

Executive Summary

This report was prepared by UNHCR, under the auspices of the National IDP Task Force and in close cooperation with the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR), which endorsed the report on 10 November 2008. The data is valid as of August 2008. The profiling was undertaken pursuant to a recommendation of the Representative of the Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons following his visit to Afghanistan in August 2007.

The purpose of the profiling was:

- (1) to know how many people were internally displaced
- (2) to know where they were displaced;
- (3) to know why they were displaced ;
- (4) to better understand their assistance and protection needs;
- (5) to better understand displacement trends, so as to assist the government to develop a comprehensive and integrated national IDP strategy;
- (6) to assist the humanitarian community to respond more effectively to IDP assistance and protection needs.

In preparing the profile, no attempt was made to do any census or re-registration of IDPs. Instead, the report pulls together the different surveys that have been done in different regions of the country, particularly by UNHCR offices in the field, by provincial Departments of Refugees and Repatriation (DoRRs) of the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR), and by UNAMA. Often, numbers are estimates rather than firm figures.

What the profiling makes clear is that Afghanistan is highly complex with different displacements having occurred at different times, in different parts of the country and for different reasons. Thus, finding durable solutions will be neither easy nor quick.

The profiling identified 235,833 IDPs nationwide. The bulk of this population is comprised of a protracted caseload of 166,153 individuals displaced as a result of conflict in the period prior to and after the fall of the Taliban in 2001, or as a result of drought of the 1990s which impacted severely on Kuchi (nomads) in the north, the west and the south. These IDPs are largely living in camp-like settlements in the south (119,958), the west (29,690) and the southeast (12,341).

In addition, there are 52,422 returnees from Pakistan since 2005 (21,102 in the period 2005-2007 and 31,320 in 2008) who became IDPs upon their return to Afghanistan, because they are unable to return to their places of origin for security reasons, landlessness, or lack of basic services or work opportunities. These have largely settled in spontaneous camps in the Eastern Region. The statistics also include “new conflict affected” families (9,901 individuals) -- people displaced since 2002 as a result of conflict (between tribal or ethnic groups, often exacerbated by disputes over land and property or access to scarce resources such as pasture or water), insecurity and human rights violations.

What the above statistics do not capture are two additional groups. First, those called “battle-affected” – individuals/families who have been impacted by fighting between the international forces/Afghan National Army and anti-government elements. These numbers in the thousands displaced in 2007 and 2008, but definitive numbers are difficult to determine because most are short-term IDPs who return to their homes after the fighting ends, and because insecurity in the "war zones" makes access and verification almost impossible. The other major groups are the persons forced into displacement by the severity of the continuing drought, coupled with the high cost of food. As displacement in this case is a traditional coping mechanism, whereby families leave their villages, or send the men to the cities or the neighbouring countries to work, it is hard to differentiate between displacement and economic migration.

Certain trends emerge as we look to the future and the type of contingency planning that is required to address likely IDP scenarios:

- an increase in battle-affected displacement if the fighting continues and the security situation deteriorates further;
- an increase in displacement if the drought continues and the economic situation does not improve;
- an increase in secondary displacement by returnees if their return is not sustainable in their places of origin;
- an increase in IDP populations as a result of conflict over land and resources unless the issue of land and property is adequately addressed

Lastly, the profile suggests the need to focus on local integration as a durable solution for the protracted caseload unable to return to their places of origin.