

## **Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) Perspective on Afghanistan's National IDP Policy**

A report commissioned by:

**Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development (ACBAR)**

And

**Danish Refugee Council (DRC)**

**November 2020**



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report provides an analysis of IDPs perspectives about the National IDP Policy. The research was conducted in Herat, Balkh, Nangarhar and Kandahar, and was commissioned by the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development (ACBAR), and Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and researched by Assess, Transform, and Reach (ATR) Consulting.

We would like to thank the IDPs and NGO staff for taking the time to participate in interviews and focus group discussions. We would also like to thank ACBAR staff for their support, attention and guiding the research team.

**Author:**

Ahmad Elyas Saboor

**Technical Support:**

Monica Sandri, Migration Specialist

**Contributors:**

Anne Jasim-Falher

Abdul Aziz Beheshti

Khushgul Sultani

**Field Data Collection:**

Abdul Nasir Mubarez

Abdul Halim Hasanzada

Azizullah Hakimi

Ghawsuddin Tawhidi

**Cover Photo:** IDP settlement in Nahr-e-Shahi district, Balkh province. Photo taken by Abdul Nasir Mubarez, ATR field team leader and researcher.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACBAR	Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development
ACTED	Agency Technical Coordination and Development
APA	Afghan Planning Agency
CCAP	Citizens' Charter Afghanistan Project
CHA	Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance
CoAR	Coordination of Afghan Relief
CRM	Complaint Response Mechanism
DACAAR	Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees
DiREC	Displacement and Return Executive Committee
DoRR	Provincial Directorate of Refugees and Repatriation
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
EU	European Union
FGD	Focused Group Discussion
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GoIRA	Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
HAPA	Health Action Plan for Afghanistan
HHs	House Holds
HRDA	Human Resource Development Authority
IDIs	In-depth Interviews
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IMCC	The Inter-ministerial Coordination Committee
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRA	Internal Relocation Alternative
IRC	International Rescue Committee
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
MoRR	Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation
MSS	Minimum Service Standards
NAPs	National Action Plans
NPP	National Priority Program
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OCHA	UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHW	Organization of Human Welfare
PAP	Provincial Action Plans
PD	Provincial District
PIN	People in Need
SC	Save the Children
SCA	Swedish Committee for Afghanistan
SDO	Sanayee Development Organization
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure

UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
WASSA	Women Activities and Social Services Association
WFP	World Food Programme
WHH	Welthungerhilfe

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Afghanistan, protracted conflicts and natural hazards have forced large numbers of Afghans to leave their homes, often more than once, to seek refuge in more secure places, often settling on unoccupied lands on the outskirts of urban areas. From January 2012 to December 2019, about 2,993,000 individuals have become displaced in Afghanistan<sup>1</sup>, with an increase of 416,000 newly displaced individuals in 2019.

In 2014, the Government of Afghanistan launched the National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) but the ability of the government and aid agencies, to address IDPs' needs remain limited. Displaced communities often suffer insufficient protection, lack access to basic services and face challenges related to civil documentation, employment or self-employment and security of tenure.

This study examines the perspective of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) on their rights and protection issues, as well as their awareness and perception of the National IDP Policy in Afghanistan. It aims at understanding how the policy helped, if at all, to address the needs of IDPs at field level and to what extent the policy is relevant and applicable in the Afghan context. Through in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) in four different provinces of Afghanistan, the study offers practical and actionable recommendations for increasing IDPs awareness of their rights and the National IDP Policy. This report is complemented by four case studies, one per each province assessed (Herat, Balkh, Nangarhar, and Kandahar).

The study finds that not only are most of the displaced populations unaware of the existence of any government's regulations that protect their rights but also NGO workers and government officials appear to have a shallow understanding of the provisions set in the National Policy on IDPs. Even when IDPs know their rights, they still feel legally insecure, unable to address their grievances and lack perspective on what is being decided for them as recipients of aid and policy decisions. Often, they are not aware of how to access the services they are entitled to. While representatives are helpful in relaying information to their communities, they might sometimes abuse their power and IDPs would rather have first-hand information.

The policy is relevant, but it has not been set for success, having received little support to address the many challenges it faces. At the provincial level, the implementation of the policy has been mired with complexities and delays including the lack of provincial action plans (PAP), financial limitations, lack of political will, and the limited capacity of government staff. Only Herat managed to develop an action plan that has helped donors align their programmatic objectives with the IDP policy and increase provincial coordination between NGOs and the government. In absence of a PAP, programmatic and coordination issues remain unsolved with little or no attention to long-term durable solutions for IDPs.

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<sup>1</sup> Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) <https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/afghanistan>



For IDPs, the existence of a poorly practised policy with an intangible effect on their lives has little bearing. They are more interested in increasing attention to the provision of their basic needs. They are concerned about the short-term approach to humanitarian support, leading to issues being fixed in an *ad hoc* manner, without addressing their core livelihood problems. So far, interventions that could help in transitioning to durable solutions (and thus addressing core livelihood issues) suffer from poor involvement of the affected communities and lack of planning, coordination and accountability mechanisms.

The research prioritizes the following recommendations as the most important and urgent to be implemented and addressed:

- **Develop and implement a nation-wide IDP awareness strategy involving service delivery ministries and relevant government bodies such as Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) and Displacement and Return Executive Committee (DiREC), and community's leaders.** The strategy, aimed at increasing understanding and cooperation, should target IDPs and host communities, making sure it does not overlook the role of women. Ideally, the strategy must be developed, planned and implemented by the government. It must be accompanied by a robust monitoring and evaluation mechanism.
- **Conduct awareness workshops for government officials, particularly for provincial Directorates of Refugees and Repatriation (DoRR) and provincial municipality staff.** The workshop must be designed to enhance understanding, engage in coordination and communication and translate policy level measures into concrete actions.
- **Develop planning, coordination and monitoring tools to help local authorities develop Provincial Action Plans (PAPs) and train staff on how to use them.** This will include the development of standard operating procedures to support stakeholders in the planning process.
- **Conduct awareness-raising workshops for NGO staff both in Kabul and provinces.** Aimed at disseminating policy contents, the workshops should be also the occasion to review current programmatic approaches and assess their alignment to the policy, while integrating lessons learned in the process.
- **Speed up the development and approval of PAP in provinces with high number of IDPs.** The first step should be to understand the reasons why this has not happened yet. The PAP's design should acknowledge differences between new and protracted displacements and between urban and peri-urban settlements and develop area-specific plans. Each area plan should be accompanied by a robust monitoring system.
- **Set up a system to hold the government accountable,** using existing resources, so grievances can be properly recorded and addressed.
- **Implement feasible and yet critical aspects of the policy,** including the decentralization of the *tazkera* issuance and the implementation of the Minimum Service Standards (MSS), as planned under the Citizens' Charter Afghanistan Project (CCAP).

## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

### A. Displacement in Afghanistan

Afghanistan faces one of the world's most acute displacement crises. The protracted conflict and natural hazards have forced large numbers of Afghans to leave their homes and seek refuge elsewhere, either within the country or abroad. According to the report of United Nations Office for Coordination of Human Affairs (OCHA) in 2017, in 30 provinces out of the 34 provinces of Afghanistan, a significant portion of the population have experienced displacement either from conflicts or natural disasters. From January 2012 to December 2019, about 2,993,000 individuals have become displaced in Afghanistan<sup>2</sup>, with an increase of 416,000 newly displaced individuals in 2019. The first half of 2020 recorded about 117,000 individuals displaced due to conflict and violence and about 30,000 displaced due to natural disasters.<sup>3</sup>

More than half of displacement is the result of conflicts between insurgent groups, the Afghan government and its international partners. Thousands of families are forced to leave their dwellings more than once to seek refuge in relatively more secure places, often settling on unoccupied lands on the outskirts of urban areas. The ability of the government and aid agencies, to help them is inadequate. Displaced communities often have limited protection and access to services such as water, health and education. Furthermore, IDPs face challenges related to access to civil documentation, employment or self-employment and security of tenure.

### B. Research Questions

This study aims to examine IDPs' perceptions of the National IDP policy and to explore the impact and relevance of the pertaining policies on the persons of concern. Through this study, these two main research questions were covered:

- 1) How has the National IDP Policy helped, if at all, to address the needs of IDPs at field level?
- 2) To what extent is the policy relevant and applicable in the Afghan context?

### C. Methodology

A mixture of in-depth interviews (IDIs), and focused group discussions (FGDs) was conducted in four provinces (Herat, Kandahar, Balkh and Nangarhar) in urban and peri-urban areas. During the inception phase, ATR consulted with ACBAR's regional offices to better understand the urban and peri-urban areas/locations hosting IDPs. The criteria for the selection of the locations are the following:

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<sup>2</sup> Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) <https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/afghanistan>

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*

- 1) Presence of IDP heads of household and availability of IDP representatives and community members (men and women);
- 2) Various durations of displacement (protracted and non-protracted/emergency);
- 3) Various living conditions (house and tents); and
- 4) Various levels of access to the market and services.

Table 1. Locations of the study

Type	Herat	Nangarhar	Balkh	Kandahar
<b>Urban</b>	Shalbfan (PD 7)	Billa (PD 8)	Dasht Shoor	Loyawala (PD 9)
<b>Peri-urban</b>	Shaidayee (Inji District)	Qala Maroof (Surkhroad district)	Hazrat-e-Bilal (Nahr-e-Shahi district)	Haji Arab (Dand district)

For this study, ATR interviewed a total of 128 IDPs, including both IDP community members and their representatives or leaders. To record IDP leaders' views on the National IDP policy, and to collect additional perspectives of the affected population, FGDs were conducted with diverse IDP community members including men and women with varying ages and backgrounds and length of displacement.

Table 2. Type of interviews and target respondents

Type of Interviews	Target respondents
<b>Focus Group Discussions</b>	16 FGDs with IDP community members (4 per province, 2 urban and 2 peri-urban). Groups consisted of 6-8 people. Half of the FGDs was with women and another half with men of different age groups and background.
<b>In-depth Interviews</b>	16 interviews with IDP leaders. 4 IDP leaders were interviewed from each province (two from an urban area and two from a peri-urban area).

In addition to interviewing IDPs, ATR conducted 4 FGDs with 30 representatives of NGOs across four provinces providing services to IDPs. The respondents represented a wide range of NGOs (see table 3) who are working in key departments and structures supporting IDPs in their programming.

Table 3. NGOs that participated in the FGDs

Province	Organizations selected for FGD
<b>Herat</b>	Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR), Handicap International (HI), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Oxfam International, International Rescue Committee (IRC), Women Activities and Social Services Association (WASSA)
<b>Balkh</b>	ActionAid, Agency Technical Coordination and Development (ACTED), CARE International, Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR), Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Save the Children (SC), World Food Programme (WFP)
<b>Nangarhar</b>	International Rescue Committee (IRC), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR), Welthungerhilfe (WHH), Internal Relocation Alternative (IRA), Organization of Human Welfare (OHW), People in

	Need (PIN), The Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA)
<b>Kandahar</b>	Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR), Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Coordination of Afghan Relief (CoAR), Afghan Planning Agency (APA), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Organization of Human Welfare (OHW)

## D. Limitations to the Study

The study faced a number of challenges and limitations:

- The majority of IDPs do not differentiate between the various humanitarian organizations involved in the distribution of information, food, shelter and other necessities. Rather, all agencies are perceived collectively as NGOs. This has limited the exploration of each NGO's best practices in building awareness-raising about the National IDP Policy and IDPs' rights.
- Although the study tried to focus on IDPs' perspectives of the National IDP Policy, during conducting the research, IDPs were more inclined to share their needs, challenges and expectations from the government and humanitarian agencies in hope of receiving further support. It is worth to note that, although the report shares some of the needs and gaps of IDPs in the examined provinces, it should not be considered a need assessment.
- The focus of this report is IDPs' awareness level about the National IDP Policy and the awareness-raising programmes and the impact on the level of IDPs' knowledge of their rights. It is not aimed at evaluating the implementation and/or operational apparatus of the National IDP Policy in these provinces<sup>4</sup>. Additionally, this study only presents four provinces of Herat, Kandahar, Nangarhar and Balkh, and should not be extrapolated at the national level.

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<sup>4</sup> In 2017, WHH commissioned a study to take stock of the implementation of the National IDPs Policy, and to formulate recommendations for improving its implementation. "Study on the National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons" <http://www.acbar.org/upload/1568887246591.pdf>

## FINDINGS

This section summarizes findings that are common to all four provinces. It responds to two research questions: (i) How has the National IDP Policy helped, if at all, to address the needs of IDPs at field level? and (ii) To what extent is the policy relevant and applicable in the Afghan context?

The analysis first assesses the level of awareness of the national IDP policy, before reviewing the efficiency of the mechanisms set up to implement the policy. In light of this context, the study then addresses the two research questions.

### A. Awareness of the National IDP Policy

#### 1. IDPs awareness of their rights and the IDP policy

The majority of the IDPs interviewed in Herat, Kandahar, Balkh, and Nangarhar were unaware of any policy, law, or legislation<sup>5</sup> that defined their rights. Only in the urban areas of Nangarhar a few male IDPs reported being aware of the existence of a national policy, an awareness they gained through a seminar organized by an NGO. None of the female respondents in the FGDs were aware of any such policy defining their rights.

*“Even if such a policy exists, it does not necessarily have any meaning in our lives.”*

Female IDP, Shaidayee, Herat

Nevertheless, similar to IDPs in other provinces, they could generally articulate their rights and the scope of government’s responsibilities.

*“We learned about the IDP National Policy through elders such as Maliks (head of the village). When we displaced to this village, the Malik gave us some information.”*

Male IDP, Billa PD8, Nangarhar

A few awareness-raising workshops or seminars were organized by humanitarian organizations and targeted IDPs and host community representatives with the objective to have information trickle down to community members.

*“[IDPs] are citizens of Afghanistan... No one can violate their rights... IDPs have equal rights as host community members... IDPs have the right to vote, stand for elections,*

<sup>5</sup> In this study the National IDP Policy was purposefully worded as legislation/law to simplify it to the IDPs. Given the low literacy levels among IDPs, naming the National IDP policy would have been confusing and complex for IDPs to understand without proper explanation.

*and the government is obliged to provide food, financial support, medical, educational, and other sanitation-related services.”*

Male Community Leader, Balkh

While the scope of the study is too limited to attribute positive results to this approach, findings confirm that IDPs are conscious of their rights, even though they do not know how their rights are consigned and protected.

*“My right is to have a home to live in, to have food to eat and our children to go to school.”*

Female IDP Shaidayee, Herat

*“When a person is living his own house due to conflicts and moves to another place then he should be given a house because he is a displaced person. The government should provide for the needs of the displaced.”*

Male IDP, Qala Maroof, Nangarhar

*“We have the right to have shelters and homes. We are really tired of displacement; we have been displaced so many times. We hope we will have homes and lands. We expect the government to provide us with the necessary support.”*

Male IDP, Haji Arab, Kandahar

*“Our rights as IDPs are not respected here because the host communities do not treat us well, and if sometimes we ask about our rights, they compel us to leave the area.”*

Male IDP, Shalbafan, Herat

IDPs who knew about the IDP policy appeared to be more vocal about their rights, though, showing a potential benefit of further investing in training people on the policy.

*“We should be provided with schools and clinics. We have the right to live freely. The NGOs organized a seminar about our rights about a year ago. The seminar was for both male and female.”*

Female IDP, Qala Maroof, Nangarhar

*“It is the government that has the responsibility to solve our problems. We know about our rights but the problem is that they don’t listen to us. They have come to our house many times and have promised us a lot of things but in the end, we haven’t received any help.”*

Male IDP, Qala Maroof, Nangarhar

Although IDPs are aware of their rights in general, they lack information about how they can access the services they are entitled to. Repeatedly, throughout the four provinces, IDPs stated that they did not

know who were the responsible government authorities, where their offices were, and what the legal procedures are, i.e. register for support programs, and obtain documents<sup>6</sup> such as birth certificates, marriage licences, or acquiring lost documents such as title deeds to land and houses, lease agreements, election cards, school records and diplomas, pension papers, etc.

The study confirmed that the head of villages (*Malik*) and community leaders have an eminent role in IDPs' access to information. They are often IDPs' only source of information and communication with the humanitarian and government agencies. Thus, *Maliks* and community leaders can play both a positive and negative role as they control the information and its flow. For example, IDPs in Nangarhar requested the government and NGOs to set up a more efficient information sharing system and particularly suggested disseminating information in local mosques to the general displaced population, so they can receive first-hand information.

## 2. Humanitarian organizations' awareness of the National IDP Policy

The result of the study among NGO staff shows that 85% of humanitarian aid workers, at the field level, have some information about the IDP policy; however, their level of knowledge varied across different provinces. Most of the FGD respondents said that they were aware of the policy but not of its details and implementation mechanisms. Although awareness workshops have been helpful for NGO staff to understand the IDP policy, the number and scope of these workshops have been limited. This study found that most of the provincial NGO staff who did not attend the workshops were unaware of the policy. These findings show that awareness-raising workshops are currently the only source of information on the IDP policy, within the community of humanitarian workers based outside of the capital.

NGO staff highlighted the need for better disseminating information on the IDP policy within NGOs. They complained, for instance, that the language of the policy is difficult to understand and that they wished they were better guided on how to practically implement the policy. They insisted on the need to simplify the language of the policy when training NGO staff.

*"The language in the policy should be easy, and simple words should be used as many people will face problems in understanding it."*

NGO worker, Kandahar

## B. Review of the Policy Implementation Mechanisms

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<sup>6</sup> For more information on protection of IDPs right to access documentation, see National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons. P. 36-37.

While the National IDP policy was commended for its comprehensiveness<sup>7</sup>, its implementation has, so far, been, slow and limited. Indeed, the translation of policy level measures into actions is very challenging.

First, although there is an implementation mechanism outlined in the policy (the Provincial Action Plans - PAP), so far, out of three envisioned pilot provinces, only Herat has developed a plan and got it approved. According to respondents from NGOs, because the language in the policy is complicated, civil servants at the sub-national level struggle to identify the right activities that are required to operationalize the policy. The lack of a clear plan at the provincial level leads to duplications of activities, and rights of IDPs are not properly protected. According to the NGO staff members interviewed in this study, it is common that multiple organizations implement similar activities, such as the provision of legal assistance, healthcare services or livelihood support, in a single IDP settlement. All conclude that, in order to increase coordination and enhance efficiency, a coherent provincial-level plan is required. The case of Herat proves that coordination indeed improves when a plan exists. However, this relative success has mostly been visible when it comes to humanitarian response, but coordination remains weak when it comes to sustainable solutions. Succeeding on this front would require more resources and increased capacity to plan long term solutions at the local level.

Second, the other mechanisms in charge of supporting the implementation of the policy at the national level, including the Displacement and Return Executive Committee (DiREC), the Inter-ministerial Coordination Committee (IMCC), and the High Commission for Migration have been largely ineffective to facilitate the implementation of the policy<sup>8</sup>. The MoRR has also shown little success in coordinating principal ministries/agencies (tasked to provide services) and international organizations. Humanitarian organizations have not always been able to demonstrate more rigour in aligning and coordinating their activities to contribute to the successful implementation of the policy, especially with consideration to the provision of long-term and durable solutions. The causes of these weaknesses are varied and include lack of capacity to translate the policy into action, limited resources and bureaucratic complexities.

### **C. Has the Policy Helped in Fulfilling the Needs of the IDPs?**

Since the implementation of the policy has only properly started in Herat, it is difficult to assess its impact. Nevertheless, it seems that the policy has at least played a role in raising awareness of humanitarian workers on who IDPs are and what rights they are entitled to. In addition, the implementation of the PAP in Herat has enabled humanitarian organizations to increase field-level coordination, particularly in the provision of humanitarian assistance to IDPs. For instance, the provincial humanitarian emergency cluster has been able to regularly meet, and decide on the level of emergency aid required for the IDPs. However, this improved coordination among humanitarian actors is largely

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<sup>7</sup> My Children Will Die This Winter' Afghanistan's broken promise to the displaced, Amnesty International, 2016, P. 7, available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/ASA1140172016ENGLISH.PDF>

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*, P. 19-26,



limited to Herat and is predominantly focused on emergency relief, rather than the provision of long-term durable solutions for IDPs.

*“No, I do not want to go back to our village. I want a house and facility to work here and make a living. I want the NGOs and the government to help us. They should pay attention to us. The reason that I want to remain here is insecurity and war in my place of origin.”*

Male IDP, Loya Wala, Kandahar

In Balkh, Nangarhar and Kandahar, since the PAP has not been developed, and given the low level of awareness of the policy among NGO and government staff, coordination and provision of assistance to IDPs have been mainly random and inadequate. In these provinces, the study could not establish a link between the fulfilment of IDP needs and the existence of the policy. In addition to ineffective field-level coordination, the study found that the support and relief projects for IDPs, including Herat, are designed, primarily, for short periods, i.e., 2-3 months, and covers a limited number of needs.

*“NGOs respond to emergency needs with short-term projects, i.e., two-month interventions. Also, different NGOs have different projects. For example, our NGO supports IDPs with temporary shelters, hygiene and sanitation kits while DACAAR is focused on delivering drinking water to them.”*

Provincial NGO worker, urban Kandahar

*“IDPs are provided emergency supports only. There is no shelter support to the IDPs.”*

Provincial NGO worker, Nangarhar

*“We call on the MoRR to do something for us. So far, we have received 94 tents and some relief assistance like bags of flour.... I think we need mostly accommodation in the first place .... the Minister for Social Affairs, Labor, Disabled and Martyrs should come here and see us then put us to work or lay the ground for us to find employment. We have skilled workers like tailors, bricklayers and so on. Till when should we wait for the NGOs to come and help us? No, we want to stand on our own feet.”*

Male IDP, Hazrat-e-Bilal, Balkh

Respondents highlighted that palpable improvement can be seen in the lives of the protracted IDPs who have stayed in the provinces for longer periods, without being able to confidently attribute such changes to the IDP policy. Similarly, for newly arrived IDPs, humanitarian aid has been mainly emergency relief, with an impact on the life of IDPs being difficult to measure. According to NGO staff, in some areas where there is concentrated support for IDPs, i.e., particular IDP settlements where multiple humanitarian organizations are engaged, the living situation has positively changed, but such examples are limited, are mostly in urban areas, and only a few settlements are targeted in such concerted manner. Also, it is unclear how much these relative successes can be attributed to the IDP policy.

To further assess if the policy has helped in fulfilling the needs of IDPs and protecting their rights, this study examined the level of access that displaced people have to basic services in the four provinces. The study found that access to basic services among IDPs varies significantly across provinces. While IDPs in Herat and Nangarhar, in general, reported having some level of access to basic services, interviewed IDPs in Balkh, and Kandahar reported a low level of access to services.

*“We do not have access to the clinics. We use private clinics which costs us. We work outside with carts for our daily life earnings and cannot afford the costs, after all, have to feed my family.”*

Male IDP, Haji Arab, Kandahar

*“There is no primary school here. We only have a tent improvised into a school where more than 300 of our children are learning. No one wants to come here to teach as there is no decent salary or benefits. For example, there is no water or food.”*

Male IDP, Hazrat-e-Bilal, Balkh

This access to basic services for the IDPs also varies in all four provinces in terms of urban versus peri-urban settlements. Peri-urban areas overwhelmingly report a lack of assistance and limited access to basic services. For example, in the province of Herat, in *Shalbafan* urban settlement, IDPs reported having access to electricity, water, sanitation, and other services similar to the host communities, while IDPs in *Shaidayee*, a peri-urban settlement in the same province, reported limited and often irregular access to electricity, drinking water and other humanitarian support. Similarly, in Kandahar, IDPs in *Loyawala* urban settlement report fairly basic access to services in comparison to the peri-urban settlement of *Daman*. A similar trend can be seen in the IDP settlements of Nangarhar and Balkh provinces.

*“We have access to services like water, toilets and electricity. Electricity is not available all the time. A few days ago, it was good, but now we don’t get enough electricity.”*

Female IDP, Loyawala, Kandahar

*“We get the water from the neighbours and sometimes we bring it with the wheelbarrow. We don’t have electricity.”*

Male IDP, Haji Arab, Kandahar

It is also important to highlight that the lack of access to basic services coupled with limited awareness of the policy and legal framework (discussed above) result in IDPs being marginalized from the wider community and unable to demand their rights. IDPs complained that government officials do not listen to their grievances, do not solve their problems and do not respond to their needs and demands. They further highlighted the need for an efficient mechanism to advocate for their needs and protection of their rights.

*“The NGOs have to give us [IDPs] a contact number so that we could call them during emergencies. The government officials are not responsive enough.”*

Provincial NGO worker, urban Kandahar

A more detailed account of the protection of IDP rights and their access to civil documentation, employment and income generation opportunities, education, health and sanitation is given below:

- **Access to civil documentation:** The procedure of obtaining *tazkera* requires IDPs’ return to their place of origin, which is usually not feasible for security reasons or to Kabul which is too expensive. However, financial and security barriers are not the only constraints for IDPs to obtain a *tazkera*; they are often not aware of the process to obtain these civil documents. This situation exerts economic, social and psychological pressure on IDPs. While some organizations have had programs to fund IDPs travels for this purpose, many IDPs are not aware of such services, which are generally limited. Moreover, the lack of documents continues to undermine IDPs access to assistance and services. Those without documents struggle to access public education, meaningful employment, or, to a lesser extent, healthcare.

*“The Malik doesn’t treat us well. They tell us to return to our place of origin. We don’t have tazkeras. When we ask for it, they tell us to go to our place of origin and get it there. We have been referred to government directorates, many times without any result.”*

Female IDP, Billa PD8, Nangarhar

*“We are from Qarabagh district and we need to go to the district for obtaining the tazkera there. If we go there, we have to spend 1,000 Afs per person only for transport and we have to pay 10 Afs for one tazkera. Our children are in school and they are asked for their birth certificates, but we have no money to go to our district and get the tazkera. We fear that they will be expelled from school.”*

Female IDP Shalbafan Herat

*“Our rights are not respected here at all. I hope that government officials help us with acquiring tazkera, birth certificate, etc.”*

Male IDP, Haji Arab, Kandahar

- **Access to education:** Majority of IDPs, particularly in peri-urban settlements in Kandahar and Balkh, were dissatisfied with the education services available, citing long distance as a barrier to their children attending schools. Often, NGO-supported classes inside settlements are not able to enrol all of the children, and when support ends, the classes shut down. IDPs often opt to send their children to work to generate income for their families instead of having them attend schools that are far away, with limited capacity, and for short periods.

*“Our children don’t go to school because the schools are far from here and there are no classes in the settlements for our children.”*

Male IDP, Haji Arab, Kandahar

- **Access to medical care:** In general, most of the interviewed IDPs reported to have limited access to health care. While IDPs settled in urban areas report having better access to health facilities than in peri-urban areas, often, quality of medical care and cost of medicine are among major setbacks. The health facilities near IDP settlements are badly resourced and lack specialized doctors. IDPs added that due to the lack of resources and specialized medical personnel, for serious health issues, they refer to public hospitals that are far and overcrowded. Private medical clinics are very expensive and a large majority of IDPs cannot afford them.

*“There are policies regarding health, accommodation and other things for IDPs which have been adopted by the government but we haven’t seen them in action meaning that we haven’t ended up benefiting from them. Even there is not a doctor to whom we take our sick child. Yesterday we buried two children because of the lack of doctor and other health services.”*

Male IDP, Nahr-e-Shahi, Balkh

*“Even if we go to clinics, they will give a piece of paper and ask us to go to the pharmacy and buy the medicines. But where is the money to buy the medicines?”*

Female IDP, Dasht Shoor, Balkh

- **Access to work and income generation opportunities:** Majority of IDPs, in all four provinces, stated that they face unemployment or underemployment. Lack of skills coerces IDPs toward unstable employment situations mainly because the skills required in urban areas are different than those in rural areas. Also, according to the IDPs, in urban areas, income generation opportunities are highly restricted to male employment, thus leaving most of the IDP women without income or a way to support the family.

*“We are able to find temporary economic opportunities in spring, summer and autumn, however, during winter it is extremely difficult to find any job due to the weather condition.”*

Male IDP, Hazrate Bilal, Balkh

- **Access to water, electricity, and sanitation:** Similar to other services, access to water, electricity and sanitation for IDPs depend on the location of their settlement. IDPs in urban settlements often reported having better and easier access to water and electricity. IDPs residing in peri-urban areas usually struggle to access clean drinking water. Electricity is also irregular. Some

IDPs in Nangarhar and Kandahar reported to have batteries and solar panels for electricity, however, this is not a common feature for IDPs in other provinces. NGOs deliver water in tankers to IDP settlements but, this is reportedly irregular and the delivery is often delayed due to NGOs' internal bureaucratic procedures.

*"We don't have access to electricity and drinking water. We are treated differently from the others. They have houses, water, power, etc., but we don't."*

Female IDP, Qala Maroof, Nangarhar

*"We do not have access to water, electricity and sanitation services. We live here in the desert and nobody cares about us. We displaced here due to war and insecurity."*

*We do not receive the services as the local communities."*

Male IDP, Loya Wala, Kandahar

## D. Is the Policy Relevant to and Applicable in the Afghan Context?

Despite the fact that the policy is not well disseminated across the Afghan administration, humanitarian workers and IDPs, all stakeholders have some ideas of the rights IDPs should be entitled to. Preventing displacement, assisting and protecting IDPs while in displacement, and supporting durable solutions, the policy addresses the main concerns of the displaced, such as security of tenure, access to basic services and livelihood. For instance, in regard to health care, *"the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) will expand health care facilities and services, including for physical rehabilitation, in urban centres with expanding populations which include large numbers of IDPs, so that they are sufficient to meet the needs, and accessible to those living in informal settlements"*<sup>9</sup>. In regard to education, the *"Ministry of Education (MoE), with respect to IDPs (assumes the obligation to ensure that primary and secondary education is free and compulsory for all IDP children, girls, as well as boys" and "no IDP student, will be denied access to a school on the grounds that they have no school records (children can be tested to find their appropriate grade) or no tazkera"*<sup>10</sup>. The policy's objectives and contents are thus still relevant to the Afghan context and none of the interviewed persons in this study questioned its relevance.

Its applicability, instead, appears to be a trickier question. First, the language of the policy is not adapted to its audience, i.e. the people the policy protects and the people who are required to operationalize it. Second, with a low capacity in the sub-national administration, it would be extremely useful to develop tools and standard operating procedures (SOPs) to guide government staff on how to translate policy measures into concrete actions adapted to their local context. Third, the accountability mechanisms within the Afghan administration and toward the government (for NGOs) is non-existent or extremely weak. Fourth, considering the difficult economic and social situation in Afghanistan, financial constraints

<sup>9</sup> National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, p.43

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p.45

are going to constitute the main barrier to policy implementation. Host communities sometimes suffer from extreme poverty so the shortage of resources requires prioritizing one vulnerable population over another, or prioritizing among the rights that can be protected for all.

So, the policy can be assessed as overall relevant, but it has not been set for success, having received little of the support it required to address the many challenges it faces. It can become applicable if the right technical support is provided, but more importantly if resources are made available to operationalize it. In a country where resources are increasingly scarce and where the economic situation is aggravating, it is difficult to envisage that the government will prioritize the IDP policy over the many other needs, at this stage.

*“As an IDP, I request from the president of Afghanistan to invest and provide work opportunities for the people who need work. We request from all the related organizations such as Breshna<sup>11</sup> to help us. We need their financial help urgently due to winter. Also, I request from the United Nations and international organizations to help us with food and water. Also, build schools near our camps, our children don’t go to schools.”*

Male IDP, Dasht Shoor, Balkh

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<sup>11</sup> Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS) is an independent and autonomous company established under The Corporations and Limited Liabilities Law of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (IROA). DABS is a limited liability company with all its equity shares owned by the Government of Afghanistan (GoA). The company was incorporated on 4th May 2008 (15 Saur 1387) and replaces Da Afghanistan Breshna Moassassa (DABM) as the national power utility. DABS will operate and manage electric power generation, import, transmission, and distribution throughout Afghanistan on a commercial basis. <https://main.dabs.af>

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. Increase IDPs and Host Community Members' Awareness of IDP Rights and Policy

Most of the IDPs are not aware of any policy at the national level that defines their rights. This knowledge gap, however, does not mean that IDPs are not aware of their rights. Majority of the IDPs are able to articulate their rights as citizens of Afghanistan. In spite of this, they are unable to practically claim their rights. The study finds that it is important to further raise awareness among IDPs for the following two reasons:

1. People who know about the policy are more vocal about their rights
2. While community representatives and *Maliks* are helpful in relaying information to their communities, they might sometimes abuse their position of power and IDPs would rather have first-hand information.

***Recommendation 1:*** *Develop and implement a nation-wide IDP awareness strategy involving service delivery ministries and relevant government bodies such as MoRR and DiREC, and community leaders*

The strategy shall target IDPs and host communities. Ideally, this strategy should be developed, planned and implemented by the government, even if donor funding is necessary through technical assistance or financial support to certain activities.

At its core, the strategy must acknowledge the different types of IDPs and their socio-economic conditions in each province. Ideally, it should be integrated into the National Action Plan (NAP), however, in a pragmatic sense, the awareness strategy, for each province shall also be implemented independently considering the delays in the development of NAPs and PAPs. For the awareness strategy, various dissemination and public outreach mediums should be considered including, but not limited to, social media, printed publications, TV, radio, door-to-door visits and community-level gathering<sup>12</sup>.

Men can be targeted through organizing information seminar(s) in mosques after Friday prayer. Such events can be coordinated with the local religious heads (mullahs and community leaders) to ask IDPs and host community members to stay for a bit longer at the end of the prayer for an information-sharing session. Such sessions should be organized in major IDP settlements and residential areas with high numbers of IDPs.

The awareness strategy should not overlook women, even if they are not traditionally the ones in charge of approaching the government to claim their rights (task men are usually responsible for within the household). Widows and women whose husbands work abroad are particularly vulnerable and require

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<sup>12</sup> To be considered only post-COVID 19

support to claim their rights. In addition, women can influence men in their household, asking them to make petitions to the government, especially on issues women are particularly most interested in (health, education and access to water and sanitation). Considering that women's mobility can be restricted, radio messages could be considered as the main way of disseminating information.

It is essential that the awareness strategy **equally focuses on providing information to a wide public, including host communities and those affected by displacements** to increase understanding and cooperation. Considering the high need for more peace- and confidence-building initiatives, the awareness strategy should be aimed at bringing and/or increasing peaceful coexistence highlighting examples of cooperation between IDPs and host communities.

Finally, the awareness strategy must be accompanied by a **robust monitoring and evaluation mechanism** to enable NGOs and government offices to build on achievements, identify gaps, and incorporate learned lessons during the implementation.

## **B. Enhance Relevant Decision-Makers' Awareness of the IDP Policy, IDP Rights, and Humanitarian Support Protocols**

Most of NGO staff and government officials are aware of the IDP national policy. However, this awareness is shallow and does not mean that they are savvy with the principles of the policy. Dissemination of the policy, at the provincial levels, has been challenging due to two main reasons. First, policy workshops have been conducted for a limited number of NGO staff, and second, as per the interviewed NGO staff, the language of the policy is complicated and they report their difficulties to implement it without a detailed action plan or guidance prescribing specific actions/roles in support to the government.

***Recommendation 2:** Conduct awareness workshops for government officials, particularly for DoRR and provincial municipality staff.*

MoRR should be supported to design and deliver awareness-raising activities at the provincial level. In addition to disseminating the National IDP policy measures, the workshops must be designed to target three different aspects:

- Government staff engaged in high-level coordination with NGOs, mainly in the capital, to increase understanding of different policy measures and to raise awareness on the need to prioritize such measures during budgeting exercises.
- DoRR and municipality staff to increase their understanding of coordination and communication processes and steps, in line with the policy provisions.
- Staff from line ministries at the provincial level, to increase not only their understanding of the policy but also their skills to translate policy level measures into concrete actions.



**Recommendation 3:** *Develop planning, coordination and monitoring tools to help local authorities develop PAPs and train staff on how to use them.*

Tools could include prioritization matrixes, needs assessment guidelines, examples of actions for each of the measures, coordination meeting formats, monitoring framework model, etc. In addition, standard operating procedures could be developed to provide a step-by-step process to be followed by stakeholders in the planning process, including defining the responsibilities of each of them. Stakeholders should be trained in these various tools and processes, mostly through mentoring support.

**Recommendation 4:** *Conduct awareness-raising workshops for NGO staff both in Kabul and provinces.*

In addition to disseminating policy content, these workshops should constitute an occasion to review current programmatic approaches and assess their alignment with the policy. It can also reflect on positive and negative coordination experience, in order to integrate such experiences in the learning process. Discussions on the transition from short-term (emergency) support to long-term durable solutions would also be useful. Following such workshops, it appears necessary that country offices mentor and coach their staff based at the provincial level on implementing decisions taken by the organization.

In general, and for all three recommendations in this section, the objective should be that government and NGO are fully aware of their responsibilities toward IDPs. They need to understand that their responsibility entails identifying IDPs' needs in terms of access to basic services, prioritizing the response to such needs and ensuring that funds are available for delivering such services. Capacity-building activities would ideally include lectures, practical work (case studies and exercises) and coaching in real situations.

### **C. Develop/Use Mechanisms for Ensuring that the Rights of IDPs are Protected.**

At provincial levels, the implementation of the policy has been mired with complexities and delays including but not limited to the lack of provincial action plans, financial limitations, lack of political will, and the limited capacity of government staff. Only Herat managed to develop an action plan that has helped donors align their programmatic objectives with the IDP policy and increase provincial coordination between NGOs and the government. In absence of a PAP, programmatic and coordination issues remain unsolved with little or no attention to long-term durable solutions for IDPs.

**Recommendation 5:** *Speed up the development and approval of PAP in provinces with high number of IDPs.*

To do so, the first step should consist of understanding the reasons why this has not been done yet in pilot provinces. In addition, the development of the National Action Plan would probably help provincial authorities in developing their own plan, as they would certainly find it easier to adopt practical and clear programmatic measures locally rather than translating a conceptual list of rights into actions. Coaching support to provincial authorities should also facilitate the development of the PAPs.

The four provinces covered under this study hosts the largest number of IDPs in Afghanistan – though with varying levels. The IDP situation has grown very complex. For instance, interventions required to support protracted IDPs might be different than newly arrived ones. Similarly, the support needed for urban IDP settlement might be different from peri-urban settlements. Therefore, the PAP should acknowledge such differences as part of its design by breaking down such needs and developing area-specific plans. This should link short and longer-term needs of IDPs based on their area and locality and ensure that it involves all humanitarian actors working in this area do this together and consult community members. Additionally, each area plan should be accompanied by a robust monitoring plan to ensure that implementation is in accordance with the set goals, objectives, and any learned lessons will be incorporated in a timely manner.

**Recommendation 6:** *Set up a system to hold the government accountable.*

This can be done using one of the two existing (or about to exist) helplines: (i) humanitarian helpline and Complaint Response Mechanism (CRM) developed by Welthungerhilfe (WHH) to be implemented in the MoRR, and (ii) the humanitarian helpline for IDPs and returnees (Awaaz) funded by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), European Union (EU) and the World Food Programme (WFP) and run by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). A properly working CRM can improve stakeholders' accountability, and enable IDPs to raise their voice and file complaints through an accessible channel without the fear of retribution.

The CRM should contain straightforward complaints registration and response procedures, by establishing a Complaints Desk inside MoRR (presently planned for in the WHH plan). It shall define the roles and responsibilities such as who should register complaints, who will do monitoring, and a follow-up mechanism needs to be set for registered complaints. Complaint registry shall consider local context which might be different in each province, locality or settlement. Special attention should be given to accessibility, confidentiality and data protection.

## **D. Improve Implementation of the Policy**

Considering the limited and over-stretched resources of the Afghan government, complete adherence to the provisions of the IDP policy is very challenging. Humanitarian organizations, in order to fill the void left by the government, have been largely focusing on the provision of basic needs like food, water, shelter and sanitation. Most IDPs expressed their dissatisfaction towards the support provided by the government and humanitarian organizations – saying that this assistance only covers short-term needs and does not address longer-term issues. They criticized the currently used project-based approach, leading to issues being addressed in an *ad hoc* manner without addressing their core livelihood problems. Even if they know their rights, they still have this feeling of legal insecurity, inability to address grievances and lack of perspective in what is being decided for them as the recipient of aid and policy decisions, rather than actors.

**Recommendation 7:** *Implement feasible and yet critical aspects of the policy.*

As a priority, the government should consider focusing on implementing two aspects of the policy:

- As per government commitment in the National IDP Policy and protecting the rights of IDPs to access civil documents, **decentralize the issuance process of the *tazkera***. The government, in close collaboration with relevant NGOs (mainly funding and technical experts), must enable the provincial government offices to issue *tazkeras* to IDPs by changing the centralized regulation. Additionally, NGOs and other civil society actors can further advocate for such a policy-level change in *tazkera* regulation.
- In addition, **discussions need to take place with CCAP** (MRRD and IDLG, as well as their partner ministries: MAIL, MoE and MoPH) along with **similar national programs** to see how the Minimum Service Standards should be delivered in communities with IDPs (as well as in their community of origin to facilitate return and reintegration).

## ANNEX – CASE STUDIES

### A. Case Study - Herat

#### 1. IDPs awareness of the National IDP Policy

Herat, a province in the western part of the country, hosts the largest number of IDPs in Afghanistan. Years of conflict and natural disasters have urged many from neighbouring provinces to leave their dwellings and migrate to this province. Herat is the only province in Afghanistan where an action plan to implement the National IDP Policy at local level has been developed. Most of the IDPs were unaware of any policy for the displaced, and considered such documents as not useful as long as they have limited effect on their daily lives.

#### Overview of displacement

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Herat hosts an estimated 887,343 IDPs. Among them, 59% were displaced by conflict and 41% by natural disaster. Majority of the displaced are settled in five districts including: 332,020 IDPs in Herat city, 109,359 in Kharukh, 94,586 in Guzara, 65,845 in Injil, and 59,563 in Obe. This makes Herat one of the top five provinces with the highest number of IDPs.

Box 1. Overview of displacement in Herat. Source: International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Amnesty International.

*“Even if such policy exists, it does not necessarily have any meaning in our lives”*  
*Female IDP, Shaidayee, Herat*

While IDPs are not all aware of the National IDP policy, they are however, aware of their basic rights as citizens and the services and assistance that they are entitled to receive.

*“We have the right to have a better life – which we do not have right now”.*  
*Female IDP, Shaidayee, Herat*

For most of the IDPs, channels and platforms to implement and advocate for their rights are not clear. IDPs feel that the fact that their rights are not properly protected, among others their right to shelter, food and employment, has significantly marginalised them. This was particularly highlighted in their depiction of the tension between displaced populations and the host communities.

*“Our rights as IDPs are not respected here because the host communities do not treat us well, and if sometimes we ask about our rights, they compel us to leave the area.”*  
*Male IDP, Shalbafan, Herat*

#### 2. Government and humanitarian organizations approach

In addition to discontent with local authorities, IDPs are concerned about IDP-verification process conducted by NGOs and government agencies. IDPs believe that despite going through multiple and

often rigorous aid eligibility surveys, provision of humanitarian assistance and basic services are limited and not delivered fairly and equally.

*“Look, if we were not IDPs then why did they conduct biometric scan of our family members? Why did they distribute IDP cards to us? There is no relief in sight, there is no help, there is no planning for us.”*  
 Male IDP, Shaidayee, Herat

Furthermore, IDPs feel that there is prevalent favouritism and mismanagement in the distribution of aid. IDPs do not receive the support they are entitled to as citizens of Afghanistan. IDPs also believe that there is limited accountability and transparency mechanisms in place for the assistance provided to them.

*“When humanitarian organizations provide support for IDPs, they should not distribute the supports through Arbabs, Wakil Guzars and Maliks because they do not distribute the aid fairly to all IDPs.”*  
 Female IDP, Shaidayee, Herat

### 3. Access to facilities and services

IDPs are discontent with the different levels of access to water, electricity, and sanitation among IDP settlements. Not only have IDPs been receiving limited services, their living conditions have also deteriorated due to continued unemployment, inadequate attention from the authorities, and growing insecurity in their settlement areas.

*“I have been here for two years. But I can tell you that we are getting worse by day as we don’t see any flow of relief and help coming through.”*  
 Male IDP, Shalbafan, Herat

### 4. Participation in decision making, integration, and return

In general, IDPs feel unable to make government agencies and NGOs pay more attention to their needs. IDPs want an efficient mechanism within the government agencies and NGOs to help them address urgent needs, and in turn, enable the decision makers to take more informed decisions. Also, humanitarian workers believe that if IDPs are more engaged in the decisions that are made about them, over time, they can bring positive changes.

*“If they are included, it would have a great effect as a result...IDPs can play a role and they should do it in an organized way for example, they should have community representatives to help them advocating for their rights”*  
 NGO Worker, Herat

While most of the IDPs hope to return to their places of origin, they fear the growing insecurity and limited livelihood opportunities in their places of origin might make it impossible for them to do so. With the prospects of return looking grim, many IDPs, though reluctant, preferred to integrated locally.

## B. Case Study – Nangarhar

### 1. IDPs awareness of the National IDP Policy

After Herat, Nangarhar hosts the largest number of IDPs in Afghanistan. The conflict between Government Forces, Taliban and ISIS has been a major source of IDPs influx from nearby districts. People flee from the insecure districts to districts where government presence is more pronounced. In spite of the large number of IDPs, Nangarhar lacks a provincial action plan<sup>13</sup> to guide government and humanitarian organization's efforts.

In terms of awareness, some of the IDPs in this province were aware of the National IDP policy. Reportedly, they were informed through training sessions conducted by some NGOs aiming at disseminating information about IDPs' rights, as well as the responsibilities of provincial government and humanitarian organizations toward them.

#### Overview of displacement

Based on IOM data, Nangarhar hosts about 299,259 IDPs, who are mainly residing in four districts as follows: (Behsud hosting 83,657 IDPs, Surkh Rod having 45,003 IDPs, Jalalabad city with 27,588 IDPs, and Chaparhar in which 20,795 IDPs reside). Reportedly, based on the National IDP Policy, a provincial action plan was developed in Nangarhar, however upon review, it was not operationalized.

Box 2. Overview of displacement in Nangarhar. Source: International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Amnesty International.

*"We learned these about IDP National Policy through elders such as Maliks (head of the village). When we were displaced to this village, Malik gave us some information".*

Male IDP, Billa PD8, Nangarhar

Despite a number of seminars and workshops conducted for IDPs in this province, majority of female respondents had no information about the IDP Policy. Nevertheless, similar to IDPs in other provinces, they could generally articulate their rights and the scope of government's responsibilities.

*"We should be provided with schools and clinics. We have the right to live freely. The NGOs organized a seminar about our rights about a year ago. The seminar was for both male and female".*

Female IDP, Qala Maroof, Nangarhar

### 2. Government and humanitarian organizations approach

<sup>13</sup> WHH reports that efforts are underway to develop a more comprehensive Provincial Action Plan (PAP) for IDPs considering the urgency and durability of displacement in the province.

In terms of humanitarian assistance, IDPs were in general concerned with the limited and random provision of support, emergency relief. IDPs in Nangahar were particularly concerned that the government and NGOs are keen to have them return rather than working on set of long-term durable solutions to enable IDPs to integrate in the province, particularly, urban areas where more income generation opportunities are available.

*“No, we don’t want to get back there. We are afraid that security will once again get worse if we get back to our place of origins. The government and NGOs are expected to help us and provide us the necessary support”*

*Male IDP, Billa, Nangarhar*

### 3. Access to facilities and services

In terms of water accessibility and sanitation, majority of the IDPs were unhappy with the lack of basic resources and services, particularly drinking water. Most of the IDPs added that they do not have access to electricity and only few with solar panels have access to electricity, while majority cannot buy them.

*“We don’t have access to electricity, and drinking water. We are treated differently from the others. They have houses, water, power, etc., but we don’t.”*

*Female IDP, Qala Maroof, Nangarhar*

Similar to other provinces, IDPs in Nangarhar were not able to obtain *tazkeras* from the provincial offices in their settlement areas and have to go back to their places of origin or to Kabul. This however exerts pressure and extra burden on IDPs, who have no or limited income.

### 4. Participation in decision making, integration, and return

With respect to participation in decision making, IDPs were interested to have a more efficient information sharing system by the government and NGOs and particularly suggested use of local mosques for dissemination of information. Unlike in other province, IDPs in Nangahar requested more active participation of the affected population in the policy development and programme design, rather than mere involvement of their representative and community leaders (Maliks).

*“The Malik doesn’t treat us well. They tell us to return to our place of origin. We don’t have Tazkeras. When we ask for it, they tell us to go to our place of origin and get it there. We have been referred to government directorates, many times without any result.”*

*Female IDP, Billa PD8, Nangarhar*

While most of the interviewed IDPs were keen to return, they emphasized that it is an option only when the security situation get better.

*“Yes, we do. We want to go back there. The government can send their soldiers and finish the problems there. We want to go back there because all our houses and house materials are there.”*



Female IDP, Billa PD8, Nangarhar |

## C. Case Study – Balkh

### 1. IDPs awareness of the National IDP policy

Balkh is also among the four provinces that hosts a large number of IDPs who have mostly been displaced from the northern provinces of the country. Similar to other provinces, IDPs were largely unaware of any policy pertaining to displaced people. A limited number of interviewed IDPs said that they were aware of the existence of an IDP policy through leaflets distributed by the humanitarian organizations during food distribution.

#### Overview of displacement

Balkh Province hosts an estimated number of 160,814 IDPs. Mazar-e-Sharif hosts 61,026 IDPs, and Nahr-e-Sharif hosts 45,756 IDPs. IDPs in Balkh City are mainly from the northern provinces of Samangan, Sar-e Pul, Jawzjan and Faryab. In Balkh, IDPs identified conflict and drought as the main reasons for their displacement.

Box 3. Overview of displacement in Balkh. Source: International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Amnesty International.

*“[IDPs] are citizens of Afghanistan... No one can violate their rights... IDPs have equal rights as host community members... IDPs have the right to vote, stand for elections, and the government is obliged to provide food, financial support, medical, educational, and other sanitation related services.”*

Male Community Leader, Balkh

While most of the IDPs were able to spell out their rights, they were concerned that their rights are not being fulfilled. Humanitarian assistance both from NGOs and government agencies are inadequate and most of the time does not meet their basic needs.

### 2. Government and humanitarian organizations approach

In addition to low levels of humanitarian assistance, IDPs were concerned that the ongoing conflict between government and Taliban, in Balkh, has further aggravated their situation. Both government resources and attention have shifted to conflict instead of supporting IDP with durable support programs. In spite of being discontent, IDP representatives requested MoRR to play a more proactive role, particularly, in coordinating aid activities, and communicating with the NGOs about their needs. They added that donors usually support a specific area, or limited number of people, but MoRR should support all IDPs regardless of where they come from or which ethnicity they represent.

*“There are policies regarding health, accommodation and other things for IDPs which have been adopted by the government but we haven’t seen them in action meaning that we haven’t ended up benefiting from them. Even there is not a doctor to whom we take our sick child. Yesterday we buried two children thanks to lack of doctor and other health services”.*

Male IDP, Nahre-Shahi, Balkh

### 3. Access to facilities and services

According to interviewed IDPs, humanitarian organizations have dug water wells, setup classes for children education, and provided sanitation services, i.e., latrines, However, they are very limited and do not satisfy their needs. In addition, IDPs have either very limited or no access to medical care, public schools, and electricity. IDPs added that majority of displaced people do not have *tazkeras* or other legal documents. IDPs added that although access to above mentioned services is necessary and important, they are more concerned about lack of income generation opportunities in the province, especially in cold winter times.

*“We are able to find temporary economic opportunities in Spring, Summer and Autumn, however, during the winter it is extremely difficult to find any job due to the weather condition”.*

Male IDP, Hazrate Bilal, Balkh

### 4. Participation in decision making, integration, and return

In general, IDPs were in favour of increased participation of their representatives in the decision that are made about them. Similarly, most of the IDPs preferred to stay in Balkh and were not keen to return to their provinces due to insecurity and lack of livelihood opportunities. In spite of limited income generation opportunities, IDPs were hopeful about prospects of integration in the Balkh province.

*“As an IDP, I request from the president of Afghanistan to invest and provide work opportunities for the people who need work. We request from all the related organizations such as Breshna<sup>14</sup> to help us. We need their financial help urgently due to winter. Also, I request from the United Nations and international organizations to help us with food and water. Also, build schools near our camps, our children do go to schools.”*

Male IDP, Dasht Shoor, Balkh

<sup>14</sup> Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS) is an independent and autonomous company established under The Corporations and Limited Liabilities Law of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (IROA). DABS is a limited liability company with all its equity shares owned by the Government of Afghanistan (GoA). The company was incorporated on 4th May 2008 (15 Saur 1387) and replaces Da Afghanistan Breshna Moassassa (DABM) as the national power utility. DABS will operate and manage electric power generation, import, transmission, and distribution throughout Afghanistan on a commercial basis. <https://main.dabs.af>

## D. Case Study - Kandahar

### 1. IDPs awareness of the National IDP policy

Kandahar province hosts thousands of IDPs in the south of Afghanistan. Conflict and insecurity are major reasons for displacement. While IDPs, similar to other provinces, were able to articulate their rights as citizens of Afghanistan, they were generally not aware of any policy, at the national level, defining their rights. Lack of a provincial action plan coupled with low awareness of government officials from the IDP policy have resulted mostly in emergency and often random assistance to IDPs in this province.

#### Overview of displacement

According to IOM reports, 223,832 IDPs reside in Kandahar, whose major causes of displacement are conflict, insecurity and violence. Unlike Herat, Nangarhar, and Balkh, this province has not been selected as a pilot location. Also, no action plan has been developed to tackle the IDP issue in the province, so far.

Box 4. Overview of displacement in Kandahar.  
 Source: International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Amnesty International.

*“We have the right to have shelters and homes. We are really tired of displacement; we have been displaced so many times. We hope we will have homes and lands. We expect the government to provide us the necessary support”.*

Male IDP, Haji Arab, Kandahar

IDPs were dissatisfied with the lack of attention from the government officials and humanitarian organizations. They were concerned that their rights are neither respected nor protected.

*“Our rights are not respected here at all. I hope that government officials help us with acquiring Tazkera, birth certificate, etc.*

Male IDP, Haji Arab, Kandahar

### 2. Government and humanitarian organizations approach

In spite of the general dissatisfaction with the government and humanitarian approach so far, IDPs were still hopeful that government agencies, particularly the provincial offices, would pay more attention to their needs. Humanitarian organizations, likewise, expect the government agencies to focus on provision of durable solutions to IDPs, while NGOs are working to deliver emergency assistance.

*“NGOs respond to emergency needs with short-term projects, i.e., two-month interventions. Also, different NGOs have different projects. For example, our NGO supports IDPs with temporary shelters, hygiene and sanitation kits while DACAAR is focused on delivering drinking water to them.*

Provincial NGO worker, urban Kandahar

IDPs added that the government officials do not listen to their complaints, do not solve their problems and do not respond to their needs and demands. IDPs highlighted the need for an efficient mechanism to advocate for their needs and protection of their rights.

*“The NGOs have to give us [IDPs] a contact number so that we could call them during emergency situations. The government officials are not responsive enough.*

Provincial NGO worker, urban Kandahar

### 3. Access to facilities and services

Due to long distance from urban areas, IDPs have hard time accessing schools and clinics. This remoteness of IDP settlements have also economically deprived IDPs and has significantly limited their access to basic services such as drinking water, electricity and livelihood opportunities.

*“our children do not go to the schools because the schools are far from us and there are no sub-classes in the settlements here for our children”.*

Male IDP, Haji Arab, Kandahar

*“We do not have access to water, electricity and sanitation services. We live here in the desert and nobody cares about us. We displaced here due to war and insecurity.*

*We do not receive the services as the local communities”*

Male IDP, Loya Wala, Kandahar

In terms of medical services, respondents in Kandahar said that they lack access to clinics and medical services. Most of the IDPs refer to private clinics where medical care costs are high and they are unable to pay for it.

*“We do not have access to the clinics. We use the private clinics which costs us. We work outside with carts for our daily life earnings and cannot afford the costs, after all, have to feed my family.”*

Male IDP, Haji Arab, Kandahar

### 4. Participation in decision making, integration and return

In Kandahar, IDPs were eager to have a more robust decision-making process where their elders or representatives are involved in decisions are made about their needs and their future – either eventual return or gradual integration. Due to insecurity and conflict in their places of origin, most of IDPs were keen to stay in Kandahar where comparatively more livelihood opportunities are available.

*“No, I do not want to go back to our village. I want a house and facility to work here and make a living. I want the NGOs and the government to help us. They should pay attention. The reason that I want to remain here is insecurity and wars in my place of origin”.*

Male IDP, Loya Wala, Kandahar



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