

BREAKING BARRIERS AND BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES: HOW CAN UNHCR PARTNER NGOs IMPROVE REFUGEE LIVELIHOOD THROUGH THE SKILL BUILDING PROGRAM IN SELECTED DISTRICTS OF BALOCHISTAN?

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ABSTRACT

The global refugee crisis is worsening day by day, caused by conflicts and climate. Afghan refugees, one of the largest protracted refugee populations globally, specifically face substantial challenges such as documentation issues, legal obstacles, educational challenges, limited access to formal employment, inadequate recognition of their skills, and barriers to sustainable livelihoods. This research assesses the impact of the skill-building programs for refugees initiated by the UNHCR partner NGOs in Balochistan. Furthermore, the study identifies the challenges and barriers refugees face in accessing and utilizing these opportunities. Lastly recommendations are given based on the study. Moreover, this study uses a mixed-method approach, with qualitative semi-structured interviews and focused group discussions with refugees, policymakers, and NGO representatives and an online survey form with refugees in the quantitative section. The findings of the study showed the impact of these programs in enhancing livelihood opportunities, while also highlighting the gaps in accessibility, alignment with labor market needs, and program outreach. Lastly, the study also provides evidence-based recommendations for improving these skill-building programs. These recommendations include the introduction of new skill-building programs that are aligned with the labor market needs, improving the existing programs through advanced equipment, increment in the monthly stipend, and increase in the duration of programs that are considered technical. By addressing these gaps, this research aims to support sustainable livelihood strategies for Afghan refugees, contributing to broader refugee inclusion efforts in Pakistan and beyond.

Keywords: Skill Building Programs, Afghan Refugees, UNHCR partner NGOs, Mixed Method approach.

1. INTRODUCTION

Pakistan is host to 1.38 million registered Afghan refugees, which constitutes one of the largest refugee populations around the world (UNHCR, 2024). In supporting refugees, Pakistan receives aid from various organizations and countries. The largest aid donor organization, which is playing a vital role in providing basic facilities to refugees, including health, education and livelihood support, is the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). UNHCR, with the support of local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), has various programs in facilitating refugees across different sectors. As Afghan refugees have lived in Pakistan for almost the past four decades, UNHCR has prioritized key livelihood interventions to help refugees become self-reliant and reduce aid dependency (UNHCR, 2023).

Livelihood opportunities are crucial for meeting basic needs, accessing services and knowledge, and enhancing capacities and dignity. Consequently, UNHCR Pakistan has prioritized livelihood interventions as a key strategic focus (UNHCR Pakistan, 2020). The UNHCR's strategy is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (UNHCR, 2023). Pakistan is not a signatory to any United Nations Convention relating to Refugee rights, such as the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol. This makes refugees more vulnerable as they cannot own or acquire property, nor can they be part of the formal economic market. In recent years, UNHCR Pakistan has made limited efforts in livelihood development, primarily through the provision of vocational and technical training and startup tools for businesses.

One of the major partners of UNHCR working on livelihood projects in Pakistan is the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF). It also operates in Balochistan and aims to empower Afghan refugees through vocational and technical training. Moreover, the National Incubation Center Quetta also works on the livelihood sector of refugees with the help of UNHCR. The livelihood strategies involve startup ideas and grants for business to the Afghan Refugees. Moreover, the Innovative Development Organization (IDO), with the support of UNHCR, specifically works on refugee livelihood through skill-building programs across the refugee settlements in Balochistan. IDO supports refugees in refugee camps and urban settlements such as Quetta. Moreover, Tameer-E-Khalq Foundation, with the help of UNHCR, has also introduced skill-building programs in the Saranan refugee camp in the district of Pishin. Lastly, the Taraqee Foundation in collaboration with the UNHCR, works on skill-building programs for females specifically in the Urban refugee settlement in Quetta.

This study targets Urban Refugee settlements in the district Quetta and the two refugee camps of Saranan and Surkhab. Moreover, the skill-building programs of Innovative Development Organization and the Taraqee Foundations are the main subject matter of this study.

Taraqee Foundation (TF), currently working in the Urban refugee settlements in the district Quetta since 2016, has graduated up to this date almost Twenty-Seven Hundred refugee women as part of the skill-building programs. The major objective is to make refugee women self-reliant and self-sufficient and to integrate them into the host community. TF works in three major urban refugee settlements: Qadriabad, Ghousabad and Hazara Town. Before 2023, only refugees participated in these skills-building programs; however, since 2024 host community has also included based on the 70% refugee and 30% host community ratio. The skills provided by the Taraqee Foundation are:

- Hand Embroidery
- Ladder Embroidery
- Arts and Crafts
- Dehydration of Food and Vegetables
- Carpet Weaving
- Tailoring
- Basic Computer Skills
- English Language Courses

These programs are generally six months long generally, except the carpet weaving, which is yearlong, as it is quite technical and requires more time to understand. In each course, there are ten beneficiaries enrolled; however, in carpet weaving, there are a total of eighty beneficiaries enrolled, divided equally between Ghousabad and Hazara Town. At the end of the course, the Trade Testing Board (TTB), an approved institution by the Government of Balochistan, conducts tests and issues certificates to the passing candidates. These skills are selected based on the market demands. For example, Dehydration of food has a high demand here in Quetta, and many of the beneficiaries sell the dehydrated food to different local stores.

Innovative Development Organization (IDO), with the help of the UNHCR, currently has skill-building programs across Balochistan in almost every refugee camp and Urban refugee settlements. This study focuses on the IDO skill-building programs in the Urban refugee settlement of district Quetta and the two refugee camps of Saranan and Surkhab. The main objective of these skill building programs is to improve refugee livelihood, refugee-host community cohesion, and support refugee self-reliance. As one of the objectives is to support refugee-host cohesion, at the Urban Cohesion Hub (UCH) Quetta, both refugee and host community members participate in the skill-building programs with a ratio of 70% refugee and 30% host community. The skills offered in the Urban Cohesion Hub (UCH) Quetta, which last six months with a stipend of six thousand rupees per month to each beneficiary, are: mobile repairing and tailoring for male beneficiaries. In the male section, there are currently fifteen beneficiaries in each section, totaling thirty. While in the female section, there are around thirty females right now.

Innovative Development Organization has two skill-building programs centers in the Saranan refugee camp, one for males and the other for females. In the male section currently, there are fifteen beneficiaries involved in learning the tailoring skill. While in the female Center, they learn the basics of poultry farming, and almost thirty female beneficiaries are involved.

The Innovative Development Organization, with the Help of UNHCR, has three important skills in the Surkhab refugee camp. These skills include solar food dryer, goat and sheep farming, home seed and gardening. While for the females, there is only one Center for poultry farm where twenty females are involved. In the goat and sheep and solar food dryer IDO has fifteen beneficiaries enrolled in each, while in the home seed and gardening, they have a total of twenty male beneficiaries enrolled. The enrolled beneficiaries get a total of six thousand rupees per month for six months, as each program lasts almost six months.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The current worldwide refugee crisis is considered one of the most urgent humanitarian issues today, involving the displacement of 36.4 million people from their homes due to war, persecution, violence, and other causes. (UNHCR, 2023). Refugees, numbering significantly high, endure prolonged periods of displacement, particularly in the Global South, well beyond the initial crisis phase, with an average duration now exceeding two decades (UNHCR, 2023). These are the countries from the Global South, mostly developing countries, that host the largest number of refugees, heightening the vulnerability of the refugees as the developing countries are facing issues from political instability to economic crisis, and now environmental issues. Economic exclusion of the refugees in the host countries exacerbates the reliance of refugees on international humanitarian aid, fostering poverty and the exploitation of the refugee workforce in the informal economic sectors (UNHCR, 2024). In these circumstances,

UNHCR pledges to invest in refugee self-reliance and economic inclusion in 121 countries, supporting almost one million refugees in securing employment and social protection (UNHCR, 2024).

UNHCR aims to support 15 states in adopting inclusive economic policies and to build partnerships for integrating refugees into the host community so that refugees can be facilitated through the national services of the host countries (UNHCR, 2024). Research shows that one of the durable solutions for the displaced population is their economic integration into the host country labor market (Peitz et al., 2023). A study by Fiddian Qasmiyeh et al. (2014) says that refugees are more vulnerable in the sense that they have to seek out ways to sustain themselves due to the limited humanitarian aid both within and outside the camps, and their situations are worsened once the host government opposes refugee inclusion in the market. This leads to the refugees' livelihoods at risk.

Chambers and Conway (1992) define livelihood as the methods by which individuals sustain their livelihoods, including both tangible and intangible assets. Whereas sustainable livelihood refers to long-term adaptability and its environmental sustainability (De Haan and Zoomers, 2005). Refugee livelihood programs often include assisting refugees in self-employment and wage-employment, through providing vocational training to learn new skills, supporting small businesses through microfinance, job placement assistance, and apprenticeships (Fiddian Qasmiyeh et al., 2014).

Numerous scholarly investigations have been conducted on the potential for sustainable livelihood opportunities, encompassing small-scale enterprises, entrepreneurial endeavours, skills enhancement initiatives, agricultural ventures, and diverse livelihood avenues, across various regions of Africa, Europe, and selected Asian contexts(See, for example, Buscher, 1981; Horst, 2006; Conway, 2004; Wake & Cheung, 2016; Vellani et al., 2017; Alloush et al., 2017a, 2017b; Jacobsen & Fratzke, 2016; Omata, 2012, 2021; Van Raemdonck, 2019; Davis, 2019; Muhangi et al., 2022; Cavaglieri, n.d.).

Theoretically, Economist Theodore W. Schultz (1961) is the pioneer who advocated that investment in knowledge and skill is a form of investment in capital that is named human capital, resulting in the theory of human capital being widely acclaimed in economics. Human capital theory, further developed by Grey Becker (1964), where he states that the most important investment one can make in human capital is to invest in education and training. Moreover, empirically, there have been many studies conducted over the years showing how investment in education and training results in better livelihood opportunities and higher incomes. In this way, Shauri and Oswago (2010) study found that the vocational training for refugees in Kenya showed positive performance, concluding that after the training, refugees improved in securing jobs. In the same way, a study by Diana Van Dijk, Janne ten Have, and Melissa Kotiso (2022) shows how vocational training helped refugees better integrate into the Dutch work culture.

A study conducted by Grawert and Mielke (2018) comprehensively studies how Afghans secure their livelihood in Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. The study found that the skills acquired during displacement have a positive impact on the livelihood outcome in the future. The study also highlighted the significance of the Trans-local network for Afghans as a livelihood pillar and 'established-outsider relations' as an enabling condition. Moreover, the study also explains how the social class determines livelihood outcomes. A recent study, conducted by Dahlberg et al. (2024) in Sweden, evaluated the programs for labor market integration. The study found that these programs have a large positive effect on the employment of the program. These programs included early and intensive language training, work practice with supervisors, and job search assistance.

Studies in the context of refugees and their impact on the labor market have been conducted in Pakistan and other countries. A study by Ali et al. (2021), where the labor market inclusion of Afghan refugees in Pakistan has been studied through Bourdieu's theory of capital. The findings of the study showed that the low capital endowment of refugees is due to a low level of financial resources, while the emotional capital is shaped by the trauma and psychological distress, and the identity capital through a negative perception towards Afghan refugees in Pakistan. The study argues that this is further reduced by the symbolic violence against refugees here in the form of short-term government policies, bribery to police to escape abuse, and workplace discrimination. To overcome these challenges, refugees do mobilize their capital endowment for better labor market inclusion through resilience as emotional capital, identity, social and cultural capital in the shape of ethnic, linguistic, and religious similarities.

A study by Jacobsen and Fratzke (2016) highlights the shortcomings the refugee livelihood programs often face. They identify four major shortcomings, starting with the lack of mapping of the political and economic landscape, insufficient evaluation of such programs, a lack of coordination among various organizations involved in these programs, and lastly, a lack of trained staff that can implement such programs effectively.

Moreover, Aydın (2021) has analyzed how Syrian refugee women in Turkey use social capital to get jobs in the Non-Governmental Organization. A study conducted by Javaid et al. (2022) highlights that refugees have a positive impact on the labor market in Pakistan in the long run. A relevant study in this context was conducted by Aziz (2019), examining the impact of vocational training for Afghan refugees in Balochistan, which highlights the positive effects of vocational training on employability, earnings, and work-related aptitudes.

This study, however, examines challenges or barriers refugees face while being part of the skill-building programs. It explores the challenges faced by refugees participating in these programs and gathers their recommendations for improvement. This study specifically asks about the challenges/barriers that refugees face in the skill-building programs that can affect their better skill

acquisition and better livelihood opportunities once the skill program is complete. Moreover, the NGOs sector experts are also part of the study for the identification of challenges and for the improvement in the skill programs.

2.1 Research Gap

The implementation of the skill-building programs by UNHCR partner NGOs in the refugee settlement in Quetta and refugee villages in Pishin remains unexplored. Moreover, there is a lack of research on the challenges/barriers that refugees often encounter during their participation in such programs. Additionally, little attention has been given to understanding refugees' skill preferences in urban Quetta and camps through targeted surveys. This study aims to address these gaps by providing insights to enhance the accessibility and impact of skill-building programs.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This research was conducted utilizing a mixed-method approach to explore the refugee perspective on the skills development programs by the UNCHR partner NGOs in the districts of Quetta and Pishin. In the qualitative method, this study focused on the refugees, policymakers, and NGO representatives to explore their perspective of these programs, barriers, and challenges faced by the refugees (Patton, 2015). Qualitative methods include semi-structured interviews and focused group discussions. The quantitative approach is useful in understanding the trends in skills-building programs. Furthermore, the study adopts an exploratory sequential design where quantitative data is required to validate and verify the qualitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

3.1 Research Design

An exploratory sequential research design is followed in this study. It is a mixed-methods research design where qualitative data is collected first, analyzed for an in-depth understanding of the research problem, followed by the quantitative data collection, which validates and verifies the qualitative findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). First, the semi-structured interviews and focused group discussion were conducted with Afghan refugees, and the NGOs' members involved to explore their views on the skill-building programs, the barriers that refugees face, and recommendations for further improvements (Patton, 2015). The insights from the qualitative data then informed our survey to identify the other needed skill programs (Babbie, 2020). This study then integrated the findings from both the qualitative data and quantitative data for a nuanced understanding of the issue, which ensured findings to be detailed and widely applicable (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

3.2 Target Population

The target population in this study is divided into three main groups. The first one is the refugees who have participated in the skill-building programs in the districts Quetta and Pishin. Secondly, refugees who have not availed of skill-building programs are mainly asked for further skills that they think need to be included. Lastly, the relevant stakeholders, such as policymakers and NGO representatives, who are involved in refugee livelihood programs, are interviewed for a better insight into the design, implementation, and challenges faced in such initiatives for both refugees and the organizations.

3.3 Sampling Technique

3.3.1 Refugee Sample:

Purposive sampling was used to select refugees based on their participation in the skill-building programs. 'This type of sampling is essentially to do with the selection of units (which may be people, organizations, documents, departments, and so on), with direct reference to the research questions being asked' (Bryman, 2012, Page 416). Furthermore, convenience sampling was also utilized for the online survey form. The convenience sampling method is used when the sample is simply available to the researcher by virtue of its accessibility, and the researcher chooses this sample technique considering time, cost, etc. (Bryman, 2012). For purposive sampling, a sample of 30 to 35 refugees was interviewed to achieve data saturation. In qualitative studies, the sample size cannot be established at the outset as to how many people need to be interviewed, and the researchers rely on data saturation (Bryman, 2012). While for the convenience sampling for an online survey form a total of 76 refugees participated.

3.3.2 Policymakers and NGO Representatives:

For choosing the policy makers and NGO representatives, a purposive sampling technique was used as they were involved in the refugee livelihood programs and skill-building programs in Quetta and Pishin.

3.3.3 Geographical Focus

The geographical focus is limited to the urban refugee settlements in the district Quetta and the refugee villages in the Saranan and Surkhhab. The choice of Quetta (refugee population: 170,148) and Pishin (refugee population: 52,051) ensures access to data and facilitates a focused analysis of livelihood interventions in these areas.

3.3.4 Sample Size

A sample size of 30-35 skilled refugees was selected through purposive sampling. Moreover, a sample size of 76 was selected for an online survey form through convenience sampling to collect quantitative data on skill trends.

3.3.5 Data Collection Method

The data is collected through semi-structured interviews, focused group discussions, and an online survey form. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with the Afghan refugees who were currently availing skills-building programs and the NGO members part of these programs. Secondly, Focused group discussions were conducted with the Afghan refugees verify and validate findings from the semi-structured interviews (Bryman 2012). Lastly, the online survey form asked for what other skills were required to be introduced in the refugee settlements.

3.3.6 Data Analysis

The qualitative data were analysed through thematic analysis. The thematic analysis starts with the transcription of the data; the transcribed data is coded to identify the emerging themes relevant to the research objectives (Clarke & Braun, 2013). The steps that involved in the thematic analysis are: familiarizing yourself with themes, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and, finally, producing a report (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The main themes were the barriers/challenges refugee faced and the recommendations for the improvement of the program. On the other hand, the Quantitative data included the online survey form, that was analyzed through the Excell sheet, and the results are presented in the form of charts/graphs.

The data from interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) were analyzed through thematic analysis, while the online survey was analysed using quantitative analysis methods.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

In the overall process of this study, especially the field work where the primary data is collected with the refugees, all the ethical steps were followed identified by Bryman (2012). Before going to the field, approval was taken from the university review board. Consent forms were signed and also verbal consent was taken from all the participating individuals in the interviews and the FGDs. To protect participants' privacy, the norms of anonymity and confidentiality were ensured.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section analyses challenges or barriers of the skill-building programs by the Taraqee Foundation in urban refugee settlements in district Quetta and the Innovative Development Organization's skill-building programs in urban Quetta, Saranan, and Surkhab refugee camps. Moreover, the challenges or barriers are identified, and recommendations are provided for future improvements in these programs based on the interviews, focused group discussions, and an online survey form with refugees and other stakeholders.

4.1 Challenges for Refugees in Skill Building Programs

This section is mainly about the challenges that refugees face in skill-building programs. The first paragraph will deal with the challenges faced by refugees in the Urban Cohesion Hub of Innovative Development Organization in Quetta. The second paragraph deals with the challenges refugees are facing in the skill-building programs in the Saranan refugee camp. Moreover, the next paragraph will deal with the challenges that are faced by the beneficiaries of skill-building in Surkhab.

4.2 Challenges of refugees in the Urban Quetta

During the semi-structured interviews and focused group discussion in the Urban Cohesion Hub of Innovative Development Organization in the district Quetta, the participants highlighted a few important challenges that are being faced by the beneficiaries. Refugees highlighted that some skill-building programs are quite technical, such as mobile repairing, and it is not possible to cover such skills in a short duration of six months specifically the software part of mobile repairing requires more time. Moreover, they also said that the stipend provided, which is six thousand rupees only, is insufficient. Lastly, refugee beneficiaries at the UCH Quetta highlighted a lack of inclusivity in the skill-building programs, noting that key skills relevant to their needs were not included in the offerings.

4.3 Challenges of Refugees in Saranan Refugee Camp

There are a few important challenges that were mentioned by the beneficiaries of the skill-building program in Saranan refugee camp by the Innovative Development Organization (IDO). A major issue that the beneficiaries mentioned was outdated equipment. The IDO, upon graduation of the beneficiaries, provides equipment/ toolkits needed for the beneficiaries to further continue their skill and make it a source of income. The equipment which are provided were mostly outdated, as mentioned, refugee beneficiaries specifically in the context of the tailoring machine, and with this equipment, they cannot compete in the market.

Another major challenge that refugee beneficiaries face in Saranan is the lack of electricity, due to which the types of equipment provided cannot be utilized, such as tailoring machines. The beneficiaries at the Saranan also mentioned that the stipend provided is insufficient. Moreover, refugees at Saranan also mentioned the lack of inclusivity in the skill-building program and a lack of a few other important skills, specifically female beneficiaries stressed for more skills to incorporate, and at which they are already skilled, and suited to market demand.

4.4 Challenges of Refugees in Surkhab Refugee Camp

In the Surkhab refugee camp, the beneficiaries of the skill-building programs of IDO highlighted many challenges that they are facing concerning the skill-building programs. A major issue that the beneficiaries believed was the outdated types of equipment provided upon graduation from the program. They mentioned that the equipment provided is not advanced according to market need, specifically in the skill of the solar food drying program. The current types of equipment are inefficient and time-consuming. Furthermore, the beneficiaries in Surkhab also highlighted that individually they do not have the capacity to export the dry food to the market. They believed that a community Center could better do it as it would allow them to take large orders and fulfill them on time collectively. This will lead to more efficiency and productivity, according to refugees. The two more challenges were the lack of inclusivity in the skill offering and the insufficient stipend to meet their basic needs.

Through an online survey from refugees, when asked What is your biggest challenge to participating in skill development programs? The responses are shown in figure 1. The most selected option is the lack of access to the training centers. The second option selected is limited access to the equipment.

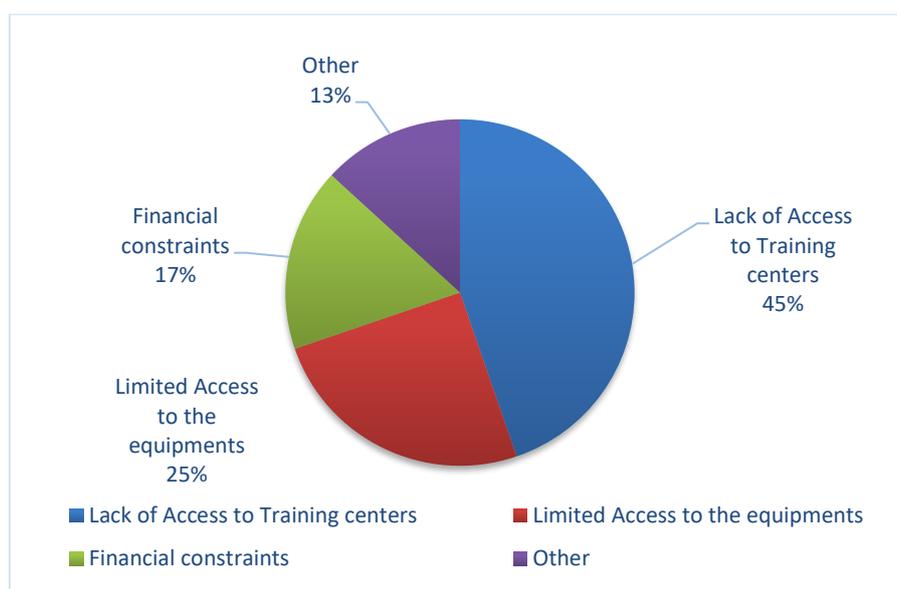


Figure 1. What is your biggest challenge to participating in skill development programs?

4.5 Recommendations for improving Skill Building Programs

This section deals with the recommendations based on interviews with refugee and NGO representatives, focus group discussions, and an online survey form. The recommendations provided here are context-specific, and the recommendations for each skill-building program are different, e.g., for the skill-building program in Saranan, the recommendations are different from those for the skill-building program in Surkhab. The first part deals with the recommendations for the skill-building program in Urban Quetta. The second part deals with the recommendations for the skill-building program in Saranan. Lastly, the recommendations for the skill-building program in Surkhab are provided.

4.6 Recommendations for the Skill Building Program in Urban Quetta

This section deals with the recommendations for the skill-building program in district Quetta, which is an urban refugee settlement. The recommendations are drawn from the interviews, focused group discussions, and an online survey form with refugees and other stakeholders.

The most common recommendation from the refugees was an increase in the monthly stipend given to them. The basic reason for the increment in the monthly stipend was given by the refugees as the amount provided is insufficient to meet their basic needs. As the class duration almost starts from 10 am to 12 or 1 pm, it is the time when refugees mostly work in different sectors. The major beneficiaries of the skill-building program are the daily wage refugees, and they are the only breadwinners of the family. If they

avail these programs, then they are unable to go for other daily wage work due to limited time and their family day to day livelihood is disturbed. To conclude, they highlighted that the six thousand rupees stipend is insufficient.

The second recommendation for improving this program highlighted by the refugee was to increase the duration of some technical skill-building programs, such as mobile repairing as the software part of the mobile repairing is quite technical, highlighted the refugees.

The most important one that refugees in the Urban Cohesion Hub highlighted was that more skills should be offered. Refugee beneficiaries specifically asked for courses like Basic computer literacy and general electrician. Moreover, female refugees in the Urban Quetta specifically asked for the introduction of skills such as a beautician, etc. They believed these skills are in demand in the market, which could lead to a better livelihood.

An online survey is also conducted with refugees to gather their recommendations for the new skills that should be incorporated. A total of seventy-six refugees participated in the online survey form, through convenience sampling. Both from the refugee villages and the Urban settlements.

When asked What type of skills are you most interested in learning? The most liked skill was the digital marketing skill in the Urban refugee settlement in Quetta. Below is the graph showing the result (figure 2). Note that this chart only represents the findings from participants from male Urban refugee settlements.

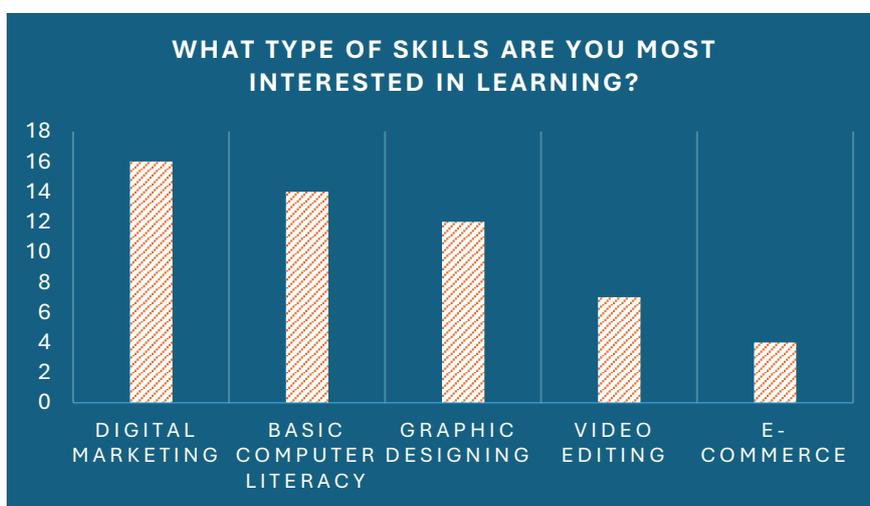


Figure 2. Skill Trends in Urban Quetta (What type of skills are you most interested in learning?)

The second most liked option in Urban Quetta is basic computer literacy, and the third is graphic design. This shows an interest in the new skills and a shift from the traditional skills.

In the next chart (figure 3), refugee males and females are asked for their perspective on the skill that they are interested to learn. This contains the overall ratio of male and female participants from both Refugee villages and the Urban refugee settlements. The chart below presents the findings.

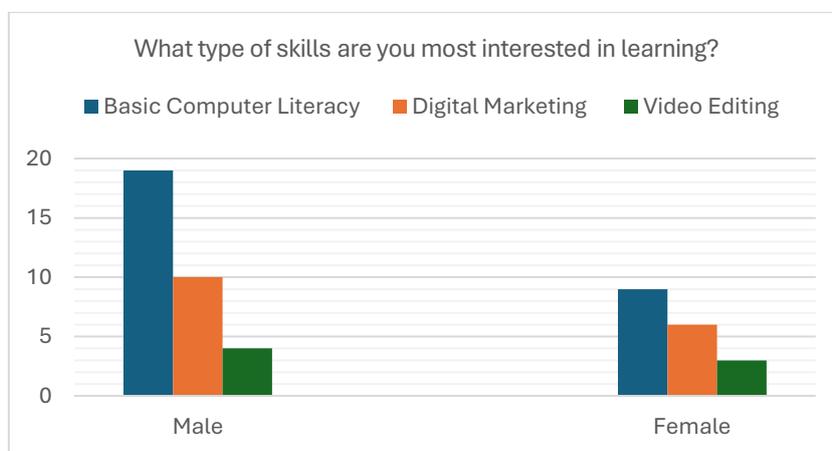


Figure 3. Male Female comparative Ratio (What type of skills are you most interested in learning?)

The most liked skills among males (both from refugee villages and urban settlements) are basic computer literacy, secondly, the most liked option is digital marketing, and lastly, video editing is the most liked option, and the same goes for the female refugee participants. Note that this chart represents the findings from all participants, including males from urban refugee settlements and refugee villages, and females from urban refugee settlements and refugee villages collectively.

To implement this, UNHCR can initiate these skill-building programs independently, like currently practiced through IDO, TF, etc or a better option is to sign a memorandum of understanding with the DIGIBIZZ, NAVTTC, or DIGISKILL, as these organizations are already providing skill-building programs to the host community and refugees in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

4.7 Recommendations for the Skill Building programs in Refugee Villages

This section deals with the recommendations for the skill-building program in the refugee villages of Saranan and Surkhab. These recommendations are based on semi-structured interviews, focused group discussions, and an online survey form with refugees and experts in this field of study.

The most common recommendation provided by the refugees in the Saranan and Surkhab camps was the upgrade of the equipment provided at the end of the session. In Saranan refugee beneficiaries from the tailoring skill highlighted that the equipment provided at the end of the session are not upgraded and not competitive according to the market need. The upgradation in the equipment will not only lead to market competitiveness but also efficiency and increase in production. Adding to this, refugee beneficiaries from the tailoring skill also mentioned that the lack of electricity in the refugee camp of Saranan makes the equipment repugnant or useless. For the solution, they recommended that a solar panel with a battery be provided to each beneficiary so that they can utilize their skills and equipment without any issue. The same issue was highlighted in the Surkhab refugee camp. The beneficiaries from the Solar food dryer highlighted that the machine, through which they dehydrate food, is low in production and unable to meet the demands of the market and the needs of the beneficiaries. They also recommended the upgradation of the machinery used in the solar food dryer.

Moreover, during the interviews and focused group discussions, refugees from Saranan and Surkhab also recommended diversifying skill offerings. Female refugees from Saranan are recommended for the Skill related to stitching, which they thought is highly in demand, and also the females in Saranan are also somehow skilled in the said skill of stitching. The formal channalization would make its impact real. Furthermore, the basic computer literacy program was also recommended by the refugees both in Saranan and Surkhab. This point is made further clearer by the online survey form conducted, as highlighted by the chart.

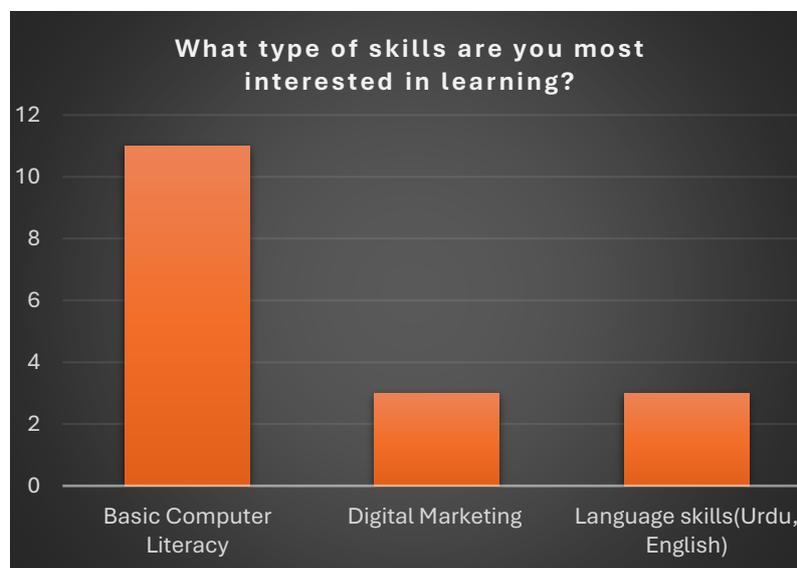


Figure 4. Skill Trends in RVs (What type of skills are you most interested in learning?)

The chart (figure 4) shows that the basic computer literacy program is highly demanded by the refugees in the refugee villages. Moreover, the second demanded skill through the chart is digital marketing and language skills, such as Urdu and English. This highlights the change in the trend and refugee villages focusing on modern skills.

Moreover, refugees in Surkhab mentioned that community centers are more efficient for skill-building programs. They highlighted that working collectively in the community center would lead to more production and efficiency. They recommended that community centers be established in refugee villages specifically for skills such as solar food dryers.

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