



Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Status of Women and Girls in Khyber District

Gender Profile of Merged District



Document: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Status of Women and Girls in Khyber District
Merged District Gender Profile

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Abbreviations/ Acronyms

AIP	Accelerated Implementation Plan
BHU	Basic Health Unit
BISP	Benazir Income Support Programme
CD	Civil Dispensary
CEDAW	Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CHUs	Comprehensive Health Units
CHC	Community Health Centre
CRVS	Civil Registration of Vital Statistics
CRC	Convention on Rights of Child
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CNIC	Computerized National Identity Card
C&W	Communication and Works (Department)
DDA	Drawing and Disbursement Authority
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DHQ	District Headquarter Hospital
DHIS	District Health Information Systems
DRC	Dispute Resolution Council
DPO	District Police Officer
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EmONC	Emergency Obstetric and New-born Care
EVAWG	End of Violence Against Women and Girls
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization (United Nations)
FR	Frontier Regions
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Area
FCR	Frontier Crimes Regulations
FDIHS	FATA Development Indicators Household Survey
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GE	Gender Equality
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GRAP	Gender Reform Action Plan
GIZ	German Agency for International Cooperation
HeRAMS	Health Resource Availability and Mapping System
HMIS	Health Management Information System
ICERD	International Convention on Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination
ICCPR	International Convention on Civil & Political Rights
ICESER	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICPD	International Conference on Population Development
IDP	Internally Displaced Population/Person
IDS	Integrated Development Strategy
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
JJSO	Juvenile Justice System Ordinance KP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
KAP	Knowledge, Attitude and Practices
KII(s)	Key Informant Interview(s)
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
KPCSW	KP Commission on the Status of Women
KPMD	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Merged Districts (Support Programme)
LG	Local Government
LHV	Lady Health Visitor

LRC	Legal Reform Committee
MA(s)	Merged Areas(s)
MCFC	Mobile Citizen Facilitation Centre
MDs	Merged Districts
MICS	Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey
MNA	Member of National Assembly
MNCH	Mother and Child Health
MPA	Member of Provincial Assembly
NER	Net Enrolment Ratio
NADRA	National Database and Registration Authority
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NMDs	Newly Merged Districts
P&DD	Planning and Development Department
PLC	Police Liaison Council
PPC	Pakistan Penal Code
PPP	Public Private Partnership
QIP	Prime Minister's Quick Impact Programme
RHC	Rural Health Centre
SMEDA	Small and Medium Enterprise Development Authority
SoPs	Standard Operating Procedures
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SW&WDD	Social Welfare and Women Development Department
TDPs	Temporary Displaced Population/Persons
TDS	Tribal Decade Strategy
THC	Tehsil Headquarter Hospital/Tertiary Health Care
UC(s)	Union Council(s)
UDHR	Universal Declaration on Human Rights
UNCAT	United Nation Convention Against Torture
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
VCNC(s)	Village Council and Neighbourhood Council(s)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Programme
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WHO	World Health Organization
WEE	Women Economic Empowerment

Preface

UN women proposed to develop an analytical report, based on primary and secondary data, highlighting the present-day situation of women and girls in the five Newly Merged Districts – Khyber, Kurram, Orakzai, North Waziristan and South Waziristan – of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The analysis and data provided will facilitate the federal Government and provincial Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; UN Agencies, particularly the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Merged Districts (KPMD) project partners; and other associates in the development and planning, and implementation, of policies and programs that will effectively serve the needs of the most vulnerable groups in the underserved Merged Districts (MDs), particularly women and girls.

A comprehensive analytical report, representing the situation of women and children in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's five MDs, was prepared in collaboration with government ministries, non- governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), and in consultation with other semi-government entities. The complete report (separately available) provides a comparative account off all five MDs; it also provides sectoral recommendations for immediate interventions, in light of the Government's proposed Tribal Decade Strategy (TDS), and the Accelerated Implementation Plan (AIP), to accelerate the social, economic and political development of the MDs.

The subsequent report is a gender profile of Khyber District, one of the five MDs. It highlights the current status of women and girls, and the disparities that exist between women and men, boys and girls, in the district. The indicators used for the study were aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Human Development Indices' (HDIs) and the Gender Equality Ranking (GER). Combining multiple primary and secondary data sets, the situational analysis explores gender disparities, vulnerabilities, and social exclusion, as a result of poverty, social and cultural constraints, governance and security situations. The secondary data was collected from public sources, private and development sectors, through surveys, publications, guidelines, directives, research papers and reports. The reviewed material highlighted the salient features of the Khyber District in terms of demography, administration, social services and infrastructure, cultural barriers preventing women and girls' access to, and control over, various resources. Primary data was collected through consultative meetings, focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs); the reports incorporate stakeholder voices from the district, providing an insight into the challenges that women and girls face, and their current status with regard to education, health, economic participation and empowerment, gender-based violence, and leadership and political participation.

May 2020

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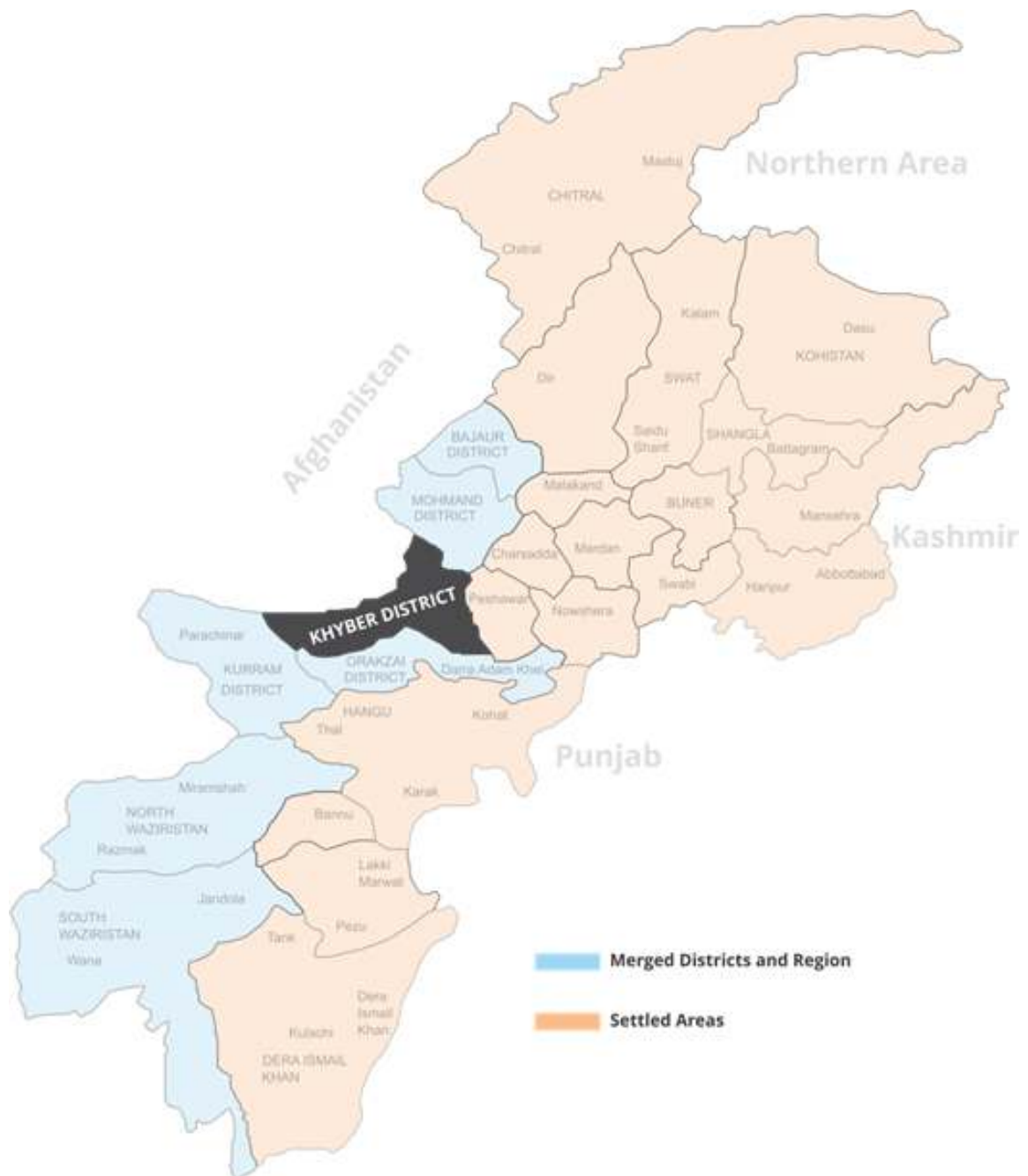
Section 1 Gender Profile Khyber District

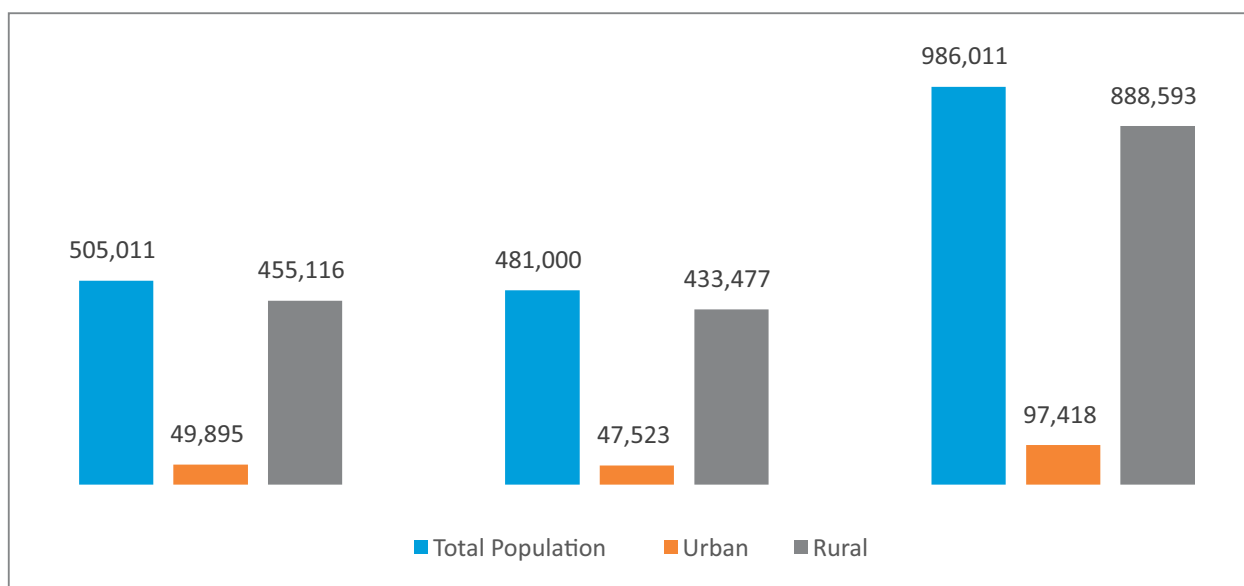
Demographics

Khyber Agency, the part of erstwhile Federal Administration Tribal Areas (FATA), was merged with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in May 2018 and renamed as Khyber District. The district comprises of 4 tehsils, namely, Bara, Jamrud, Landi Kotal, and Mula Gori. After the merger, it is now annexed to the Peshawar division.

1.1 District at a Glance

Khyber district ranges from Tirah Valley down to Peshawar. It borders with Nangarhar province of Afghanistan to the west, Orakzai district to the South, Kurram district to South West, Peshawar to the East, and Mohmand district in the North. The historic Khyber Pass, connecting Pakistan with Afghanistan and, therefore Central Asia, passes through the district's mountainous range.





Graph 1: Proportion of total population in urban and rural areas in Khyber

Population Density	383/sq. km
Major Tribes	Afridis, Shinwaris, Mullagoris and Shilmanis
Languages Spoken	99.6% speak Pashto

Land of the district is mostly hilly and only 10% of the land is cultivated and 1% is reported as forest area. Major livelihood sources include small businesses (shop keeping, livestock & subsistence agriculture), foreign remittances (laborers in Gulf Countries), and transportation (being at international trade route).

For women livelihood sources are meagre. Rural women are involved in small family-owned agriculture and livestock, and a very few in home-based businesses like sewing and stitching. A few urban educated women are engaged with paid employment in the education sector as teachers and in the health sector as health care providers in government and non-government entities.

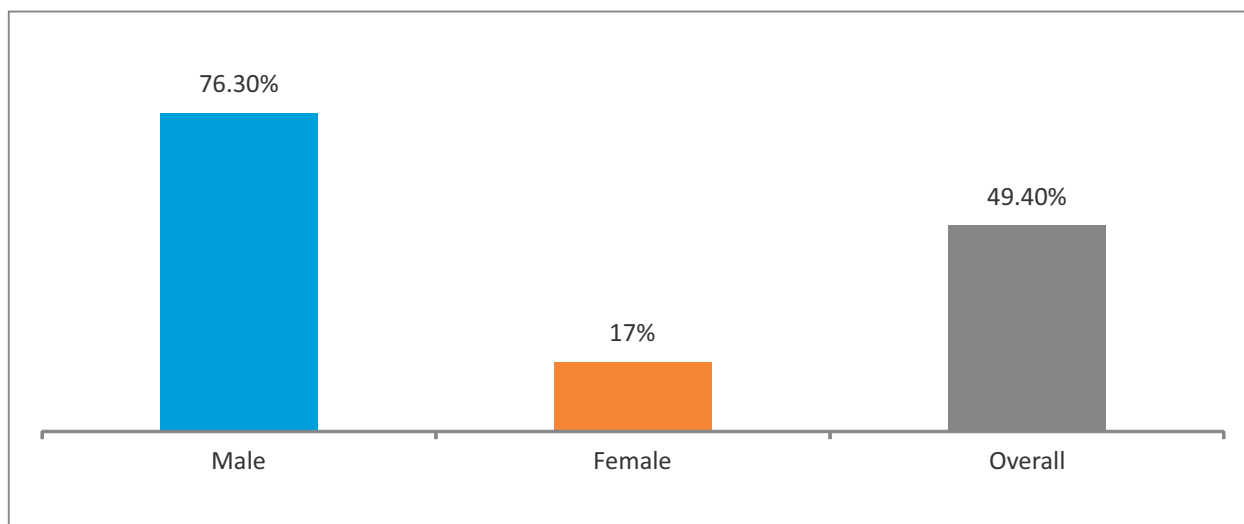
Major issues of the district include:

- Law and order situation because of insurgency and militancy
- Inadequate development in the area resulting in low socio-economic status
- Tribal patriarchal culture and traditions resulting in women's restricted mobility and socioeconomic participation
- Wide gender gap in all development indicators

Section 2 Secondary Data for Khyber District

2.1 Education

Education is the basic human right of every child legally guaranteed by the Constitution of Pakistan, which requires the state to provide equal educational opportunities to all without discrimination based on sex, colour, caste, ethnic background, religion, and socioeconomic status. However, because of complex cultural issues, gender disparity is high particularly at the secondary and higher education level. The overall literacy rate of Khyber District is 49.4%, whereas, male literacy is 76.3% and the female literacy rate is only 17%.



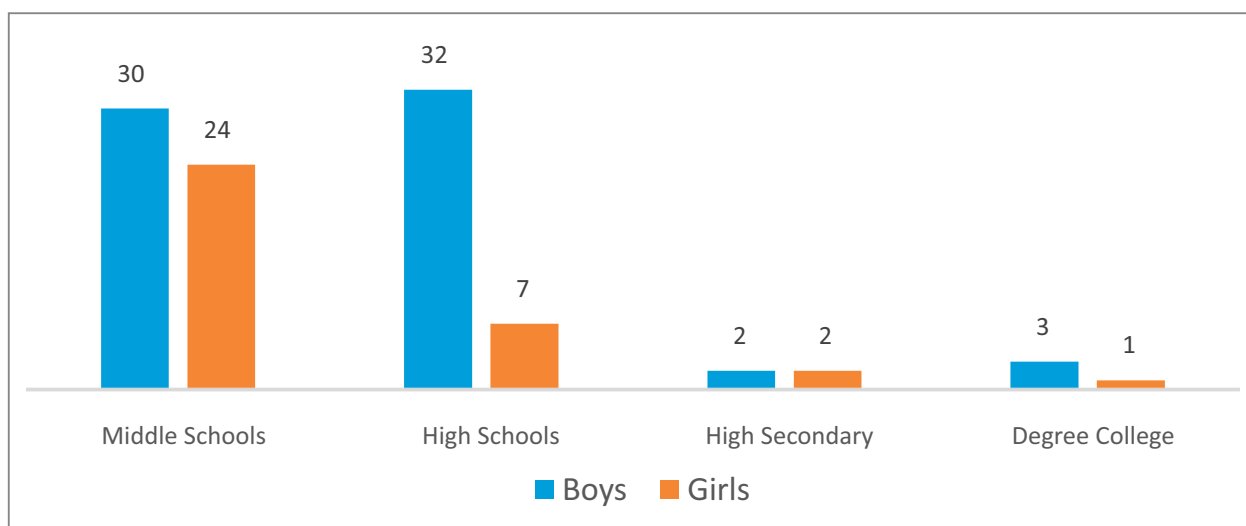
Graph 2: Literacy rates in Khyber District

Source: FATA Development Indicators Household Survey 2013-14

Though at the primary level quite a number of schools are set up for both boys and girls, but the gender disparity starts at middle education level and widens at high secondary. Furthermore, at the college level, a challenging parity exists, as there is only 1 college available for girls against the 3 colleges for boys. Of the total functional schools, there are 42 fewer schools for girls as compared to boys at the primary level. Similarly, there are 6 less schools at middle and 25 less schools for girls at the high school levels. This represents an overall gap of around 11% between the boys' and girls' institutions (56% and 45% respectively). As considerable progress has been made in achieving universal primary education and closing the gender gap in enrolment, the higher education opportunities for girls in the district remain a challenge and demonstrates the severe lack of political will and social commitment in investing in girl's education.

Level		Primary School	Middle School	High School	Higher Secondary	Degree College
Khyber	Boys	312	30	32	2	3
	Girls	270	24	7	2	1
	Total	582	54	39	4	4

Table 1: Gender disparity at all school levels in Khyber District

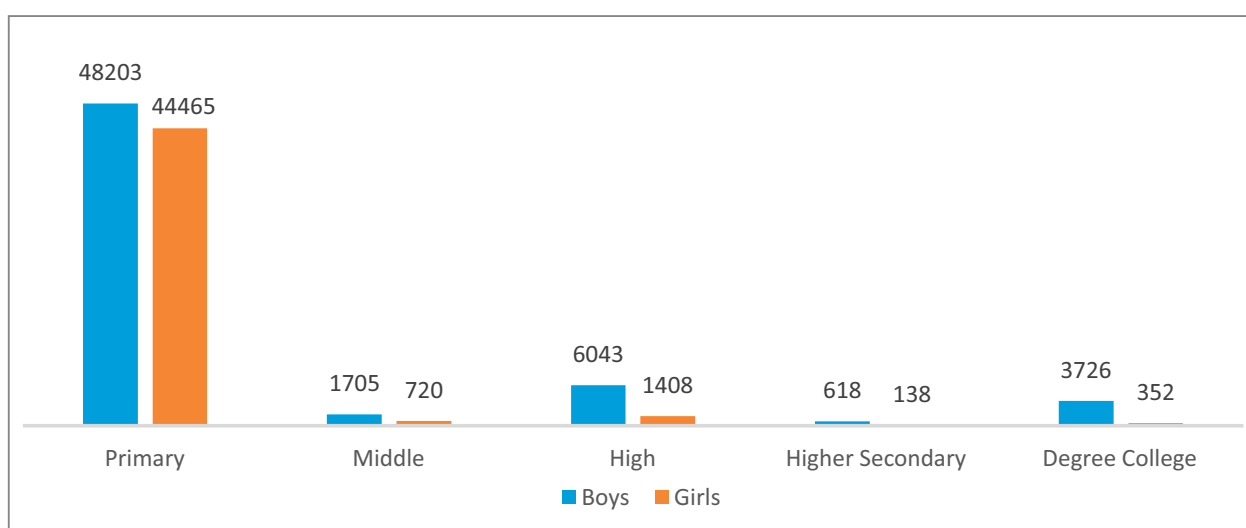


Graph 3: The proportion of educational institutions reserved for boys and girls in Khyber

While it is encouraging to see (table below) that there isn't a significant difference (around 8%) in the total percentage of students enrolled at the primary school level (100:92 boys and girls), there is, however, the trend of widening gap as the students climb the ladder towards the higher level of schooling. For instance, the figures of boys' and girls' enrolment, reveal greater disparity at the middle school level – with 1705:720 (boys: girls) and at the high school 6043 boys are enrolled where there are only 1408 girls. Policymakers need to notice that secondary education equips girls to become productive engaged citizens. Advancing girls' secondary education could be their transformative development strategy, as higher education can bring significant benefits to girls and society – from increased lifetime earnings to reductions in adolescent childbearing, child marriage, stunting, and maternal and child mortality.

Level	Primary School	Middle School	High School	Higher Secondary	Degree College	
Khyber	Boys	48203	1705	6043	618	3726
	Girls	44465	720	1408	138	352
	Total	92668	2425	7451	756	4078

Table 2: Enrolment for boys and girls in all schools in Khyber District
Source: District wise Education statistics of KP 2017-18

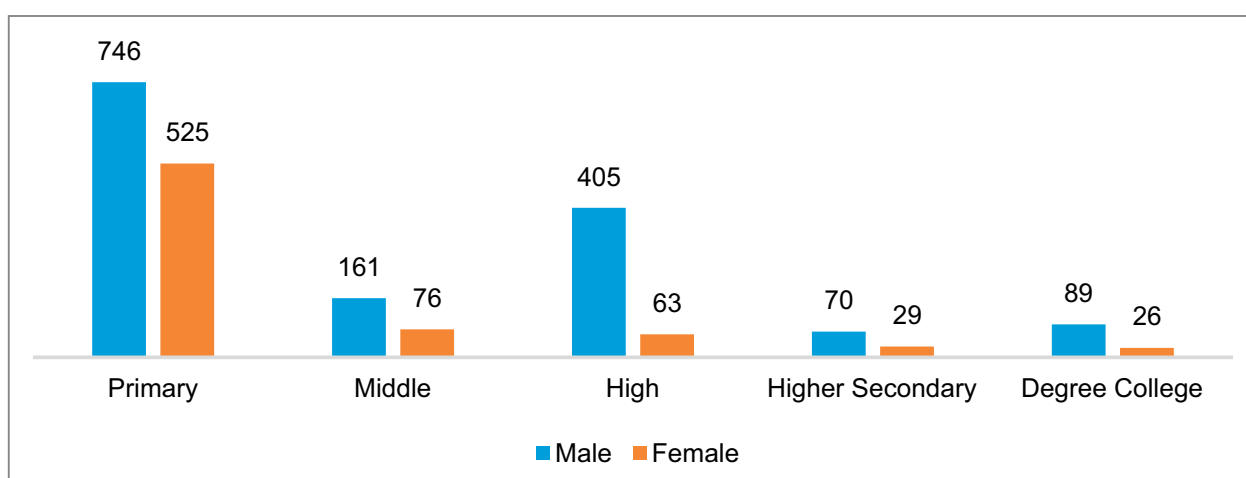


Graph 4: Enrollment figures for boys and girls at various levels of education in Khyber

Likewise, a large gap can be observed on the availability of male and female teachers. At almost all levels (table below), except the primary level with comparatively less disparity, there is a gap of 50% or more. For instance, at the middle level, there are 161 male middle school teachers as compared to only 76 females. The gap further widens at the high school level, where there are only 63 females' teachers as compared to 405 male teachers. The ratio of the number of students per teacher stands at 65:1 (boys) and 85:1 (girls) at the primary level, while at the high school level it is at 15:1 for boys and 22:1 for girls.

Level	Primary	Middle	High	Higher Secondary	Degree College	
Khyber	Male	746	161	405	70	89
	Female	525	76	63	29	26
	Total	1271	237	468	99	115

Table 3: Availability of male and female teachers for all school levels in Khyber District
Source: District wise Education Statistics, 2017-18



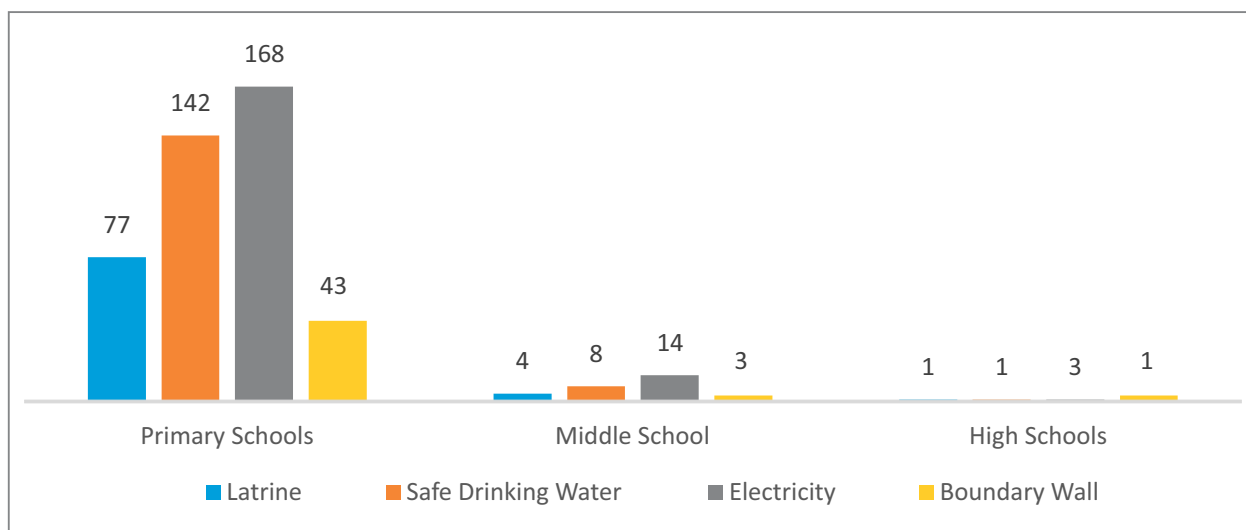
Graph 5: Proportion of male and female teachers in schools

The barriers that deter boys and girls from attending school are often associated with poverty, geographic remoteness, armed conflict, poor-quality education, and lack of school infrastructure. While several barriers will be discussed in the content later, the below figure shows the state of basic facilities such as latrines, safe drinking water, etc. in the existing girls' schools.



A public school in Khyber District
Source: Tribal News Network

The condition of facilities at the girls' primary school level shows a dismal picture. According to the Education Management Information System – EMIS 2017-18, out of the total 270 girls' primary schools, 43 primary schools have no boundary wall, 142 lack safe drinking water facility, 168 are without electricity, and 77 are without toilets/latrines. The situation is slightly better in middle schools, with 3 schools without a boundary wall, 8 without drinking water, 14 without electricity and 4 without latrines out of the total 24 schools. However, it is important to note that the absolute number of schools for both these levels are very low. At the high school level, out of the total 7, there is 1 school without a boundary wall, 1 without drinking water, 3 without electricity, and 1 school without a latrine.



Graph 6: Number of girls' schools with missing infrastructure or facilities

The current situation of the inadequate and/or missing facilities provides a strong indication of the poor environment at girl schools and one of the main reasons for higher dropout indicators in the merged districts, including Khyber. Moreover, these obstacles often interact with gender inequality to intensify learning disadvantages for marginalized girls. The needs must be addressed at the policy and program levels to ensure favourable educational ambience through the provision of improved physical and learning facilities; hence, combat girls' low retention and attendance rates in schools.

2.2 Health

Unfortunately, in terms of health and survival, the region shows a dismal picture linking to the larger issues of socio-economic, political, and ecological factors such as accessibility, affordability, and availability of health services. There is a severe lack of understanding regarding the needs of female health, especially maternal and child health across the continuum of care.



Healthcare services available to women in Khyber District

Source: IPS News

Because of the limited availability of statistical data, reliance was put more on the available research studies, normally presenting a holistic picture of the erstwhile FATA, Khyber being part of it. Pakistan Demographic Health Survey (DHS, 20187-18) statistics presents the situation of the area as follows:

- Fertility rate is 4.8, whereas the Pakistan average is 3.6
- 49% of the births are attended by skilled health personnel
- Only 32% of the women residing in MAs receive timely postnatal care
- The infant mortality rate is 29 between birth and the first birthday per 1000 live births
- Basic immunization coverage is as low as 30%
- The mean age of women at the marriage in MAs is 18.2 years as compared to rest of Pakistan, which is 20.4
- Current use of modern contraception by married women is lowest at 14% with the unmet need of 17%

A study “factor responsible not utilizing institutional delivery services in Khyber agency, FATA, Pakistan” (Imran Inayat Yousafzai, et al; 2012), present the following observations:

- 72% of women reported non-availability of regular delivery services and doctors at the health facility
- 67% of women mentioned cultural issues – not allowing them to go to health facilities
- 63% of the respondents could not afford the cost associated with their treatment

- 25% of the same study respondents did not have anyone to accompany them to the health facility, which sometimes results in postnatal deaths

Another study conducted by G N Ghani (2013) regarded poor infrastructure, shortage of healthcare providers, economic conditions, and negative cultural practices responsible for making things worse for married women in Khyber.

Preliminary analysis of the existing secondary data on health facility assessments reveal challenges in service availability and readiness to provide essential MNCH/SRH services within the district. The physical presence of service delivery and core health personnel is a critical starting point in health care services responding to the needs of all beneficiaries especially women and adolescent girls.

Health Service delivery in the district is through primary and secondary level health care facilities.

Primary level Health Care Facilities	Secondary Level Health Care Facilities
Community-Based Care Services	Facility Based Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil Dispensaries (CDs) • Basic Health Units (BHUs) • Rural Health Centers • Community Health Centers (CHCs) 	Secondary care level referral centres: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tehsil Headquarter Hospitals • District Head Quarter Hospitals.

Table 4: Primary and Secondary Level Health Care Facilities

There is no Tertiary Care Hospital (THC) hence patients requiring further care are referred to the THC located in the larger cities of KP Province, particularly to Peshawar.

There are 62 health facilities in district Khyber; however, 52 health facilities are reporting to the district health information system (DHIS).¹

Hospitals	Dispensaries	CHCs	BHUs	MCHCs
4	24	10	12	2

Table 5: Health Resource Availability and Mapping System (HeRAMS) in health facilities of FATA Pakistan (2018)

According to the HeRAMS (2018), 28 health facilities have overall structural damage and 8 reported to have extensive structural damage. Of all the available health facilities only 14 provide Antenatal Care, and only 07 in the entire district provide some level of basic emergency obstetric and newborn care (EmONC) to address the needs of pregnant women, adolescents, and new-born.

Availability of Healthcare Professionals

The minimum health package requires a certain number of the health care providers, specifically addressing the women's health-related issues (for instance, LHVs, nurses, health educators, etc.) and provision of mother and child health services, including family planning and pre and post-natal services, availability of safe delivery kits, and the routine immunization. However, the majority of these health outlets (except the district and tehsil headquarter hospitals) are deficient in the provision of the majority of such services and supplies to properly address women and children health issues.

Even at district-level hospitals, the availability of qualified staff to serve the population at the district headquarter hospital in Khyber lacks necessary professional staff. For Khyber, there is only one gynaecologist, one paediatrician, one general surgeon, one physician, and only 15 medical officers against

¹ DG Health Services and the Health Resource Availability & Mapping System (HeRAMS, 2018).

the requirement of 108. There is no psychiatrist available for the entire MDs. Below given table shows the current strength of available staff at health facilities compared to the requirements:

Staff Category	BHU/CHC Level			CD Level		
	Required	Available	Gap	Required	Available	Gap
Male/Female MOs	12	10	2			
LHVs	22	15	7	24	16	8
Health Technicians	44	22	22			
Health Educators	12	0	12			
Dispenser/ Medical Technicians				24	14	10
EPI Technicians				24	14	10

Table 6: Staff at the BHU/CHC Level

The HeRAMS (2018) data reveals a grim picture on the availability of crucial professional health care providers at the district headquarter as well as the primary and secondary level health facilities. In particular, at the BHUs and the CDs level, necessary staff availability gaps are bulging, whereas the health personnel statistics present even a grimmer picture at the CD level, which may be the only health care source available to the majority rural population.

The service readiness of the existing health facilities to deliver the health services package is also unreliable due to lack of provision of 24 hours services, lack of full complement of basic equipment, and standard precaution for infection prevention, diagnostic capacity, and essential medicines to provide adequate MNCH/SRH services.

Description	BHU		CHC		CD	
	A*	E*	A*	E*	A*	E*
Service Provision						
Routine Immunization	8	12	8	10	12	24
Child Screening & Malnutrition Growth Monitoring	1	12	0	10	1	24
Antenatal Services	7	12	2	10	1	24
Basic EmONC	4	12	0	10		
Postpartum Care	2	12	0	10		
Equipment Availability						
Refrigerator	8	12	3	10	9	24
Safe Delivery Kit	5	12	3	10		
Sterilization Facility	1	12	3	10		
Microscope	4	12	3	10	3	24

A*: Available E*: Expected

Table 7: Availability of Services and Equipment to Provide Adequate MNCH/SRH Services

The above table elaborates a great disparity between the availability and expected services and necessary equipment required to satisfactorily meet the needs of the women and children in the district. Another critical gap is the lack of any evidence on recent capacity building of the health care staff and presence of treatment protocols and referral guidelines including services for victims of gender-based violence stated by the KP Ombudsperson on harassment in an interview with the research team.

Section 3 Primary Data for Khyber District

3.1 Education

The research team has looked at the priority of educational challenges that came forth as a result of secondary research. Significant challenges include:

- Limited resources to enhance well equipped institutional outreach in the district
- Lack of consideration at the planning level to develop girls' institutions
- Traditional notion that girls' education is not that important. They need to learn only household chores – the prevailing intra-household discriminatory practices between boys and girls.
- Lack of institutions, facilities, and qualified Human Resource.

The above challenges were substantiated by the respondents as well during the primary research:



*Girls school in Khyber District
Source: Gandhara News*

The data indicates that the research participants (29%) were concerned with the lack of government educational institutions; hence girls travelling farther to reach schools. Access (distance and cost) to education remained a huge educational challenge, particularly for girls. Long distances and cost of schooling along-with the prevailing lack of security, poverty, and females' culturally restricted mobility, hinder enrolment, and continuation of their education. The female political activist from Khyber was of the view that:

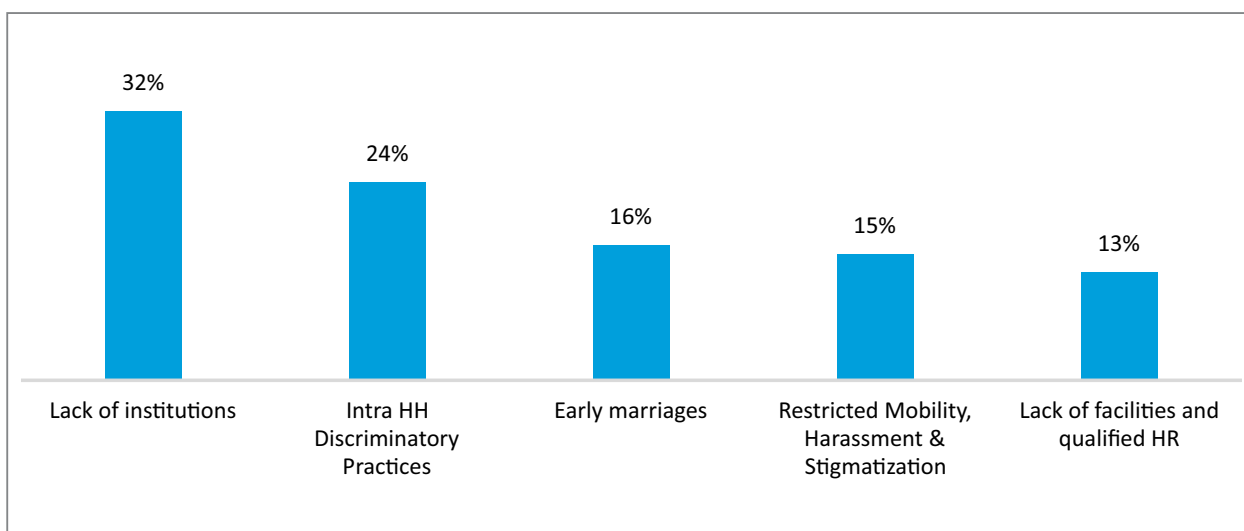
“We need more and more schools for our children, particularly girls, so that basic literacy is attained among all children. Then we need more primary and high schools to make our children skilful for their future livelihoods.”

A female political activist from Khyber

Non-availability of nearby girls' schools was a concern for parents who even principally support girls' education. Pursuing an education in far areas is a burden on their already low socioeconomic status. A male respondent expressed:

“Like me, several of us from Khyber definitely want our daughters to be highly educated – equal to our sons. We want them to be doctors, professors, lawyers, and CSP officers. However, unfortunately, many of us are economically limited and cannot send our daughters to other cities for higher education. I would suggest that the government prioritize female education over males and establish higher education institutions for girls in every tribal district on a priority basis.”

A male Respondent from Khyber



Graph 7: Categories of responses to the challenges and barriers with regards to girls' education

Gender discriminatory norms practiced at HH level e.g. preference of boys over girls, boys being heirs carry the family name and bread earners, while girls are for other homes and household custodians only with no tangible economic contribution. A female expressed as follows:

“Girls are considered economically worthless as compared to the boys in our society – boys get preference in all aspects of life, be it good clothes, shoes, or choice of education.”

An FGD participant – Khyber

“Even the poor would want to send their male-children to schools, it doesn't matter if they are far and/or expensive.”

An Adolescent Girl – Khyber

Another uneducated girl from the same group presents her disappointments as following:

“Boys are free to get an education, to play, to walk in the village street but girls cannot do so.”

An Adolescent Girl – Khyber

As a result of the tribal traditions, early marriages between the age of 15 to 18 years, were also identified as one of the major educational challenges for females of the area, noted by around 15% of the research participants. A female key informant from Khyber, commenting on the prevalence of early marriages said:

“Unfortunately, early marriages are quite common in our society. Furthermore, marriages are mostly fixed at birth for both boys and girls. Parents hardly wait until their daughters reach their puberty. Girls, more than boys, face not only pressure from their parents' side, but the in-laws as well for an early marriage.”

A Female Key Informant – Khyber

Mobility issues of females also restrict their education as thousands of girls in Khyber face gender-based constraints outside their homes. Females are allowed to go out of home only with a male member of the family. Adult girls are not allowed to live alone doesn't matter even if it is for education. A male FGD participant from Khyber said:

“When our girls pass the 5th class, the majority of them quit schools because for further education they need to go to Peshawar. Boys can survive on their own, but being a girl, she cannot go and live there alone, so a male has to accompany her all the time, which is impossible.”

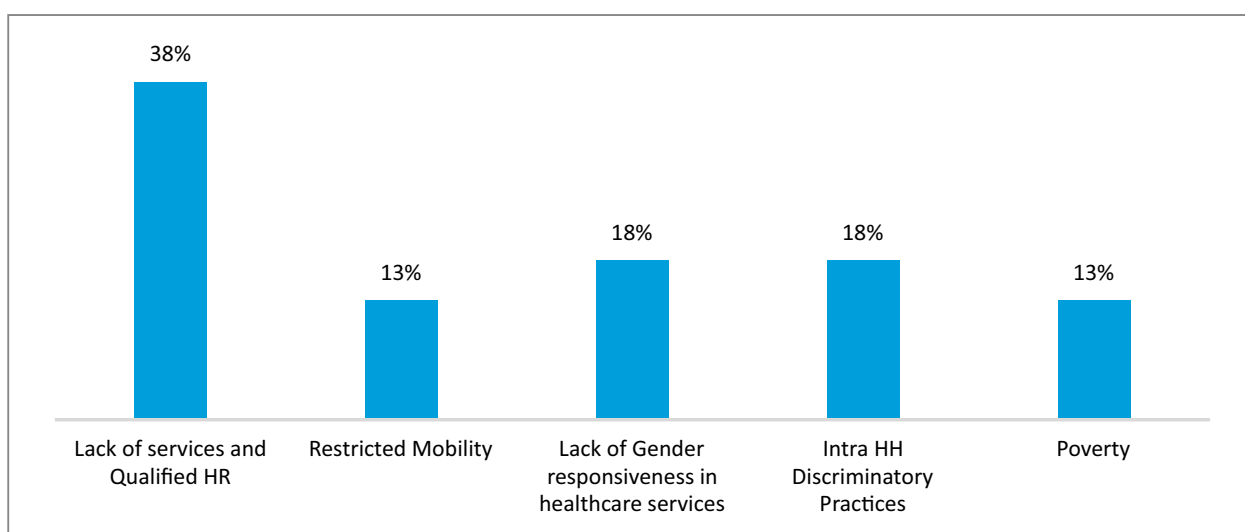
A Male FGD participant – Khyber

In a religious and tribal society of the Merged Areas (MAs), where purdah is highly emphasized, and females' interaction with males from outside the family is restricted; sex-segregated schools with only female teachers are a must. In addition to the above, participants also emphasized that there is a dire need for adequate educational institutions equipped with basic facilities and qualified female teachers. Also, teachers should be recruited from the local areas to avoid their absenteeism.

3.2 Health

Besides analysing the service availability and readiness of the health care system within the district, KIIs and FGDs were also held at the community level to directly document the concerns, challenges, and barriers faced by the females in accessing the MNCH/SRH services. The discussion held was mainly around:

- Lack of services and qualified health care providers and the gender-responsiveness offered in health facilities.
- Cost and quality of the treatment received
- Issue that the women and girls face at home and at the community levels between their homes and reaching the facilities.



Graph 8: Categories of responses to the challenges and barriers with regards to access to MNCH/SRH

It was observed that women were more vocal and concerned with health issues than the men by virtue of their exposure to the health for their physiological and reproductive health needs. Mostly the concerns shown by the participants again corroborated the aforementioned statistics.

A large number, 33% of the research participants shared that the health institutions did not provide satisfactory services to fulfil their health care needs. Many reported deficient availabilities of qualified, technical, and professional female staff to cater to women's and children's health needs. In Pakistan generally and in the tribal society specifically; availability of a female care provider is an important prerequisite to avail treatment by a woman or an adolescent girl in a health facility. Culturally, it is not acceptable for women to receive treatment from a male health care provider. Unavailability of female health care providers at the basic health facilities (BHUs, CHCs, and CDs) worsen the situation. Since most of the female staff commute from outside Khyber, their attendance is irregular.



Primary healthcare in Khyber District

Source: Community Motivation and Development Organization

A woman from one of the FGDs in rural Khyber, while narrating her experience at a health facility, informed the team:

“My daughter was sick, and I took her to the health facility three days continuously but could not find the female staff to examine her. At last, when her situation got more deteriorated, we (my husband and I) borrowed some money from a neighbour and took her to Peshawar to a private clinic.”

A woman from one of the FGDs in rural Khyber

According to a provincially elected female representative from Khyber, while discussing the challenges and barriers with the research team, said:

“Leave aside the other rural facilities, I would like to invite you to come and observe the situation of the district headquarter hospital Landi-Kotal, – you will see that people wait for hours and hours to find a qualified doctor. Female doctors are not regular in performing their duties, the labour room is a mess, in-patient wards are dirty, electricity, and water provision is irregular.”

Elected Female Representative from Khyber

Several research participants (22%) reported that health facilities are not sufficiently equipped with services, such as labour rooms, medicines and immunization (for instance, TT vaccine) to address the needs of the clients at the facility level. A key informant, while discussing the women and child health issues, said:

“I have been myself there (to the health facility) and there are no basic facilities available to properly treat women. The place is very unhygienic plus none of the equipment is in order.”

A female key informant from Khyber

Like most of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's tribal belt, women in Khyber also face intrahousehold gender discriminatory practices and/or experience gender-based constraints outside their homes while accessing health care, as mentioned by 19% participants. Given the gender norms in these communities, men's role is vital because women lack autonomy and cannot take a decision regarding even their own health. Some of these barriers are institutional while others are the product of the existing cultural norms limiting women's and girls' mobility and interaction with the outside world. According to a female FGD participant:

“The woman has to fight for her health or die – she fights at home to let her go and seek health care; once permitted, she needs to arrange finances for transportation and medicines, she has to face several security check posts, she faces several hour travels' hardships and finally she has to be patient at the hospital to get proper treatment.”

Female FGD participant from Khyber

Health institutions are miles away from the homes of a large portion of the population particularly in the rural areas of the district. The majority of the inhabitant of Khyber district belong to low socioeconomic strata; hence, difficult to bear the healthcare-associated high costs. Men control the financial resources that are required to pay for these services. However, in poor communities, many men do not earn enough money to pay for the services their wives desire or require. Because the women lack control over financial resources of their own, they are entirely dependent on their husbands for access to MNCH services. Thus, poverty was identified as a barrier to both seeking care services and male involvement and support. A woman was of the view:

“People are poor here. Unless the situation is very severe, women are advised for adopting traditional healing methods at the household and community level from the elderly women of the village.”

Female FGD participant from Khyber

Besides the frequently mentioned health challenges and barriers illustrated above, the general lack of awareness regarding the mother and child health and sexual and reproductive health among both men and women was identified as another prominent issue. Male ignorance regarding women's health was identified as a particular challenge. Additionally, lack of availability of basic amenities such as safe water and fuel, for which mostly women bear the burden, and lack of cleanliness were also some of the barriers putting women and adolescents' health at risk.

3.3 Women Economic Empowerment

Khyber district is economically retrograded owing to its barren and mountainous terrain and continuous militancy. Though Khyber's economic reliance largely depends on subsistence agriculture, nomadic pastoralism, livestock, and local level businesses, however, war and military operations have diminished local businesses. The participation of women in the economic domain is limited due to cultural constraints. High unemployment in the area is ensuing in the increased movement to bigger cities in search of living or

involving many youths into unregulated livelihoods such as poppy cultivation, illegal imports, and exports, cross-border and intra-country smuggling of goods and arms.

Land ownership is another prominent issue and land distribution is unjust, which is mainly done on tribe and clan basis and therefore are considered as collective tribal lands. The revenue record of the land is unavailable. The poor segment of the population cannot afford to cultivate land or access markets to sell their produce, thus gives Maliks and wealthy access to a larger portion of the produce.

According to a Demographic and Household Survey (2017-18):

- 51% of the HHs in the MAs is in the poorest wealth quintile
- 74% live in multidimensional poverty, women among the majority
- 99% of the women are unemployed
- 68% of the HHs receives remittances from emigrant workers in the Gulf region
- Only 13% of the women and 11% of men are Benazir Income Support Program beneficiaries
- Less than 5% of the women have bank accounts
- 66% of men and 87% of women have no access to any sort of media (TV, Radio, Newspaper)
- Only 1.5% of the women have ever used the Internet

Khyber district severely lacks agricultural economic opportunities for women, because of scarce farming lands. In Tirah valley, some families are involved in subsistence farming and women play their role in plantation and harvesting. However, their involvement in paid agriculture activities is non-existent, because of restricted mobility and purdah restrictions.

Women are involved in livestock rising mainly for family consumption purposes. Alongside other domestic chores, they take care of their household level small herds of livestock as well. Many of the respondents of FGDs and KIIs, viewed women's work at home unaccounted and unappreciated. A female key informant from Bara, Khyber, was of the view:

“They (the women) are the most devoted caregivers and service providers at the household level and they never demand any reward or wages for faithfully serving their families, even if they are providing extra services, like working on the farms; unfortunately, still their efforts are considered worthless.”

A female key informant from Bara, Khyber

“Because of poverty and lack of education, the poorer segment of the population cannot afford to cultivate and/or gain access to finances (from within the family or outside) and the market to sell their products”, as added by some key informants from Khyber.

Female Respondents from Khyber

Lack of on-farm and off-farm economic and entrepreneurship opportunities were mentioned (31%) as a significant barrier to a better livelihood for the Khyber families. Nevertheless, farming being one of the main sources of subsistence, several women and girls were interested in acquiring capacity building, technical and financial support to participate in the on-farm household level opportunities, such as raising cattle for dairy products and fattening, poultry farming and kitchen gardening. They are hopeful that with their capacity building they would be able to enhance their livelihood.

Men and women mentioned a lack of job opportunities as one of the major causes of social disorder, economic insecurities, and the overall prevalence of poverty in Khyber. Khyber is situated on the international trade route with Afghanistan, which creates opportunities for men and boys to get involved in trade-route relevant jobs. But they also are uncertain about regular income because of law & order situation and frequent closure of the international border. As reported, women in Khyber district do not have access to paid jobs due to cultural restrictions and the non-availability of women-related paid employment opportunities.

A very small number of women from the urban centers of the district participates in formal employment, mostly as teachers and health care providers, in various services providing government and nongovernment entities located in different parts of the district.

Lack of employment opportunities have pushed male to pursue livelihood opportunities in big cities like Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, Islamabad, etc. of Pakistan and abroad. Today the main source of livelihood for many of the families is remittances, however, that is at the cost of leaving their families behind.

In district Khyber, the informal sector is one of the main sources of livelihood, and that too for the men only. Women in the district are highly discriminated against to participate in productive activities, particularly outside their homes. Families confine their women to only their reproductive roles, providing care for children and elders and other household chores. Along with some agricultural engagement, women's work in the non-formal sector, if any, also involves unpaid work in the family businesses. The restrictive situation of women's economic participation mostly remains the same in urban and rural areas as well as among the educated and uneducated people of Khyber.

It was, however, observed that new trends of women's economic participation are slowly emerging in the Khyber society owing to fewer economic opportunities available for men. Many women have started supplementing their household income through their engagement with home-based small businesses such as shop keeping, sewing, and stitching. However, mostly they sell their stitched products in their villages only due to mobility restrictions. The encouraging sign was that one woman was selling her products to a middleman who onwards sells them in Peshawar. A few more, mostly from the urban centers, were reported to carry beauty parlours from within their homes.

The females participated in the research showed their interest to join training opportunities within their locality that could enable them to make some extra earning for livelihood. Many were eager to participate in economic activities, had they been able to acquire some seed or start-up financial and technical support. The majority of these women belonged to the poorest segment of society and did not have enough capital assets to put up any business. A few participants of a female FGD among themselves agreed upon a process, which could lead them to live a better life:

“We should be provided training on entrepreneurship skills within our area. Once trained, we need some money to start our business. Unfortunately, we don't have enough money to initiate a business on our own, and also we don't know how to deal with banks.”
Female FGD participants from Khyber

Some urban educated girls were interested in establishing private schools and e-commerce businesses; however, they were also looking for some external technical and financial support to initiate their interventions.

Women's involvement in small entrepreneurship activities at the household level, using their own meagre resources, is just a new trend and is slowly emerging in Khyber district. Due to restricted mobility, culturally prescribed gender-roles, lack of education and awareness, most women are not permitted to access

markets. Though some have started selling their products through middle middlemen and have thus started indirectly approaching markets. This situation is equally valid for both women of an urban and rural setting without significant variation. However, on several occasions, while discussing the prospects, women showed interest in becoming entrepreneurs if they had access to some basic education, the know-how of the business, and could reach out to the market within their cultural boundaries. One of the KII participants said:

“Women do not hold any land to use, they do not possess any property to utilize for economic purposes. Most of them illiterate and can't get employment, they do not have any know-how of business – they have always been dependent on men, and if the situation remains the same, they will remain dependent on men forever.”

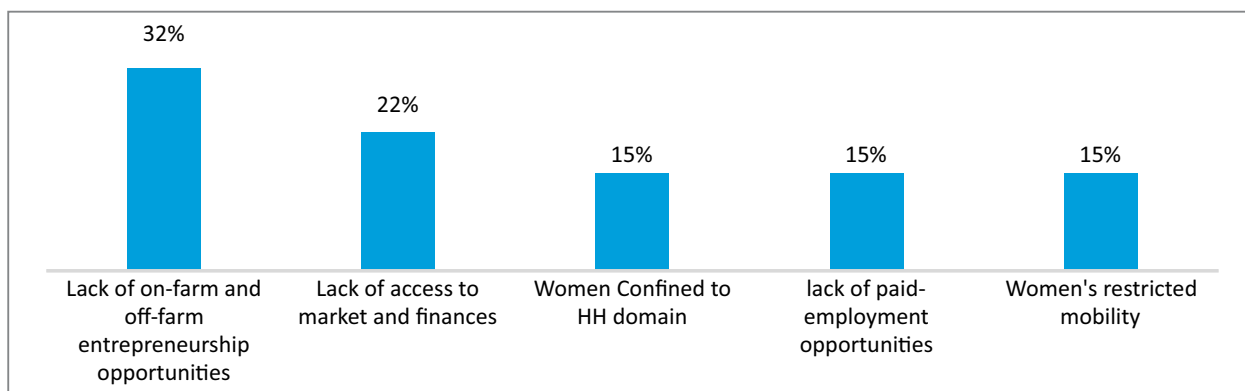
A KII participant from Khyber

It was observed that their interest in becoming an entrepreneur could change the mindset, if opportunities are carefully worked out for them. Khyber district has the potential to put up women-markets/bazars, where only women can operate shops and entries are restricted to women only as buyers. For this, the financial /microfinance institutions can also play a role to provide finances to women.

As informed by several research participants, the number of women-headed households have significantly increased during the last decade due to militancy and military operations in the area. Families have lost male members and left-over females are mostly found dependent on relatives and/or the charities. Women despite being in severe poverty were unable to participate in the economic activities because of the prevailing gender-based discrimination, restricted mobility, and absence of productive assets. Some were getting scant support from the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) and few in the urban centers were engaged in domestic labour work in the houses of the affluent class. Women heading their families and households are generally facing various social and economic challenges and direly need support. Moreover, due to economic pressures, many children of many such families are working as child laborers at the local markets or in Peshawar.

During the KIIs and FGDs women identified the following as major challenges faced by women to actively participate in economic opportunities:

- Lack of on-farm and off-farm entrepreneurship opportunities
- Lack of access to market and finances
- Gender based discrimination
- Lack of paid-employment opportunities
- Mind-set of confining women only to reproductive aspects of life



Graph 9: Categories of responses to the challenges and barriers with regards to women participation in economic activities

In Khyber District, reviewing women's engagement in agriculture, employment, entrepreneurship and their access to markets and financial credit assessed the status of overall women's economic participation.

3.4 Gender Based Violence

The social structure of Khyber district was severely disrupted by the conflict between Pakistan's Army and militants. People were already deprived of their basic human rights due to governance of the area under FCR laws, where decision-making was in the hands of few powerful individuals instead of a system of governance based on justice and equality. Conflicts and wars further deteriorated and disturbed the lives of common people. Women, among all, have traditionally been the most vulnerable and affected segment of the patriarchal society.

The emergence of militants in Khyber district challenged the state's writ and the tribal structure. These militants tried to regulate the social system and established their own parallel court system. The militants discouraged female education; girls' schools were one of the main targets of militants. Dozens of girls' schools were destroyed in Khyber. Many elders and proponents of education and rights were gunned down; for example, Farida Afridi, head of an NGO working for women rights including female education was killed in the early era of the Taliban invasion².

Khyber women also got affected due to multiple displacements from Khyber district to urban and rural areas of settled districts of KP and in some parts of neighbouring Afghanistan during the current decade. With these displacements, the poor segment ended up in IDP camps established in the rural areas where shelter, food and health and education facilities were provided by the Government departments and NGOs, while the affluent mostly moved to urban centres of the province, particularly Peshawar³.

Indeed, women's mobility and empowerment determine gender roles. In host communities, the IDPs experienced two types of environments, rural and urban. In rural areas, a light impact on gender roles could be observed borrowed from the local communities. The IDPs in rural center tasted a culture system which was almost same in nature but slightly different than their own. Whereas the IDPs in urban centers got more exposed to urbanity, with a diverse culture of society and market. In urban centers mobility of women is comparatively less restrained, therefore, several women started sharing some of the men's responsibilities: for instance, shopping of some small things for the household, like grocery, etc. which traditionally fell in men's domain in their original places.

Conflicts and resultant displacements brought both positives and negative shifts. Harsh realities include the destruction of houses and businesses, disruption in children's education, facing cold and harsh weather, hunger, the psychological trauma of war and conflicts, etc. Nonetheless, the displacement also provided people with exposure to different types of human lives. Tribal people were able to see how other people were living in comparatively better places and with good quality living standards. Both men and women were seen to have accepted that, despite other challenges, their lives were better than before and showed a positive change in their attitude⁴. Several of them got their CNICs for the first time, saw good schools, health facilities, children parks, paved roads, houses with better sanitation facilities. Indeed, this exposure provided them with thoughts to demand these basic human facilities on return to their original areas.

Today in Khyber district, the number of girls attending school has increased and negative attitude towards education is slowly disappearing⁵. This research respondents also favoured girls' education, however, wanting institutions near their houses due to insecurity & cost.

²Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2014

³Mosel & Jackson, (2013)

⁴The Impact of Displacement on Gender Roles and relations; The care of IDPs from FATA, 2019

⁵Levine, Ullah, Khan, Mushtaq, Uddin (2019)

Generally, women's mobility is rare and restricted in the merged districts mainly due to cultural restrictions and security situations. Before the military operation, the Taliban structurally restricted mobility of females by disseminating messages that women should not even visit doctors without the men's companionship or escort. Moreover, they also restricted women's and schoolgirls' mobility for working and learning. Even when the population got displaced during military operations, women's mobility remained restricted due to curfews and security checks. While, in post-military operation, mobility got restored in some parts of Khyber but in the large part situation still needs to be normalized. In short, before and during the Taliban period and after military operations, women's wellbeing and mobility remained badly affected.

“A woman had started her own garments business in Bara market and her husband used to support her in her business. It was doing very well but then came militants who imposed a ban on females' education and jobs outside.”

Levine, Ullah, Khan, Mushtaq Ahmad, & Uddin, 2019

According to a key informant:

“Before militants' influence, women could freely move around their own area, go to relatives, move to collect firewood, fodder and water and were also allowed to work in their fields unimpeded by the constraints of burqa. However, due to cultural practices her mobility out of her village to markets and schools after attaining the age of puberty was still not permitted.”

After displacement and exposure situation has somewhat changed, as noted by a number of research participants. Now in few of the urban areas like Bara or Jamrud in Khyber, few women could occasionally be seen shopping in purdah. They are allowed to go to nearby markets and hospitals. Aged women go out of their houses and even villages to visit places and accompany younger women and children to schools and hospitals. People's attitude is changing towards education of their females and they have expressed their regret on their earlier decision on educational restrictions. However, there are still challenges that women and girls face in terms of their movement due to unpleasant incidents because of security arrangements, check posts and attitude of security forces personnel.

No focused and in-depth research has been carried out on GBV in merged areas. Mostly the available information is about the entire country with some mention of MAs. According to Demographic and Health Survey Pakistan (2017-18), in erstwhile FATA region:

- More than 66% women have experienced spousal physical, sexual, or emotional violence
- Out of these 66% women, around 80% women never sought any help because of shame and non-availability of effective remedial sources/outlets
- 95% of the women themselves justify wife-beating for reasons such as burned food, the argument with husband, going out without permission, neglects children/in-laws or refuses to have sex
- More than 99% do not possess any lands or properties and women do not have access to inheritance

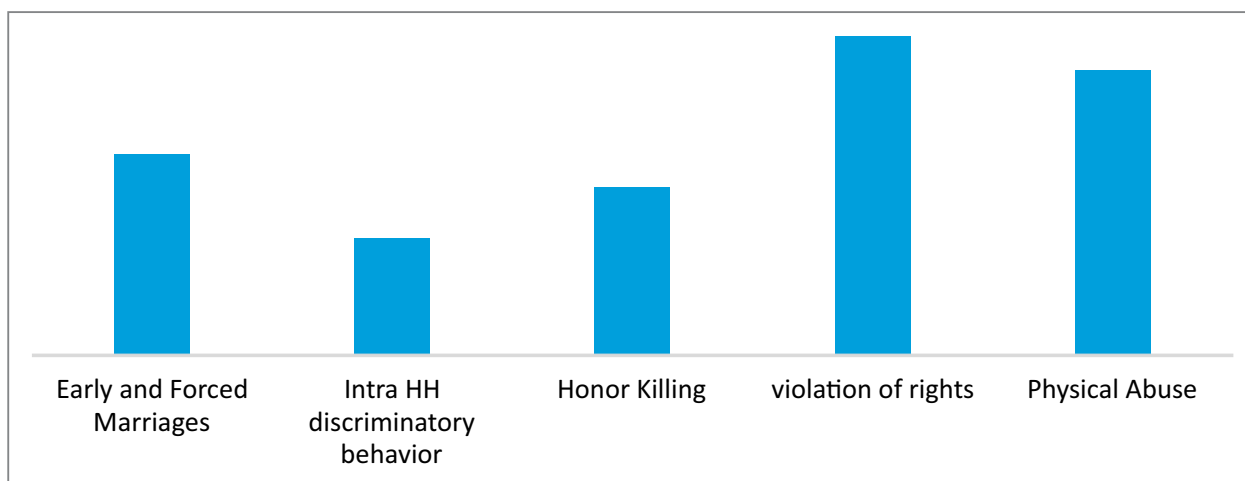
Extensive efforts were made to find some district specific GBV data on Khyber; however, it was concluded that either there were no relevant studies, or the new studies and stories did not cover GBV professionally. This may be due to the absence of mainstream media in the region.

Gender roles are determined by the patriarchal system which is a result of tribal culture. We believe, other factors may also be the cause of GBV, which include forms of urbanity, economic activities, nature of resources, and state visibility and its service delivery mechanisms. Our respondents also gave their input on

this issue. They were of the view GBV exists invariably both in urban and rural areas. In the merged areas, urbanity does not challenge the value system of the existing social structures. However, major variations on GBV occurrence were reported between the people with and without education – more in uneducated families and less among the educated families.

It was somewhat challenging to make our respondents openly speak on the subject and share their viewpoints, traditional practices, and experiences regarding GBV because of the closed traditional society. Interestingly, comparatively in in-depth one-to-one KIIs, people were more open to discuss the subject, whereas, in FGDs, people remained reserved, shy, and used only polite words.

The study encompasses following types of GBVs in Khyber district.



Graph 10: Categories of common GBV occurrences

Though with the passage of time and people's exposures to other parts of the country significant changes have taken place in the lives of women and girls; gender inequality remains high in Khyber district. 33% of the respondents in Khyber, termed a violation of rights and expressed that no-inheritance and property rights are their big concern and challenge in ensuring gender equality. In this regard, some of them referred to Islamic teachings on guaranteeing women's rights and share in the inheritance, whereas, male-dominating tribal society of Khyber negates that right. Gender discrimination, i.e. preference of boys over girls is a common practice in all walks of life including, education, health, mobility, choice of food, clothes, marriage, and financial and decision-making agency. A female key informant from Khyber stated:

“We (the women in Khyber) here face the worst forms of gender discrimination in the world. Our important roles as mothers and wives are unrecognized and everything, we do is taken for granted. Women are neither given rights as prescribed by the religion nor the constitution of Pakistan. We were and we are considered as second-class citizens within and outside our homes.”
 A female key informant from Khyber

The second biggest challenge reported to the research team was domestic violence (27%), particularly women's physical (and verbal) abuse. Beating women for a small reason is considered a common day-to-day business, as reported by a few of the women during FGDs. Interestingly, several older females considered it 'normal' and as it was happening due to the negligence of women and were not performing their 'duties' as housekeepers. However, young adolescent girls in Khyber FGD unanimously disagreed with the views of the elderly women and termed physical abuse as a violation of religious and human rights. A girl in the FGD was of the view:

“Our women are treated like animals, they are beaten for small things, like too much salt in the food. This is very unfair and severe cruelty.”

During interviews and FGDs, women and girls termed the displacement, as a blessing in disguise because it provided them a chance to live separate from their other close family members and thus got rid of physical and verbal abuses by husbands' parents and siblings. During the displacement, their husbands were no longer spending all their time with their brothers and (male) relatives but were instead free to talk to them, and several women indicated that domestic violence has reduced.

Several research participants (16%) reported that like in many other parts of the region, marriages commonly occur at a young age and with almost none or very minimal consent from girls in Khyber also. It is a trend almost throughout the MDs that girls should get married soon after her puberty. However, the most appropriate age for marriage, suggested by several adult participants, particularly the females, was between the age of 16 & 18 years. A few also mentioned 15 as an appropriate age for marriage. Only less than 15 years is considered as an 'early marriage', particularly in rural areas and among the uneducated parents. A female key informant from Khyber, commenting on the prevalence of early marriages said:

“Unfortunately, early marriages are quite common in our society. Furthermore, marriages are mostly fixed at birth for both boys and girls. Parents hardly wait until their daughters reach their puberty. Girls, more than boys, face not only pressure from their parents' side, but the in-laws as well for an early marriage.”
A female key informant from Khyber

Some forms of forced marriages are also common in Khyber, including marriages:

- Without “formal” or proper consent of girl [and boy]
- Against the will of girls [or boy] – when they oppose the wedding
- Marriage taken place under the custom of Ghag
- Women exchange for blood feuds
- Widowed women [compulsory] marriage with husband's brother
- Child marriage commitments [this does not fall in the category of early marriage]

There were two main concepts revealed during the FGDs and KIs about forced marriages – i.e. there are marriages taking place without taking formal or proper consent and decided by the family, mostly male, members and the girl or boy do not oppose. In some other cases, the girl or boy must marry even if they oppose or dissent the decision. This is a common practice among the tribal families of Khyber. Many participants also mentioned that normally they (particularly the girls) do not have a say; their parents are the ones making such decisions. They normally get the news of their engagements once all the details are finalized by their parents, mainly fathers. In most families, mothers' roles are limited to preparations for the marriage.

Moreover, forced marriages take place even structurally under the concept of Ghag or Zhagh⁶ – boy's claim over a girl (Levine, et al, 2019). However, the afore-mentioned customary practice is almost non-existent in Khyber district.

Women exchanged for blood feuds – Girls are exchanged in marriages between the aggrieved families to settle the disputes. According to the research participants, this practice has almost vanished from the area.

Another common practice is a young widowed compulsory marriage with a husband's brother or close relatives. This practice was reported to be still common in the tribal society, where men consider women as 'family honour' and would like to have their women stayed within the family, particularly if she is young with or without children.

⁶Ghag: is when a boy announces publicly that “this belongs to him” and he wants to marry. He can either simply announce it publicly or send some local elders to girls' parents or gun fire outside girl's house. In the Southern districts of South and North Waziristan it is called Zhagh.

Another practice which still exists in some families is the commitment that parents make when the boys and girls are still children. These types of commitments normally take place between two close families and the children once reach the age of marriage have to keep the family words and commitments by getting married.

Interestingly, after displacement from Khyber district and their stay in Peshawar district and other settled areas, there was slight change observed in people's attitude and marriage patterns. Some of this research key informants in Khyber agreed with some researchers claiming that the average age for both girls and boys has gone up by a few years and the trend of asking boys and girls about their consent is also setting up, though slowly⁷. However, some adolescent girls pointed out that early marriages were still part of the culture mostly among the rural populations. Furthermore, previously almost all marriages were contracted between close relatives, but the trend is changing, and more girls are now marrying outside the very close family circles.

Honor killing is still an issue faced by women in Khyber district, as reported by some FGD participants. Some of them referred to a few sporadic incidences; however, according to several of these research participants, it was on a decrease over time. However, the danger for a girl herself would never be over, as the frequency of so-called honour killings demonstrates (Levine, et al, 2019). Some researchers pointed out that in the past such murders could even be ordered by the only accessible law courts, the Jirga (Levine, Ullah, Khan, Mushtaq Ahmad, & Uddin, 2019). For example, a teenage girl was killed in June 2017 on the orders of a Jirga after she tried to run away with two young boys (Malik, 2017). The difference now in the post-merger scenario is that the perpetrators could be brought to justice by the court of law according to the Constitution of Pakistan.

In response to the question of rescue and relief services available to the GBV victims, three types of responses were received; such as, majority of the women stay silent and bear what is happening to them because of shame, stigma and family 'honor'; women who suffered more and even got hurt or injured, reported to their (paternal) families involved. In very rare and severe cases the victims reported such incidents to the local Masharan and/or Jirga.

However, in the post-merger scenario, although so far, no GBV cases are filed in any of the districts, many key informants were of the view that awareness should be created regarding the available remedial resources. They were optimistic that once merged areas people know trust-worthy resources, for instance, effective and efficient courts of law, they will come forward and move their grievances through these courts. However, currently, it seems difficult as explained by some key informants, because for the poor women, due to unawareness regarding the formal justice system of Pakistan and the heavy costs associated with filing cases in the new justice systems. Indeed, various participants forwarded three recommendations:

The courts for Khyber district are working from the adjacent district, Peshawar, which for many GBV victims are not easily accessible. Therefore, at the earliest possible the government should shift the courts inside district Khyber.

The justice system needs to gain the confidence of the people accessing them by providing speedy and free of cost justice to the GBV victims, and also ensuring the safety of the complainer. Currently, there are no shelter or safe homes for such victims.

There should be at least one female judge appointed in Khyber district to deal with such cases; moreover, female attorneys should also be encouraged to represent women in the merged districts, including Khyber.

⁷Levine, Ullh, Khan, Mushtaq Ahmad, & Uddin, 2019).

3.5 Women's Leadership and Political Participation

Following the July 20th elections, August 2019 happen to be a historic month in the political history of the MDs when 21 elected members took oath to the provincial assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; hence, became part of the mainstream politics and lawmakers for the first time. 16 of them got elected through direct elections, while 4 women were elected on reserved seats for women and one for minorities. Two women candidates also contested the provincial general elections, including one from Khyber and the other from Kurram; however, could not succeed in securing enough votes to secure the provincial seats.

Highlights of recent Election⁸:

- For the three provincial assembly constituencies, total registered voters were 519, 290 – around 57% were male and 43% were female voters. However, the turnout of female voters was very low
- Total polling stations were 345, males and females combined.
- Khyber district was one of the two districts (the other is Kurram) where a woman from merged districts contested the provincial assembly elections.

During the research, the team inquired the participants of their participation and thoughts regarding the recent provincial elections and their hopes for and expectations from the future local government elections in their area. Many respondents from Khyber districts who took part in the election through casting votes and/or were mobilizers of certain candidates expressed that this was their first time to cast a vote and was a novice experience. However, several challenges were also discussed regarding the overall lack of participation of women in such democratic processes. They particularly talked about the following challenges, which can be categorized into cultural and institutional constraints.

Challenges owing to cultural constraints

- Social stigmatization
- Male influence over females' decision and participation
- Lack of awareness
- Gender discrimination
- Restricted mobility

Challenges due to institutional or structural constraints

- Lack of women polling stations
- Lack of transportation
- Fear and lack of security
- Ill-treatment of women within the political parties
- Women's disinterest in politics and political process

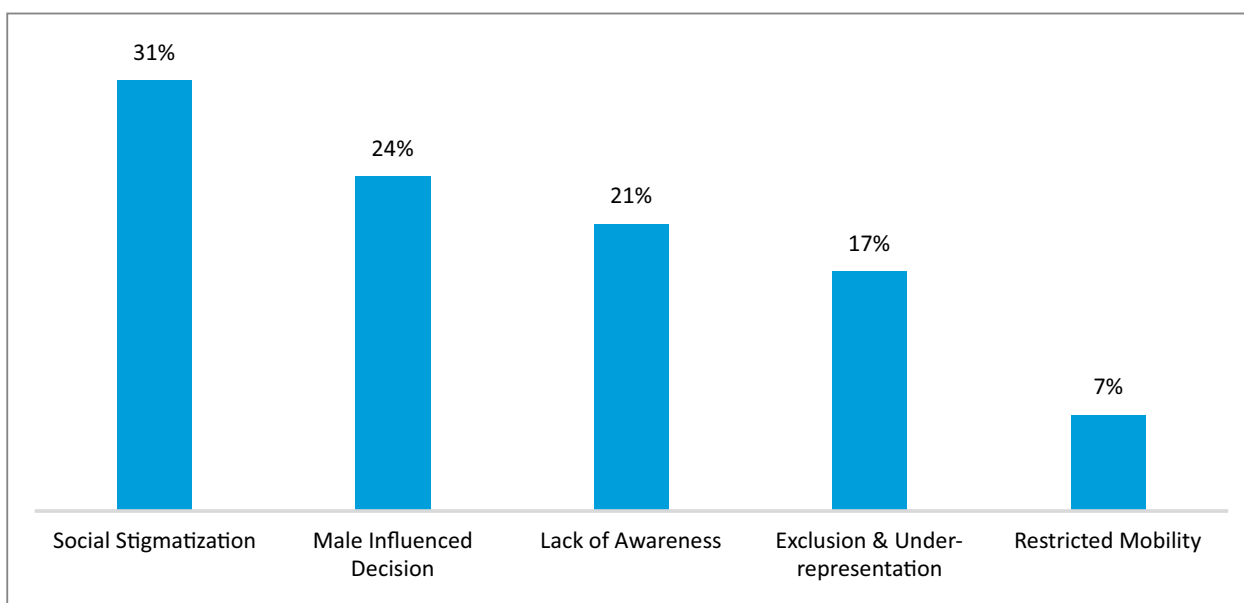
The major cause of women's lack of engagement in public and civic affairs, including political processes as voters, but more as an active participant of politics, was stigmatization and getting a derogatory label of 'not a good woman' from the society, as mentioned by the majority (40%) of research participants. Several participants, both women and men from the FGDs and KIs believed, that political activities need a gender-

⁸Election Commission of Pakistan Records

mix atmosphere. There have been many reports of sexual harassment in the political gathering; hence, most of the women and their families hesitate to join political activities. A female key informant from Khyber thought:

“It’s a big challenge for a woman from our society to participate in politics. Even though Naheed Afridi (the sole female PA election contestant from Khyber) was a very strong candidate, yet she was harshly criticized, and she didn’t get good votes as well.”

A female key informant from Khyber



Graph 11: Barriers & Challenges Expressed by Respondents

She added:

“However, despite the current adverse circumstances, I think women must participate in politics and break the stereotypes of ‘dirty environment.’ Only a woman can better understand women’s problems and that men will look at those problems only from their own perspective.”

A female key informant from Khyber

Like in many other parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, most women in the merged districts, including Khyber, were unable to vote as per their will, rather the choice of casting their vote was influenced by their male family members – mainly husbands, father, and brothers, stated by 37% of the research participants. In tribal system, “clans and families have a strong influence in shaping decisions of the communities, including women,” noted by a KII informant from Khyber. There were several questions raised, as more than 65,000 female voters were registered in Khyber’s Naheed Afridi’s constituency (July 2019); unfortunately, as little as around 8,000 women cast their votes. Out of these, despite extensive campaign and media coverage, the single female contestant secured only 194 votes, while her male opponent male contestant received more than 12 thousand votes in total (Tribal News Network, July 22, 2019).

Sitting in the driving seat and taking part in politics seems to be a cumbersome process for several of the merged area’s people, particularly women. For many of them, politics require a lot of courage, strong financial footings, strong family background, and sufficient knowledge of the procedures and processes. Lack of awareness regarding the political and electoral processes on the part of women was considered another major obstacle in women’s participation by over 18% of male and female research participants.

Because of illiteracy, lack of proper education, low exposure to media, and restricted mobility, many women are unable to decide who to vote and why should they do so. Therefore, they either abstain from casting their vote or depend on the decisions of their males. On the other hand, women severely lack understanding of the electoral processes to participate as active politicians. Several FGD participants believed that politics lies in the 'only-men' domain.

Exclusion and underrepresentation were identified as other significant issues hindering women from active participation in politics and playing a leadership role. At the household level, women are mainly considered playing their reproductive gender roles confined to house. Women's active engagement in civic, political, and electoral processes is not approved - leadership and politics are considered 'men's job' and women's gender roles prohibit her participation in public affairs. “Khyber women need to break the stereotypes of women's inability to participate in civic activities like elections and compete for public office”, argued by the sole woman candidate from Khyber in one of her interviews (quoted by Eye News Network Service, June 27, 2019). She further said that:

“I am not taking part in elections merely to win, but for the political liberty of women in Pakistan.”

Naheed Afridi, Eye News Network Service, June 27, 2019

On the other hand, it is also commonly believed that political parties were also male-dominated, women face huge challenges to create a space for themselves. A key informant from the district was of the view:

“There is no mechanism of check and balance and those with might (of wealth) get party tickets and contest elections (or obtain the women reserved seats), hence, they can buy votes as well.”

A female key informant from Khyber

Therefore, the male-dominated environment of political parties is a huge challenge for women's participation in political processes. Moreover, to make a place in the political parties, as many mentioned, a huge amount of resources, human as well as financial, are required to run campaigns and/or donate to the political parties to get a party ticket. Women, being already dependent on men's financial support, cannot spare such a huge amount for expenses; therefore, difficult to find decision-making space in the political parties.

Politics require mobility and exposure to the world outside the home; however, women in the merged areas, including Khyber, are severely restricted regarding their mobility due to various cultural, social, and structural reasons. For instance, considering women's participation as an 'un-Islamic act' and against the Pashtun cultural norms. The structural limitations included lack of financial resources, lack of near, secure and women-friendly polling stations, and lack of CNICs, for example.

Moreover, A few of our FGD participants and one of our male key informants from the district reported that in certain parts of the district for various reasons – tribal, personal, hot weather, and mobility limitations – many family heads and some local elders decided against women vote to poll. On the other hand, because of the poor performance of the politicians from other areas, there were several women, who thought that their participation in the election process was not much of an importance and merely a waste of time.

3.6 Grassroots Leadership Development

As already stated, there is a mind-shift in the people of Khyber district owing to displacements and its proximity to the Peshawar district. The research team identified several young men and women as potential leaders and activists – from the business, sports, journalism, and political sectors, enthusiastically willing to

participate in Khyber's development as gender influencers and change agents. These individuals showed passion and potential for future leadership; however, they need proper guidance, support, and enhanced technical capacities to become effective change agents and influence the rigid cultural and tribal traditions obstructing gender-equality in Khyber.

The three elected male members and the female on women reserved seats from Khyber district secured their seats as independent candidates; however, later joined a political party. For all the four elected public representatives from Khyber, entering the provincial legislature and raising issues of their district is a new experience. They are newcomers to active electoral politics; however, young, energetic, and willing to work with commitments for the district.

Another source of potential grassroots leadership identification and development is the pool of activists and potential candidates from the upcoming local government. These people, particularly the elected local government youth and women, can play an important role in the identification and implementation of women development focused schemes at the grassroots level.

On the other hand, in general, within the framework of tribal identity, the majority of the people are willing to accept change, including educating their daughters. With the utilization of energy and enthusiasm of the Khyber youth, the development and prosperity of Khyber are now much easier and sustainable than before. There is a need for improved, effective, and efficient connectivity between the state, the international community, and the people of Khyber District.



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