

ESCAPING WAR: WHERE TO NEXT?

A RESEARCH STUDY ON THE CHALLENGES OF IDP PROTECTION IN AFGHANISTAN



NRC

NORWEGIAN
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iDMC internal
displacement
monitoring
centre

SAMUEL HALL.





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GLOSSARY

DURABLE SOLUTIONS

In the context of this study, “a durable solution is achieved when internally displaced persons no longer have any specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without discrimination on account of their displacement”. Conditions such as active conflict may not be conducive to their achievement, and there may be socioeconomic and political obstacles, but action can still be taken to reduce IDPs’ vulnerabilities and support their self-reliance, which are important steps toward them. Durable solutions are ultimately achieved through “sustainable reintegration at the place of origin”, “sustainable local integration in areas where internally displaced persons take refuge” or “sustainable integration in another part of the country”.¹

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE

Internally displaced people (IDPs) are “persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally-recognized State border”.²

PROTECTION

Protection is a term that “broadly encompasses activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of individuals in accordance with international law ... regardless of their age, gender, social ethnic, national, religious, or other backgrounds”.³ Interventions should focus on addressing “the risks and consequences of violence, coercion, deliberate deprivation and abuse for persons, groups and communities”. They should “prevent, reduce, mitigate and respond to protection threats against persons, groups and communities affected by on-going, imminent or future humanitarian crises” and “reduce the protection vulnerabilities and increase the protection capacities of persons, groups and communities affected by ongoing, imminent or future humanitarian crises”.⁴

RETURNEES

Returnees are defined as “every person who returns to Afghanistan after he or she was compelled to leave the country due to persecution or a situation of generalized violence, including returning asylum seekers and refugees.”⁵

RETURNEE-IDPs

Returnees become de facto IDPs in Afghanistan if they “are unable to settle in their homes and/or places of origin because of insecurity resulting from armed conflict, generalized violence or violations of human rights, landmines or ERW contamination on their land, land disputes or tribal disputes”.⁶ This study refers to such people as returnee-IDPs. Returnees also become IDPs if they are unable to settle in their places of origin because of socioeconomic issues such as the loss of property and assets, or a lack of livelihood opportunities or other services as a consequence of their displacement. This study also considers such people returnee-IDPs on the basis that they may be exposed to a broad range of protection risks as a result of threats and vulnerabilities specific to their displacement.

REINTEGRATION

Reintegration is considered sustainable “when returnees have reached levels of economic self-sufficiency, social stability within their communities, and psychosocial well-being that allow them to cope with (re)migration drivers. Having achieved sustainable reintegration, returnees are able to make further migration decisions a matter of choice, rather than necessity”.⁷

SECONDARY DISPLACEMENT

People can be said to experience secondary displacement when, after being displaced from their homes, they are forced to flee their area of shelter or residence to another location. People living in displacement can experience secondary, tertiary or multiple displacement. IDPs and returnees may both experience secondary displacement.

¹ OCHA, *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, 1998, available at: <https://goo.gl/R3mWc1>

² *Ibid.*

³ OCHA, *Thematic Areas: Protection*, available at: <https://goo.gl/myptYb>

⁴ ECHO, *Thematic policy document: Humanitarian protection*, May 2016, available at: <https://goo.gl/vyRoqZ>

⁵ Government of Afghanistan, *National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons*, November 2013, available at: <https://goo.gl/epfNwI>

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ IOM, *Towards an integrated approach to reintegration in the context of return*, 2016, available at: <https://goo.gl/iLjzuJ>

ACRONYMS

ACBAR	Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development	LIVE-UP	Local Integration of Vulnerable and Excluded Uprooted People
ANDMA	Afghan National Disaster Management Authority	MDI	Multi-dimensional integration index
AIRO	Afghanistan Independent Rehabilitation Organization	MORR	Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation
CDC	Community Development Council	MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
CHF	Common Humanitarian Fund	MRE	Mine risk education
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework	MOE	Ministry of Education
CSO	Civil society organisation	MOLSAMD	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled
CTP	Cash transfer programme	MOPH	Ministry of Public Health
DfID	UK Department for International Development	MOWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
DiREC	Displacement and Returnees Executive Committee	NGO	Non-governmental organisation
DORR	Department of Refugees and Repatriation	NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
DRC	Danish Refugee Council	OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ECHO	Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Aid Operations	PAP	Provincial action plan
ERM	Emergency response mechanism	PIN	People in Need
ERW	Explosive remnants of war	SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
FGD	Focus group discussion	SH	Samuel Hall
HEAT	Humanitarian emergency assessment tool	UN	United Nations
HNO	Humanitarian needs overview	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
HRP	Humanitarian response plan	UNHABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre	UNHCR	United Nations Refugee Agency
IDP	Internally displaced person	UNMACCA	United Nations Mine Action Coordination Centre for Afghanistan
IOM	International Organisation for Migration	WFP	United Nations World Food Programme
KII	Key informant interview	WHH	WelthungerHilfe
		WHS	World Humanitarian Summit



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SUMMARY

This report - based on research from Samuel Hall and commissioned by the Norwegian Refugee Council and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre - follows on from a 2012 study of displacement patterns and the challenges inherent in protecting internally displaced people (IDPs) in Afghanistan. This new and updated analysis focuses on assessing the causes of prolonged and multiple displacement and seeks to present the key protection challenges still confronting displacement-affected Afghans today. Combining the voices of IDPs with analysis of primary data collected from IDPs and secondarily displaced returning refugees across Afghanistan, the study reveals major gaps in access to key humanitarian services as well as a set of persistent and entrenched vulnerabilities that blight the lives of IDPs.

PROTRACTED AND RECURRING DISPLACEMENT

Afghanistan's long history of conflict has led to complex dynamics of forced displacement that include internal, international and irregular migration. Internal displacement has been a feature of the country's humanitarian crisis for decades, and it is on the rise. The number of IDPs increased three-fold in less than five years, from 492,000 in 2012 to more than 1.5 million as of the end of 2016. Around 653,000 people were displaced by conflict and violence in 2016 alone - the highest annual figure on record for the country. Hundreds of thousands more were forced to leave their homes during 2017. Some families take refuge for short periods with relatives or reside temporarily in urban informal settlements before returning, but many more are displaced for much longer. Significant numbers are forced to flee multiple times.



📷 Maslakh IDP settlement, Herat province, © NRC / Jim Huylebroek

YESTERDAY'S REFUGEES, TODAY'S IDPS

Afghans also constitute one of the largest and longest-displaced refugee groups in the world. More than three million Afghans, many of them now second and third generation refugees, live in neighbouring Iran and Pakistan. The position of both countries has latterly been to promote their return and recent regional political tensions have served to raise the expectation that the pace of return and repatriation will be accelerated. The methods deployed have not always been in line with principles of voluntariness, and include coercion and deportation. As a result, an annual average of more than 300,000 people have been returning each year since 2012 - often only to leave the country again or to live in internal displacement. Many thousands of secondarily displaced 'returnee-IDPs' families have been left with little choice but to occupy the vast and growing number of informal and sub-standard settlements that today pepper the country's urban landscape.

DETERIORATING HUMANITARIAN CONDITIONS

Rising displacement in Afghanistan takes place against a backdrop of abject poverty and chronically low humanitarian and development indicators. Infant and maternal mortality rates are high and food insecurity and malnutrition are getting worse. Education attainment levels are low and decent livelihood opportunities are few and far between. The country is also prone to disasters triggered by natural hazards including earthquakes and floods – increasing the risk of displacement for many communities.

Protection needs in Afghanistan's complex emergency are mainly linked to the deteriorating security situation and the resulting consequences of forced population movements. But weak institutions, lacking remedial mechanisms and an absence of services in many areas are additional factors that serve to weaken the ability of Afghan IDPs to fulfil and access their basic rights. As displacement becomes

prolonged, protection risks evolve and increase, particularly for those living in informal settlements characterised by undignified and sub-standard conditions. Negative individual and/or family coping mechanisms, such as reduced food intake and a reliance on child labour, proliferate in the absence of adequate livelihood opportunities, social protection and food security.

PERVASIVE DISPLACEMENT DUE TO CONFLICT

The study reveals that newly arrived returning refugees are adding significantly to Afghanistan's already sizable IDP caseload. Most of those who attempt to go back to their homes are highly likely to be displaced again as a result of Afghanistan's ongoing and escalating conflict. Many IDPs interviewed were returning refugees who had moved from one life in displacement to another. Displacement is a pervasive feature of life for Afghans with many IDPs telling us they had been displaced by conflict more than once and to multiple locations. In almost every instance the cause of displacement reported was the same: conflict and violence.

A comparison of this study's main findings with previous data collected in 2012 shows that some important development gains have been made and also that there is improvement on some key protection indicators for many IDPs, including access to drinking water, electricity, sanitation facilities and legal documentation. Other indicators, however, such as food security, access to aid and the prevalence of child labour have worsened and warrant cause for concern.

KEY FINDINGS

Conflict and violence are driving more and more Afghans from their homes.

94 per cent of the IDPs we surveyed said they had fled due to conflict, violence or persecution – a 19 per cent increase compared to 2012. The data collected for this study illustrates a steady upwards trend in displacement since 2012. This appears to be linked to the withdrawal of most foreign troops, escalating violence and the increasing number of areas throughout the country now falling under anti-government forces control. The majority of IDP respondents displaced in 2017 were from Nangarhar province in the east or from the north-western

province of Kunduz. 84 per cent of those from Nangarhar said their places of origin were now controlled by ISIL and 97 per cent of those from Kunduz reported fleeing areas now under Taliban control.

Newly returned refugees and migrants are adding significantly to Afghanistan's IDP caseload.

Afghanistan is struggling to absorb increasingly large numbers of refugees and migrants – many of whom have been compelled to return in recent years following pressures in neighbouring Iran and Pakistan and also due to reducing asylum acceptance rates for Afghans internationally. The implication has been an increase in 'returnee-IDPs' – IDPs we surveyed for this study who reported becoming secondarily displaced after returning to Afghanistan. We found that three quarters of the returnee-IDP respondents were unable to go back to their original home because of insecurity. 72 per cent reported their families having been displaced twice and almost a third were displaced three times. These returnee-IDPs face the same challenges as other IDPs in accessing their rights and securing durable solutions.

Three quarters of Afghanistan's IDP households are not receiving aid assistance and many are resorting to harmful coping strategies such as skipping meals and relying on child labour.

Only 25 per cent of IDPs reported receiving some form of aid assistance and one in two respondents said they had trouble satisfying their food needs on a regular basis. Lacking access to food, water and housing, as well as to key services such as education, healthcare and livelihood opportunities, IDPs are exposed to ongoing risks and have heightened protection vulnerabilities. Trapped in in protracted cycles of endemic poverty, we find increasing numbers of IDP families adopting harmful coping strategies. Around 80 per cent reported holding high levels of household debt and almost 20 per cent of IDP families sent at least one child out to work.

Afghanistan's IDP registration procedure is complex, costly and prevents aid from reaching those who need it.

The petition system, the main channel through which IDPs access humanitarian assistance, is not working as it should. Potential beneficiaries do not have enough

information about the process and the logistics and cost of submitting an application are prohibitive for many – particularly the requirement that applicants must visit a Department of Refugees and Repatriation (DoRR) office in person. There is little or no access to the system outside government-controlled areas. Taken together, the petition system's problems impede, if not prevent, principled humanitarian action to reach the most vulnerable groups at the right time and with the right assistance.

Afghanistan's IDPs are not aware of their rights or the entitlements and remedies available to them.

Less than 20 per cent of households surveyed were aware of their rights, and without understanding their entitlements they are clearly not in a position to exercise them. As a result, IDPs tend to be highly aid-dependent and exist on the margins of society with little engagement in civil and political community processes. IDPs lack an understanding that all human rights are equal and frequently confuse rights with needs - with 70 per cent identifying a right to food and water compared to just seven per cent who identified the right to vote.

In a context of ongoing conflict and worsening security, durable solutions remain elusive for the vast majority of Afghanistan's IDPs.

Insecurity is the main obstacle to achieving durable solutions – with almost a quarter of IDPs citing it as the single most important factor guiding their decision on whether to return, relocate or to try and integrate locally. Jobs and housing were ranked as the second and third most important considerations for IDPs. IDPs cited a lack of information about areas of return or possible relocation, particularly in terms of security, and also their inability to afford another move as other major impediments to achieving a durable solution. The majority of IDPs we surveyed do not want to return to their place of origin and wish instead to integrate locally. Women in particular said they intended to try to integrate locally for fear of being forced to flee again soon after returning.

Afghanistan's IDPs are benefiting from national and international programmes that target them for support.

While durable solutions remain all but out of reach for most IDPs, efforts are being made to reduce IDPs'

vulnerability, build resilience and promote their self-reliance. These are yielding positive results. Some of the important programmes and initiatives IDPs cited include the provision of legal support on housing, land and property issues - particularly when it comes to legal documentation, registration and tenure security. A pilot in Herat province of programmes to improve the living conditions of IDPs and host communities, as well livelihood projects for women in Kabul's informal settlements, were also welcomed by displacement-affected communities in those areas.

Afghanistan's IDP women are highly vulnerable and often lack access to specialist support while in displacement.

Given the prolonged and pervasive nature of Afghanistan's conflict, the vast majority of IDPs have been exposed to traumatic and stressful events – with women especially likely to be affected due to social isolation and a lack traditional protective mechanisms available to them in displacement. Women IDPs we spoke with were struggling to cope with cramped living conditions and the stress of adapting to their new environment and circumstances. In many instances, women reported psychosocial and mental health concerns – often exacerbated by domestic tensions in the household. A lack of community-based safety networks also heightens exposure of IDP women to GBV risks, including domestic violence.

Despite these needs, psychosocial and mental health services are extremely limited in most areas and, even where they are available, tend not to address women's needs. Expanded coverage of specialist GBV support, and increased numbers of female field responders, is critical if we are to respond better to IDPs in Afghanistan.

WORKING TO IMPROVE THE PROTECTION ENVIRONMENT FOR IDPS ACROSS AFGHANISTAN

In a context of escalating conflict and violence, a deteriorating economic crisis and chronic political impasse, it is not surprising that Afghanistan continues to see such large and growing numbers of IDPs. The hundreds of thousands of refugees pressured to return from Iran and Pakistan over the past few years has only deepened further the response challenges for the humanitarian and



📷 Kabul IDP informal settlement, © NRC / Jim Huylebroek

development community and also for the Afghan Government - who continue to lack capacity at local level to address and respond to displacement-affected communities.

As humanitarians endeavour to support IDPs and other groups of displacement-affected Afghans - including refugee returnees - both in meeting their basic needs and also to achieve durable solutions, this report identifies a number of key response areas to be prioritised:

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Collective efforts are needed to implement Afghanistan's national policy on IDPs. This requires increased resourcing for the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) and its provincial offices.
- The IDP petition system needs to be reformed and streamlined so it works in the interest of IDPs and to ensure that it helps improve our ability to record displacement and respond effectively.
- Local coordination on responding to displacement needs to improve and with a focus on planning and an assumption of national responsibility.
- Multi-year funding is needed to bridge the response gap found between new and protracted IDP caseloads – who share many of the same needs and vulnerabilities.
- IDPs should not be viewed as only a humanitarian concern. Development actors need to be brought into the response framework earlier in order to better target longer-term programmes at displacement-affected communities.
- Primary response needs as identified by IDPs themselves must be addressed. These are housing and shelter, livelihood opportunities, education, child protection and psychosocial and GBV services for women.
- A strategy to improve responses to IDPs in insecure areas is needed as growing parts of the country continue to fall out of government control. Non-state groups must allow humanitarian access to displacement-affected populations living in their areas so that they are able to access assistance.

1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE PRESENT SITUATION

“ IDPs exist on the margins of society, unable to meet their basic needs for food, water, sanitation, housing, health care or education.”

Afghanistan’s national policy on IDPs⁸

Internal displacement has been a feature of the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan for decades, and it is on the rise. The number of internally displaced people (IDPs) has increased three-fold in four years, from 486,300 in 2012 to more than 1.5 million as of the end of 2016. Around 653,000 people were newly displaced by conflict and violence in 2016 alone, the highest annual figure on record for the country.⁹ Conflict escalated again in 2017 – resulting –in a further displacement of 448,000 people.¹⁰ Afghanistan has now been reclassified from a post-conflict country to one in active conflict.¹¹

“ IDPs who are displaced to insecure areas receive less attention and that is because neither the donors nor the implementing agencies are interested in going to such areas. Security policies ... do not allow travel to such areas.”

National NGO representative in Kabul¹²

Efforts to protect and assist Afghanistan’s IDPs are increasingly impeded by a lack of humanitarian access, which stakeholders interviewed for this study raised as an issue of grave concern.

There are three main factors behind the ever shrinking humanitarian space:

- ➔ **Escalating conflict:** Non-state armed groups have expanded the territory they dominate, restricting government control largely to provincial capitals and other urban areas. A conflict that used to be marked by seasonal changes, peaking in the summer months and decreasing in the winter, has also become a more constant reality for civilians. All parties have become increasingly hostile to anyone crossing conflict lines.¹³
- ➔ **Lack of respect for international humanitarian law (IHL):** The Taliban recently indicated greater willingness to allow humanitarians to work in the territory it controls, but its highly decentralised structure allows regional and local affiliates to decide for themselves whether or not they are willing to do so.¹⁴ Other parties to the conflict, such as Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), have demonstrated their flagrant disregard for IHL. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) announced in October 2017 that it would drastically reduce its presence in Afghanistan, a decision that particularly affects provinces such as Kunduz where displacement and protection concerns are on the rise. Health facilities across the country have been forced to close and schools in many provinces have been occupied by parties to the conflict, severely restricting access to healthcare and education.
- ➔ **Humanitarians’ overcautious approach:** Instead of pushing outside the boundaries of their work, humanitarians are increasingly confining themselves to the same areas. One key informant interviewee for this study said: “The biggest access constraint is self-selection out of it.”¹⁵

⁸ Government of Afghanistan, *National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons*, November 2013, available at: <https://goo.gl/epfNwT>

⁹ IDMC, *Global Report on Internal Displacement*, May 2017, available at: <https://goo.gl/CCYm7>; AAN, *Over Half a Million Afghans Flee Conflict in 2016: A Look at the IDP Statistics*, 28 December 2016, available at: <https://goo.gl/p6FNo1>

¹⁰ OCHA (2017), *Humanitarian Response Plan 2018*, Afghanistan.

¹¹ OCHA (2017), *Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018*, Afghanistan.

¹² KII, National NGO representative, Kabul, 3 August 2017.

¹³ KII, Humanitarian donor representative, Kabul, 12 July 2017; KII, International NGO representative, 11 July 2017.

¹⁴ KII, Humanitarian donor representative, Kabul, 12 July 2017.

¹⁵ KII, International NGO representative, international NGO, 11 July 2017.

The impact of these factors cannot be overstated. People living in inaccessible areas are likely to be among the most vulnerable, but information is lacking. Humanitarians do not know the extent of displacement in areas not under government control. Nor are they aware of IDPs' protection priorities in these areas, or how they differ from those elsewhere. Almost all profiling exercises and other data collection on IDPs take place in accessible areas, meaning that analyses which inform programming are inherently biased.

Funding is also an issue. Only two per cent of the Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF) for 2016 was allocated for work in areas not under government control.¹⁶ The end result is that IDPs in these areas have little or no access to assistance and protection.

The World Bank and UNHCR stated in 2016 that "a higher number of returns from abroad will likely result in an increase of internal displacement".¹⁷ With the world's focus on the large influxes of refugees and migrants in Europe, however, internal displacement was all but overlooked at the UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants, which took place the same year. It was barely mentioned in the resulting New York Declaration and was not referred to in the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF).¹⁸ This study seeks to connect the dots across the displacement continuum and redress the balance somewhat by analysing the fate of the many returnees to Afghanistan who face a life of internal displacement.¹⁹

An evidence base that provides better quantitative and qualitative understanding of the entire displacement continuum in Afghanistan, from the drivers of initial displacement and onward movements of IDPs across borders to the return processes and obstacles to durable solutions that this study addresses, is vital at this juncture. It would allow governments, policy-makers and responders on the ground to better meet displaced people's immediate and longer-term protection and assistance needs at

their points of departure, transit and arrival. This in turn has the potential to strengthen systematic approaches to preparedness and response, and to address the systemic political and development challenges brought about by unresolved and protracted internal displacement in Afghanistan.²⁰

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research for this report had four objectives:

1 DISPLACEMENT PATTERNS

Analyse displacement patterns with a focus on secondary and multiple displacement affecting both IDPs and returnees

2 PROTECTION & DURABLE SOLUTION

Assess protection concerns and IDPs' prospects of achieving durable solutions, including an in-depth look at impacts, needs and opportunities

3 STAKEHOLDER & PROFILING MAPPING

Undertake a comprehensive mapping of stakeholders and profiling methods using a consultative approach, to inform an analysis of engagement and responses

4 LONGITUDINAL ANALYSIS

Conduct a longitudinal comparative study using benchmarks from 2012 to assess how the IDPs' situations and protection needs have changed over the last five years²¹

¹⁶ KII, UN official, Kabul, 13 July 2017.

¹⁷ World Bank/UNHCR, *Fragility and population movement in Afghanistan*, p.2, 2016, available at: <https://goo.gl/37yKQd>

¹⁸ IDMC, *Internal displacement and the Global Compact on Refugees: Are today's returning refugees, tomorrow's IDPs?*, 2017, available at: <https://goo.gl/LX7aQw>

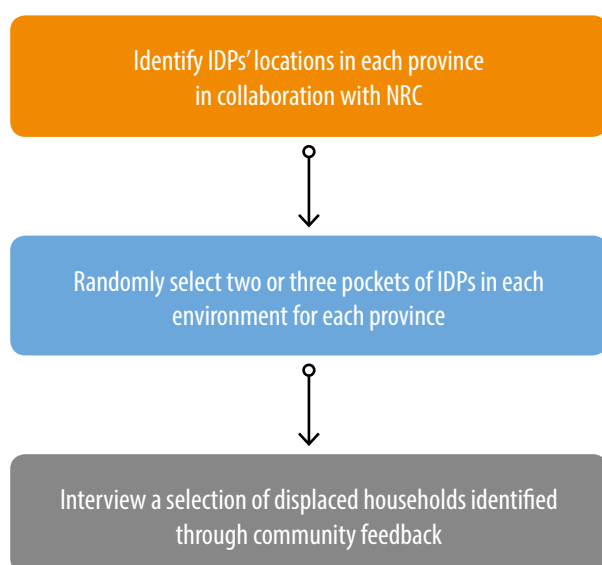
¹⁹ IDMC, *The Invisible Majority: IDPs on the displacement continuum*, 2017, available at: <https://goo.gl/Xxe35v>

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Samuel Hall/NRC/IDMC/JIPS, *Challenges of IDP Protection*, 2012, available at: <https://goo.gl/FB4BZS>

1.3 METHODOLOGY

Primary data collection took place in July and August 2017 in the provinces of Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, Kunduz and Nangarhar. Data was collected from rural, semi-urban and urban environments in all five provinces. The provincial capital or *markaz* served as the urban area, while semi-urban areas around them and rural districts with no common border with the *markaz* were identified in collaboration with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).



Four of the provinces are the same as those surveyed in 2012, and are also those with highest number of returns. Kunduz has been added to reflect more recent displacement patterns caused by escalating conflict between the Taliban and the Afghan security forces in the north of the country since 2015. Some reports indicate that Kunduz accounted for 10 per cent of all new displacements in Afghanistan in 2017.²²

Focus group discussions brought the experience of IDPs, returnee-IDPs and host community members to the fore, complementing and building on the quantitative data. They were used to collect information on the causes and patterns of displacement, protection concerns and potential solutions, and they yielded narratives about participants' experiences of displacement.

LIMITATIONS AND CONSTRAINTS

The research focuses on government-controlled areas, and as such the sample is not representative of all IDPs in Afghanistan. A range of concerns, most prominent of which were security, access and data challenges, prevented the research team from obtaining a random sample.

Table 1: Quantitative survey sample

Type	Interview targets					Total
	Kabul	Herat	Kandahar	Kunduz	Nangarhar	
IDP	284	258	258	310	310	1,420
Returnee-IDP	232	258	284	181	206	1,161
Total	516	516	542	491	516	2,581

Table 2: Qualitative sample – Focus group discussions

Type of focus group	Kabul	Herat	Kandahar	Kunduz	Nangarhar	Sub-Total	Total
IDPs	1	1	1	1	1	5	15
Community members	1	1	1	1	1	5	
Returnee-IDPs	1	1	1	1	1	5	

²² ACAPS briefing note, *Afghanistan: conflict-induced displacement in Kunduz*, 2017, available at: <https://goo.gl/Ry76bN>

2

A RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH TO IDPS' PROTECTION

2.1 WHO IS AN IDP IN AFGHANISTAN?

Afghanistan's national policy on internal displacement defines IDPs as "persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border".

The definition is the same as the one set out in the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. Of particular importance in a country to which an increasing number of refugees are returning, many of them under duress, the policy also defines returnees "who are unable to settle in their homes and/or places of origin because of insecurity resulting from armed conflict, generalized violence or violations of human rights, landmines or ERW contamination on their land, land disputes or tribal disputes" as IDPs.²³

There are two broad ways in which returnees to Afghanistan may find themselves living in internal displacement or a situation very similar to it and thus become a "returnee-IDP".²⁴

- ➔ **Displacement after return to their place of origin:** There is a relatively high chance that returnees who are able to go back to their places of origin or habitual residence may be displaced again, particularly given the escalating conflict in the country. Ninety-nine per cent of IDPs interviewed for this report said they had fled their homes to escape conflict, compared with around three-quarters in the 2012 study.
- ➔ **Inability to go back to their place of origin on return to Afghanistan:** Returnees from areas in the throes of active conflict may be unable to go back to their homes or even their province of origin, and may instead have to stay with friends or relatives or seek work in an urban area.

GAPS IN DATA, OR IN DATA COORDINATION?

There is a shortage of reliable data on internal displacement in Afghanistan. Numbers of IDPs are estimates because they are neither nationally representative, nor do they reflect those who may have achieved durable solutions.

There are two structural problems with data collection. The lack of access to areas not under government control prevents data collectors from making comprehensive assessments. The fact that many areas of Afghanistan are hard to reach makes monitoring and assessment even more complex, because there is a time-lag between the moment displacement takes place or is observed and its reporting.

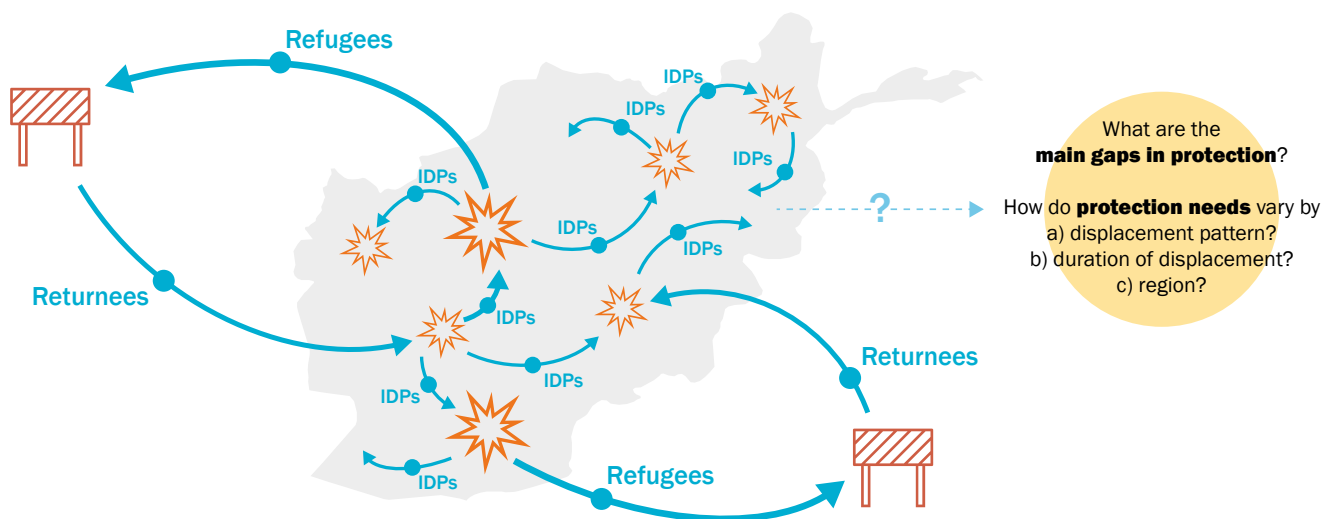
A lack of coordination between sources also means they only present partial snapshots, because IDPs are neither tracked nor monitored. This leads to an overall weakness of the data system in Afghanistan, with a focus on numbers unmatched by analysis.

²³ Government of Afghanistan, *National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons*, November 2013, available at: <https://goo.gl/epfNwI>

²⁴ IDMC, *Going "home" to displacement: Afghanistan's returnee-IDPs*, 2017, available at: <https://goo.gl/xQHqdm>

Figure 1: The refugee-returnee-IDP nexus explored in this study

Yesterday's refugees ▶ ▶ ▶ Today's returnees ▶ ▶ ▶ Tomorrow's IDPs ?



The World Bank and UNHCR published a policy brief in 2016 that described an increase in secondary displacement among returnees in Afghanistan.²⁵ It highlighted a two-fold increase in the incidence of internal displacement among returnees since 2013, when compared with return flows in 2002. As the pace of repatriations increases while the country struggles with simultaneous security and economic crises, the report warns of the risks of displacement upon return. The brief prompted the focus of the research for this report on the refugee-returnee-IDP

nexus and the need to recognise the prevalence of multiple displacement in Afghanistan. Many of the households surveyed for this study reported experiencing repeated displacement. Of the returnee-IDPs interviewed, 72 per cent of their households had been displaced twice and 27 per cent displaced three times. Our revealed that returnees and IDPs share the same vulnerabilities, and as such responses should be cohesive and cover all subgroups of the country's displaced population.

FAMILY 1: A LIFE OF DISPLACEMENT

Family 1 currently lives in Injil, Herat province, after three decades during which episodes of internal displacement eventually led to flight abroad, followed by a return to internal displacement. Security, work and social networks contributed to the inevitability of migration and the family's choice of destinations. They are now settled in Herat and plan to integrate locally, because they are unable to afford to leave again. They are physically secure in Herat, but many of their protection needs are still unmet.

Four episodes of displacement over 30 years

Displacement episode	Province	Location	Duration	Why did you go there?	Why did you leave?	Moving as a household?
Origin	Faryab	Qiasar	17 years	Residence	War	Yes
1	Badghis	Morghab	6 years	Work	War	Yes
2	Herat	Injil	5 years	Security	War	Yes
3	Kandahar	Kandahar	4 years	Security	War	Yes
4	Kowaita, Pakistan	Mahmood Khil camp	15 years	Security	Forced to leave	Yes
Current	Herat	Injil	11 months	Friends	Still here	Yes

²⁵ World Bank/UNHCR, *Fragility and population movement in Afghanistan*, 2016, available at: <https://goo.gl/RRQATv>

FAMILY 2: FROM FAILED RETURN TO LOCAL INTEGRATION

Family 2 is currently trying to integrate locally in Kandahar city following a series of internal displacements. This study reveals that many displaced people want to integrate locally because they are unable to afford to move again. This is not only a choice but a fundamental right, and the pursuit of durable solutions should be geared to an understanding of their history. Their past experience informs their choices for the future.

Trying to integrate locally

Displacement episode	Province	Location	Duration	Why did you go there?	Why did you leave?	Moving as a household?
Origin	Uruzgan	Gizab	30 years	Residence	War	Yes
1	Uruzgan	Chora	1 year	Security	War	Yes
2	Uruzgan	Tirinkot	2 years	Work	War	Yes
3	Uruzgan	Gizab	1 year	Relatives	War	Yes
Current	Kandahar	Kandahar city	1 year	Security	Still here	Yes

To illustrate the reality of multiple displacement in Afghanistan, the tables above summarise the experiences of two families.

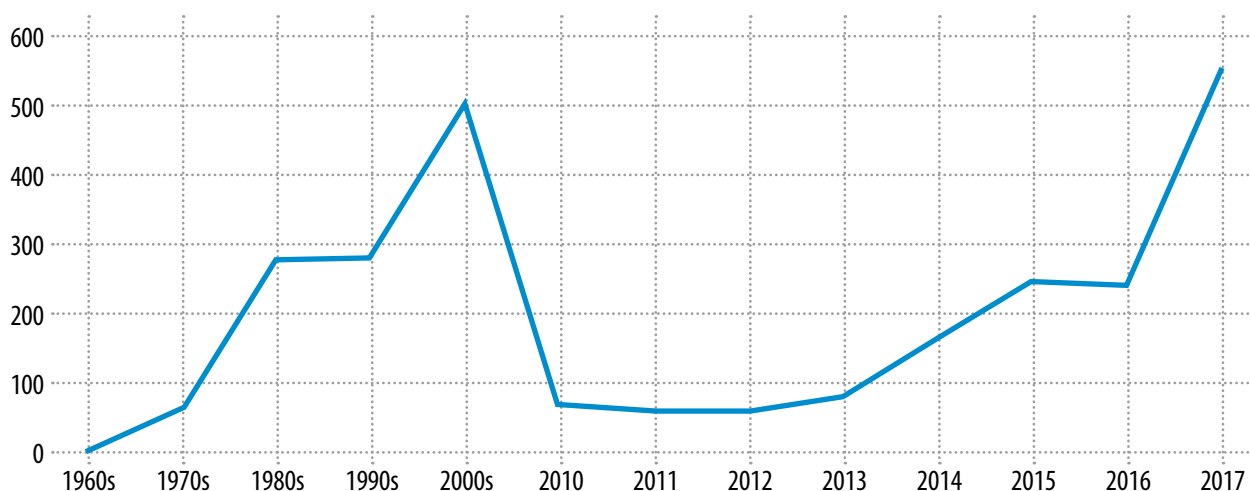
Displacement may take place within a district, province or region, or between countries. It is defined as intra-provincial, inter-provincial, regional and cross-border movement.

DISPLACEMENT PATTERNS

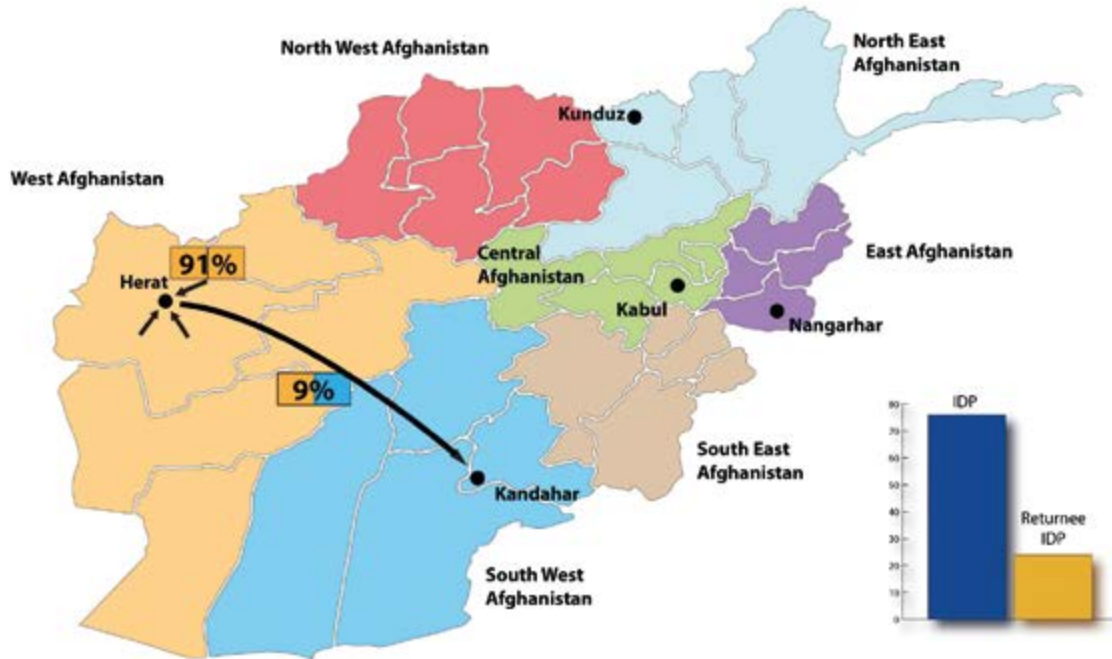
The data collected for this study illustrates a steady upward trend in displacement since 2013 linked to the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan, escalating violence and anti-government forces gaining ground throughout the country. Fifty-two per cent of the sample were first displaced in the last five years, including 40 per cent in the last two, but the reality is that Afghans have been living with displacement for more than half a century, and the generational problems it causes affect all demographic groups.

➔ **Intra-provincial movements** tend to outnumber inter-provincial and regional ones in Afghanistan. In our sample for the west of the country, 91 per cent of movements took place within Herat province, with only nine per cent of respondents moving to the south-west province of Kandahar (see map 1). These are mainly IDPs, rather than returnee-IDPs. More local displacement helps IDPs to maintain their social networks and retain a sense of familiarity with their surroundings, but in other regions displacement over greater distances was more prevalent.

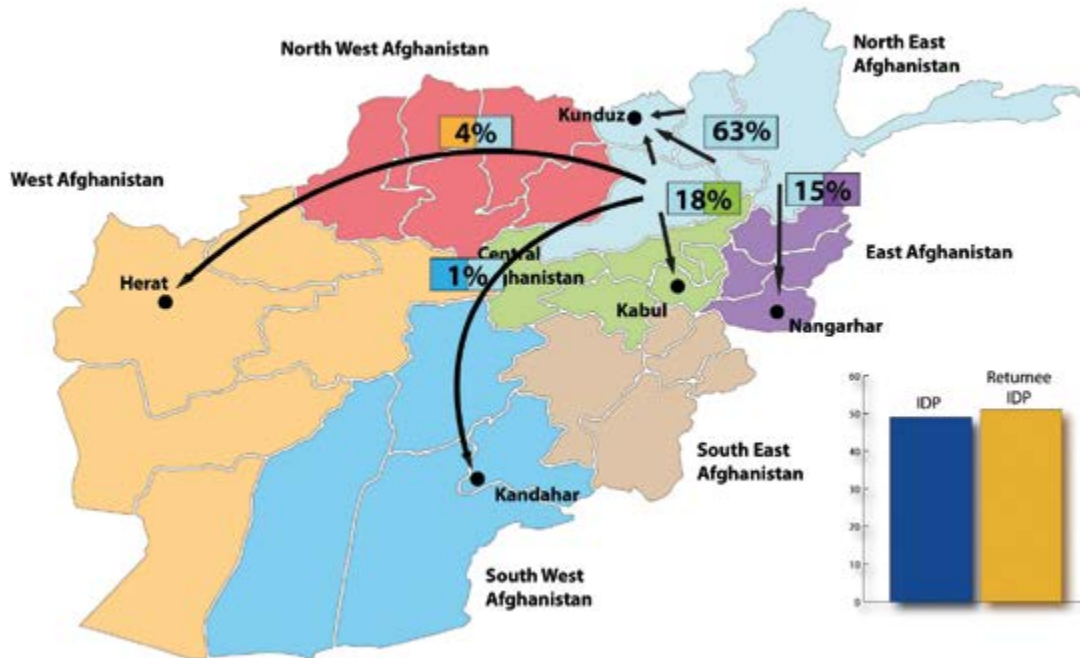
Figure 2: Respondents' year of initial displacement



Map 1: Displacement patterns within and from western Afghanistan



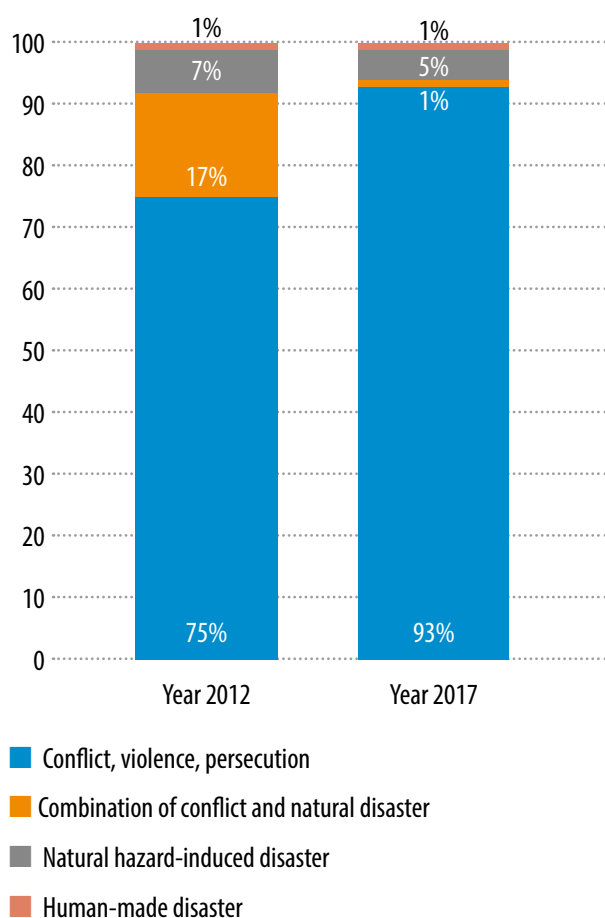
Map 2: Displacement patterns within and from north-east Afghanistan



➔ **Inter-provincial and regional movements** are more common from the north-east of the country, where Kunduz province has become increasingly significant as both a point of departure and destination. The situation in Kunduz highlights concerns about the effectiveness of displacement as a coping strategy and the pursuit of durable solutions in a live conflict environment. Sixty-three per cent of movements took place within the province, but 18 per cent were to Kabul and 15 per cent to Nangarhar.

Once displaced, households tend to stay on the move. Seventy-two per cent of the returnee-IDP households interviewed said they had been displaced twice, 27 per cent three times and one per cent four times or more.

Figure 3: Causes of IDPs' displacement



People tend to flee rural areas for their regional centres. Ninety-one per cent of respondents in the west of the country had moved to Herat city, 92 per cent in the south-west to Kandahar city and 76 per cent in the east to Jalalabad. These findings confirm that IDPs tend to think they will be safer and more able to cope in urban areas, where services, employment opportunities and humanitarian aid are more readily available. They also show that IDPs prefer to stay as close as possible to their places of origin.

IDPs are more likely than returnees to head for urban areas. Nearly three-quarters of the displaced people this survey encountered in urban environments were IDPs. In rural areas, more than half of the sample were returnees unable to return home.

People recently displaced fled conflict zones. The majority of IDPs in the sample displaced in 2017 were from Nangarhar and Kunduz. Eighty-four per cent of those from Nangarhar said their places of origin were controlled by ISIL, and 97 per cent of those from Kunduz that they had fled areas under Taliban control.

Conflict and violence are the main causes of displacement. Ninety-four per cent of IDPs surveyed said they had fled conflict, violence or persecution, a significant deterioration on the situation in 2012 when the figure was close to 75 per cent. The increase in the number of displacements associated with conflict mirrors the findings of a 2017 report by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) on the protection of civilians between 2012 and 2017, which showed an 18 percentage-point increase in the number of deaths and a 38 percentage-point increase in the number of civilians injured.²⁶

Disasters triggered by natural hazards led to fewer displacements, down 16 percentage points, and the number of people displaced by a combination of causes was relatively stable, down two percentage points.

People's displacement stories in 2017 were regrettably similar to those in 2012, with many centred on the Taliban insurgency and heavy clashes with Afghan security forces. Respondents spoke of airstrikes, suicide attacks, kidnappings, torture and ransom demands. Many had lost at least one family member before their decision to leave.

²⁶ UNAMA, *Quarterly report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict*, 1 January to 30 September 2017, available at: <https://goo.gl/CaqZ8Z>

CHANGES OVER TIME: 2012 AND 2017

This study found that development gains have been made and infrastructure built since 2012, and a number of protection indicators have improved.

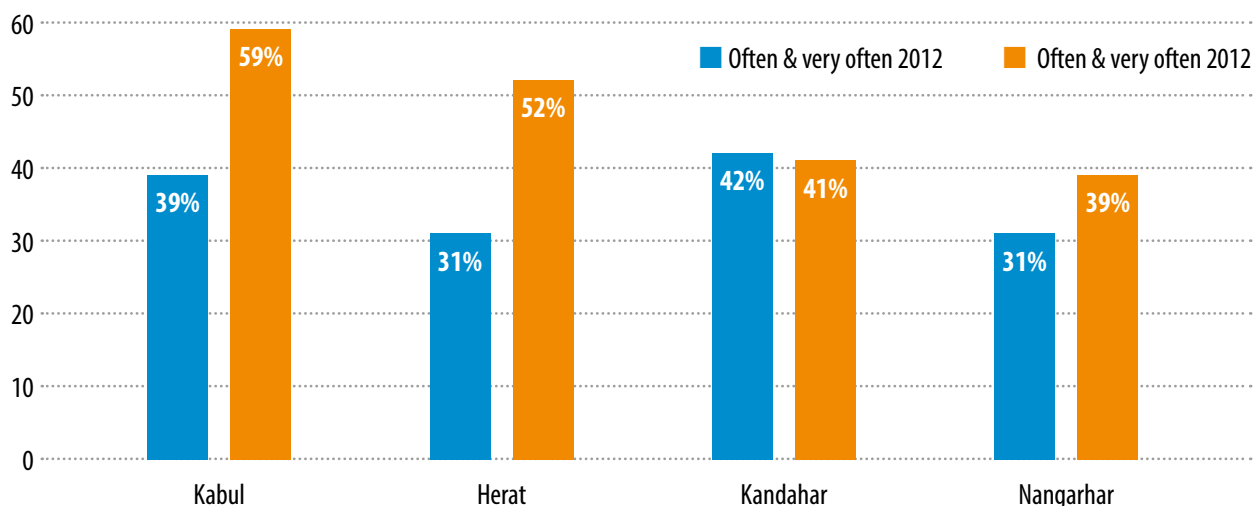
- Seventy-six per cent of respondents said they had access to safe drinking water, a marked improvement on 2012, when the figure was three per cent. Regional differences have become more pronounced, however, with 84 per cent of respondents in Herat having access but only 69 per cent in Kunduz.
- Forty-four per cent of respondents said they did have access to electricity, also an improvement on 2012, when the figure was 30 per cent for IDPs.
- Less than 10 per cent of respondents said no one in their household had a passport or primary identity document known as a *tazkera*, compared with a third in 2012.
- Seventy-eight per cent of respondents said they had access to a traditional toilet or flush latrine, compared with 64 per cent in 2012.

Both the 2012 and 2017 surveys show that the vast majority of respondents felt safer following their displacement, at 95 and 98 per cent respectively. They were also similarly appreciative of the protection they received from the police, at 87 and 88 per cent respectively.

Other indicators, however, give cause for concern:

- ➔ **Aid levels:** Only 25 per cent of respondents said they had received assistance, compared with 44 per cent in 2012, which reflects the increasing difficulty humanitarians have in reaching those in need. This is particularly concerning given that the survey was conducted in accessible areas – the figure is expected to be significantly lower in inaccessible areas.
- ➔ **Food security:** One in two respondents said they had had trouble satisfying their food needs on a regular basis over the past 12 months, compared with one in three in 2012. This reflects a significant deterioration in food security, and regional differences are stark. One in six respondents in Kabul said they had suffered hunger over the past year, compared with one in four in Kandahar and Nangarhar.
- ➔ **Child labour:** Eighteen per cent of respondents said their households relied on child labour, up from 12 per cent in 2012. Among respondents in Kabul province the figure was 26 per cent, and among returnee-IDPs 23.6 per cent.

Figure 4: How often in the last year did your household have trouble satisfying its food needs?



A STORY FROM KUNDUZ



Our place of origin is called Qala-e-Zaal, my village is called Nazboz. I was born there, we had a farm and livestock. We were living among people of our ethnicity, and we worked and saved while there was peace. Then the revolution happened, we moved around and eventually in 1991 we fled to Pakistan. My father made the decision to go.

Life there was tough for us until we learned some skills and found work, but then little by little things got better. I was working in a sweatshop, my wife was working in an embroidery shop and my two children were studying. We were there for many years.

But then the police started to trouble us, asking for money whenever they saw us at the market. After that we returned to Afghanistan and went back to our old house, but there was nothing left. It was hard, but we built our house again using the savings we had made in Pakistan.

Then the civil war started and we fled to Iran, where we stayed for eight years. We returned again in 2001 and enrolled our children in school. We bought a cow, and we were able to integrate thanks to our relatives. But war broke out again in Qala-e-Zaal in 2016. The Taliban took control of the district and we were forced to leave yet again.

Now we live in a rented house in Kunduz city. My younger children think it is their home, but the older ones think their home is somewhere else and that we will return to where we belong. My son is a day labourer and I work at the bazaar. We have access to schools and a health clinic, but our rent is very high. We feel safe because our house is near a police checkpoint, but the Taliban's attacks on Kunduz city are increasing. The Taliban have many friends in Kunduz.

Everywhere we have fled, it was with the expectation that we would be safe and able to live in peace. Now we are very tired.



2.2.STATUS AND RIGHTS

THE PETITION SYSTEM

There are two main ways in which IDPs in Afghanistan receive assistance. During large displacements, humanitarian organisations are empowered to act unilaterally to provide emergency aid. The most common recourse, however, is for IDPs to register with the Department of Refugees and Repatriation (DoRR) and submit assistance requests via its petition system.

WHAT IS THE PETITION SYSTEM?

DoRR oversees the registration of IDPs in each province. To register and file a claim for assistance, IDPs have to visit a DoRR office in person. An applicant can submit a petition on behalf of his or her family. DoRR consolidates similar petitions and sends them to OCHA's pre-screening committee, which includes representatives from the government, the UN system and humanitarian partners. OCHA receives key information about the beneficiary, including their village of origin, their date, reason and place of displacement, and contact details. The committee conducts a rapid assessment to decide whether applicants meet the requirements to receive aid, and if so what their needs are. The goal is to provide assistance to successful applicants within 72 hours of receiving their petition, though it may take longer.

Does the system work?

Awareness of the petition system is not widespread among IDPs, and there are significant variations between provinces and groups. Forty-four per cent of respondents in Kunduz had submitted a petition, but only eight per cent in Kandahar.

Kandahar, Herat and Nangarhar rank below average for the submission and acceptance of petitions. The system appears to work better for IDPs in Kunduz and Kabul, and for returnee-IDPs in Kunduz, Nangarhar and Kabul.

The highest acceptance rates for petitions is among returnee-IDPs in Kunduz, followed by IDPs in Kabul.

Overall, only one in five apply to the petition system, and out of those less than one in two get approved – for most IDPs these odds are simply not worth the bureaucracy and costs incurred.

Table 3: Have you ever submitted a petition to be registered as an IDP?

	IDP	Returnee-IDP	All
Herat	8 per cent	13 per cent	10 per cent
Kabul	19 per cent	25 per cent	22 per cent
Kandahar	7 per cent	9 per cent	8 per cent
Kunduz	43 per cent	46 per cent	44 per cent
Nangarhar	15 per cent	29 per cent	20 per cent
Total			21 per cent

Table 4: If so, was your petition accepted?

	IDP	Returnee-IDP	All
Herat	18 per cent	31 per cent	26 per cent
Kabul	54 per cent	45 per cent	50 per cent
Kandahar	0 per cent	24 per cent	14 per cent
Kunduz	44 per cent	59 per cent	49 per cent
Nangarhar	14 per cent	47 per cent	32 per cent
Total			34 per cent

Key informants identified five obstacles: Lack of information on the process, the cost of travelling to DoRR offices, lack of access outside government-controlled areas, lengthy procedures and overly strict screening criteria. Beyond bureaucratic obstacles, the system risks not always reaching the most vulnerable.

A STORY FROM JALALABAD



My name is Zarmina, daughter of Ghulam Sediq. We left Koot district because the situation was bad. There was active conflict going on between the Taliban and the government, and my husband was killed. It was morning and he had gone to the fields and was busy working when a bullet came straight from the air and hit him in the back. I had no one else to lead me and my family there, so after we had spent our savings on his funeral and other expenses, we left.

We came to Jalalabad to escape the conflict in Koot. The Taliban and ISIL would have taken us with them had we stayed there. They slaughtered a lot of people in Koot. We beg on the streets and do other people's laundry. We make enough to feed ourselves and we are happy to be in a secure area. I've already lost my husband, and I don't want to lose my children too.

We received 30,000 afghanis (\$436), a tent and household appliances from an organisation. These helped us a lot and we were able to start a new life. I was ill. I used to work for people in their kitchens, do their laundry, wash their carpets, and my children collected rotten vegetables that people would otherwise throw away. I am thankful to God, to you guys, and the people or governments that assisted us. My situation is better now. I used part of the money we received to buy medication for myself, part of it to feed my children and part of it to buy household items that we had lost. We received all this assistance from one organisation.

Winter is already starting and the floor of the tent is wet. It is not good for me because I have rheumatism and high blood cholesterol. My children are very young too. We don't have flour in the house, and as you just saw my children brought rice in plastic bags from a wedding next door. My youngest child collects scrap metal and sells it, which is the only income our family has at the moment. We need food, blankets and cash assistance.

My children never went to school before. I registered one of them at a school in Jalalabad, but other pupils fought with her and took her books and school items. We had no one to stand up for her and look after her while she was at school, so she is not going anymore. All five of my children are out of school.

My son's name is Khudae Nazar. He is 14, and he lives with us. I feel secure here because the police always patrol the area by the airport, even at night. There is also a police checkpoint at the end of the street. No fear.





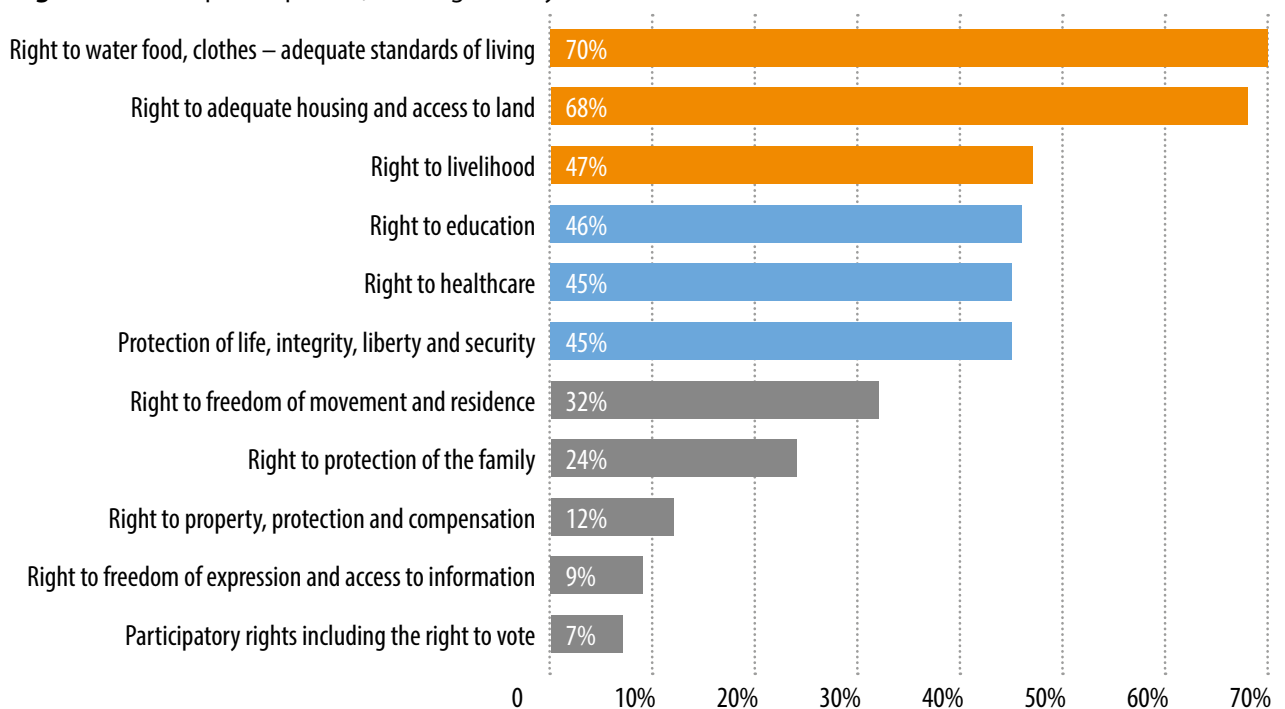
📷 Almar district, Faryab province, © NRC / Jim Huylebroek

IDPS' PERCEPTION OF THEIR RIGHTS

There is a key need to raise awareness among IDPs of their human rights. Most have no knowledge of their rights under the constitution and Afghanistan's national policy on displacement, despite the fact that they entitle them to protection for which the government is responsible.

Figure 5 shows a lack of understanding that all human rights are equal. There is a yawning gap between the 70 per cent of respondents who identified the right to food and water and the seven per cent who identified the right to vote. The informal ranking IDPs provide may also reflect confusion between the notions of needs and rights, and the relative importance they attach to the former given their environment of extreme vulnerability.

Figure 5: As a displaced person, what rights are you entitled to?



3

OBSTACLES TO RIGHTS

IDPs' inability to access decent housing, tenure security over land and employment and skills adaptable to their new environment generate a cycle of other needs and negative coping strategies. These in turn lead to other protection concerns across generations.

Protection requires a holistic approach that goes beyond the housing, jobs, food and water that IDPs identify as their main priorities. Their civil and political rights, and their right to documentation, education and health also need to be addressed. There is relatively little variation between the services and rights IDPs and returnee-IDPs are excluded from, nor does the length of time or number of times people are displaced make much difference.

3.1 LACK OF ACCESS TO DECENT LAND, HOUSING OR SHELTER

“ This area is safe now, but I live in a house that may fall down during the rains. It may kill me and my children.”

“ Since we came here, we have lived in a bad house. We have to send our children to bring water from outside, because we do not have it. They have been harassed on the way.”

Participants in a female focus group discussion with IDPs in Herat

Despite their poor housing conditions, the women quoted above are in a better situation than many other IDPs. They are at least among the 52 per cent who live in a house. Thirty-five per cent of respondents said they lived in a temporary shelter, and others in tents or camps (see figure 6).

Urban housing offers only limited and temporary protection. IDPs who settle in urban and peri-urban areas are more likely to live in temporary shelters, shacks, tents or camp-like settings. Forty-three per cent live in cramped and temporary conditions, compared with 35 per cent of rural IDPs. Urban IDPs also face vulnerabilities related to restraints on their movement and heightened domestic violence caused by cramped and overcrowded spaces. Their settings curb their freedom to exercise their rights, and women and children are disproportionately affected.²⁷

Their tenure security also tends to be worse. Only five per cent of the urban IDPs surveyed had documentary evidence of ownership or a lease agreement in their current location, compared with 11 per cent before displacement. The trend is reversed, however, for rural IDPs, 17 per cent of whom said they had deeds for their current accommodation, compared with 10 per cent before displacement.

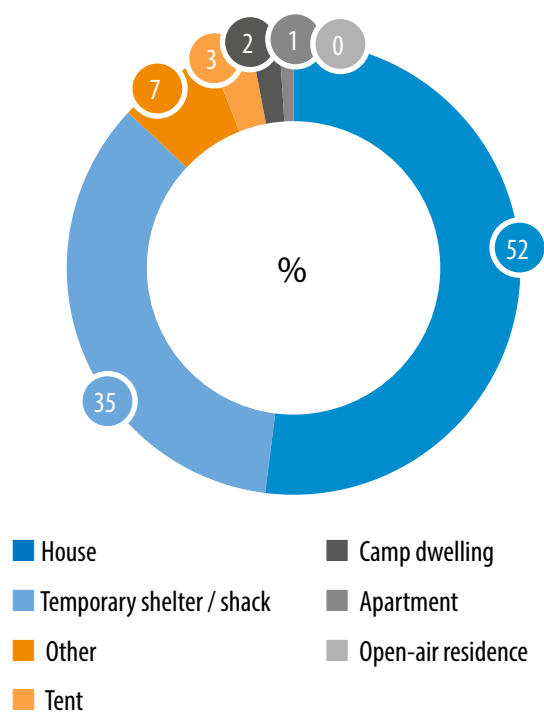
Housing may vary by region, but 63 per cent of the sample as a whole rated their housing conditions as either poor or very poor, and 27 per cent as average. Only 10 per cent rated them as good or very good. The figures for those who consider that they live in poor or very poor conditions are similar for returnee-IDPs and IDPs, at 65 and 60 per cent respectively.

Table 5: Is access to any of these services restricted for you or your household

Province	Housing and land	WASH/Health	Livelihoods	Education	Water	Documentation	Justice	No restrictions
Herat	26 per cent	19 per cent	17 per cent	16 per cent	13 per cent	6 per cent	2 per cent	3 per cent
Kabul	26 per cent	16 per cent	11 per cent	22 per cent	18 per cent	4 per cent	1 per cent	2 per cent
Kandahar	24 per cent	14 per cent	22 per cent	11 per cent	13 per cent	7 per cent	7 per cent	1 per cent
Kunduz	23 per cent	14 per cent	20 per cent	14 per cent	14 per cent	7 per cent	6 per cent	2 per cent
Nangarhar	30 per cent	15 per cent	16 per cent	14 per cent	13 per cent	6 per cent	4 per cent	4 per cent

²⁷ Majidi N, *Resilience in displacement? Building the potential of Afghan displaced women*, Journal of Internal Displacement, volume 4 number 1, 2014, available at: <https://goo.gl/5ysB4g>

Figure 6: What type of housing do you currently live in? (all respondents)



Poor quality shelter may lead to other concerns, including illness and injury. “During the winter, houses fall down because it is very wet,” said one community leader in Chaman-e-Babrak. “Children are dying during the winter and summer. This past winter 21 people died, children and old people. In the summer months, the heat affects people because houses do not have a real roof. Either they are open or they have plastic on top, which makes it very hot.”

Sanitation conditions are also a problem, though 68 per cent of respondents at least use a traditional covered latrine. Nine per cent, however, have no access to toilet facilities, and 13 per cent have an area in their compound to use but no pit. Only nine per cent have access to a flush latrine. Health consequences can be significant, particularly for women, girls, people with disabilities and the elderly. Exposure to gender-based violence is also an issue for those who have to share facilities.

Seventy-four per cent of respondents said their lack of access to decent land, housing or shelter was their main challenge, but only two per cent said they had received relevant assistance in their current location. This means that the vast majority of those in need of this type support are not receiving it.

HOUSING AS A PRIORITY?

Given the extent of housing needs revealed in this study, and that they are likely to heighten IDPs’ vulnerability if left unaddressed, there is an overwhelming need for a more structural response to the issue. There appears to be greater recognition of this urgency at the subnational government level in 2017 than there was in 2012. According to an official at the Nangarhar branch of the Afghan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA): “Access to land and tenure security is not a new issue, but it’s certainly come to the fore with the spike of returns.”

That said, when it comes to people displaced by disasters at least, there is still a sense that they can manage their housing situation on their own. They have “lost their shelter, their home places. Therefore, the first concern is that they are provided NFI and food items. If they have health or other concerns, they are referred to health centres, or organisations that work on health. They are being settled in safe places until the disaster is finished. If there is any loss to shelters or homes, they can settle in other places while their home is being repaired. If they lost their homes – if their homes are really destroyed fully, or they lost their fields – the displacement can take a long time. But if there are just some hazards, they can go earlier to their own places, so their displacement does not take a long time.”²⁸

Rising rents have forced some households to move again in search of affordable housing. “We had to move twice to smaller and more remote houses since our return, because housing prices are getting higher and higher near Jalalabad,” said a female participant in a focus group discussion in Sorkh Rod. The situation is similar for returnee-IDPs in Herat province: “We have rented an old house. If we do not pay the rent, they will throw us out and then we will have to find another one. I ask the government to provide us with a house, I am exhausted of moving from one rented house to another.”

Given negative coping strategies such as going deeper into debt and reliance on child labour in order to get by, it is unlikely that returnees will be able to extricate themselves from a cycle of poverty and displacement.

²⁸ KII, Government official, Nangarhar, 11 September 2017.

3.2 LACK OF ACCESS TO FOOD AND WATER

“ People can hardly provide food for themselves, and they are afraid that they may die of hunger.”

Female Returnee–IDP and participant in Jalalabad focus group discussion

Seventy-one per cent of respondents list lack of access to food and water as one of the three main challenges they face. The issue is most serious in Kabul, Kunduz and Herat, and appears less so in Kandahar and Nangarhar (see figure 7).

There does not appear to be a correlation between the number of people who receive assistance and those who struggle to access food and water. Forty-seven per cent of respondents in Kabul said they had received emergency assistance, but 83 per cent still said access to food and water was a major challenge. The figures for Kandahar were eight and 65 per cent respectively, and for Nangarhar they were 11 and 62 per cent.

This does not mean that households in Kandahar and Nangarhar are in a better position. Further examination of their food consumption reveals evidence of food insecurity. Only around 20 per cent said they never had problems satisfying their food needs (see figure 8).

A comparison of this study and its predecessor in 2012 appears to show that food insecurity has become a more serious problem for IDPs. According to the respondents in this study, the causes are structural, particularly their inability to find work. This may be down to a lack of skills suitable for their new environment, a lack of knowledge and networks or, in the case of women, cultural barriers to their economic integration. The assistance the World Food Programme and other organisations provide helps to meet IDPs’ basic food needs, but the underlying issues are not being addressed. IDPs in the meantime are forced to feed more people with less money. Most only eat twice a day, and some do not even eat every day.

Figure 7: Percentage of respondents who list lack of access to food and water as one of their three main challenges

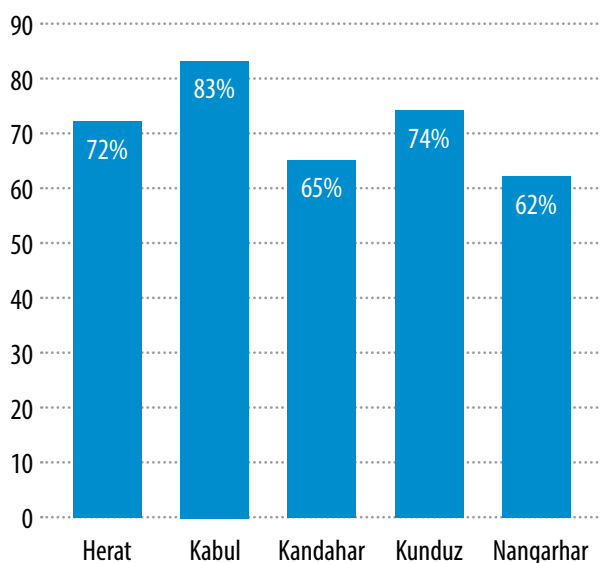
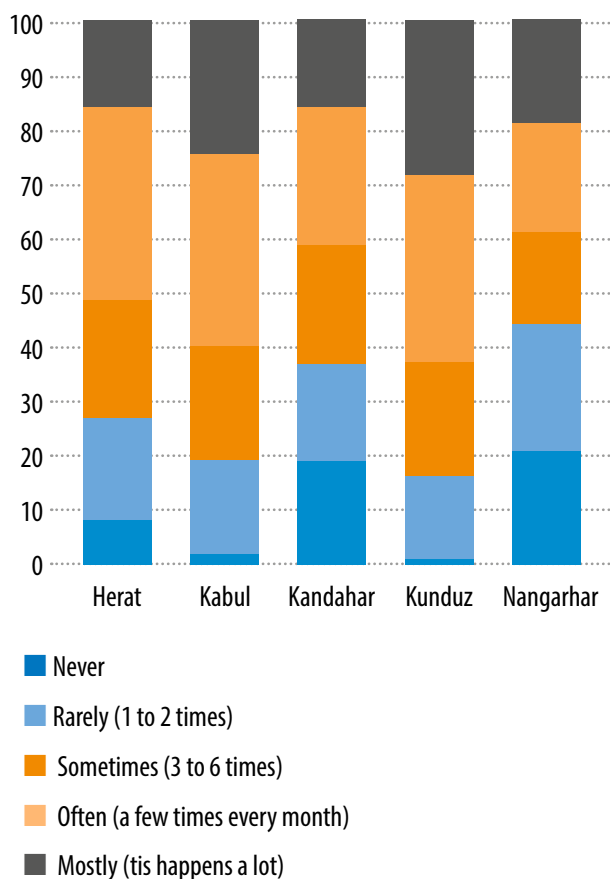


Figure 8: How often in the last year did your household have problems satisfying its food needs



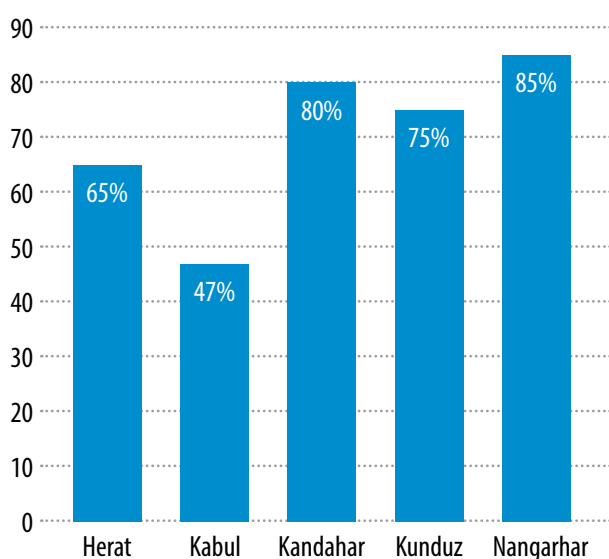
3.3 UNEMPLOYMENT, UNDEREMPLOYMENT AND LACK OF MARKETABLE SKILLS

Inadequate housing and food are a symptom of IDPs' second most serious challenge. Seventy-one per cent of respondents listed unemployment, underemployment or lack of marketable skills as one of their three main problems. This was consistent across gender, type of IDP, number of displacements and provinces.

The vast majority of IDPs said the main source of income for their household both before and after displacement was in the informal economy, at 93 and 91 per cent respectively. Only 1.3 per cent of respondents said they were unemployed.

What does appear clear, however, is that IDPs are more likely than their counterparts in the general population to be underemployed or have poorly paid and unstable work. Across all respondents, 59 per cent were day labourers before their displacement, and 67 per cent after it. According to an International Labour Organisation (ILO) official in Kabul interviewed in 2016: "For IDPs, the construction sector and to a lesser extent agriculture clearly fall into this category. Unskilled day labourers will compete for extremely low-paid precarious jobs."²⁹

Figure 9: Percentage of respondents listing unemployment, underemployment and lack of marketable skills as one of their three main challenges



²⁹ KII with ILO Kabul, September 2016.

Three other observations emerge from the research on this topic:

1. Female-headed households are particularly vulnerable, with 69 per cent reporting seasonal daily labour in the agriculture or construction sectors as their household's main source of income before their displacement, and 72 per cent after displacement, mainly in the construction sector.
2. The notion of someone being self-employed is unclear among respondents, but qualitative discussions revealed that there is often some crossover with being a day labourer with a stronger emphasis on autonomy and specific skills. Jawad, an IDP in Kabul, considered himself to be self-employed. "I am my own boss, I can decide not to work today," he said.
3. Salaried workers see themselves as part of a more formal economy and labour market. The research team interviewed IDPs who had jobs at local NGOs, beauty parlours and factories or as civil servants, with formal contracts and regular salaries. They were very much the exception, however, and it should not be assumed that the 10 per cent of IDPs who considered themselves salaried workers had such stable working conditions.

IDPs' lack of marketable skills restricts them to unstable employment. The rural-to-urban trajectory of many is an important factor in limiting their employment opportunities during displacement, because urban areas do not offer the possibility of pursuing their previous livelihoods. Sixty-one per cent of respondents said they had worked in agriculture before displacement, but only four per cent after it. Nor are their skills transferable. According to an official at the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in Kabul, women who used to earn money from agriculture, particularly during the harvest season, were now "locked in their home, which creates some frustration and reduces the household income".

Forty-six per cent of respondents said their household's access to livelihoods was restricted, rising to 67 per cent in Kunduz and 55 per cent in Kandahar. The situation appears somewhat better in Kabul and Jalalabad, where the figures were only 33 and 32 per cent respectively, but the quality of employment on offer is another matter.

Table 6: Main source of household income, disaggregated by gender of head of household before and after displacement (percentages may not add up to 100% as the “other” category was not included).

Before displacement	Day labourer	Self-employed	Salaried worker	Number of respondents
Male-headed households	59 per cent	29 per cent	10 per cent	2,403
Female-headed households	69 per cent	15 per cent	16 per cent	121
All households	59 per cent	28 per cent	10 per cent	2,526
After displacement	Day labourer	Self-employed	Salaried worker	Number of respondents
Male-headed households	67 per cent	20 per cent	9 per cent	2,403
Female-headed households	72 per cent	11 per cent	10 per cent	121
All households	67 per cent	20 per cent	9 per cent	2,526

Afghanistan’s economic situation has worsened since 2014 and construction has been badly hit, but IDPs still perceive it as their most likely source of work and income.³⁰ Focus group participants did, however, highlight tensions between IDPs and local communities over job opportunities in the sector. One elder in Kandahar said: “We have no problem with IDPs and we know they had to leave their homes to come to our province and valley. We understand and accept that. But now they also compete with our sons and brothers for jobs. And jobs are scarce. Employers in the construction business keep hiring IDPs instead of our sons who are better qualified, because IDPs are ready to work for nothing, almost for free.”

The following sectors and jobs have provided IDPs in urban and peri-urban areas with employment opportunities:

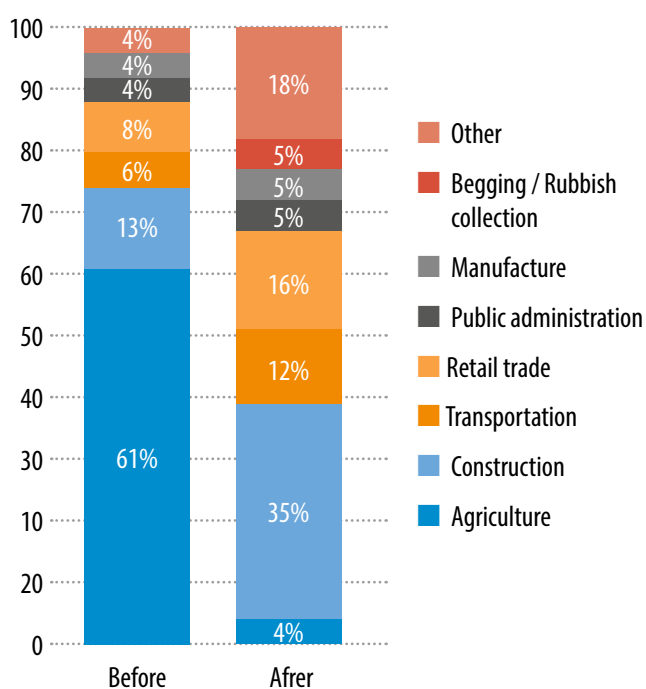
- 1. Traditional:** When there is an upswing in sectors such as construction, commerce, retail and transport, they are good sources of day labour and self-employment. “Other” in the table below includes pulling carts, and collecting glass and metal.
- 2. New:** Education, health, manufacturing, mining and quarrying, communications and beauty parlours provided little or no employment before displacement, but provided 18 per cent of respondents with income after it.
- 3. Harmful:** Five per cent of respondents overall, and eight per cent of female-headed households, said they had resorted to begging and rubbish collection as a source of income after their displacement. Such work leads to health and child labour concerns.

³⁰ World Bank, *Afghanistan Development Update: Stimulating the Economy in a resource-constrained environment*, 2017, available at: <https://goo.gl/5ZtmH6>

Table 7: Difference in employment sectors before and during displacement, by province and sector (in percentage points)

	Herat	Kabul	Kandahar	Kunduz	Nangarhar
Agriculture/livestock	-68	-62	-47	-49	-46
Construction	+36	+22	+21	+6	+22
Transport/communication	+4	+10	+4	+12	+5
Retail	+14	+11	+3	+8	+3
Public administration/ government	0	-1	0	+2	+2
Manufacturing	0	-1	+3	0	+2
Other	+15	+22	+16	+28	+17

Figure 10. Employment sector before and after displacement





📷 Kunduz city, © NRC / Jim Huylebroek

3.4 ENDEMIC VULNERABILITY AND HARMFUL COPING STRATEGIES

IDPs' vulnerable economic situation exposes them to a number of protection risks. These include short-term concerns such as access to food, water, housing and healthcare; and long-term concerns such as access to education, legal remedies and livelihood opportunities, which have the potential to trap households in protracted cycles of poverty and vulnerability.

Insufficient income and debt as a coping strategy:

Exact data on income was not collected because of its variable and unstable nature for many IDPs, but it is clear that they do not earn enough money. Respondents from male and female-headed households said they spent an average of 77 and 78 per cent of their income respectively on food. The figures were the same for IDP-returnees and IDPs. Qualitative research revealed that some households derive at least some of their income from loans.³¹

“ From the time we were displaced, we borrowed money. All our property was left in our village. Right now I am in debt because our men are often jobless. Sometimes they find a job but not always. Now we live on the loans I have taken out.”

“ The major problem in displacement is the debt. I am in debt too. We don't have a job here. One day we work but five other days we don't.”

“ I was not in debt before displacement, but I am now. I pay all my family expenses from the money I have borrowed.”

Female IDPs participating in Kabul focus group discussion

Limited credit available and debt trap: Sixty-six per cent of respondents said they were able to borrow money when they needed it, and 82 per cent that their households held more debt than they spent in a month. The figures suggest solid family and social networks and high levels of mutual trust. On the downside, however, they may point to the risk of a debt trap and loss of autonomy, leading to negative coping strategies including child labour, prostitution and trafficking.

“ People here will not give me a loan if they don't know me and if someone does not provide a guarantee for me, so it is good for everyone.”

Basir, an IDP in Kandahar

³¹ Samuel Hall/ILO, *Buried in Bricks: A Rapid Assessment of bonded labour in brick kilns in Afghanistan*, 2012, available at: <https://goo.gl/nMoiik>

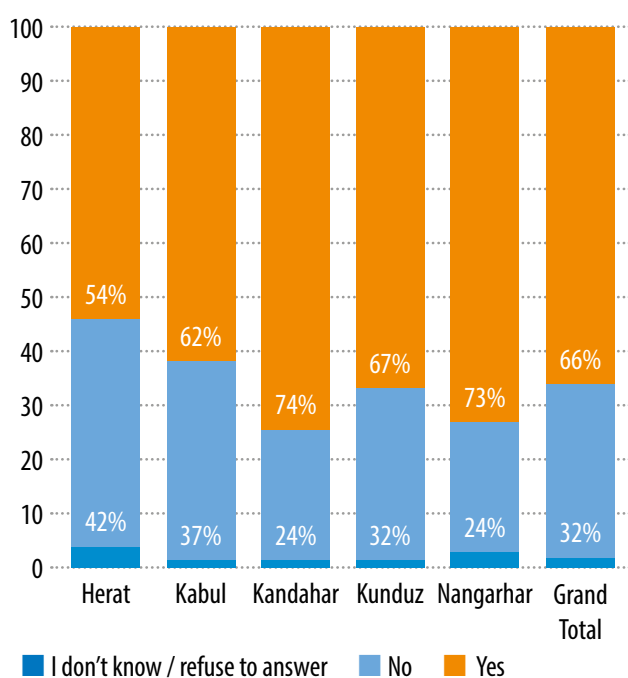
Table 8: Ability to borrow money and risk of debt trap

	Are you able to borrow money if you need to?	Does your household currently hold more debt than it spends in a month?	Number of respondents
Total	66 per cent	82 per cent	2,581

Seventy-four per cent of respondents in Kandahar and 73 per cent in Nangarhar said they were able to borrow money if they needed to, but the figure drops to 54 per cent for Herat (see figure 11). Access to credit, which in turn affects employment and income-generating opportunities, is likely to be the only factor that determines whether a household goes into debt or not, and to what extent.

Women tend to have better access to loans than men. Seventy-four per cent of female respondents said they were able to borrow funds, compared with 57 per cent of men. As across the sample as a whole, more women were able to obtain credit in Nangarhar and Kandahar, but fewer in Herat (see figure 12A).

Figure 11: Ability to borrow money if necessary



Identifying who holds spending power in a household and sets spending priorities can help to target beneficiaries and inform interventions. Given that nutrition is the main priority for displaced households and that the majority rely on loans, cash assistance tends to be spent on food or debt repayments. The fact that household incomes are not enough to meet food needs means that coping strategies may affect their health and wellbeing as

IN THEIR OWN WORDS: IDPS' CYCLE OF VULNERABILITY



I live in house which has lot of problems. I can't sleep at night because of the fear of theft. Our house doesn't have doors, and we lost a big bag of rice. Our economic situation is very poor, we have no job. My children cry everyday and ask me to cook meat or good food, but I do not have money and usually I cry with them. When I was displaced, I got into 15,000 afghanis (\$218) of debt to pay for my husband's treatment and for us to move. I am now widowed and all my children are too young. We do not have any friends or family here. I do not know how to enrol my children in school because they do not have tazkeras. There is war in Shindand so I cannot go back and get tazkeras for them. I had to send them to collect plastic bags and paper, because I cannot buy fuel. We use the plastic bags as heating material. I am the breadwinner and I spin wool. I cannot do anything else because I am ill.

Participant in Herat focus group 2

We had a better life before because we were farming. When we were displaced, we stopped having any income, except for the money we borrow. From the money I have borrowed from my friends, I paid for expenses such as travel and other things. I don't have any specific job, but I work as a day labourer. Sometimes I work two or three days a week ... I cannot find a job and there is no friend to introduce me for one. Our children cannot enroll in school and they don't have any skills that they can work with. Their future is at stake.

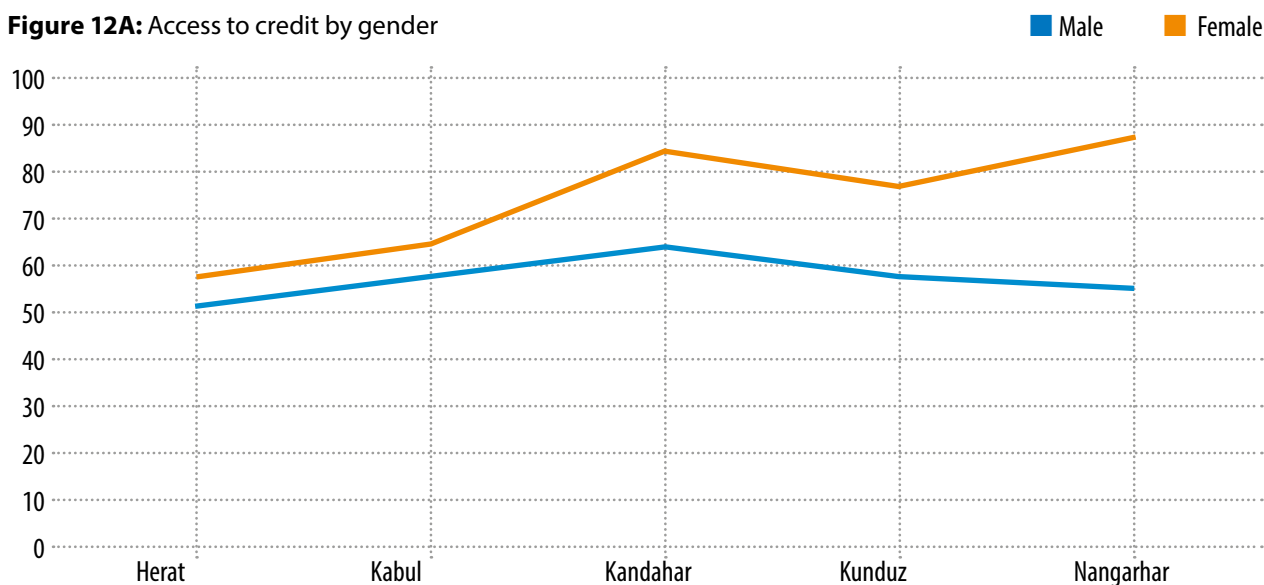
Participant in Kabul focus group 3

My father said we had a very good life before displacement. We worked with other people and our relatives helped us. But with displacement we lost our only house, we suffered and our life got worse. We were forced to go to Pakistan, where we suffered the same problems. I worked in the market pushing a cart and my father used to sell fruit, but now he is unemployed and I sell grapes. Our income is not enough, we are in debt. Our rent high and my brother is ill so our main need is to have shelter and a job, and cash to repay our debt.

Participant in Kunduz focus group 3



Figure 12A: Access to credit by gender



debt levels increase and they become less able to keep up with repayments, trapping them in a cycle of vulnerability.

The finding on women’s ability to access loans speaks to possible practices that go beyond shock-based responses to planning longer-term investments with them. It also points to a need for awareness raising and training in managing household expenses. As noted in Samuel Hall’s 2014 research for the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and People in Need, female IDPs prefer cash assistance because they already receive food aid and prefer to use the money to pay off their debts and get their children to hospital or school.^{32 33}

HARMFUL COPING STRATEGIES: CHILD LABOUR AND CHILD MARRIAGE

Child labour in displaced families is closely linked to their many other protection concerns. It is the result of their lack of shelter, livelihoods and food. Families who contributed to the research for this study, which considers children under 14 working as child labour, had a pragmatic approach to the issue. It should not happen, but they have no other choice. Many said their children were not forced to work, but rather that it was the natural thing for them to do, whether instead of school or because they were not in education anyway.

Child labour is more prevalent now among displaced families than it was in 2012, but it still under-reported and the figures do not reflect the many forms it can take. Certain tasks are considered children’s responsibility and so tend not to be reported. This shows that greater awareness needs to be raised of the impact of labour on a child’s protection and development.

The UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) uses the term “child protection” to refer to preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse against children, including commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking, child labour and harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation and cutting and child marriage.³⁴

Almost one in five of the families surveyed for this study relies on child labour to help meet their basic needs. For households who have debts lower than their monthly expenditure the figure is 14 per cent, and for those whose debts are higher than their monthly expenditure it is 20 per cent.

Child labour is more common among returnee-IDPs. Twenty-four per cent of such households said they relied on child labour, compared with 16 per cent of IDPs’ families. This is likely to be because the combination of cross-border and repeated internal displacement heightens households’ vulnerability.

³² Samuel Hall/DRC/PIN, *Urban poverty report: A study of poverty, food insecurity and resilience in Afghan cities*, 2014, available at: <https://goo.gl/QyPpjE>

³³ Samuel Hall/DRC, *Cash programme review for IDPs in the Kabul Informal Settlements*, 2013, available at: <https://goo.gl/HlzChg>

³⁴ UNICEF information sheet, *What is Child Protection?*, 2006, available at: <https://goo.gl/rJddmR>



📷 Herat province, © NRC / Jim Huylebroek

It is also more common among urban IDPs at 21 per cent, compared with 18 per cent for peri-urban IDPs and 15 per cent for those in rural areas. It is particularly prevalent in Kabul, which is likely to reflect both the greater economic vulnerability of IDPs in the capital and the fact that the city's relatively vibrant economy creates more demand for child labour.

The following contributions to focus group discussions throw light on the circumstances that prompt families to resort to child labour and the kind of work that children do.

“ Our children are not going to school because their families need them to work. Most of these children's fathers are ill and even can't stand on their feet. I am a widow ... I have to send my children to work and provide money for expenses ... we need them to work and provide something for the family. If they don't find another job they will clean people's houses or sweep their streets to earn some money. Not only us but all parents wish their children had a better position in society, but our ambitions have been ruined”

Participant in Nangarhar

A STORY FROM KABUL

“

My family went to Pakistan when Doctor Najib became President, and after his regime we returned back to Afghanistan. We have been in Kabul ever since. We have a house and property in Panjshir, but it was destroyed during the jihad against the Soviets. That's why we are living in Kabul. Our house was destroyed during the conflict and we have not yet rebuilt it.

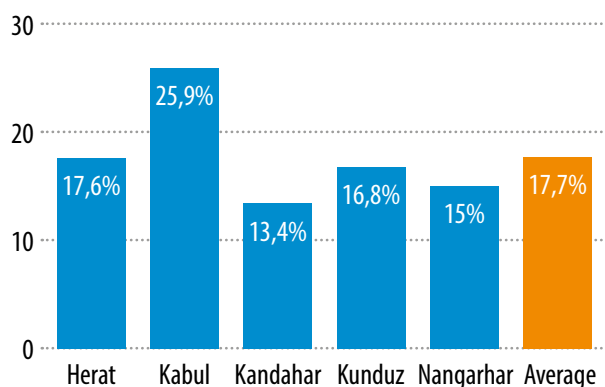
My children are still young. My daughter is in 10th grade at school and the others are at different grades. They are not obliged to work here, but they like to work when they finish school. They work with me and when they go to home they do their homework.

When there was conflict in Afghanistan, most Afghan people migrated to Pakistan, not only my family ... There are many people who have returned from Pakistan and Iran, and they are from different provinces. Some of them returned after the Soviet invasion and some after the Taliban regime. Nowadays there is conflict in many provinces, and many families have left their provinces and come here.

Everyone can live here because they are all Afghan and everyone has the right to live here. It does not belong to one ethnicity. There are no cases of conflict between people over land or anything else. Everyone can build houses here and occupy them.

”

Figure 12B: Reported child labour trends by province of current residence



“ We do not have heating material for the winter, so our children have to collect paper and plastic off the streets. We cannot send them to school, so we send them to collect heating material for winter.”

Participant in Herat

“ Our biggest problem is this that we don't have water to drink. The water we used to use made our children ill. Most of the pumps the national solidarity programme built for us don't have water anyway. We send our children to get water from outside, they have been harassed on the way.”

Participant in Kandahar

“ We were forced to return to Afghanistan. My children and husband were working in Pakistan. At least they were fulfilling life's needs, but my husband died a year ago. My children are very young. They sell corn and collect waste material, but it is not helpful and does not solve our problems. We are always ill and my children spend their whole life working instead of studying. I am a widow. I owe money to some people, but I don't have anything to pay them back with. They want my daughter in lieu of their loans, and they are forcing me.”

Participant in Nangarhar

Like child labour, child marriage is associated with economic vulnerability. The deeper families are in debt, the more they use their children as a coping strategy. Significantly fewer families have married off their children, however, with figures of five per cent among families who have debts lower than their monthly expenditure, and seven per cent for those whose debts are higher. For people fleeing conflict and violence, and particularly for those displaced a number of times, child marriage may also be a means of consolidating networks.

According to a recent UNICEF study, a number of social and cultural factors contribute to the prevalence of child marriage in Afghanistan.³⁵ They include community norms and attitudes, and the influence of tribal, family or community networks. There are also economic factors at play, including the transactional nature of marriage, which involves the exchange of money or goods, coping strategies to withstand economic and other shocks, and traditional justice mechanisms that treat women as a commodity. These include *baad*, in which a woman or girl from a criminal's family is given to a victim's family as a servant or bride, and *baadal*, in which families exchange women or girls as brides.

The legal age of consent in Afghanistan is 16 for girls and 18 for boys. Marriage under these ages is considered to be forced.³⁶

“ During displacement, different areas need different things. The first emergency issues are food, NFI, getting a full package. After this, we need to support families to become self-sufficient so that they are not always asking for a humanitarian package.”

Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) official³⁷

³⁵ Samuel Hall/ UNICEF/MOLSAMD, *Child Marriage in Afghanistan: Changing the Narrative*, 2017.

³⁶ OHCHR, *Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage, and Registration of Marriages*, 7 November 1962, available at: <https://goo.gl/Nj1oPs>

³⁷ KII, Government official, Kabul, 5 September 2017.

3.4 HEALTH

Twenty-four per cent of respondents across the sample as a whole said they lacked access to health services, and health problems were widely reported. A third of households said at least one member had a chronic illness, and 34 per cent a mental or physical disability. This represents a major protection need, but it is one of the least addressed.

Figure 13: Specific vulnerabilities reported

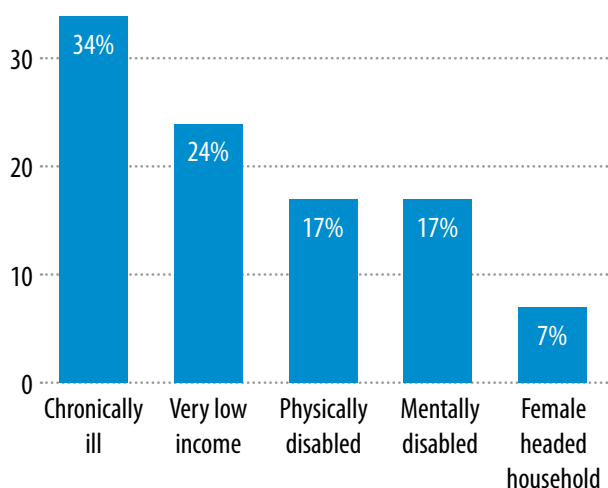


Table 9: Was a member of your household ill or injured in the last three months?

Number of times displaced	Yes
Once	63 per cent
Twice	62 per cent
Three times	67 per cent
More than three times	75 per cent
Average	63 per cent

Table 10: What was the main type of health provider that the household member used in the last three months?

	None	Clinic/mobile clinic	Hospital	Private doctor	Traditional birth attendant	Traditional healer	Other
Female	5 per cent	26 per cent	44 per cent	21 per cent	1 per cent	2 per cent	1 per cent
Male	2 per cent	16 per cent	44 per cent	36 per cent	0 per cent	1 per cent	1 per cent
Average	4 per cent	22 per cent	44 per cent	28 per cent	0 per cent	2 per cent	1 per cent

The percentage of respondents who reported illness or injury in their households in the last three months increases according to their number of displacements, from 63 per cent for those who been displaced once to 75 per cent for those who have been displaced more than three times. Forty-four per cent of those who sought medical attention did so at a hospital, 28 per cent with a private doctor and 22 per cent at a clinic or mobile clinic.

Mobile clinics are most widely used in Kandahar, Kunduz and Nangarhar, and they have a special role in the provision of health services to women across Afghanistan. Significantly more women than men attend them, possibly because their access to other types of provider is restricted. According a UN Population Fund official, women and girls face “limited access to services [and] emotional violence. [They are] not allowed to go out ... not allowed to access schools or basic health services.”³⁸

Respondents in some areas covered by this study said the health facilities they required were not available. In Nangarhar’s Daman neighbourhood, one focus group participant said: “We have no hospital. Many patients are dying of heart attacks. We cannot reach hospitals on time. We die on the way to the hospital.”³⁹ Returnees, returnee-IDPs and IDPs all face the same constraints, and land allocation sites for returnees tend not to have health facilities.⁴⁰

Amighi, a returnee living in Alice-Ghan north of Kabul, lost his wife on the way to hospital in 2013. “It should never have happened, even in Afghanistan,” he said. Previous studies have also highlighted the need to improve access to health services and the targeting of vulnerable households as part of integration and reintegration efforts.⁴¹

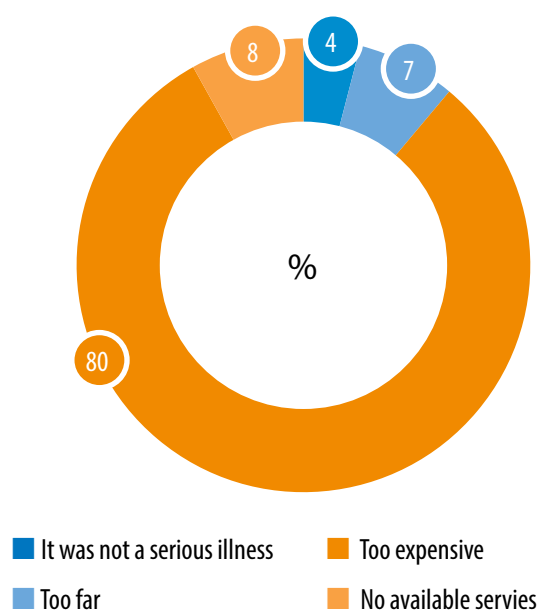
³⁸ KII, UN official, Kabul, 30 June 2017.

³⁹ FGD respondent, Nangarhar province, 14 September 2017.

⁴⁰ Majidi N, *Home Sweet Home! Repatriation, reintegration and land allocation in Afghanistan*, 2013, available at: <https://goo.gl/RdUvku>

⁴¹ MGSOG/Samuel Hall, *Evaluation of the UNHCR Shelter Assistance Programme*, 2013, available at: <https://goo.gl/7gRxPT>

Figure 14: Reasons for not accessing healthcare



Many households report chronic illnesses, but not all seek treatment. In the words of one mother: “My children have been ill for many years. They are always taking medicines, but it is not effective. I am not healthy either. I have high blood pressure and cholesterol, but I cannot have treatment. Dying would be better than this life, but I can’t see my children die. If only the government or other organisation would help us.”⁴²

Other health issues raised relate to families’ poor housing and economic conditions. One focus group participant in Herat said: “When there is a storm, the house fills with dust. There are eight of us living in the house, and we do not have enough income. We do not have enough water and food. Our children cannot go to school and stay in this unhealthy house. It is not safe for them. We are close to the bazaar and we have electricity, but our sons cannot work, they do not go to school. They just stay at home and get ill. We’re happy there are no shootings here, but our home has made us ill.”⁴³

Households tend not to identify healthcare as one of their three main concerns, but the above example clearly links the issue to their most pressing need, for adequate shelter and housing. Improving the latter would clearly have knock-on effects on the former.

Respondents also identified psychological wellbeing as a concern. Cramped living conditions and the stress of adapting to new circumstances have led to an increase in domestic tensions and violence. Economic pressures also come to bear, and men may react badly when they find they are unable to fulfil their traditional role as their household’s breadwinner. In addition to taking out their frustrations on their partners and children, they may also fall into substance abuse. Women in the meantime may find themselves overwhelmed by having to keep the household afloat economically on top of their domestic work.

In the words of one IDP who took part in a focus group discussion in Nangarhar: “I am sad and worried about my future. I have psychological problems. We are displaced, and I am worried for my future. My family tells me to work, and I usually argue with them because there are no jobs to do ... While I am walking or sitting somewhere I talk to myself and repeat my life story with myself, and when I realise what I’m doing I look around to see if anyone saw me talking to myself.”⁴⁴

Frustrations with the registration system, inability to access aid and hostility from local communities can all add to the pressure people face. According to one interviewee in Herat province: “They told us to go to the province we belong to, or to Herat city or Maslakh camp. They said we were free to go wherever we liked, but they did not assign us a place. So we came to Maslakh because we had nowhere else to go to.

“*When we got here, the residents didn’t allow us to put our belongings anywhere. They told the government that we were strangers from Pakistan and that they didn’t know us. They even said that we were ISIL, Taliban. The next day the counter-terrorism police came and asked us for our ID cards. Then they finally let us set up our tents ... We are now three or four families together in one house. We have not received anything from organisations or from the aid that reached the camp. We were told it was not for us.*”⁴⁵

⁴² FGD respondent, Nangarhar province, 14 September 2017.

⁴³ FGD respondent, Herat province, 24 September 2017.

⁴⁴ FGD respondent, Nangarhar province, 11 September 2017.

⁴⁵ FGD respondent, Herat province, 26 September 2017.

3.5 DOCUMENTATION

Across the sample as a whole, 70 per cent of family members do not hold any identity documents, making it difficult if not impossible for them to access assistance and services provided by the government and national and international NGOs. Twenty-six per cent of respondents said their lack of documentation impeded their access to education, 12 per cent to employment and 12 per cent to healthcare. Thirteen per cent said it restricted their movement, and 12 per cent that it meant they were harassed by authorities.

Returnee-IDPs tend to have fewer documents per household than IDPs. The exception was Nangarhar, which has received the majority of returnees from Pakistan and so greater attention from organisations attending to their needs. This may also help to explain why more household members overall hold ID documents than in other provinces, though family sizes are also much bigger.

There are two main categories of documents in Afghanistan:

1. Personal identification documents: *tazkeras* and passports
2. Civil registration documents: birth, marriage and death certificates and property deeds

The possession of birth certificates is becoming more common thanks to concerted programming that includes training midwives in filling them out and the importance of doing so.

Households' lack of identity documents have significant impact on their access to education. The situation appears most acute in Herat and Kabul, where 33 per cent of respondents said not having a *tazkera* impeded their family members' schooling, and least acute in Kunduz, where the figure was 16 per cent.

IDPs from Helmand said the province's lack of official records were an obstacle to their children attending school in their places of displacement. Maryam, who arrived in the Dashte Barchi area of Kabul in 2016, said: "Our children are not enrolled in school because they ask for previous school records, which unfortunately we don't have because those schools are now under Taliban control ... They are very worried about not being able to attend school."⁴⁶

⁴⁶ FGD respondent, Kabul, 11 September 2017.

WHAT IS A TAZKERA, AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

The *tazkera* is the most important identification document in Afghanistan, and the gateway to accessing education, employment, healthcare and loans. It is also required for the issuance of housing, land and property (HLP) certificates and title deeds. Most Afghans hold one, but they are significantly less common among women and displaced people.

There is less need for a *tazkera* in rural areas, where people know each other and are known to community elders, but for people displaced to urban and peri-urban areas, their lack of one restricts their access to basic services and credit. Many of those who do not hold a *tazkera* do not realise how important it is to have one. An NRC/Samuel Hall study on civil documentation revealed that three-quarters of respondents realised that their lack of *tazkera* would reduce their children's access to education.

To obtain a *tazkera*, IDPs have to travel back to their district of origin to apply, but transport costs and insecurity make it impossible for many to do so. Temporary changes to the system are currently being introduced, including the Ministry of Education facilitating enrolment in school without a *tazkera*, and IOM is working on a digitisation project.

The government recognises the importance of IDPs' documentation issues, and will provide a letter that can be used in place of a *tazkera* in some circumstances, but not all provinces provide such letters and IDPs still have travel back to their places of origin to be issued with one.

The lack of documentation ultimately impedes IDPs from fulfilling all their other needs. It can result in families being caught in a spiral of vulnerability and become a barrier to durable solutions across generations.

Table 11: How many people in your household currently have an identity document?

Location/type		Identity documents	Average family size
Herat	IDP	2.3	6.6
	Returnee-IDP	1.9	6.8
	Average	2.1	6.7
Kabul	IDP	2.3	7.5
	Returnee-IDP	2.0	7.3
	Average	2.2	7.4
Kandahar	IDP	2.9	9.7
	Returnee-IDP	2.8	9.1
	Average	2.9	9.3
Kunduz	IDP	3.0	8.2
	Returnee-IDP	2.7	8.5
	Average	2.9	8.3
Nangarhar	IDP	3.3	9.4
	Returnee-IDP	4.2	8.8
	Average	3.7	9.2
Overall average		2.7	8.2

Table 12: Percentage of household members missing an ID document by province and displacement type

Location/type		Percentage of household members missing an ID document
Herat	IDP	64
	Returnee-IDP	72
	Average	68
Kabul	IDP	69
	Returnee-IDP	72
	Average	70
Kandahar	IDP	70
	Returnee-IDP	69
	Average	69
Kunduz	IDP	64
	Returnee-IDP	68
	Average	65
Nangarhar	IDP	65
	Returnee-IDP	52
	Average	70

Table 13: Which areas of family members' lives are affected by not having tazkera?

Province/ displacement type	None	Voting	HLP	Jobs	Health	Education	Harassment from local authorities	Mobility	Access to Justice
Herat									
IDP	5 per cent	5 per cent	9 per cent	13 per cent	11 per cent	32 per cent	11 per cent	8 per cent	5 per cent
Returnee-IDP	6 per cent	3 per cent	6 per cent	12 per cent	15 per cent	34 per cent	10 per cent	7 per cent	7 per cent
Average	5 per cent	4 per cent	8 per cent	13 per cent	13 per cent	33 per cent	11 per cent	8 per cent	6 per cent
Kabul									
IDP	5 per cent	6 per cent	7 per cent	14 per cent	12 per cent	33 per cent	11 per cent	7 per cent	6 per cent
Returnee-IDP	6 per cent	6 per cent	7 per cent	11 per cent	13 per cent	33 per cent	13 per cent	4 per cent	6 per cent
Average	6 per cent	6 per cent	7 per cent	13 per cent	13 per cent	33 per cent	12 per cent	6 per cent	6 per cent
Kandahar									
IDP	1 per cent	5 per cent	3 per cent	7 per cent	12 per cent	24 per cent	18 per cent	17 per cent	13 per cent
Returnee-IDP	2 per cent	4 per cent	3 per cent	9 per cent	14 per cent	22 per cent	18 per cent	16 per cent	12 per cent
Average	2 per cent	5 per cent	3 per cent	8 per cent	13 per cent	23 per cent	18 per cent	16 per cent	13 per cent
Kunduz									
IDP	8 per cent	9 per cent	7 per cent	16 per cent	10 per cent	16 per cent	8 per cent	16 per cent	9 per cent
Returnee-IDP	8 per cent	9 per cent	8 per cent	16 per cent	10 per cent	16 per cent	9 per cent	15 per cent	10 per cent
Average	8 per cent	9 per cent	7 per cent	16 per cent	10 per cent	16 per cent	9 per cent	16 per cent	9 per cent
Nangarhar									
IDP	1 per cent	8 per cent	2 per cent	9 per cent	14 per cent	28 per cent	12 per cent	16 per cent	10 per cent
Returnee-IDP	1 per cent	7 per cent	1 per cent	11 per cent	14 per cent	33 per cent	7 per cent	17 per cent	9 per cent
Average	1 per cent	8 per cent	2 per cent	10 per cent	14 per cent	30 per cent	10 per cent	16 per cent	10 per cent



📍 Sar-e-Pul province, © NRC / Enayatullah Azad

3.6 EDUCATION

Across the survey sample as a whole, 26 per cent of respondents said their lack of documentation impeded their access to education, 12 per cent to employment and 12 per cent to healthcare. Thirteen per cent said it restricted their movement, and 12 per cent that it meant they were harassed by authorities. More respondents felt their access to education impeded in Herat, Kabul and Nangarhar, and fewest in Kunduz.

The qualitative fieldwork threw up some stark contrasts. Mothers in the Nawabad area of Herat all said their children were unable to go to school without a *tazkera*, and that even if they had one they would be unable to afford the school fees. In Kandahar, however, people recently displaced and living with their relatives said they were able to send their children to school: “Our children go to school in the morning and return in the afternoon. I work at a teacher training college, so I’m well aware of the value of education. It is like a treasure which is precious everywhere. Some people do not know the value of education and send their children to earn 100 to 150 afghanis (\$1.45 to \$2.20) a day. Their only aim is to earn money. No one has given them information about the dangers of mines. We have to remind them not to walk in certain places, but we have not received dedicated training on the issue.”⁴⁷

⁴⁷ FGD respondent, Kandahar, 25 September 2017.

A community leader in Chaman-e-Babrak in Kabul suggested going to school would make children’s lives safer: “Many children have been hit by cars. Families worry so much about their children, it results in psychological problems for them. There is also concern about violence toward children. Some have been beaten up by strangers. There is nothing to protect them, no coping strategy. The only solution would be for our children to go to school, because schools can protect them. But we would need money and food [as a substitute for the income that children generate].”

Parents in Jalalabad, however, were worried about their children’s journey to school. They were concerned about harassment and ever busier streets and traffic, and were hesitant to allow their children to go to school as a result.

Others were concerned about the quality of education available. They cited a lack of good teachers with a strong sense of responsibility toward their children, language barriers and a shortage of equipment and materials. A returnee-IDP in Maslakh settlement in Herat said: “One book for eight children and in a different language, how are they supposed to learn?” Another parent in Chaman-e-Babrak said: “I want to send my children to school, but the teachers don’t like them ... I hope that they can go to school. Our lives are behind us, but I want better for my children.”

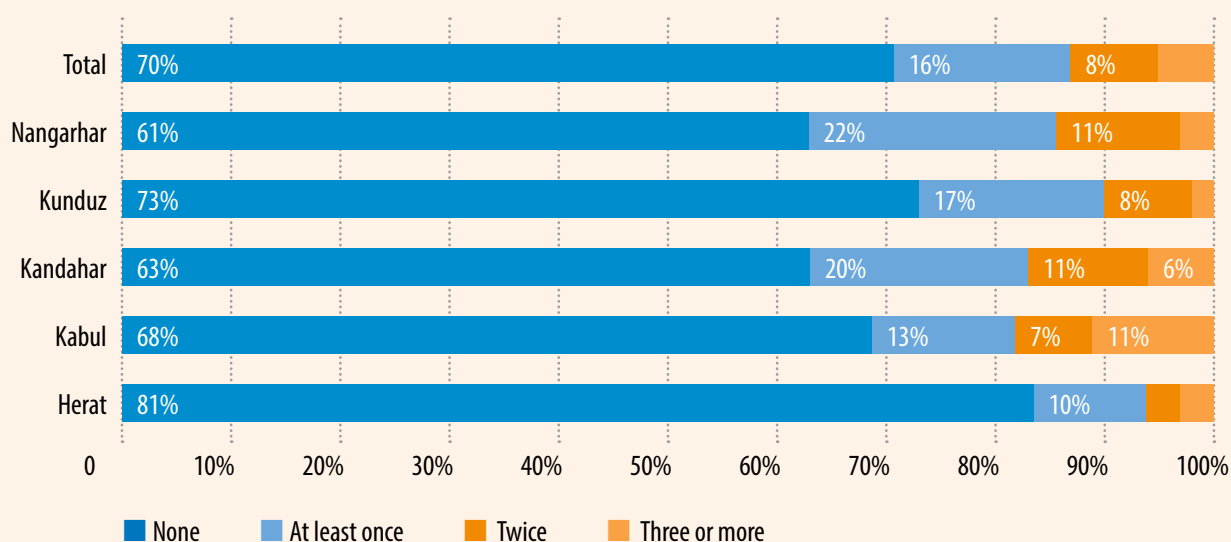
MINE RISK EDUCATION FOR DISPLACED CHILDREN

Across the survey sample as a whole, 30 per cent of respondents said a member of their household had received mine risk education (MRE). The figures for Nangarhar and Kandahar were higher, at 39 and 37 per cent respectively, as a result of the emphasis placed by the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS), the Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan (MACCA) and their implementing partners on their work in the two provinces (see figure 15). Children are prioritised for MRE because civilian casualty numbers show that almost half of those injured by mines are children, most of them boys.

MACCA strengthened its focus on IDPs in 2014 on the basis of their ever-increasing number and the fact that their relative lack of knowledge of the areas they live in made them more vulnerable to mines. It had initially focused on returnees, when hundreds of thousands of Afghans were coming back from Iran and Pakistan to areas that had been heavily contaminated in their absence.

Despite these efforts, however, and strong community and parental acceptance of them, our 2012 study revealed that economic desperation can drive intentional risk taking. Children in rural and peri-urban areas in particular were found to be exposing themselves to potentially fatal danger to graze livestock or collect firewood and scrap metal in the areas around of their villages.

Figure 15: Has a member of your household received mine risk education?



4

DURABLE SOLUTIONS

“ A durable solution is achieved when internally displaced persons no longer have any specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without discrimination on account of their displacement”.

Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement

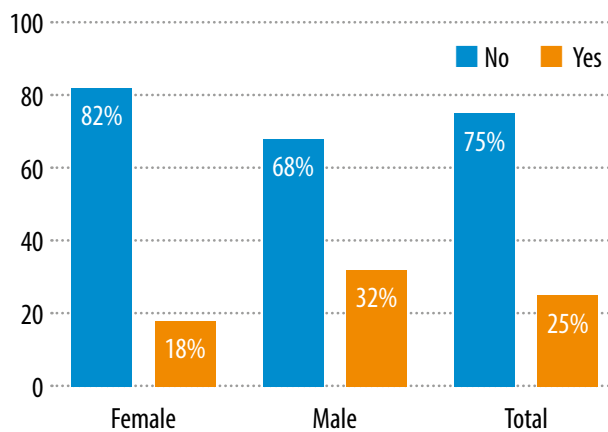
IDPs in Afghanistan struggle to exercise their rights. For some rights the challenge is greatest during the early stages of displacement, but for others it increases with the passage of time. The full set of IDPs' rights and the government's legal obligation to protect them are set out in the 2013 national policy on internal displacement. This section looks at the links between rights, protection and durable solutions.

Given the scale of recent displacement in the country, both in terms of IDPs and returnees, and the government's lack of capacity to address their needs, durable solutions for most are highly elusive. There are also many obstacles to their achievement. Ongoing conflict renders many areas unsafe to return to, and a lack of information about other areas of the country that might be safer discourages IDPs from moving there.

Most often, however, IDPs say they simply are unable to afford to move again, while barriers to local integration pose significant challenges for those who try to settle sustainably in their places of displacement. Even defining what a durable solution might look like is tricky for some groups, such as those born in displacement or to a refugee family abroad.

The current focus on humanitarian and increasingly life-saving aid is not enough in and of itself to lay the ground for IDPs to achieve durable solutions. To do so also requires the involvement of the development sector to establish conducive conditions over time. As things stand, however, people tend to receive less assistance and support the longer they are displaced. Men also appear more likely than women to receive aid (see figure 16).

Figure 16: Aid received by gender



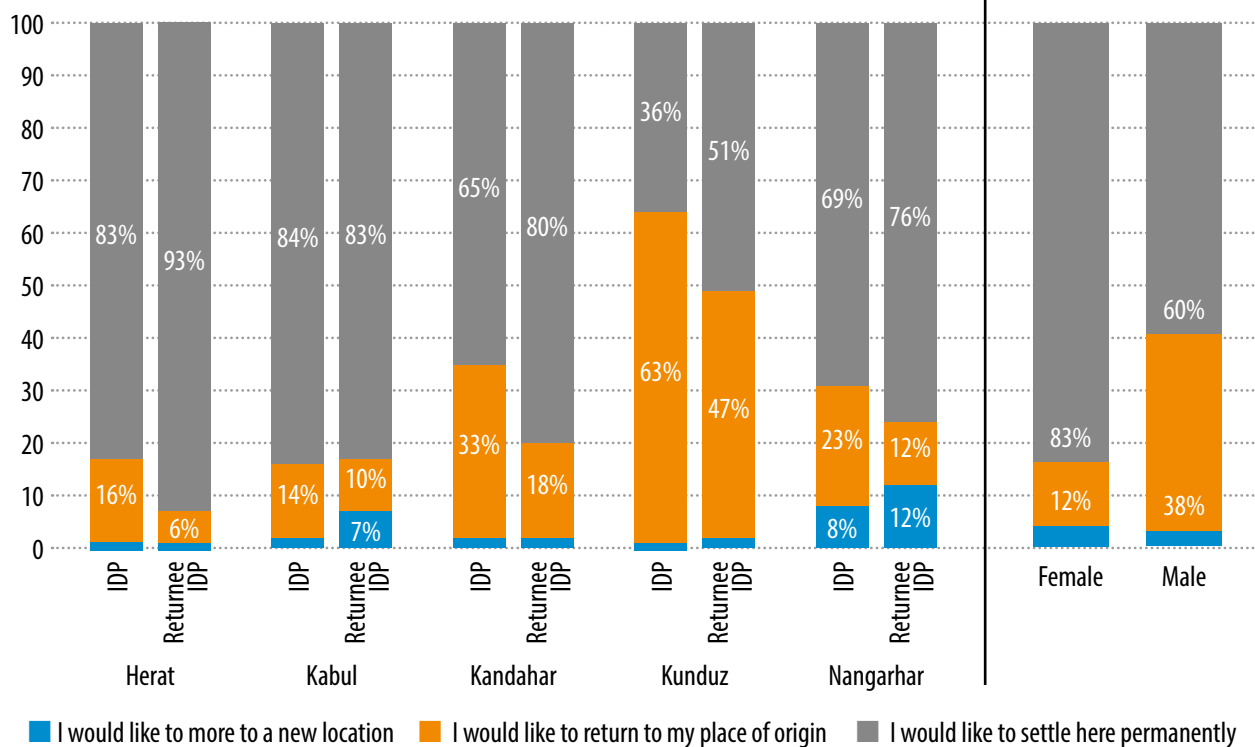
4.1 WHAT KIND OF DURABLE SOLUTIONS DO IDPS WANT?

Most IDPs want to settle in their current location with the exception of those in Kunduz, many of whom would prefer to return to their places of origin. This is closely linked to the volatile security situation and increasing displacement in the province.

Women are more likely to want to integrate locally, because they are concerned about the impact of further upheaval on their families. A focus group discussion in the Dashte Barchi district of Kabul reveals the concerns of women from Helmand who were displaced first to the provincial capital of Lashkargah before moving on to Kabul.

Habiba, 38, was displaced from Helmand in 2016 and arrived in Kabul. She said: “If life goes better here I want to stay forever, because we cannot afford the cost of another shift. We don't have plans to go

Figure 17/18: What is your plan for the future?



anywhere else because we are in debt ... Nor can we return to our own place because all the property we had is in ruins. We don't know any other IDPs who have gone back to their place of origin ... there is no security." Reza Gul, 50, said she was in a very similar position: "I want to stay here forever, because our home and our life in our place of origin has been ruined by the Taliban. We brought some of our belongings. But we are in debt so we cannot afford to move to another place, not even our place of origin".

This makes the economics of forced migration clear. The destitute do not move on from their places of displacement because they are unable to afford to. This factor, combined with insecurity in their places of origin and the fact that some – particular those who have been displaced for a long time – may have established roots and networks in their places of displacement, means that local integration is only realistic option for most IDPs in Afghanistan to achieve a durable solution.

Of the very few who would prefer to settle elsewhere, the majority want to stay in Afghanistan. Many of those surveyed in this group also said they would prefer to move to an urban area in their province of origin so to at least be closer to home.

People's lack of land, property or assets in their places of origin is the most significant obstacle to return as a durable solution. Across the sample as a whole, less

than a third of respondents said they still owned land or other assets there, and even for them tenure security is still likely to be an issue. Given that title deeds and other HLP documents are relatively rare in Afghanistan, it is likely they would find it difficult if not impossible to reassert their ownership.

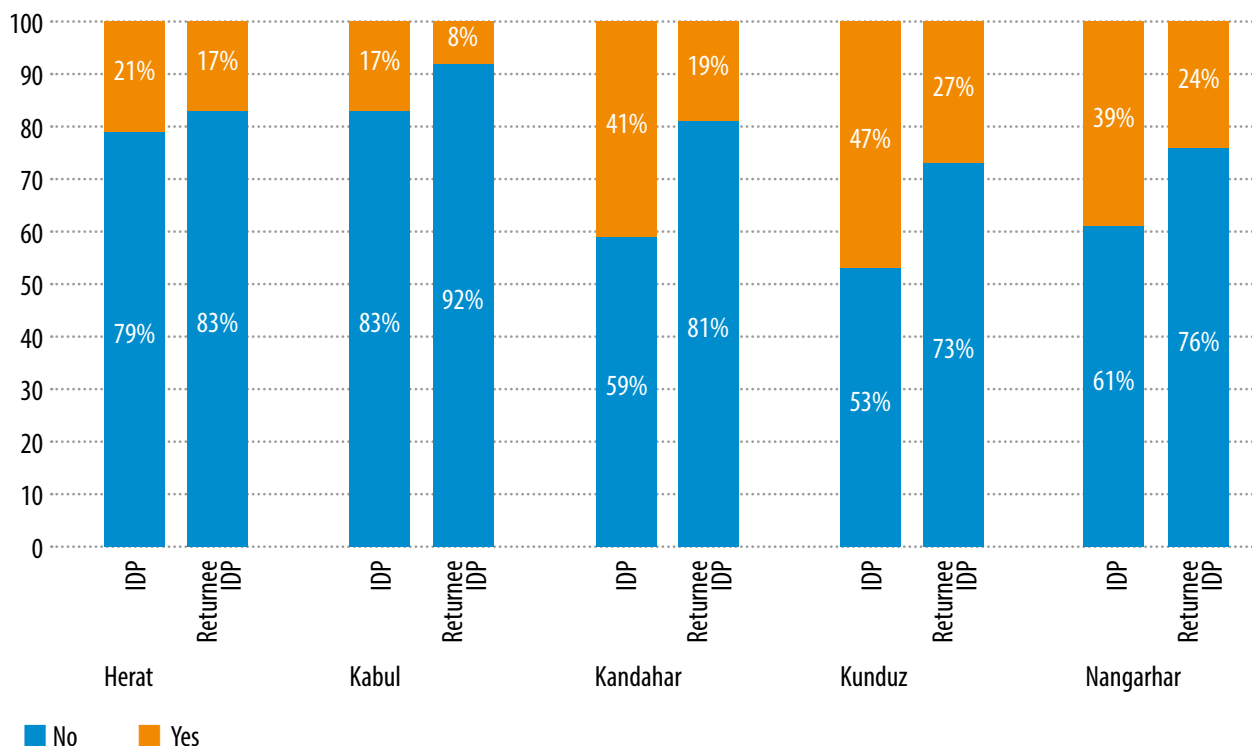
Table 14: Do you still own land, property or assets in your place of origin?

No	73 per cent
Yes	27 per cent

Returnee-IDPs are less likely than IDPs to still own housing, land or property in their places or origin, and across both groups those currently living in Kabul are the least likely to have assets to return to. The number of times people have been displaced and the length of displacement are also significant. Thirty-one per cent of those displaced once said they had assets to go back to, compared with 20 per cent of those displaced twice. Among people displaced for a year or less the figure was 36 per cent, compared with 21 per cent for those displaced for two years or more.

Among those who do still have assets in their places of origin, 45 per cent have returned to check on them.

Figure 19: Do you still own land, housing or property in your province of origin?



4.2 SUPPORTING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF DURABLE SOLUTIONS

“ Even if the government wants to implement a project, it might not happen. For example, the second Kabul to Jalalabad road hasn’t happened for four or five years. You always need a secure environment for development projects.”

UN official in Kabul⁴⁸

Insecurity is the main obstacle to achieving durable solutions. Others include a lack of coordination and collaboration between the humanitarian and development sectors and other stakeholders, the at times parallel efforts of the government, donors’ one-year funding cycles, bureaucracy and corruption.

According to an UN official in Kabul: “We need to be upfront with development partners. While we can’t do durable solutions, we could do a better job supporting pathways to such solutions. There is pressure on us to support durable solutions, but we can’t compromise the response in the process. It’s not that we’re not supportive of durable solutions ... but the development sector is massive. Yet there is more pressure on humanitarians.

⁴⁸ KII, UN official, Kabul, 13 July 2017.

Table 15: Which of the following rank among the three most important factors that would guide your decision to stay, move to your province of origin or move to a new location in the next three to five years

Security	23 per cent
Opportunities for jobs	22 per cent
Access to housing and/or land	17 per cent
Access to education	13 per cent
Access to food and/or water	9 per cent
Access to healthcare	8 per cent
Access to justice	3 per cent
Access to documentation	3 per cent
Being close to family/friends/social networks	1 per cent
Access to legal migration options	0 per cent
Access to other services	0 per cent

“ We can be more engaged on land allocation. We could support government in reforming the petition system, and they are open to such efforts. We could provide transitional support in interim arrangements for education. Reintegration is a development challenge, not humanitarian. We could do more on livelihoods, but there is no funding for it. What would be considered an emergency in most places is considered normal here.”⁴⁹

⁴⁹ KII, UN official, Kabul, 16 July 2017.

Even if durable solutions are out of reach, steps can be taken in their direction with initiatives that reduce the vulnerability of IDPs and returnee-IDPs and promote their self-reliance:

- NRC’s information, counselling and legal assistance (ICLA) programmes aim “to empower people to survive displacement and build new lives”. They provide support on HLP rights, establishing a legal identity and registering as an IDP or refugee.
- The UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) Local Integration of Vulnerable and Excluded Uprooted People (LIVE-UP) project works to improve the living conditions of IDPs and host communities with the aim of encouraging local integration, and is currently running a pilot in Herat.
- DRC and Welthungerhilfe (WHH) run livelihood activities for women in Kabul’s informal settlements that work toward if not durable then transitional solutions. WHH runs income-generating activities applicable to urban settings and vocational courses after which it may provide loans to start small businesses.

When asked for the three most important factors in determining which type of durable solution they might try to pursue, all respondents except those in Kabul identified safety, jobs and housing. Those in Kabul ranked education third ahead of housing.

Some respondents are not in a position to make properly informed decisions about their options for

durable solutions. When asked which topics they lack information on, their responses reflected the factors they ranked as most important in guiding their decisions.

Table 16: Which of the following do you lack information on?

Job opportunities	19 per cent
Security	17 per cent
Access to housing and/or land	15 per cent
Access to education	14 per cent
Access to healthcare	10 per cent
Access to food and/or water	8 per cent
Access to justice	7 per cent
Access to documentation	6 per cent
Other	2 per cent
Legal migration options	1 per cent
Family/friends/social networks	1 per cent
Access to other services	0 per cent

Respondents were asked how they would qualify their local or host communities’ behaviour and attitudes toward them. Those in Herat felt they had been received most positively, followed by those in Kabul, Kandahar, Nangarhar and Kunduz. Those more recently displaced tended to report more positive attitudes, as did those who had been displaced a number of times. The exceptions were Kandahar and Nangarhar, where those in their first year of displacement felt local communities had not been so welcoming.

BARRIERS TO DURABLE SOLUTIONS

Structural changes: The elections in 2014 and the time taken to establish a new administration and cabinet means the government’s attention to durable solutions for IDPs was distracted for a year either side of voting day. The arrival of new officials unfamiliar with the national policy on IDPs created gaps in some processes and the need to start again from scratch with others.

Insecurity: Conflict and violence accounts for almost all displacement in Afghanistan. IHL is widely disrespected, and civilians are caught up if not targeted in attacks and fighting in residential areas. As conflict drives ever increasing displacement, it becomes more difficult to focus on durable solutions. In Nangarhar, for example, DoRR started to implement a provincial action plan for the national policy on IDPs but was quickly overwhelmed by the need for an emergency response to new displacement.

Inappropriate land allocation: Maslakh settlement in Herat was cited as an inappropriate allocation of land to resettle IDPs in some of the key informant interviews. It was built in a rural area with little or no access to basic services or livelihood opportunities. Residents have to take public transport that few can afford to get to Herat city. Given how unsuitable the site is, few IDPs are willing to leave urban and peri-urban settlements such as Now Abad and Karizak to settle there. Most key informants said the government should be more open to sustainable urban development in cities that host IDPs to facilitate local integration.

Lack of coordination: OCHA oversees the humanitarian response throughout the country in coordination with its international partners, MoRR and other line ministries. OCHA follows a cluster-based approach with six in operation in different regions, but MoRR does not have focal points assigned to each one. In their absence the clusters coordinate directly with the relevant ministries, often leaving MoRR out of the loop.

5

COLLECTIVE ACTIONS TO BENEFIT ALL IDPS

5.1 THE NATIONAL POLICY ON IDPS: A 'FAILED PROMISE'?

“ International organisations developed the IDP policy and gave it to MoRR, but they did not support MoRR to implement it.”

NGO worker in Kabul⁵⁰

Afghanistan's national policy on IDPs “is a national instrument safeguarding the rights of the displaced as citizens”.⁵¹ Endorsed in 2013, it articulates IDPs' rights and stakeholders' responsibilities in protecting them in accordance with the Guiding Principles. The next steps toward implementation were to have been the development of a common understanding on IDPs, raising the necessary funding and building stakeholder capacity.⁵²

The policy was widely praised when it was introduced, but putting its provisions into practice has proved another matter, particularly at the provincial and local level. In 2016, Amnesty International described the policy as a “failed promise” and called for its implementation to be made a national priority.⁵³

The policy is still on stakeholders' minds and many still refer to it, but discussions inevitably lead to factors that are seen to limit national ownership. These include an overriding perception that it was written by international organisations and without commitment on the part of the government; the country's political transition and the arrival of new staff in key government departments who lack awareness and knowledge of the policy; the lack of financial and technical capacity for implementation and constraints caused by conflict and insecurity.

⁵⁰ KII, International NGO, Kabul, 4 September 2017.

⁵¹ Samuel Hall policy brief, *National Policy on IDPs in Afghanistan*, 2015, available at: <https://goo.gl/s3Xfnq>

⁵² *Ibid*, p.18.

⁵³ Amnesty International, *My children will die this winter: Afghanistan's broken promise to the displaced*, 2016, available at: <https://goo.gl/fSHFBC>

“ We started implementation of the provincial action plan for the policy in Nangarhar, and our discussion was about solutions. But then there were emergency issues, so we went to emergency response, not durable solutions.”

MoRR official in Kabul⁵⁴

The policy recognises “the lead role of the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) in responding to the protection and assistance needs of IDPs, and the importance of strengthening MoRR, including through developing its human resource capacity and its information management system, and increasing its financial resources, so that it can effectively execute this mandate”. In practice, however, MoRR is under-resourced and much of its operational capacity is devolved to the provincial DoRR offices.

The policy initially led to better coordination. An implementation working group was established, and all issues relating to IDPs' needs were channelled through it. UN-Habitat also launched LIVE-UP project alongside other UNHCR initiatives in Herat and other provinces. There have been some local successes, but they have not been scaled up as a result both of increasing conflict and insecurity and limited funding and capacity.

MoRR and its general directorate on IDPs and emergencies have neither a dedicated budget to continue implementation nor the capacity to supervise international agencies' work. In an effort to boost capacity WHH, NRC and UNHCR have provided training to government staff, mainly from the general directorate, to guide their work on national and provincial action plans. Training sessions were conducted in Herat, Kandahar and Mazar, but lines of responsibility for developing the plans are not clear and only Herat has developed one to date.

⁵⁴ KII, Government official, Kabul, 5 September 2017.



Herat province, © NRC / Kennett Havgard

“ When the cabinet endorsed the national policy on IDPs, it was election time. During elections the machinery of government stops. Every minister and governor is only interested in political issues, not technical issues. This was the case for two years, one year before the election and one year after the election when the new government begins. We started from zero – new minister, new land department, new people who don’t know about the policy ... This was very difficult for us. Now, the new policy framework, which was endorsed by the cabinet ... points to the policy on IDPs. Now is the time to start a new campaign to support the implementation of the policy. Now is the time.”

MoRR official in Kabul⁵⁵

There has not been a system-wide review of the strategic and operational response to internal displacement since 2012, and it remains unclear how new dynamics such as returnees and secondary displacement are being addressed.

Donors meantime provide more support for IDPs than returnees. Undocumented returnees are likely to receive only one-off support at the border, and tend not to be integrated into the broader response. Donors also tend to focus on IDPs in the first six months of their displacement to the detriment of

protracted IDPs and returnee-IDPs. Doing so, and creating sub-groups in process, is not conducive to the implementation of cohesive national policy to protect all IDPs.

New coordination mechanisms have been established, including the humanitarian architecture led by OCHA and the durable solutions working group co-chaired by UNHCR and MoRR. The Afghanistan Protection Cluster, led by UNHCR and NRC, continues to be a key element of the response, while the day-to-day screening of IDPs’ applications for assistance is managed by DoRR and its international partners.

At the international level, the lead role in coordinating the response has moved from UNHCR to OCHA. At the national level, implementation of the national policy has not yet been evaluated, and a discussion about the pursuit of durable solutions during Afghanistan’s ongoing conflict is still much needed.

Amid such challenges, and given the many obstacles to return, it is worth recalling that the national policy formally acknowledges that IDPs, including returnees who have become internally displaced, have the right “to make, in accordance with their right to settle in any part of the country as provided for by Article 39 of the Constitution and international human rights law, a voluntary and informed decision about their future, including the choice not to return to one’s home”.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Government of Afghanistan, *National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons*, pp.49, 2013, available at: <https://goo.gl/EPpGcG>

THE PETITION SYSTEM

STEP 1: REGISTRATION OF IDP - The process to register is only available in government-controlled provinces, with the system going through the Directorates of Refugees and Repatriation.



STEP 2: CONSOLIDATION OF PETITIONS - The time between a household's registration and the DoRR's submission to OCHA may not be short – fieldwork reported that, in some provinces, up to a few weeks could go by until a critical number of applications had been amassed.



STEP 3: RAPID ASSESSMENT - The question of timing – and the time lost between registration and consolidation – can put at danger the utility of the Petition System.



QUESTION:
how to ensure
timeliness and
due diligence?

5.2 ADJUSTING THE PETITION SYSTEM

FEEDBACK FROM USERS

IDPs are less likely than returnee-IDPs to register and apply for assistance under the petition system, and more likely to have their petition rejected. This may in part be because returnee-IDPs are better informed about the system and its procedures when they first return to the country. Awareness and use also varies between provinces, and is particularly poor in Kandahar.

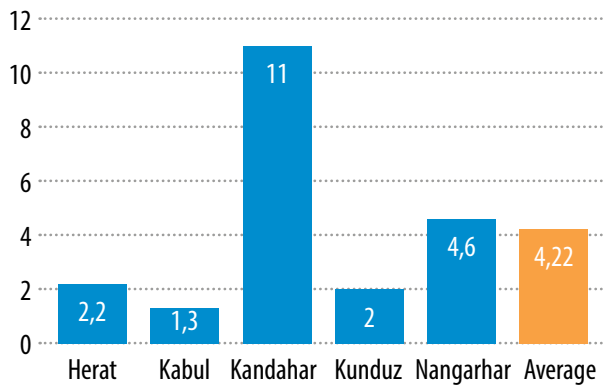
Approvals also vary significantly from one DoRR office to another. Relatively few returnee-IDPs have their petitions approved in Kandahar, and relatively few IDPs in Nangarhar. A pattern emerges in which regions with large influxes of one sub-group register fewer members of the other.

Problems with the petition system need to be addressed structurally, with a focus on five main obstacles:

1. **Information:** Many potential beneficiaries are not aware of the registration procedure, a situation that becomes more acute the further they are from urban areas.

2. **Cost:** There is no application fee, but IDPs wishing to register face indirect costs such as transport to their nearest DoRR office. There is also anecdotal evidence of applicants being asked informally to pay, which adds to a sense of lack of transparency and mistrust in the government. Middlemen, particularly community elders submitting petitions, may also see an opportunity to earn money.
3. **Access:** The petition system is only accessible in areas controlled by the government. National exercises to collect data on IDPs such as OCHA's joint assessments in 2016 have similarly only taken place in these areas.
4. **Time:** IDPs interviewed for this study complained about the amount of time the authorities took to process their applications. The system aims to complete the process in 72 hours, but some said they had waited months to learn the outcome of their petition.
5. **Screening:** IDPs also complained that the screening process was too strict. According to one WHH worker: "Some people have integrated, but still try to abuse the system. But when the committee tries to be strict, it leads to depriving other deserving IDPs."

Figure 20: Number of problems faced when lodging a petition



5.3 ADDRESSING CAPACITY AND COORDINATION GAPS

“ I attended a meeting in 2015 and I remember we discussed the definition of an IDP for around two hours. Even after two hours people still held on to their different definitions.”

Representative from an Afghan NGO focused on food security

DIFFICULTIES IN IDENTIFYING BENEFICIARIES

Structural issues: Fraud, corruption, double counting and inflating figures on IDPs

Policy: DoRR offices require IDPs to visit in person to submit a petition. They do not accept beneficiary lists from international organisations, which might include people in genuine need who are unable to travel to register.

Eligibility: Protracted and seasonal IDPs are excluded from applying, and applicants are only allowed to make one petition even if their needs persist or they move to a new province.

Operational issues: Secondary displacement makes it difficult to track IDPs who decide to move after submitting applications. Determining applicants’ motivation for moving, whether they are IDPs or economic migrants, is also problematic.

Invisibility: IDPs who choose to settle in established communities, particularly in urban areas, are hard to identify and so may be neglected.

DONORS AND DATA: ISSUES FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

Largely driven by donors, humanitarian organisations have adopted distinct categories for IDPs based on the length of their displacement, and these are strictly adhered to by partners in the Emergency Response Mechanism (ERM) funded by the Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Aid Operations (ECHO):

1. Newly-displaced IDPs are defined as having been living in displacement for less than six months
2. Prolonged IDPs as living in displacement for between six months and two years
3. Protracted IDPs as living in displacement for more than two years

Most responders in Afghanistan only provide assistance to newly-displaced IDPs. Those who have been living in displacement for more than six months are no longer eligible, even though their needs are likely to persist and may even become more acute over time. “Other organisations may provide assistance for 12, 18 months, but we do six. Really, we’re looking at the combination of vulnerability and shock. Our aid is not a poverty alleviation fund,” said one European humanitarian donor official.

Humanitarian donors take chronic needs and vulnerabilities that may persist or emerge years into displacement or during the process of return to be a development issue, and so the responsibility of that sector and the government. The focus on short-term assistance also has a historical perspective based on past displacement patterns. Until 2012, people who fled conflict tended to be displaced for relatively short periods of time. The escalating conflict has changed this reality, and OCHA’s humanitarian response plan for 2017 included a specific objective on supporting prolonged IDPs.

The availability and quality of data on internal displacement in Afghanistan is a significant and pressing issue that is symptomatic of broader questions of coordination, information management and access. OCHA has taken on responsibility for IDP data collecting since 2014, and the government is currently working with IOM to set up a central database. “All data should come to one centre, to be analysed and then shared,” said one MoRR official. For now, however, the process is decentralised and

focuses on categories, types and duration of displacement.

OCHA collects data and reports on incidents of new displacement associated with conflict via the petition system, under which IDPs apply to register with DoRR offices, an inter-agency screening committee reviews their petitions and those deemed eligible are verified using a household emergency assessment tool (HEAT) form. The process may, however, involve both under-reporting, as discussed above, and duplication. If one person is displaced three times in a year, they are counted three times in the figures, because OCHA does not track secondary displacement. Duplication may also be an issue if the beneficiary receives more than one cluster intervention.

IOM records incidents of new displacement associated with disasters and sends its data to OCHA for reporting. It also monitors community-level movements with its displacement tracking matrix (DTM). The methodology relies on key informant interviews and focus group discussions to measure flows of IDPs. The DTM data is unique in that it also reports on return flows, and the system is currently being rolled out across Afghanistan.

HEAT is designed to simplify and streamline emergency humanitarian assessments, but the data collected is not currently consolidated or disaggregated. Instead, implementing agencies and organisations report general indicators such as the total number of beneficiaries. Nor is HEAT always used comprehensively, with information sometimes missing on sub-groups such as female-headed households.⁵⁷

The following initiatives should help to improve the situation:

- OCHA's recording of displacement associated with conflict has provided monthly trends since 2012. It maps displacement geographically and gives percentages for IDPs in hard-to-reach areas and other key figures. The information is updated regularly and available online.
- IOM's DTM is a global initiative currently being rolled out in Afghanistan with the aim of providing timely analyses to inform responses. The organisation is also expanding its monitoring of cross-border flow, which will help draw attention to the

plight of returnees who go "home" to a life in displacement.

- The multi-dimensional integration index (MDI) is a tool developed by Samuel Hall under UNHCR's leadership and supported by members of the durable solutions working group. The group is led by UNHCR and has a steering committee made up of IOM, NRC, DRC, the Mercy Corps, the Agha Khan Foundation and the Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR). The tool is designed to monitor post-return and integration outcomes and provides one set of common indicators to standardise agencies' data collection, to ensure that comparable data is collected by all.

A NEW GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE ON DISPLACEMENT: ISSUES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

MoRR is responsible for the protection of IDPs displaced by conflict, in theory at least. In practice, however, there are many government bodies involved in the response, but mandates are not clear and budgets and capacity limited.

ANDMA is responsible for the protection of IDPs displaced by natural hazards and the disasters they trigger. It gets its information via a number of channels including provincial governments, international organisations and the media. Other ministries involved in IDPs' protection include rural rehabilitation and development, public health, women's affairs, education, and labour and social affairs. In theory they coordinate with MoRR and ANDMA as required.

The establishment of Afghanistan's national unity government has brought with it a revised structure for dealing with displacement, and a new policy framework for returnees and IDPs was launched in December 2016. The Displacement and Returnees Executive Committee (DiREC), an inter-ministerial group, is responsible for implementing the framework, and is supported by a number of working groups and taskforces. The technical working group is made up of government ministries, UN agencies, international organisations and the Afghan Coordination Body for Afghan Relief and Development (ACBAR).

⁵⁷ KII, International NGO, Kabul, 11 July 2017.

DiREC is focused on coordination and collaboration between the government and its international partners. In theory it should lead to a systematic approach to addressing the gaps in assistance and services for IDPs and other communities affected by displacement. DiREC's leadership has established three thematic areas as priorities:⁵⁸

- **Documentation and education:** The government has provided detailed guidelines for schools and their management to address the documentation issues that IDPs and returnee-IDPs report. The Ministry of Education is also working to address the gap.
- **Land allocation:** This issue is being addressed via a revised presidential decree, which is pending signature. It recognises the problems with the previous decree 104, and introduces a new set of guidelines and technical procedures, basic requirements for land selection and a bank of all suitable government land aim to ensure that plots are available for allocation. Beneficiaries will be selected by UN-Habitat and IOM based on vulnerability assessments.
- **Social integration:** Existing national priority programmes and the citizen's charter will be rolled out to districts with high levels of return across the country, with financial and technical support from the World Bank. The focus will be on access to services.

Within these thematic areas, three cross-cutting issues will be addressed, matching the gaps identified in this and previous research:

- **Data collection:** Mechanisms are being established to undertake community-level profiling and collect household data to identify IDPs and changes in population trends.
- **Representation:** Ways are being sought of including IDPs in consultative mechanisms, such as the Community Development Councils (CDCs) established under the National Solidarity Programme, or other formal or informal community organisations, and to train them to manage displacement and return flows in their areas.
- **Equal access to services:** Plans are being developed to provide a package that includes water, health, education and other services in all locations and new sites of displacement.

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS: ISSUES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

A review of OCHA's "who's doing what where" analysis for October to December 2016 shows that among the top 15 providers of aid to IDPs, the majority were civil society organisations (CSOs). They either work in partnership with international organisations and UN agencies, or intervene on their own.

The localisation of aid emerged as a central theme at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, and the main output was the Grand Bargain, which included a commitment on behalf of donors and aid organisations to allocate 25 per cent of global humanitarian funding to local and national responders by 2020. With this in mind, a number of initiatives in Afghanistan aim to support CSOs' added value as local actors and improve their capacity to reach communities in need of assistance. Two examples are ACBAR's twinning programme, funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) and Open Society Afghanistan (OSA)'s forced displacement programme.

Key findings from an organisational capacity assessment of CSOs in Kabul province led by Samuel Hall for OSA show that limited financial viability and funding uncertainties are significant impediments to their work. Some CSOs have improved their processes, but income diversity remains a challenge because sustained core funding is beyond their reach. The most important indicator for the sustainability and performance of CSOs appears to be funding diversity. On the technical level, CSOs intervene on emergency needs but their involvement in the forced displacement and migration agenda remains limited.

Two common complaints from CSOs are that they are treated in a top-down manner by national entities and the international community, and that they are sidelined in referral systems. The frequent lack of procedures for referrals is a symptom of a wider shortfall in partnerships between sectors, and more fundamentally of knowledge and trust among stakeholders. CSOs that have been trained through the twinning programmes of the CHF process have the strongest referral systems in place.

CSOs are the only organisations able to ensure that community voices are heard and that displaced people participate in shaping the programmes

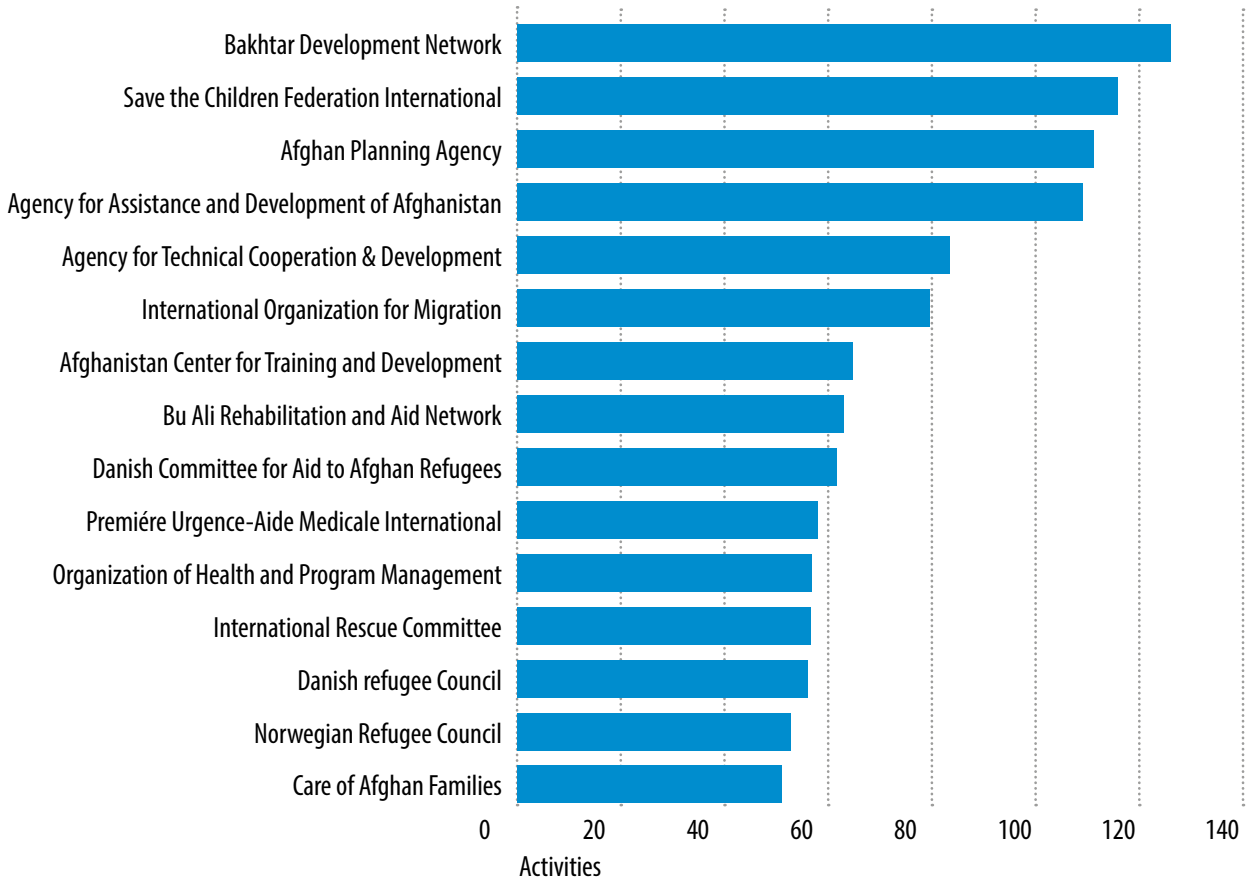
⁵⁸ KII, Government official, Kabul, 28 September 2017.

developed for them. This research shows, however, that consultation is by no means widespread. Sixty per cent of respondents in Kabul said their communities had been consulted, 59 per cent in Herat, 47 in Kandahar, 39 in Kunduz and 32 in

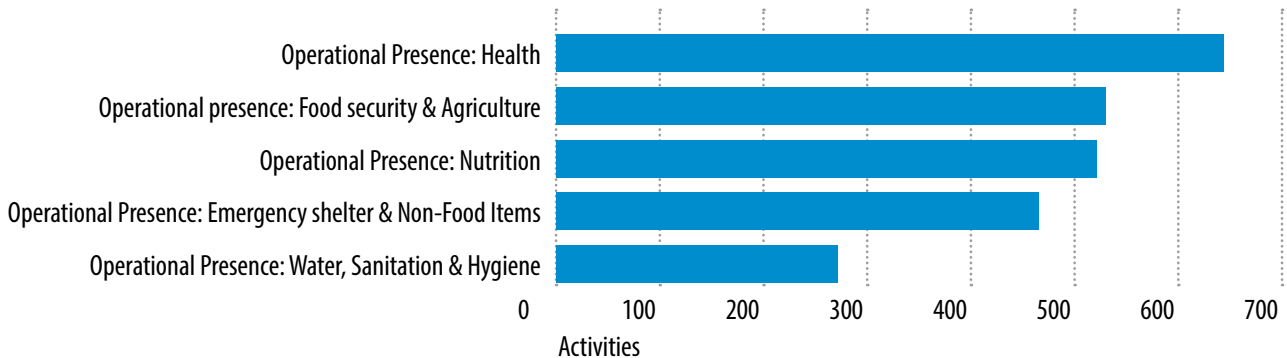
Nangarhar. It is time to ensure that the voices of IDPs and other communities affected by displacement are listened to equally in all regions of the country. CSOs have a vital role to play in doing so, and with it to improve much-needed access to target populations.

Who's Doing What Where (October to December 2016)

Who (Top 15)



What (Top 15)



6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 COLLECTIVE OUTCOMES APPROACH TO ENHANCING IDPS' PROTECTION IN AFGHANISTAN

The IDPs interviewed for this research want to achieve durable solutions, but many do not see them as within reach. They may find their own short-term ways of getting by, but these often include negative coping strategies such as reduced food intake or reliance on child labour, which have the potential to extend poverty and cycles of vulnerability across generations.

Most have structural needs. IDPs' primary concerns are also obstacles to the fulfilment of their rights. Addressing their needs and concerns has been left largely in the hands of the humanitarian sector which, given Afghanistan's escalating crisis, is increasingly occupied with emergency responses. The assistance provided will undoubtedly save many lives and must continue, but the response must also be strengthened and emboldened by the government and the development and private sectors to ensure a common agenda toward collective outcomes that does not leave IDPs behind.

Walter Kälin, the former UN special representative on IDPs' human rights, wrote in 2017 of the global need for "far-reaching changes in how Governments and the international community address internal displacement".⁵⁹ He reminds us of the commitment made in the UN Secretary General's Agenda for Humanity to implement a new way of working by adopting contextualised long-term responses toward collective outcomes, based on the comparative advantage of a diverse set of actors.

The One Programme principle of the One UN programme for 2018 to 2021 is a step toward providing a framework for mutual results and coordination in Afghanistan.⁶⁰ It singles out return and reintegration as one of its six focus areas, within which areas of high return and displacement are prioritised. Access to basic services, adequate land and housing, livelihoods and jobs, safe and voluntary return, and infrastructure services are target areas for UN agency and national priority programmes. More can be done within this new framework to develop collective outcomes and commonly agreed results that reduce the specific needs of IDPs detailed in this study. To enhance IDPs' protection, combined efforts will be needed at the national, sub-national and local level. The recommendations in this section are to be understood in this spirit of a collective outcomes approach.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) state that the most vulnerable must be empowered to contribute to and benefit from development efforts. This research identifies three challenges to achieving this aim in Afghanistan, and which require a joint response.

➔ **IDPs' protection status has changed little since 2012.** Some elements of their infrastructure, such as access to electricity, have improved, but their three main needs remain the same: housing and shelter, food and water, and access to decent jobs. Coping strategies meantime are creating cycles of vulnerability. Child protection is being compromised, and IDPs' choice to live in urban areas tend to make them more, rather than less vulnerable.

⁵⁹ OCHA, *Breaking the impasse: a new approach to address internal displacement*, p.5, 2017, available at: <https://goo.gl/K9KhBS>

⁶⁰ UN, *Afghanistan "One UN - One Programme"*, 1 January 2018 - 31 December 2021, submitted to President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani on 21 November 2017.

→ **Conflict is escalating and causing ever more displacement.** The number of people displaced is rising steeply, whether they be civilians living in Afghanistan or returnees who come back to a country at war. The fact that areas beyond government control are difficult or impossible to access severely limits data collection, coordination and responses. A strategy to improve responses in insecure areas is needed. Without it many more vulnerable Afghans will become part of a vast but hidden population experiencing extreme infringement of their rights.

→ **IDPs' knowledge of their rights is very poor.** Less than 20 per cent of households surveyed were aware of their rights, and without understanding their entitlements they are clearly not in a position to exercise them. The rankings for their right to freedom of movement and residence, and their right to property are very low. This is in part because they lack information about the processes in place to support them, such as the petition system, but also because levels of assistance have decreased. The focus on humanitarian and life-saving aid means IDPs are not encouraged to look beyond their immediate circumstances.

As well as a conversation on rights, a coordinated rights-based approach to assistance is also needed. Humanitarians cannot be expected to address IDPs' needs on their own, and government plans and interventions need to be localised. The shift from national to local and from humanitarian to development is not just a generic recommendation. It is an urgent priority, at least in areas in the country accessible to the government. Coordination should evolve around the fulfilment of rights rather than mandates. Donor priorities cannot guide the response to internal displacement given such wide-ranging needs. It is up to the government to establish these priorities.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRIORITY AREAS FOR FOLLOW-UP

This report has identified and recommended a set of priority areas that need to be addressed by all response actors across the humanitarian-development spectrum. As collective outcomes require joint workings, we seek below to propose specific follow-up actions that require attention variously from the Government of Afghanistan, international donors, the United Nations and national and international NGOs.

1. ADDRESS HLP RIGHTS

This research reveals that IDPs' lack of sustainable housing solutions and limited job opportunities continue to be their main protection concerns. They prevent them from exercising their right to dignified living conditions and represent major obstacles in their efforts to achieve durable solutions. Addressing issues related to housing and livelihoods should be prioritised as the foundation for the response to other significant needs and vulnerabilities related to displacement.

IDPs' inability to afford decent housing, particularly in urban areas, leads them to recur to standard shelter solutions such as overcrowded informal settlements and slums in order to be closer to services and jobs. Access to housing loans and credit schemes could help to prevent this from happening, with knock-on effects in terms of other rights, including more dignified living conditions and improved physical and psychological wellbeing.

Regulation of the housing market and the introduction of rent controls to protect IDPs and local communities from arbitrary price increases would help to reduce squatting and the spread of informal settlements. Previous studies and the qualitative research for this report confirm that some landlords see the demand created by influxes of IDPs and returnees as an opportunity to raise rents.⁶¹ Humanitarians providing cash-for-rent support should calibrate grants carefully based on scrupulous market research to avoid contributing to market inflation and exposing vulnerable families to heightened protection risks, including eviction.

⁶¹ UNHCR Policy Development Evaluation Service, *Surviving in the city: A review of UNHCR's operation for Iraqi refugees in urban areas of Jordan, Lebanon and Syria*, 2009, available at: <https://goo.gl/5mFKkHK>; Briant N and Kennedy A, *Priorities of African Refugees in an Urban Setting*, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, volume 17, number 4, pp.437-459, 2014, available at: <https://goo.gl/RWkEAK> (registration/purchase required).

Last but not least, a priority point on reform and implementation of land allocation schemes and restitution and compensation regulations is needed to ensure that both IDPs and returnees are given adequate opportunities to achieve durable solutions. The revision of presidential decree 104 has established a set of guidelines and technical procedures, currently awaiting approval from the president's office. The guidelines lay out basic requirements for land selection and a bank of all suitable government land, with distribution planned to start in 2018. The reform will put forward a consortium of UN agencies to handle beneficiary selection based on vulnerability criteria and assessments.

2. IMPLEMENT THE NATIONAL POLICY ON IDPS

Afghanistan's national policy on IDPs sets out 10 rights⁶², and interventions should be mapped alongside each one to identify where the imbalances lie. A rapid stakeholder analysis conducted during the study shows that some rights, including the right to education, have been better addressed than others, such as those to adequate housing, livelihoods, healthcare and access to information.

A well-resourced department more deeply involved in ensuring the policy is implemented would help to inform the approach needed to identify gaps, the efforts to be sustained and those to be newly designed. An approach to land allocation is already in the pipeline, and if properly implemented will bring about significant improvement in terms of housing and security of tenure. Once these have been addressed, the right to an adequate standard of living would be easier to fulfil.

The right to education has been prioritised and the Ministry of Education has made progress in easing access restrictions based on documentation. A similar approach is now needed to IDPs' healthcare, not only for chronic illnesses but also psychosocial conditions, which tend to receive little attention in Afghanistan. The destabilising pressures of conflict and displacement should be addressed via a greater focus on people's psychological wellbeing.

The policy recognises "the lead role of the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) in responding to the protection and assistance needs of IDPs, and the importance of strengthening MoRR, including through developing its human resource capacity and its information management system, and increasing its financial resources, so that it can effectively execute this mandate". In practice, however, MoRR is under-resourced and much of its operational capacity is devolved to the provincial DoRR offices. A local approach to strengthening partnerships and support to DoRR is needed. The Provincial Action Plans of the IDP policy implementation process need to be reviewed and made operational.

3. MULTI-YEAR FUNDING FOR DURABLE SOLUTIONS

Most humanitarians in Afghanistan focus their response on newly-displaced IDPs. Those who have been living in displacement for more than six months are no longer considered eligible for assistance even though their needs are likely to persist and may even become more acute over time.

Humanitarian donors take chronic needs and vulnerabilities and those that may emerge years into displacement or during the return process to be a development issue, and so the responsibility of that sector and the government. The focus on short-term assistance also has a historical perspective based on past displacement patterns. Until 2012, people who fled conflict tended to be displaced for relatively short periods of time and to return to their places of origin as soon as hostilities ceased. The escalating and enduring conflict has changed this reality, and OCHA's humanitarian response plan (HRP) for 2017 included a specific objective on supporting prolonged IDPs.

IDPs cite security, housing and livelihood opportunities as their three main requirements in their pursuit of durable solutions. A few interventions focused on providing HLP and livelihood assistance are currently being implemented, but they tend only to last for a few months and do not have proper exit strategies, making them unsustainable.

Obstacles to durable solutions such as structural changes caused by then worsening conflict, inappropriate land allocation and lack of coordination

⁶² These are the right to freedom of movement and residence, to adequate housing, to livelihood, to water, food and clothes – adequate standard of living, to health care, to protection of the family, to education, to property protection and compensation, to freedom of expression and access to information, participatory rights including the right to vote. These are presented in the IDP policy and the 2015 Policy brief – National Policy on IDPs in Afghanistan.



📷 Qarghayi district, Laghman province, © NRC / Jim Huylebroek

would best be resolved through multi-year, consortium-coordinated programmes with civil society at the forefront and the government heavily involved would in a way address the coordination challenges and have a bigger impact for those in need. Also poor/lack of dialogue and interaction between humanitarian and development actors causing a significant gap in the humanitarian-development nexus. Short-term funds and status targeting (i.e. newly displaced IDPs) are part of the problem but we do have funds for development in place; the main issue is that the two sectors are not linked to each other.

4. REFORM THE CURRENT PETITION SYSTEM

The petition system is not functioning properly and fails to address the needs of many vulnerable displaced families. Structural characteristics and operational issues often lead to targeting errors, delayed assistance, discrimination, restricted access and the violation of humanitarian principles. The extent to which the system serves its purpose varies significantly between provinces and regions because procedures and practices are not standardised, and capacities and willingness to abide by principled action differ. The system needs to be reformed and reinforced to eliminate current shortfalls and improve the service it provides. Recommendations to do so include:

- **Reinforce DoRR offices' capacity** not only to register claims, but also to analyse them through a protection lens. This will require the secondment of national and international NGOs and CSOs to facilitate the screening and profiling of displaced households.
- **Establish the option of mobile registration** in IDPs' places of residence instead of requiring them to incur the cost of travel to report to DoRR offices. Bringing the government closer to the people would go a long way to improving the petition system.

Registration should not only be a mechanism for the disbursement of aid. It should also be a system to advance IDPs' rights and a tool for informed programming and protection.

Information streams should also be reinforced upstream and downstream, including mobile information, counselling and legal protection services that cover:

- ➔ **Rights:** Increasing IDPs' knowledge of their rights and their access to the petition system
- ➔ **Social cohesion:** Addressing misconceptions among returnees, IDPs and local populations
- ➔ **Psychosocial support:** Counselling on coping mechanisms and aid programmes

5. INCLUDE DURABLE SOLUTIONS IN THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN (HRP)

The HRP for 2018 to 2021 is the first multi-year humanitarian response plan, but it still focuses narrowly on responding to IDPs' immediate humanitarian needs on the assumption that their chronic needs and vulnerabilities are the responsibility of the development sector. It acknowledges key protection concerns, but does not detail how they should be addressed.

To put greater strategic focus on durable solutions and bridge the significant gap between humanitarian and development responses, the 2019 HRP should include a dedicated chapter on the issue. The current focus on humanitarian and life-saving aid and the absence of strategic and operational links between humanitarian and development work are not conducive to IDPs bringing their displacement to a sustainable end.

6. HOLD NON-STATE GROUPS ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE PLIGHT OF IDPS IN THE AREAS THEY CONTROL

Much of IDPs' basic social protection is provided by humanitarian organisations in government-controlled areas. A combination of externally and self-imposed access restrictions mean they are all but absent across the vast swaths of Afghanistan that are controlled by non-state groups. Very little information is available about the needs of displaced populations living in these areas.

Humanitarians should do more to negotiate access to areas under the control of non-state groups, and the groups themselves should be held accountable for the provision of services to displaced populations living in their areas. They should also facilitate information sharing to enable timely and well-targeted responses, as well as facilitate access to IDP populations in areas they control.

7. IMPROVE PROVISION OF PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

Given the prolonged nature of Afghanistan's conflict, the vast majority of displaced people have been exposed to traumatic and stressful events. Women's psychosocial wellbeing is particularly affected by a combination of cultural and socioeconomic factors. These include limited access to job opportunities, a lack of marketable skills, and restricted movement and access to social opportunities in unfamiliar environments with weaker community-based safety networks and heightened exposure to GBV risks, including domestic violence.

Psychosocial and mental health services are extremely limited in many areas, however, and even when they are available they tend not to include mechanisms to address the needs of the displaced. Greater efforts to do so are a pressing priority, and should include an expanded presence of specialists, more incisive outreach, sensitisation and advocacy efforts on GBV issues, the deployment of more gender-balanced teams of field responders and increased coordination efforts through the development of clear referral pathways.

8. PRIORITISE CHILD PROTECTION SUPPORT

One of the key findings of this research is the rising trends in child labour and child marriage among the displaced. Almost one in five of the families surveyed for this study relies on child labour to help meet their basic needs. For households who have debts lower than their monthly expenditure the figure is 14 per cent, and for those whose debts are higher than their monthly expenditure it is 20 per cent. The combination of cross-border and repeated internal displacement heightens household vulnerability and leads to child labour more frequently among returnee-IDPs.

The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) uses the term "child protection" to refer to preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse against children, including commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking, child labour and harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation and cutting and child marriage.⁶³ To target child protection in contexts of displacement in Afghanistan, the nexus between child protection-livelihoods-poverty should form the core of the response.

⁶³ UNICEF information sheet, *What is Child Protection?*, 2006, available at: <https://goo.gl/rJddmR>

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