"I was born here"

Children's participation and
refugee education in Pakistan

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"I WAS BORN HERE"

CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION AND REFUGEE EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN

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Acknowledgements

1. Introduction

Over the last four decades, there have been several waves of movement across the borders due to recurring conflict in Afghanistan, as well as internal displacement within the country due to conflict and natural disaster. Pakistan remains one of the five largest refugee-hosting countries in the world; as of June 2022, an estimated 1.3 million registered refugees live in Pakistan, 99% of whom are from Afghanistan.[1] Including undocumented individuals and those of other status, estimates go up to 3.3 million people of Afghan origin. Almost half of refugees in Pakistan are children.

Globally, there is high evidence that forced migration is becoming an increasingly urban phenomenon – in 2016, over 60% of refugees lived in urban areas where they can have a greater measure of autonomy in the pursuit of dignified lives.[2] This is visible in the case of Pakistan - while designated "refugee villages" hosted by the UNHCR do exist, almost 70% of refugees holding Proof of Registration (PoR) cards live in urban and peri-urban areas.[3] Still more are unregistered, a reality which further exacerbates the vulnerabilities of urban poverty.

Refugee children face particular challenges in terms of both accessing as well as continuing education. Pakistan is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, but there is a national commitment to education for all, enshrined in Article 25A of the Constitution. In principle this means the provision of free public education at the primary level to every child, regardless of background. However, according to the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring report 2019, the Afghan refugee primary net enrolment rate stands at 29 percent, less than half the national rate in Pakistan of 71 percent.[4] While urban neighbourhoods can offer proximity to schools and education services, in reality, barriers to access and retention remain, particularly for those who live in informal settlements on the peripheries of cities.

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[1] UNHCR. (2022). *UNHCR Pakistan Fact Sheet*.

[2] Archer, D., & Dodman, D. (2016). The urbanisation of humanitarian crises. *Environment and Urbanisation Brief*, *36*.

[3] UNHCR. (2022). *UNHCR Pakistan Fact Sheet*.

[4] UNESCO. (2019). 59, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2019: Migration, Displacement and Education – Building Bridges, not Walls*. UNESCO.

The purpose of the research project was to explore how children with a history of forced mobility and urban poverty respond to educational programmes that enable meaningful participation, and engage them as agents of change in their communities.

We looked, in particular, at the experiences of children of Afghan origin who participated in a Child to Child programme during COVID-19. The "Partners in Learning" or "Seekho Sikhao Saathi" programme was adapted and implemented by the organisation Cities for Children in informal settlements in Islamabad, Pakistan, drawing upon a Child to Child early learning model called "Getting Ready for School.[5]" Through this, older children aged 10-14 were trained to deliver playful early learning sessions to younger children aged 3-6 in safe ways within their communities, to offset the impact of school closures. The programme aimed to preserve a link with learning while boosting resilience and agency for children during COVID-19.

It was seen that while the participatory programme did indeed bring gains in terms of socioemotional learning, sense of agency and motivation to stay in school, longer term retention and performance were linked to structural factors beyond the control of the individual child.

Methodology

The methodology was two-pronged: Secondary data analysis of the qualitative feedback collected from children by Cities for Children via weekly reflection questionnaires and Focus Group Discussions related to their experience of the programme; and firsthand interviews of pre-selected participants to gain a more dimensional picture of their experiences of mobility and migration. The interviewees will be identified by the partner schools based on their experiences of mobility and interaction with the education system.

The primary research questions guiding the project were:
- **How does the experience of mobility affect the educational trajectory of children in Pakistan?**
- **How can participatory programmes have an impact on children's sense of agency and their wider socioemotional skills?**

Based on the data, the researcher reviewed the complex interplay of factors that impact the children's academic trajectory and socioemotional skills. Initially, particular emphasis was placed on how the Child to Child model and experience of leading learning for others during COVID-19 impacted students' sense of agency, and sense of personal wellbeing.

Limitations

While the small sample size of interview respondents poses limitations, the information particularly on challenges they shared can be extrapolated to broader refugee experiences, and is corroborated by international evidence on refugee education.

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[5] Child to Child. (2010). *Getting Ready for School.* https://www.childtochild.org.uk/projects/getting-ready-for-school/

2. The Partners in Learning Programme

COVID-19 and the threat to learning[6]

This is my picture
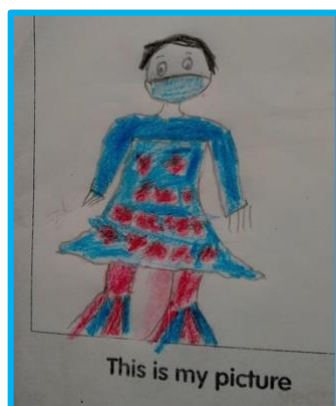
In April 2020, schools in Pakistan were closed indefinitely in order to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. This pattern of school closures caused huge concerns about learning losses globally - it was estimated that 1.6 billion learners in about 190 countries would be affected[7] and decades of progress in education would be eliminated. Moreover, research suggests that the impact of school closures may be strongest at foundational years of education; school closures for an estimate of 3 months during grade 3 can cause 72 percent of students "falling so far behind by grade 10 that they will have to drop out" or be incapable of learning further[8]. While the world quickly pivoted towards digital and online solutions, it also meant that children without access to technology fell further behind.

Street-connected children were particularly vulnerable to the social and economic shocks of COVID-19. During periods of lockdown, they were hugely impacted by loss of individual and family livelihoods, and were often excluded from official welfare programmes due to lack of formal documentation. Many of the education and protection services they accessed closed down indefinitely, and it was hard for them to follow the guidelines to "stay home." In addition, the longer they stayed out of school, the harder it was for them to return to education.

Seekho Sikhao Saathi (SSS) - or "Partners in Learning" – was a response by Cities for Children to school closures during COVID-19, to support street-connected children served by the Pehli Kiran School System (PKSS). It was based on the Child to Child model of older children (Big Partners) to deliver early learning sessions to younger children (Little Partners) within their communities, in safe ways.[9] The original Child to Child Getting Ready for School programme was piloted in six countries in 2007, with the support of UNICEF - and has since been adapted for various contexts including flood-affected districts of Sindh, Pakistan.

When the pandemic struck in 2020, Cities for Children carried out a rapid adaptation and translation process of the open-source GRS materials, adding in additional play-based sessions. These additional sessions drew upon Montessori principles and were based on the CfC philosophy that **"happy memories build resilience"** for children in difficult circumstances.

The key objectives of the programme were to:

- mitigate learning losses from school closure and ensure continued engagement and mental stimulation for young learners
- lower risk of drop-out for students of the Pehli Kiran Schools and provide motivation to continue attending when schools reopen.

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[6] Information from Cities for Children internal report
[7] United Nations. (2020). *Policy Brief: Education during COVID-19 and beyond*.
[8] Ibid.
[9] For more information on the Getting Ready for School, see: https://www.childtochild.org.uk/projects/getting-ready-for-school/

- provide safe spaces for children to learn and play, promoting their wellbeing during this crisis.

Initially, sessions were designed for one quarter – and until schools opened, 14 sessions were delivered over a 7-week period, kicking off in July 2020. Another iteration followed when schools reopened, but for the purposes of this research project the focus was on children who participated in the initial pilot programme.

"We hadn't touched books for a while in COVID-19 – books were in one place, bags were in another. So we got the chance to open the books once again."
- Boy respondent for GCRF

The teachers shared that the programme helped bring back a "mindset to learn[10]", by creating a sense of routine and drawing children back towards books.

> ***WHO WERE THE PARTNERS IN LEARNING?***
> *The roughly 300 Big Partners and 1000 Little Partners were students of 8 non-formal schools constituting the Pehli Kiran School System serving children from refugee, migrant and internally displaced communities in Islamabad, Pakistan. Each school is based in a different urban slum settlement or "katchi abadi," and is adapted for that particular setting. The programme was kept deliberately flexible, with schools having autonomy over implementation; in some contexts sessions happened mostly in the open-air school setting due to the absence of community spaces; while in others they were hosted mostly in homes; and others had more of a hybrid model. Given the ever-changing nature of restrictions during COVID-19, flexibility and adaptation was a key feature of the programme.*

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[10] Focus group discussion transcripts

Impact for younger children – foundational skills
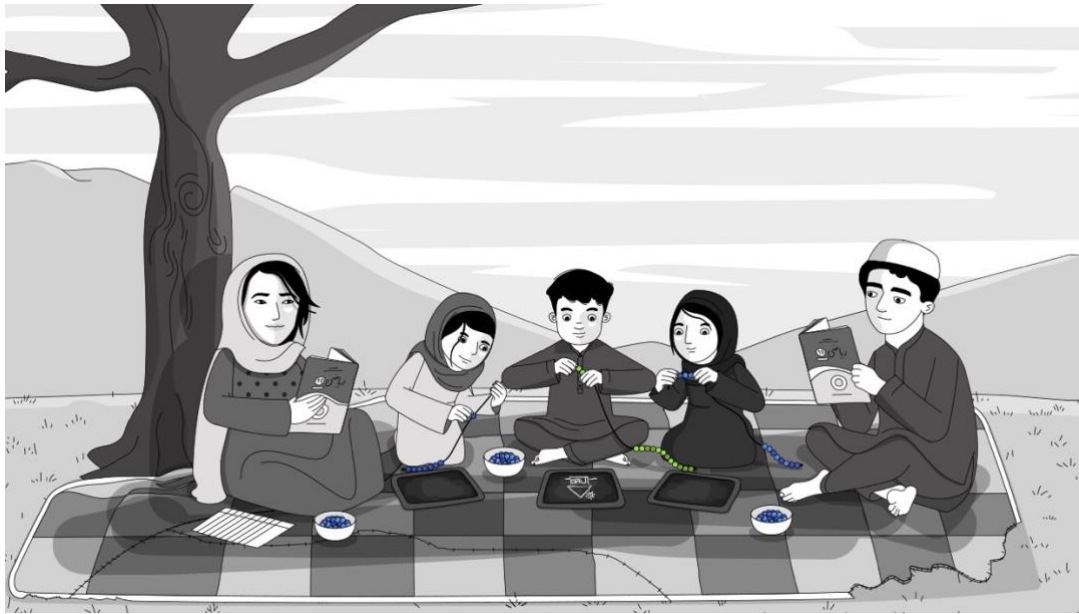
The sessions had value in the immediate term as they created a sense of normalcy, which was important to reinforce young children's mental health and longer term resilience. The occurrence of the sessions and the continuation of the learning journey for Little Partners therefore had intrinsic value, and teachers reported that when schools re-started, they entered ready to learn.

Cities for Children was able to measure demonstrable impact in the domains of literacy, numeracy and motor skills for the younger children. E.g., at the end of the first round, at the playgroup level:

- skills like counting from 1-10 more than doubled
- ability to sort objects by shape rose by 60%
- ability to interpret and "tell" a three-step picture story doubled[11]

In the particular schools approached for the research project, where a sizeable proportion of children of Afghan origin were present, the attendance data is presented in the diagram below.
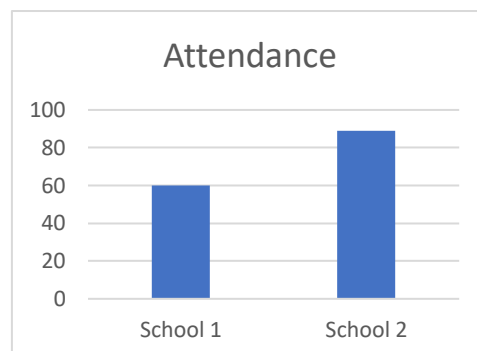
School 1 serves more of a mixed community including children of Afghan origin as well as Pashtun families from within Pakistan and migrant families from Punjab province. School 2 serves more of a

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[11] For more information, see "Seekho Sikhao Saathi" Report Summary: https://www.citiesforchildren.co/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Landscape-version-Report-Summary-2.pdf

specifically Pashtun and Afghan community. As above, attendance from the mixed community was significantly higher than the largely Afghan origin community (about 30% higher).

Impact for older children – socioemotional learning

There were several sources of qualitative data indicating impact for Big Partners – **weekly reflection records**, that were filled In order to internalise their experiences and document their learning; **focus group discussions** with children, parents and teachers; and **body-mapping exercises** in which children reflected on how they had felt themselves change before and after the programme. Data from all of these was triangulated to inform an initial analysis on socioemotional learning, after which specific outcome areas were identified for further study in future iterations.

Some of the common self-identified themes from weekly reflection records from the first iteration are presented in the word diagram below.

creativity
CONFIDENCE
LEADERSHIP
GROUP   problem-solving
MANAGEMENT
empathy

The impact for older children in the pilot was initially analysed using the CASEL framework for socioemotional learning (SEL), consisting of the following five domains: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making.[12] The diagram below illustrates the relative importance as self-reported by the children through open-ended questioning and evaluation exercises, at the end of the second iteration. The information was drawn from 68 body-maps at the end of the second iteration, and shows "counts" of how many times children self-reported impact within a particular domain.
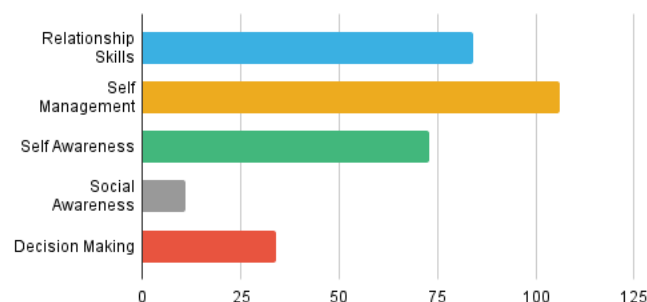
Figure 1 Socioemotional domain vs. Response Count[13]

Further analysis revealed that the social and emotional development indicators most observed in the older children were as follows:

- Developing a positive self-image
- Learning to communicate with confidence and kindness

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[12] For details on the components of the domains, see: www.CASEL.org
[13] Source: Cities for Children internal report on Impact for Big Partners, by Minha Khan

- Displaying self-control and non-violent conflict resolution
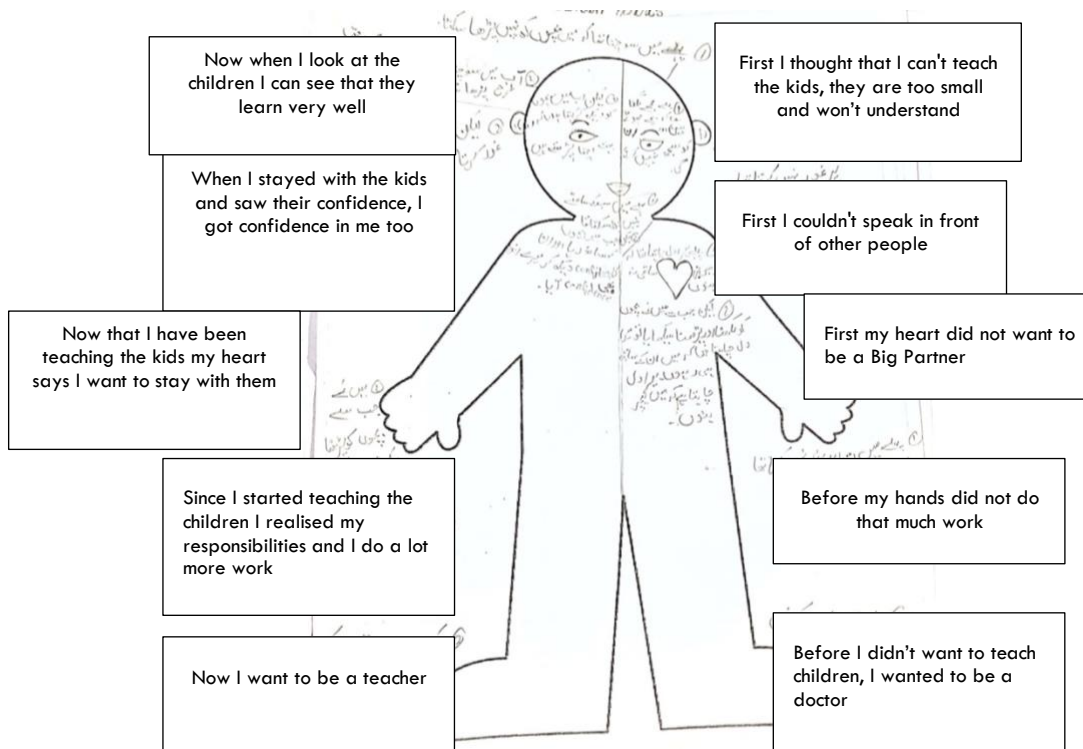- Developing empathy and community care

Now when I look at the children I can see that they learn very well

When I stayed with the kids and saw their confidence, I got confidence in me too

Now that I have been teaching the kids my heart says I want to stay with them

Since I started teaching the children I realised my responsibilities and I do a lot more work

Now I want to be a teacher

First I thought that I can't teach the kids, they are too small and won't understand

First I couldn't speak in front of other people

First my heart did not want to be a Big Partner

Before my hands did not do that much work

Before I didn't want to teach children, I wanted to be a doctor

Figure 2 Sample body map showing impact on Big Partner skills and self-perception

Reading as a skill

The first time, it was very hard. We didn't even know how to read. Then the madams taught us and we also did it. Slowly it became easy for us and it also became fun for us to teach.
- 14 year old Boy respondent for GCRF

One of the spillover effects of the programme for the Big Partners was improvement in reading skills, as they had to read as well as understand the session plans in order to deliver them. When asked what they learnt or retained from the programme, one of the most common responses from children of refugee backgrounds was that they learnt to read.

This was significant in terms of the return to school, and combatting what the World Bank terms "learning poverty". This looks as reading as a "gateway to learning" in other areas. For Afghan and Pashtun students for whom Urdu was a second language, this was significant as it would have a wider impact on their ability to engage with learning materials across all subjects at school.[14]

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[14] World Bank. (2021, April 28). *What is learning poverty?* https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/brief/what-is-learning-poverty

3. Returning to Big Partners – A Year On

The value of the programme as an intervention to support children's resilience and learning in crisis was adequately demonstrated. However, part of the research project was a consideration of whether or not a participatory Child to Child programme such as Partners in Learning can have a longer term impact on educational trajectories for children whose families have experienced protracted, forced displacement. The semi-structured interviews enabled an exploration of the greater structural factors that influence decisions surrounding children's education.

Out of the 13 children interviewed:
- 3 had dropped out at the end of primary school, with 2 being on the brink of dropout
- At least 2 had repeated at least one school year in the aftermath of COVID-19
- 6 were already continuing on – or expressed plans to continue on – to secondary education.
- The average number of siblings was 9, with 6 being the lowest and 12 being the highest.

All but one of the interviewees had at least one parent who was born in Afghanistan. One girl's family was from Waziristan, a region which has also experienced violent conflict and the spillover of conflict from Afghanistan in the last few decades. School 2 was identified as one in which performance and retention remained particularly challenging – more so than other schools in the system serving which serve a mix of ethnically Punjabi and Pashtun communities.

Unpacking challenges

In terms of academic performance and retention, part of the challenge was of course the return to learning following the disruptions of COVID-19. There was a clear language barrier for several of the interviewees, which could hinder learning and performance across all subject areas. In the firsthand interviews with children, the following themes emerged as the most significant in determining their pathways through education:

a) **Gender**

"Abu says you can study till 8, that's it. Our people do purdah."

- Girl Respondent for GCRF

According to the UNESCO GEM report (2019), in Pakistan, the primary net enrolment rate of Afghan refugee girls was half that of boys and less than half the primary attendance rate for girls in Afghanistan. This also reflects broader gender differences in Pakistan – according to the Malala Fund, only 13% of girls reach grade nine.[15] This is partly due to traditional gender expectations and cultural constraints, as shared by some of the female interviewees who had dropped out – one girl even shared that she *"didn't want to get her picture taken to put on the school form."*

Girls were hesitant to share reasons for dropout, with some preferring to remain quiet when asked about future plans to stay in school. Conversely, boys were able to articulate their goals clearly and to speak more confidently about continuing education, even while experiencing other barriers. For instance, the following was shared by a boy who represents a success story for the schools and is currently studying as well as working as a medical apprentice:

"I always wanted to study more, move forward, become something and do something for the rest of us."

b) Urban Poverty

"The only problem is, how will our household survive? My father is old, sometimes he doesn't work for three or four days. All the shopkeepers are standing to collect debt. Our house doesn't even have drinking water."
- Girl Respondent for GCRF

According to researcher David Satterthwaite, "Daily life in the worst slums ought to be considered a humanitarian emergency." The everyday challenges and insecurity of living with uncertain income, lack of security of tenure, overcrowding, and lack of access to basic services like water and sanitation take a toll on children and their educational trajectories. The cycles of debt often experienced by the urban poor were exacerbated by phenomena like the COVID-19 pandemic – a UN-Habitat survey found that one-third of urban slum dwellers in Rawalpindi had lost their jobs following a lockdown.[16]

Most interviewees reported having 10-11 siblings, and those with older siblings shared how they had dropped out to begin work. In particular boys were reported to start working in bazaars (markets) vending items, joining shops or starting daily wage labour. For girls, investment in education can be seen as an unnecessary burden, even with minimal costs.

c) Documentation

"I was born here, everything. I studied here, completed my education here and now I'm going to get admission in pharmacy school. For the rest, we have been given an ID card from NADRA which just says we are an Afghan citizen – it is just used for identity but can't be used like a Pakistan CNIC, which you can use in a bank or to get land in your name. This card that was given to us is just for identity purposes."
- Boy respondent for GCRF

Despite the protracted nature of displacement for many Afghan refugees, there have been few formal pathways to citizenship. While Pakistani nationality laws stipulate that children born in the country should automatically have birthright citizenship, in practice this has not been the case. Until the recent

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[15] *Malala Fund Pakistan Overview*. Retrieved April 10, 2023, from https://malala.org/countries/pakistan
[16] ASER Pakistan. (2021). 12. *Learning Quality in the Katchi Abadis of Pakistan*.

crisis in Afghanistan in 2022, the official policy of the Pakistan government and UNHCR towards Afghan refugees was geared towards voluntary repatriation.

Even now, the identity document issued to Afghan refugees is the Proof of Registration (PoR) card, which gives the legal right to reside in the country for the period of its validity. In recent years, there were large-scale efforts to register undocumented individuals and families.[17] However, many in informal urban settings preferred to remain under the radar, despite increased risks of harassment and vulnerability, for fear of being asked to return. The current UNHCR guidance is non-return to Afghanistan – but undocumented individuals can no longer apply for a PoR card or be eligible for UNHCR assistance.[18]

"We don't have Pakistani ID card, but really thanks to this school that they got me admission in school after this. Otherwise if we had gone from here, no one else would have taken us in school."
- 14 year old boy respondent for GCRF

Pakistan has committed to providing free and compulsory education to all children between the ages of 5 and 16, regardless of background or circumstances. However, registration in schools requires having a B-form and identification documents for parents, which are often not available particularly for unregistered children. For children lacking the requisite documentation – and sometimes for children even having the right documents – the practical exercise of gaining admission in government schools can mean navigating several bureaucratic hurdles. This is partially in the context of already strained resources in government schools, as well as overcrowding in classrooms. Those who had successfully gained entry to government schools after Grade 5 shared how they had needed special support from school staff, who had worked with the relevant government ministries to facilitate admission for individual students.

d) Mobility

"Abu said we will study where we are moving, to a village in Balochistan."

While many of the children and young people had families that had been settled in the country for decades, sometimes even in the same community, there is an element of risk that comes with a lack of security of tenure, and the informal status of their settlements. Some had moved within the city – with some going back and forth from the current settlement. Others who were finding economic circumstances difficult were planning to move out of the city – like one family that was following community connections to a village in Balochistan.

Researchers working in refugee education have documented the challenges of repeated disruption to schooling, moving between different systems of learning and not being able to access content due to language barriers.[19] One boy had moved directly from Afghanistan, by his estimation 3 years earlier (the timeline could not be corroborated by the school). There, he had been enrolled in a madrassah (religious school). He had learnt Urdu from his teachers and friends and could speak the language with clarity and fluency – but a teacher later shared that he had needed to repeat classes and had not been able to progress. In his own words,

"I didn't know a word (of Urdu) even. Now Alhamdulillah I know it all. My mind is very sharp. I used to read Quran Pak in Afghanistan, in a madrassah. I learnt 3 or 4 siparahs (chapters) by heart. Then Ammi and Abu brought me here – I didn't want to! But they forced me to come. Then here they put me in a madrassah, then I wasn't leaving, then they said study in school till Class 4

[17] UNHCR. (2022, January 4). *Pakistan concludes 'drive' to issue smartcards to registered Afghan refugees*. Reliefweb.
[18] UNHCR. 2023. *UNCHR Pakistan Help*. https://help.unhcr.org/pakistan/proof-of-registration-card-por/
[19] Dryden-Peterson, S. (2015). *The Education Experiences of Refugee Children in Countries of First Asylum*.

or 5 then go to a madrassah. Even now I study in madrassah. I like school too…I know Urdu and Islamiat well. But English and Math I don't know so well. But I will learn them too."
- *Boy respondent for GCRF*

e) Quality of services

We got (my sister) admission in Islamabad Model College. She would study, she went for 3 weeks – but then when she came back one day, she cried the whole day. She said, I can't study there. The school teachers just come, chat with the other girls, write something on the board and leave. They don't take attendance, they don't do anything and just leave. So then how will I give the paper (exam)? Then she got sick (and didn't go back).
- Girl respondent for GCRF

The quality of publicly available education services in Pakistan is a strong factor linked to dropout. Large class sizes, low teacher motivation and learning poverty hinder children from continuing education, as they are unable to progress. In the interviews, children shared how learning in their community-based non-formal schools had been tailored for them, and how they had gotten individual support to move forward. The lack of capacity in the public school system to cater to the needs of vulnerable students, with the added complexity of language barriers, is an ongoing challenge.

What elements of the project live on?

The following themes are those that were shared in feedback rounds immediately following the programme, and that children returned to in the research interviews.

a) Positive shared memories

"When we taught the kids we also enjoyed it and learnt ourselves too. We would learn and read and also teach the kids."
- Girl respondent for GCRF

During a time of high stress, children built a repository of positive memories and shared experiences, which speak to how the programme positively impacted wellbeing at the time and supported children to cope with difficult circumstances. Being able to build bonds with children in the community added meaning to the experience for Big and Little Partners alike.

"They were all our friends. All are our brothers and sisters."
- Boy Respondent for GCRF

b) Empathy and alternatives to violence

"If we spoke to them angrily, kids would get scared. If we spoke with love, children would listen (be raazi)."
- *Girl Respondent for GCRF*

"I learnt this that when we were angry with the kids, they would not understand. If we get angry, they get scared, then things are not good."
- *Boy respondent for GCRF*

In a context with high levels of domestic violence, where corporal punishment in positions of authority is the norm, one lasting takeaway was the power of teaching others "with love." This was intentionally built into the progamme design as part of the emphasis on safeguarding, but changing norms and attitudes takes consistent effort and time – even in the round of interviews, one respondent still referred to corporal punishment as a way of dealing with children. However, the fact that several respondents remembered that they needed to deal softly with their Little Partners and seek non-violent ways of conflict resolution – and felt that this approach worked – was a huge achievement.

"The teachers would make us understand, then we would make the children also understand in a soft way and they would get it."
- Girl Respondent for GCRF)

c) Pride in achievement

"Ammi was very happy. She said you are becoming teachers!"
- Girl respondent for GCRF

At the time, parents in teachers in Focus Group Discussions reported how their perceptions around what children and young people could achieve had changed. Children, too, came away with a sense of having done something positive in the community and exercised individual agency to make a real change, having been called upon to keep the connection with education alive for others during a crucial time.

d) Respect for teachers

"I did not have the desire (shauq) to be a teacher, but when the kids came we found out we could teach them. Now I have a bit of shauq..."
- *Girl respondent for GCRF*

One of the recurring responses in the body-mapping data was that children and young people were inspired to think about becoming teachers in the future. Focus group discussions revealed that they had new-found respect for their teachers as they understood how difficult their work was, in terms of managing classes and students. This respect for the teaching profession was one element that lasted over time.

e) Recall of playful learning practices

"We also became small kids with them, when explaining to them! That's why they understood."
- Boy respondent for GCRF

"We learnt games, took a ball from school and played…It was a lot of fun."
- Girl respondent for GCRF

One of the objectives of the project was to promote positive mental health and learning through playful practices. According to the Lego Foundation, learning through play happens when the activity **joyful,** meaningful, engaging, iterative and involves **social interaction**.[20] Children learnt to use play as a tool in order to engage children, using a variety of methods including games, local stories and poems to reinforce learning objectives.

"What happens with that is that the brain becomes sharp and laziness goes away."
- *Boy respondent for GCRF*

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[20] Lego Foundation: Five Characteristics of Learning through Play
(https://www.legofoundation.com/media/1062/learningthroughplay_leaflet_june2017.pdf)

4. Policy implications

Before looking at wider policy implications, the question arises: **Given the challenges of mobility and urban poverty, what really made the difference for performance and retention?** At the grassroots community level, some of the key answers based on this research were:

- **Sustained support.**
  The support of the community school and staff in navigating barriers including documentation and future admissions was key, without which children's educational journeys would have been interrupted. Several children expressed their gratitude and said how they wouldn't be able to without the help of the school staff.

"The amount (the schools) have done for us, the way they have served us, no one does it."
– Boy Respondent for GCRF

- **Family support.**
  The commitment of parents to ensuring their children's education in spite of difficult circumstances was important, as they would often face the tradeoff between sending children to earn rather than to learn. Family support or lack thereof was also key in determining whether or not girls continued. Community outreach and awareness campaigns can therefore play a role in shifting attitudes and encouraging further education for children.

- **Personal qualities**.
  These mattered to some extent, e.g. there were girls and boys who were the only ones from their families to make it to school. One girl shared:

"I had the drive. I would tell my parents every day that I want to study in school, so I could get an education, so I could become a good human."

However, this personal agency mattered only to the extent that others around them were also supportive – within the same extended families, there were boys who reached higher levels of education than girls would ever be allowed to.

Moving forward, in order to ensure that children from refugee and displaced backgrounds in urban poverty stay on through primary school and transition on to secondary school there needs to be support at the grassroots as well as the policy levels. At the policy level, children need:

- **Removal of documentation barriers to entry.**
  The question of offering birthright citizenship to refugees is both politicized and contested. However, based on the existing constitutional commitment to offer education for all, the Government of Pakistan can address barriers to educational access for children by removing the B-form requirement for entry in mainstream schools, which requires parents to have a Pakistani CNIC. If, instead, birth certificates issued by local union councils could be used for school entry, this would help address barriers for out-of-school children from various backgrounds, including rural-urban migrants within the country.

- **Liaison with community-based schools and service providers.**
  In order to ensure that children can easily transition from non-formal education providers to the formal education system, the Government needs to work closely with community-based organisations. Not only can they leverage their community outreach, but can also develop a deeper understanding of challenges that can then be addressed.

- **Family access to poverty alleviation schemes.**
  For families in urban poverty, access to livelihoods and poverty alleviation schemes can help address the larger structural barriers that keep children out of school, by removing the need for negative coping mechanisms such as child labour and early marriage.

- **Special incentives and outreach for girls.**
  Specific outreach schemes creating awareness of why girls' education matters, and incentives to send girls to school can help overcome some of the obstacles that prevent girls from continuing education in the longer term.

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