brought the power of social status (vis à vis the community) and, more directly, a high degree of direct authority over those who are economically dependent. Once men have their own independent income, they have greater autonomy vis à vis family authority in other ways too.

The dispersion and weakening of centres of power and of the institutions that set social norms has been compounded by the expansion of mobile communications, first commonly accessed (by men) in displacement. Smartphones were found to be commonly owned even by youth, at least in some areas. Men can now communicate with a social

network outside their own family and are exposed to a range of other ideas, reinforcing a move to a more individualised, less collective way of thinking. This exposure has continued to some extent on return.

It is possible to dig still deeper for the underlying roots of these transformations. Afridi society, like Pashtun society as whole, had a highly organised social structure and a moral code with strong responsibility to one's community; much of one's worth comes from one's standing in that community. This code still appears to be strong, but its institutional underpinning has been fractured over the last decade or more, due to the destruction of the *malik* system by the militant groups and then by displacement. On return, society was being recreated in a situation where the hierarchical status quo had been very much weakened for a number of reasons. The previous status quo had been strong enough to resist – or, probably more accurately, to deter – most attempts from *within* to loosen it. (Change from the outside, such as armed pressure from militant groups was another thing altogether.) After displacement, a new critical mass pushing for greater individualism has emerged, together with far weaker community mechanisms and the weakening of the power of the patriarchs of the joint family. Through displacement, men were exposed to different ideas of how to behave: collectively, these various causes meant that men were able to respond to these ideas in a more individual way. The change in family structure has contributed to other societal changes, partly because it appears to be one driver weakening family feuds, which previously played a huge role in the society. This accelerated a trend that had begun even before displacement for several reasons, including the decline in the tribal system and the power of armed groups. The reduction in feuds has enabled a change in perceptions of masculinity, reducing the need to be seen as strong (considered as the

opposite of gentle) and to be able to call upon a large number of arms-bearing males (see Levine et al., 2019: 7–8).

Whatever the exact contribution of each causal root, attitudes towards masculinity have clearly changed. On an everyday level, this is seen in men's interactions with their families (see below). At an idealised level, this was illustrated by the testimony of a well-known local poet, who described how the songs glorifying men as warriors are no longer being sung by women.[15]

> Women would sing folk songs at weddings and engagements, projecting a woman as a symbol of beauty and fragility, while the man was projected as a symbol of toughness, hardness, bravery, and strength. … The act of killing used to be glorified and it was considered bravery. But it isn't glorified any more. Now peace, education, development and advancement are the focus.

Although many of the changes above can be seen positively, one negative result of the weakening of peer pressure enforcing conformity is an increase in the use of hard drugs. Drugs have long played an important role in Khyber District's local economy, but crystal meth has recently become huge problem in Pakistan (Firdous and Mehboob, 2019).[16] One centre of the trade in Pakistan is in Khyber District.

> New drugs like ice [crystal meth] got very notorious and the youth have fallen prey to it. Chars [hashish] has always been here, and there's not much social embarrassment about it, but ice came as a blow. Society has really turned against the youth because of these hard drugs. The youth of the area are vulnerable to indoctrination. They were prone to the wave of Talibanisation and also to the curse of the ice (unmarried young men, FGD, Bara).

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15 The connection between Pashtun proverbs and folk-sayings and masculinity is discussed by Sanauddin (2015).

16 Previously, the production and sale of hashish was socially acceptable and brought wealth to many in Khyber Agency. Now, the use of more dangerous imported drugs is regarded with much greater fear.

> Many of the boys are exposed to drugs these days. Things have changed with us, there is no proper check and balance by their elders (elderly man, Bara).

3.2 Men's economic life

On return, economic life did not simply pick up where it had left off before displacement. The conflict had left a huge toll with the destruction of livestock and other assets. Old opportunities had been lost, and new ones appeared. As mentioned above, income fell from one of the main cash crops in Tirah (hashish), and income from smuggling and trade with Afghanistan had also dried up (see below). However, investment in the physical reconstruction of the area brought new employment opportunities and increasing urbanisation brought greater economic activity, especially in market centres.

This study did not focus on livelihoods or look to quantify changes in household income, but we were struck by an unexpected social finding. In the earlier study, when men described their pre-displacement economic lives, most discussed their engagement in the (joint) family farming enterprise, but few talked of their independent economic responsibilities. Far more men, especially younger men, now appear to be struggling with their own economic responsibilities.

> Since the joint family system had already been broken down, people started to rebuild their homes on individual level. In such situations, one man couldn't support the family on his own, because the source of income was just from work in casual labour. Most of the boys, therefore, had also to find work (father, Bara).

The roots of this change span a diverse range of causes. There has been a gradual decline in agricultural livelihoods and an increase in the non-agricultural, more urban economy. The conflict between the state and army and armed militants also added several dimensions of economic change. The conflict led to the destruction of much of the agricultural asset base; security measures brought in included tighter controls over the border with Afghanistan, reducing income from smuggling, which had been a lucrative and economically important part of life for many. In addition, the end to the conflict integrated FATA with the state to some extent, both politically and with investment in infrastructure, including new roads, school buildings and grounds for returnees for house reconstruction. The greater presence of state advantages, many of them centring around market towns, is the reason behind the reduction in the returns on hashish production: middle-men fear the interference of the state in trade. In political economy terms, there has been a shift away from the relative importance of land as a factor of production and towards labour and capital. As a result, the cash economy has increased, also driven by the increased need for cash to pay for goods and services that were either previously unavailable (including education, health) or did not have to be purchased. These economic changes only partly explain the increased economic responsibility of younger men.

As mentioned above, many people on return decided to set up more independent family units, either living as separate households within a large joint family home or as nuclear families living in separate homes. With this choice comes responsibility: this was shared in the economy of a JFS, with the ultimate responsibility and authority residing with the family elder. Living in smaller units means that many more men are heads of households (and more economic responsibility is also felt by women; see chapter 4).

> When my father died, responsibility came on the shoulders of my elder brother … I felt a little bit relieved because my brothers took the bulk of responsibilities, leaving me free … But on the other side, it also brought a lot negativities with itself, because my own wife and children were at the bottom of the priority list, and my elder brother had absolute authority over almost every aspect of our life… In displacement, I had to take on the responsibility of taking charge of my own family. This was hard work in the

beginning but as the time passed on, I got used to it … So, when we moved back to Khyber [District], all of my brothers agreed to keep the nuclear family system that we'd developed in Peshawar (father of two, Bara).

The choice to live in smaller family units has largely been driven by the transformation of the husband–wife relationship. In displacement, many women spoke of their reluctance to return to joint family living, and the weakening of the JFS reflects both their increasing voice in the family and of men's increased concern for their wives' welfare, both discussed further below.

3.3 Men's relationships with their children

Changes in men's attitudes to family life are seen most clearly in the transformation of their relationships with their children. Before displacement, most men were ashamed to be seen publicly giving their children attention for fear of appearing weak and being the subject of backbiting. The change to nuclear family living meant that a man no longer spent his spare time socialising with his brothers and uncles; instead he had only his wife and children for company. In time, men came to appreciate this. Now, men spoke with pride of their children, and many enjoyed taking them outside where they would be seen together publicly.

> Before, it was considered bad to have your children in your lap. You couldn't go out with one of your children. But now we go out with young children and play with them, and it's fine. Society is changing. It's probably because people spent time living in a nuclear family and they got time to understand one another in a better way (elderly man, FGD, Bara).

Fathers are now more likely to relate to their children as people, as individuals. Although less tangible than some of the other changes

described in this paper, this came across clearly in many interviews with fathers, their children and their wives.

> [Living as a nuclear family in displacement] led me to focus my attention on my kids … to listen to their everyday difficulties, listen to their ideas and suggestions and to appreciate their views … When we moved back to Khyber Agency, we all agreed to carry on living as nuclear families … This gives me a chance to spend a lot of precious time with my children and wife … it helps me to guide them to be creative and curious, to be self-confident (40-year-old father of one son and one daughter, Bara).

Such testimonies were verified by women interviewees.

> [My husband] is so much more helpful to me now in many ways. He really likes playing with the children and going outside with them. He also tries to spend time at home with me. He gives equal attention to our daughter and our son. His brothers are also like this now. Of course, in some ways preference is still given to boys over girls, but overall they look after their daughters, they sit with them and talk with them. They were never like this before, during the displacement. But as soon as we returned to our villages, they began to realise that this was the right way to be (mother of two children, aged 23, Bara).

> Now my husband is giving proper time to the children instead of gossiping all the time in *hujra* as he used to (mother of three, married for 26 years, Bara).

> Fathers, for example, never used to have anything much to do with their daughters. At best, they interacted a bit with their sons. The daughters were

just waiting to get married and leave home, to join their husband's family … But now fathers also feel that their daughters belong to them, and they are interacting much more with them. I think within a few years, fathers will start treating their daughters the same as their sons to a considerable extent (mother, Tirah).

Children were critical of fathers who had not changed, or not sufficiently, in this way, and they explicitly aspired to be different.

In our home, I feel that most of the time we were unable to really talk to our parents. I can talk more to my mother, but not to our father. When our father decides something, that's it, there is no discussion. In my opinion that is the wrong approach. I want to have a friendly environment with my children, so that they never have a problem to speak freely with me as their father… The next generation will be smarter than us (26-year-old unmarried man and eldest son, Bara).

No interviewees explicitly linked this softer paternal behaviour with the broader softening of masculinity discussed above. It is possible to speculate here, but this area would be better filled with further study.

3.4   Men's relationships with their wives

The decline of the JFS led to men spending more time with their families, instead of spending their time in the *hujra* with their male relatives. As a result, the first study documented how men were learning to see their wives as individuals, who had needs to be considered and opinions to be listened to. This trend has clearly continued and even strengthened on return.

When I told my mother how my husband helps me, she was really

astonished. It was unbelievable for her … She said that in her time, men did not want to help their wives or even sit down with them. For them, sitting with wife and spending time with her is a sign of a coward, not a man … But the boys of today are different. I see so many young married couples in the family where the husband takes a lot of care of his wife, and he supports her in case of conflicts within the family (45-year-old married woman with two daughters, Bara).

Living in Peshawar has taught me that women are people, just like men, and now I help out my wife with household chores. I've made changes, starting from my own house … Now my wife and I make decisions together (father of four, Tirah).

If there's a need for a helping hand, [my husband] doesn't hesitate to be the one to cook for the whole family. He didn't have this kind attitude before displacement (mother of four, Bara).

Changes in personal relationships cannot happen without bringing about much deeper changes in the institution of family. The role of a woman's mother-in-law and her frequent abuse was documented in the first study. Previously, hierarchical authority put a mother above her son, and a man thus had to put his mother above his wife. Occasional voices still echoed this view.

There is a daily fight between my mother and my sister-in-law but my brother supports his mother. My brother won't move to a separate house over it … he won't disobey his mother. A mother has a higher status than a wife (unmarried woman, Bara).

However, it was more common to hear the opposite sentiment.

> Even the approach of the mothers-in-law has changed, because they are well aware that if they are harsh to their daughters-in-law, it will now lead to confrontation with their sons (45-year-old married woman with two daughters).

> Our men met the local people of Peshawar on a daily basis and this had an influence on them. Of course, they would never admit this, but their behaviour became more gentle and polite. They no longer listen to the constant backbiting from their mothers (mother, small group discussion, Bara).

Now some men are standing up for their wives within their extended family. This can entail a degree of conflict with their parents and brothers, which some are now willing to accept. Everyone's place within the extended family thus becomes in some sense conditional, something that must be co-created, rather than a simple fact of life to be accepted. For women, men's willingness to take their side has come together with less domestic violence from husbands and also, through separation from the JFS or having a husband to protect them from the JFS, less domestic violence from the matriarch and others.

Again, various causal roots can be identified. Changes to marriage relations are partly due to the break in joint living arrangements and men's newfound appreciation of their wives as individuals and as partners in managing their households. The physical destruction of housing stock created opportunities to reconstruct family arrangements according to new preferences – often chiefly the preference of women, it appears, who were evidently successful in persuading their husbands to set up separate households. This could either be a physically different reconstruction in separate housing or a social reconstruction of relationships within a single large family home. The move to smaller living units was in turn facilitated by the economic changes described above: wage-earning naturally fits an individual or nuclear family economy, compared to the agricultural economy, where joint families operated as a collective economic unit. The change in marriage relations must also owe something to a growth of individualisation, discussed above. The new nature of marriage relationships can also be linked to a growth of individualisation. It can also be seen as the outcome of a drive for something different (caused by exposure to new ideas and different lived experiences in displacement), combined with the opening up of space for people to choose their own way of living, with the decline of a centralised authority and the fear of backbiting in the event of non-conformity to social norms.

4 Marriage

The different relationships people are looking for in marriage, described in the previous section, are starting to alter the institution of marriage. Changes can be seen in at least three areas: the age of marriage, consent of partners to the marriage and the nature of the relationship between the two people.

4.1 Decreasing very early marriage

In the first study, we found a trend away from very early marriage for girls and some receptiveness to the idea that they would be asked for consent, even if it was unlikely that a girl would feel able to disagree with her parents' arrangements for her. This trend seems to have strengthened since return. Marriage had previously been arranged between very young children and was, as such, an arrangement between families. This does not imply that parents did not consider the wellbeing of their children in marriage arrangements; a 'good' marriage depended on family trust and respectability, rather than on the personal relationship between two individuals – a husband and wife would not expect, or be expected, to have that much to do with each other as individuals. Two interrelated changes can currently be seen in society: a marriage relationship is now seen more as a relationship between individuals and children are increasingly seen as people with individual characters.

All interviewees agreed that the practice of very early marriage was diminishing and that this was a positive development. There was also consistency in testimonies from men and women, across age groups and in both Tirah and Bara. There was even the supporting testimony of an outsider to the local Afridi community, a Sikh resident of Tirah.

> In our Sikh community, children were never betrothed. Muslims used to practice it, but now, this has almost ended (Sikh man, Tirah).

The following quotations each express a different reason for preferring later betrothal and marriage.

> This move away from early marriages happened because of displacement – without displacement, it wouldn't have happened (middle-aged man, FGD, Bara).

> Previously people would make their children marry without really thinking about what would be best for their children and the companionship they would have in marriage … [The change away from very early marriage] is partly due to spread of religious education within our people (25-year-old woman, Bara).

> People live in separate households now, so everyone has to look after their own family. A boy can't marry until he can earn money to keep his wife (middle-aged man, FGD, Tirah).

> I don't want my daughter to be married too young. I want her to complete her education both religious and of academics and then she can decide her marriage on her own choice (23-year-old mother of two, Bara).

> My husband has declined a number of proposals for our daughters, who are still too young. He does not want to think of marriage and boys when they are still at this age. In the past people would even arrange the engagement of newly born girls and boys, but later on, this often created lots of problems. Such problems included rivalry between the families (25-year-old mother of four (married at 18), Bara).

> After being married for four years now, I can see that it's really hard to be married when you're too young, when you're not settled and have no steady income … I want my son to wait until he is at least 25 before marrying, to be mentally mature. First of all, he needs good education and then a good job. After then he will be able to live a happy married life (young man, Bara).

4.2 Asking marriage partners' consent

Attitudes to the need for children to consent to their marriage have been transformed in a very short time.

> When my parents were taking decisions about my marriage, they asked me for my consent … This was the first time it had happened in our family. My sisters hadn't been asked about their marriages … [My parents] would have felt ashamed to ask their daughters for consent (young married woman, Bara).

Later engagements and marriages have contributed to increasing acceptance of the notion of asking the people being married for consent, which is now almost universally considered the norm.

> When children were getting married young, they didn't have

decision-making ability. But when people are getting married at 20 or more, they are mature and they can decide their own future (middle-aged man, FGD, Bara).

The issue of consent must be viewed in context: we did not hear any stories of children refusing what their families proposed, although there were signs that more and lengthier deliberation on the part of girls was acceptable. At least one interviewee was quite explicit about the limitations of current practices around asking consent.

> To be honest, free will isn't really given yet, but the parents do ask their children about a proposed girl or boy. At least, it's a sort of consent, which didn't happen before the displacement (middle-aged man, FGD, Bara).

Although both boys and girls are now usually asked for consent, some differences remain. It seems that it would more possible for a boy to disagree with his parents' choice than for a girl.

> If one of them is not willing to engage with a proposed girl or boy, then the will of the boy has more weight than a girl. In our society, girls rarely show their unwillingness in case of engagement and marriage (39-year-old man, Tirah).

Although the choice of marriage partners is almost always initiated by the parents (or other family elders), boys are starting to make suggestions in some families. This goes beyond what we had heard in interviews during displacement.

> A boy can talk about his choice of a girl but a girl can rarely express such things (39-year-old man, Tirah).

> Mothers and sisters-in-law approach girls to get their consent for the marriage. On the other hand, boys can initiate showing their interest to their

> mothers regarding a girl that they like or dislike (middle-aged woman, Bara).

Myriad factors have influenced the changing attitudes to consent. As well as consent being affected by later betrothal, it is also related to the reason why betrothal is now later: parents are talking about their children's personal wellbeing and fulfilment. Exposure to a different way of life in Peshawar has meant that parents want their children to experience marriage differently from them. For mothers, this was sometimes related to the hardships they had endured in their marriages – a hardship that they now see as avoidable for the next generation:

> My daughters are now getting married and all the decision has been taken with their consent. My husband supported me in this. I agree to their decision because I do not want them to face the suffering which I faced in my life [with my first husband] (45-year-old mother, Tirah).

People's own explanations for the increasing practice of asking for consent tended to look at their motivations for asking for consent rather than at the causal factors that made it possible. Three reasons were almost always offered. The first, as discussed, was the increased concern for their children's welfare and happiness since displacement. Second, it was suggested that marriages without prior consent were seen as increasingly having problems; ensuring the two parties were willing was an accommodation made in order to maintain the stability of the marriage relationship.

> The consent of both boys and girls is now acquired regarding marriages. This is partly because … many relationships have broken down because girls were never asked if they agreed to the marriage. People are now reluctant to make decisions regarding marriages for their daughters without asking their opinion first (mother, Tirah).

> The people of Peshawar … gave importance to the opinion of the groom and bride [in arranging a marriage], which is why marriages in Peshawar were stronger and long-lasting compared to Khyber Agency (26-year-old father of one son and one daughter, Bara).

The third explanation offered was increased education, both schooling and Islamic education each bringing a new understanding and a new language of rights (see Box 5).

> Initially, parents felt embarrassed [about asking children for consent], but with the spread of religious education, people realised their mistake. The elders now believe that marriages of the children should be based on our religion. Islam gives the right to girls and boys in deciding their marriage and that is why nowadays, parents are obliged to follow the Islamic teachings (adolescent girls/young unmarried women, FGD, Bara).

> In the current era, marriages are done on the choices of young girls and boys. The change occurred because of the spread of education among girls – both [Quranic] education in madrassa and academic education in schools. They are now aware of their rights (elderly woman, FGD, Bara).

Attitudes are rarely monolithic, however. Although no interviewees expressed any negative attitudes towards consent, the new culture around marriage may not be comfortable for everyone. It is not necessarily the older generation that resists change the most. A brother may feel less secure about his authority over his sister than her father, and feel his authority threatened by a more liberal attitude, as the following example shows.

Box 5: The role of religion in change

This paper traces in some detail how displacement and return led to changes in the underlying factors behind social norms (such as the economy, the housing stock and family structure), which in turn transformed those norms. Behind people's stories it is possible to trace how normative codes, a very different kind of factor, set the rules by which change is possible. For the majority of the population of Khyber District, the two main codes before displacement, in displacement and on return have remained Pakhtunwali and Islam. If the same normative codes continue to shape people's lives throughout displacement and return, one might expect this to limit or constrain change in social norms. In fact, the role that these normative codes have played in shaping change has been quite intricate.

Pakhtunwali is a common cultural code across all the Pashto-speaking areas in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Neither Pakhtunwali nor Islam changed as a result of displacement and return, but two shifts have taken place. First, people's understanding of the codes changed, mainly as a result of exposure in displacement to a host community that also followed the same codes of Pakhtunwali and Islam. There may have been some broadening of people's understanding of the codes, including a greater ability to differentiate between Pakhtunwali and the particular practices that had developed in the closed society of their own Afridi clan.

People's understanding of Islam also broadened. As the paper has described, more people, especially women and girls, had time to study their religion and people had access to religious teachers who were much better educated in Islamic law than many had been in Khyber Agency. Some of the practices that had been instilled in them as normative codes, such as forced early marriage or a prohibition on education for girls, were seen not to have derived from Islam at all, but rather to be in contradiction to it. This created some space for previous rules to be challenged, including by women.

In a similar way, in displacement they lived among other Pashtun and Afridi, including their relatives, who subscribed to the same overall code of Pakhtunwali, but who behaved differently. This may have led them to distinguish between a broader code of Pakhtunwali and their own narrower Afridi code. This shift was not a driver of change, but may have enabled it. For instance, people did not begin to send their daughters to school because they decided that Pakhtunwali mandated it. Instead they began to want to send their daughters to school for the more practical reasons already described, but their new understanding of Pakhtunwali (and of Islam) was that this was acceptable.

Change may not have been so easy if it had not been for a second transformation, one regarding the institutions by which those codes were taught and enforced. In displacement, the people from Khyber Agency saw a Pakhtunwali that was moderated with codes from state law, and whose institutions of social enforcement accommodated a greater role for state institutions. This has not happened in the same way on return to Khyber District, at least not yet. However, the authority of the *hujra* and the patriarch has been dispersed by a change in the family structure, as detailed in this paper. At the same time, as we have seen, many have received greater religious knowledge coming from independent religious scholars, rather than only receiving the rules of their religion from the family hierarchy. There would probably have been a greater opposition to social changes brought about by displacement, particularly in the role of women and girls, had the authority of Islam not been separated from the authority of the elders in the *hujra*.

Faint signs of a third moral code can also be seen in some interviews. It is the appeal to values based on some form of common humanity, a code to which people implicitly appealed when they complained to interviewers that they had been treated unfairly. There was a language of rights, used in particular by women in interviews, especially in describing their lives pre-displacement. We do not know how far this represents a change in language brought about by displacement and subsequent return, or how far this language is used by them in intra-family discussions. It is important, though, to indicate here that this code exists and plays some role, which others can explore further.

> My daughter is going to get married soon … I asked my elder son to ask her if she was happy with the arrangement, but he initially resisted. He felt ashamed to ask his sister, but I convinced him. I explained to him that after I died, he would be responsible for her … The reason I asked my elder son to talk to her was because I wanted to build the bridge between a brother and a sister and the trust between them, to make the relationship stronger (39-year-old man, Tirah).

Ultimately, many factors have combined to change the practice around consent even beyond the reasons already given (exposure, parents' own changed marital relationship, greater Quranic education and children being seen more as individuals). Decision-making by more distant relatives in joint families is diminishing; the system of family feuds, and with it the need to use marriage to forge alliances, is weakening; and women increasingly have voice in family matters. It is impossible to say how far change could have happened if only one or two of these causal factors were present.

4.3   Other changes in the institution of marriage

Other, smaller changes in the marriage institution can be seen as symptomatic of deeper shifts. Now that relationships between husbands and wives have altered and are not solely centred on producing children, men in particular may need to rethink what they want in a wife. This is clearly happening across Khyber District. Young men and their families now generally prefer a girl with some education (for most, as long as her education is not greater than the boy's). The desire for an educated bride is also partly related to the increasing acceptance of women earning money. One mother interviewed told the (female) researcher that she would very much like 'someone like you – someone earning a lot of money would be good for my son'. Both men and

women in the research team were struck by the significance of this remark. They all agreed that, from their own experience working in the area, before displacement women would not even have let the woman researchers into their homes, for fear that they would 'spoil' their own daughters.

It is now much more acceptable for a boy to talk to his fiancée on the phone during their engagement. Here, too, several causal changes have interacted. As well as communication now being more possible because of the spread of mobile phones, it has become tolerated (to some extent and only in some families) for betrothed couples to speak on the phone now that they are viewed as two people with wishes of their own. This change runs in parallel with married couples' increased personal communication.

> I guess I have the liberty to talk to my fiancé on the phone, where my mother would never have imagined of talking to my father. Even after marriage they hesitated in talking to each other (18-year-old woman, youngest of six, educated to 9th grade).

Such communication is still not widespread. Most girls do not have frequent access to phones, but their use is becoming more common, even if only when their father is not at home.

> [My fiancé] is very caring and often brings me gifts. We keep in touch mainly through phone text messages. My fiancé gave me a mobile – I keep it secretly. Only my mother and the women in the family know about it. My father and my brother have no idea I have it! (18-year-old girl, Bara).

The mother would have had more difficulty keeping her daughter's secret had they been living in a joint family. It would have been much harder to keep it from her mother-in-law and the mother may also have run the risk of severe physical punishment had the secret been revealed – another example of how different kinds of change can reinforce each other.

The institution of the bride token[17] is weakening in both Tirah and Bara. In principle, the bride token was supposed to be gifts to the bride to set up her new home. In the past, this was rarely the case – families treated it as payment to them, often using the bride token for their sons' future wives.

> To build up my family and to have grandchildren, I had to marry my daughters to other families far from [my village], because I needed the bride token so that I could bring a bride for my son (widow, over 50, Bara).

Now, in more and more cases, no bride money is being asked for or paid. This is not a simple economic change due to economic hardship. (In the past, those who could not afford bride token would arrange an exchange marriage, or *adal badal* – see Levine et al., 2019: 10). The fathers and mothers of girls interviewed say they are refusing payments because of the implications this has for their daughters. They explicitly used the language of selling to describe the practice of accepting bride token in exchange for a daughter.

> My father … promised me in marriage to an older man who gave him money … It was completely a forced marriage … I was compelled to bear [a lot of mistreatment] because my father had taken money for my marriage. Effectively, I was sold (45-year old woman, Bara).

> One of the families offered money during the finalisation of the [marriage] commitment, which I clearly refused. I told them that she is my daughter, not an object that I will sell to someone (65-year-old father of 11 daughters, who had spent many years in Kuwait).

> My parents did not demand a single penny from my in-laws. They feared that demanding money from groom's family would lower the respect of their daughter in her in-laws' home. The price that is paid for her can always be used against her (young woman, married in displacement).

> Taking money on daughter's marriage is considered as an insult now (young woman, FGD, Bara)

Where a token is paid, it is much more clearly related to helping the bride establish a home.

> The trend of bride token is declining. It completely depends on the will of groom's family and bride parents to get things for the girl but it is not demanded anymore (young woman, FGD, Bara).

> The bride token is still common. But it's changed. In the past … some of us were not even allowed to see our gifts before the wedding. Now, girls do not only see them, but they even demand the things which they want, which would previously have been considered an embarrassment (elderly woman, FGD, Bara).

However, in one FGD, a woman insisted that in her clan bride token continued unchanged.

> We still demand bride money as it is the oldest custom in our clan of the Afridi tribe. This trend can never be changed (married woman, FGD, Bara).

We are unable to speculate on how far different clans have developed different attitudes to bride token.

The institution of marriage is now seen more as being between individuals rather than only between families; however, this is not to suggest that all other functions of marriage have changed. Marriage remains a relationship

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17 Dowry usually refers to payments paid by the bride's family; however, in this part of Pakistan, a payment, often in goods rather than cash, is customarily made by the groom's family to the bride's family, which is referred to here as 'bride token' to avoid confusion.

between families, and the increasing importance of a wage economy does not mean that the agricultural economy has disappeared or that land rights are not central to many families' wellbeing. There are doubtless deeper economic and familial processes at work that continue to influence how the institution of marriage shapes family alliances and claims. This study was not able to capture all these dynamics clearly and fully, but it has revealed a new set of forces acting to shape marriage, with which those other processes must interact.

5 Implications of findings

In this final section we consider the implications of the findings of this study for assistance specifically in Khyber District (with probable relevance for other newly merged districts), and then examine possible broader implications of our research into changing gender relations for the aid sector as a whole.

5.1 Implications for newly merged districts in Pakistan

Whatever its limitations, this study has tried to present a different approach to understanding gender relations. In trying to understand the logic of change, the study's perspective is one not widely seen in humanitarian documentation (assessments, proposals, evaluations) or even in much development aid literature. Its findings, on the largely positive developments in the lives of women and girls as a result of displacement from and return to FATA, have not been reflected in the discourse of humanitarian and reconstruction aid actors in Pakistan, which has focused significantly on protection concerns and the needs of women and girls, but with little reference to how women and girls live together with men and boys.[18] Our first report on the lives of women in displacement highlighted how the aid sector almost always portrays displacement as a crisis in which women, as 'the most vulnerable', suffer most and have their vulnerabilities exacerbated. Aid practice was based on the belief that displacement exposes women to greater risks of SGBV; although this is the case in many settings, in this context women

almost uniformly told us how much better life was in displacement, and how their main risk of SGBV (i.e. domestic violence) was, thankfully, very much diminished (Levine et al., 2019: 15, 29 and 32).

Several senior figures who have worked in the aid response with this displaced population and in the gender equality sector more broadly in Pakistan spoke independently of two reasons why these positive changes were not part of the sector's official understanding of the lives of returnees to the newly merged districts, even though many staff, individually, were well aware of what was going on. First, they all repeated the simple truth that presenting suffering is good for business. The humanitarian sector business model uses assessment both as a tool to understand the situation and as a means to advertise need: the greater the degree of suffering that can be portrayed, the greater the urgency and scale of funding that can be incited. Presenting the positive sides of people's lives is thus seen as bad for business.

The second reason opens up a whole field of study in itself. Our Pakistani national informants in the aid sector all took for granted that, however expert, experienced or familiar with the local realities they were, national staff would not have decision-making power. International staff sometimes approached issues such as women's status in the merged districts with a degree of preconception and misunderstandings of local culture, fuelled by group-think. The design of interventions and aid policy thus tended to begin with the concepts of aid, rooted in the sectoral silos of aid, rather than starting from the lived experiences of the people whom aid

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18 This is in contrast with academic gender literature, which does, of course, often analyse the relationship between men and women. There have also been a few studies, mainly from the Middle East, that have identified how the experience of displacement can disrupt gender norms and roles in ways that can give rise to positive outcomes, both for women and also for men, who become able to form better relationships with their families. Such findings, though, are not necessarily then well incorporated into the humanitarian discourse. See Holloway et al. (2019) for a fuller discussion of this literature.

was intended to help. Perhaps the most striking example of an analysis that starts from an aid perspective is the very terminology used in describing the 'protection risks' that women faced in displacement – risks or dangers that are defined in relation to the function of the external agency (to *protect* them), rather than in relation to their own personal security. It is far beyond the scope of this report to discuss the importance of good gender programming that is founded on cultural awareness, an awareness that can only be integrated into decision-making if power imbalances within the aid sector itself are overturned.

Whatever the benefits of stereotypical crisis narratives for fundraising, they are never a good analytical basis for deciding the best ways to support people in situations of rapid flux. There are deeper reasons for challenging static gender narratives that focus only on women as victims and ignore change and agency. Our story of change in this paper is a story packed full of agency: it is the agency of men and women, boys and girls, who are adapting to changed circumstances, as well as actively looking for opportunities where changes are opening up spaces for them to advance their agency – to study, to become more independent, to be free from cruel treatment, to develop warm relationships with their children. There are many reasons why the aid sector ought to want to avoid thinking of and presenting people as being without agency, but that discussion is largely outside the scope of this paper. Here we will highlight just one practical reason regarding the design of interventions in a return situation like Khyber District.

The same intervention can have very different degrees of success depending on its timing or context. To give an example: attempts to build schools for girls in Khyber Agency had little success in transforming education opportunities for girls in the past, because, as discussed above, few people were interested, it was not regarded as acceptable and people did not feel able to challenge that view. Things have clearly changed in Khyber District since displacement: investment in girls' education across the district is now likely to bring about enormous change, as enough people are hungry for opportunities to send their daughters to school. Good programming

is not just about fighting against problems but seeking to take advantage of opportunities. By understanding processes of change and how people look to alter their own society and lives, agencies seeking to bring about change can see where their support is most likely to be helpful.

This study was not intended as a needs assessment or preparatory study for designing gender programmes for Khyber District. Our comments below should not be taken as recommendations for specific programming choices: they are intended to be illustrative, to show the kinds of programming that might flow from an analysis of change in gender relations, subject, of course, to more in-depth study of the specific issues involved.

This could begin with support for physical reconstruction after a crisis. Many women clearly favoured the reconstruction of small housing units, in order to avoid reconstituting the JFS in which they had felt oppressed. (The advantages for women of such smaller family units were already revealed in our study of women in displacement (Levine et al., 2019).) Our limited study of the impact on women's lives due to the weakening of the JFS found this to have been huge and broadly positive. This suggests that, where support for reconstruction is guided by 'community participation', it is important to consider which voices are consulted; if only those considered to be 'home owners' (i.e. the family patriarchs) are listened to, the outcome of such discussions would be very different from talks that take into account all voices (including those of women).

Investing in girls' education was mentioned above, but deserves to be stressed again. Based on what women and girls consistently told us, education might be the most transformative investment for them in the merged districts. There is already demand for education in most villages, but the practical constraints facing girls when accessing school need be considered. Schools need to be very local to where people live for it to be considered safe and modest for girls to attend.

The importance of increasing the number of positive professional role models for girls was also discussed. The presence of a woman teacher, living in the community, may be as transformative as the education she brings. This

impact may be multiplied if teachers can be found from within the community itself. The number of women with a high enough level of education to teach is very limited, especially in Tirah and even more remote areas, but a small number do exist. It may be possible to find ways of hiring girls with some education to work as teaching assistants, or supporting them with intensive continuing education so they can eventually qualify as teachers. Again, these suggestions are not intended as possible solutions, but as ways in which findings from studies such as this can open up space for different ways of thinking about building on already-won successes to create more opportunities.

Women are already creating and seizing opportunities for expanding their independent economic agency, and this development might repay sensible investment. It is clear that it is women (and girls) who can best analyse which kinds of support will be most effective and helpful for them. Currently, there are a limited number of areas where women make money (e.g. tailoring and embroidery), and there is a risk that expanding vocational training in these narrow areas will result in oversupply, leading to collapse in profits. In more urban parts of Bara and in the centre of Tirah, a developing urban economy should provide other opportunities, whether in more traditionally female areas (beauticians, baking, what people called 'modern cooking') or in other work that women can conduct at home, which may provide some challenge to traditional constraints. Once more and more women have access to mobile phones and the internet, the range of small businesses or professional skills that can be offered expands enormously.

Supporting women to take up more opportunities has impacts on gender relations beyond the potential income that individual women may gain. There is a careful game to play when pushing already-expanding boundaries of what is considered permissible

for women to engage in, to avoid creating a backlash. But this is not a game that external agencies should play on women's behalf. People in Khyber District are already actively seeking change while simultaneously wishing to remain within the broad frame of their culture (Islam, Pakhtunwali); determining grey areas for possible expansion, and where lines should not be crossed, are decisions that women are making for themselves in each town and village.[19]

Increased communications with the world outside Bara and Tirah have expanded women's horizons, both because they have enabled economic development generally and supported a flow of ideas and information. These areas of investment need to continue. As one informant put it, 'the key to feminism is roads'. It is still common in aid literature, including in Pakistan, to use the longstanding distinction made between practical gender needs (e.g. which may improve the material lives of individual women) and strategic gender needs, which improve women's lives as women by reducing the inequalities in their gender relations (based on the analysis of Moser (1993)). The distinction has not been used in this paper because it has not been relevant: the provision of electricity or piped water gave girls and women *time*, which proved critical in opening up opportunities for them to challenge previous gender roles.[20] Although not all women will be able to take advantage of roads, go to markets, own or use phones or access the internet, some women will be able to take advantage of these practical opportunities and each one who does contributes to a strategic change in gender relations.

More than one informant spoke of the importance of collective action and community in the Pashtun culture. This may be a possible area to harness. The so-called tribal areas might have seemed far too conservative a society and an infertile area for supporting collective women's voices, but individual women's voices

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19 Dietrich et al. (2020) show the need for a change in how humanitarian action relates to women in gender programming, with women in Bangladesh, Colombia, Jordan and Uganda demanding that it follows their agenda and supports their own agency. Ferris (2018) also calls for greater participation of displaced women in decision-making.

20 The observation that time-saving devices have played a major role in emancipation is, of course, not new. See, for example, Cardia (2008).

that we heard for this study suggest that support for their collective agency might be fruitful. There is already a blossoming of political action in the merged districts, including by women, taking advantage of the combination of newfound political freedoms and the new practical opportunities for collective action, which will be made possible by the transformation of communications in the area (including both roads and telecommunications).[21]

We also touched on the ways in which the society's normative codes are expanding, and this too may present opportunities for supporting change. There is far from uniform acceptance that a working woman in an urban area can be seen as an example of honour and modesty. Changes in attitudes towards the idea of a working mother have taken decades to progress in Western societies and it would be naive to think that attitudes will change much more quickly in societies like Khyber District. It would perhaps be helpful to find and present a variety of positive narratives about professional women, positioning women's economic independence as being enabled by expanding understandings of what is possible within Islam and Pakhtunwali, rather than being a victory over these codes. It remains essential to present positive images of professional women that are rooted in respect for Islam and Pakhtunwali.

One way of presenting positive role models is by creating them. Each time an aid agency hires a woman from the community she becomes another role model who others can follow. This does not always fit in with current recruitment practices, since women with much formal education are hard to find. Recruitment may need to be considered differently: rather than looking for people whose skills best fit the agency's way of working (e.g. knowledge of English and an ability to work in an international culture), agencies should look at what skills and expertise can be found locally, and organise the work from this starting point.

It is necessary to think about where an accompanying narrative may come from. Islamic teachers may be one possible source. Many local Islamic teachers have had very limited education, either Islamic or secular, and, at least before displacement, extremely limited exposure to life outside their own village or district. Yet we have seen how a more informed Islamic education has been broadly positive for women and girls, and that some have become accepted Islamic scholars in their own right. This may offer another way to change the messaging received by both men and women about what constitutes a worthy or acceptable life for a woman.

One final area of importance to mention is the role of the state. Prior to displacement, tribal structures set rules and enforced conformity while also providing the only available forms of protection (although not necessarily for women). Now these tribal structures have weakened, the presence of state protection can enable people to remain within their tribal *culture*, but to feel less confined by tribal *authority* figures. This will depend on the role of the state in providing a justice system, some form of law and order and a guarantee of the personal security of citizens in Khyber District. This makes the future for women's agency in the newly merged districts somewhat precarious. If the state fails to provide a minimum administration of justice, there is a risk that tribal authority may reassert itself in ways that roll back many of the advances that women have made.

5.2 Gender, the humanitarian sector and understanding change

It is premature, after the first case study in this research series, to draw conclusions about how humanitarian agencies are engaging with a gender agenda. The literature review for this project described in some detail the different ways in which the humanitarian sector as a whole has been preoccupied with the issue of gender (Holloway et al., 2019). The latest attempt to ensure that humanitarian programming is based upon sound gender

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21 It is beyond the scope of this paper to look at political engagement in the newly merged districts as a whole, but active grassroots organisations include Takrah Qabailee Khwenday (TQK) and the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement (PTM), in which men and women are active together.

analysis has been the move from the use of a gender marker (IASC, 2010) to the new gender with age marker (GAM) (IASC, 2018).

Our studies of displacement and return in northern Pakistan give little indication that humanitarian programming has shown any kind of consistency in the quality of its gender programming. It is hardly surprising that the GAM, which was supposed to ensure a minimum level of gender analysis to underpin every programme, has not proved entirely successful. All our informants with knowledge of the humanitarian sector were frank in their appraisal of the use of gender markers, which they described as nothing more than box-ticking exercises.

> Proposal writers believe that in order to secure funds, they just have to put some target numbers of beneficiaries which are disaggregated by gender and include the phrase 'women and girls' as often as possible (gender expert, Pakistan).

If this is the case, there is little reason to believe that the new GAM will lead to different outcomes.

Most of the treatment of gender in the humanitarian community in Pakistan has sat with the Protection Cluster. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that the dominant narrative remains of women's vulnerability, rather than of their agency. Protection Cluster (2016) offers a fairly typical picture of the narrative:

> IDPs and returning displaced women continue to be exposed to grave risks of abuse and different forms of gender-based violence. … recent displacements and conflicts have increased women protection-related concerns …
> Though, gender is a cultural and social phenomenon that keeps changing with time and needs of the time KP & FATA are seen as prevalent insular and conservative cultural dynamics.

Without minimising the risks that women and girls continue to run, this study raises questions about the assertion that risks have got worse because of displacement or that KP and FATA are insular and have conservative cultural dynamics.

Very little recent or comprehensive gender analysis exists for FATA or the newly merged districts, with the exception of a limited number of small-scale or narrowly defined studies (Mohsin, 2012; Naveed, 2018; or WFP and FAO, 2015, which does at least give some breakdown of food security data by gender). The most recent study available that treats gender in the return areas with any depth is USAID (2012), which was intended more as a study of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)'s support for gender – and stabilisation – programming rather than a gender analysis of FATA and KP.

More broadly, gender analysis relating to the humanitarian sector has shown a tendency to concentrate on measuring indicators. The 2010 analysis of gender markers in the Pakistan Floods Emergency Response Plan shows clearly that the purpose of the markers is to demonstrate 'how the needs of men differ from women (girls from boys)' in order to reflect on the 'different ways men compared to women (or boys compared to girls) will benefit from this project intervention' (GTF, 2010: 4). It is reflected again in the gender strategy for the Protection Cluster, which is also about 'the different needs of men and women, children, people with disability, marginalised groups, and minority groups' (Protection Cluster, n.d.: 5) – but not about the relations between them. Although project proposals may show that these questions were considered, this is far from being a gender analysis of the society that such projects are trying to help. The markers are essentially about the distribution of project resources. The new GAM looks for reporting on four 'essential programming actions that contribute towards gender and age inclusion' and eight additional indicators. Three of the four actions are entirely project-centred; every one of the eight monitoring indicators are project-centric. The GAM may prove to be a useful tool for helping programmes to monitor distribution of the benefits in a gender-disaggregated way, which is in itself a useful objective. On its own, though, it will not lead to programming that is better informed from a gender perspective.

In a different domain, the World Bank's gender indicators for Pakistan detail the disaggregated literacy and school enrolment rates, measure

whether a woman can open a business or apply for a passport in the same way as a man, or whether a woman can be dismissed from her job for being pregnant.[22] Again, although it is important to document specific inequalities in each country and over time, this kind of indicator measurement does not substitute for gender analysis. (There is a further question about the relevance of country-level indicators for assessing a situation in areas where the issues around gender may be quite distinct.)

Although the humanitarian sector has probably moved its position since 2012, when the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) noted that 'In accordance with its principles of neutrality and impartiality, the ICRC does not claim to reform gender relations' (ICRC, 2012: 30), there is still a discussion about the extent to which humanitarian programming should aim to be gender-transformative.[23] Three possible reasons can be advanced as to why humanitarian assistance should focus on ensuring that aid helps women rather than tries to radically change gender power relations in crisis-affected societies. First, it could be argued that gender transformation is in itself a neocolonial project, seeking to shape so-called traditional (read: backward) societies into mirror images of the West where, it is supposed, gender power relations have been transformed and are now equal. It could also be argued whether external actors have the right to try and reshape a society's culture, and it is wrong to take advantage of a crisis, and of people's dependency on aid, to do so. Crises may not be the time to try and create more instability in societies or to attempt transformational changes, however well-intentioned. A third position would defend a reluctance to be gender-transformational not on grounds of principle but in terms of feasibility. Trying to change the deep underlying structures in society on which gender inequality is based is long-term work, but humanitarian action, even when supported by new models of multi-year humanitarian financing over longer timeframes of two to four years, cannot begin to come to grips with power relations in society, let alone trying to transform them.

Our study provides a fairly clear answer to the first two arguments that assume humanitarian agencies are dealing with fixed 'traditional' societies where women are devoid of agency and where gender programming is imposed by international actors with little appreciation of the local society. Some national gender experts who were interviewed did indeed believe that the second part of that sentence is, sadly, true; but it is impossible to maintain the first assumption in the face of the evidence. Good gender programming would not be about imposing change on a reluctant society; it would support women who had complained that in their pre-displacement lives they were treated worse than cattle (Levine et al., 2019: 10, 16 and 31), and the many men, women, boys and girls who wanted a different future for themselves and were slowly feeling their way towards it. Far from believing that displacement or reconstruction were not the best times to try to expand their horizons, men and women in crisis-hit Khyber District were taking exactly the opposite view. Such conclusions are not generalisable, but if humanitarian agencies could better understand how crisis-affected people were trying to adapt and create room for manoeuvre for themselves, they might hesitate less to support people's own initiatives.

The question of the timeframes needed for gender-transformative programming is a more difficult one, though humanitarian agencies have been happy to take on other long-term challenges, such as transforming societies to make them more resilient. Humanitarian assistance alone cannot transform gender relations any more than it can make people or societies resilient. Good gender programming in crises demands a nexus approach, within which the full range of actors can develop together a long-term strategy for supporting change, to which each can contribute in different ways. A dynamic study of how and why societies beset by crises are changing their own gender relations is a good place to start.

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22   https://data.humdata.org/dataset/world-bank-gender-indicators-for-pakistan/resource/ebfaabee-f801-422e-9839-98c7cbc138d2.

23   See also Holloway et al., 2019: 32.

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