



Activate, at CERP

CERP Pre-College Summer Program



Summer 2026
Jun 29 - Jul 31, 2026
Lahore, Pakistan



www.cerp.org.pk

Based in Lahore, Pakistan, CERP is a leading independent social impact organisation focused on improving decision-making through rigorous research, advanced analytics, capacity building, data collection and advisory services.

There is a tremendous amount of data collected but often, little emphasis is put on properly analysing it to inform crucial decisions. **CERP brings a world-class skill set to clean, collate and make sense of the data to draw deeper insights and actionable intelligence – deploying data and evidence to drive better decisions, and eventually high-impact reforms across multiple sectors.** In more than a decade since its inception, CERP's past work has been supported by prominent funding organisations such as the World Bank, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMFG), Asian Development Bank, UK Aid, and UNDP, among others.



Deepening the culture of evidence across public and private sectors, inspiring innovation, and driving impact to improve lives.

300+
Team Members

40+
Active Projects

100+
Global & Local Partners

110+
Academic Research Fellows Globally

Verticals



Analytics

Empowers organisations to effectively use data to make better decisions



Survey

Collects data using cutting-edge practices to ensure quality accuracy and reliability



Research

Generates rigorous evidence to help policymakers address real-world challenges



Policy Advisory

Translates evidence and insights into actions



Labs

Spearheads technological innovation for social impact



Learning Hub

Develops quality education modules to improve communities

Activate, at CERP

Comprising three tracks, it is a first-of-its-kind, **highly selective pre-college summer programme at CERP**. It aims to equip the youth interested in the development sector with **experiential learning and on-ground field experience, tailored technical and professional development skills, and networking & engagement opportunities**.

Who Can Apply?

High school students **worldwide**.

 Lahore, Pakistan

 5-week programme

Note:

- Top 10% of eligible and interested high performers from the programme will also gain first access to, and be considered for openings / full time opportunities at CERP.

Why Activate, at CERP?

Activate, at CERP offers high school students around the world a platform to deeply immerse themselves in **Pakistan's cultural and development context** while gaining real-world experience through rigorous development-sector projects, providing an **enriching and global experience before entering college.**

It is a unique and comprehensive opportunity for individuals with intellectual curiosity and interest in development economics, research and policy analysis to:

1. Gain **hands-on, real-world work experience with placement in rigorous development sector projects** undertaken by CERP ([Health](#), [Education](#), [Climate](#), [Agriculture](#), [Gender](#), others) through analytical and field work in Pakistan
2. Build **employable skills**, apply learnings in real-time, and advance growth to be able to successfully enter the development or public sectors at international development organisations, government departments, nongovernmental organisations, and bilateral and multilateral development agencies in Pakistan or abroad



3. Network with **award-winning academics, globally recognised experts and international development economists**

at CERP for career exploration support, higher education guidance, informal training, motivation, direction and advice.

The programme is enriched with:

Community Building:

Participants will have a unique opportunity to connect with a myriad of individuals ranging from like-minded programme participants, undergraduate and graduate interns from local and international universities, current employees and senior leadership at CERP during the summer. Outside of CERP, participants will explore the city through a series of planned excursions, recreation activities and a unique lived experience in Lahore, the cultural capital of the country, during the programme to deepen their knowledge and understanding of Pakistan.

Weekly Mentor-Mentee Programme:

All participants will be matched with highly skilled, seasoned professionals in their fields

Bi-Weekly Seminar Series:

Every other Friday, interactive sessions on a variety of relevant topics will be held for participants with guest speakers including but not limited to: CERP Board Members, Senior Executives, CERP Research Fellows, CERP Graduate Student Fellows and others. It provides participants exposure to movers, shakers, thinkers, and doers — practitioners and subject matter experts — who are driving positive change in Pakistan across various fields, including policy, research, advocacy, climate, gender, health, education, and social entrepreneurship.

Group Coaching Session with CERP Board Member(s)

Capstone Project

CERP Leadership

Maroof A. Syed

President & CEO, CERP

Non-Resident Fellow, Julis-Rabinowitz Center for Public Policy & Finance, Princeton University

“We are really excited to launch a new program called Activate, at CERP. One of the **unstated missions of CERP is to do human development across the world**. While we have 114 research fellows and 350 people on the ground working, we wanted to **augment that with a much younger population committed and driven or even exploring development as a career opportunity, and to give them a lens into the developing world by engaging in Pakistan meaningfully**. Firstly, the program activates human development at a global scale, allowing us to bring younger people into Pakistan and giving them an opportunity to not only learn from the best but also **engage in real-life projects**. Examples of some of our projects are the LEAPS Program (the largest village-level education study in the world reaching one million children) and more recently, the Targeted Instruction Program (testing a quarter million children on learning losses due to COVID or any exogenous shock). It engages them in a meaningful way into what development really means, the challenges for unique communities in the developing world, and being a part of amazing knowledge production. Secondly, if we really want people to become **global citizens**, we have to engage broadly with the culture and context of the place, enhancing their ability to look at **development not only from a technical lens but from a contextual lens**...pairing these things together to **become better professionals eventually, but also better human beings**.”

Dr. Atif Mian

Co-Founder & Board Member, CERP

Professor of Economics, Public Policy & Finance, Princeton University

“The purpose of this program is to bring in high school students from the diaspora and give them a **lived experience of research, and an understanding of issues that are related to the society and the economy in Pakistan**. CERP was founded many years ago with a goal to promote research and in particular, critical thinking in general among the **young minds of Pakistan and the Pakistani diaspora abroad. Engaging with issues relating to education, health and other aspects of economic and social policy are the best ways to excite young minds**... In that process, they **enrich their own lives as well**, with a **bigger perspective of what life looks like in Pakistan** and the **challenges on social and policy levels to bring about change in Pakistan**. I hope people find this experience useful and **they not only learn from it, but they also use it to build their careers going forward**.”

Parents

Samia Ahmed Ali

“My son had the opportunity to participate in the Activate, at CERP program this summer, and it was an **outstanding learning experience**. What I appreciated most was **how the program took him through the entire research process step by step, from framing questions and designing surveys to analyzing data using statistical tools (Stata)**. His project focused on empowering women microentrepreneurs through mobile technology. The **exposure has provided him with both a foundation in research methods and the confidence to think critically about how evidence can be used to drive social change**. As a parent, I am grateful to the CERP team for creating a well-structured program. The experience has **sparked in him a genuine interest in research and social impact**.”

Sehr Khaliq

“The program as a whole was very useful. The most impactful part of the program has been the learning week and the interaction with the managers. Arreyana was very lucky in the managers she got as **they invested a great deal of time and effort in mentoring her** and including her in project work.”

Sehr Emaad & Emaad Siddiqui

“Shahzain has enjoyed this program tremendously and gained so much from it.”

Yasmeen Shafiq & Azfar Hasan

“The program was project driven. The experiences were enriched by the diversity in colleagues, peers and mentors. **Guidance and mentoring was of high quality** and supportive. The program allowed for insights into development and social economics. The program **encouraged creative problem solving and used a structured approach to projects**. Students got an opportunity to **understand wider social issues and how policy interventions can help through structured research**. They worked on real life live projects allowing them to relate to opportunities and challenges in the local environment.”

Alumni



Jibreel Bhatti

CERP Research Scholar, Summer 2023

Rising Senior, Lakeside High School | Age 17
Seattle, Washington

Harvard University, Class of 2029

Other Admission Offers: **Stanford University**

“My experience at CERP was absolutely transformative. The main thing you need to know is that **the work you will do at CERP is real and has a lasting impact** on a community that we are all a part of. I got to work on **projects ranging from agriculture and education, to the role of religious figures in public health**. You get to cover information and subjects across different fields, and you get to do it in a **community of people who are welcoming, curious, and will do everything that they can to give you the tools you need to succeed and grow as a person**. While I was at CERP, I picked up **skills ranging from coding to statistics to economics of all kinds**, including micro, macro, and **things you won’t learn in any classroom**. In addition to **working with Nobel Prize winners and academic luminaries**, what I truly value about my CERP experience is the community that I was able to be part of. This community will be the best thing that ever happened to you, and I guarantee that you will find some great friends and mentors. I would also like to stress that it greatly helped me with my **college application** process. Everyone took so much time and effort to write me a **recommendation letter** that has helped me throughout this entire process, and I truly cannot say how grateful I am for them.”



Hayah Mian

CERP Research Scholar, Summer 2024

Rising Senior, Lakeside High School | Age 16
Princeton, New Jersey

Rutgers University, Class of 2029

“I’ve learned so much from the Activate program, but some of the most important skills include **data analysis and data visualization**. Over the past few weeks, I’ve gained experience using **STATA** and I’ve become more comfortable with **coding**. On top of that, I’ve gained insights into how workplaces function, how to communicate effectively, and how to manage time. These are all **practical skills for both research-based work and professional settings**. Additionally, the data analysis skills I’ve developed will be **valuable for classes, future research projects and in my college coursework**. This program has also **helped me realize that I do want to pursue a career in research**. The program has **shaped my perspective** a lot, especially when it comes to **understanding the economy**. I had the chance to see how different communities across Pakistan operate. This program has taught me a lot, not just during the **training sessions but also through the work experience**. I’ve learned how to navigate a professional environment, how to handle meetings, and how to interact with colleagues. I’ve been able to immerse myself in Pakistani culture, while also comparing the work culture here with the one in the U.S. This program has given me a chance to **mix both American and Pakistani cultures in a very interesting setting**.”

Alumni



Safa Ahmad

CERP Research Scholar, Summer 2024

Rising Senior, Ursuline Academy | Age 17
Cincinnati, Ohio

Harvard University, Class of 2029

“I think CERP is very different from any program I have ever experienced in the United States, whether it’s an internship, a summer program, or anything else. CERP is impact driven. The organization’s mission is focused on evidence-based research, analyzing data in a meaningful way, and **contributing to policy, which aligns perfectly with my interests**. I want to major in political science or public policy, so this program is very much in line with my goals. My most memorable experience here has been working with so many accomplished and professional individuals. I’ve been involved in a project with the Marketing and Communications team, and it’s been really interesting to see the different types of work they do—ranging from education policy to social media outreach. It’s refreshing to experience the diverse work happening in the field. Through the Activate program, I’ve not only gained skills in data, research, and policy but also had the opportunity to experience the culture of Lahore. This has been especially meaningful to me because I haven’t visited Pakistan since I was very young. Being here, exploring the city, and combining that experience with my work has been truly rewarding. **There’s no place I would rather be**. Activate has taught me a lot about **research, data, surveying, and analysis**. Before this program, I never really thought about the process behind the data I would see—where it came from, how long it took to collect, or the effort involved in analyzing it. I now realize that data collection and analysis are tough processes that require significant work. As I look ahead, particularly a career in public policy and political science, the **skills I’ve gained from the Activate program will help me with research techniques and data analysis**. I’ve always been interested in studying politics and political science, but I never fully understood the different branches within the field, particularly public policy. Thanks to this program and **CERP’s impact-driven approach, I’ve developed a stronger interest in public policy**. Being in Pakistan has also **offered me new perspectives** on the country. There are many different media portrayals of Pakistan, but actually being here for the program has allowed me to **see the country through a different lens**. Now that I’m here and working on projects related to the **country’s economy and policy, my understanding and worldview have expanded**.”

Alumni



Afia Farooki

CERP Research Scholar, Summer 2024

Rising Senior, The Brooklyn Latin School | Age 16
New York City, New York

Mount Holyoke, Class of 2029

“My experience in the program has been very welcoming. I’ve learned **how research can affect public policy**. I also had the opportunity to learn from individuals who have created non-profits and NGOs, addressing **issues ranging from food insecurity to employment for women**. One of the key takeaways from the program has been how to synthesize research. I gained valuable insights into **data collection, STATA, public advocacy, and how to create policies that tackle the root causes of problems**. I plan to apply the core concepts I’ve learned at CERP to whichever field I choose in the future, using these tools to enhance my work. This experience has shaped my perspective by allowing me to **see life in a new country, one I’d never seen before**. I also gained **practical experience through fieldwork**, which taught me that you can never fully know what someone needs, but the best way to understand is through research. Being in a real work setting and surrounded by individuals who have deeply invested themselves in this work has been incredibly enriching and has taught me a great deal.”



Hamna Chowdhry

CERP Research Scholar, Summer 2024

Rising Junior, The Winsor School | Age 16
Boston, Massachusetts

Wellesley College, Class of 2030

“I plan to study medicine in the future. I’ve gained a lot of valuable workplace culture experience, especially since I’m working alongside people who are actively **making an impact in the world**. Through this experience, I’ve gained a deeper understanding of Pakistani culture. Spending time here in Pakistan has really helped me connect with the people and see how things work on the ground. **Overall, I feel like I’ve grown a lot as a person**. I’ve learned to work with others more effectively, think **critically and creatively to solve bigger problems, and find a personal connection to what I’m doing**.”



Ameenah Babar

CERP Research Scholar, Summer 2025

Rising Senior, Trinity School | Age 17
Lahore, Pakistan

Oxford University, Class of 2029

“I worked on the Targeted Instruction program, which was being managed in Islamabad. It tackled post-Covid learning gaps that started to exist on the federal level in classrooms. I worked with mentors and professors from University of Chicago and all over Pakistan, and this experience really helped me get a better understanding of quantitative work and handling large datasets because I learnt **regression analysis on Stata** and worked a lot on survey design.”

Jinnah Fellowship Scholars

Rifat Zeba

CERP Research Scholar, Summer 2025

Rising Senior, Homebridge by Beaconhouse | Age 19
Chitral, Pakistan

“My experience has been **transformative**, from connecting with like-minded people to understanding hard behavioural economics concepts and implementing them. I have learned how to conduct and present a standalone research project. Additionally, I got mentorship from my mentors and other CERP colleagues, which has been truly helpful in my career development.”



Shahzada Qasim

CERP Research Scholar, Summer 2025

Rising Junior, Dar-e-Arqam | Age 16
Gujrat, Pakistan

“The most memorable experience for me was **living with a host family**. I also got to learn a lot about the context and the structure of the **Pakistani developmental sector**, and how the Pakistani culture and **society influences its economy**.”



Romaisa Malik

CERP Research Scholar, Summer 2025

Rising Senior, Peshawar Model Degree | Age 18
Peshawar, Pakistan

“I got to work on my own research project, contributing a lot to my research skills: **how to conduct a literature review and how to analyze data**. I got to learn a lot from my mentors and my fellows as well. My most valuable experiences were the discussions and the space I got to think. At Activate, I took a pause and zoomed out to think about ideas and the problems in the society. I’ve realized that in order to take an initiative, you need to back it up with data... I realized how small steps can actually take you to the bigger impact, and also **how leadership and learning goes hand in hand**. I come from a STEM background, but I was still able to debate with professionals and with my peers on the problems in the society around development, and I was able to **voice out these ideas**.”

Jinnah Fellowship Scholars



Kalpina Mehrani

CERP Research Scholar, Summer 2025

Rising Junior, South City School | Age 16
Mithi Tharparkar, Pakistan

“It has been an **eye opening experience** for me... My project (digital skills for women entrepreneurship) was really personal to me, as I belong from a rural area where we don't have as much access. My most memorable experience was **getting out of my comfort zone** and trying new things, talking to new people and connecting with professionals. I'm looking forward to working on similar projects in my area, because I believe this project actually helped me evolve in relation to technical skills and digital media. I would like to **empower other girls from my area** too.”

Recent Research Scholars



Shahzain Siddiqui

CERP Research Scholar, Summer 2025

Rising Sophomore, International School Manila | Age 15
Manila, Philippines

“Two words I would use to describe this program are ‘**enriching**’ and ‘different’. This program was really unique for me. We had students from New York, Chitral, Tharparkar, Lahore, Islamabad, **all over Pakistan and the globe**. Each of them brought a unique perspective on economics and government, and different frameworks. You learn a lot not just from your work, but from the **people who you work with**.”



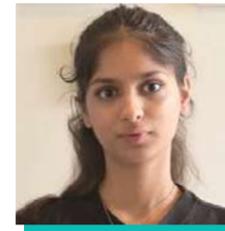
Amna Omer

CERP Research Scholar, Summer 2025

Rising Senior, Learning Alliance | Age 18
Lahore, Pakistan

“It's really peaked my interest in economics so far. All the seminars have really opened my mind to **different areas of economics**. Before the program, I hadn't even ever heard of STATA. Now to be able to say that I'm proficient in it is a big accomplishment on my part. I'm much more open to **different perspectives** because I've met people with very **varying views** from mine. I'm a much more **open person** now and I can professionally respond to different views.”

Recent Research Scholars

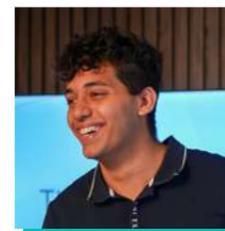


Mirha Zeeshan

CERP Research Scholar, Summer 2025

Rising Senior, American International School - Riyadh | Age 18
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

“**Insightful and groundbreaking**. One thing that I loved about this entire experience as a scholar at Activate was the fact that I got to work on my own general interest and delve into **topics that I wanted to explore**. I had a lot of freedom as to where I wanted to go with my work. My most valuable experience was **networking** with a lot of the employees, especially with my placement managers and my mentors. They really help you with **navigating life**, especially at such a young age where a lot of us don't really know what we want to do further on. They'd always allow us to **freely express our concerns and ideas**, and would take them into consideration. Activate taught me how to interact with my seniors and colleagues and how to professionally write reports and consolidate them. It helped **shape my perspective** because we were constantly interacting with people from different backgrounds. It really **helped me realize that there's a much larger world than we perceive it to be**.”



Saif Ali

CERP Research Scholar, Summer 2025

Rising Junior, Aitchison College | Age 17
Lahore, Pakistan

“Meeting people from different backgrounds, **interacting with academics** and those in the research field, it's been very interesting and eye opening. I **see things from different angles** now, not just from a research perspective, but also an analytical perspective... for example, **when implementing a policy**, what it can do for all kinds of stakeholders and the **future impact** that it will have.”

Recent Research Scholars



Fatima Faheem

CERP Research Scholar, Summer 2025

Rising Junior, International School Lahore | Age 16
Lahore, Pakistan

“Coming from physics and chemistry, you don’t know much about economics and research. I got to know **how research actually works**, and what quantitative and qualitative data is. Because of this program, it really helped me in making up my mind about writing articles in the future, or maybe even publishing my own research paper.”



Zarar Asad Tariq

CERP Research Scholar, Summer 2025

Rising Senior, TNS Beaconhouse DHA | Age 17
Lahore, Pakistan

“The **experience has been quite transformative**. I wasn’t really acquainted with the process of structured research before. I learned a lot about how to conduct research. Especially on the qualitative side, what it means to have **focus groups and key informant interviews**, and **how your work impacts society as a whole**. Long papers and long hours, but the insights were extremely valuable. Reading, notetaking, deriving and constructing arguments...how to structure when you recommend policy or future steps for research as well. It shaped my perspective, and **there’s a lot more to the world** that I don’t know yet. As an economics student, I’ve always been interested in economics, but this **hands-on approach** really added to my goal of pursuing economics in the future and making an impact with my projects.”

Note: A few testimonials have been edited for clarity and readability



Jinnah Fellowship

The fellowship highlights **equity and access** within the Activate programme through the Jinnah Fellowship, which provides talented students with the **same transformative skills, exposure, and lifelong connections** offered to all participants. This fellowship **unlocks opportunities** for driven students from diverse backgrounds, helping to **bridge gaps** and create **pathways to success**.

Selection is based on a **holistic review** of academic merit, motivation, leadership, extracurricular involvement, and recommendations. With comprehensive support for tuition, travel, accommodation, and meals, the fellowship ensures students can focus entirely on their learning and growth, fully engaging with every opportunity.

Open to students from households with a monthly income of PKR 200,000 or less, the Jinnah Fellowship strengthens Pakistan’s development ecosystem and contributes to a more inclusive, capable community of young leaders. All eligible students are encouraged to apply.

Programme Structure

1. Capacity Building

The programme will be inaugurated with a week-long series of ongoing skills development courses:



Technical Skills: Data Science & Software

This course builds the participants' skill sets in relation to data science and data-driven decision-making to understand the importance and effective use of data and evidence, empowers them to conduct impactful work in the development sector domain in and outside Pakistan, and effectively link theory with real-world policy problems. It enables participants to learn new software and perform data-related tasks, alongside modules on:



Power Skills: Professional & Personal Development

This course builds participants' power skills, essential for long-term success, in the following areas:

Development Sector Fundamentals & Problem Solving

Learn about the landscape and fundamentals of the development sector in Pakistan

Build key skill sets with modules on the introduction to: Data Collection Methods, M&E and Research Ethics

Learn how to employ critical thinking techniques specific to challenges commonly encountered for development, M&E & research sectors in order to assess problems accurately, evaluate alternative solutions and anticipate risks

Workplace Ethics, Etiquette & Career Management Essentials

Learn the art and rules of writing and structuring effective resumes & cover letters, and perfecting the 'elevator pitch'

Learn how to write powerful emails for professional needs, and email etiquette

Understand how to structure responses, perfect delivery, and ace interviews using frameworks, templates, and simulations

Learn how to practice leading without authority

Develop essential internship and job search strategies, and networking techniques and tools

Gain insight into best-in-class time management techniques, SMART goal setting, and frameworks for work planning



Effective Communication: Oral & Written – Presentation & Public Speaking Skills

Strengthen ability to lead and communicate powerfully in different settings with development, public and private sector stakeholders (including but not limited to: NGOs, INGOs, non-profits, government partners, and multilateral institutions)

Learn how to manage voice and pace to become a credible communicator / public speaker with vocal confidence & presence

Learn how to structure a compelling presentation / slide deck using global best practice templates to achieve desired results

Foundations of Negotiation

Prepare for negotiations using a research-based framework and techniques to improve negotiation outcomes – for personal and professional use, and tips on navigating difficult conversations within a negotiation

2. Placement to CERP Projects

As part of the multi-week experiential learning and work experience to learn on the job, participants will be matched to verticals / research projects at CERP based on their skills, interests, preferences and project requirements. As part of their work experience, they will gain hands-on field exposure and experience in the outskirts of Lahore (subject to relevant government approvals for conducting field research and qualitative interviews / surveys). Participants will be assigned a capstone project (including but not limited to: literature reviews, case studies, policy briefs, data collection and cleaning, statistical analysis) to deliver and present to a panel of experts, culminating the end of the programme, in order to allow participants to apply skills learned to a real-world project, under their ownership end-to-end.



Application Process

To apply to the programme, applicants are required to submit the [online application](#) on the CERP website. Prospective candidates are encouraged to apply early as applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis.

Applications Open	December 20, 2025
Applications Close	March 24, 2026

Programme Fee

TRACK 1: High school students around the world	USD 5,000 per research scholar
TRACK 2: High school students residing in Pakistan	USD 1,150 per research scholar
TRACK 3: Jinnah Fellowship: High school students residing in Pakistan with demonstrated financial need	Fully funded programme; covers programme fee and accommodation



For More Information

29-P Gulberg II, Lahore, Pakistan, 54660
trainings@cerp.org.pk
+92(346)008-3007, +92(346)161-0422
cerp.org.pk



Scan to access the application form