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# Countering the challenges of globalization faced by endangered languages of North Pakistan

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## Summary

Indigenous communities living in the mountainous terrain and valleys of the region of Gilgit-Baltistan and upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, northern Pakistan, speak over 30 languages. Some of these are *Balti, Bateri, Burushaski, Chilloso, Dameli, Dumaki, Gawarbat, Gawri, Indus Kohistani, Kalasha, Khowar, Palula, Shina, Torwali, Ushojo, Wakhi, and Yidgha*. According to Moseley (2010), all these languages are considered to be endangered because of a number of challenges the communities speaking them face: lack of political organization, suppressed identities, no written tradition, marginalization and globalization, impact of dominant languages over these languages, life in a difficult ecology, poverty, and migration.

The cultural, political, linguistic, and ecological milieu is leading to language and cultural loss among these communities. Notwithstanding these extremely tough challenges, there are some good initiatives being carried out privately by community members that are focused on reversing language and cultural loss by documentation, transmission to the coming generation, and trying to make the languages relevant in pedagogical settings.<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Introduction

According to the listing in *Ethnologue* (Eberhard et al. 2020), there are 77 languages spoken in Pakistan as mother tongues, though if we group together the various dialects of *Pashto, Koli, Balochi, and Hindko*, we get a total of 66. Glottolog 3.4 (Hammarström n.d.) enumerates 83 languages for the country.

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<sup>1</sup> I am greatly indebted to Peter Austin for editorial assistance in revising, restructuring, and improving this paper through several drafts. I also acknowledge valuable feedback from two anonymous referees which improved the structure and contents of the paper.

More than 30 of these languages are spoken in northern Pakistan, the linguistically most diverse region. The number of speakers of languages in Pakistan varies from a few hundred to multi-millions, with some languages apparently having disappeared in recent times (see Section 1.1). The exact number of speakers of any of these languages is not known because none has ever been included in any national census in Pakistan. However, some estimates based on the work of various researchers and information gathered from locals are indicative.

This paper focusses on upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the region of Gilgit-Baltistan, which we term 'North Pakistan', and provides a brief introduction to the languages spoken there. We concentrate on the least known languages and exclude Hindko and Pashto as they are relatively well described. Almost all the languages discussed are in various phases of endangerment, ranging from 'moribund' to 'threatened' (see Section 1.5). A short account of the current situation of each language is given (Section 1.6). The paper concludes with a short discussion of the causes of attrition of these languages, with a recommendation to include the languages in education and to enhance literacy in them as it can be the most significant tool of revitalizing and promoting any threatened language.

## 1.1 Marginalization

In early May 2019, scholars, writers, and activists from the mountain communities of North Pakistan gathered in the town of Bahrain, 65 kilometres north of Mingora, the headquarters of District Swat. The gathering was an attempt to deliberate on the challenges being faced in the socio-cultural, socio-economic, and socio-political spheres. It aimed at finding ways to address the challenges of modernity and of the internal and external colonization of these areas on the margins of Pakistan. The one-day gathering was organized by a local organization, *Idara Baraye Taleem-o-Taraqi* (IBT), in collaboration with The University of Sydney.

A number of factors pertaining to the marginalization of these communities were discussed. Among them, exclusion of the languages of these communities from spheres of state education and media was identified as one of the most fatal threats to the rich cultural heritage of these communities. It was intensely felt that with the attrition of their languages these communities will lose their identity, history, literature (which is mostly in oral form or orature), and the indigenous knowledge of their environment and cosmos.

The gathering was unique in many ways. The scholars, writers, and activists resolved to carry out a number of initiatives in order to address the challenges they have been facing. They did not only lament the apathy of the State towards their heritages, but expressed their determination to do whatever

they could for their heritage and social development. The multiplicity of issues identified, and the welcome insights from the participants demand a series of articles, but since awareness of the threats to their languages emerged from this introspection as a pressing need, this paper is devoted to the languages spoken in North Pakistan, highlighting the linguistic diversity of the country for readers both within Pakistan and abroad.

## 1.2 North Pakistan

The area we are calling North Pakistan includes the mountainous northern parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (formerly North-West Frontier Province) and Gilgit-Baltistan (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. North Pakistan

In Chitral only twelve languages are spoken (Decker, 2004). These are *Dameli, Eastern Kativiri, Gawar-bati, Gujari, Kalasha, Khowar, Madaglashti Persian, Palula (Phalura), Pashto, Shekhani, Wakhi, and Yidgha*. Khowar is the dominant language in Chitral, whereas the Kalash are the sole indigenous community who are a religious minority as well (see Hussain & Mielke, this volume). In the Swat valley the indigenous languages are *Gawri, Gujari, Torwali, and Ushojo*. Pashto has become the dominant language and lingua franca in Swat. Torwali and Gawri are said to be the ancient indigenous languages of Swat, and their presence in the valley can be traced back to the pre-Muslim era (Torwali, 2015a). In Indus-Kohistan there are five indigenous languages, in addition to *Gujari and Pashto*, namely, *Bateri, Chilliso, Gowro, Kohistani, and Shina* (Hallberg, 2002); the last two of these are the major languages. In the upper Dir district, adjacent to Chitral and Swat, *Gawri* is spoken, along with the moribund *Kalkoti*. The dominant language of upper Dir District is *Pashto*. In the Northern Areas, present day Gilgit-Baltistan, *Balti, Burushaski, Domaki, Khowar, Shina* and *Wakhi* are spoken.

### 1.3 Language classification

All of the languages of North Pakistan, excluding *Balti, Burushaski, Madaglashti, Wakhi, and Yidgha* are Indo-Aryan languages, and have been classified as ‘Dardic’ by a number of writers, notably Leitner (1880, 1866, 1886 and 1893). However, Morgenstierne (1892-1978) regarded Dardic as ‘simply a convenient term to denote a bundle of aberrant Indo-Aryan hill-languages’ which ‘contain absolutely no features which cannot be derived from Old Indo-Aryan’ (Mock 1997). Mock further quotes Morgenstierne that ‘there is not a single common feature distinguishing Dardic, as a whole, from the rest of the IA (Indo-Aryan) languages’ (Mock 1997).

*Madaglashti, Wakhi and Yidgha* are Iranian, whereas *Balti* is a Tibeto-Burman language. *Burushaski* is a language isolate, i.e. it has not been convincingly demonstrated to belong to any language family. *Gujari* and *Hindko* are Indo-Aryan but not considered part of the Dardic cluster. *Hindko* is spoken in Peshawar, Kohat, and in Hazara Division, especially in the districts of Abbottabad and Mansehra, where it is the dominant language. It is the second major language in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. *Gujari* or *Gojri* is the language of Gujar communities living in northern and southern Pakistan (Ethnologue 2002). In Swat and other upper parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa *Gujari* is also spoken by communities now scattered in some villages in the hills. In Mansehra District, a minor language, *Mankiyali*, also locally known as *Trawara*, (Anjum & Rehman 2015) is spoken by a small community of a few hundred. The language is Indo-Aryan, Dardic, and is also critically endangered.

## 1.4 History of research

The number of people speaking each of the languages in North Pakistan has never been estimated correctly because these communities are not separately enumerated in census surveys. Their populations vary from a few hundred, to thousands, to a million in a few instances.

None of Pakistan's governments or universities have ever taken any initiative to completely profile the indigenous languages spoken by the people of Pakistan. Only a few, namely Balochi, Pashto, Punjabi, Sindhi, Saraiki and Urdu, are mentioned in the media, teaching materials, or any kind of national database. Past attempts to profile the languages of Pakistan have been undertaken by non-Pakistani researchers or international organizations. Early work was carried out by the colonial British government, for example by Grierson (1851-1941), who did a remarkable survey over 30 years of about 364 languages and dialects of what was then India, and published his results from 1903 to 1928 in 19 volumes as the *Linguistic Survey of India*. Grierson's Survey contains information about some of the languages spoken in the mountainous region of what is now Pakistan. Before Grierson, Leitner (1877) reported on linguistic and anthropological work on the languages and people of these areas. Following Leitner, another officer in then British Army, Biddulph (1880) also published on the languages and peoples of these areas. Since then a number of notable linguists and anthropologists such as Georg Morgenstierne, Karl Jettmar, D.L.R. Lorimer, Frederik Barth, Colin Masica, Richard Strand, and others have studied the languages and cultures of North Pakistan and Afghanistan. Georg Morgenstierne (1892-1978) did extensive linguistic work on the languages of North-western India including the Dardic and Kafir languages of North Pakistan and the languages of Afghanistan.

A systematic survey of the languages of northern Pakistan was begun in 1986 by SIL International under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture, through the National Institute of Folk Heritage, *Lok Virsa*. The National Institute of Pakistan Studies (NIPS), Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad, facilitated and supported the research. The survey was jointly published in five volumes by both partners in 1992. The survey, entitled *Sociolinguistic Survey of Northern Pakistan*, covered 25 languages of North Pakistan including Pashto, Hindko, Ormuri and Waneci. The editors regard their work as an 'improvement' on Grierson, stating: '[a]t a macro level, this work is definitely an improvement over Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India and the subsequent studies by various scholars' (Backstrom & Radloff 1992).

## 1.5 Language endangerment

An endangered language is one that is not being learned by children, and is typically under social, economic and political pressure from a larger, more dominant language and culture. Moseley (2007) defines five levels of endangerment:

1. *potentially endangered* – lacks prestige in the home country, its speakers suffer from economic deprivation, it is under pressure from a larger language in the public sphere, and is not being systematically used in the education system;
2. *endangered* – its speakers are mostly adults, it is not passed to children, especially in schools but also in the home environment;
3. *severely endangered* – there are only elderly speakers above 50, it has lost prestige and social value over a generation ago;
4. *moribund* – spoken by a very tiny, elderly sub-group;
5. *extinct* – no active speakers, its existence is only remembered by community members, with perhaps a small possibility of its revival.

According to *Ethnologue* there are around 7,106 languages currently spoken across the world. Moseley (2007) reports that some scholars estimate that by the end of this century, more than half of these languages will become extinct, resulting in the loss of valuable scientific, historical, social and cultural information.

Almost all the indigenous languages spoken in North Pakistan are endangered. Some of them, for instance Bateri, Chilliso, Domaki, Kalkoti, Mankiyali (Trawara), and Ushojo fall in the category of ‘severely endangered’ languages, while Gawri, Khowar, Kohistani, Shina, and Torwali are ‘endangered’. Gujari, Hindko, and even Punjabi, are ‘potentially endangered’, even though their speakers number in the millions.

## 1.6 Language snapshots

In this section we provide brief overviews of the current situation of each North Pakistan language, in alphabetical order.

*Badeshi* is an extinct Indo-Iranian language. It was traditionally spoken in the Chail valley to the east of Madyan town in Swat (Syed 2018). In 2018, BBC Urdu reported that there were three remaining speakers of Badeshi, however this is incorrect.

*Balti* is a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the four districts of the Baltistan Division of the Gilgit-Baltistan region: Skardu, Shigar, Ghanche, and Kharmang. Note that there are, however, some small villages in the valleys of Kharmang, Rondu, and Sakardu where the major language of Gilgit-Baltistan, Shina, is also spoken. *Balti* is the second largest language of Gilgit-Baltistan after Shina, and has an estimated number of speakers in Pakistan of about 380,000 (Eberhard et al. 2020).

*Bateri* is a Dardic language spoken near Batera on the east bank of the Indus River in the Lower Kohistan District in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This area is in the southernmost part of the Kohistan region, to the north of and across the river from the Pashto-speaking town of Besham. Speaker numbers are estimated at about 22,000 (Frawley 2003).

*Burushaski* is the sole language isolate in Pakistan as it has not been classified as related to any other language in the world. It is spoken in the districts of Hunza and Nagar, and in the Yasin valley in the Ghizer District of Gilgit-Baltistan. According to Munshi (2015) the number of speakers is about 100,000.

*Chilisso* is a moribund Dardic language spoken in scattered villages in the right bank of the Indus River in the midst of the majority *Shina*-speaking population on the eastern side of the Kohistan District in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Frawley (2003) estimates there are about 1,600 speakers.

*Dameli* is a Dardic language spoken in the Damel Valley, which is situated between Drosh and Arandu, about 20 kilometres south of Drosh in Southern Chitral in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Perder (2013) estimates the number of speakers as 5,000.

*Domaki* (or *Bariski*) is spoken by a small community living in a few scattered villages in Hunza, especially Mominabad. The total population was estimated by Janjua (2005) as about 854. The community have recently renamed the language *Dawoodi*; it is severely endangered.

*Eastern Kativiri* is an Indo-Iranian language in the Nuristani sub-group. It is spoken in the Lutkuh valley, and by some people in villages in the Bumboret, Rumbur, and Urtsun valleys of the Chitral District in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Speakers number about 3,700.

*Gawarbati* is a Dardic language spoken along the Chitral River, predominantly in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border area near the village of Arandu in the Chitral District in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In Pakistan it has about 2,000 speakers; it is also spoken across the border in Afghanistan.

*Gawri* is a Dardic language spoken in the hilly villages in the districts of Swat and in Upper Dir District. The most famous tourist destinations, Kalam in



Swat and Kumrat in Upper Dir, are owned by people speaking this language. In Swat, the main Gawri villages are Kalam, Utror, Matiltan, and Ushu, whereas in Upper Dir the Gawri majority villages are Thal, Lamuti, Biar, and Birikot in the Kalkot Tehsil (also referred to as Dir Kohistan or Kohistan of Dir). The total number of speakers in both Swat and upper Dir exceeds 100,000 (Sagar 2018).

*Gojri* is spoken by the nomadic Gujjars in various parts of Pakistan, and in scattered villages in Gilgit-Baltistan, Chitral, Dir and in Swat. No estimate of speaker numbers in North Pakistan is available.

*Gowro* is the language of the Gabar Khel clan living scattered in some of the villages in the eastern Kohistan region in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It is a moribund Dardic language, and should not be confused with Gawri spoken in upper Swat and in Upper Dir District. The current status of this language is not known as many locals in Indus Kohistan claim that it is no longer spoken. Frawley (2003: 197) asserted that it was spoken by about 200 people.

*Kalasha* is a Dardic language spoken in four small valleys on the west side of the Chitral River south of Chitral town, namely the Rumbur, Bumboret, Birir and, Urstun valleys of Chitral District in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It is also known as *Kalashamon*, and Petersen (2016: 10) reports about 3,000-5000 speakers (see also Hussain & Jeff Mielke, this volume).

*Kalkoti* is a severely endangered Dardic language spoken in the village of Kalkot, in Tehsil Kalkot, Upper Dir district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Liljegren (2013: 129) reports about 6,000 speakers.

*Shekhani* is a term used by most people in Chitral for both *Eastern Kativiri* and *Kamviri* speakers. *Shekhani* means ‘the language of the sheikhs, or converts’. It is spoken by a small population in the Langorbat and Badrugul villages in Chitral in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

*Khovar* is the major language spoken in Chitral and is perhaps the second largest Dardic language in Pakistan. The majority of people in Chitral speak *Khovar*, and it is also spoken in certain villages and valleys in the Ghizer District of Gilgit-Baltistan. The estimated number of speakers in all regions in Pakistan is about 500,000 (University of Chitral 2018).

*Kohistani* is one of the major Dardic languages and is spoken mainly on the west bank of the Indus River in the Kohistan region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including the Kandhia valley adjacent to Diamer district of Gilgit-Baltistan. Some ancient writers named this language *Maiya* or *Shuthun*, and it is also known as *Indus Kohistani*. The estimated number of speakers is about 250,000 (Jan 2012).

*Madaghlashti* or *Madakhlashti* is an Iranian language spoken by a small population in the Madakhlast village in the Shishi Koh valley in Chitral, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

*Mankiyali* is an endangered Dardic language spoken by about 500 people in the Danna village in Mansehra District in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Anjum 2016). The language was added to *Ethnologue* in 2018.

*Palula* is a Dardic language spoken by a small population in a number of villages on the east side of the Chitral Valley near Drosh in southern Chitral, and in Biori Valley. Ashret, located on the main road between Dir and Chitral, just below the Lowari top on the Chitral side, is the main Palula village. Liljegren (2019) estimates approximately 10,000 speakers.

*Shina* is the largest Dardic language spoken in this region and has multiple dialects and variants, and an extensive literature. It is spoken in Gilgit city, Puniyal, in villages of Ghizer district, in the Shinaki area connected to Hunza, and in Astor and Diamer districts of Gilgit Baltistan. It is also spoken in the eastern Kohistan region, and on the eastern side of the River Indus in the Kohistan area, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It has approximately 500,000 speakers in Pakistan (Mumtaz et al. 2019).

*Torwali* is a Dardic language spoken in the main Swat Valley, as well as in one of its tributaries, the Chail Valley. These two valleys join at Madyan, a *Pashto*-speaking town just eight kilometres below the scenic town of Bahrain, which is the business and political centre of the Torwali people. Towards the north, Torwali is spoken up to Asret although there are some speakers in Laikot, Peshaml, and Aryanai near Kalam. Torwali (2019: 44) estimates it has about 120,000 speakers.

*Ushojois* a severely endangered Dardic language spoken by about 2,000 people in the villages of Kas, Kardial, Bishigram, Tangai Banda, and other smaller hamlets in the Chail Valley to the east of Madyan town in Swat. Each Ushojo village also has Torwali speakers, while Bishigram also has speakers of *Pashto*.

*Wakhi* is an Iranian language mainly spoken in Gojal, Hunza in the Gilgit-Baltistan region of Northern Pakistan. However, a small number of Wakhi-speakers also live in the Yasin valley in the Ghizer District of Gilgit-Baltistan, and in the Yarkhun valley of Chitral, with the majority living in the Baroghil area in Chitral, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Malik (2013) estimates the total number of speakers in Pakistan, China, Afghanistan and Tajikistan as 65,000.

*Yidgha* is an Iranian language, mainly spoken in Pakistan in the Lutkuh Valley of Chitral, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. There are probably fifteen villages of *Yidgha* speakers in the Luktkuh tehsil between Garam Chashma and the

Darosh pass in Chitral. The estimated number of speakers is about 6,150 (University of Chitral 2018).

Almost all the languages listed above face increasing socio-political pressure due to cultural globalization, and internal and external colonization. The dominant languages in the region like Pashto and Urdu, along with English as the language of globalization, are replacing these languages from the domains of education and media. Most of the dominated languages are entirely oral, i.e. they do not have a writing culture. Because of the attrition of these languages the scientific and literary communities of the world will lose significant repertoires of indigenous knowledge and wisdom in the form of, but not limited to, traditional approaches to agriculture, conservation practices, traditional medical practices, seasonal calendars and methods to mitigate disasters, mythologies, oral histories, songs and music. If nothing is done, the communities who have been using them for social interaction and as expressions of their world views and values will lose their past memories, histories, and identities. They will thus be exposed to manifold vulnerabilities such as loss of self-esteem, crises of belonging, and threats to their identities, as well as loss of their imagination, which is so intrinsically embedded in the languages they acquire in their local communities. The region is also a beautiful blend of shared multilingualism, and language loss would threaten the current matrix of co-existence and cultural harmony shared by various language groups.

There is an urgent need to support these local languages and revitalize them using modern means and tools. An important step is to build literacy because written media can assist with keeping a language vital as well as enhancing its prestige. Written forms may also assist with preservation and future access.

## **2. Challenges and factors that cause the endangerment of these languages**

The languages described above are endangered because of a number of challenges they face, the most crucial of which are set out in the following sections.

## 2.1 Lack of a writing system

These languages do not have widely-used scripts,<sup>2</sup> and those that do exist are based on the Perso-Arabic writing system. Orthographies have recently been developed with the technical support of SIL, however aside from Khowar, Hindko, Gojri, and Shina, where a number of authors and poets write using orthographies based on the Perso-Arabic script, no language had a written tradition before 2000 CE. For a few, somewhat differing paths have been followed. Thus, for instance, Balti has seen some effort to use the Tibetan Balti script (Kazmi n.d.), and for Kalasha there is a Roman script in addition to the Perso-Arabic one (Trail & Cooper 1999; Cooper 2005). Many local people use a Cyrillic-based script for Wakhi (drawing on practices in Tajikistan). The old poets in Shina and Khowar wrote in an Urdu-based alphabet, with additional characters for the unique sounds these languages have. However, the use of these special characters was not coherent and different writers tended to use different symbols for the same sound. Urdu literacy has led writers and poets to use its alphabet for their own languages even for the special phonemes they have.

## 2.2 Lack of recognition by the state

Most of the languages of North Pakistan are not recognized by the national government for use in schools as mediums of instruction or as subjects, nor are they recognized as national languages of Pakistan. Pakistan's constitution does not even recognize any indigenous groups in the country (Cultural Survival 2017). In 2012 the then provincial government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, however, introduced a law called the *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Promotion of Regional Languages Authority Act 2012* whereby Saraiki, Khowar, Hindko, and Indus Kohistani were allowed to be gradually used in pre-primary schooling in places where they are the mother languages of the majority of the children. Pashto, the dominant language in the province, was made a compulsory subject in primary grades in areas where it is the language of the majority (International Crisis Group 2014). Unfortunately, the succeeding government in the province has not taken the initiative any further and the establishment of the law is still in a state of limbo.

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<sup>2</sup> Although scripts have been designed for Khowar, Shina, Indus Kohistani, Torwali, Gawri, Burushaski and Palula, these are not widely used within the respective communities. For some, especially Torwali, Gawri, Palula, Indus Kohistani, and Khowar, the situation has improved since 2008 because of efforts of local community organizations, and early childhood education initiatives undertaken with the support of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) and Forum for Language Initiative (FLI).

### 2.3 Poverty and marginalization

The minority communities of North Pakistan are predominantly poor, illiterate, and underdeveloped. Literacy among the Ismailia sect of Burushashki, Wakhi, Shina, and Khowar in Gilgit-Baltistan and upper Chitral, is higher compared to that of other communities, but given the scarce job opportunities, many of the youth migrate to cities, and their languages and cultures come under much pressure. In the cities the children no longer acquire their heritage languages. These mountainous communities are marginalized in terms of human development and infrastructure. Despite being the custodians of some of the country's rich natural resources in the forms of forests, biodiversity, and water, these communities lag far behind in the human development index. The Pakistan Human Development Index Report 2017 by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (Najam & Bari 2017) gives the following:

- Kohistan District is 'very low' with an HDI<sup>3</sup> score of 0.229;
- Upper Dir District is 'low' with 0.300;
- Gilgit-Baltistan is 'low medium' with 0.450; and
- Swat and Chitral Districts are 'medium' with 0.600.

Note that this is a cumulative report for all districts; the areas where the Dardic communities live within the Pushtun majority districts of Swat and Upper Dir are further marginalized. Poverty and marginalization has also triggered large migrations from these areas, with many people permanently settled in cities like Karachi, Hyderabad, Peshawar, Lahore, Rawalpindi, and Islamabad. For instance, over 35% of the Torwali community of upper Swat (Torwali, 2015b) has permanently settled in Karachi, Quetta, Hyderabad, Peshawar, Nowshera, Rawalpindi, Lahore, and other cities. This has further threatened the languages and cultures of the source communities. The same is true for the Districts of Chitral, Upper Dir, and the region of Gilgit-Baltistan. In addition, a large number of people from these communities flee the rough and long winter in the mountains and spend it on the plains of Pakistan. As winter begins, about 80% of the Gawri and Gujjar of upper Swat migrate to the plains of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab (International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development n.d.).

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<sup>3</sup> The Human Development Index (HDI) is a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable, and having a decent standard of living. Values range between 0 and 1. For further details see <https://bit.ly/2YxQtEw> (accessed 2020-06-12)

They spend three to five months there at the cost of the education of their children. In addition to winter, the major causes of permanent and seasonal migration are lack of essentials for sustenance such as fuel, health facilities, and roads. Being overwhelmingly dependent on scarce agriculture and livestock, these communities do not live a privileged life.

## **2.4 Suffering an impacted 'marred' identity**

A 'marred' identity has political, social, economic, and religious contours and arises increasingly with the poor and marginalized where they think themselves neither worthy of inclusion or participation in, nor capable of any contribution to, civil society, as well as not being of any concern to God (Myers 2011). Since the state education system in Pakistan usually discourages lessons on cultural diversity within the society in textbooks, and since these communities have no effective political say in the country, the majority of ordinary educated Pakistanis do not know about the existence of indigenous identities. And as successive invaders have dismantled their centres of powers over the past five centuries these communities have lost the sense and memory of their unique identities. As a result, a majority of them suffer an impacted or 'marred' identity which is very often an ascribed-discursive identity, as Gee (2001) puts it, leading them to link themselves with (Islamic) Arabs, or the dominating communities they live with.

Moreover, globalization has also posed critical questions of identity and identity construction. It is a complex issue, especially in the context of rapidly imposed external change. While culture and identity share many things, they are not the same. Though culture is an important part of identity it is not the entirety of it, as identity is very much political as well. Given the complexity of identity construction and the modern influences that shape and accelerate it, these ethnic minorities seem to be the worst victims of marred identities.

## **2.5 Onslaught of cultural and religious globalization**

Globalization has affected every community in Pakistan, large and small, but the impacts of it can be fatal to these suppressed communities in North Pakistan as they are influenced at international, national, and provincial or local levels. Globalization has affected them in two areas the most: their languages, and their cultures. The majority of them have now begun to regard their languages and cultures as hurdles in the way to development, leading many of them to shift not only their culture but also their languages. A prime example is the threatened Kalasha community, which has so far partly retained their unique indigenous worldview and cultural practices, however

conversion to Islam or Christianity is proceeding rapidly, leading to language and cultural loss (see also Hussain & Mielke, this volume).

As in many communities in Pakistan, affluent educated families sometimes prefer to speak Urdu within their networks and feel pride in doing so. The influence of the dominant languages thereby increases at the cost of the indigenous tongues. The younger generations in these communities no longer understand the languages of their ancestors. In addition, the minority languages are gradually becoming laden with words from dominant languages such as Urdu, Pashto, and English. Cultures and languages are also threatened by the popular Urdu-dominated media, both electronic and print.

Similarly, the global spread of religious fundamentalism and resultant fanaticism, especially in the form of a politically-charged, puritanical version of Islam, has badly affected the indigenous cultures of these communities. They cannot observe their folk traditions in music or rituals. Of course, these new phenomena have impacted the larger society as well, but it is more difficult for the indigenous communities to survive the onslaught, being fewer in number, weaker both politically and economically, lacking media representation, and historically brutalized.

## **2.6 Living in difficult terrains**

All the North Pakistan communities live in mountainous locations, and even though they may share the same history, ancestry, and culture, they cannot relate to each other because of being scattered and locked into isolated valleys in the mountains of the Hindu Kush, Karakorum, Himalaya, and Pamir ranges. The geography has cut them off from each other for centuries. Thus, Shina or Khovar communities of Gilgit and Chitral do not know that sister groups live in Swat or in Dir. Even many of the Khovar community in Chitral, where they are dominant, feel shy about being identified with the Kalasha, Gawar, Palula, or Dameli communities also living in Chitral.

## **3. Efforts to revitalize minority languages**

The cultural, political, linguistic, and ecological milieu discussed above adds to the loss of language and culture among the various communities. Notwithstanding the toughest challenges, there are currently some good initiatives being carried out that are focused on reversing the loss of languages and cultures by documenting them, transmitting them to the coming generations by incorporating them in education and literacy, and by trying to have the languages recognized by the government(s) of Pakistan.

### **3.1 Role of linguists**

Though ethnographical and anthropological work in these communities has been done over the past few centuries, systematic efforts for revival of many of the languages only started after the 1990s, and more especially with the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As mentioned above, sociolinguistic surveys and descriptions commenced in the late 1980s, laying a foundation of later private efforts aimed at revitalization. The linguists involved carried out the research for scientific reasons, and, indeed, for some personal gain. Foreign linguists came to the areas with research grants from their universities, employed individuals from these communities as key consultants, and began to document and analyse the languages.

### **3.2 Role of speakers**

In the past, much of the research on these communities and their languages and cultures was done by colonial researchers who employed middlemen from outsider communities like the Pushtuns, Iranians, or Indians who used to work for the British governments. In recent research the consultants of the linguists and researchers are identified individuals from the ‘subject’ communities who are aware of the significance of the work.

### **3.3 Training locals**

Some linguists affiliated with SIL International have felt the need for training local speakers in basic linguistics and language documentation in order for their work to be done easily and more authentically. For this purpose, they established a resource centre in Peshawar in 2003 called the Frontier Language Institute.

This Institute has trained a considerable number of people in some North Pakistan communities in basic linguistics and anthropology through short courses designed by renowned experts. The trainees carried out work on their languages and a number of them founded organizations in order to sustain revitalization efforts, which are community-based. The strategy designed was multi-fold: research, training, advocacy, and mobilization. Research and training on languages led to developing writing systems, documentation of oral literatures and cultures, and production of reading materials. Advocacy and mobilization led to greater inside support from the communities, as well fostering awareness on local and national levels.



Some of the initiatives that came into being are:

1. *Forum for Language Initiatives (FLI)* – a civil society organization established in 2003 (originally named the Frontier Language Institute) to train indigenous community members to document and promote their languages. FLI has so far trained scores of language activists in more than a dozen languages in basic linguistics, orthography development, cultural research, teacher training, and in community mobilization and advocacy (FLI n.d.).
2. *Idara Baraye Taleem-o-Taraqi (IBT)* – a civil society organization based in Swat. Established in 2007, IBT has the revitalization, documentation, and promotion of endangered languages, especially Torwali, as some of its main objectives. It has published a number of books in and on Torwali, and has also been successfully implementing a mother tongue-based early childhood multilingual education initiative among the Torwali in upper Swat. The programme currently has four community schools with 200 students aged four to nine years old. IBT also works for the social and cultural empowerment of all the language communities in northern Pakistan because it aims ‘to transform the most neglected sections of Pakistani society especially the marginalized ethnic groups living in northwest Pakistan into empowered and developed communities by the active participation of people without any gender, racial and religious discrimination’ (IBT 2019: 2).
3. *Gawri Multilingual Education Programme* by the Gawri Community Development Programme (GCDP) has to date published a number of books in and on Gawri. It has also been implementing a mother tongue-based early childhood multilingual education project in the area (Sagar 2018).
4. *Palula Multilingual Education Programme* in southern Chitral by the Palula Community Welfare Program (PCWP) is similar to the work of GCDP and IBT.
5. *Kohistani Multilingual Education Programme in Indus Kohistan* by the community-based organization Initiative for People in Need (IPN) (IPN n.d.).
6. *Khowar Multilingual Education Programme* in Chitral by the Mother-tongue Institute for Education and Research (MIER) (Alhaj 2014).

7. *Anjuman-i-Taraqi-i-Khowar* (Association for the Development of Khowar) – a literary organization established in 1954 by Khowar speakers in Chitral. It has been publishing books in and about the Khowar language (Kamal, 2018).
8. *Ayun and Valleys Development Programme* (AVDP) is run by Kalasha youth for the revival and maintenance of their unique culture (Farooqui, 2011). There are other indigenous Kalasha organizations such as Ishpata and others.
9. *The Bakarwal Mobile School System* for the nomadic Gujars in Azad Jamu and Kashmir (Bakarwal Mobile School, 2012).
10. *Hindko-based multilingual education project* by a community-based organization in Abbottabad, Pakistan.
11. Shina has no mother tongue education programme but there are a number of initiatives by organizations and individuals that have been in the field working for the revitalization of the language and its music. Among these is the *Shina Language Community Programme*, and others.
12. Wakhi in Pakistan has a number of initiatives working for the revival of the language and associated culture. A few individuals, who formerly worked with linguists, have been carrying out various activities on the language, and more importantly on its music and culture. The *Bulbulik Music School* established by the Gulmit Educational and Social Welfare Society has been training young people to play Pamirian instruments (Pamir Times 2017). Fazal Amin Beg manages a website for Wakhi and posts Wakhi stories, poems, essays, and research (Beg, n.d.). Another programme is the Initiative for Preservation of Pamirian Arts and Culture - IPPAC.
13. *Burushaski Research Academy* was founded by Allama Nasir Uddin Hunzai in the early 1980s and since then it has been dedicated to research and revival of the language. It has published works in and about Burushaski (Burushaski Research Academy n.d.).
14. *The Burushaski Language Documentation Project* is an initiative led by the US-based linguist Sadaf Munshi working with a team of local Burusho people for the documentation and revitalization of the language (Burushaski Language Documentation Project 2015). The products of the project are available online for the general public and the academic community.

15. Balti has a number of small scale initiatives led by Balti people, resulting in considerable literature being produced in Balti (Baltiabad, n.d.).
16. *Mountain Communities Collective (MCC)* works for the integrated empowerment of the mountain communities of North Pakistan.

These are a few initiatives focused privately on the preservation and revitalization of the various languages, not all of which are used in education. There is mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) in Torwali, Gawri, Khowar, Palula, Hindko, Indus Kohistani, Gojri, and to some extent Kalasha. These educational programmes are managed and run by organizations without any support from the governments. In MTB-MLE programmes, children start their education with mathematics, social studies, ethics, and literacy taught through their mother tongues as a medium of instruction. In the second year, Urdu, and one semester later English, are introduced as subjects, starting with oral skills and then moving to reading and writing.

Successful language revitalization programmes aim at the use of the particular language in all domains. Information technology, especially the internet and mobile phones, though supporting the communities to regroup, network and connect, has put the endangered languages at further risk and facing greater challenges because the current technology does not generally support writing of these languages, an issue that needs to be addressed. Scholars and practitioners (Annamala et al. 2001) suggest that a key factor in any effort for reversing language shift in any community is to maintain ‘any functions to be regained by the threatened language must be simultaneously reinforced both from ‘below’ and from ‘above’ in terms of power considerations’ (Fishman 2001: 21) and ‘a commonly adopted functional goal of threatened languages is to offer education in which those languages can operate as sole or, at least, as co-media’ (Fishman 2001: 14). Given these needs, the initiatives mentioned above have also been trying to use the languages in education as well as on digital media to reach a wide audience. Torwali, Kohistani, Khowar and Shina keyboards have been developed for Android devices so that the younger generations may use their languages on social media.

The indigenous musics in some of these languages are also thriving in digital media, including Shina, Khowar, Torwali, Balti, Burushaski, and Wakhi music which are particularly vigorous on YouTube, Sound Cloud and Facebook.

#### 4. Conclusion

Some of the aforementioned initiatives are overseen by organizations with meagre financial resources and for a number of specific projects the organizations rely upon funding from outside Pakistan. However, individuals associated with these organizations make tremendous efforts and expend their own money in printing books in their languages as well as in using digital media. But given the increasing poverty and depletion of opportunities for their livelihoods, many local scholars are distracted from this work, making it vulnerable with a danger that it may not be sustained over the long term. Although there are very effective endeavours from within the communities themselves, they are limited because of resource constraints.

Other language communities do not have community-based initiatives because the linguists who initiated research on their languages were unable to support the communities for longer periods. This includes Bateri, Chilliso, Dameli, Domaki, Gawarbat, Gawro, Kalkoti, Kamviri, Kativiri, Madakhlashti, Mankiyali, Ushojo, and Yidgha. If immediate actions are not taken, it is feared that these languages may become moribund in the next decade.

Although some good initiatives by the communities themselves are underway with limited support from international organizations, the communities cannot sustain this work unless and until the Pakistani governments recognize the languages and cultures, and set up plans for the preservation and promotion of them as sources of indigenous wisdom and history. Globalization, with all its modern technologies, is a threat to these communities but it can be turned into an opportunity if proper measures are undertaken for including the cultures and languages in education and media, which are among the first drivers of globalization.

International donors also need to focus on the shrinking cultural diversity of Pakistan. Preservation and promotion of this marvellous cultural diversity can be utilized for the development of cultural tourism in the country, with this rich repertoire of cultural diversity effectively being added to the creative economy. Holistic and integrated strategies need to be adopted for an integrated sustainable development of these communities, and their languages and cultures, in North Pakistan.

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