

# HOPE on the HORIZON!



Media Guide to Afghanistan's  
National Policy on Internal Displacement

**iDMC** internal  
displacement  
monitoring  
centre

**NRC** NORWEGIAN  
REFUGEE COUNCIL







The adoption of Afghanistan's first national policy for internally displaced people (IDPs – people who have been forced to flee their homes, but have not crossed an international border) is a landmark occasion, and signals hope on the horizon for a country that has faced decades of turmoil.

Afghanistan has experienced extraordinary levels of internal displacement due to over thirty years of armed conflict, recurrent natural disasters and serious human rights violations. The policy establishes the first comprehensive framework for upholding the rights of Afghanistan's IDPs, for finding solutions to end internal displacement and includes measures to prevent future IDPs.

Today, reports suggest that over 600,000 people are internally displaced in Afghanistan by conflict alone. Many refugee returnees also end up in internal displacement. The number of IDPs has risen rapidly over the last five years, and this trend looks set to continue.

**Thousands of IDP families have been in displacement for long periods of time, some for over a decade**



# Why does the policy matter? Who does it cover?

The national IDP policy represents a historic commitment by the Afghan government to protect and assist its displaced citizens under both national, and international law.

The policy comes at a critical time. As international troops prepare to leave Afghanistan by the end of 2014, a growing number of Afghans are being forced to flee their homes by conflict and violence. The length of displacement is also increasing. Natural disasters such as drought, earthquakes and floods, development projects and human rights abuses continue to cause further significant displacement.

The policy applies to all people who are forced to flee or leave their homes, including as a result of government or international military operations, Taliban abuses, natural disasters and development projects. While it only covers those displaced from their homes within the borders of Afghanistan, Afghan refugees who return to Afghanistan and who cannot return home due to conflict or live in a similar displaced and vulnerable situation to IDPs are also included.

The policy covers IDPs in both rural and urban areas, whether or not they have returned to their place of origin. Notably, it also aims to improve living conditions for those communities which host IDPs or are otherwise affected by displacement.

## Timeline of the policy development

### Winter 2011:

Over 100 IDPs, including children, die in Kabul's slums as a result of harsh weather

### February 2012:

President Hamid Karzai and the Afghan Cabinet tasks the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) to develop a comprehensive national policy on internal displacement.

### July 2012:

The MoRR launches the process at a National Consultative Workshop in Kabul, attended by UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs, Dr. Chaloka Beyani. The policy process is led by the MoRR, and is supported by the Inter-Ministerial Coordination Committee on Refugees Returnees and IDPs (IMCC), Afghanistan's National IDP Task Force, the IDP Policy Working Group and an international IDP Advisor, seconded to the MoRR.

### Autumn 2012:

Drafting of the policy begins and continues into early 2013. It is developed through a process of broad consultations with stakeholders including provincial governors, mayors, IDPs, humanitarian and development actors and national line ministries. Provincial consultations are carried out in Kabul, Balkh, Faryab, Herat, Paktya, Nangahar, Logar and Kandahar.

### May 2013:

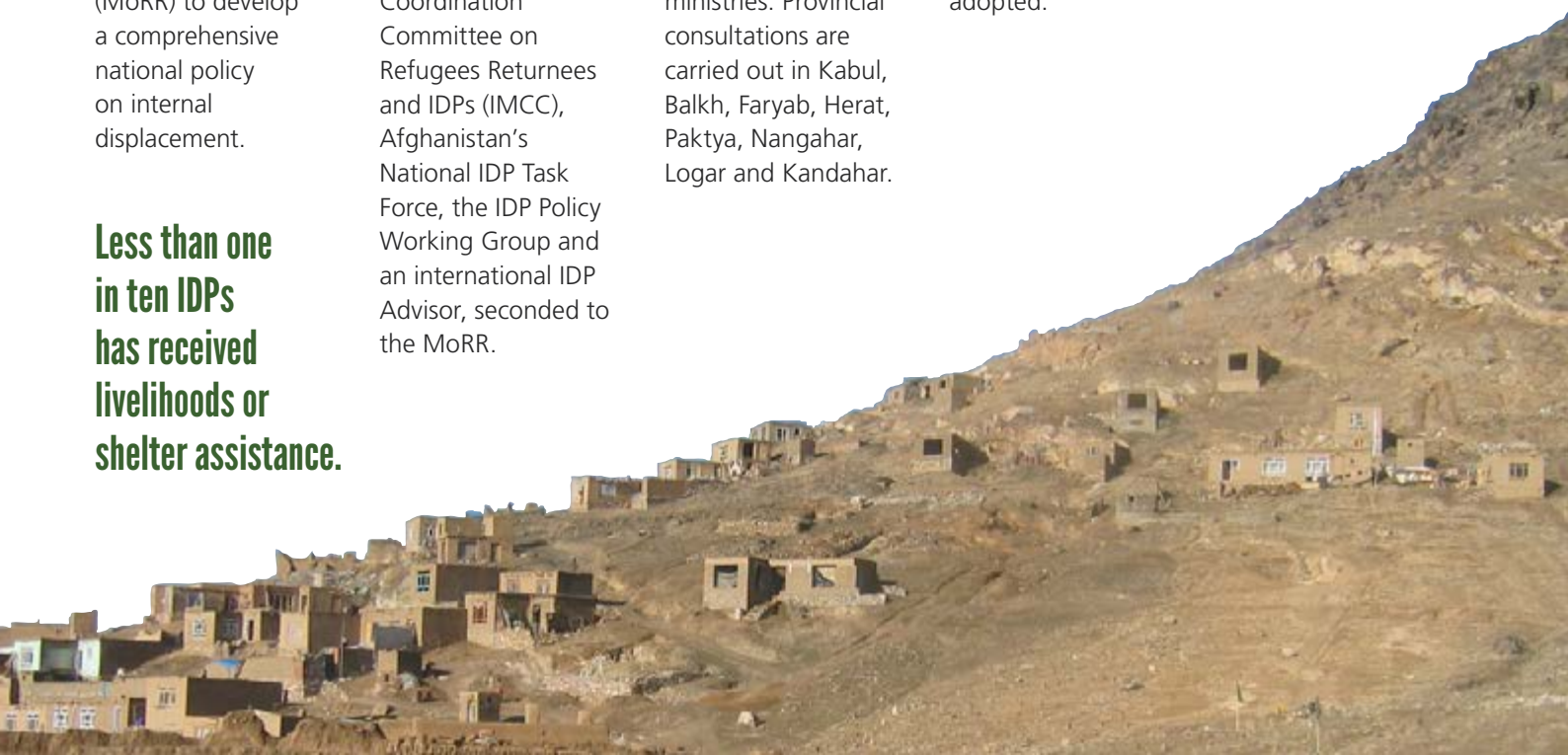
A wide range of government and other stakeholders reviews the policy for a final time at a second well-attended National Consultative Workshop convened by the MoRR in Kabul.

### November 2013:

The policy is officially adopted.

**The future:** Swift implementation is now required. National and provincial action plans based on the policy must be completed by central and provincial authorities respectively before Presidential elections in April 2014.

**Less than one in ten IDPs has received livelihoods or shelter assistance.**



# Before displacement

One of the aims of the policy is to prevent all causes of internal displacement, not just displacement due to conflict.

## Natural disasters

The policy calls on national authorities to continue efforts to establish early warning systems and adopt disaster preparedness and management measures, including contingency planning and disaster risk reduction (DRR) interventions. In some disaster-prone areas, efforts must be made to permanently relocate people to safe areas.

## Development projects

Projects, for example the building of dams or bridges, carried out by public or private actors and that may, by necessity, lead to displacement must be 'overwhelmingly in the public interest'. National authorities must ensure that other alternatives are explored and economic and environmental impacts are assessed beforehand. National authorities have a duty to inform and consult those affected and provide them with appropriate compensation.

## Conflict and human rights violations

The policy provides that national authorities must take measures to protect civilians against unlawful displacement caused by conflict, criminal acts and human rights violations such as land grabbing and the forced recruitment of children during armed conflict. Those responsible for unlawful displacement are to be held accountable under Afghan law.

# During displacement

When a person is first displaced, they face particular challenges. They often lack basic necessities and are vulnerable to threats to their safety and being separated from their family members. The policy sets out the government's responsibility to provide life-saving assistance in emergency situations, if necessary with assistance from the humanitarian community.

Measures the government must take under the policy:

- Registration of IDPs for the purpose of receiving assistance
- Maintenance of law and order in areas where IDPs have settled
- Issuance of electronic national ID cards (*E-tazkera*) irrespective of place of displacement
- Establishment of a system for tracing missing persons

IDPs are entitled to the same rights as other Afghan citizens, but often find it more difficult to enjoy those rights because of their displacement. The policy addresses this by ensuring that basic human rights such as freedom of movement, food, work, housing and shelter are all afforded to IDPs by relevant ministries and authorities.

# Bringing displacement to an end

The IDP policy sets out measures to help IDPs resume dignified lives in safety. Today, three-quarters of IDPs wish to settle permanently where they are living, rather than return to their original home.

The policy clearly calls on all government authorities, including mayors and governors, to respect displaced people's rights to integrate locally, and focuses on ways to support them to do so; either in the places they fled to, or somewhere new. Development programmes to improve housing and livelihood options for IDPs should be introduced, including in urban areas. Local communities who host IDPs must also benefit from such programmes.

Returning people to their original homes is possible only under certain conditions. Under no circumstances can IDPs be forced or encouraged to return to areas where their life, safety or health will be at risk. Displaced persons must also be provided with the information they need to make free and informed decisions on where they want to settle, be it to return home, stay where they are or move to another part of Afghanistan.

**Over half of IDPs interviewed in a 2012 NRC/IDMC survey identified Taliban and other non-state armed groups as primarily responsible for their displacement**



# Making Afghanistan's national IDP policy work

The policy strengthens coordination of responses to displacement across government and defines the roles and responsibilities of different line ministries, provincial governors, mayors and other government bodies for the internally displaced. The MoRR plays the lead role in responding to IDPs and must plan and coordinate implementation of the policy with all other actors who work with IDPs in Afghanistan.

**Over three quarters of IDPs intend to settle permanently in their current location. The desire to return 'home' reduces steadily over time**

# 5 NEXT STEPS the government must take

1. A national implementation plan, or a roadmap, must be developed by the MoRR within six months.
2. Provincial governors must create Provincial IDP Task Forces within one month and develop a provincial-level action plan within three months to provide long-term solutions for IDPs in their province.
3. IDPs and communities affected by displacement must be consulted and involved in the planning process.
4. The specific needs of IDPs must be included in national development strategies such as Afghanistan's National Priority Programmes (NPP).
5. An oversight mechanism must be established to monitor progress in implementing the policy. It will report publicly to the Office of the President each year.



# QUOTES

"I personally witnessed the dire living conditions of internally displaced Afghans, their exposure to rights violations, their muted voices and their lack of perspectives for a future in safety and dignity. Afghanistan's policy on internal displacement sparks hopes for these hundreds of thousands of IDPs living across the country for a better future. This policy reflects a commitment by the Government of Afghanistan to seek better solutions for IDPs and gives a voice to the displaced communities themselves who have a right to determine their own future. Implementing this important policy will be critical and has to be a priority in rebuilding stability and peace in Afghanistan."

*Chaloka Beyani,  
Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs*

"Being displaced is an experience that more than 40 per cent of Afghans have gone through at least once in their lifetime. Culturally, no Afghan wants to leave their family unless absolutely forced to. This policy for IDPs addresses their needs with dignity from a short-term, medium-term and long term perspective with the ultimate possibility of tackling the root cause of conflict."

*Prasant Naik, NRC Afghanistan Country Director*

"From protecting displaced children from forced recruitment, ensuring that those displaced are adequately registered for assistance, to improving conditions for IDPs in cities, the policy will make a real difference to the escalating numbers of people suffering the consequences of displacement. While adoption of the policy is an important first step, in many ways, adoption of the policy is just the beginning. The Afghan government must act immediately and in coordination to ensure that this landmark opportunity provides real change for those living and dying in displacement, and who have suffered in silence for far too long"

*Alfredo Zamudio, IDMC Director*

# SOCIAL MEDIA: suggested messaging

## Twitter :

On the occasion of [#Afghanistan](#) adopting policy for [#IDPs](#), @IDMC\_Geneva highlights housing rights & forced evictions <http://bit.ly/1e02sJX>

We urge [#Afghanistan](#) to build on new policy for internally displaced as opportunity to guarantee housing rights <http://bit.ly/1e02sJX>

.@IDMC\_Geneva applauds [#Afghanistan](#) for new policy on displaced, hopes for solutions 2 issue of tenure security [#IDPs](#) <http://bit.ly/1e02sJX>

New policy in [#Afghanistan](#) a step to extend help to growing number of urban [#IDPs](#), improve housing & living standards <http://bit.ly/1e02sJX>

As [#Afghanistan](#)'s future remains uncertain in 2014, development & humanitarian agencies must continue to assist [#IDPs](#) <http://bit.ly/1e02sJX>

## Facebook:

Today we congratulate Afghanistan for adopting a landmark policy to address the situation of over 630,000 people internally displaced by conflict (IDPs) across the country, and call on the government to make the policy's wide-ranging provisions a concrete reality.

With an uncertain future as international military presence in the country winds down in 2014, IDMC calls on international community to assist Afghanistan to implement its new IDP Policy and ensure long term solutions for displaced citizens.

Learn more here: <http://bit.ly/1e02sJX>

**While often confused with urban poor, IDPs in cities are generally worse off than the rest of the population. They have lower household incomes, and face particular discrimination**



# ABOUT IDMC

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) is a world leader in the monitoring and analysis of the causes, effects and responses to internal displacement. Through its monitoring and analysis of people internally displaced by conflict, generalised violence, human rights violations, and natural or human-made disasters, IDMC raises awareness and advocates for respect of the rights of at-risk and uprooted peoples.

IDMC is part of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).

For more information, visit our website at [www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org).

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