

AFGHANISTAN

# Protection Assessment of Conflict-Affected Populations

Assessment Report

May 2018



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Cover photo: Children play in an informal settlement in the province of Herat, Afghanistan © REACH, 2017

### About REACH

REACH is a joint initiative of two international non-governmental organizations - ACTED and IMPACT Initiatives - and the UN Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNOSAT). REACH's mission is to strengthen evidence-based decision making by aid actors through efficient data collection, management and analysis before, during and after an emergency. By doing so, REACH contributes to ensuring that communities affected by emergencies receive the support they need. All REACH activities are conducted in support to and within the framework of inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. For more information please visit our website: [www.reach-initiative.org](http://www.reach-initiative.org). You can contact us directly at: [geneva@reach-initiative.org](mailto:geneva@reach-initiative.org) and follow us on Twitter @REACH\_info.

## SUMMARY

Afghanistan continues to face extensive humanitarian challenges caused by conflict and displacement. In 2017, ongoing armed conflict displaced at least 360,000 individuals within Afghanistan,<sup>1</sup> contributing to an estimated total of 1.3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) by the end of 2017.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, since the start of 2018, a further 127,000 individuals have been internally displaced by conflict, and the country has received an estimated 300,000 Afghan returnees from Iran and 15,000 from Pakistan.<sup>3</sup> To add to the complexity of the situation, an estimated 220,000 Pakistani refugees are currently residing in the south-east of Afghanistan, and also require the support and assistance of the humanitarian community.<sup>4</sup> Each of these conflict-displaced groups face a diverse though distinct set of protection concerns. Nonetheless, while previous monitoring activities have indicated rising levels of vulnerability among conflict-displaced populations, comprehensive quantitative protection-based data has thus far been lacking.

This Protection Assessment of Conflict-Affected Populations (PACAP) aims to identify the impact of conflict, particularly on the protection concerns of displaced populations before, during and after displacement and outline the protection environment in the area of residence for conflict-affected populations that did not displace. The assessment further differentiates between the protection needs and vulnerabilities of recent IDPs, non-recent IDPs,<sup>5</sup> returnee (these three categories are collectively referred to as ‘displaced households’ throughout the report), as well as Pakistani refugee households and Afghan households that remain in conflict-affected areas. This provides depth and breadth to existing information provisions while expanding research to fill information gaps relevant to protection programming in Afghanistan.

Whilst the assessment found that 37% of the assessed IDP and returnee households were displaced more than once, the report and analysis is focused on the impact of a household’s most recent displacement.<sup>6</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all findings are in regard to a household’s latest displacement and thereby not necessarily in comparison to a household’s situation in their area of origin.

This assessment was designed by REACH in support of the Afghanistan Protection Cluster (APC) and partner organisations, to build an analysis framework that aligns indicators with the programmatic aims of the APC and its partners. The main PACAP dataset consists of 17,845 structured interviews in all 34 provinces of Afghanistan, collected between the 17 March and 3 May 2018.<sup>7</sup> The interviews were randomly sampled and stratified according to displacement status, including recent IDP, non-recent IDP, returnee, refugee, and host community households. Findings based on the household-level survey are generalisable at the provincial level for displaced populations overall, and at regional level when comparing between displacement groups, with a confidence level of 95% and a 5% margin of error. In addition to the quantitative survey, 35 focus group discussion (FGDs) were held across all regions of Afghanistan. First, 30 FGDs were conducted with selected representatives of female- and youth-support groups to gain a better understanding of sensitive gender-based and child-protection issues. Second, five FGDs were conducted with purposively sampled representatives of displaced communities to supplement and better understand quantitative findings. Furthermore, the assessment aims to contrast the generalisable findings on conflict-displaced and host households with initial insights on conflict-affected affected, Hard to Reach areas. To this end, a set of protection-based questions was incorporated into the Afghanistan Hard to Reach Assessment (AHTRA), which conducted a total of 1,126 Key Informant interviews (KIIs) in hard-to-reach districts of Afghanistan,

<sup>1</sup> OCHA, “Afghanistan: Humanitarian Needs Overview”, December 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Internally Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) “IDMC Global Figures 2017”, 2017.

<sup>3</sup> IOM, “Afghanistan: Weekly Situation Report”, 20-26 May 2018

<sup>4</sup> NRC, “Global Report on Internal Displacement”, 2017.

<sup>5</sup> IDP households that were displaced more than 6 months ago are considered non-recent IDP households.

<sup>6</sup> Throughout the report, the term ‘displaced households’ refers to recent IDPs, non-recent IDPs and returnees only. Refugees are addressed separately.

<sup>7</sup> The sampling frame was based on previous datasets, collected by REACH, UNHCR, and IOM DTM.

which was carried out by REACH between March and May 2018.<sup>8</sup> Key informants were purposively selected based on their position in the communities (doctors, school teachers, etc.). Findings of FGDs or KIs are not representative and were therefore not systematically compared to population groups or protection concerns identified in the household surveys. Key findings of the assessment include:

### Demographics and Displacement Characteristics

- The vast majority (91%) of IDP households (both recent and non-recent) were forced to leave their previous locations due to armed conflict or harassment/intimidation by armed actors. In contrast, the main push factor for returnee households was forced expulsion, with 64% of returnee households stating this to be the reason for their return to Afghanistan.
- More than half (51%) of the female-headed returnee households, which made up 8% of assessed returnee households, reported not to be registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), compared to 41% of male-headed returnee households. Returnee households that were not registered with UNHCR more often (71%) reported having been forced to return to Afghanistan, compared to households that were registered with UNHCR (59%).
- After their most recent displacement, displaced households had, on average, a monthly income 17% lower than before their displacement and earned, on average, 24% less than host community households. The most financially vulnerable group were households that did not have any member owning a Tazkira,<sup>9</sup> as these, on average, earned 46% less than other displaced households in their current location. Female-headed households reported an average monthly income in their current location that was 24% less than male-headed households.
- Almost half (46%) of displaced households reported having a fixed plan to return to their area of origin (AoO) within the 6 months following the household survey, though strong regional trends were noted. In the west only 4% of households reported a firm plan to return in the 6 months following the survey, compared to 78% of households in the south. Of those displaced households that did not have a plan to return, 35% wished to return, but saw no possibility to do so, while 65% preferred their current location due to better livelihoods opportunities and/or access to services.

### Protection Vulnerabilities and Concerns During Displacement

- During their travel to return to Afghanistan, 44% of returnee households reported to have been subject to intimidation, harassment or were forced to pay a bribe. This was a significantly larger proportion than recent IDP (35%) and non-recent IDP households (32%) and may highlight the extra challenges returnee households face at the border or border region.
- Returnee households not registered with UNHCR faced harassment or forced bribery in 55% of the cases, compared to 36% of returnee households that were registered with UNHCR. Returnee households not registered with the UNHCR may accordingly be forced to return through less secure routes rendering them more vulnerable.
- Overall, 18% of displaced households reported that at least one member was physically injured during displacement. The majority of these injuries were, however, not directly caused by armed conflict, with less than 1% of IDP and returnee households reporting injuries through weapons, mines, explosive remnants of war (ERWs) or pressure plate improvised explosive devices (PPIEDs) during displacement. This indicates the physical danger of displacement in difficult terrain in Afghanistan, particularly when fleeing at night to avoid being detected by armed actors.

<sup>8</sup> For more information see the REACH AHTRA report, to be published August 2018.

<sup>9</sup> A Tazkira is the Afghan national identification document issued by the Afghan government and serves as a proof of identity and citizenship. A Tazkira is commonly required for an individual to access employment, education, housing, and humanitarian assistance.



- Across all displaced households, 69% reported that women in the household did not have access to medical facilities during displacement, though in the east this proportion rose to 90% of households. Additionally, returnee households that crossed back into Afghanistan without being registered with UNHCR were reported to be the most vulnerable sub-group, with 75% reporting women not being able to access medical facilities.
- Households with a higher average income were less likely to encounter armed fighting during their displacement, even if focused solely on households that displaced within a single region of Afghanistan. Higher economic capabilities may accordingly enable households to afford safer means of transportation during displacement, leaving poorer households most vulnerable to security risks during displacement.

### Impact of Displacement on Protection Vulnerabilities and Concerns

- In their previous location in Afghanistan, 87% of IDP households reported to have faced armed conflict during the 30 days prior to displacement, with the highest proportion reported in the east at 94%. In contrast, 14% of returnee households reported armed fighting in their prior location outside Afghanistan.
- Displaced households in the north were found to have the most difficulty avoiding armed conflict and military airstrikes after displacement, with 23% reporting having experienced armed conflict and 14% military airstrikes since their most recent displacement (compared to the national average of 14% and 5%, respectively). This indicates that displaced households in the north were less able to settle in conflict-free areas after their displacement, compared to displaced households in other regions of Afghanistan.
- While the proportion of displaced households reporting killing and maiming as the main concern of men sank from 30% to 3% after displacement, the proportion of displaced households reporting psychological trauma as the main concern among men more than tripled after displacement, from 4% to 13%. In contrast, women were reported by 11% of households to have already had psychological trauma as their main concern before displacement and by 14% of households after displacement. If only considering the response of female household heads this proportion further rises to 19% before and 16% after displacement.
- Households that reported psychological concerns as their main concern after displacement spent on average 4.5 times more on repaying debts/loans than households that did not state psychological concerns of men or women (AFN 1,730 [USD 25] vs AFN 374 [USD 5]).<sup>10</sup> This indicates that being indebted, potentially as a result of costs incurred due to displacement, had a significant impact on the mental health of male and female household members.
- In the east, 77% of displaced households displayed high to extreme scores in the multi-sector Coping Strategies Index (mSCI), in comparison to 8% of households in the central region. By measuring the frequency and severity of coping strategies households rely on, the mSCI provides an insight into the overall situation of household stress levels. Displaced households in the east accordingly faced the most difficulties adjusting to their new location and had to rely on negative coping strategies with greater severity and frequency.
- Displaced households without any members possessing a Tazkira similarly struggled in their current location with 63% relying on high to extreme coping strategies, as compared to 43% of displaced households with at least one Tazkira.

### Specific Protection Concerns

- Overall, 9% of displaced households reported having at least one economic contributor under the age of 16 years. Recent IDP households in the south (25%) and the central (18%) regions were more likely to have at least one child economic contributor, compared with non-recent IDP households (16% and 8%

<sup>10</sup> AFN to USD conversions are based on the official exchange rates of 01 May 2018 (AFN 70.3 / USD 1), provided by the Central Bank of Afghanistan at [www.dab.gov.af/en](http://www.dab.gov.af/en).

respectively). This may indicate that over time, displaced households find alternative means of income and no longer have to rely on income generation through children. Children of a household with a female or disabled head were furthermore particularly likely to have to support the family as an economic contributor (21% and 15%, respectively).

- In the south, 40% of displaced households reported to know of harassment or violent attacks against women, girls or boys in their community in the 30 days prior to data collection, while the national average was 7% of displaced households. The three provinces with the highest proportion of households knowing of harassment or attacks against women or children were: Uruzgan (81%), Zabul (50%), and Helmand (47%).
- IDP households (53% of non-recent and 45% of recent) more frequently had to rely on (written) rental agreements in their current location than returnee households (39%) and host community households (12%), who instead more often had access to customary tenure documents and land title deeds. Having to pay rent after displacement significantly reduced the economic resilience of displaced households, as indicated by the findings that in the 30 days prior to the interview displaced households living in rental homes spent on average 6.5 times more on loan repayments.
- Households that reported mines/ERWs/PPIEDs around their community before displacement significantly more often reported lacking access to at least one basic service, such as education or medical facilities, (21%), in comparison to 12% of households that did not report mines/ERWs/PPIEDs in their previous location.

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## List of Acronyms

<b>AFN</b>	Afghani (Afghan Currency)
<b>AHTRA</b>	Afghanistan Hard to Reach Assessment (REACH, 2018)
<b>APC</b>	Afghanistan Protection Cluster
<b>BSU</b>	Basic Service Unit
<b>ERW</b>	Explosive Remnants of War
<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussion
<b>HH</b>	Household
<b>HNO</b>	Humanitarian Needs Overview
<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Person
<b>ISSET</b>	Informal Settlement
<b>KII</b>	Key Informant Interview
<b>mSCI</b>	multi-sector Coping Strategies Index
<b>NSAG</b>	Non-State Armed Groups
<b>PPIED</b>	Pressure Plate Improvised Explosive Device
<b>SDR</b>	Secondary Data Review

## Geographical Classifications

<b>BSU</b>	Basic Service Units (BSU) are defined as geographical areas having common demographic and socio-economic features, and sharing services and facilities (water sources, health/education facilities, and/or a common market). BSUs have been identified and mapped as part of the Afghanistan Hard to Reach Assessment and are otherwise not commonly used.
<b>District</b>	A pre-defined area within each province, identified by the government of Afghanistan.
<b>Province</b>	Highest form of official governance below the national level (see in Map 1 below).
<b>Region</b>	Unrecognised by the Government of Afghanistan but commonly used by the humanitarian community (see specific delineation in Map 1 below).

Map 1: Reference map of classification of regions throughout the assessment



## Key Concepts

**Household** – A housing unit in which there is one clearly defined head, with all other individuals living within the boundaries of the housing unit. Members of the household typically share meals. The household can consist of multiple families and can include directly related and non-related members provided they are permanent residents at the time of interview.

**Household head** – The decision maker in the household; the primary decider regarding financial allocation, wellbeing of household members and movement decisions. They need not be the sole decision maker, provided they have the final say. While they need not be the primary breadwinner, in Afghanistan this is often the case.

**Recent IDP household** – A household forced to leave their home due to persecution, war, violence or threat of wellbeing and travel to (at least) a different district within Afghanistan, in the six months prior to interview.

**Non-Recent IDP household** – A household forced to leave their home due to persecution, war, violence or threat of wellbeing and travel to (at least) a different district within Afghanistan, more than six months prior to interview.

**Returnee household** – An Afghan household who previously fled its home to live in another country due to persecution, war, violence or threat of wellbeing, typically but not always Pakistan or Iran, and has since returned to Afghanistan but not to their exact area of origin.

**Refugee household** – A non-Afghan household, forced to flee its country of origin due to persecution, war, violence or threat of wellbeing, now residing within Afghanistan.

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## INTRODUCTION

Armed conflict continues to drive humanitarian needs and exacerbate displacement across Afghanistan, creating at least 360,000 new internally displaced persons (IDPs) in 2017,<sup>11</sup> contributing to an estimated total of 1.3 million IDPs throughout Afghanistan at the end of 2017.<sup>12</sup> In the absence of a political solution to the conflict, this trend is likely to continue in 2018, with 127,000 people having already been internally displaced by conflict between 1 January and 10 June 2018. In addition, close to 300,000 Afghan nationals have returned from Iran and 15,000 from Pakistan since the start of 2018.<sup>13</sup> To add to the complexity of the situation, an estimated 220,000 Pakistani refugees reside in south-east Afghanistan, also in need of assistance from the humanitarian community.<sup>14</sup>

Together these conflict-displaced groups constitute a vulnerable population that faces a diverse set of protection concerns, affecting particularly women and children, who comprised two thirds of the new IDPs in 2017.<sup>15</sup> The Afghanistan Protection Cluster (APC) stated in its 2017 Response Plan that 3.7 million individuals will require protection assistance in 2018.<sup>16</sup> Previous monitoring activities have indicated increasing levels of vulnerability among conflict-displaced populations, but comprehensive quantifiable protection-based data has so far been lacking.

This Protection Assessment of Conflict-Affected Populations (PACAP) aims to identify the impact of conflict, particularly on the protection concerns of displaced populations before, during and after displacement and outline the protection environment in the area of residence for conflict-affected populations that did not displace. The assessment further differentiates between the protection needs and vulnerabilities of recent IDPs, non-recent IDPs,<sup>17</sup> returnee (these three categories are collectively referred to as 'displaced households' throughout the report), as well as Pakistani refugee households and Afghan households that remain in conflict-affected areas.

This provides depth and breadth to existing information provisions while expanding research to fill information gaps relevant to protection programming in Afghanistan. These specific protection-based findings are aimed to inform the 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and revised 2018-2021 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP).

This assessment aimed to meet the following specific objectives:

- To outline the conflict-based protection concerns and needs of conflict-displaced populations, specifically noting the concerns and needs that contributed to the decision to displace.
- To identify the protection concerns faced by conflict-displaced populations during their displacement.
- To analyse the protection concerns and needs of conflict-displaced populations in their previous and current locations, which have been exacerbated by conflict and displacement.
- To indicate the current protection environment in the area of residence of conflict-affected populations that did not displace.

The first section of this report outlines the methodological approach in more detail, including the different quantitative and qualitative sampling methods, analysis processes and limitations. The following section begins to outline the main findings of the assessment, focusing on household and displacement characteristics, including push and pull factors. Next, the main protection concerns faced by households during their displacement are discussed, addressing security incidents and related injuries. Finally, the impact of displacement on protection issues is analysed by comparing the concerns and needs of displaced households in their previous and current location and further contrasting them with findings on non-displaced conflict-affected populations. The report concludes with a summary of key assessment findings and a discussion on further areas for research.

<sup>11</sup> OCHA, "Afghanistan: Humanitarian Needs Overview", December 2017.

<sup>12</sup> Internally Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) "IDMC Global Figures 2017", 2017.

<sup>13</sup> IOM, "Afghanistan: Weekly Situation Report", 20-26 May 2018.

<sup>14</sup> NRC, "Global Report on Internal Displacement", 2017.

<sup>15</sup> OCHA, "Afghanistan: Humanitarian Needs Overview", December 2017.

<sup>16</sup> OCHA, "Afghanistan: Humanitarian Response Plan", December 2017.

<sup>17</sup> IDP households that were displaced more than 6 months ago are considered non-recent IDP households.

## METHODOLOGY

Building on an extensive secondary data review (SDR), REACH worked in close collaboration with the APC to ensure contextual understanding of the conflict and displacement dynamics and to identify protection-related information gaps in order to develop the data collection tools. Following this, a detailed response analysis was established to ensure PACAP indicators and the programmatic goals of partner organisations were fully aligned, in an attempt to increase the comparability of findings with other related assessments. All indicators were validated through a collaborative workshop, which engaged partners to provide feedback prior to data collection.

The study was based on a mixed methods approach, combining a) quantitative household-level interviews with displaced and host community households, b) KIIs with conflict-affected households remaining in hard-to-reach districts, and c) FGDs with representatives of female- and youth-support groups. The household-level interviews were randomly sampled and stratified according to displacement status, including recent IDP, non-recent IDP, returnee, refugee, and host community households. The Key Informants (KIs) and FGD participants were purposefully sampled based on their knowledge of the community or the research topic. Combining these methods provided the assessment with a broader geographical scope as well as a wider thematic spread including sensitive issues around gender-based violence (GBV) and child protection.

The assessment was designed in close collaboration with the APC and partner organisations, using an analysis framework that aligned indicators with the programmatic aims of the APC and its partners. The main PACAP dataset consist of 17,845 structured interviews with displaced and host community households in all 34 provinces of Afghanistan, collected between the 17 March and 3 May 2018.<sup>18</sup> Findings based on the household-level survey are generalisable at the provincial level or, if disaggregated between displacement groups, at the regional level, with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error.

As a result of the sampling strategy outlined below in Table 1, the sample size of the returnee households only allowed for comparisons of the returnee population in the east, north, and central regions, as well as at the national level. Due to the lower reported returnee population in the south and west, responses from returnee households in these regions are only reported and compared at the national level. Additionally, the sample of refugee households was only sufficient for generalisable findings and comparisons with other displacement groups at the national level. Given the refugees' limited area of residence, the report will present and compare findings on refugees in an extra section at the end of the report, excluding them from the analysis in all previous sections. Unless stated otherwise, references to displaced households throughout the report do not include refugee households. Furthermore, it needs to be noted that whilst gender of household head was not stratified in the sampling strategy, the scope of the assessment allowed for generalisable findings and comparisons between male- and female-headed households at the national level with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error.

<sup>18</sup> The sampling frame was based on previous datasets, collected by REACH, UNHCR, and IOM DTM.

Table 1: Household survey sampling strategy, stratified by province and displacement status

Provinces	Non-recent IDP	Recent IDP	Returnee	Refugee	Host	Total
<b>Central</b>	<b>3630</b>	<b>487</b>	<b>937</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>529</b>	<b>5936</b>
Bamyan	336	5	38		3	382
Daykundi	401	45	14		38	498
Ghazni	366	27	2		11	406
Kabul	303	76	122		339	840
Kapisa	374	13	1		29	417
Khost	335	57	27	305	14	738
Logar	256	13	188		11	468
Paktika	172	30	169	48	7	426
Paktya	280	22	129		36	467
Panjsher	319	33	21		9	382
Parwan	289	65	18		20	392
Wardak	199	101	208		12	520
<b>East</b>	<b>1183</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>513</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>436</b>	<b>2788</b>
Kunar	282	109	173	196	72	832
Laghman	242	71	176		69	558
Nangarhar	330	274	145		282	1031
Nuristan	329	6	19		13	367
<b>North</b>	<b>2636</b>	<b>486</b>	<b>521</b>		<b>566</b>	<b>4209</b>
Badakhshan	363	24	4		6	397
Baghlan	318	23	70		66	477
Balkh	270	29	143		139	581
Faryab	333	43			56	432
Jawzjan	191	168	18		26	403
Kunduz	323	17	79		87	506
Samangan	269	17	114		23	423
Sar-e Pul	208	143	31		22	404
Takhar	361	22	62		141	586
<b>South</b>	<b>1769</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>106</b>		<b>255</b>	<b>2524</b>
Helmand	418	36	7		75	536
Kandahar	363	77	58		133	631
Nimroz	345	39	21		8	413
Uruzgan	349	178	6		22	555
Zabul	294	64	14		17	389
<b>West</b>	<b>1405</b>	<b>434</b>	<b>138</b>		<b>411</b>	<b>2388</b>
Badghis	391	93			36	520
Farah	230	90	135		30	485
Ghor	330	105	3		56	494
Herat	454	146			289	889
<b>Total</b>	<b>10623</b>	<b>2261</b>	<b>2215</b>	<b>549</b>	<b>2197</b>	<b>17845</b>

For the qualitative element of the assessment, a total of 30 FDGs followed the household-level survey to gather broad thematic information on gender-based violence and youth concerns, which could not be included in the structured interviews due to security concerns. Representatives of women and youth-support groups were identified, to provide insight on sensitivities relating to those population groups. FDGs were carried out in the five regional capitals of Afghanistan (Nangarhar, Kandahar, Herat, Balkh, Kabul), between 8 - 22 April 2018. Participants were purposively selected, to include representatives of local support groups who work directly with beneficiaries in the concerned regions and were capable of providing insight about the regional protection environment for female and youth populations. Approximately six respondents were selected for each FDG.



Table 2: Focus group discussion sampling strategy, by region and participant group

Participant Group	Central	North	East	South	West	Total
Women-support	3	3	3	3	3	15
Youth-support	3	3	3	3	3	15
Total	6	6	6	6	6	30

Following this, five additional FGDs were conducted with KIs of informal settlements (ISET) in each region to supplement and triangulate findings from the household survey.

Given the aim to include and compare findings on displaced households with the conflict-affected population that did not displace, the report further includes key protection-related findings from the Afghanistan Hard-to-Reach Assessment (AHTRA).<sup>19</sup> During this assessment REACH conducted over 1,126 Key Informant interviews (KIs) in 46 hard-to-reach districts of Afghanistan, between February and May 2018.<sup>20</sup>

KIs were conducted at the level of Basic Service Units (BSUs), are defined as a geographical area having common demographic and socio-economic features, and sharing services and facilities (water sources, health/education facilities, and/or a common market). REACH interviewed on average two to three KIs in each BSU for the needs assessment. Breaking down the HTR districts into BSUs helped ensure that the area on which KIs provided information corresponded directly to their community, mitigating the risk of unreliable data being collected. The needs assessment was split into two rounds of data collection. The first round of data collection took place between 11 and 29 March 2018 and 1,126 KIs were interviewed, while for the second round, 1,164 KI were interviewed between 8 and 27 May 2018. Individual KI responses were triangulated and aggregated into one response per BSU, with the majority responses being adopted as the result in each case.<sup>21</sup>

Findings of the FGDs and KIs are not representative and therefore comparisons/trends highlighted are indicative only.

## Data analysis

Findings were triangulated with the SDR, and key comparisons are made throughout the data analysis, focusing on regional trends, differences between conflict-affected and/or displaced groups and between male- and female-headed households. Furthermore, comparisons were made between households with elderly/non-elderly household heads, households with disabled/non-disabled household heads, households displaced once/multiple times, returnee households registered with UNHCR or not, and IDP households displaced across or within regions. While none of these household characteristics were built into the sampling strategy, the scope of the assessment allowed for a sufficient number of households to be included for comparisons at the national level. References to the different groups were only made if the assessment found statistically significant differences between them, or, if it did not while the SDR suggested it should have. Comparisons between the conflict-displaced and host population households at the regional level further strengthen findings related to the impact of conflict and displacement on protection concerns and needs. Weightings for all sub-groups were applied during the analysis, based on population estimates.

FGDs were analysed using NVivo software and an inductive approach, enabling themes to emerge directly from the key informant interviews with a particular focus on protection concerns specific to women and children.<sup>22</sup> The interpretation of data was guided by two key criteria: extensiveness and specificity.<sup>23</sup> Extensiveness refers to the number of respondents that raised a certain issue/theme, while specificity notes that detailed descriptions of experiences should be given more weight than general responses. FGDs were used to triangulate findings from the quantitative analysis.

<sup>19</sup> REACH (2018), "Afghanistan Hard-to-Reach Assessment Report".

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Boyatzis, R. (1998). *Transforming Qualitative Information*, Sage Publications.

<sup>23</sup> Krueger, R. (1994). *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide to Applied Research*, Thousand Oaks.

## Limitations

- The household-level assessment covered all 34 provinces of Afghanistan, but due to security concerns a range of districts within these provinces were inaccessible. This presents a bias towards relatively more secure locations in Afghanistan and may exclude some of the most vulnerable households. To minimise this bias, the assessment incorporated findings from the AHTRA as explained above.
- Data was collected throughout day-time hours, when household heads were typically working. Thus, some interviews may not have been conducted with the lead decision maker in the household, though all efforts were made to come at a time when the household head would be available. If it was not possible to speak with the lead decision maker, the interview was conducted with the secondary decision maker in the household.
- In Paktika province enumerators were not able to identify refugee households as expected based on the population sample. The number of interviews with refugee households in Khost province was therefore increased accordingly to allow for generalisation at the national level.
- The sensitive nature of some questions may have led to underreporting, particularly regarding issues and concerns specific to women and girls in the household. To address this, 30 FGDs were conducted with female and youth-support group representatives, who were able to provide insights into gender-based and child protection issues in each region of Afghanistan.
- It is possible that results are inflated in terms of protection vulnerabilities and needs, as respondents may have felt this would increase their likelihood of receiving assistance. To minimise this, all interviews were conducted in person and began with a clear explanation that the assessment is independent and not directly related to any form of assistance.
- With the household head being predominantly male in Afghanistan, questions about the situation or concerns of women were commonly answered by male respondents. The conditions and vulnerabilities of women may accordingly be misrepresented. However, the scope of the assessment allowed for generalisable findings and comparisons between male and female-headed households at the national level. Throughout the analysis all questions regarding the situation of women were disaggregated between male and female-headed households and any significant difference reported.
- Whilst the sampling of FGD participants through nationwide women- and youth-support groups allowed to access respondents with a broad exposure to the issues of concerns within their regions, this approach led to FGDs each time being held between members of a single organisation, limiting dynamic discussions due to organisation internal hierarchies.
- The KIs in the hard-to-reach districts are indicative only, as they rely on the knowledge of KIs and are therefore informed perspectives and not comparable findings. Furthermore, the methodology was area-based and had no gender-disaggregation, potentially underreporting on gender-specific issues.
- While the assessment found that 37% of displaced households were displaced more than once, the report and analysis is solely focused on the impact of a household's most recent displacement. Unless otherwise stated, all findings are therefore in regard to a household's latest displacement and not necessarily in comparison to a household's situation in their area of origin (AoO).
- The statistical significance of some results may be overstated, as hypothesis tests were not corrected for stratified sampling.

## FINDINGS

### Household Characteristics

Before analysing protection vulnerabilities and concerns, this first section of the assessment findings provides an overview of the displaced households' characteristics. It begins with a brief outline of household demographics and general displacement patterns and features, including the impact of returnee households' registration with UNHCR. Afterwards, the section discusses the identified push and pull factors of displacement and concludes with the displaced households' intentions to return to their area of origin.

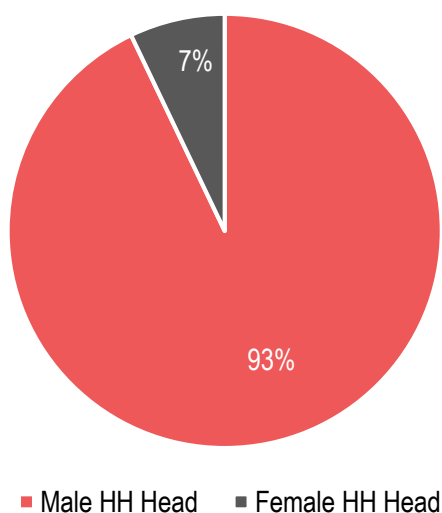
#### Demographics

The composition of displaced households was close to equally male (49%) and female (51%).<sup>24</sup> Overall, households were found to be comprised of 64% children under the age of 18 years, with slight variations across regions, ranging from 66% in the east to 60% in the north. The ratio of boys and girls (under the age of 18) was equal across all regions of Afghanistan.<sup>25</sup>

Across Afghanistan, displaced households were found to contain an average of 1.6 families comprised of 10 individuals, similar to host community households (1.5 families and 9 individuals). The largest conflict-displaced households were identified in the east, with on average 2.1 families and 13 individuals, compared to an average of 1.2 families and 7 individuals in the west.

The average age of the household head was 44 years, varying only slightly between returnee households (46 years) and recent IDP households (42 years), as well as regionally between households in the east (46 years) and south (42 years). Only 0.4% of both displaced and host community households were headed by children under the age of 18 years, while 6% of displaced and 5% of host community households were headed by individuals over the age of 64 years, thus considered elderly-headed households. Regional trends show that the proportion of elderly-headed household differed significantly from the west (9%) to the south (2%).

Figure 1: Proportion of male and female-headed households



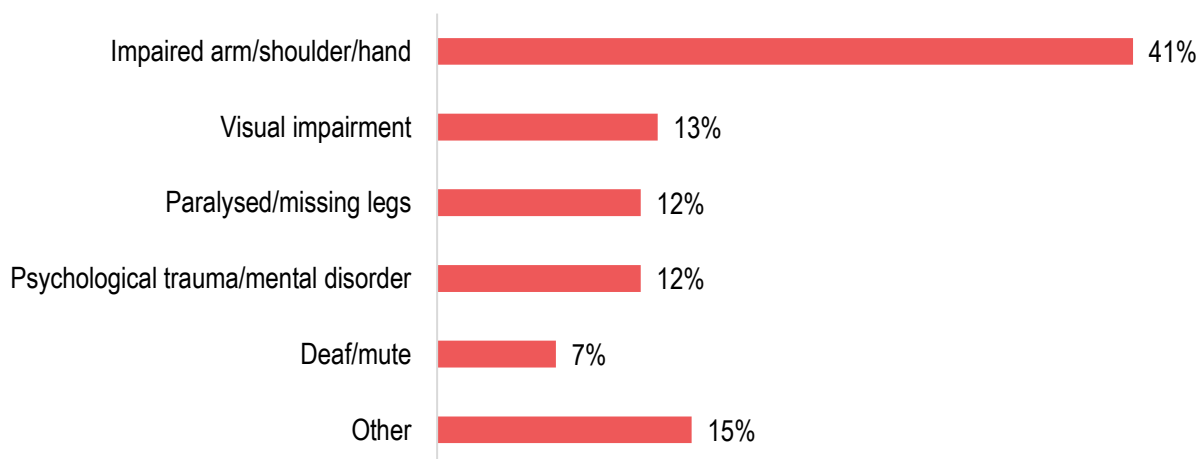
As displayed in Figure 1, the vast majority of displaced household heads were male (93%), while 7% were female. Across all conflict-displaced household groups, 5% of the household heads were reported to be disabled, which was found to be similar in host communities (7%). Regionally, the highest proportion of households with a disabled household head was in the west (9%), compared to only 3% in the east.

In terms of individual members, the assessment found 10% of displaced households to have at least one disabled member, which was similar to 9% in host community households.

<sup>24</sup> The terms 'displaced household' and 'conflict-displaced household' are used interchangeably throughout the report and refer to recent IDP, non-recent IDP, and returnee households. Refugee households are assessed separately in the final section of the report.

<sup>25</sup> The overall demographic profile of displaced households was found to be almost the same as in REACH, "Education and Child Protection – Joint Needs Assessment", 2017.

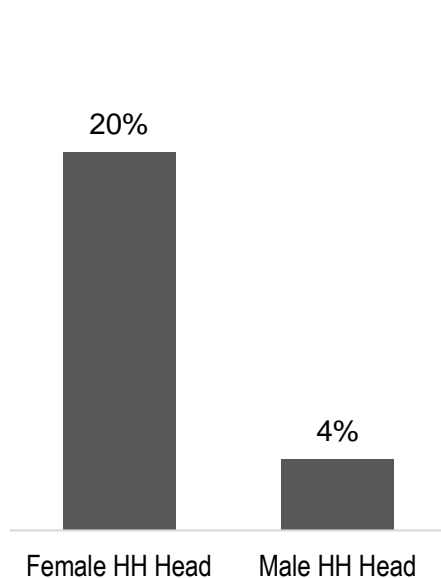
Figure 2: Proportion of disabilities of disabled household members



Across displaced households, 62% reported having at least one breastfeeding individual and 23% reported having at least one pregnant individual. The regional spread showed that the highest percentage of households with breastfeeding (79%) and pregnant (37%) individuals was in the east. This may be explained by the larger average household size in the east. In contrast, the lowest percentage of households with breastfeeding individuals was found in the central region (45%) and pregnant individuals in the north (11%).

Lack of access to a Tazkira, the Afghan national identification document issued by the government to all Afghan individuals as a proof of identity and citizenship, represents an additional vulnerability, in some cases hindering access to employment, education, housing and humanitarian assistance. Overall, 5% of displaced households stated that no one in the household held a Tazkira, with no significant difference between the displacement groups and host community households.

Figure 3: Households without a single Tazkira, by gender of household head



However, the access to a Tazkira varied significantly regionally, with 9% of displaced households in the west claiming that no one in the household held a Tazkira, compared to only 2% in the central region. This may be partially explained by the smaller average household size in the west. The assessment found that households without a single Tazkira consisted on average of 7.6 individuals, compared to an average of 10.4 individuals for households with at least one Tazkira.<sup>26</sup>

As Figure 3 highlights, 20% of female-headed households had no household member who owned a Tazkira, while this number was only 4% for male-headed households. While the likelihood of Tazkira ownership was found to be the same between displacement groups, a significant difference was noted between returnee households, with significantly more returnee households not registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) having no adults with a Tazkira (10%) compared to registered returnee households (4%).

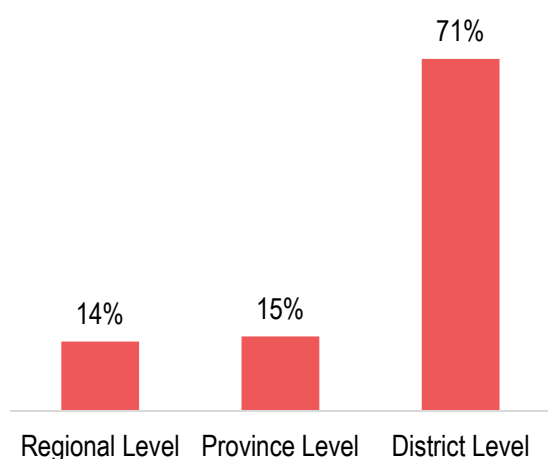
<sup>26</sup> P-value <0.001

## Displacement

### Displacement Patterns

Among all IDP households, 15% were displaced across provincial boundaries (but within the same region) during their latest displacement, while 14% displaced to a different region (as defined by the assessment, see Map 1) in Afghanistan.

Figure 4: Level of displacement of IDP households (during most recent displacement)



For IDPs that relocated to a different province within the same region (15%), in 69% of the cases they moved to the regional-capital provinces (Kabul, Nangahar, Kandahar, Balkh, Herat). This trend is even stronger for IDP households displaced across regions of which 93% moved to the five regional-capital provinces. Tellingly, 91% of the IDP households that were displaced to a different region now reside in Kabul province (central region), while only 6% displaced to the east, 2% to the north, and 1% to both the south and west. This is likely due to the livelihoods opportunities IDPs expect to find in Kabul, the Afghan economic centre (see more on 'pull factors' below).

The data shows that while 78% of displaced female-headed households have remained in the same province as their AoO, only 71% of male-headed HHs have. This may be due to female-headed HHs being less likely to move to urban areas. When asked about their most recent displacement, 24% of female-headed households reported to have moved to an urban area (where they had no family/friends), while 34% of male-headed households reported having done so. Indeed, when female-headed HHs reported to have left the province of their AoO, they were less likely than male-headed households to have moved to a provincial capital (74% compared to 86%). Considering that regional capitals offer more livelihoods opportunities, access to services and humanitarian assistance, and given that access of humanitarian organisations is decreasing in rural areas due to insecurity<sup>27</sup>, it should be noted that this displacement pattern may render female-headed households more vulnerable as they are less likely to receive the support and assistance they need.

In contrast, households with a disabled household head were more likely to have left their province of origin (35%) than households without a disabled household head (29%). When asked about their most recent displacement, households with a disabled household head reported, in 39% of cases, that they moved to an urban area (where they had no family/friends), while only 33% of households without a disabled household head reported the same. The higher proportion of households with a disabled household head leaving their province of origin, may be explained by households with a disabled household head needing to move further away, towards urban centres, to be in the vicinity of adequate healthcare facilities.

Regionally, significant differences were found with 78% of all IDP households in the east and 75% of all IDP households in the north having remained within their province of origin, while only 50% of all IDP households in the west, 47% of all IDP households in the south, and 33% of all IDP households in the central region still resided within their province of origin. Table 3 highlights that this may be due to a significantly lower movement to urban centres in the north and east, compared to the other regions, but further research is necessary to determine factors confidently.

<sup>27</sup> INSO Afghanistan: Non-public reports

Table 3: Destination of IDP households after most recent displacement

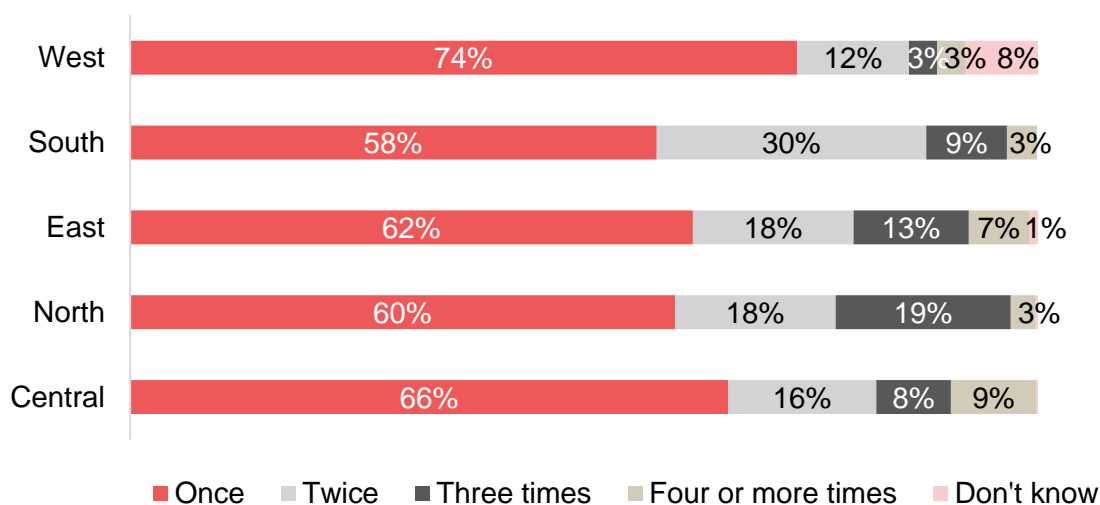
	Different region (no family/friends)	Rural area, same region (no family/friends)	Stay with relatives or friends	Urban centre, same region (no family/friends)	Other
Central	16%	8%	23%	53%	1%
North	10%	52%	14%	23%	2%
East	15%	60%	2%	24%	0%
South	17%	3%	11%	67%	1%
West	9%	13%	19%	58%	1%

Displaced households within the north and east may be more limited in their access to services and humanitarian assistance, given the previously mentioned decreasing reach of humanitarian organisations and governance structures in rural areas.

Furthermore, moving across provincial boundaries involves costs that not all households may be able to afford. The assessment found that households which moved to another province during their recent displacement earned on average 14% more prior to displacement than those remaining within their province. The most vulnerable households may be least accessible to humanitarian organisations, as a result of their financial inability to displace to urban areas, which would also provide better access to services and livelihoods opportunities.

Across all displaced households, 37% reported having been displaced more than once. Displaced households currently residing in the south were most likely to have been displaced more than once (42%), while the percentage of households displaced 4 or more times was the highest in the central region (9%), as displayed in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Number of displacements per household, by current region of residence



While 62% of non-recent IDP households were only displaced once, 75% of recent IDP households reported to having been displaced only once.

### Returnee Registration and Return Patterns

Overall, 41% of returnee households were not registered with UNHCR, thereby receiving less support to claim assistance, enrol in education, or seek employment. This is support returnees often require, as many have resided outside of Afghanistan for long periods. Regionally, returnees in the west (67%) and east (53%) were most likely to be unregistered, compared to 26% in the central region.<sup>28</sup> It is also important to note that 51% of female-headed returnee households reported not being registered with UNHCR, compared to 41% of male-headed returnee households. Female-headed returnee households therefore present greater vulnerability. In contrast, 68% of the

<sup>28</sup> Further research needed to understand why this may be the case.



returnee household with a disabled household head were registered with the UNHCR, compared to 58% of returnee households without a disabled household head.

Whether a returnee household was registered with UNHCR or not had an impact on where the household returned to. While 88% of households not registered with UNHCR returned to their province of origin, only 73% of the households registered with the UNHCR did the same.

## Push Factors

Overall, 91% IDP households reported armed conflict/military operation or intimidation and harassment by armed actors to be the main push factor in their decision to leave their previous location, as displayed below in Table 4. While armed conflict was the biggest push factor for both recent and non-recent IDP households, the intimidation and harassment by armed actors was indicated to have played a bigger role in displacing recent IDP households than it did for non-recent IDPs (37% compared to 30%).

In contrast, the main push factor for returnee households was forced expulsion from the country they were previously living in. For households that were forced to return, 88% went back to their AoO, while only 68% of those who voluntarily returned did so. Additionally, returnee households that were not registered with UNHCR were significantly more likely to report 'forced return' (71%) from their previous location abroad compared to those that were registered (59%).

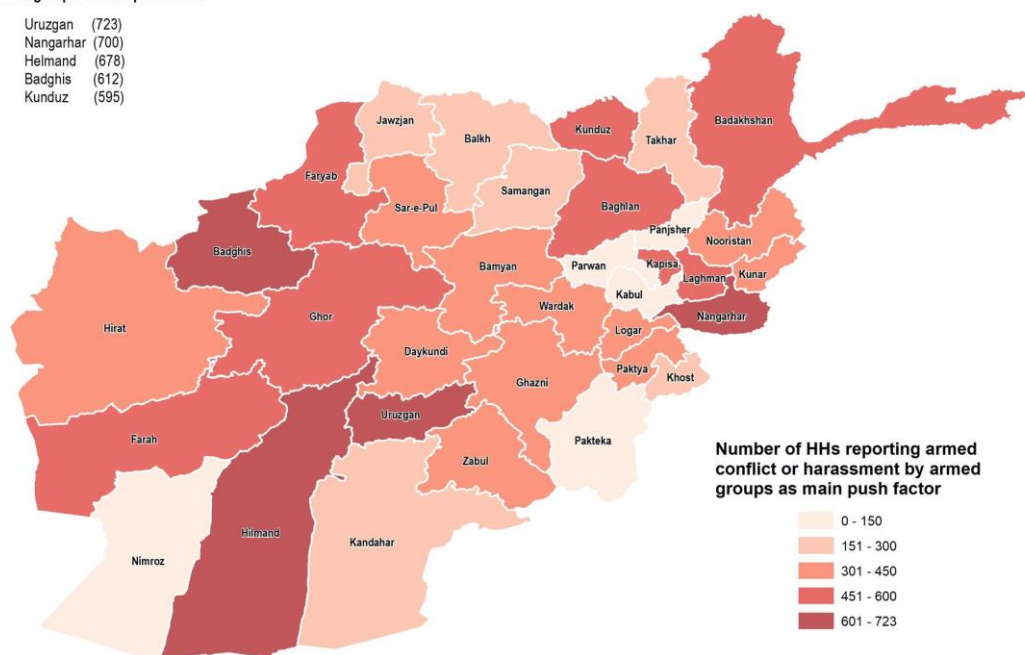
**Table 4: Main push factors for most recent displacement, by displacement groups**

	Armed conflict / military operation	Forced return/expulsion from foreign country	Intimidation and harassment by armed actor (state or non-state)	Kidnapping /abduction	Land dispute/land occupation	Natural disaster	Other
Non-recent IDP HHs	61%	1%	30%	2%	1%	3%	3%
Recent IDP HHs	56%	0%	37%	1%	2%	3%	1%
Returnee HHs	11%	64%	12%	1%	5%	1%	8%

**Map 2: Provinces in which households reported the main push factors to be armed conflict/military operation or intimidation and harassment by armed actors, displayed by previous location of households**

Provinces with the highest number of HHs reporting armed conflict or harassment by armed groups as main push factor

Uruzgan (723)  
Nangarhar (700)  
Helmand (678)  
Badghis (612)  
Kunduz (595)



For IDPs previously residing in the north, armed conflict was reported by 66% of the respondents as the main push factor, compared to 53% in the central region, and 49% in the west. Intimidation by armed actors was reported as the highest push factor in the east at 34%, compared to 26% in the west and 24% in the central regions.

For 39% of IDP households that displaced to a location outside of their previous province the main push factor was intimidation from armed actors, compared to 27% of households that were displaced within provincial boundaries. This is reversed for households reporting armed conflict as the main push factor, with 68% of the households displaced within provinces reporting armed conflict as the main push factor, compared to 44% of households that left their previous province of residence. This difference may be explained by the growing reach of armed actors over entire provinces of Afghanistan, requiring households to displace across provincial boundaries to reach safety.<sup>29</sup>

## Pull Factors

Given the ongoing conflict and insecurity in Afghanistan, the main pull factors drawing conflict-displaced households to their current location was a perceived improvement in the security situation, as shown in Table 5 below.<sup>30</sup> In the north, factors such as ethnic affiliation (14%) and the presence of friends/family (14%) played a significantly larger role in pulling households to their current area of residence than in the west or east.

Affordability was the main factor for 25% of households in the east in choosing their current location. Indeed, only 1% of respondents in the east were hoping for better employment opportunities in their current location, compared to 7% in the west and 12% in the central region. This indicates that the limited financial capacity of households in the east forced them to remain in areas without any livelihoods opportunities, rendering them less able to support their families in the future.

**Table 5: Main pull factor to current area of residence, by region**

	Better access to services	Better employment opportunities	Better security	Ethnic affiliation	Family / friends are here	Only destination we could afford to stay in	Only staying temporary	Other
Central	3%	12%	61%	2%	9%	12%	1%	1%
North	1%	5%	54%	14%	14%	4%	7%	2%
East	0%	1%	69%	3%	3%	25%	0%	0%
South	3%	5%	79%	0%	10%	3%	1%	0%
West	1%	7%	77%	1%	1%	10%	3%	0%

If households were displaced across provincial boundaries, they were significantly more likely to be driven by a greater employment opportunity in the new location, than those who remained in the same province (12% compared to 3%). Displaced households that remained within the province earned 24% less in their current location than households that moved to a new province. Before their displacement, the households that remained in their province only earned 12% less than those that left. This growing economic difference is likely due to the economic opportunities that households find in a different province, as 81% of households that displaced across provincial boundaries relocated to regional capitals, the economic strongholds of Afghanistan.

In contrast, the displaced households that experienced the most significant financial impacts of displacement were those (19%) that left their province but did not relocate to a regional capital. They were found to earn, on average, 41% less than those that displaced to Kabul, Nangahar, Kandahar, Balkh, or Herat. Displaced households that were forced to displace to a different province but could not settle in a regional capital, are likely then to be most in need of humanitarian assistance.

Returnee households were significantly more likely (15%) to be drawn to their location by the presence of family/friends than recent IDP (8%) and non-recent IDP households (5%). In contrast, better security was a significantly less significant pull factor for returnee households (51%). This may indicate that returnee households

<sup>29</sup> BBC, "Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan", January 2018.

<sup>30</sup> Throughout this assessment, security refers to physical safety from violence.

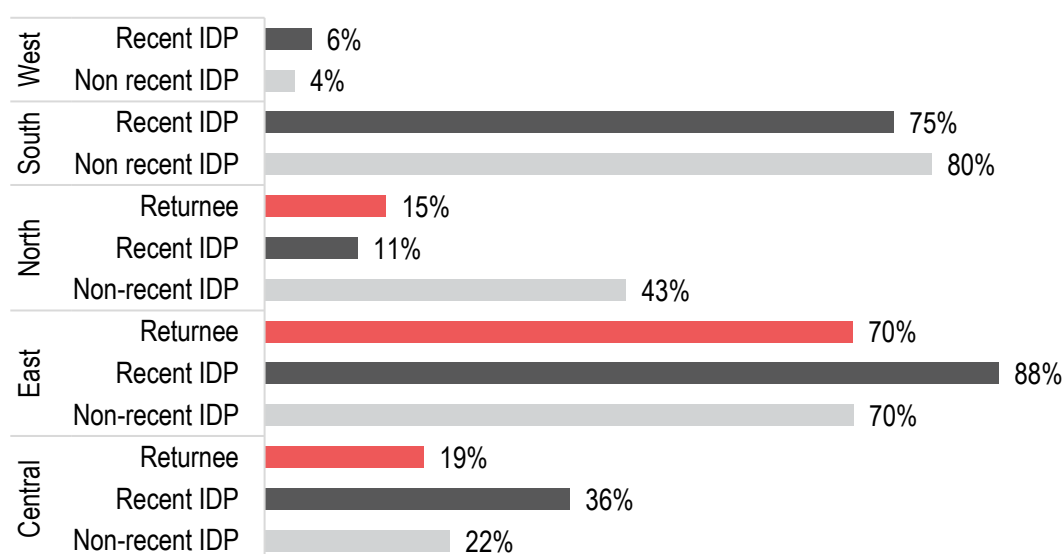
still have a network of friends and family on which they can rely but may also highlight that returnee households have less knowledge of which areas can be considered safe and have to orientate themselves by other indicators.

## Intentions to Return

### Plan to Return

Overall, 46% of displaced households reported having fixed plans to return to their AoO within the 6 months following the household survey. However, as Figure 6 highlights, the proportion of households having a plan to return varied significantly between provinces and displacement groups. Comparing regions, 4% of displaced households in the west reported having a firm plan to return in the six months after data collection, while 78% of households in the south claimed to have one. Further research is necessary to explain this stark regional difference in households' intentions to return.

**Figure 6: Conflict-displaced HHs with a fixed plan to return to their AoO within the six months following data collection, by region and displacement group**



In the north 43% of non-recent IDP households reported to have a fixed plan to return, while only 11% of recent IDP households stated the same. This indicates that recent IDPs in the north were displaced due to factors that, to their knowledge, will remain unchanged in the foreseeable future.<sup>31</sup> Across regions, returnee households were significantly less likely to have a plan to return when currently residing in the north (15%) than in the east (70%). As Figure 7 indicates this may be because displaced households in the north commonly preferred to remain in their current location, while households in the east predominantly wished to return to their AoO.

Whether a displaced household had plans to return did not only depend on the region of residence, but also whether it was originally from that same region. Households that currently resided in the same region as their AoO were more likely to have firm plans to return (50%), declining to 22% if residing in a different region. This may indicate that increased distance from the AoO hinders returns, but, as the following section suggests, may also relate to availability of livelihoods opportunities in their new location and region.

Lastly, it is interesting to note that households which had been displaced multiple times were more likely to have plans to return to their AoO within the six months following data collection (55%), than those that had only been displaced once (41%). This may be because the households that were displaced once were able to better integrate in their current location and therefore preferred to remain rather than to return.<sup>32</sup> In contrast, households that were

<sup>31</sup> The New York Times, "Taliban surge routs ISIS in Northern Afghanistan, August 2018.

<sup>32</sup> REACH (2017), Multi-Cluster Needs Assessments: [FSAC](#), [WASH](#) and [ESNFI](#).

displaced multiple times may have exacerbated coping strategies or failed to establish stable livelihoods opportunities and hence had a stronger urge to return.

### Preference to Remain

Overall, 35% of the households that did not have firm plans to return wished to return, but saw no possibility of doing so, while 65% preferred their current location. Regionally, the urge to return, while not being able to, was the strongest among households in the east (72%), in comparison to only 21% of households in the central region.

**Figure 7: Reason for not planning to return, among households that do not intend to return in the six months following data collection, by current region of residence**

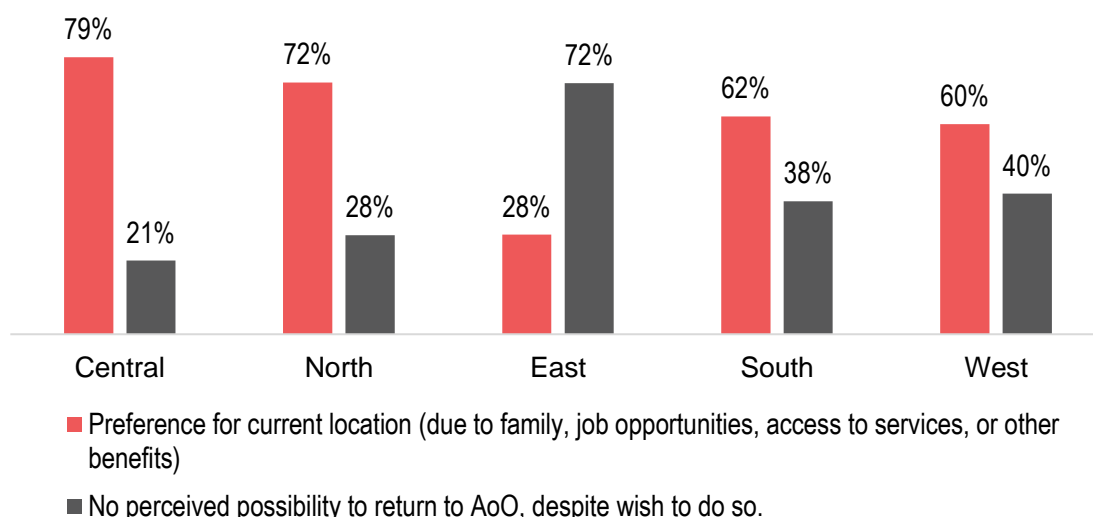


Figure 7 indicates that displaced communities in the east were least able to establish or invest in a sustainable future in their current location and require support to either return to their AoO, find a location in which they feel comfortable to remain, or to better establish themselves in their current location.

IDP households that remained within their region of origin, were found to be more likely to prefer returning to their AoO (38%), compared to 24% of households that resided outside of their region of origin. Therefore, distance from AoO is not the dominant factor in deciding whether to return; rather the availability of economic opportunities in the current area of residence. As Figure 7 indicates, the east was perceived to be the region offering fewest opportunities encouraging displaced households to remain.

A number of vulnerable groups were found to be particularly likely to feel stuck in their current location, wishing to return to their AoO, but not seeing an opportunity to do so. First, female-headed households were found to be significantly more likely to prefer returning to their AoO (44%) even if they had no plan to do so, in comparison to 34% of the male-headed households in the same situation. Second, 45% of households with a disabled household head wished to return to their AoO but saw no possibility to, while this was only the case for 34% of the households without a disabled household head. Third, households that displaced multiple times and had no firm plans to return in the six months following data collection still wanted to return to their AoO in 47% of cases, while only 29% of households that were displaced once shared this goal.

### Concerns about Return

The factor that most commonly concerned households when considering returning to their AoO, across all regions and displacement groups, was the potential presence of non-state armed groups (NSAGs) or anti-government elements (AGEs). Overall, 63% of displaced households were concerned about the presence of NSAGs and AGEs in their AoO, with recent IDP households most concerned (71%), compared to 47% of returnee households. Moreover, 10% of recent IDP households were concerned about the presence of mines/ERWs/PPIEDs, while this was a concern for 2% of the returnee households.

Additionally, the study found that 14% of returnee households were most worried about the lack of shelter in their AoO, compared to 4% of non-recent IDP, and 1% of recent IDP households. Returnee households were also significantly more worried about the lack of economic opportunities in their AoO (9%, compared to 3% of recent IDP households).

Comparing across regions of origin, data showed that households who's AoO was in the east were most likely to be concerned about the presence of armed groups (72%), compared to 39% of households whose region of origin was the central region. Aside from the presence of NSAGs, 12% of respondents noted the potential presence of mines/ERWs/PPIEDs as their biggest concern, while only 4% of households in the central region shared this as a main concern. Households originally from the north were in 9% of cases worried about military airstrikes in their AoO, while this was less of a concern for households from the east, with only 2% that reported airstrikes as their main worry (see Table 6).

**Table 6: Main concerns about returning to AoO, by region of origin\***

	Lack of economic opportunities	Lack of shelter and land	Lacking access to services	Potential community harassment	Potential military airstrikes	Potential presence of mines/ERW/PPIED	Potential presence of NSAG or AGEs	No concerns
Central	12%	8%	5%	6%	4%	4%	39%	20%
East	6%	9%	1%	1%	2%	5%	72%	2%
North	3%	4%	2%	3%	9%	7%	65%	4%
South	4%	5%	1%	3%	5%	12%	50%	19%
West	10%	1%	1%	5%	4%	5%	65%	10%

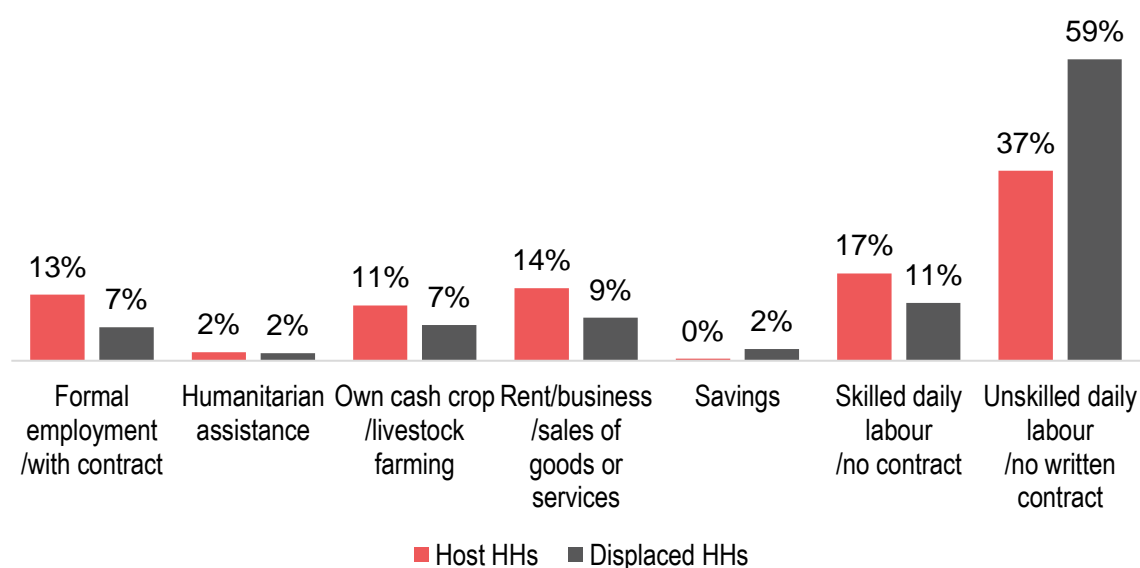
\*Additional concerns not included in the table ranged between 0-3% and included: financial burden of movement, potential forced recruitment, street crime, and 'other'.

## Socio-Economic Status

### Sources of Income

Displaced households relied predominantly on unskilled daily labour as their primary source of income (59%), in contrast to 37% of host community households. This renders displaced households more vulnerable, as unskilled daily labour does not guarantee employment and is often poorly remunerated. In contrast, 13% of host community households could rely on a formally employed member, while only 7% of displaced households could do so.

**Figure 8: Most common income and livelihood sources in the current location\***



\*Additional income sources not included in the table ranged between 0-1% and included: borrowing/loans, gifts/remittances, government benefits, and 'other'.



The assessment found no significant differences between the displacement groups, regarding their reliance on the different sources of income, but noted the impact of a range of specific vulnerabilities. Households that did not possess a single Tazkira were found to rely significantly more often on unskilled daily labour (65%) than households that had at least one Tazkira (44%). Additionally, 30% of households with a Tazkira were found to rely on cash crop or livestock farming, while only 24% of households without a Tazkira had this possibility. This indicates that households without a tazkira are constrained in their access to land that could have been used for agricultural purposes.

Similarly, returnee households that were not registered with UNHCR were found significantly more likely to rely on unskilled daily labour (72%), in comparison to 59% of households that were registered with UNHCR. Conversely, 14% of households not registered with UNHCR relied on skilled daily labour, in comparison to 20% of registered households. This may indicate the long-term benefit of being officially recognised as a refugee in a foreign country, such as in Iran where refugees have access to education and skill enhancement opportunities.

However, some households that relied less on unskilled daily labour may be regarded even more vulnerable. For instance, as women have fewer formal and informal employment opportunities, only 50% of female-headed households reported unskilled daily labour as their main source of income, while 60% of male-headed households reported the same. Instead, 12% of female-headed households reported had to rely on humanitarian assistance as their primary source of income, while only 1% of the male-headed HHs reported the same.

Similarly, 49% of households with a disabled household head relied on unskilled daily labour as their main source of income, while only 60% of households without a disabled household head did. This may be explained by the household head's disability rendering them unable to conduct strenuous daily labour. Instead of unskilled daily labour, we may therefore expect disabled household heads to rely on less physical work and/or work that can be divided among family members, such as some types of cash crop farming. However, the research did not find a significant difference between households with a disabled household head (12%) and other households (7%) in regard to their reliance on cash crop or livestock farming. Humanitarian organisations may accordingly consider supporting some households with a disabled household head teaching them accessible cash crop techniques.

Displacement itself also had a significant impact on main source of income for the household. While 59% of displaced households currently depend on unskilled daily labour, only 45% of displaced households did so prior to displacement. Instead, 30% of displaced households used to rely on own cash crop or livestock farming in their previous location, while only 7% were still able to do so after displacement. Many of the displaced households would accordingly have the skills to provide for the household if they had access to agricultural land in their current location.

### Level of Income

In the 30 days prior to the interview, the average income of displaced households was found to be 24% less than the average income of host community households (AFN 7,693 [USD 109] vs AFN 10,160 [USD 145]).<sup>33, 34</sup> This difference can be largely attributed to displacement itself, as displaced households lost on average 17% of their monthly income, when compared to the 30 days prior to their most recent displacement (AFN 7,693 [USD 109] vs AFN 9,292 [USD 132]). Returnee households suffered, on average, the biggest decrease in their income upon their return (21%), while the income of recent IDP households only sunk by 14%.

However, the income of recent IDP households was also significantly less than the income of non-recent IDP and returnee households before they displaced. Recent IDP households reported a 16% lower income in their previous location than non-recent IDP households (AFN 7,609 [USD 108] vs AFN 9,080 [USD 129]) and 23% less than returnee households (AFN 7,609 [USD 108] vs AFN 9,865 [USD 140]). The difference between the previous income

<sup>33</sup> P-level <0.001

<sup>34</sup> AFN to USD conversions are based on the official exchange rates of 01. May 2018 (AFN 70.3 / USD 1), provided by the Central Bank of Afghanistan at [www.dab.gov.af/en](http://www.dab.gov.af/en).



of recent and non-recent IDPs grows to 20%, if we only compare the households that were displaced once and thereby focus the income in the households' area of origin.

The average monthly income of a household was strongly correlated with the number of earners within the household. Displaced households that only had one economic contributor earned on average AFN 6,605 [USD 94] in the 30 days prior to the interview, while households with four or more economic contributors reported an average income of AFN 13,940 [USD 198].<sup>35</sup> Overall, households had an average of 1.5 economic contributors with only slight differences between regions and displacement groups.

Households that did not have any member with a Tazkira earned on average 46% less in the 30 days prior to the assessment, than households that held at least one Tazkira (AFN 4,216 [USD 60] vs AFN 7,873 [USD 112]). Female-headed households reported to have earned on average 24% less than male-headed (AFN 5,952 [USD 85] vs AFN 7,825 [USD 111]). Returnee households that were not registered with UNHCR reported an average income that was 13% lower than that of returnees that were registered with UNHCR (AFN 7,176 [USD 102] vs AFN 8,224 [USD 117]). Displaced households with a disabled head were found to have earned 9% less in their current location than households without a disabled household head (AFN 7,021 [USD 100] vs AFN 7,729 [USD 110]).

These comparisons highlight households without any Tazkira or with a female household head as the groups with the lowest overall income in the 30 days prior to the assessment and therefore are considered to have the highest economic vulnerability.

Households with an elderly household head were found to earn significantly more than households with a household head under the age of 64 years (AFN 9847 [USD 140] vs AFN 7547 [USD 107]). This is likely due to households with an elderly household head being larger on average, including more economic contributors.

## Protection Concerns – During Displacement

Households face significant risks and hardship during their displacement. This chapter aims to identify these risks and challenges and provide the humanitarian community with information to best mitigate them. Given the movement of the households during displacement it is difficult to pinpoint where certain risks and challenges arise, particularly in reference to returnee households. In order to ensure the accuracy of the data, geographical disaggregations within this chapter are limited to IDP households that remained within a single region during their most recent displacement. Furthermore, all findings specific to mines/ERWs/PPIEDs were included in the dedicated 'Mine-Action' section.

### Incidents

#### Armed Fighting

Of the recent IDP households (displaced within the six months prior to data collection), 40% encountered armed fighting during their displacement. In contrast, 31% of non-recent IDP households reported that they faced armed fighting during their movement more than 6 months prior to data collection. The higher proportion of recent IDP households reporting armed fighting reflects the increasing insecurity and conflict throughout the country<sup>36</sup>, threatening displaced households more than in the past. During their return to Afghanistan, 7% of returnee households reported encountering armed conflict.

Greater distance travelled during displacement did not translate into a higher risk of encountering armed conflict. While 34% of IDP households that were displaced within a single region encountered armed conflict, only 13% of IDP households that displaced to a different region did. This may have been because displacing to a different region commonly requires better means of transportation which allow a household to avoid areas of active fighting. This interpretation is strengthened by the finding that households with a lower income were significantly more likely to come across armed fighting during their displacement, even if only compared with households that displaced within

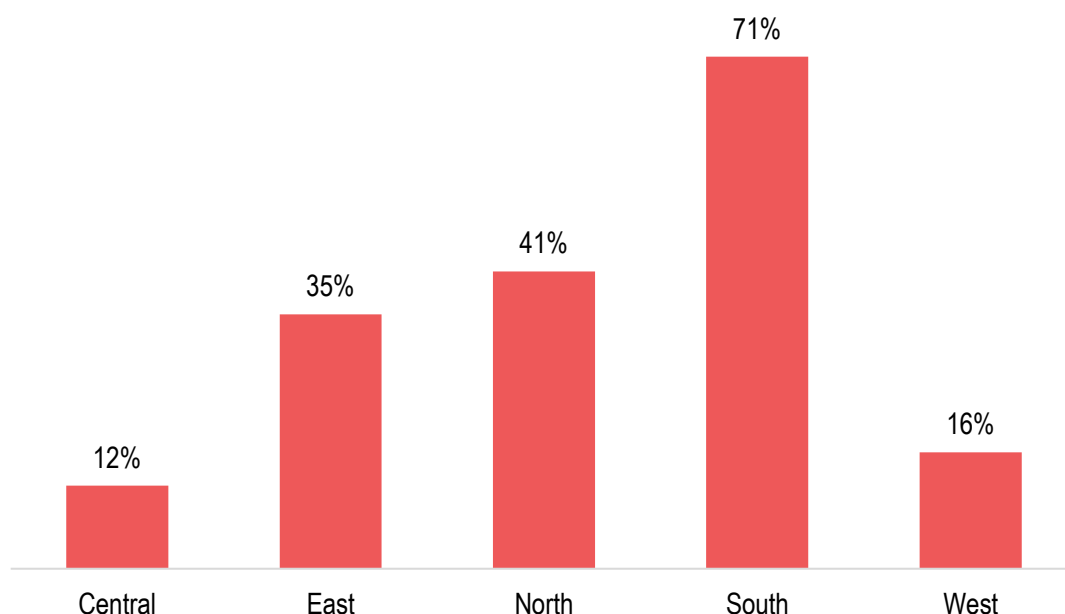
<sup>35</sup> P-value <0.001

<sup>36</sup> Security Council, "May 2018 Monthly Forecast"

a single region. Households with higher economic capacity may accordingly be able to afford travel along safer routes of displacement that safeguard them from encountering armed fighting.

Figure 9 displays the proportion of IDP households, displaced within a single region, that faced armed fighting during their displacement. Accordingly, 71% of IDP households displaced within the south encountered armed fighting during their displacement, compared to 12% of IDP households displaced within the central region.

**Figure 9: Percentage of IDP households displaced within a region that encountered armed fighting during displacement, by region**



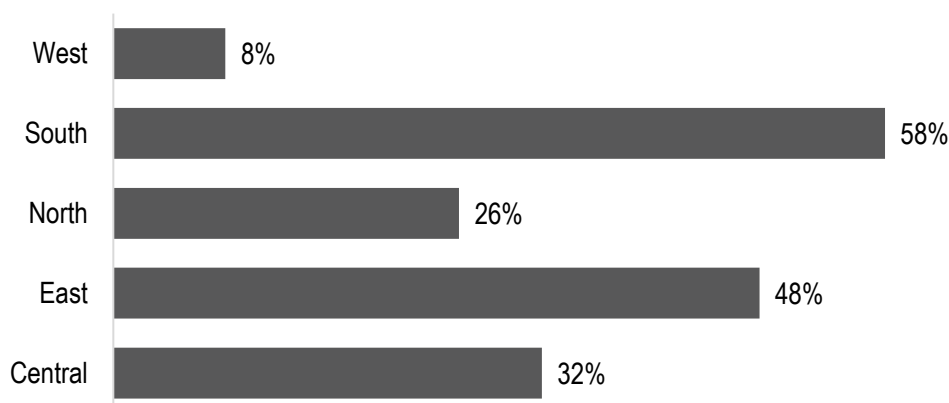
Nationwide, 34% of households with a disabled household head reported having faced armed fighting during displacement, while only 24% of households without a disabled household head reported the same. This indicates that households with a disabled household head may have been less mobile and thereby less able to avoid certain routes, even if they were known to be subject to armed conflict.

### Intimidation, Harassment or Forced Bribery

During their return to Afghanistan, 44% of returnee households reported to have been subject to intimidation, harassment or bribery. This is a significantly larger proportion than recent IDP (35%) and non-recent IDP households (32%) and may highlight the additional challenges returnee households face at the border or border region. Returnee households not registered with UNCHR faced harassment or forced bribery in 55% of cases, compared to 36% of returnee households that were registered with UNHCR. This indicates that not being registered with UNHCR left households more vulnerable to harassment and bribery by authorities on their return to Afghanistan.

Overall, 36% of male-headed households reported to have been subject to intimidation, harassment or bribery during their displacement, compared to 22% of female-headed households. Similarly, 36% of households with a household head younger than 65 years faced intimidation, harassment or bribery, while 29% of households with an elderly household head did. Figure 10 further indicates that households that moved through areas of the south and east during their displacement were most likely to face intimidation, harassment or bribery.

**Figure 10: Proportion of IDP households that reported intimidation, harassment or bribery during their displacement, by region**



### Arrest or Detainment

For returnee households, 17% reported that at least one member of the household was arrested or detained for a period of time whilst returning. In comparison, only 8% of IDP households reported detainment or arrest during displacement. The assessment found that returnee households' UNHCR registration status had no impact on the likelihood of being arrested or detained. This may indicate that a UNHCR registration functions as a deterrent to informal intimidation tactics but does not offer sufficient protection against intimidation from other bodies beyond NSAGs.

Similar to findings on harassment and bribery, 10% of male-headed households reported that at least one member was subject to arrest or detainment during displacement, while only 4% of female-headed households were. Overall, 8% of IDP households displaced within a region reported at least one member being arrested or detainment during displacement. This proportion was significantly higher in the South with 18% and in the Central region with 15% of households reporting arrest and detainment.

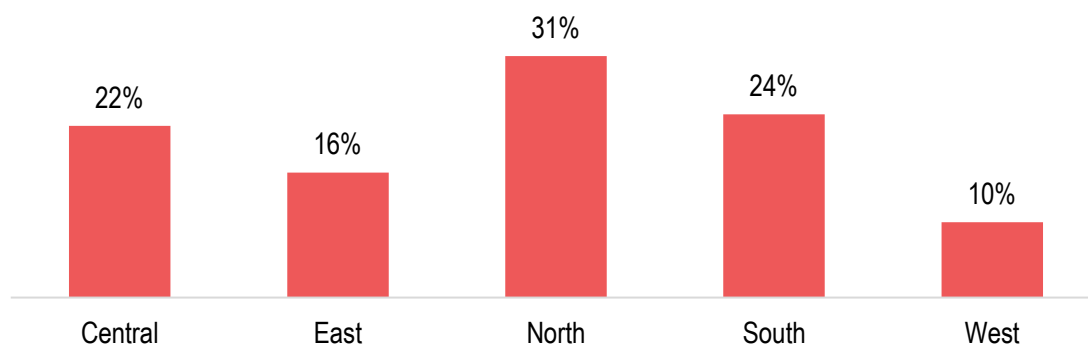
### Injuries

Overall, 18% of displaced households reported that at least one member was physically injured during displacement. The vast majority of these injuries were, however, not directly caused by armed conflict. Less than 1% of displaced households reported to have been injured by weapons or mines/ERW/PPIED during displacement. Similarly, less than 1% of displaced households reported one or more household members to have died through a weapon or mine/ERW/PPIED. This indicates that most of the injuries reported by displaced households were due to accidents in the difficult terrain which households were forced to cross during displacement.

Recent IDP households were the most likely to report physical injuries during their displacement (30%), while returnee households reported injuries during displacement the least often (12%). Additional analysis within this assessment indicated that returnee households relied on more established routes and means of transportation (i.e. vehicles) and were therefore less likely injured on the way. This is further suggested by the finding that 23% of IDP households that displaced within a region reported at least one injury, while only 3% of IDP households that displaced across regions did. Given that it often takes more established means of transportation to displace into a different region, it could be a factor in explaining the lower proportion of injuries.

The assessment found that households that got injured during displacement within a single province earned on average 27% less than those households that also only displaced within a single province but did not get injured (70,22AFN / 9,684 AFN). While all households displaced due to the conflict, richer households were able to avoid injury while on the move, suggesting that they were able to afford safer means of transportation. However, further research is needed to understand why poorer families are more vulnerable to injuries and how they can be protected on the move.

Figure 11: Displaced households with at least one injury during displacement, by region



### Other Incidents

Overall, 4% of all displaced households report at least one member facing attempted recruitment by armed actors. This proportion did not differ across displacement groups or vulnerable households. However, in the south 21% and in the central region 11% of IDP households reported attempted recruitment during their displacement within the respective region.

Additionally, 33% of recent IDP, 19% of non-recent IDP, and 4% of returnee households reported that they were subject to military airstrikes during displacement. Regionally, the highest proportion of households encountered military airstrikes during displacement was in the south (54%) and north (35%), compared to 7% of households in the central region. Most of the recent IDP were interviewed in the south or north, which can help explain why this group reported them significantly more often.

Theft is another concern during displacement reported by 7% of households, affecting all households equally, with no differences found between the displacement type or vulnerability.

### Access to Services

#### Medical Facilities

Overall, 69% of displaced households stated that women did not have access to medical facilities during their displacement. For unregistered returnee households this proportion rose to 75%, compared to 64% of registered returnee households. Households with an elderly household head were slightly more likely to report women not having access to medical facilities at 75%, as opposed to 69% of households with a household below the age of 64. The proportion of households that reported women not having access to medical facilities during displacement was not significantly different among female-headed households (68%) or among households with a disabled household head (68%).

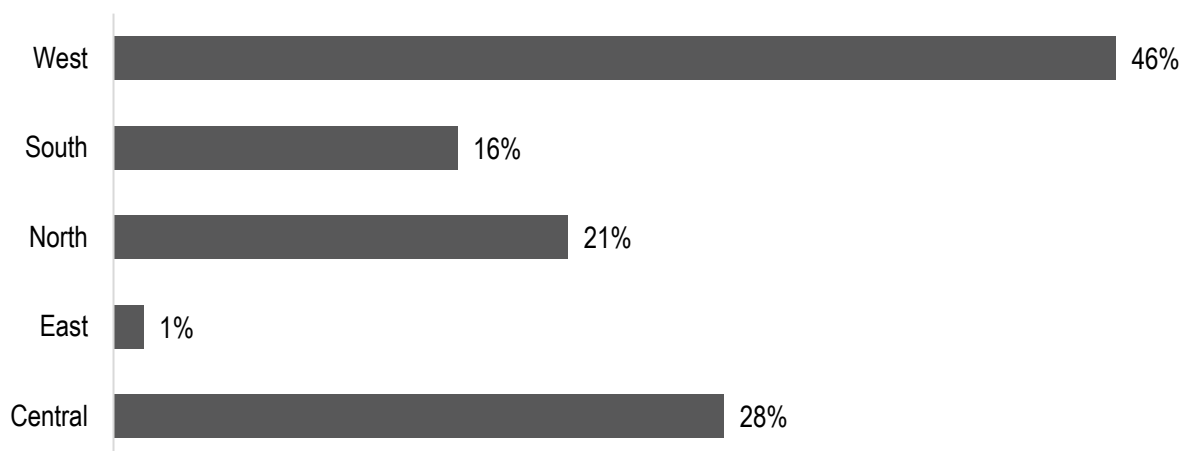
Findings indicate that there are fewer healthcare facilities in the east of Afghanistan, as the proportion of households with women that were not able to access medical facilities during displacement was highest in the east with 90%, compared to 65% overall. Across Afghanistan, the proportion of displaced households (66%) that reported men as unable to access medical facilities during displacement did not significantly differ from the proportion of households that reported no access for women (69%).

#### Police Stations

Overall, 13% of displaced households stated that women did not, if required, have access to police stations during their displacement – a percentage that was similar for men. Male-headed households were more likely to report that women did not have access to police stations during their displacement, compared to female-headed households, 13% compared to 7%. This may be explained by female-headed households choosing safer routes and locations for their displacement from the onset.

Regionally, 46% of households that reported not having access to police stations during their displacement were in the west, compared to only 1% in the east (see Figure 12).

Figure 12: Households that reported women not having access to police stations, by region



The proportion of households did not vary significantly across displacement or specific vulnerability groups.

### Wash Facilities

Overall, 51% of displaced households stated that women did not have access to WASH facilities during displacement. However, more female-headed households than male-headed households reported that women did not have access to WASH facilities (58% compared to 51%). Rather than a difference between the actual needs of women in female and male-headed households this difference may indicate that men, in general, underestimate women's inability to access WASH facilities.

This concern is exacerbated for women in households with a disabled household head, of which 69% reported women not having access to WASH facilities, compared to 51% of households without a disabled household head. Similarly, households with elderly household heads were slightly more likely to report not having access to WASH facilities (57%) compared to households with a household head under the age of 64 (51%). Households displaced within the south most often reported women not having access to WASH facilities at 70% compared to households in the east, which only noted this to be the case in 26% of the cases.

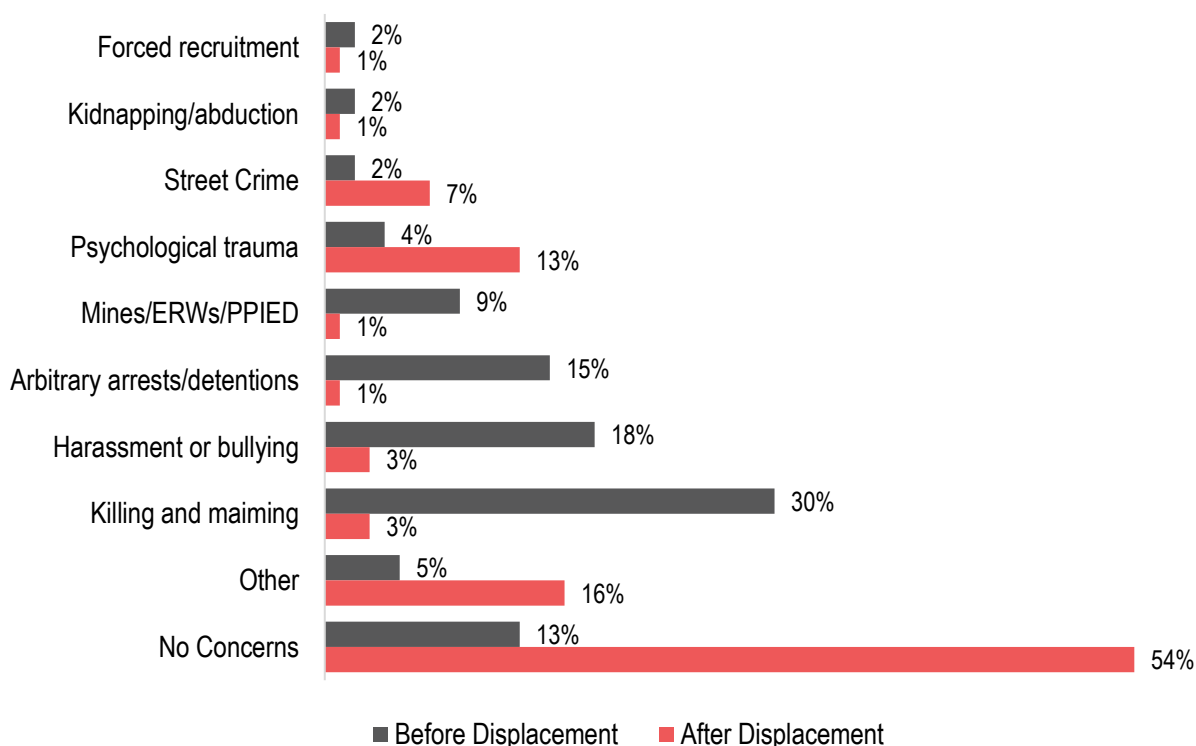
## Protection Concerns – Impact of Displacement

After having assessed the protection concerns displaced households face during displacement, the following section will examine the impact of displacement on households' protection-related vulnerabilities and concerns. The section will analyse the vulnerabilities and concerns of households in their current location and, where feasible, compare them to their vulnerabilities and concerns prior to displacement. The wealth of data and research framework further allow for a detailed comparison of household issues reported in the assessed location, either at the provincial level or between displaced groups at the regional level.

### Main Concerns

Figure 13 displays the main concerns that households reported adult male members to have had in the previous location, prior to their most recent displacement. It highlights that for most displaced households the main concerns were conflict or security related, with "killing and maiming" being the concern most commonly reported.

Figure 13: Main concerns of men before and after displacement



While 13% of displaced households reported that men had “no concerns” in their previous location, this includes returnee households that were forced to return and did not face any conflict related concerns.

Comparing the main concerns of men in the previous location to the main concerns of men in the current location, highlights that conflict or security-related concerns are no longer the main issues. Instead, household most often reported that men have either none of the listed concerns or other concerns after displacement. Almost all of the other concerns reported by households for men after displacement were economic, highlighting a lack of job opportunities (15% overall).

The proportion of displaced households that noted psychological trauma as a main concern for men more than tripled from 4% of households in the previous location to 13% of households in the current location. Taking a closer look at factors potentially influencing psychological trauma, the assessment found that respondents that noted psychological trauma as a main concern had, on average, an income 6% lower over the 30 days prior to the assessment, than respondents that did not (AFN 7,317 [USD 104] vs AFN 7,748 [USD 110]).<sup>37</sup> Overall economic means may accordingly play a role, but probably not a decisive one. However, if we compare households that noted psychological trauma as a main concern with those that did not, we find that the former on average spend 4.5 times more on paying back loans/debts than the latter (AFN 1,730 [USD 25] vs AFN 374 [USD 5]).<sup>38</sup> This indicates that being in debt or relying on loans may have a significant impact on the mental health of male household members, hindering their ability to recover from psychological trauma.

Reporting on the main concerns of female household members is more difficult, as the vast majority of interviews was conducted with male household heads. However, interviews with both male and female-headed households highlighted similar main concerns of women as men. The only significant difference was that 11% of male-headed and 19% of female headed households reported psychological trauma to be the main concern of women before displacement. After displacement, 14% of male-headed and 16% of female-headed households reported psychological trauma to be the main concern of women, similar to the above-mentioned proportion of households

<sup>37</sup> P-value <0.001

<sup>38</sup> P-value <0.001



reporting this to be the case for men. Households that reported psychological trauma of women equally had to repay loans 4.5 times more.

### Concerns in Hard-to-Reach Districts

Conflict-affected populations that remained in hard-to-reach districts (non-displaced) faced similar concerns, with a stronger focus on mines/ERWs and psychological trauma. In the first round of data collection, KIs in 50% of BSUs reported mines/explosive remnants of war (ERWs) as the main protection concern for their communities, followed by psychological trauma (42%) and street crime (31%). Unlike the first round, protection concerns were ranked by KIs in the second round of data collection, enabling a better understanding of the most pressing protection concerns in the communities within the assessed districts. Killing and maiming was the most common primary concerns, reported by 32% of BSUs.

This data is provided to give a broad overview of the situation of conflict-affected, but not displaced, populations. It cannot be directly compared with the household-level interviews, as the Afghanistan Hard to Reach Assessment (ATHRA) data is not generalisable and since the KI and household-level questionnaires were not identical. However, the data does suggest that after displacement, households had fewer significant, trauma-related protection concerns, such as exposure to mines/ERWs/PPIEDs than those that remained within hard-to-reach districts. However, both had comparable levels of psychological concerns, even if for varied and differing reasons. Psychological concerns are accordingly a cross-cutting issue that could be addressed by humanitarian actors planning to implement in hard-to-reach districts as well as areas of displaced populations, through further specialised assessments to identify the level and type of trauma.

### Multi-Sector Coping Strategy Index

The multi-sector Coping Strategies Index (mSCI) for Afghanistan was developed by Oxfam to help organisations assess severity of humanitarian needs.<sup>39</sup> It is composed of ten indicators designed to evaluate household practices aimed to mitigate, or respond to, challenges faced. By measuring the frequency and severity of these ten coping strategies, the mSCI provides an insight into the overall situation of the household stress levels.

As Table 7 highlights, the majority of displaced households in Afghanistan were considered to rely on minor coping strategies, while only very few households were considered to have an extreme severity score. Displaced households in the east were, on average, worst off with 77% of households having a high to extreme severity score, in comparison to only 8% in the central region.

**Table 7: Multi-sector Coping Strategy Index, by region\***

	Minor	Moderate	High	Major	Extreme
<b>Central</b>	67%	25%	5%	2%	1%
<b>East</b>	7%	16%	50%	26%	1%
<b>North</b>	37%	26%	20%	17%	0%
<b>South</b>	53%	22%	15%	7%	4%
<b>West</b>	42%	35%	20%	4%	0%

\* The mSCI thresholds were: Minor 0-9, Moderate 10-39, High 40-79, Major 80-119, Extreme 120 and above.

While the mSCI scores did not differ across the displacement groups, they did highlight significant differences between returnee households. If not registered with UNHCR, 59% of returnee households reported to rely on high to extreme coping strategies. In contrast, if registered with UNHCR, 45% of returnee households reported to rely on high to extreme coping strategies. Again, this indicates a benefit for returnee households being registered with UNHCR.

While 49% of female-headed households reported to rely on minor coping strategies, 57% of male-headed households reported the same. This made female-headed household, on average, more vulnerable, as they more often had to rely on moderate to extreme coping strategies. Moreover, out of households that were displaced

<sup>39</sup> Oxfam (2018), [Multi-Sector Coping Strategy Index](#): See link for details of the methodology and calculations for the mSCI.

multiple times, 43% reported a minor severity score, while 64% of households that were displaced only once reported the same. Households without a Tazkira, reported high to extreme coping strategy scores at 63%, as compared to only 43% of those who had at least one Tazkira. This indicated that having a Tazkira was indeed helpful in mitigating challenges faced. Households with a disabled or elderly household head reported, on average, similar mSCI scores as households without a disabled or elderly household head.

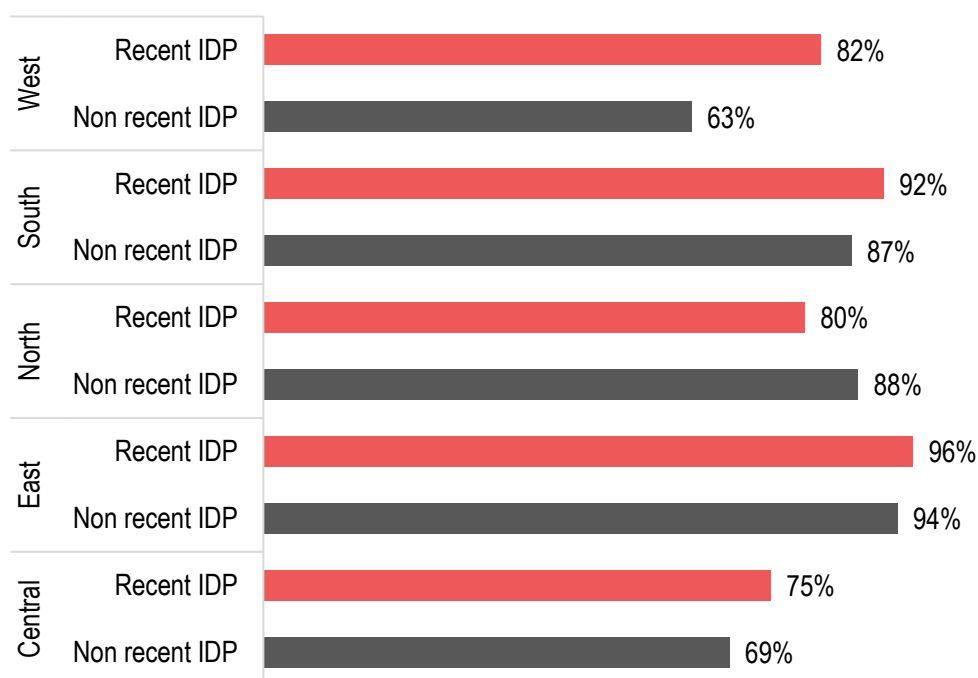
## Key Protection Concerns

### Armed Fighting

Overall, 87% of IDP households reported armed fighting in their previous location during the 30 days prior to displacement. This proportion was highest in the east with 94% of households reporting armed fighting, compared to 64% in the west. In contrast, 14% of returnee households reported armed fighting in their prior location outside Afghanistan.

Further distinctions can be drawn at the regional level when examining instances of armed fighting by previous location of household residence in Afghanistan.

**Figure 14: Households reporting armed fighting in previous location over 30 days prior to displacement, by region and IDP status**



As Figure 14 highlights, IDP households faced armed fighting in their previous location significantly more often in the west and central regions in the 30 days prior to their displacement, if they displaced within 6 months before the assessment. Armed fighting was accordingly an issue that displaced households faced more often before September/October 2017.<sup>40</sup>

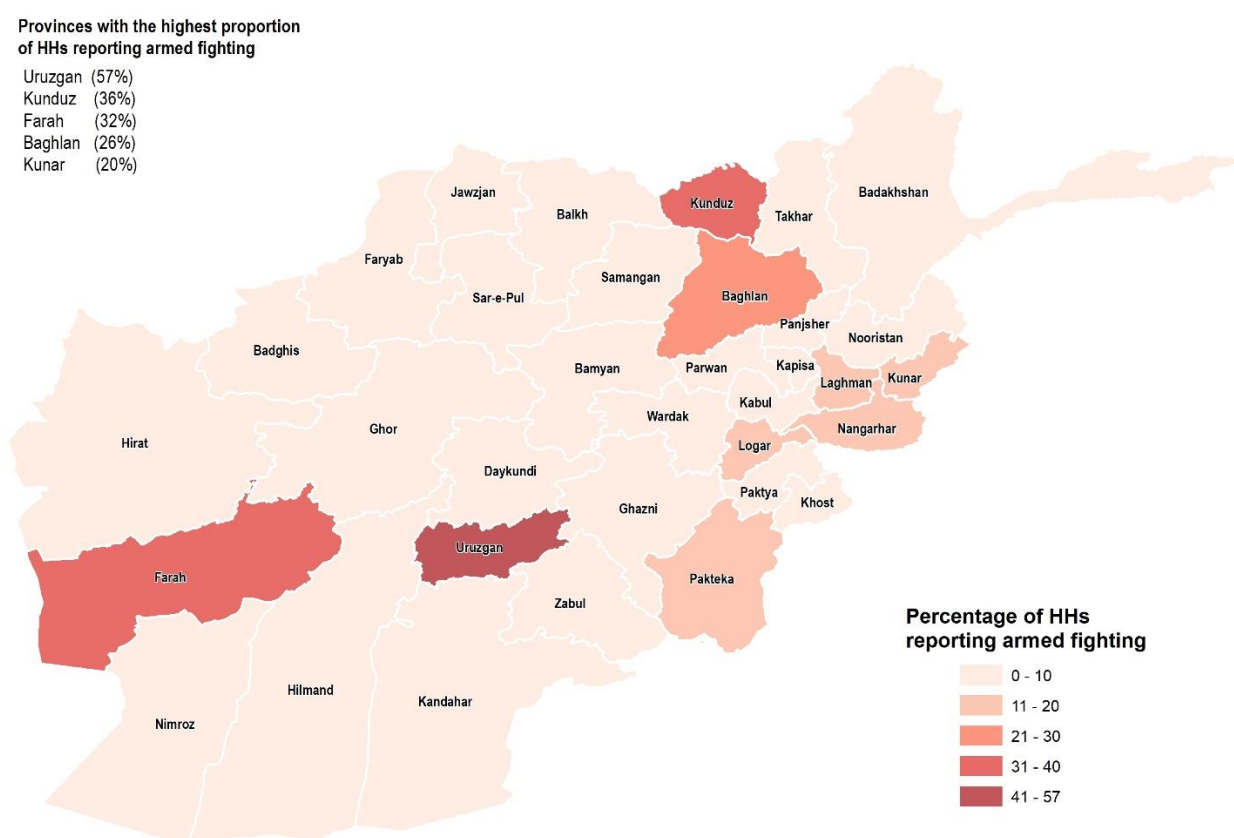
In their current location 14% of displaced households reported facing armed fighting. This proportion is similar across the displacement groups but differs between the regions of Afghanistan. Twenty-three per cent (23%) of displaced households currently residing in the north reportedly still face armed fighting, while only 1% of households currently residing in the central region reported the same.

<sup>40</sup> REACH (2017), Multi-Cluster Needs Assessments: [FSAC](#), [WASH](#) and [ESNFI](#).

However, this finding must not be interpreted to reflect only the situation in the different regions of Afghanistan, as it is also influenced by where the displaced populations decided to settle within a particular region. In the north, for instance, only 7% of the displaced population was located and interviewed within the province of the regional capital (Balkh), while in the central region, 80% of the displaced population was located and interviewed in the province of the regional capital (Kabul).

When comparing the five capital provinces (Balkh, Nangahar, Kandahar, Heart, Kabul) with the other 29 provinces of Afghanistan, armed fighting is only reported by 8% of households residing in the capital provinces, but by 21% of households residing in the remaining provinces. This distinction may accordingly explain the higher proportion of households still reporting armed fighting in the north, compared to the other regions. There were no significant differences across the different vulnerable groups (female, disabled, or elderly household head).

**Map 3: Provinces in which displaced households reported armed fighting in their current location**

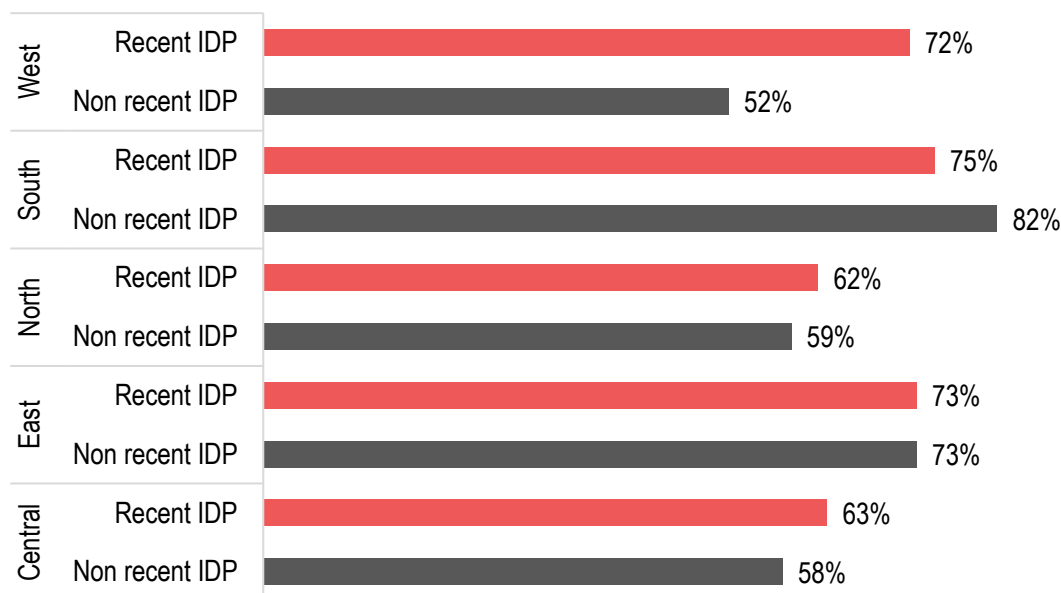


## Military Air Strikes

In the 30 days prior to their most recent displacement, 65% of IDP households reported to have experienced military airstrikes in their previous location. In contrast, only 8% of returnee households reported air strikes in their previous location outside of Afghanistan. IDP households whose previous location was in the south experienced military airstrikes most often (82%), compared to 53% of IDP households that previously lived in the west.

However, Figure 15 highlights that the situation in the west deteriorated in the six months preceding data collection with 72% of recent IDP households reporting military airstrikes in their previous location, compared to 52% of non-recent IDP households. Recent IDP households in the south also report military airstrikes less often than non-recent IDP households. The data also suggest a slight deterioration in the central region.

Figure 15: Households reported military airstrikes in previous location, by region and IDP status



After displacement, only 5% of displaced households reported to still be subject to military airstrikes in their current location. However, this differed significantly across regions. Displaced households in the north still reported military airstrikes in 14% of cases, compared to only 1% in the east and central regions. The distinction between safe and contested areas may have accordingly been least clear in the north, leaving many of the displaced households exposed to continued armed fighting (see previous section) and military airstrikes. Displaced households in the south and west were less able to avoid areas targeted by military airstrikes, with 10% of displaced households in the west and 9% in the south reportedly being subject to military airstrikes. Table 8 provides an overview of the provinces with the highest proportion of households reporting military airstrikes after displacement.

Table 8: Provinces with the highest % of households reporting military airstrikes in their current location

Uruzgan	51%
Farah	31%
Kunduz	25%
Baghlan	12%
Ghazni	7%

### Key Protection Concerns in Hard-to-Reach Districts

Conflict-affected populations that did not displace from their AoO also reported being subject to military airstrikes. In the first round of needs assessment, KIs in 38% of the BSUs reported their communities have had airstrikes in or around them in the 30 days prior to data collection. This proportion increased to 43% in the second round of data collection. In the vast majority of BSUs these strikes were reported as occasional (in 92% and 87% of BSUs in the first and second round, respectively). Nevertheless, a concerning 4% of BSU faced airstrikes once a week, 7% more than once a week, and 2% faced daily airstrikes in the second round (5%, 7% and 0% in the first round). BSUs where KIs reported daily airstrikes were located in the districts of Khanabad (Kunduz province) and Arghistan (Kandahar province). Populations in these areas are therefore exposed to collateral damage resulting from these strikes, including damage to shelters, destruction of means of sustenance such as cultivable lands, or collateral injuries and death, but also to psychological trauma.

## Injuries/Illnesses

Overall, 4% of conflict-displaced households reported that at least one family member died in their previous location due to conflict, with 3% noting their family member(s) were killed with a weapon and 1% noting their family member died due to mines/ERWs/PPIEDs. This percentage was not significantly different among the different displaced groups, as well as across vulnerabilities and throughout regions. Female-headed households were more likely to report that at least one family member died in their previous location (14%), compared to male-headed (3%). This difference could be anticipated as female household heads commonly only exist in Afghanistan after the death of a male household head.

Of all displaced households, 2% reported that at least one family member was permanently injured (e.g. loss of limb, loss of vision, head injury) in their previous location due to conflict. This proportion was the same across different displaced groups and regions, except for families with a disabled household head, which stood at 12%.

Around 2% of displaced households reported sustaining temporary injuries (e.g. body wounds, temporary loss of vision, etc.), with no difference across displacement groups or regions. Additionally, 7% of displaced households reported that at least one member developed a psychological illness in their previous location due to conflict – with 9% of IDP households and 2% of returnee households reporting same. Regionally, the proportion of displaced households that reported at least one member developed a psychological illness was highest in the south at 28%, followed by the east at 14%, compared to only 4% in the other three regions.<sup>41</sup>

Displaced households that had at least one member who died in the previous location were more likely to have another family member develop a psychological illness (26%), compared to displaced households that had not (6%). In a similar fashion, displaced households that faced military airstrikes in previous location were more likely to have a family member develop a psychological illness compared to those that had not (10% compared to 4%), and displaced households that witnessed active fighting in their previous location were more likely than households who did not to report same (10% compared to 2%). Lastly, the presence of mines/ERWs/PPIEDs affected displaced households' mental wellbeing, with 11% reporting having a family member who had developed a psychological illness, compared to 5% of households for which mines/ERWs/PPIEDs were not a concern.

## Specific Protection Concerns

### Child-Protection

#### Child Economic Contributors

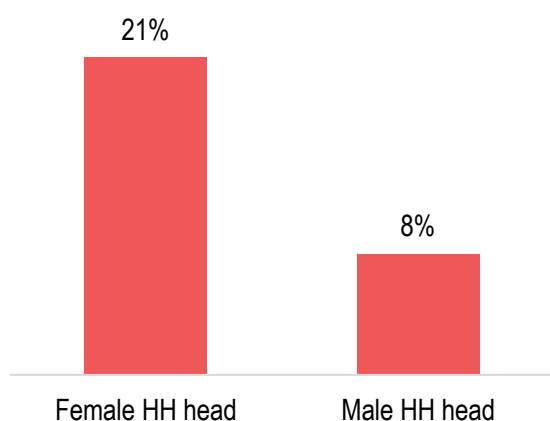
In all five regions, the proportion of displaced households with at least one economic contributor under the age of 16 was reported as the same in host and displaced populations. Overall, 9% of displaced households reported having at least one economic contributor under the age of 16 years. However, this proportion was significantly higher in the south, with 16% of households reporting to have at least one economic contributor under the age of 16 years. The assessment found no significant difference from the other regions to the national average.

Recent IDP households were more likely to have at least one child economic contributor in the south (25%) and central region (18%), compared with non-recent IDP households (16% and 8% respectively). This may indicate that over time, displaced households find alternative means of income and no longer rely on child economic contributors. Fourteen per cent (14%) of returnee households reported that they had at least one economic contributor under the age of 16 in the central region, which is significantly higher than the 8% of non-recent IDP households noted above. In the north and east, the proportion of refugee households with at least one child economic contributor does not differ from recent and non-recent IDP households.

At the provincial level, the assessment found that the provinces with the highest proportion of households with at least one child economic contributor were: Khost (48%), Uruzgan (35%), Paktya (28%), Farah (25%), and Paktika (20%).

<sup>41</sup> Incidence of psychological illness is self-reported and does not imply medical diagnosis.

Figure 16: Households with at least one economic contributor, under the age of 16 years



As figure 16 highlights, 21% of female-headed households reported at least one child economic contributor, while only 8% of male-headed household reported the same.

Similarly, 15% of households with a disabled household head had to rely on at least one economic contributor under the age of 16, while only 9% of families without a disabled household head had to do the same.

The assessment found no significant difference in the income level between households that had to rely on at least one child contributor than those that did not.

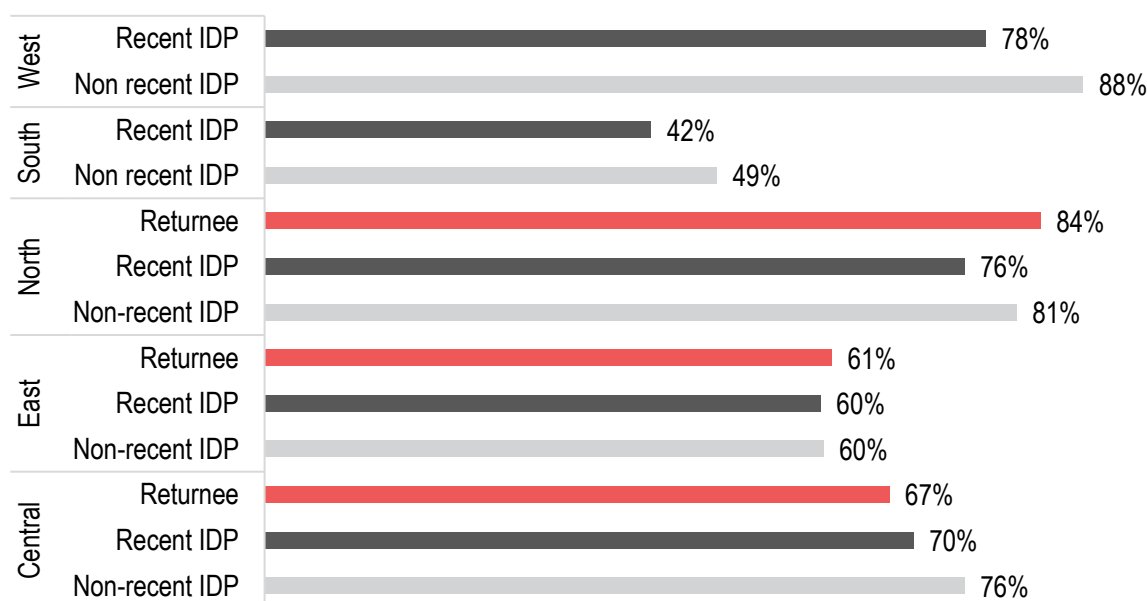
### Access to Youth Centres

Throughout the assessment, 71% of households reported that there was no youth centre specifically for teenagers and children available to their household members in their current location. This proportion rose to 86% of households in the west, compared to 50% in the south.

Overall, youth centres were reportedly equally unavailable for the host population and displaced households. However, in the west 86% and in the east 61% of displaced households reported that there was no centre available to their youth and children, while only 79% (west) and 55% (east) of host community households reported this. In the south, the difference was the opposite with 69% of host households reporting no available youth centres, while only 50% of displaced households reported the same.

Across Afghanistan, data revealed no significant difference in the availability of youth centres for recent IDP, non-recent IDP or returnee households. At the regional level, non-recent IDP households were more likely than recent IDP households to report no youth centre being available to their household members in west, south, and central regions.

Figure 17: Households reporting that no youth centres were available for their children in their current location





The fact that non-recent IDP households more frequently reported that no youth centre is available to their household members may be geographical; 62% of non-recent IDP households assessed were in capital province (Balkh, Nangahar, Kandahar, Herat, Kabul), while only 38% of recent IDP households were located in these provinces during the assessment. When comparing the reported availability of youth centres in the capital province with all the other provinces in their respective region, we find that in all regions households were significantly more likely to report not having a youth centre available in their community if living in the capital province. At the provincial level, all capital provinces, aside from Nangahar, were further found to be significantly above the national average (71%) of households reporting no youth centre being available (Balkh 88%, Kandahar 80%, Herat 99%, and Kabul 77%). This may indicate that either too few youth centres exist in the capital provinces, or that displaced families have difficulties to identify youth groups in an urban environment.

Comparing particularly vulnerable households we found that 78% of female-headed households reported no available youth centres, compared to 70% of male-headed households. Restrictions in their participation in the public sphere may make them less aware or able to send their children to youth centres. Similarly, 77% of elderly households reported no available youth group in their current location, in contrast to 70% of households with a head younger than 64 years. Again, the age of the household head may be restricting their participation in community activities and therefore knowledge of available options.

In contrast, households with disabled household heads were significantly less likely (70%) than other households (78%) to report no available youth centres in their community. This may be related to their current location, as households with a disabled household head were also less likely (46%) to live in a capital province, than other households (55%).

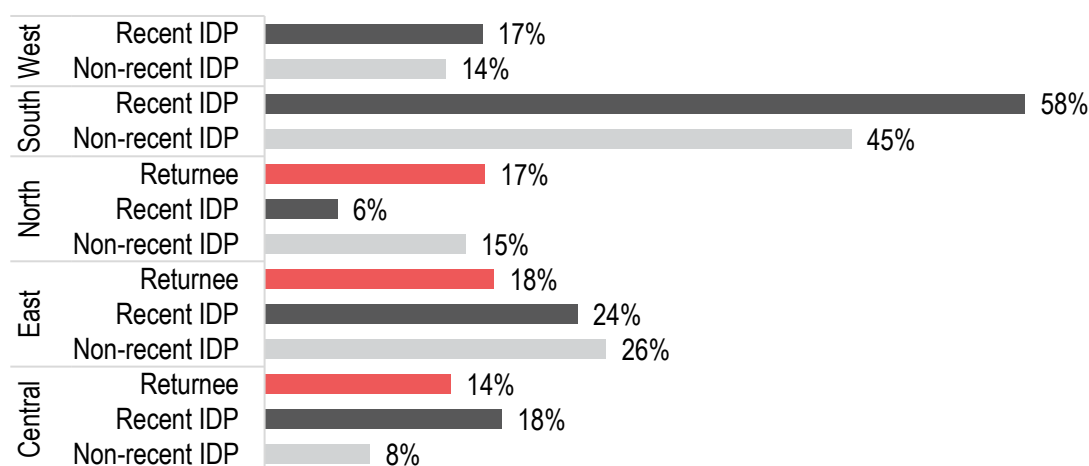
## Gender-Based Violence

### Concerns

Overall, 18% of displaced households reported that there are areas in their community where women, girls, and boys feel unsafe or try to avoid. This figure is more striking when disaggregated at the regional level, showing that 44% of displaced households in the south report unsafe areas for women, girls, and boys, compared to only 10% of displaced households in the central region.

Across Afghanistan, a similar proportion of host community households report unsafe areas as displaced households (16%). However, significant differences exist at the regional level. In the south, 44% of displaced households and 25% of host community households reported unsafe areas for women and children; and in the north, 16% of displaced households and 8% of host community did. In contrast, in the west 26% of the host community households noted unsafe areas for women and children, while 17% of displaced households did. Further research is needed to explain these regional differences and address the challenges for women and children.

Figure 18: Proportion of households reporting unsafe areas in current location, by displacement group



As Figure 18 highlights, the proportion of households reporting unsafe areas for women and children in their current communities varied between the displacement groups across the regions. While 17% of returnee and 15% non-recent IDP reported unsafe areas for women and children in the North, only 6% of recent IDP households did. In contrast, 58% of recent IDP households reported such areas in the South, while only 45% of non-recent IDP did.

At the provincial level, the assessment found that the provinces with the highest percentage of displaced households reported areas where women and children feel unsafe were: Uruzgan (89%), Farah (64%), Kunar (56%), Helmand (55%), and Paktya (51%).

For male-headed households, 18% reported there to be areas in the community in which women and children feel unsafe or try to avoid, compared to 11% of female-headed households. This may be explained by female-headed households choosing locations they perceive to be safer for themselves and their children after displacement, while male household heads focus on other criteria such as job opportunities. However, further research to analyse and test this assumption is needed.

### Attacks/Harassment

Additionally, women and children in the south are also significantly more likely to encounter harassment and attacks in the south. While 40% of displaced households in the south reported to know of harassment or violent attacks against women, girls or boys in their community in the 30 days prior to the assessment, only 7% of displaced households reported this on average. None of the other regions differed from the national average.

**Table 9: Provinces with the highest % of households knowing of harassment or attacks against women, girls or boys in their community in the last 30 days**

Uruzgan	81%
Zabul	50%
Helmand	47%
Farah	46%
Khost	33%

Regionally, recent IDP households were significantly more likely to report knowing about harassment and attacks against women and children in the 30 days prior to the assessment in the south and central regions. In the south, 50% of recent IDP households reported knowing of harassment and attacks, while 40% of non-recent IDPs reported the same. In the central region 10% of recent IDP households reported knowing of harassment and attacks, in comparison to 4% of non-recent IDPs. These are also the two regions in which a significantly higher proportion of recent IDP households reported unsafe areas for women and children (see figure 18).

The proportion of host communities knowing of harassment and attacks in the 30 days prior to the assessment was found to be similar to displaced households in all five regions of Afghanistan. However, differences were found between the districts that include the five regional capitals (Nangahar, Kandahar, Herat, Balkh, Kabul) and other, more rural, districts. In the latter districts, 9% of households reported knowing of harassment or attacks against women and children, compared to 1% of households in districts that hold the regional capitals. This may indicate a higher prevalence of gender-based violence in rural compared to urban areas.

Follow-up FGDs highlighted that the type of gender-based attacks and harassment may differ between urban and rural areas. Representatives of female support groups notes that in urban areas, women and children are commonly less restricted in their movement and freedoms but are also more likely to be subject to harassment in the public space, such as by bus and taxi drivers or unknown police officers.

In contrast, in rural areas gender-based violence is less often by chance in the public sphere, due to stronger community ties and stricter rules on where women and children are allowed to go, but more structural in the form of forced marriages and families selling their daughters into marriage under the age of 18. Domestic violence was, however, reported high in both urban and rural contexts in the FGDs.

The proportion of female and male-headed households reporting attacks shows little variation throughout the country. However, follow-up FGDs highlighted that since female-headed households reported a significantly lower monthly income and less access to the labour market, women in female-headed households are more likely to have to work as sex workers.

Lastly, almost all participants of the FGDs highlighted the limited access of female-support organisations in rural areas, which continues to shrink with the recent advancements of NSAGs. Women and children in rural areas may accordingly soon lose support and access to services, despite displaying some of the most severe vulnerabilities.

### Awareness of Support Mechanism

Despite the high levels of displaced households reporting knowledge of assaults and harassments against women and children in their community, 45% reported that women and children in their household would not know anyone to contact in the community (or outside) to receive help, in case they would be assaulted or harassed. While the central region had the lowest percentage (5%) of households that reported knowing of harassment and attacks against women and children, it had the highest percentage (54%) of households reporting that women and children would not know whom to contact. In comparison, 22% of displaced households in the west reported that women and children would not know who to turn to, in case of an assault or harassment.

Women and children of recent IDP households in the north (42%) and west (28%) were found to be less likely to know whom to ask for help to avoid any future assault or harassment, in comparison to non-recent IDP households in the north (33%) and west (22%). However, the opposite was found in the central region where 57% of non-recent IDP households reported that women and children would not know, while 36% of recent IDP households stated the same. This strong divide in the central region may be explained by the lower proportion of recent IDP households moving to Kabul province (20%) compared to non-recent IDP households (80%). The urban environment of Kabul, may make it particularly difficult for women and children to know of someone to contact to receive help, even if having been there for more than 6 months.

Women and children of returnee households were not found to be significantly more or less likely than other displaced households to know where to go for help, in case of an assault or harassment. However, while 45% of displaced households reported women and children not knowing anyone to ask for help, 32% of host community households reported the same vulnerability of women and children. Regionally, this difference between host and displaced households was most significant in the north and west, with 33% of displaced households in the north reporting women and children do not know, while 23% of host community households stated that women and children did not know. In the east, 22% of displaced families reported women and children not knowing anyone to turn to for help, in case of an assault or harassment, while only 7% of the host community households stated the same.

The provinces in which the highest percentage of households reported women and children not knowing who to ask for receiving help were: Nuristan (89%), Laghman (75%), Badakhshan (73%), Kunduz (70%) and Kabul (63%).

The assessment found no significant difference between female-headed and male-headed households that reported women and children not knowing who to turn to. Even if women and children would know who to ask for help, follow-up FGDs highlighted that in almost all cases they would not do so. FGDs highlighted that gender-based violence remains in almost all cases unreported, because of three main factors. First, women and children are concerned about the stigma in the community they and their family would face if they reported an attack or harassment. Second, women and children are afraid that if their family members would find out they may punish or even kill them to uphold the families standing within the community. Third, support groups noted that most women and children do not trust the authorities with these issues, as they often fail to take gender-based violence seriously or even turn against them and blame them for inappropriate relations. During the FGDs, GBV service providers noted high suicide rates among women who were previously survivors of gender-based violence.

## Housing, Land, and Property

### Household size

In their previous location, the home of displaced households consisted on average of 2.8 indoor rooms, this number decreased to 2.2 indoor rooms in the current location of displaced households.<sup>42</sup> This decline affected all displacement groups equally. Whether the household was displaced for the first time or multiple times also had no impact as all reported the same reduction since their most recent displacement.

In their previous location, 46% of displaced households could not afford to have more than 2 indoor rooms. Households that had up to 2 indoor rooms before displacement reported to earn 28% less than households that previously had 3 or more indoor rooms (AFN 7,640 [USD 109] vs AFN 10,678 [USD 152]). In their current location, 68% of displaced households could not afford more than 2 indoor rooms after displacement. Households that had up to 2 indoor rooms in their current location earned 33% less than households that had 3 or more rooms (AFN 6635 [USD 94] vs AFN 9952 [USD 142]).

Within Afghanistan, homes of displaced households in the north had the least amount of indoor rooms in their current location, with an average of 2 rooms, in comparison to 3.3 indoor rooms for displaced households in the south. Displaced households also had significantly fewer rooms available in their current location (2.2) than host population households, which reported on average 2.9 indoor rooms.

Female-headed households reported to only have 2.5 indoor rooms available in their current location, in comparison to 2.8 rooms in the male-headed households. However, female-headed households were also found to consist on average of 8.3 household members, while male-headed households reported 10.4 members. However, women in general are impacted by the number of rooms, as fewer indoor rooms result in households not being able to allocate separate living spaces to female household members. Overall, 76% of displaced households reported not being able to allocate separate living spaces to women. These households had an average of 2.1 indoor rooms in their current location, while households that were able to allocate separate living spaces to female members had an average of 2.8 indoor rooms.

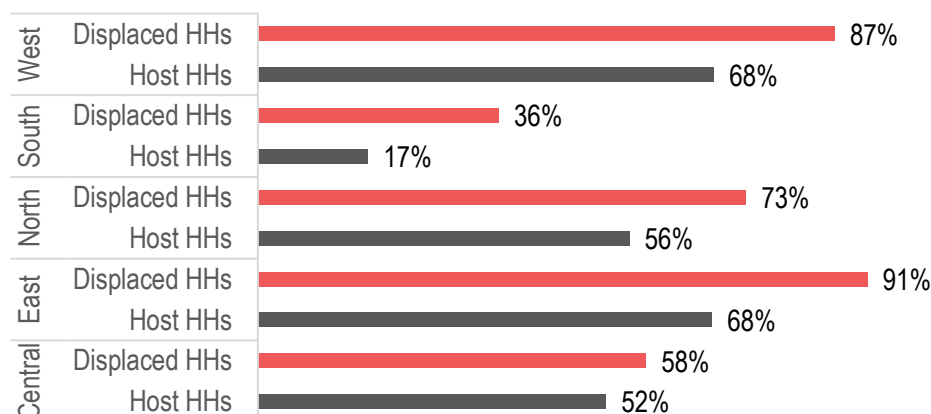
Regionally, the proportion of displaced households unable to allocate separate living spaces in their current location differed significantly, with 91% of households reporting this to be the case in the East, compared to 36% of households in the South. Within the North, 75% of non-recent IDP households reported not being able to allocate separate living spaces to women, compared with 65% of returnee households. In the South, 38% of non-recent IDP households reported not being able to allocate separate living spaces, compared to 25% of recent IDP households. Otherwise, the displaced groups display the same proportions within the different regions.

As Figure 19 displays, displaced households were significantly more likely to be unable to allocate separate living spaces in all five regions of Afghanistan. Not only does this indicate overcrowding within displaced households, but also indicates a higher prevalence of protection concerns.

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<sup>42</sup> p-value: >0.001

Figure 19: Households reported not able to allocate separate living spaces to women



### Tenure Status

Overall, 49% of displaced households had to rent accommodation in their current location after displacement. As Table 10 displays, the exception were households currently residing in the west, of which 47% rely on a customary tenure document<sup>43</sup> and only 13% on a rental contract.

Table 10: Tenure status in current location, by region\*

	Customary tenure document	Land title deed by Court of Law	Letter of permission by the Government	None (occupied without permission)	Rental agreement (written)	Verbal permission
Central	15%	3%	2%	7%	53%	17%
East	7%	5%	2%	6%	48%	31%
North	15%	6%	5%	1%	47%	24%
South	4%	12%	10%	2%	53%	17%
West	47%	9%	1%	11%	13%	19%

\* Additional responses not included in the table ranged between 0-2% and included: 'Safeyee Notebook', 'Other', 'Don't know'.

In all of Afghanistan, 25% of displaced households relied on nothing more than a verbal agreement for their current shelter. This proportion was higher in the east with 31% of the respondents noting that they only have verbal permission to reside in their current shelter. This assessment also found that host community households are less likely than displaced HHs to rely on rental agreements at all. Rather, the former more often have a customary tenure document (43%) or land title deed (29%). Table 11 shows that time spent in the current location does not impact the ability of IDP households to acquire better tenure status. Non-recent IDP households are more likely to rely on rental agreements and verbal permissions than recent IDP households and are also less likely to have a customary tenure document. This may suggest that displaced households remain stuck with the tenure agreement that they receive upon their arrival in a new location and have little possibility to improve their status.

Table 11: Tenure status in current location, by displacement group\*

	Customary tenure document	Land title deed by Court of Law	Letter of permission by the Government	None (occupied without permission)	Rental agreement (written)	Verbal permission
Host HH	43%	29%	2%	2%	12%	8%
Non-recent IDP HH	8%	3%	2%	5%	53%	27%
Recent IDP HH	23%	4%	2%	5%	45%	21%
Returnee HH	22%	10%	4%	3%	39%	19%

\* Additional responses not included in the table ranged between 0-3% and included: 'Safeyee Notebook', 'Other', 'Don't know'.

<sup>43</sup> For further information on customary tenure in Afghanistan see the [USAID explanatory report](#).

Returnee households not registered with UNHCR had to rely on rental agreements (written) 47% of the time, while only 34% of those registered with the UNHCR had to do so. Additionally, 70% of households with a disabled household head were found to rely on rental agreements.

Figure 20: Average amount spent (AFN) in the 30 days prior to assessment on loan repayments, by tenure status

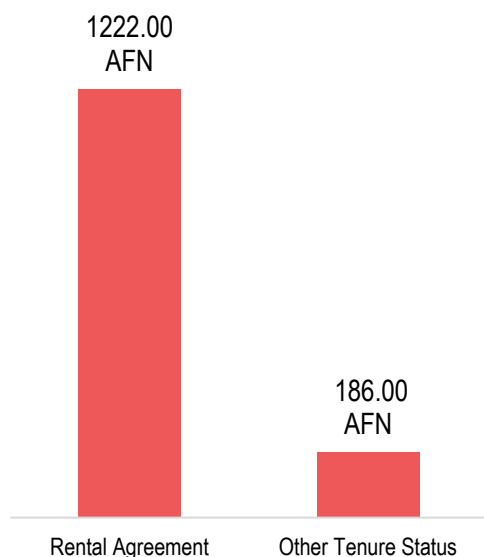


Figure 20 indicates that being in a rental agreement can expose displaced households to significant vulnerabilities. Displaced households that reported currently living in a rental home spend, on average, 6.5 times more on loan repayments in the 30 days prior to the interview, than households in other tenure arrangements. This correlation supports qualitative findings that displaced households often have to borrow money and face economic concerns due to rent expenses after displacement.<sup>44</sup>

Loan repayments and monthly rent form a significant expenditure for HHs who often lack sufficient funds to fulfill all the needs of their dependents.

Lastly, 30% of female-headed HHs were found to rely on a verbal agreement in their current location, while 24% of male-headed HHs reported the same. Relying on a verbal agreement is likely not a choice. Households in a verbal agreement had, on average, 33% less income in the last 30

days than households with a different tenure status. Housing leased under a verbal agreement is therefore likely cheaper and informal accommodation arrangements place tenants (especially female-headed HHs) in uncertain, and thus vulnerable situations.

### Fear of Eviction

Of returnee households, 70% reportedly feared imminent eviction in the 30 days prior to their return to Afghanistan. In contrast, 47% of recent IDP households and 40% of non-recent IDP households feared eviction in the 30 days prior to their recent displacement. The fear of eviction was not found to be different between returnee households that were registered with the UNHCR and those that were not.

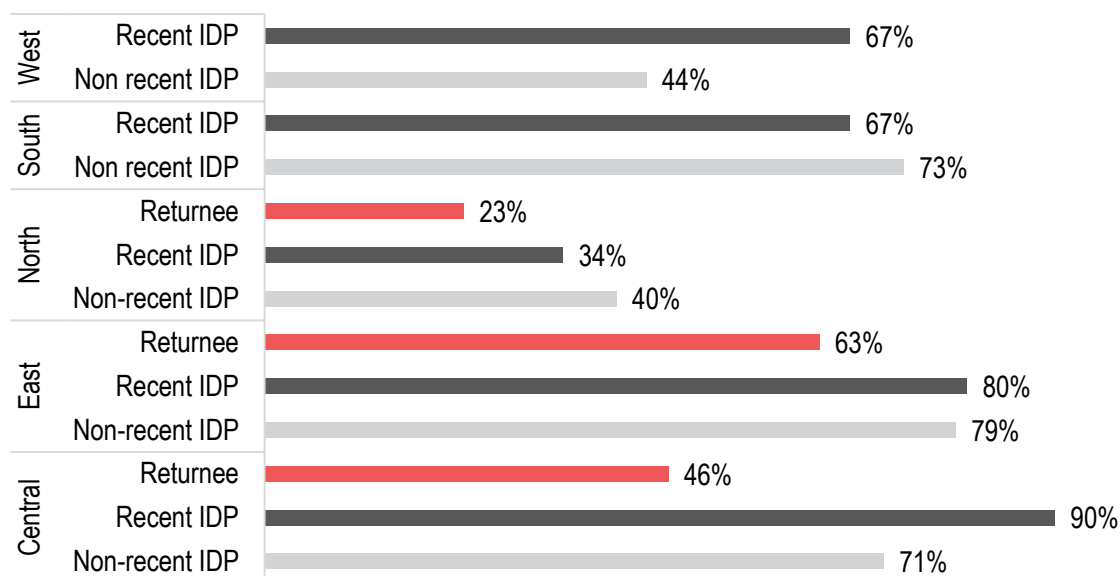
Households that feared eviction prior to their displacement were found to have earned 8% less in the 30 days prior to displacement, than households that did not fear eviction (AFN 8,871 [USD 126] vs AFN 9,692 [USD 138]). Of households with a disabled household head, 63% feared eviction in the 30 days prior to displacement, while 48% of other households feared eviction during the same timeframe.

The fear of eviction remained a significant concern for the majority of displaced households after displacement. However, after displacement, the fear of eviction was more prevalent among IDP than returnee households. In the central region, 90% of the recent IDP households cited this fear, compared to 46% of returnee households.

<sup>44</sup> REACH (2019), Fragmented Families Assessment



Figure 21: Fear of eviction in current location, by displaced group and region



Across Afghanistan, displaced households were significantly more concerned about eviction than host community households, with 59% compared to 20%. Regionally, the figure for host community households fearing eviction in the south rose to 49% - which is nonetheless significantly lower than 71% for displaced households.

Just as in the previous location, 68% of households with a disabled household head feared eviction in the current location, compared to 59% of households without a disabled household head.

Concerns of eviction correlate strongly with the tenure status of a household. Overall, 71% of displaced households that currently have either no tenure status, a verbal permission, or written rental agreement fear eviction, while only 16% of household with a more secure tenure status fear eviction. This can also help explain why host community households are also afraid of eviction. While, 65% of host community households that currently have either no tenure status, a verbal permission, or rental agreement fear eviction, only 8% with other tenure agreements fear the same.

## Mine Action

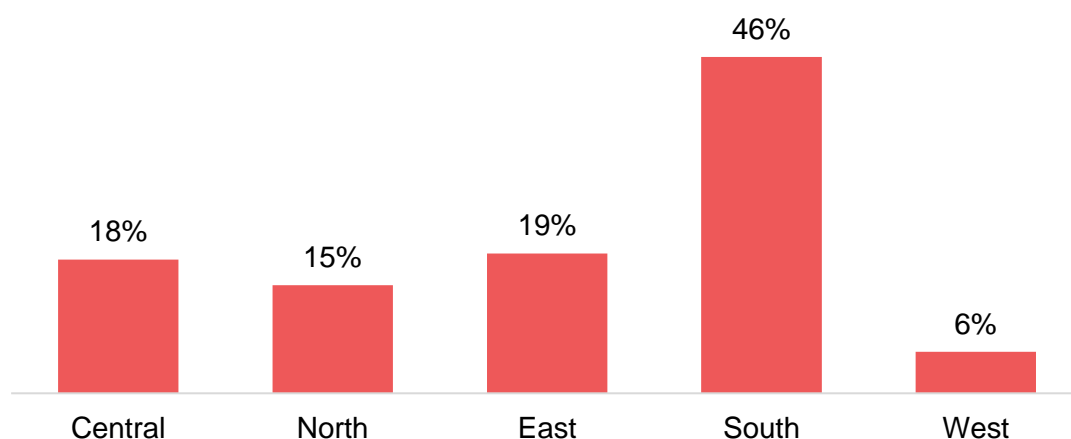
### During Displacement

Overall, 11% of displaced households reported having come across mines/ERWs/PPIEDs during their most recent displacement. However, while 15% of non-recent IDPs and 13% of recent IDPs reported having come across mines/ERWs/PPIEDs, only 1% of returnee households had the same experience. Of the displaced households that came across mines/ERWs/PPIEDs during their displacement, 79% noted that these mines/ERWs/PPIEDs were not sufficiently marked to be recognizable.

IDP households that remained within a single province during their most recent displacement were significantly more likely to have come across mines/ERWs/PPIEDs (19%) than those that crossed a provincial boundary (7%). This indicates that households that moved across provincial boundaries were able to afford to take more established routes, roads, and means of transportation, thus minimizing their risk of coming across mines/ERWs/PPIEDs. This explanation is further supported by the finding that, of all the IDP households displaced within a single province, those with a higher average income before displacement were less likely to come across mines/ERWs/PPIEDs during their displacement. This finding also holds true at the regional level.

Figure 22 highlights that 46% of IDP households that were displaced within the south came across mines/ERWs/PPIEDs during their most recent displacement, while only 6% of IDP households displaced within the west reported the same.

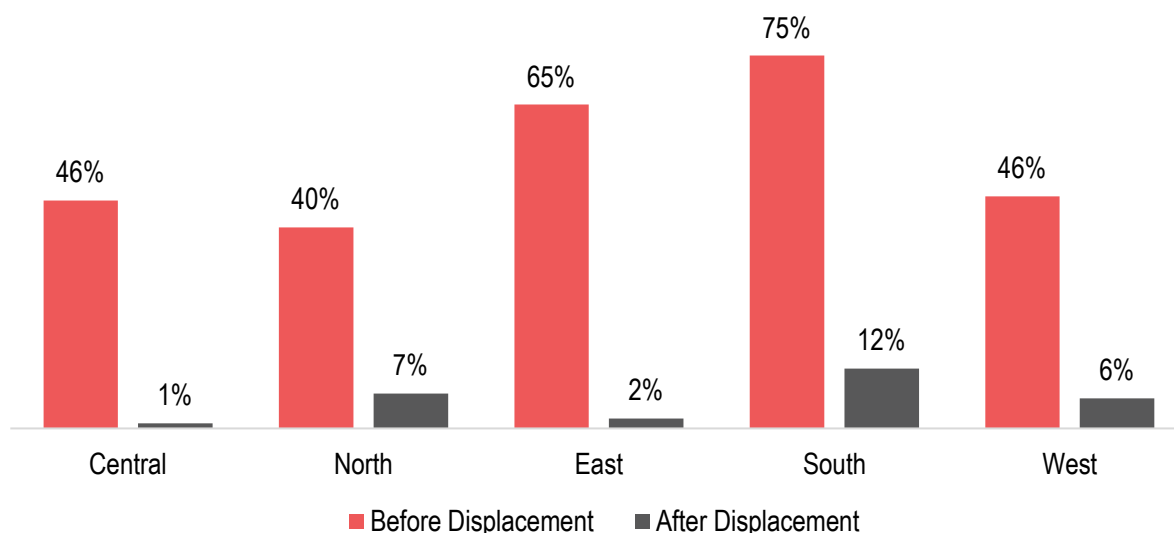
Figure 22: IDP households that came across Mines/ERWs/PPIEDs during displacement



### Impact of Displacement

Overall, 52% of IDP households reported that mines were present in their previous location, with the highest proportion reported in the south (75%); see Figure 23.

Figure 23: IDP households reporting mines in their community before and after displacement, by region



While 63% of IDP households that displaced within the six months prior to the assessment reported mines/ERWs/PPIEDs in their previous location, 52% of non-recent IDP households reported the same issues in their previous community. This may indicate the escalation of conflict across Afghanistan and the problem of ERWs and PPIEDs that come along with it.

Of the households that reported mines/ERWs/PPIEDs in their previous location, 60% noted that they were not sufficiently marked and 97% stated that the mines/ERWs/PPIEDs negatively impacted their daily routines, restricting access to certain areas in/around the community. This is further supported by the finding that 21% of displaced households that reported mines/ERWs/PPIEDs in their previous location also reported to not have access to at least one basic service, in comparison to 12% of displaced households that did not report mines/ERWs/PPIEDs in their previous location. Figure 24 outlines key correlations between IDP households reporting the presence of mines/ERWs/PPIEDs in their previous location and the lack of access to key basic services.

**Figure 24: IDP households reporting lack of access to basic services in previous location, by reported presence of mines/ERWs/PPIEDs**

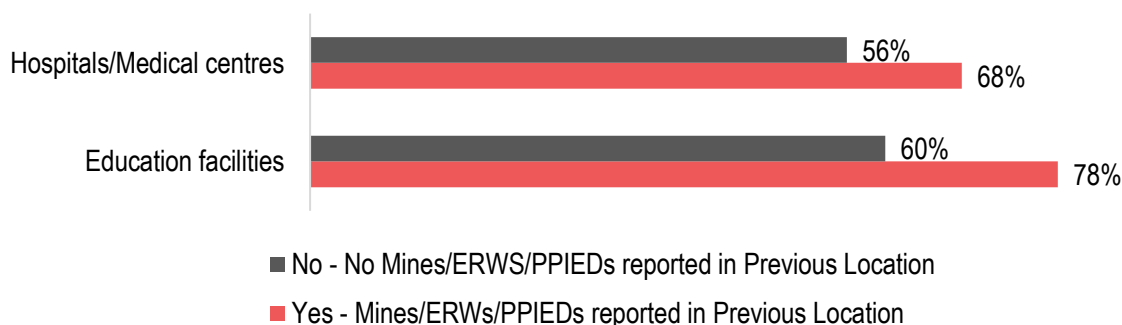
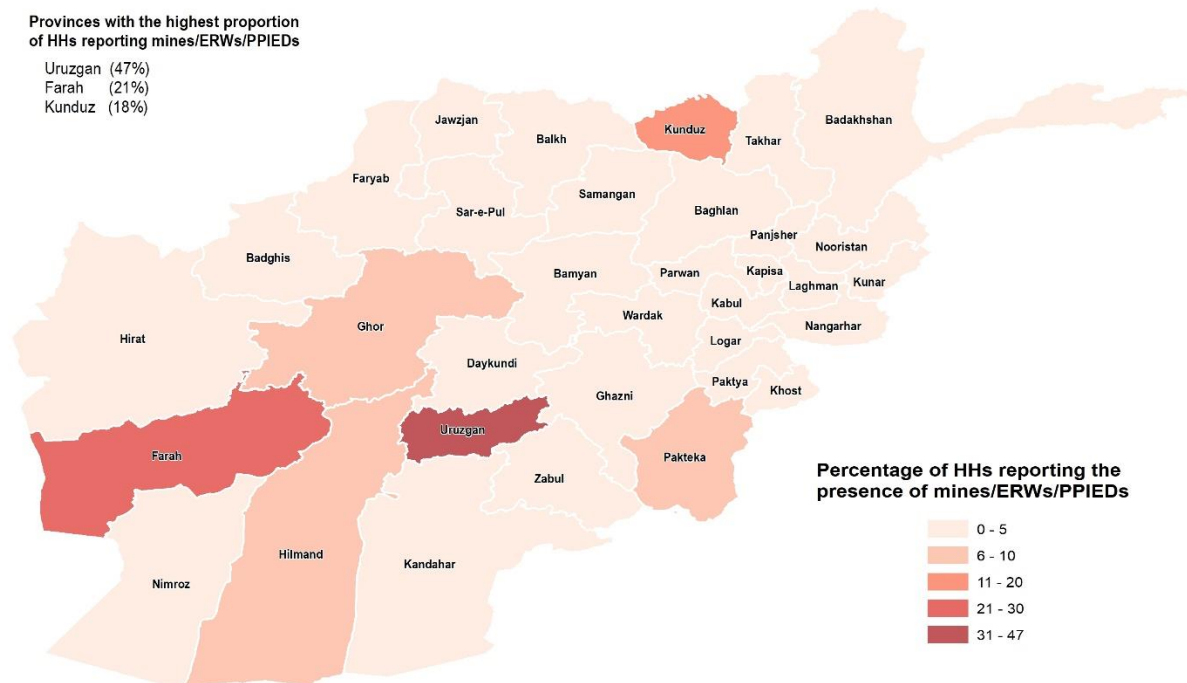


Figure 23, however, also highlights that the presence of mines/ERWs/PPIEDs was significantly less of a concern for households after displacement, with only 4% of all displaced households reporting mines/ERWs/PPIEDs to be present in their current location. However, displaced households in the south were less able to avoid this concern with 12% still facing mines/ERWs/PPIEDs around their current location.

Map 4 provides an overview of the provinces in which households were least able to avoid mines/ERWs/PPIEDs after their displacement. Importantly, this is not a measure of mine prevalence in those provinces, as in many of those provinces the interviews were geographically limited to where displaced households now commonly reside. Instead it is a map that outlines how well households were able to avoid mines/ERWs/PPIEDs in each province after displacement.

**Map 4: Households reporting mines/ERWs/PPIEDs in their current location, by province**



Map 4 highlights that almost half (47%) of displaced households that currently reside in Uruzgan are still living in proximity of mines/ERWs/PPIEDs. Displaced households accordingly have a difficult time avoiding them when searching for a new, safer location to settle. These safer locations were commonly around Tarinkot, the provincial capital of Uruzgan.

## Refugee-Specific Concerns

As noted in the introduction, a significant displaced population of Afghanistan are the estimated 220,000 Pakistani refugees residing in the southeast of the country. Given their special status and limited area of residence, they were excluded from the previous sections of the report. The following presents key protection-related findings on refugee households and compares them to the Afghan displaced population (recent IDP, non-recent IDP, and returnee households), at the national level.

### Displacement, Return, and Socio-Economic Factors

Almost all refugee households (93%) noted that they left Pakistan either due to armed conflict or intimidation/harassment by armed actors. In particular, 79% of refugee households noted that the main push factor for their displacement was armed conflict, in comparison to 53% of the Afghan displaced households. The Afghan displaced households noted intimidation/harassment by armed actors as the main reason for displacement in 26% of the cases, while 14% of refugee households reported the same.

Overall, 61% of refugee households reported the main pull factor for coming to their current location was a perception of better security, which was the same proportion for Afghan displaced households. The assessment further found that only 3% of refugee households chose their current location due to employment opportunities, in comparison to 9% of Afghan displaced households. In contrast, 9% of refugee households were drawn to their current location hoping for better access to services, compared to only 2% of Afghan displaced households. These findings correspond to the general notion that registered refugee households are entitled to assistance but are often not integrated into the national labour market.

When asked if they had a firm plan to return to their area of origin in the next 6 months, 81% of refugee households reported yes, similar to previous findings by REACH,<sup>45</sup> while only 33% of Afghan displaced households shared this intention. However, 33% of refugee households were concerned about the potential presence of mines/ERWs/PPIEDs in their place of origin, compared to 9% of Afghan displaced households. The potential presence of NSAGs and AGEs was reported as a concern for 38% of refugee households, compared to 63% of Afghan displaced households. These findings are in line with findings that most refugees fled from active fighting and not the day-to-day intimidation of armed actors. This may, in turn, mean that refugee households were willing to return once active fighting passed and could explain the high proportion of refugee households that reported a firm plan to return.

On average refugee households reported a slightly higher income than Afghan displaced households in the 30 days prior to the assessment. For every 100 AFN [USD 1.40] of income for Afghan displaced household, a refugee household had, on average, 108 AFN [USD 1.50]. Overall, 91% of refugee households relied predominantly on unskilled or skilled daily labour for their income, compared to 68% of Afghan displaced households. In contrast, less than 1% of refugee households relied on cash crop/livestock farming, while 11% of Afghan displaced households reported this as their main source of income. Although refugee households may have had a slightly higher average income, they almost exclusively had to rely on unstable income sources (i.e. daily labour) with no other possibility to cover basic needs of the household (i.e. farming for food).

### Protection Concerns During Displacement

Refugee households reported a range of protection concerns that portrayed the journey from Pakistan to Afghanistan as particularly dangerous and traumatic. Almost half of refugee household (49%) reported having been intimidated, harassed, or forced to pay a bribe during their displacement, while only one third of Afghan displaced household (33%) reported the same issues. Furthermore, 23% of refugee households reported that at least one member was detained or arrested during their journey from Pakistan to Afghanistan, compared to 17% of Afghan returnee households, who also had to cross international borders during their most recent displacement.

Accordingly, before refugee households reached their current location, it can be inferred that they were especially vulnerable and lacking the protections they should receive as refugees or asylum seekers. Indeed, 22% of refugee

<sup>45</sup> REACH (2017), Multi-Cluster Needs Assessments: [FSAC](#), [WASH](#) and [ESNFI](#).

households faced attempts of forced recruitment from armed actors during their flight from Pakistan, compared to 4% of Afghan returnee households that reported such attempts.

Aside from security concerns, the journey from Pakistan was also depicted as physically demanding and dangerous, given that 39% of refugee households reported at least one household member getting injured during displacement. Of these, 25% reported that their injuries during displacement were due to weapons or mines/ERWs/PPIEDs. In contrast, 23% of Afghan displaced households reported at least one injury during displacement.

## Specific Protection Concerns

### Child Protection

While a high percentage of refugee households reported that youth or support centres were available specifically for children and teenagers (52%) – higher even than Afghan displaced households (29%) – this assessment also found that 28% of refugee households had at least one member under the age of 16 as an economic contributor, compared to only 10% of Afghan displaced households. This could indicate that the provision of youth centres, in and of themselves, cannot support children and youths as they cannot attend these centres due to having to earn a living to sustain their households.

### Gender-Based Concerns

This study found that that refugee households were typically more vulnerable than Afghan displaced households in terms of sexual and gender-based violence. Of all refugee households, 49% reported that there were areas in which women, girls, and boys felt unsafe or tried to avoid, in contrast to only 17% of Afghan displaced households that reported the same. Additionally, 35% of refugee households were aware of harassment or violent attacks against women, girls, or boys in the 30 days prior to data collection, as opposed to only 13% of Afghan displaced households that reported the same. While it appears that more refugee households faced sexual and gender-based violence than Afghan displaced households, they were also less likely than Afghan displaced households to know of someone they can ask for help to prevent future assaults/harassments (57% and 64% respectively).

### Land, House, and Property

While more refugee households than Afghan displaced households feared eviction from their current location, with 88% compared to 57%, it also appears that the former were able to provide relatively more comfortable living conditions than the latter. For example, 59% of refugee households could allocate separate living spaces to women, while only 35% of Afghan displaced households could do the same. Additionally, refugee households had on average 3.18 rooms, compared to 2.82 rooms for Afghan displaced households. However, these small advantages do not impact the security of tenure status of refugee households, with 36% having only verbal permission, 35% rental agreements, and 17% reporting that they have no permission for living in their current location.

### Mine-Action

Overall, 66% of refugee households noted that mines/ERWs/PPIEDs were present in their previous location, as opposed to 48% of Afghan displaced households. It was found that the percentage of refugee households that came across mines/ERWs/PPIEDs during their displacement was the same as Afghan displaced households (17%). Moreover, only 2% of refugee households reported that mines/ERWs/PPIEDs were present around their current location, a figure similar to Afghan displaced population (5%).

## CONCLUSION

For the past four decades, Afghanistan has been in a constant state of conflict resulting in civilian casualties, internal and international displacement, and a range of protection concerns of displaced and remaining individuals.<sup>46</sup> Given the lack of any political solution, the 2018-2021 Humanitarian Response Plan estimates that in 2018, 3.7 million individuals remain in need of protection assistance.<sup>47</sup> Yet, despite this wide-spread need, comprehensive protection-based data for evidence-based programming, has so far been lacking in Afghanistan.

To address this information gap and to identify the diverse protection concerns, this PACAP aimed to differentiate between the impact conflict had on displaced populations and host communities in accessible areas, and on conflict-affected communities in hard-to-reach areas. Furthermore, the assessment distinguished between the protection concerns of different displacement groups (recent/non-recent IDPs, returnees, and refugees) and at different stages of displacement itself (before, during, and after). These delineations and PACAP's mixed methods approach provide depth and breadth to existing information on protection concerns and the role of conflict in displacement across Afghanistan. This information depth and breadth supports the humanitarian community to focus their protection programming on the needs of the most vulnerable groups, on pressing issues, and in the worst affected geographical areas.

Overall, this assessment found that female-headed households, households with a disabled household head, households without any member owning a Tazkira, and returnees that were not registered with UNHCR typically exhibited the most significant needs, with key vulnerabilities cutting across different protection-related issues, thus requiring comprehensive response programming. For instance, for returnees, those without UNHCR registration were more likely to be forced to return to Afghanistan (71%), more often faced with harassment or forced bribery during displacement (55%), unable to access medical facilities during displacement (75% for women), and with a 13 percentage point lower average income than registered returnees after displacement. While addressing the underlying social and structural issues for households with female and disabled household heads, the findings suggest that focusing on increasing access to Tazkiras and being registered with UNHCR can help tackle a range of protection concerns at once. Further research on why households lacked access to Tazkiras or were not registered with UNHCR may help the humanitarian community follow-up on this suggestion.

While the assessment findings clearly displayed the direct impact of conflict with 91% of IDP households forced to leave their previous locations due to armed conflict, or harassment and intimidation by armed actors, it also indicated cases of conflict-related trauma, with 18% of displaced households reporting that at least one member was physically injured during displacement travel. These injuries may often not be directly attributed to the conflict, as less than 1% of displaced households reported them to be caused through weapons, mines, ERWs or PPIEDs, but they indicate the physical danger of displacement in difficult terrain in Afghanistan, particularly when fleeing at night. Further research why and how displaced household members get injured fleeing from conflict, rather than being shot or injured in an explosion, may allow for a more diverse and yet better focused trauma response programming.

The assessment findings also highlighted the additional scope for research on the way in which households displace. For instance, factors such as distance of displacement or economic wellbeing were found to affect vulnerability, since in both cases, and after accounting for the correlation between the two, the assessment found IDP households to be significant less likely to either encounter armed conflict or mines/ERWs/PPIEDs when displacing further or having more economic resources. Both scenarios indicate that for household which were able to rely on better means (i.e. vehicles) and/or routes (i.e. streets) of transportation exhibited fewer protection concerns, despite fleeing from the same conflict scenarios as, for instance, poorer households.

Furthermore, PACAP identified important geographical and temporal insights on the impact of conflict and protection concerns. While, for instance, the highest proportion of displaced households that faced armed conflict before displacement were located in the east (94%) and south (88%), it was households that displaced within or to

<sup>46</sup> OCHA, "Afghanistan: Humanitarian Needs Overview", December 2017

<sup>47</sup> OCHA, "Afghanistan: Humanitarian Response Plan", December 2017.



the north that were at least able to flee from/avoid armed conflict after displacement. While 23% of displaced households interviewed in the north still faced armed conflict after displacement, only 14% did so nation-wide. This proportion dropped as low as 1% for households that resided in the central region after displacement. This raises the question of why households in the north were less able to flee from armed conflict, given that the prevalence of conflict for displaced households was higher in the east and south. Potential explanations for this may be due to a recent spread of conflict in the north or with households displacing to more rural areas in the north, but further research on how displaced households choose their location and when/why households fail to displace away from armed conflict would be valuable in supporting the humanitarian community in developing pre-emptive programming to avoid protection concerns during displacement, rather than addressing them afterwards.

In comparing host and displaced households, the assessment found that while they have similar concerns about security issues in their current location, such as armed conflict and military airstrikes, displaced household members were still affected by the long-term impact of conflict and displacement while exhibiting significantly lower capacity to cope. For instance, it was found that after displacement the proportion of households that reported psychological trauma as the main concern of male household members more than tripled from 4% to 13%. At the same time, displaced households were significantly less economically secure, earning on average 24% less than host community households. Given that almost half of displaced households (49%) had to start paying rent for their accommodation (compared to 12% of host community households) after the costs of displacement itself, many were likely forced to borrow money and accumulate debt, as reported in previous qualitative assessments.<sup>48</sup> This is supported by the findings that displaced households which lived in a rental home spent, on average, 6.5 times more on loan repayments in the 30 days prior to the assessment; which is further concerning given the strong positive correlation between loan repayment and psychological concerns. However, further qualitative research would be necessary to substantiate these findings.

Therefore, to conclude, this assessment report has outlined a range of key Protection Cluster-specific findings on concerns around Child Protection; Gender-Based Violence; Housing, Land, and Property; and Mine-Action. The assessment provides findings at the level of all 34 provinces of Afghanistan on diverse issues such as a) children (under the age of 18) having to work instead of going to school, b) households being aware of harassment or attacks against women, girls or boys in their communities, and b) households reporting mines/ERWs/PPIEDs in their current location. This detail of information provides the previously lacking protection-based data for evidence-based programming at a provincial level or allows humanitarian organisations to focus research and gain understanding on a prevailing protection concern in a particular province of Afghanistan. PACAP thereby provided a comprehensive and detailed overview of different protection concerns across various areas and population groups in Afghanistan, to be followed up by more detailed research that can help trace and explain some of the important and insightful quantitative assessment findings.

<sup>48</sup> REACH (2018), Fragmented Families Assessment