

Research Article

## Fragile Future: Youth Insecurities and Their Relations with Police in Afghanistan and Pakistan

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**Abstract:** Youth are the backbone of any nation, and they are decisive in its development or destruction. A considerable portion of the population in both Afghanistan and Pakistan consists of youth. This paper discusses the impacts of unemployment, poverty, drug abuse, corruption, conflicts, and extremism on the experiences of young people in these countries. Vulnerabilities can become risk factors that, in turn, can increase the likelihood of youth being involved with the police. Although vulnerability and insecurity are common to both young women and men, girls and young women face additional challenges that increase their vulnerability to insecurities, such as gender-based violence. This article details how livelihood and personal insecurities are closely intertwined and further considers how these insecurities involve the police in one way or another. It argues that local community-oriented police initiatives and civil society organisation contributions can increase cooperation between youth and law enforcement agencies in addressing these challenges in a collaborative and trustful manner.

**Keywords:** community-oriented policing (COP) initiatives towards youth; corruption; CSO initiatives towards youth and human security drug abuse; gender-based violence; Youth insecurities

### 1. Introduction

‘The future belongs to our youth’—these famous words by Nelson Mandela hold true for many emerging and developing countries. Seventy percent of the population in emerging and developing countries are youth [1]. The World Bank’s Development Report (2011) highlights the problem of youth participation and calls for young people to be given more significant opportunities to participate in social life. If this does not occur, then the resulting frustration could lead to societal apathy and an increasing propensity for violence, the economic and social costs of which would be a predom-

inant barrier to development. A process of this kind could lead to the destabilisation of the country in the medium to long term [2]. While many scholars have considered that the rising number of young people drives the development of post-conflict countries, others have warned of a demographic disaster if increased attention is not placed on the concerns of youth, especially regarding youth unemployment, livelihood, education, and marginalisation [3]. The consequences of ignoring these issues could be severe—particularly if the energies of the youth are channelled towards violence, extremism, and destruction. Such a path could further affect youth’s trust in governmental institutions,

such as the police, which ensures security and safety, and it is paramount that their relationship with citizens is based on trust and rule of law.

In post-conflict societies, issues of personal and livelihood security are often intimately intertwined. Therefore, there is a need to understand how local communities manage the broader set of issues comprising human security, which focuses on two main areas: 'freedom from fear' and 'freedom from want'. It focuses on broader aspects of security, namely economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political aspects, and on the different forms of interlinked insecurity that people experience [4]. In its broadest sense, the term concentrates on human vulnerability, encompassing threats of all kinds [5]. 'A human security framework puts people's security in focus, and opens for an analysis of not only multiple sources of insecurity faced by communities, but also diversity of civil institutions (governmental and non-governmental) which together can address people's diverse security needs [6]. Some factors that contribute to the risks and vulnerabilities of youth, such as lack of livelihood, insufficient access to quality education, poor health, and gender challenges, can lead young people to violence, exclusion, criminal gangs, and violent extremism. These insecurities are connected to law enforcement issues to varying degrees; in other words, the police are actively involved in confronting such law-and-order issues in and between communities. Paradoxically, the police can themselves be a primary cause of insecurity for the local population through violent behaviour and corruption, consequently creating a trust gap between law enforcement and citizens. For example, research from Latin American countries has revealed some of the challenges of police insecurity, namely militarised policing, corruption, police abuse of powers, lack of accountability, and violation of human rights [7–9]. Likewise, research from Africa has shown similar cases of police aggression, corruption, and lack of trust as important causes of citizen insecurity [10–12].

Considering the importance of addressing insecurities faced by youth and the need to build trust in post-conflict contexts, the question arises as to how citizens can improve their cooperation and trust the police. One line of approach is community-oriented policing (COP), which recognises close community partnerships and cooperation for providing safety and security, as well as building trust between the police and communities [13]. COP strives for a paradigm shift from the exclusion to the inclusion of common people from policing, where common people are afforded a visible role [14]. COP is both an organisational strategy and a philosophy that allows the community and the police to work together to solve problems of crime and disorder in novel ways and to ensure the safety and security of the public. The idea has two central components: transforming the practice and methods of policing, and taking steps to establish a relationship between the public and the police [15,16]. Most importantly, COP can facilitate a platform for youth to address their insecurities.

Rich and varied literature exists concerning youth violence, conflict, and exclusion; however, one under-researched area concerns the preventive measures employed to overcome the various insecurities that youth face through the institution of COP. Therefore, this paper focuses on the following crucial questions: what insecurities do youth in Afghanistan and Pakistan face, and how do these insecurities affect their relations with the police? How can COP be useful in creating a better understanding between police and youth? Based on field research and desk studies from two case countries, Afghanistan and Pakistan, we explore the factors that lead to insecurities and how understanding their interconnectedness is fundamental to meaningfully address the day-to-day concerns of Afghan and Pakistani youth. The scope of the current paper is limited and does not represent the whole population of youth in either Afghanistan or Pakistan. We further understand that the current paper may pose more questions than it answers, but it does what a scientific paper should: answer some questions and expose more.

The article is structured as follows. We begin with a brief literature review of youth insecurities, focusing on a broader human security perspective including discussion of gender and youth–police relations. The methodology section explains the methods utilised to study our research questions in the difficult context of Afghanistan and Pakistan. We then present our findings on the key drivers of insecurities and exclusions experienced by youth in our two case countries. This is followed by a discussion on COP activities in relation to youth in each of the case countries, including discussions on the role of civil society organisations (CSOs) and police-citizen bodies in building relationships and trust between citizens and police through their participatory dialogic approach. The article concludes with important lessons on building sustainable youth–police relations in post-conflict countries.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1. Theories of Youth Exclusion*

Several bodies of literature are relevant in exploring youth insecurities and police relations—for example, youth exclusion, livelihoods and radicalisation, gender, and policing literature. The theoretical discussions regarding youth and insecurities have centred around three major perspectives: the youth bulge theory, greed or opportunity perspectives, and grievance perspectives. The discourse within youth bulge perspectives has argued that a growing young population, coupled with unemployment, lack of economic opportunities, corruption, exclusion, marginalisation, and weak and oppressive political systems, provokes young people into violence and conflict, thereby causing a threat to peace, stability, and security [17,18]. However, others have criticised this view and warned against simplistic equations among youth, armed conflict, and violence [19,20]. Advocates of the greed or opportunity perspective have argued

that young people are prone to join armed or violent groups that engage in violence, as doing so provides incentives in the form of material and protective benefits [21,22]. The avenues for joining such groups attract youth who are illiterate, poor, and desperate to fight their way out of poverty. Grievance perspectives state that youth participation in violent conflicts is due to various factors that cause deprivation and exclusion [23,24]. In-depth studies from West Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia [23] have demonstrated that horizontal inequalities comprising ethnic, religious, or racial disparities affect the political, economic, and cultural status of people and thereby become a contributing factor in violent conflicts. Socioeconomic inequalities coupled with the lack of political participation can mobilise young people to engage in violent activities. These theoretical perspectives shed light on the different causes of youth insecurities, each highlighting different variables for youth vulnerabilities. Although demography is an important variable in understanding various insecurities, other factors—such as employment, lack of adequate livelihood opportunities, poverty, illiteracy, access to education, and corruption—also contribute to the risks and vulnerabilities. Our study from Afghanistan and Pakistan demonstrates that the factors that influence youth marginalisation and vulnerabilities are interconnected, and understanding them holistically is important.

### *2.2. Livelihood Insecurities as a Pathway to Radicalisation*

Another relevant body of literature examines how poverty, lack of adequate job opportunities, and prevalent socioeconomic conditions can force young people to pathways of extreme radicalisation [2,25–27]. Various studies have identified a clear link between poor socioeconomic conditions and lack of livelihood opportunities that tempt young people to join the Taliban and ISIS in Afghanistan, and numerous researchers have observed a similar link in the case of tribal areas of Pakistan [28–34]. For example, a study from Balk province in Afghanistan mentioned that ‘the most frequent cited drivers of insecurity were unemployment and poverty, which were described as being an “open door for the Taliban”’ [35]. Another study noted how ‘70% of young Taliban fighters in Afghanistan fight for money and not for ideology’ [36]. As Bergen and Waldman (2014) explained, for young, unemployed people, joining insurgent groups is an ‘honourable way’ to feed their families [37]. In addition, as Matusitz pointed out, ‘under circumstances of weak governance, unbridled corruption, and human rights violations, terrorism will blossom. This is a recurring theme’ [38]. Similar studies on conflict in Pakistan have suggested that unemployment, poor socioeconomic conditions, and a sense of deprivation pave the way for radicalising the youth in the region [34,39,40]. As the above research points out, for young people radicalisation becomes a coping strategy. Rather than assuming radicalisation to be solely a result of religious extremism, it can also come from poverty and socioeconomic marginalisation.

### *2.3. Gendered Insecurities*

An important area of focus regarding youth and insecurities is the challenge of gender relations and inequalities. Young women are victims of direct and indirect violence in both conflict and peaceful contexts [41–43]. Sexual and gender-based violence remains a significant problem for young girls and women, especially in fragile and post-conflict countries [2,44]. This is a particularly relevant challenge in Afghanistan and Pakistan [45,46]. The Global Rights Report (2008) provides insight into the problem facing women in Afghanistan, categorising the kinds of violence that affect them as physical violence, sexual violence, forced marriages, and psychological violence. The overall average for violence against women is 87.2%, and in Kabul it is 79.3%. The national average for physical violence is 52.4%, while in Kabul it is 47.7%; for sexual violence, the national average is 17.2%, while in Kabul it is 31.3%; for forced marriage, the national average is 58.8%, while in Kabul it is 50.2%; and for psychological violence, the average is 73.9% nationwide, and in Kabul it is 76.2% ([46], pp. 21-23). As the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) have reported (2009), findings reveal that Afghan women are subjected to an increasingly insecure environment. Women participating in public life face threats, harassment, and attacks. In extreme cases, women have been killed for holding jobs that are seen to disrespect traditional practices or are considered ‘un-Islamic’. As a result, women engage in self-censorship, restrict their movements, or discontinue their work. Threats and different forms of intimidation and attacks are harmful psychologically as well as physically ([46], pp. 1-2). Women in post-conflict areas are vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence. Gender based violence is a major cause, and consequence of, an overall gender inequality in society.

Another serious form of gender discrimination in Afghanistan is child marriage. According to the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, 57% of Afghan marriages are child marriages in which one partner is under the age of 16. In a study of 200 married underage girls, 40% were married between the ages of 10 and 13 years, 32.5% were married at 14, and 27.5% at 15 [47]. Child marriage is not considered an offence under criminal law, meaning that there are no criminal penalties for practising it, but it is prohibited under the Civil Code ([48], p. 41). It has severe consequences on education and health; for example, girls who marry at such a young age and then give birth to children are not prepared for being a mother and the responsibilities it involves. In particular, an Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission report notes runaways, suicides, self-immolations, murders, sexual perversion, and psychological disorders as the consequences of child marriage [49]. Furthermore, child marriage has serious implications for literacy and leads to low levels of school enrolment for young girls. Additionally, the lack of employment and poverty force poor families to sell their girls

into marriage to older men [50].

A prevailing cultural practice called *baad* is another type of serious violence that Afghan girls and women face. This informal method of conflict resolution allows aggrieved families to end conflicts and restore peace by presenting or exchanging young girls or women with the aggrieved party as compensation for the crime or conflict experienced by the family. Not only is the practice of *baad* utilised to settle crimes such as murder, adultery, or rape, but it also acts as a symbol of restoring the wronged family's honour [50].

'Honour' killings represent an extreme form of gender discrimination. Women bear most of the brunt in honour killings, which occur when a woman runs away from a forced marriage, elopes with a man without family consent, or engages with men that her family considers to be inappropriate. Such actions are evaluated under traditional cultural norms as actions that are prohibited for women [51].

However, young girls and women are not the only ones to face sexual violence or rape; young boys endure similar violence. The practice of *bacha bazi* (boy play) has been common in many parts of rural Afghanistan. It involves young boys wearing makeup, dressing as young girls, and dancing in front of older men. The boys are forced to have sexual intercourse with these older men, and if they refuse, then they are either raped or badly beaten. The boys' ages range between 9 and 18 years; they are typically from poor families and are recruited by wealthy men (e.g., rich merchants, militiamen, warlords, police, and government officials) who promise them financial help, education, and work [52,53]. Nisya et al. (2019) pointed out how the justice and security sectors are part of this racket. Perpetrators are seldom prosecuted because they have high connections and sufficient money to bribe justice and security officials, who are sometimes perpetrators of the crime themselves [38,54].

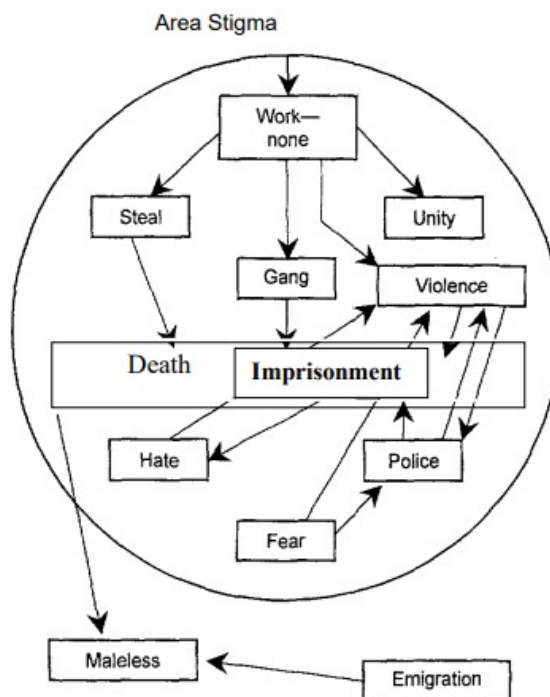
Pakistan has been ranked the third most dangerous country in the world for women, according to a 2011 poll of experts by the Thomson Reuters Foundation Poll. More than 10,000 cases of gender-based violence were reported in Pakistan in 2014. Additionally, official figures released by the Ministry of Human Rights of Pakistan reported 8,648 human rights violations in the country between January 2012 and September 2015, including 860 honour killings, 344 rapes or gang rapes, 268 sexual assault or harassment cases, 90 incidences of acid burning, 72 incidences of burning, 535 cases of violence against women, and 481 cases of domestic violence [55]. Pakistani human rights organisations estimate that approximately 1,000 honour killings occur every year in the country [56], although Article 25 (2) of the Constitution of Pakistan clearly states that no person should be discriminated against because of sex alone [57].

Tadjbaksh (2005) summarised the challenges that women in Afghanistan and Pakistan face as follows:

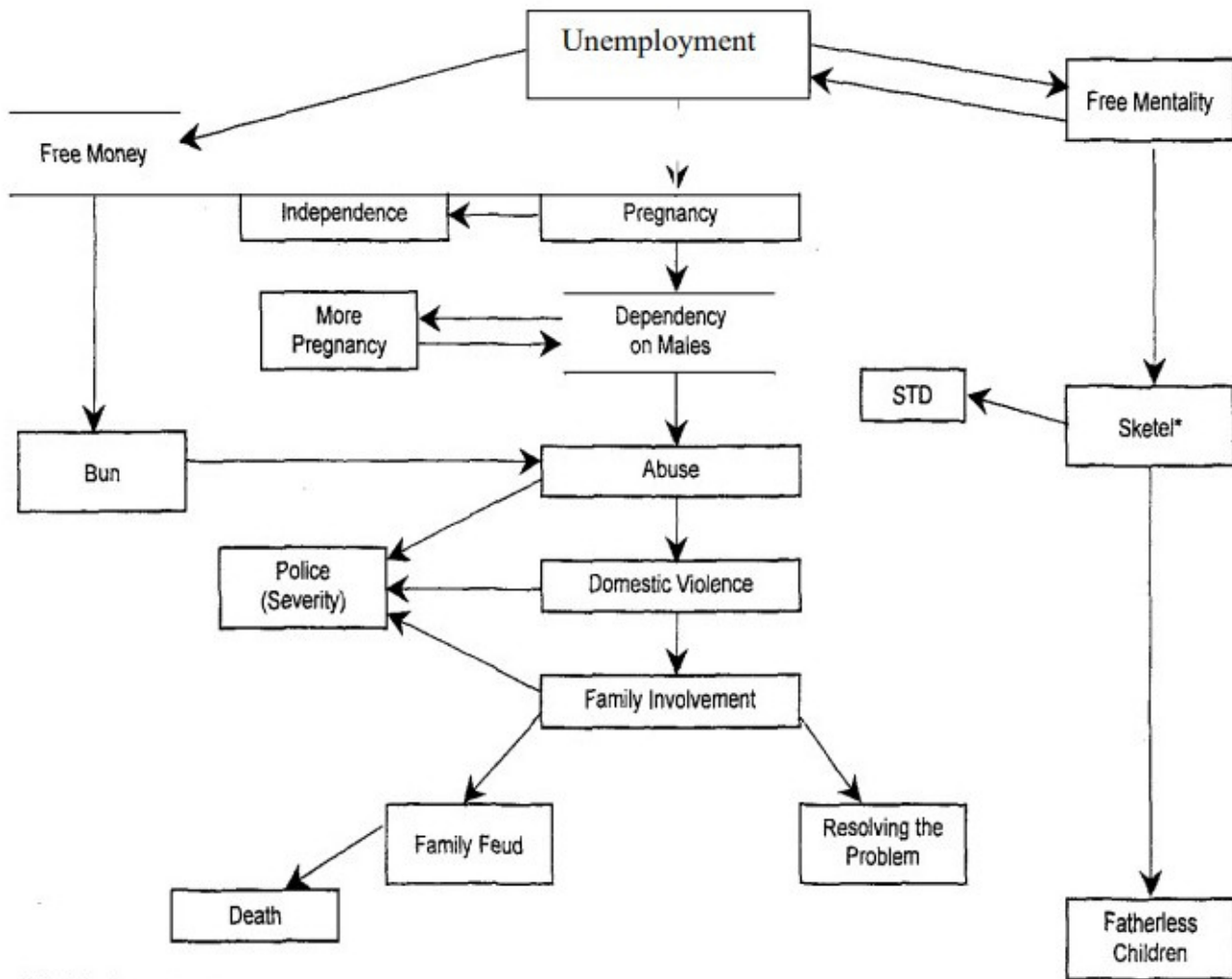
*Human security has different connotations for men and women. For women, gender-based violence is often engrained in local cultural and religious norms and is often tolerated, while the international community condemns physical violence in armed conflicts. Furthermore, since most of the physical and mental violence against women happens within*

*the family, the state may often shy away from intervening with the private sphere* [58].

Many researchers have noted the importance of a gendered perspective when analysing the roles, experiences, and socialisation aspects of men and women in conflict settings [59]. For example, a study by Stewart (2016) conducted in rural Kenya demonstrated that livelihood affects gender relations. Changing livelihoods for both men and women impacts how young men view their traditional male roles in society. For example, traditional male livelihoods that are based on export crops, livestock or pastoralism, and labour migration are declining, while female roles are also undergoing a change as new livelihood opportunities are available to females in food crop production, petty trade, informal services, beer brewing, and other industries [60]. This has created a sense of disempowerment among young men in rural areas that threatens their social value, identity, and self-esteem, the implications of which result in growing violence and insecurity among young men, potentially leading to domestic violence, increasing criminality, and intergenerational disagreements: 'when the traditional routes to becoming a man are blocked, young men may see violence as the most readily available way of proving their manhood' [59,60]. Similarly, in their seminal paper, Moser and van Bronkhorst (1999) illustrated that the dynamics of violence and crime in Latin America and Caribbean regions are influenced by a lack of economic opportunities, poverty, underdeveloped social welfare systems, and weak educational systems. Such dynamics affect society in general and the young population of men and women in particular. Moser and van Bronkhorst posited that these dynamics affect men and women differently [61].



**Figure 1.** The Problem of Unemployment and Its Impact on Men (Diagram prepared by a group of young men from Park Toms in Kingston, Jamaica) [61]



\*Sketel = loose woman

**Figure 2.** The Problem of Unemployment and Its Impact on Women (Diagram prepared by a group of young women from Park Town in Kingston, Jamaica) [61].

The above diagram, although dated, graphically explains the insecurities that young people face. The interconnectedness of poverty, unemployment, and poor educational systems forces young men to resort to violence and criminality, which in turn involve the police. Moser and van Bronkhorst (1999) point out how poor policing practices, corruption, and brutality also tend to aggravate violence between youth and police, thereby creating a deep chasm of mistrust. The diagram illustrates common insecurities that both groups face and additionally points to the gendered nature of these insecurities that affect young women and men differently. For young women, the same conditions lead to premature pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases due to prostitution, dependency on men, and the reproduction of poverty and violence. It further indicates that young women are double victims of these violent acts and crimes. Similarly, in terms of gender, our study builds on the interconnectedness of a broad set of insecurities that young men and women experience and how these insecuri-

ties are gendered in ways that often lead to violence and radicalisation.

#### 2.4. Youth–Police Relations

Past research demonstrates that youth–police relations are complex and challenging and that these challenges vary across contexts. Perceptions and attitudes towards the police indicate that four variables—age, contact with police, neighbourhood, and race—have an impact on the attitudes towards the police [62]. Police–youth relations are also affected by how officers use their discretionary powers when it comes to watching, stopping, searching, and arresting young people suspected of doing something wrong. Brunson and Pegram pointed out how aggressive policing strategies disproportionately affect youth of colour [63]. Research has shown that negative experiences with the police have a more important bearing on the legitimacy and trust than positive ones. However, perceptions of trust can also in-

crease if police can use such complaints about the police as a possibility for change by treating youth in an inclusive rather than an exclusionary manner [64].

Universally, a key challenge is the perception and attitude of the police towards youth and vice versa [65,66]. Generally, young people are viewed through a dichotomous lens: they are either perpetrators or victims of crime. As Foreman stated, 'Public safety turns, to a great extent, on what the young do and what is done to them. This is the group most likely to engage in criminal conduct, to be victims of crime, and to be targeted by the police' [67]. Cooperation and engagement with youth in fighting, reducing, and controlling crime have been significant challenges for many police services around the world [20,68]. Furthermore, cooperation and engagement with youth critically depend on the level of trust and legitimacy that the police establish with the group. Foreman further posited that, 'by treating the young exclusively as threats to public order, the state creates and reinforces attitudes of hostility and opposition. This has negative consequences for public safety because oppositional attitudes can increase law-breaking and make it less likely that citizens will provide information to law enforcement' ([67], p. 2). Such police attitudes toward youth create tense and hostile relations that lead to mutual negative attitudes; in other words, youth generally feel that they are over-policed and under-protected.

In their seminal study, Dirikx et al. (2012) examined the attitudes of Belgian youth towards policing [69] by focusing on three main aspects of policing: performance, distributive justice, and procedural justice. The performance-based perspective is based on how people view the efficacy of the police to control crime and keep neighbourhoods safe. The distributive justice perspective focuses on the fairness and quality of police services that people receive. Fair and quality service provided by the police to a diverse population would enhance their support amongst people. Lastly, the procedural justice perspective emphasises how people's attitudes towards the police depend upon their judgments about procedural fairness, which depend on four elements: 'the opportunities for participation that police officers provide in making their decisions; their friendliness and politeness; their neutrality; and finally, their trustworthiness' ([65] [69], p. 193). As shown above their study reveals a complex interplay of different variables that affect police–youth relations, as well as the heart of the dilemma in youth–police relations: trust.

A predominant challenge in post-conflict contexts is to establish cooperation and trust between communities and police services. Given the nature of post-conflict settings, trust levels are typically low. Policing research from post-conflict contexts has identified important factors that affect the nature of this relationship: lack of democratic policing, widespread corruption, illiteracy, abuse of police powers, and a military style of policing [70–72].

A pilot study conducted by the Afghanistan Civil Society Forum in 2010 for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Ministry of the Interior (MoI) on

democratic policing highlighted some interesting perspectives on police–community relations, covering eight northern districts of Kabul. Fifty-five percent of the respondents were in the 18–35 age group. The study identified the public's experiences with and expectations for their local police, the public's and the police's understanding of basic concepts of democratic policing, and the public's and the police's recommendations for improving police effectiveness and the interface between them on a regular basis. Sixty percent believed that better cooperation between the police and the public would help improve security in the community, and 10% believed community policing to be positive. However, study participants from focus group discussions (FGDs) argued that there would be extremely limited cooperation between them and the police without the establishment of mutual trust, and a significant obstacle to cooperation and trust between them was corruption. According to the respondents, bribes to pay the police for them to process cases, abuse of power, abuse of police facilities, and corruption connected to higher levels of police, the justice system, and the government were seen as the major obstacles to establishing good mutual relations. In other words, lack of police accountability is a serious and important alienating factor ([73], pp. 5-7). This would influence in building good police–citizen relationships.

Another research report by Conciliation Resources (2018) described a series of FGDs in three provinces (Kabul, Nangarhar, and Kandahar) with young Afghan activists, members of civil society, and labourers. The youth were asked to share their views on a range of topics, such as peace, security, livelihood challenges, and their views of the future. The youth voiced a common complaint: the total disregard for the rule of law by local leaders, politicians, and security providers in the country. According to them, the police, Ministry of Justice, and Ministry of Education were the worst offenders against the rule of law, and their actions comprised stealing government resources, paying bribes to obtain admission to educational institutions or government jobs, and other crimes. As one respondent remarked, 'I see an increasing gap between the government and the people, particularly young people who do not trust the government and authorities' ([74], p. 6). The consequences of such gap can seriously hurt community involvement in local and national security needs.

A study conducted in Pakistan by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) in 2011 found that police are incapable of combating rising insecurities and violence because they are underequipped and understaffed and because there are various obstacles in upgrading the existing police structure and system. The study further recommended innovative and traditional mechanisms without which police would be unable to effectively improve. The study revealed that there is a consensus among Pakistanis that the police is unable to effectively fight crime, provide basic security to its common citizens, maintain law and order, and combat growing militancy [75]. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) police in 2014 kicked off reform efforts regarding policing because the

province is one of the most vulnerable to terrorism, militancy, and violence since it borders the conflict-torn tribal areas of Pakistan. There are numerous political, institutional, and technical reforms introduced in the KP Police Act 2017 aiming at depoliticising the police and bridging the gap between the general public (especially the youth) and the police [16,76,77]. The existing studies on youth–police relationships and possible reform efforts lack rigorous research wherein the ground realities must be inquired about and explored. One of the objectives of this study is to unearth the real picture of existing youth–police relationships amid the conflict situation and the reform efforts in policing.

One common theme of the above research reveals is that establishing trust and accountability is crucial for creating and maintaining good police–youth relations. However, the research from Afghanistan and Pakistan has shown that creating trust between police and youth is not an easy task. There are barriers and impediments that must be tackled. For instance, corruption is a very serious issue that affects relations between police and the public. Violent behaviour on the part of the police also accentuates the relational gap; in fact, the police can be one of the major causes of local insecurity. Moreover, lack of interest or incapacity to deal with local law-and-order issues can also be a contributing factor in creating trust. However, we discuss further on in the paper how COP can be a suitable and relevant policing approach in building trust and cooperation between police and citizens.

### 3. Methodological Approach

#### 3.1. Youth Definition in Afghanistan and Pakistan

In research, considerable debates and differences of opinion have erupted regarding the definition of youth. This tussle includes formal definitions that categorise youth in specific age groups or ranges with lower and upper limits for inclusion. The functional definitions consider the roles and responsibilities of youth, while social-psychological definitions emphasise growth, development, and the passage from youth to adulthood based on cultural, social, economic, and political factors [78,79]. These definitional cleavages are also present in youth definitions when it comes to our case studies from Afghanistan and Pakistan. However, as Williamson (2002) and Cursi (2017) noted, concerns about youth—whether challenges, hopes, or aspirations—should focus on the empirical realities that youth face rather than on definitional standpoints [78,80]. Our paper also concentrates on the empirical realities that Afghan and Pakistani youth face regarding their daily challenges and their consequences.

In Afghanistan, the definition of youth is complex. The government of Afghanistan divides youth into two categories: pre-youth (*naw jawan*), comprising those 12–17 years of age, and youth (*jawan*), including those aged 18–35 years; the first category refers to schoolchildren and the latter to young professionals. However, as Hall (2013) noted,

the governmental definition of the term is based on a sociological understanding of the concept, which is contradictory to how youth define themselves. For youth, physical growth is a more important criterion than age. Nevertheless, the Central Statistics Organisation has a different categorisation of youth, dividing them into three categories: pre-youth (11–14 years), teenagers (15–19 years), and university students and young professionals (20–25 years) [81,82]. Moreover, the Afghanistan Youth Policy defines youth as people between the ages of 18 and 35 and adolescents as those between 12 and 18 years of age. The ages of the youth respondents in our case countries ranged from 19 to 35 years from both study areas [83].

In Pakistan, the Ministry of Youth Affairs defines youth as a timeframe in which a family's dependent children transform into independent adults and become responsible citizens of a community [84]. This definition indicates that age is not a factor for people to fall into the youth category; rather, the determinant is their ability to contribute to society or their families. The prescribed age bracket of 15–29 years is consistent with the Commonwealth's definition of *youth* [85]. With regard to the percentage of youth, Pakistan is the fifth largest country globally.

Field research for the present study was conducted in Afghanistan's Nimruz province and Pakistan's KP province and erstwhile tribal areas. Nimruz is located in the south-western part of the country, bordering Iran and Pakistan as well as Helmand and Farah provinces in Afghanistan. Pakistan's KP province is located in the north-western part of the country.

Our primary source of data were qualitative data from open-ended and semi-structured in-depth interviews (IDIs) and FGDs. The interviews were analysed through the coding of transcripts and interview notes, which led to the identification of themes that shed light on the nature of youth insecurity and youth–police relations. The themes emerged out of our discussions with youth, community members, social workers, and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs); all of them voiced their major concerns around the insecurities that they faced in day-to-day life. The major topics centred on unemployment, corruption, drug abuse, and insurgent activities. The primary data were complemented by secondary research literature from the region. The secondary research literature aims to shed light not only on the themes emerging from the data, but on insecurities that are otherwise well-documented but not possible to sufficiently cover in this field study due to their sensitive nature and the lack of data from our research. The most important of these is gender-based violence. While we do not have data on this subject, we still focus on the nature of gendered insecurities. The focus of this study is therefore on the interdependence of a broader set of insecurities that are both gendered and linked with gender-based violence as documented elsewhere and as mentioned in general in interviews with CSOs and the police.

In Pakistan, the districts of Swat and Peshawar in KP province were selected for the study, while few of the NGO/

International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) workers were interviewed in Islamabad. During the period of our fieldwork (2015–19), the region experienced a historic constitutional amendment in 2018 wherein the tribal areas of Pakistan were merged with KP province. Most of the respondents hoped that this constitutional move would have positive impacts on socioeconomic conditions in the region. The criteria for selecting these areas were that Swat is a conflict-affected district, while Peshawar is KP province's capital where all of the government institutions and headquarters—including the police—are located. Twenty IDIs and four FGDs were conducted in Swat, while 10 IDIs and four FGDs were conducted in Peshawar. Moreover, five interviews were conducted with NGO/INGO's workers in Islamabad; hence, 35 IDIs and eight FGDs in total took place in two areas in KP, Pakistan. All interviews were conducted face to face.

The FGDs were composed such that a minimum of four and a maximum of eight persons were included in the discussion from various groups of respondents. The average time used for the FGDs was an hour and a half. The data were collected from both male and female youths, school and college teachers, local elders, *jirga* [86] members, police personnel (both upper and lower ranks), NGO/INGO's workers, and the general public (including shopkeepers, traders, and small vendors). The representation of female respondents was low because of the prevailing cultural obligations that restrict women from interacting with strangers, restrict their mobility, and prevent them from participating in political affairs. The primary data extracted from the FGDs were analysed manually, using matrices and thematic methods of qualitative data analysis. Themes were identified from the sections and subsections of the question guide used during the FGDs.

Regarding Afghanistan, we selected the province of Nimruz for several reasons. Firstly, it has been one of the provinces with the lowest levels of international intervention, and hardly any aid organisations operate in the region. Secondly, the province has one of the highest numbers of migrants and internally displaced people in the country, making it an interesting case to examine what unemployment and migration mean to young people. Thirdly, due to its location, it is the fulcrum of illegal migration, human trafficking, and the smuggling of drugs and narcotics.

The data for Nimruz province are based on our fieldwork beginning in 2015. We interviewed young men, young women, members of CSOs, police personnel, and NGO representatives—both local and international. Additional data were collected from different local and international NGOs and CSOs working in Kabul. Both local and international police personnel involved with community policing were also interviewed. In addition, we talked with *shura* elders and members from selected *shuras* in Zaranj and Kang. We also conducted one FGD with five female elementary school teachers in the district of Kang through a female assistant known to the local researcher; the discussions with them revolved around employment, career opportuni-

ties, and personal safety. Furthermore, we conducted four separate IDIs with youth in the same district, and the topics of discussion revolved around livelihood opportunities, security challenges, corruption, migration, experiences with the police, and the young people's aspirations for the future. In addition, we conducted open-ended and semi-structured IDIs with 10 residents of a rehabilitation centre for addicted youth. Our attention focused on the root causes of their addiction and their stay in the rehabilitation centre. To fill the gaps in our past interviews and acquire fresh perspectives on the situation in Nimruz province, we conducted more than 10 telephone interviews with participants in the provincial capital of Zaranj in October 2019. Despite the disruptions, it was possible to speak with respondents from different occupations. We chose telephone interviews because the situation in Zaranj was quite volatile, and our field assistants faced death threats from Taliban and ISIS sympathisers. The major concern that people mentioned was the return of the Taliban [87] to power. All respondents wanted to migrate [88] to a safe place, and Europe was their desired destination. Many of them did not see any future in Afghanistan [89].

#### 4. Drivers of Insecurity and Exclusion of Youth

The major concerns of the youth, social workers, and community members that we interviewed in Nimruz point to four main areas of challenges that young people face: unemployment, poverty, drug abuse, and corruption. Although the field studies in Pakistan and Afghanistan differed in some respects, they also had common elements. For example, KP has been a hotbed of Islamic insurgency, whereas Nimruz province, unlike many parts of Afghanistan that suffer from rising insurgency and violence, has been relatively calm, although some areas have seen a slight increase in insurgent activities. Both regions have witnessed rising youth movements that have raised questions regarding police performance; however, the predominant threats to the citizens—and, particularly, the youth—in both regions are the deteriorating economic situation, unemployment, corruption, drug abuse, and increasing insurgent activities. This became apparent in our data, and the results of drivers of insecurity thus centre on the themes of unemployment, drug abuse, and corruption.

##### 4.1. Unemployment and Lack of Opportunities as Causes of Insecurity

###### 4.1.1. Afghanistan

In Nimruz province, unemployment and poverty are paramount reasons for insecurity and exclusion among youth. The most common grievance that most respondents discussed is the lack of employment opportunities for local young people, which affects their daily livelihoods. Since agriculture is a predominant source of employment in this region, the lack of adequate water resources despite the abundance of cultivable land significantly affects employ-



ment opportunities. As one respondent told us, he and many others send their sons to Iran for work due to the lack of water and irrigation. Many children are removed from schools so that they can seek work in Iran. According to a civil society activist in Zaranj, the primary reason for Nimruz's youth unemployment is the ongoing drought that has affected the province over the past few years. As he stated, 'Eighty percent of land in Nimruz is cultivable land, but lack of water due to drought has drastically affected livelihoods here. This means that a large number of people will be unemployed and have nothing to eat. A hungry person will do anything—like theft—to feed his family, and this can lead to insecurity.' According to him, 70% of youth in Nimruz are unemployed, and out of the remaining 30%, only 10% have a real job with security. As another respondent mentioned, 'Unemployment is the biggest problem here. Then come corruption and drugs. All these badly affect young people.' The impact of unemployment on young people can be disastrous, as it not only leads to corruption and drug abuse, but is also a primary cause of criminal activities, violence, and extremism. According to a *shura* elder from Nimruz, the primary reasons that youth join insurgent groups are unemployment and poverty: 'When seven out of 10 youngsters in this locality are unemployed, there will be a rise in crime due to poverty [90] majority of the youth have no other option. (It's) crime or find illegal routes to Iran for job(s).' The local population are aware of the indirect effects of unemployment on youth, as they witness them first-hand. Unemployed young people have few options in Zaranj: they can join the Taliban, anti-government groups, or criminal gangs; migrate to Iran to work as labourers; or join thousands of heroin users and roam the dumps of the city. These options may not be attractive, but they are the only choices available to these young people. As one respondent remarked, 'Unemployment itself is not a threat. However, it can be a security threat. If a young person is unemployed and he has to provide for his family, he may resort to theft, joining armed groups, and drug smuggling. Unemployment and insecurity are part of a cycle and affect each other.'

Another respondent added, 'Moreover, when they start stealing and robbing people, this leads to police involvement and criminal cases against the youth' The respondent further reiterated that unemployment is worse among women who cannot work in the private sector due to traditional societal norms and who are limited to specific jobs, such as teaching. He added that women are less likely to work in male-dominated environments. In a strictly patriarchal society in which men are the *de facto* heads of the household, it is difficult to accept that, in many cases, women are the sole breadwinners. A 25-year-old Nimruz woman with the Afghanistan Youth Parliament told us that in Nimruz, women are often the only breadwinners for their families and that unemployment can thus gravely affect them. A male member of another civil society group in Zaranj further mentioned that unemployment and social obstacles to access employment opportunities could affect women's

social status and even expose them to violence. However, according to another informant, 'Most of the women cannot work or do not have jobs, and (being) economically dependent on their husband(s) makes them more vulnerable to domestic violence.'

In addition to having to contend with serious gender-based violent crimes, young girls and women also face day-to-day harassment either on the street or at workplaces. As a female informant from Nimruz mentioned, 'Although there are some young women working for NGOs, but the number is small compared to the number of educated women available for jobs. This, I think, is because many girls and women face daily challenges of working with men.'

Another informant, a male civil society informant in Zaranj, stressed unemployment problems for women: 'Even though unemployment is a serious problem among men and women, the problem is much worse for women. While men can work in the private sectors, this may not be possible for women. The only common job that women are involved with is being a teacher. While we have many literate women, they are unemployed because no facilitation has taken place for women to be able to work in other government sectors and offices.'

While unemployment affects the whole population in different ways, youth are the social group that is most affected. A youth CSO member voiced his concern: 'Even though all age groups can face the same level of problems about security, we can say that youth may resort to illegal activities much faster than older people because they do not have life experience and have a lot of expectations.'

In our discussions with youth from the Kang district in Nimruz province, they reiterated similar experiences and sentiments, speaking about their frustrations, fears, hopes, and dreams for the future. The predominant challenge for all of them is unemployment; although some have part-time jobs, the salaries are insufficient to earn a living. As one youth expressed, the salaries do not allow them 'to be able to study and become somebody'. They further reported that the lack of economic opportunities forces them to join extremist organisations, such as the Taliban, which offer economic incentives. Other problems they face are drug dealing, addiction, and abuse. Since Nimruz province borders Iran, drug dealing and cross-border smuggling are common and significant problems, and the primary reasons for drug dealing are poverty, peer pressure, and the desire to make money to pay intermediaries to emigrate.

Another major challenge that the youth face is the lack of proper recreational opportunities and facilities. The male respondents who spoke with us expressed their dreams of having a quality football field. For most, their ultimate aspirations are to earn an education and obtain employment, and their dream jobs are teaching, engineering, working as doctors, or joining the army. Many expressed the desire to marry and live happy, safe lives. For girls, dreams are different. They are permitted to study only through the elementary school level; to attend secondary schools, they must travel a significant distance, which their parents do not

allow due to local cultural norms and the uncertain security situation. Even if they can obtain the necessary education, the only place they are allowed to work is the local girls' school, which does not have the capacity to incorporate additional employees.

Most respondents mentioned unemployment, poverty, corruption, and drug abuse as the largest impediments to youth progress and the greatest contributors to insecurity. These were also mentioned as the root causes of young people taking to crime and joining extremist groups like Taliban or ISIS, as well as a major reason to be involved with the police. Police respondents in Nimruz also reiterated that unemployment, coupled with the use and sale of drugs, is the major source of crime, violence, and insecurity in the region. As one police officer told us,

*Eighty percent of crimes in Nimruz are related to unemployment and (are) mostly committed by young people who desperately want to make quick money. These young people will do anything to make ends meet. Of course, the majority want to make money to migrate.*

The above quote demonstrates that both citizens and police have similar concerns when it comes to the key drivers of insecurity, namely unemployment and poverty that leads to criminality.

#### 4.1.2. Pakistan

In Swat, as in the rest of Pakistan, unemployment is the primary source of insecurity. Respondents from international and local NGOs in Swat, Peshawar, and Islamabad offered diverse responses and concerns regarding the sources of insecurity. The majority stated that unemployment is one of the leading sources of insecurity and is fuelling the worsening law-and-order situation that has made the country an insecure place for everyone from common people to state authorities. They stated that unemployment and poverty are the driving forces that cause people to adopt illegal and criminal means to survive.

The data collected in Swat illustrate multiple sources of insecurity in communities. The respondents frequently mentioned youth unemployment as the most dangerous source of insecurity because unemployment drives people to become involved in illegal activities, including murder, theft, kidnapping, carjacking, and petty crime. Swat locals also believe that those who join the Taliban are generally young people who are unemployed, excluded, neglected, and deprived in society and who are critical of the government and local landlords. Young men joining the Taliban and Al-Qaeda are common in both Afghanistan and Pakistan; the data collected from both offer similar findings regarding unemployment and the rise of Talibanisation and militancy. A civil society activist from Swat said, 'Unemployment is the main source of insecurity in Pakistan. When people have no other option to feed their families, they involve themselves in theft, murder, and other street crimes.' Another respondent who works with an international organisation based in Peshawar shared that 'unemployment, poverty,

and injustice are the main sources of insecurity in Pakistani society at local and regional levels. At a national level, unequal distribution of resources among provinces is the main source of insecurity for the people.'

However, a youth activist from Swat hoped for a better future for youth in the district after enduring a negative situation. He expressed that

*Unemployment, an apolitical attitude, and high illiteracy rates are the major sources of insecurity our youth are facing today. These sources of insecurities are related to those young men who do nothing and spend most of their time in leisure. Most of the youth from poor segments of society study in government schools and colleges, and the quality of education is gradually improving in Swat, and I assume the insecurities on the part of the youth are minimising day by day. The trend of madrassa is also gradually vanishing, particularly in the post-conflict scenario. People avoid sending their children to madrassa.*

The impact of unemployment on young people can be disastrous, as it not only leads to corruption and drug abuse, but is also a primary cause of criminal activities, radicalisation, and violence. Pakistan must take advantage of its youth bulge in a positive way; however, to date, the state has ignored the growing radicalisation among youth, although the government has been striving to empower youth through multiple initiatives. For example, the previous government of the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz), or PML (N), began six initiatives to facilitate youth development to combat the soaring unemployment at a cost of Rs 20 billion [91]. These initiatives include merit-based scholarships, laptop distribution, fee reimbursement, skill development programmes, free education for those in less-developed areas, and interest-free loans to young people [92]. Such initiatives can begin to ameliorate young Pakistanis' frustrations, grievances, and anxieties, which vary across regions and are complex in nature. For example, youth from the newly merged tribal districts of the erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas, KP, and Baluchistan provinces have grievances with the state that are predominantly related to unemployment, unequal distribution of scarce resources, and lack of proper educational facilities. Additionally, their complaints and anger are directed towards the authorities, who are responsible for the forced disappearance of thousands of youths from tribal areas, the lack of inquiries into extrajudicial killings, the harsh treatment at check-posts across tribal areas, and the lack of compensation for human and property losses during military operations. They demand that the authorities establish a truth and reconciliation commission examining military operations in tribal areas [93].

The Pashtun Tahaffuz (Protection) Movement (PTM), which primarily comprises young people, rose to prominence in early 2018 in response to the above-mentioned grievances. Through it, youth seek peaceful methods to voice their complaints and to turn the state's attention to these issues [33,94]. However, the state's negligence in confronting their grievances has widened the gap between

law enforcement agencies—especially the police—and the Pashtun youth in the region [95]. For example, the youth are cautious in their approach and dealing with police authorities when it comes to matters of personal and livelihood security. This study has found that the young people themselves are discussing and addressing the challenges surrounding livelihood, which is a substantial concern, and the insecurities that they face. Some of these challenges create security issues of different types.

A recurring theme from our research sites was the impact of unemployment on youth and its consequences on livelihood security and personal security. One can say that unemployment is a universal concern for youth, though in conflict or post-conflict contexts, the consequences can be much more severe. The examples from Nimruz and Swat demonstrate that the vulnerabilities that young people face in pursuing their livelihoods is affected by the availability of adequate economic opportunities, access to education and local institutions, and political processes that influence decision-making. Livelihood security is not only affected by the above factors, but can also be threatened by poverty, corruption, and conflicts. The risk factors that accompany these insecurities are migration and drug abuse. In order to ensure a secure livelihood, youth in Nimruz migrate to Iran, while youth in Swat migrate to the big cities in Pakistan. However, neither of these options may offer the needed security, and can they involve other risks, such as theft, robbery, drug peddling, and abuse, as the following sections will show.

## 4.2. Drug Addiction

### 4.2.1. Afghanistan

It is important to understand that the drivers of insecurity and challenges for youth are interconnected and create a vicious circle that young people have difficulty escaping. The nexus of migration and human trafficking is one such circle. This is the case not only in Nimruz, but also in other parts of the country; however, Nimruz, as a hub of migration and population movement in the country, has specific features that may lead to additional social challenges, including drug addiction. Due to its location, Nimruz is a principal port for human trafficking and drug smuggling to neighbouring countries. As one respondent commented,

*Addiction is a significant problem for youth. Due to insecurity, drug cultivation is one of the most important means to make a living, and this cannot be stopped. Therefore, this has also become a problem in Nimruz.*

According to estimations from the head of the Youth Sub-directorate in Nimruz, at least 2,000 people—mostly youth—illegally migrate to Iran. This has led to the widespread availability of drugs, which has made the capital city of this province highly attractive for addicts. Illegal migration and human trafficking as outcomes of unemployment and insecurity have become an attractive option for youth, and such strategies to mitigate the lack of livelihoods have consequences. A resident of a border district in Nimruz

expressed feelings of despair and anger:

*Border inhabitants are a vulnerable population. Many young people have been killed near the border. They were going toward Iran to earn some money, but even before reaching the Iranian border, they were shot, and no one has asked why.*

A rough estimate suggests that at least 3,000 women in Nimruz are addicts, which has both direct and indirect consequences for young women. Female addicts also suffer due to the physical violence that their spouses direct toward them. As one female interviewee mentioned,

*Being a female addict is not easy, as getting help or rehabilitation facilities is either not easy or not possible. There are some rehabilitation centres for men, but for women there are no facilities. In addition, most families will try to prevent young girls or women from seeking outside help to save the 'honour' of the family.*

Authorities further told us that many female addicts gathered from the streets or returning from Iran are kept in brothels in Zaranj and the surrounding areas. We were told that strongmen and police personnel are involved in a complex network of addicted women, returnees, sex workers, children and youth, and drugs. As was mentioned to us,

*There are things that I cannot openly say, but there are networks, strongmen, and police who run a complicated network that includes youth and children. They use children to sell drugs, and when they are addicted, they are used as a tool for begging. Drugs are so easy to get. If you are a newcomer in the city and you do not know anyone, you can easily find people through drugs.*

Our interviews at a rehabilitation centre in Zaranj revealed that 80% of young people became addicts while they were in Iran as illegal labourers or immigrants. Many of them were second-generation immigrants or job-seeking temporary migrants. The stories of the immigration–addiction nexus that we heard at the rehabilitation centre demonstrate the interconnectedness of such insecurities. One such story told by Karim (an alias) highlights the plight of young people:

*Karim was the eldest of five children who came to Zaranj city to make a living so that he could support his family, who were poor. His family was from a nearby province. Karim's family got in touch with an intermediary who promised work for Karim in Zaranj city. The family paid the intermediary some money for this service. In Zaranj, Karim was introduced to a drug gang involved in smuggling drugs across the border into Iran. Karim's job was to smuggle drugs into Iran and sell them to drug couriers and labourers working there. For these services, he was paid—not very well but enough to send some (money) home to help his family. His family was not aware of the kind of work Karim was doing; they were under the impression that he had a decent job. Karim also mentioned how some border police and local police are involved in the drug racket scene. They work closely with the drug gangs and are in the pockets of these gangs. According to him, the police do not earn enough money, and this is the only way they can have more money to feed*

*their families. As for Karim, he started stealing some money and small amounts of drugs and started taking drugs. He did this because the gang did not pay him well and he felt cheated for the work he was doing for them. The gang found out, beat him up, and threw him out on the streets. He lived on the streets mostly by stealing until a local NGO worker, who brought him to the rehabilitation centre, found him.*

Youth, typically men, are the breadwinners of the family from an early age, and many expectations are on their shoulders from the beginning. To feed their family or start a family, youth must earn money, and an attractive option is labour in Iran. It pays little, but after a year of tenacious work, one can earn enough to survive with their family in Afghanistan for a year before returning to Iran. Many of these youth undergo challenging hardships to reach Iran. For instance, many are caught in police crossfire or killed by criminals, and those who reach Iran work for as long as six months to pay the debt to their traffickers. Living in Iran illegally as a labourer or immigrant is stressful. Labourers live in communal rooms with many people in similar situations. Living a life of uncertainty and facing the prospect of a bleak future make drug abuse a popular recreational activity among immigrant youth: they become drug addicts and are thus deported. Back in Afghanistan, they again face a bleak future with no job opportunities; with criminality being an immediate option, they are caught by the police and face imprisonment.

The above case history captures the interconnectedness of the insecurities that young people face growing up in post-conflict contexts: unemployment, poverty, child labour, lack of educational opportunities, economic migration, and availability of drugs [96,97]. Hall's study (2016) has demonstrated the causes and impact of drug abuse by young people, finding that lack of jobs, illiteracy, and poverty are common variables that lead youth to drugs. This aligns with another study conducted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Afghanistan Drug Use Survey (2009), which mentions that approximately 1 million drug users in the country are between the ages of 15 and 64. The survey further reveals that opium and heroin are two of the most common drugs abused by young people; moreover, Afghanistan and Iran have some of the highest numbers of users (UNODC, 'World Drug Report 2012'). Both our data and other research show that how drug abuse become coping strategies for youth in mitigating their livelihood challenges.

#### **4.2.2. Pakistan**

As in Afghanistan, drug abuse in Pakistan among young people is rapidly increasing. The respondents informed that there are two types of young people involved in this social issue. Firstly, there are those who are involved in the drug business to earn money to either support their families or pay human traffickers to help them migrate to other countries. Secondly, there are those who get addicted to these

drugs. The use of ice or crystal meth (methamphetamine) among young Pakistanis is alarming and worrisome for law enforcement agencies; the State Minister for the Interior of the present government has claimed that in Islamabad (Pakistan's capital), 75% of young female and 45% of male students across various universities are addicted to ice [98,99]. Another related problem is theft by drug addicts, who commit crimes to finance their drug usage.

The majority of the respondents from local communities in Swat and Peshawar were of the viewpoint that drug addiction can be attributed to unemployment, rural–urban migration, and broken families. Particularly, the issue of how drug addiction among youth is on the rise can easily be observed in the Hayatabad and Karkhano (famous mega marketplace) areas of Peshawar, wherein drug addicts can be seen roaming around everywhere, including the residential streets, marketplaces, and deserted areas. The local communities consistently lodge complaints in the concerned police stations to eliminate these drug addicts because they are the primary source of various crimes in the areas including theft, abuse of children, and street crimes. The respondents shared that police have failed to tackle the problem because the number of drug addicts is on the rise and the government has no comprehensive policy to eliminate this serious social problem.

Upon asking about the causes and effects of drug abuse, respondents shared that unemployment, negligence of the government, and the massive rural–urban migration due to military operations in the tribal areas and subsequent internal displacements are the main reasons for drug abuse among youth. The free roaming of these addicts has affected the local inhabitants of Hayatabad, Peshawar in many ways—for instance, theft, rising street crimes, child abuse, and stealing from residential areas during night time. Respondents suggested that it would be difficult to tackle the issue of drug abuse, including other youth issues, until and unless the police and other concerned departments come up with solutions to rural–urban migration or displacement and create livelihood opportunities for people living in rural areas that would eventually reduce the unemployment burden. On the other hand, the police are of the viewpoint that they are frequently monitoring the worsening situation but have failed to achieve the desired results due to lack of resources to rehabilitate the addicts and eliminate the primary sources behind this societal issue—that is, the massive rural–urban migration, the worse law-and-order situation in the adjacent tribal areas, rising inflation, and unemployment among the youth. Several incidents of murder, attempted murder, sexual abuse, theft, robberies, and snatching have been reported in Peshawar and its suburbs where the accused were found to be drug addicts.

Drug addiction is also on the rise in Swat; as per the government estimations, there are over 4,000 drug addicts present, most of whom use heroin and ice drugs. The police and civil government are trying to address the issue and have established Darul Kafala (rehabilitation centre) for drug addicts [100]. In both Peshawar and Swat, police—

together with local communities, local public liaison councils (PLCs), and other committees—are trying hard to eliminate the menace of drug addiction from the society but failing to achieve desirable results. Both the respondents from the police and local communities argued that the reasons and sources of drug addiction (as mentioned earlier) are so strong and vibrant that despite applying available remedies to stop it, drug addiction is on the rise.

If we compare both the cases of Afghanistan and Pakistan, one of the main reasons for drug trade and abuse is linked to unemployment and poverty. As we have pointed out drug trade and the participation of youth in this trade is to support their livelihoods, and this makes them succumb to the use of drugs, which affects their insecurity. While the centre provides some relief to addicts, but it does not address other psychosocial insecurities that youth face. Most treatments at drug centres are medical in nature and little or no social counselling is provided to facilitate patients' rehabilitation into society. Additionally, social stigma and family honour add to the mounting insecurity affecting youth, and the consequences of not reintegrating youth into society force them to become marginalised and susceptible to criminality or extremism.

## 5. Trust and Corruption

### 5.1. Afghanistan

In the Nimruz case, the interviewed youth reported widespread disillusionment; they did not expect any positive developments in terms of decreasing corruption in the near future. As mentioned earlier, our informants in both case countries frequently reiterated this expectation. One considerable element of frustration, especially among the educated youth, was obtaining employment in either the public or private sector. Many voiced their frustration and anger at people who obtain jobs for which they are not qualified—either through their connections with people in high offices or through tribal affiliations. Moreover, even if people do get jobs, their position is not secure. Some must resort to corruption to keep their jobs intact. As one respondent mentioned,

*It can also be said about job security. When someone gets a job, he or she must be careful because since there is corruption, his or her position can be sold to someone else. Since job security is so weak and the employee does not feel safe, he or she might resort to corruption to fill his or her pockets before candidates having better connections get the job, even if they are not qualified.*

Most of our informants mentioned that corruption within government, police, and educational institutions is so prevalent that their trust in these institutions is minimal. They viewed their future in the country as hopeless, and many argued that the only possibility of a better life is to migrate out of the country. As one informant mentioned,

*Unemployment is a big problem all over the country. Nimruz is a border city, and we can see people leaving the*

*country illegally on a daily basis. I can estimate that at least around 2,000 people are leaving the country to Iran every day. Moreover, 80% to 90% of them are youth. It is not only unemployment that makes them leave the country but also corruption, insecurity of life, and war are other reasons.*

In Nimruz province, the lack of trust in and corruption of formal official institutions means that most youth prefer the informal institutions available to them for advice, conflict resolution, and interaction with government institutions. A civil society activist estimated that at least 75% of youth would prefer to consult *shura*, [101] family elders, and youth networks for help and services. Furthermore, trust in the police among youth is relative. As one youth informant explained,

*If there is a personal or family connection between the youth and the police, then the level of trust is high and the police receive support. This further depends on the mutual experiences that police and youth have with each other.*

CSOs have been introducing programmes to facilitate and support the police and army personnel with youth issues. Although corruption is a challenge, the CSOs believe that working directly with the police through meetings and consultation can improve their services.

Our findings echo another study, 'Youth study on peace and security: Afghanistan (2018)', in which respondents expressed similar sentiments of frustration towards such nepotism. In this study, youth were especially angry that corruption had become an integral part of almost all interactions. One respondent stated, 'Government positions are sold in the market, and if you pay a specific amount of money, you can buy a position...even if you are illiterate and uneducated' ([3], p. 6). The Asia Foundation Report, Afghanistan 2018 further highlighted this problem through its yearly survey, in which 81.5% of respondents considered corruption to be a substantial problem. The respondents' experiences and interactions with different institutions highlighted the challenges of corruption: 67.5% of respondents experienced corrupt practices while seeking admission to schools and universities, as well as when receiving documents from the same; 65.1% encountered corrupt practices in their interactions with the Afghan National Police; and approximately 65% mentioned that they often experienced corruption when applying for work. These figures do not vary by age or gender ([102], pp. 118-119).

The unemployment, poverty, drug abuse, and corruption vulnerabilities of the youth in Nimruz are common for children and young people in other parts of Afghanistan. Our findings here echo those from two studies conducted by Samuel Hall in 2016 and 2017 that elucidated the vulnerabilities faced by Afghan youth. One primary focus of the 2016 study was the impact of mental health issues faced by these youth. Reasons for mental health disorders among internally displaced persons and forced returnees include the lack of socioeconomic opportunities, marginalisation, isolation, trauma, and stigma. In addition, the youth also mentioned how different forms of violence, such as theft, gangs, and terrorist attacks, affect their livelihood. Hall's

2017 study, which was conducted inside the Juvenile Rehabilitation Centre in Kabul, demonstrated that youth who have broken the law in different ways experience problems and challenges both during detention and after being released, and this factor can affect their future lives. Hall's three-part study reveals existing vulnerabilities, risks, and barriers faced by youth. The first part provides reasons that they are imprisoned. Many children mentioned theft due to poverty and unemployment as a major factor for their imprisonment; '43% of the overall population are charged with theft/robbery, followed by moral crimes [103] (14%). Other charges include drug offences, physical fights, the sale of alcohol, and trespassing. The most serious charges are of murder (13%) and sentences for threatening Afghanistan's national security (12%), including terrorism charges' ([102], p. 23). The children explained that on many occasions, the police either detained them without proper evidence or utilised them as scapegoats to locate the culprits involved in crime [82]. Both studies also mention the impact of police harassment, violence, and corruption as an important factor contributing to youth insecurity.

One young informant from Nimruz tellingly captured the significance of the problem:

*Unemployment is (the) source of all social corruption. As much as people are patient, their patience will wear thin. Moreover, they would commit crimes. One cannot eat security, one cannot wear security, and one cannot drink security. As I told you, unemployment is the source of all corruption. Unemployment can lead to drug addiction. Unemployment is the main reason behind drug addiction all over the country. Here, everyone is vulnerable, but mostly our youth.*

The above quote vividly captures the interconnectedness of vulnerabilities connected with personal and livelihood insecurities that affect citizens in general and youth in particular.

## 5.2. Pakistan

The data from the study areas in Pakistan suggest that corruption is the root cause of the trust deficit between the public and various governmental institutions in Pakistan and that the police frequently have prominent interactions with the public. As per the Corruption Perception Index 2016, of 169 countries, Pakistan is 116<sup>th</sup> in controlling corruption [104]. The Global Corruption Barometer (2013) conducted a survey in which 81% of respondents in Pakistan considered civil servants and public officials to be extremely corrupt; the conclusion is that Pakistan suffers from bribery at all levels [105].

There are, however, other issues that influence the public's trust in the police, such as their inability to adequately address gender-based violence. A well-known female social activist from Peshawar expressed her views on the insecurity looming around women:

*Women are more insecure than anyone in the communities. In a society where women are at times unable to*

*even get to a police station, it is no surprise that so many cases of domestic abuse and other forms of violence go unreported.*

A woman from an international organisation based in Peshawar explained further,

*Nine out of ten women experience violence, usually at the hands of family, but few go to police. It is okay to hit a woman. It is okay to throw acid on a woman. It is okay to kill a woman. These are the areas we live in and the times we live in.*

In Pakistan, addressing sociocultural and religious factors surrounding gender is vital for effective gender-responsive policing interventions. Data collected in the Peshawar and Swat regions of Pakistan with respondents from NGOs, INGOs, government officials, and police personnel clearly indicate that gender-based violence is considered one of many critical issues in Pakistan and that women are prone to experiencing various kinds of violence at the hands of male community members and have limited access to police protection and justice. Most women are not permitted to obtain education, work, or even leave their homes on their own without a male relative. As one young woman from Swat said,

*There are so many reasons why women wouldn't report domestic abuse. They may not be aware that police can help them, or they feel shame or fear that their husbands will beat them more or that they will become outcasts from their family. This environment drastically reduces women's access to justice.*

Community involvement in policing services, as well as behavioural and attitudinal change training, is necessary to increase gender responsiveness and accountability in policing. Police in KP have introduced and implemented steps to ensure gender-responsive policing in the province. For example, enhancing the role of trained women in policing is an important component of managing the increasing trend in violence against women. One example is the establishment of women's desks at police stations. For example, each police station must house a separate desk specifically to oversee female-related issues. A study of a UK-funded program found that the establishment of women's desks at five police stations in Peshawar led to a 57% increase in the reporting of incidents in one year, commenting that it helped reduce the stigma of reporting such crimes: 'For a woman to go to the police to make a complaint against a male in her household, that is a huge, huge step. The presence of a woman police officer softened the blow to the family. It made it acceptable for them to bring her back into the house' [106]. Unemployment and poverty also affect those women living in traditional societies, in which they only perform household chores. A community elder from Swat valley told us that, 'unemployment and extreme poverty create dissonance among the family members, and ultimately, the women in the household have to bear physical violence and torture by the male members of the family'.

Additionally, some police stations across the study areas in Pakistan have separate women's complaint cells, which

have been effective in resolving cases of gender-based violence, although significant work remains, and reforms are needed to allow women and other vulnerable segments of society a respectable and equal place. This is part of a broader effort by both governmental organisations and NGOs to promote the enactment of new laws through legislation and research-based initiatives that improve police services. For example, the newly implemented KP Police Act of 2017 aims to depoliticise police and make them accountable to the elected institutions at both the district and provincial levels. Moreover, the establishment of PLCs, dispute resolution councils (DRCs), and citizen–police liaison councils (CPLCs) through the act can begin to close the widened gap between the people and the government [16].

As we have seen from the above description, complex issues are at work when it comes to questions of livelihood challenges and human security at the local level. Those best positioned to understand the interplay of the issues are the communities themselves since they are the ones who experience these day-to-day challenges either directly or indirectly. In both case countries, trust and corruption are main concerns for youth and other segments of the society. It can be echoed from our findings from both case studies that corrupt practices in government departments are inevitable for one’s survival and job security. Despite several reforms’ efforts, police and the judiciary are the most corrupt institutions in Pakistan as per the National Corruption Perception Survey 2021 conducted by Transparency International Pakistan, and our data suggest the same in the case of Afghanistan.

### 5.3. Youth Insecurities and Police Relations

Earlier sections have shown that livelihood opportunities are often limited in post-conflict areas. Especially for the younger population, this can lead to feelings of hopelessness and make them extremely vulnerable. It is also important to understand that conflict affects boys and girls differently. Enduring poverty and lack of economic prospects also leave youth vulnerable to participating in criminal activities as a livelihood strategy. They are more easily recruited into criminal groups and drug trafficking. In addition to providing an income, membership in organised crime groups can provide protection, safety, and an important sense of belonging and identity. As a result, authorities may stigmatise, chase, or beat them—whether randomly or in a targeted manner. Additionally, youth may cope with their situation by migrating or using drugs, which may lead to further insecurities. Another coping strategy may be radicalisation. Rather than assuming radicalisation to be solely a result of religious extremism, it can also come from poverty and social and political marginalisation. As our case examples show, the drivers of insecurity for the youth are interconnected, creating a vicious circle of vulnerability and risk. As pointed out earlier, research has revealed that police–youth relations in post-conflict contexts have their own challenges. The challenges of police insecurity, militarised and aggres-

sive policing practices, abuse of police powers, corruption, and lack of trust and accountability tend to create a volatile relationship between police and youth. It becomes clear that issues of livelihood security and personal security are closely entwined, and there is a need to take an integrated approach to understanding these livelihood processes so that local communities might be in a better position to tackle their human security needs. It is also vital to understand how institutions, such as the police and government, can contribute to rather than threaten human security. For the police, there is the need to consider these issues through a civilian rather than a militarised or ‘force’ approach of policing. This is where the advantages and strength of COP as a policing and preventive approach can be useful in creating this bridge of collaboration and engagement between law enforcement and local communities.

## 6. COP: Building Bridges of Trust with Youth

### 6.1. Afghanistan: Youth–Police Relations

The previous sections have identified some key drivers of insecurities that youth face and how these are interlinked with policing issues. As previously stated, police–community relations in post-conflict contexts are problematic and challenging. The lack of trust in the police is a significant impediment to fostering their relations with the public. In this section, we examine how a shift towards COP might contribute towards bettering youth–police relations and how these relations can open spaces for better communication in addressing human security issues. In the first year of police reform in Afghanistan following the Bonn peace agreements in 2001, the focus of policing was on the training of police in military tactics and fighting insurgents, with very little focus on the broader set of insecurities that local communities experience.

After realising the need for more civilian-focused police, the government of Afghanistan turned to COP, as voiced through the policy document Police-E-Mardumi (PeM)[107], which defines the importance of ‘the cooperation between the people and the police’ and highlights that those problems must be solved through close *cooperation* and *coordination*. The terms cooperation and coordination are broad concepts and recurring themes in many governmental documents that discuss community policing; initially a project, PeM has now become a permanent directorate within the MoI. The secondary units of PeM were extended in a few provinces in the country, and prior to the departure of one of its primary supporters, the European Union Police Mission (EUPOL), from Afghanistan, it had reached almost all provinces. According to the PeM protocol, the first step is to establish a *shura*-e police or police–public consultation *shura* (PCCS), which is utilised as a bridge between the police and the people. In the first meeting between the community and police, the concept of community policing is introduced. A similar unit was also established in the province of Nimruz [108]. As a young NGO activist

reiterated,

*When we think of police in Afghanistan, we think of war, of a warlord, and of a rough and tough person. This has caused a gap between people and the police. People think of police as a rough person who is fighting on the frontline and has no idea about working with the people and their problems. The PeM program tries to solve this problem. PeM is facilitating bringing police and people closer and conveys the message that the police are working for people's safety and together they can work for better security.*

For instance, the PeM Community Policing Directorate has been given the green light to establish and operationalise 19 diverse councils in each of the police districts of Kabul, comprised of elders, religious persons, women, youth, influential community members, students, representatives of the educational directorate at the local level and the police commanders, and a liaison officer from the PeM directorate to address community issues. Issues that are taken up are land grabbing, unemployment, addiction problems, corruption, gender-based violence, school safety, criminal activities, and violence and issues regarding the police. Thirty percent of the membership in these *shuras* is reserved for women who come from civil society and schools and are known activists. Beyond the capital, PeM has expanded to include offices in 34 provinces of Afghanistan, with 337 PCCSs comprised of 13,480 members at provincial and district levels. The meetings are generally conducted in police buildings and are usually held twice each month. The people elect the members from their respective police districts.

These *shuras* are important venues in which governmental organisations and police representatives can directly meet and consult community representatives to address security concerns. The youth and the larger community can express their grievances towards the government and the police to take a stand on many security-related issues. However, respondents mentioned to us that contact between the youth and police frequently occurs as personal contact and is needs-based. A young person who works for a CSO mentioned the following:

*We do not have regular meetings or procedures, but we have personal relationships and use them to connect with the police. For example, 25 days ago, we had a meeting with them (the police). We have a monthly meeting among the members of the civil society, and in one of the meetings, we discussed the problem of availability of drugs on the street and car theft. We decided to talk to the police about this. We contacted them, and then we set a meeting with the deputy chief of the police regarding these issues. We asked them to adopt measures based on our recommendation. After that, we saw some improvements, and some arrests were made.*

At the meeting, the police officer promised to address this issue. Following the meeting, some arrests were made, but according to some respondents, police efforts are inconsistent, and civil society must regularly push the police into action. When *shura* members return to their commu-

nities, the legitimacy that they gain from the involvement with PCCSs allows them to become part of the local or traditional conflict resolution mechanism in their neighbourhoods. These *shura* further act as a conflict resolution mechanism in which citizens can discuss the conflicts that they are facing and provide a bridge between the community and the police. Furthermore, the police gain public participation in security-related activities.

These PCCSs are important arenas for youth–police interactions. However, our research additionally reveals mixed feelings towards the police and, thus, different levels of trust between the people and the police at the community level in Nimruz province. While some respondents stated that they do not trust the police, others attributed the considerable level of security in their districts to the unity and cooperation between the police and the community; the difference depends on the modality of their interaction. An informant expressed his thoughts regarding the police as follows:

We can categorise the police into two groups. The first group is the low-ranking police, and the second is high-ranking police (officers). A few days ago, I was on my way to work, and I was stopped at a checkpoint. The police officer asked me if I was a government official. I said, 'What is the difference, and why do you want to know?' He said, 'I want to know', and I said, 'No, I am not working with the government.' He politely asked me if he could search the car. I allowed it, and after he was finished, I left. I told this to a friend of mine, who recalled an encounter he had witnessed: a while back, a police officer had stopped an unruly motorcycle rider, but the rider had not answered the officer's questions. Instead, the rider had called the district's chief of police, who was his own father. The police chief, upon hearing the story, both scolded and beat up the police officer because he had dared question his son. Now, if high-ranking officers behave in this way, what can you expect from low-ranking cops? This can discourage low-ranking police officers. Such behaviours affect trust.

For people whose relatives are part of the police, the police are considered a friendly institution, while for others, the police are a corrupt organisation. When we asked our respondents if they have any regular communication with police, they said that they have nothing to communicate to them; they—the police—only work with smugglers and regulate the goods and oil smuggling across the border. Some respondents believed that people only interact with the police when they commit crimes; for example, they replied by saying, 'Thank God we have nothing to do with the police. We don't commit any crimes.' For them, interaction with the police means something negative, and the police are viewed as interacting only with the corrupt. Although the respondents said, that their relationship with the police is good, they primarily meant that they have no real interaction because they have not done anything wrong.

Levels of trust in the police are also low among women. According to a female civil society activist, there have been reports of corruption in the Female Response Units (FRUs)



[109] of Nimruz, causing women to prefer to speak with the Directorate of Women's Affairs. This lack of trust can lead to further unemployment among women because few are willing to join the police due to fear of sexual harassment. Corruption and lack of trust in the police may additionally result in more women referring to traditional structures or CSOs. Based on our interviews, many women prefer to reach out to the Directorate of Women's Affairs, women's shelters, religious figures, CSOs, Community Development Councils (CDCs), and other entities. When we asked a civil society activist about the level of trust between women and police, she said,

*I cannot say there is no trust at all, but there are some elements in the police who destroy the existing level of trust. For example, a few months ago, a policeman was pressing and threatening the women shelter's administration that a woman living in the shelter should marry him because she did not have any guardian. This does not paint a good picture.*

The police have their own categories and opinions of youth. For example, in one of our interviews with an officer from Nimruz province, the respondent mentioned how the police both perceive and categorise them:

*I categorise them—youth—in three groups. The first group is the students who do not do anything wrong. The second group are the educated and bright youth who want to be part of government and support the government and the police, and the police have a good relationship with them. The third category are mostly youth in the villages and districts where the Taliban have influence. Some of them, although living under Taliban influence, have good intentions regarding the government, but there is another category that hates the government and supports the Taliban, Al-Qaeda, and ISIS. This last category is involved in a variety of crimes. They are constantly looking for opportunities to make quick money through all possible means, such as selling drugs or firearms, stealing, or informing.*

While many of these challenges are widespread and the police may not be involved in them directly, many of these issues bring the police into the picture; however, forums such as the PCCSs have created spaces for interactions and connections. It is important for youth to view the police as more than an institution that they visit after something negative has happened. As one youth participant in a police–community meeting stated,

*These meetings are a great way to interact with the police. Such meetings create a space for understanding our problems that we face and give us the opportunity to understand the police's challenges. Many youth have a very bad picture of the police.*

The government's establishment of channels of communication and relationship building through COP are crucial steps in addressing important livelihood and personal security concerns of communities. However, these initiatives are not enough, as people still view the police with scepticism and mistrust. In both Afghanistan and Pakistan, civil society–driven initiatives have played a crucial part in pro-

moting COP through joint projects for community–police engagement as discussed below.

## **7. Civil Society and International Efforts in Building Relationships between Police and Youth**

In 2013, the international community, the UN, and a number of national NGOs allied in one of the largest community policing projects: the Afghanistan Democratic Policing Project. The project included many activities, among which were safety and school outreach activities aimed at youth. The purpose was to generate awareness among schoolchildren and youth regarding increasing public safety. The government of the Netherlands funded it, while the UN Office for Project Services managed the project, and UNAMA managed its implementation. Sayara, an international NGO and one of the implementation partners, trained the police to conduct safety briefings in schools and other community venues, including mosques. Police officers from the local community-policing unit visited schools to both inform and provide practical demonstrations to students regarding how to react in emergencies such as fires, traffic accidents, floods, and earthquakes, and they also addressed mine awareness and how to provide first aid. They also distributed school bags, pencil cases, lunch boxes, flashlights, and medical bags to the schools. Additionally, the local police discussed their role in serving the wider community. The safety outreach component covered 15 districts in seven provinces, with PeM teams contacting three schools or community groups per district. In many instances, the police and CSOs cooperated to conduct outreach programmes, which were delivered to schools in different provinces. Such participatory and cooperative efforts contributed to building positive trust-based relations among the police, CSOs, and the youth. In addition to Bamyán, other Afghan provinces—including Balkh, Baghlan, Ghor, Helmand, Kunduz, and Uruzgan—became part of this outreach programme [50,110].

Another example of police efforts to improve relations with local communities took place in Herat. In close cooperation with EUPOL and with financing from Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the local PeM unit conducted a series of awareness campaigns for traffic safety in schools and colleges across the city, which were experiencing a rise in injuries and deaths among students due to traffic accidents. Police distributed stop signs, traffic paddles, and reflective vests, focusing on crosswalk safety training for students. Such initiatives may be small but are nonetheless important to building trust and confidence and improving interactions between young people and the police (Field interviews with EUPOL Staff, 2015).

In a similar fashion, CSOs, sports bodies, and clubs in Kabul and a few provinces in the country were interested in improving relations with the police. The project comprised police and youth from diverse backgrounds who trained together, forming joint teams in either football or cricket to play

in tournaments with other local teams. These projects became popular, opening avenues for cooperation in fighting crime, drugs, and terrorism (Field interviews with UNAMA Staff, 2015).

For example, in Kabul, a women's NGO successfully cooperated with police stations to train personnel to help victims of domestic violence. The training involved basic services for victims, legal aid, and knowledge regarding gender rights. Additionally, the NGO assisted the police in providing safe shelters for victims, as their stations did not have capacity for that project (UNAMA informant, 2015).

A private NGO founded in 1996, PARSА, works directly with several groups in Afghanistan. In our discussion with the head of PARSА and two members of the organisation, we were told that they participate in various projects with the most vulnerable people in society, such as destitute women and orphaned children, to provide economic programmes for women living in shelters. An important project that PARSА re-established in 2008 is the Scout programme for youth. The Scout movement was established in 1931 and was active until 1970; however, due to various conflicts affecting the country, it lost momentum. Governmental support and financial assistance from international organisations enabled the movement to slowly gain popularity among the youth in 2008. Officials mentioned to us that PeM worked with the Scouts on two projects: community outreach and community service programmes. PeM representatives attend the Scoutmaster's programme to develop outreach skills in youth and then teach and train Scouts on safety measures regarding fire, traffic, first aid, and mines. Scouts then teach other youth under the guidance of PeM, planning community service programmes that involve planting trees, cleaning schools, and removing trash. In cooperation with PeM, Scout programmes provide opportunities for those who are at risk of being recruited into extremism. Scouts contact the communities through PeM, calling on community elders—which include *maliks*, *shura* members, and District Development Authorities (DDA) members—to introduce their programmes. There are roughly 2,500 Scouts in the country, 30% of whom are girls. In our discussion with the head of PeM in 2018, we were told that the relationship between Scouts and PeM is based on ongoing projects: when the project ends, the relationship will become an ad-hoc one, which means that the police will contact the Scouts if there are programmes (per field interviews conducted in 2016).

In Nimruz, the Scout programme is conducted with the help of and coordination between PeM and the Directorate of Education. There are 680 Scouts in Nimruz province, and PeM trains them on school safety programmes, police responsibilities, and their role in the community. These Scouts are then assigned to teach other students about the school outreach programmes and the police. According to a civil society activist who participated in some PeM *shura* meetings in Nimruz, 'these meetings could provide a platform to remove the gap between the public and the police'. For example, police are depicted as a 'warlike institution

rather than being people oriented; therefore, these meetings may allow young people specially to view the police differently. Furthermore, these meetings have become a venue for young people to meet with each other and create a network.'

The cooperation among youth, international agencies, CSOs, and police is important for creating conditions for COP to be effective in minimising citizens' insecurity. These relationships can improve knowledge transfers among youth, police, international agencies, and CSOs. The participatory nature of such projects offers channels for communication and cooperation. Coyne and Nyborg (2020) highlighted the advantages of a civilian-centred approach towards police–community participation. Such a cooperative approach provides an incentive for the police to improve their behaviour and performance towards the community and creates a platform for police accountability. This type of grassroots approach is uncontroversial, and it creates an alternative vision of policing in which communities and police cooperate to overcome insecurity. The strength of a civilian-based approach is the wide variety of knowledge, skills, and connections that it offers, which is important for creating locally sustainable solutions to security challenges. The participatory and dialogic nature of such involvement opens avenues for implementing COP practices in a sustained manner [6].

### *7.1. COP and Trust Building Between Youth and Police in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa*

While several attempts were made to reform an inherently colonial police force since Pakistan's independence in 1947, they were not successful until the Police Order of 2002—promulgated by the then-president of Pakistan and providing protection under the constitution in the 17th Amendment Act of 2003—replaced the Police Act of 1861. While the Police Order of 2002 was a major step in the direction of a more democratic police service, political interests, leaving many of its ambitions of becoming an independent, trusted institution unrealised, hampered it. Over the past two decades, however, political and economic instability and increasing security concerns—both along its borders and internally—sparked renewed interest in improving the relationship between the police and communities as a way to ensure peace and development in Pakistan. Combined with the devolution of political power to the provinces, a space was created for local police reform processes. Notably, the KP government introduced and implemented the KP Police Act of 2017, which is the most advanced reform effort in the country.

The Act both depoliticised the police and emphasised inclusive policing in the province through community-oriented and gender-responsive policing. One primary purpose of the KP Police Act of 2017 was to bridge the widened gap between the community and police, allowing them to work in close coordination to fight crime. While not called community-oriented policing per se, the components and

intentions of the Act of 2017 are closely aligned with the main philosophy of COP. And while few respondents from KP were aware of the term COP during our fieldwork in Pakistan, it was well known and promoted by governmental and police officials serving at higher levels. In an interview, a former director general of the National Police Bureau Islamabad defined COP as an effort,

*to convert police from force to service. There is a widened gap between police and the citizens. To gain citizens' trust, police must be polite and lenient while dealing with the common man, and COP is an effective tool in bringing positive changes in the mindsets of both police and the community.*

The Act of 2017 consolidated several activities focused on improving relations between the public and the police, including the establishment of DRCs and PLCs. These councils are organised at the district level and consist of 21 members selected from local communities, including civil service officers, lawyers, educators, youth, and other notable local individuals. In fact, community members from Swat and Peshawar view the new law as an endeavour to eliminate the fear that community members have of the police and to maintain harmony in society while engaging both police and community members (DRC Member-Local Community, Swat).

PLCs in particular are important arenas for improving relations between youth and police. In most of KP province, the police are working to incorporate young people in various societal events to improve their mutual relations. Recently, the police collaborated with UNDP and other civil departments to introduce PLCs in 10 conflict-affected districts of KP province, including six districts of Malakand Division: Swat, Malakand, Buner, Shangla, Dir Lower, Dir Upper and Chitral, Bannu, Kohat, and Dera Ismail Khan. These councils comprise 30 members: 70% are local governmental representatives—mostly elected young men—and 30% are reputable individuals from the local community [111]. Data from the fieldwork in KP reveal that although these forums can, in theory, include young women as well, they were in practice only open to male members of the community because the prevailing culture and traditions did not allow women to participate in any forums alongside men. The exception is in areas where CSOs have formed female PLCs as a part of their competence building activities with the police.

The PLCs organise events to provide platforms for both youth and the police to easily interact, play games, and discuss local issues. For example, the Rahimabad police station in Swat and areas under its jurisdiction organises monthly cricket matches between the two groups. The most important factor in these games lies in the post-match ceremonies, during which the local community expresses their grievances to the police in a friendly environment. These complaints typically concern decision-making in developmental projects, the harsh behaviour of security agencies, the provision of employment opportunities, education, and healthcare services, and other issues. Most respon-

dents appreciated that such initiatives may improve police–community relationships as well as occupy the youth with constructive activities and provide hope of ownership in confronting local matters. Locals define these PLCs as a form of community-oriented policing because the aims and objectives of this initiative contribute to the COP philosophy. A youth respondent from Kabal, Swat, addressed their importance:

*I think interactions between youth and police should happen on a regular basis. I prefer the involvement of the youth in regional matters as it is seen fruitful by many. Numerous initiatives for bridging the gap and creating partnerships between the police and the community have been and are still being taken up so far, but we don't see considerable results because eventually such initiatives are influenced by the politicisation of the programmes or projects, sometimes by influential local politicians or sometimes by police personnel. True sincerity can really be seen in such endeavours. To bring peace and harmony in the community by partnering, the police–community (relationship) needs strong leadership on the part of youth, commitment from the police department, the sincerity of politicians, and non-intervention in civil affairs by the army. However, I can hopefully say that the initiative of PLCs has the potential to bring the desired results in terms of trusted community–police relationships.*

The members of the PLCs are empowered to issue warnings for the misuse of loudspeakers in mosques and marketplaces, to verify the credentials of landlords and tenants, to check tenant acknowledgement receipts, and to monitor the activities of released accused or convicted persons and other antisocial elements [16]. A respondent from Peshawar told us:

*The initiative of PLCs is beneficial for both the police and the youth; in this way the police have been able to build a soft image since they were considered monsters in the past by the common people. Now, in the current scenario and with such initiatives, the police have the chance to interact with youth and other community members, and the common people can interact with the police without any fear. Therefore, with the launch of PLCs, the fear to face the police vanishes.'*

These initiatives and activities have brought the police and youth together to overcome local issues and proactively divert possible future avenues for conflict. Additionally, these practices have had positive repercussions on police–community relationships because youth have become aware of their rights, duties, and most importantly, their role in the overall development of the region. Initiatives, such as PLCs, can mainstream youth and collaborate with the police to maintain sustainable peace and security in conflict-torn areas.

However, during interviews with youth in the newly merged tribal districts, we learnt that they are frustrated with the role the police assume in these areas. For example, respondents complained that the police confront young activists in an unlawful manner with an iron fist and act on orders from the Pakistani army and intelligence agencies.

Many activists have been arrested in cases with little legal standing, First Information Reports (FIRs) have been lodged, and their names have been placed on exit control lists. The youth argue that such behaviour from the police expands the gap between them and the youth and that the various initiatives for bringing police and youth together could be in vain.

The data collected from youth in Pakistan's Swat and Peshawar regions reveal that they have many grievances against the government, local politicians, and security agencies, including the police. They consider these bodies to be the sources of the region's insecurities, such as unemployment, ignorance, unawareness, apolitical attitudes in the youth, illiteracy, poverty, and most significantly, a sense of deprivation and marginalisation. Most respondents believe that in the recent past, the social and political exclusion of youth caused and escalated conflict. Some young respondents mentioned that the harsh and uncooperative behaviour of law enforcement agencies is an underlying source of insecurity because, if this continues, then anti-state actors can easily misguide youth. One young activist from Swat said:

*All over the world, the youth are the soft target and first priority of such operations, which creates uncertainty, insurgency, and insecurity. A similar situation was created in Swat, too. Now we face a lot of insecurities in the area from the unfixable, rigid, and uncooperative attitudes from law enforcement agencies currently operating in the region.*

Some respondents expressed that the government should properly heed the plight of local youth because, if ignored further, they could overturn the status quo. A local young man from Swat told us, 'Now, as you know, the majority of the youth are marginalised and poor, so they can become easy targets to be radicalised—not by religiously motivated narratives this time around but rather by politically motivated narratives. For example, nationalists, liberals, and other factions of political parties can misguide them.'

Some youth respondents were optimistic regarding local young people's political activism, which could be a source of awareness on regional and geostrategic matters. This awareness has provided them a resource to overpower the ways and means of radicalisation. Notably, most youth respondents posited that people can no longer be misguided by misinterpreted versions of religion; as the people of Swat have been misguided three times on such a basis, this is now impossible to repeat. A youth activist from Swat stated,

*Swat has experienced several phases of religious radicalisation in the past, first in the late 1980s, then in 1994–95 by Sufi Muhammad's Tehreek-i-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi, and most recently by Maulana Fazlullah Tehrik-e-Taliban from 2005 to 2009. Our youth have participated in all movements where religion has been used as a tool to attract them, and the pioneers and engineers of these movements achieved implicit agendas. Now, the youth of the region have discovered these ill-fated agendas, and they can never be misguided by religion.*

Since the beginning of 2018, youth in Pashtun-dominated areas—especially in the newly merged tribal districts as well as in the adjacent cities of Bannu, Karak, Dera Ismail Khan, Peshawar, and parts of Baluchistan—have been actively demanding their due rights from the government and armed forces of Pakistan. During the fieldwork in Peshawar, we further learnt that youth (social activists) are more frightened of the state's security agencies than of militants. Young people hailing from the newly merged tribal districts expressed their views that, on the one hand, the youth movement is providing people with the courage to claim their basic human rights and justification of the military operations conducted in tribal areas since 9/11; on the other hand, they frequently face harassment, arrest, abduction, and targeted killings from security agencies, and police are at the forefront of these problems. They criticised the role that the police have assumed in post-conflict areas; for example, the respondents complained that police confront young activists in an unlawful way with an iron fist and acting on orders from the Pakistani army and intelligence agencies. The youth argued that such behaviour from police can expand the gap between them and the youth, jeopardising the initiatives for bringing them together. In an interview with the director general of the National Police Bureau in Islamabad Pakistan (NPB), we were told the following:

*NPB is developing curricula for police schools; for example, they will start the initiative in the National Police Academy Islamabad. The institution will bring together people from all segments of society: media, community elders, politicians, police, and academia in order to make COPs an effective tool to bring harmony, peace, and prosperity for all. International communities are also striving to incorporate COPs in police departments and make them an effective tool that could bring police and communities together. Various national and international organisations are working closely with police and other departments. UNDP, Coffey International, Department for International Development (DFID), UKAID, Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI), and Home and Tribal Affairs Department KP are working together to incorporate COPs in the system. Various workshops and seminars have been conducted with the police, local administration, the prison and prosecution department, and local communities in order to sensitise the idea of COPs.*

In this respect, the PLCs are not the only option for community–police interaction. Section 168 of the Police Order of 2002 provided for the establishment of CPLCs to perform certain functions that could lead to institutionalising COP in Pakistan [112]. A CPLC is 'a non-political statutory institution, operationally independent and managed by dedicated and concerned citizens offering their honorary services to bridge the gap between communities and police' [113]. The foremost difference between CPLCs and PLCs is that the former are formal and the latter are informal in exercising their activities regarding police–community relations; however, the aims and objectives of both are to establish police–community partnerships to combat crime

and resolve societal issues.

CPLCs are considered another initiative that can make the police and youth collaborate to curb crime and violence. To date, CPLCs are functional in Karachi and Lahore [93] Provincial Public Safety (PPS) and the Police Complaint Commission (PCC) in KP are attempting to establish CPLCs in each district of the province, but previous governments in KP have thus far ignored this requirement. The provincial government of KP, however, is planning to initiate a CPLC soon, and CPLCs are one of their prime objectives [114]. Three women are to be included in each committee, and members have been nominated. Initially, no specific number of members was legally specified for the liaison committee, but authorities decided to restrict it to 10. The CPLCs are not only to work as trust-building bodies but also to bridge the communication gap between the public and the police.

The police in KP now consider youth to be a means to fight radicalisation, crime, and drug addiction, and they engage youth representatives in interactive sessions with officers from across the province to encourage them to fight crime [115]. PLCs are playing an important role in this interactive engagement. These interaction sessions are held as meetings between police personnel and local youth, awareness sessions across districts, and workshops to build capacity in both police and youth. These sessions are useful for sensitising youth on various police initiatives such as DRCs, police access services, police assistance lines, and efforts to improve police behaviour at a police station level. Such cooperative efforts between the police and civil society can further build and strengthen trust relations among various actors. Since they also allow police to better understand the insecurities that the youth face, the police respond in a more appropriate manner that builds trust rather than threatening it.

Notably, Cuesta et al. (2007), Peters et al. (2003), and Bihler et al. (2015) have discussed the importance of participatory grassroots projects in reducing violence, crime, and gang activities among young people in their research from Cali in Colombia, Bo in Sierra Leone, and Central America (El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Honduras), respectively. Through positive intervention programmes and social development activities, such as training workshops, family meetings, festivals, sports activities, church groups, civic messages, youth education, micro enterprise programmes, and efforts from the private sector, youth can be lured away from crime and violence. The cooperation and collective participation of citizens, CSOs, police, the justice system, and local authorities are key factors in such preventive work [116–118]. Similarly, Moser and van Bronkhorst (1999) mentioned the importance of community policing programmes, such as implementing after-school sports activities, hosting homework clubs run by community police officers, and picking up school dropouts and taking them to school, which can enhance trust building between the community and the police ([105], pp. 14-15).

## 8. Conclusions

As we have discussed, in both Nimruz and KP provinces, some primary drivers of insecurity are unemployment, poverty, drug abuse, corruption, and a host of societal challenges that youth confront daily. In Nimruz province, addiction is viewed as the predominant enemy of the youth. Many of our respondents, both young men and women, stressed that unemployment leads to illegal migration and drug abuse, which further leads to the destruction of youth's lives in the community, and many families have been haunted by this vicious circle. Interviews with young people revealed similar histories of poverty, unemployment, migration, and drug abuse as central to people's everyday experiences. Migration, drug abuse, and drug peddling are substantial challenges to the local inhabitants and the police. Other risk factors that affect youth and increase pressure in their lives are different forms of urban violence, such as theft, gangs, terrorist attacks or bombings, and police harassment.

Our data show how livelihood security and personal security are closely interconnected. Both cases show that drug abuse is complex. One of the major reasons for youth involvement in the drug trade is to support their livelihoods; however, they also succumb to the use of drugs, which again affects their security. Livelihood security is paramount to understanding the interconnected nature of drug trade and abuse. The cases show how drugs become coping strategies for the vulnerabilities that youth face, namely unemployment and corruption, and how these in turn become risk factors with law-and-order issues between communities and the police.

As we have argued, the factors that drive young people to vulnerability, exclusion, and frustration are common to both young women and men; however, young girls and women face additional challenges that increase their vulnerability. Understanding the gender dynamics within the context of insecurity is critical. Our case studies demonstrate that the nature of insecurity that young women face is both public and private. In the public sphere, young girls face restrictions from family members, who prevent them from attending school or force them to leave school at an early age. The reasons vary from fear of walking alone to school to dangers of sexual harassment or being kidnapped. For young women, employment is another significant challenge; many women feel the pressure of sexual harassment from their male colleagues and become targets of threats and attacks in their workplaces, thereby forcing them to either quit or find another job.

In both Afghanistan and Pakistan, gender-based violence in the private sphere is a primary cause of insecurity among young girls and women, and issues related to young girls, women, and marriage are at the heart of the family or tribe's honour and dignity. Harmful practices, including child marriage, baad (exchange of young girls in conflict resolution cases), honour killings, and forced marriages, significantly limit the participation of young girls and women in many spheres of life. Young boys are also exposed to

violence through the practice of *bacha bazi*, where rich and powerful men and even the police sexually exploit poor, young boys caught in the net of poverty, family pressure, desire for economic gain, cultural traditions, violence, and abuse. Cultural norms of honour and shame that particularly pervade women's daily lives do not allow them or their family members to seek advice or report cases to external institutions such as the police. Furthermore, people either do not trust the police or view them as corrupt; hence, few seek their assistance [119].

Youth and police relations in many countries are often complex and problematic, as police perceive youth as either perpetrators or victims of crime. In post-conflict settings, these relations are additionally difficult, as societal trust is brittle. In both Afghanistan and Pakistan, police–community relations are challenging, and trust is low. Many challenges that we have discussed regarding youth—whether economic, social, cultural, or political—are closely interconnected to issues of safety and security and, hence, are linked to law-and-order issues and police involvement. Despite these difficulties, maintaining peace and stability with the young community depends on the police understanding youth insecurities and responding appropriately to their safety and security needs. Without community involvement, police efforts towards trust building and support are futile. COP is an important policing approach that we have discussed. The operationalisation of COP lies in building trust and interacting with communities in a collaborative manner; its strength is in its responsiveness and accountability and in the engagement of communities to determine appropriate and sustainable local solutions.

Our field data from KP province demonstrate that PLCs are an important COP initiative in which police and youth meet to discuss their mutual concerns regarding safety, security, developmental issues, and police misconduct in a safe space. Games and sports become important arenas for such mutual interactions. CPLCs are another such initiative in which youth and police connect to discuss issues pertaining to conflict resolution, political mobilisation, unemployment, crime, terrorism, and radicalisation. The police in KP have also introduced DRCs—alternative dispute resolution forums in which victims, offenders, and the community meet to discuss and provide reconciliation to the concerned parties in a dispute. However, a significant drawback for many of these initiatives is that the participation of young women is limited. Nevertheless, such initiatives are important in enabling communities and the police to interact without hostility, build trust, and mutually support each other to create safety and security in local environments.

In Afghanistan, the establishment of PCCSs is an important step in creating a meeting place in which the police and community members can interact without tension. As previously discussed, the *shuras* are key meeting venues for the police and government representatives to meet with community members and discuss issues concerning safety, security, and development. For youth, they provide opportunities to communicate their worries and problems to both

governmental officials and the police. Within the context of human security and COP, FRUs and PWCs are important bodies contributing to justice and security for women in a small way.

The role of CSOs in building bridges of trusting relationships between youth and the police is crucial if COP is to be effective and successful in post conflict contexts. Our case examples from Afghanistan and Pakistan illustrate the importance of CSOs' successful participation with the local police in various community-based projects that enhance fruitful partnerships, relations, and trust for future collaborations. Projects aimed at young children and youth, such as safety outreach programmes; first aid traffic safety instructions; the dangers of mines, floods, and earthquakes; joint sports programmes; and football and cricket matches are some of the activities that open lines of communication and mutual understanding regarding issues of safety and security. Serious subjects, including criminal activities, drugs, extremism, and terrorism, in which the youth are susceptible to becoming involved, are addressed in a non-threatening manner. Similarly, youth share their problems, challenges, and grievances with the police. The participatory nature of these projects simplifies cooperation and knowledge transfer. An area for future research, especially in post-conflict settings, is the role of civil society–driven initiatives in community–police engagement.

By keeping in mind the fragile relations between the police and citizens in post-conflict societies, such a grassroots approach can go a long way in creating small steps for cooperation and trust building. In Nimruz and KP, PLCs, CPLCs, PeM, and PCCSs are high-impact participatory arenas for facilitating dialogue and cooperation among all stakeholders. The primary challenge is that this effort must be viewed as a priority and an important aspect of COP.

A common thread that has been voiced throughout this paper is the interconnectedness of the insecurities that youth are exposed to in these case countries and in post-conflict societies more generally. We have examined how young people's lives are shaped by their access to economic advantages and opportunities, as well as to education and health services, illustrating how these influence their lives. Additionally, we have addressed how they can actively participate in processes, including policing, voice their concerns, and be part of the decision-making that affects their lives. Our data present how young people discuss the challenges that they meet and what they require to better their livelihoods; as we have discussed, most of these challenges concern security issues and connect to broader aspects of human security. Moreover, the data demonstrate that livelihood security issues are closely connected to personal security and the effects on communities of young women and men and that the police are critical in contributing to human security rather than being a source of insecurity.

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- [88] Most of our interviewees expressed a desire to migrate out of the country. Migration is also an important coping strategy for young Afghans to get away from poverty and unemployment. Given the limited scope and focus of our paper, we cannot cover this topic in its entirety. UNHCR estimate that about 3.5 million people are Internally Displaced People (IDPs). Iran and Pakistan host nearly 90 per cent of displaced Afghans - more than two million registered Afghan refugees in total. Some 65 per cent of the Afghan population – in and outside of Afghanistan – are children and young people. <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2021/7/60ed3ba34/unhcr-warns-imminent-humanitarian-crisis-afghanistan.html>.
- [89] During the months of June and August of 2021, the situation in the country turned dramatically with the advance of the Taliban and the fall of Kabul in August. As a result of this there was mass exodus of people fleeing the country for safety. Our researcher with the project had to flee the country along with his family to Pakistan.
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