iDMC internal displacement monitoring centre

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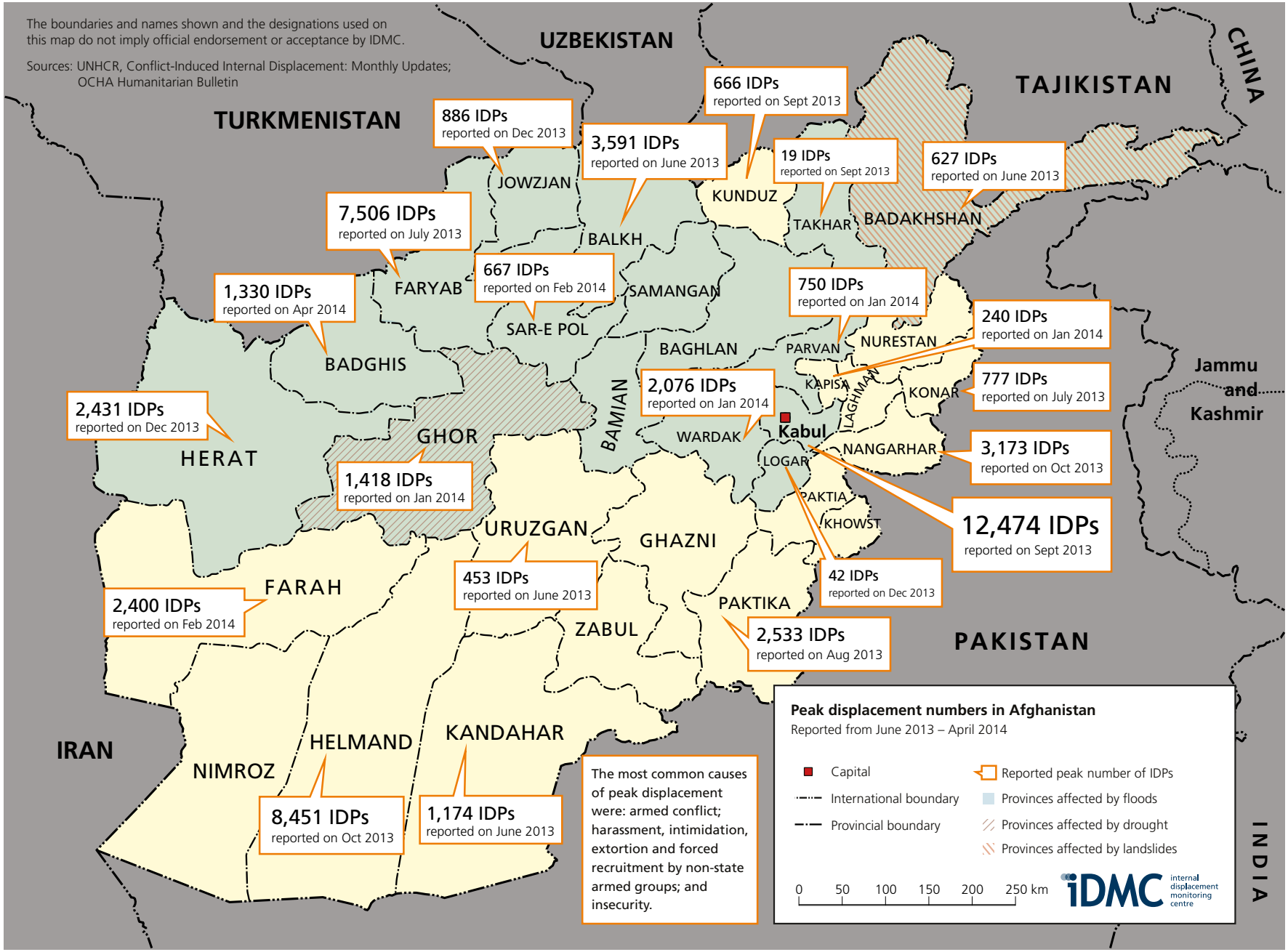
As humanitarian space shrinks, IDP policy must be implemented

An NRC-supported school in Nangarhar province, Afghanistan, welcomes IDP children into its classes. (Photo: NRC/Christian Jepsen, November 2013)

Afghanistan is in a political, security and economic transition. The International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) will hand over full responsibility for security to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) at the end of 2014, a new president and provincial authorities will assume office and the economy will need to adjust to a loss of international military spending. During this period of transition, Afghanistan's political, security and economic stability are uncertain. As such, humanitarian access has become a key concern, particularly for internally displaced people (IDPs) in rural or remote areas where development and humanitarian actors have limited access due to insecurity and on-going conflict. Shrinking humanitarian space does not translate into shrinking needs and, if anything, multiplies them. Internal displacement continues to rise against a backdrop of continuing armed conflict, high rate of civilian casualties, increased abuses by non-state armed groups (NSAGs) and pervasive conflict-related violence.

Response to needs in this increasingly volatile and uncertain climate may require humanitarian organisations to take previously avoided risks, such as relying more on local actors to carry out programmes and assessments in areas where there is shrinking or limited access. Emerging conflict trends indicate a rise in short-term localised displacement at a time when humanitarian organisations are unable to adequately respond. As a result, IDPs are frequently not profiled, left without assistance, forced to rely on host communities or local authorities who are often unaware of their legal responsibility to assist or without capacity to do so. There is an urgent need to improve profiling through local community monitoring, update data collection mechanisms and conduct house-to-house surveys. Only with better information on protection needs and vulnerabilities can IDPs receive needs based assistance.

The National IDP Policy (IDP Policy) adopted in November 2013, which outlines the responsibilities of national and provincial authorities, could offer a local solution to short-term displacement. If adequately enforced, the IDP Policy could institutionalise legal responsibilities to assist IDPs, help bridge the humanitarian-development gap, facilitate durable solutions for those in protracted displacement and build



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capacity to respond to short-term displacement. Unfortunately, implementation of the IDP Policy has stalled due to lack of political will and capacity on the part of the responsible government agency, the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR). International attention must now turn towards supporting national authorities to effectively implement the IDP Policy and ensure that it delivers tangible, positive outcomes for displaced populations in Afghanistan.

Background

Both local and international observers hailed provincial and presidential elections held on 5 April 2014 as exceeding expectations both in terms of turnout as well as the level of transparency – compared to the 2009 elections – of the Independent Election Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) (CACI, May 2014). The elections were a milestone for women's political participation: of around 7.5 million Afghans who participated, 34 per cent were women and twelve per cent of candidates were women (BBC, April 2014, IEC, 2014). Presidential run-off elections were held on 14 June with two candidates, Abdullah Abdullah, and Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai vying for the position, final results will be announced 22 July 2014 (CNN, April 2014, IECA, 2014).

2014 marks the final year of NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) presence in Afghanistan. The Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) started assuming responsibility for the security of the country in June 2013 (Oxfam, October 2013). As of 1 April, 51,176 international troops remained in Afghanistan (NATO, April 2014). US President Obama announced in late May that 9,800 US troops would remain beyond 2014, following the approval from the soon-to-be elected Afghan president, with a small assistance force remaining after 2016 (Washington Post, May 2014). The handover of security responsibilities from the international to Afghan security forces from 2011 to 2014 has not been accompanied by increased stability (AAN, January 2014, CSIS, August 2013).

Afghanistan has been in a state of protracted conflict for almost thirty-five years, hampering interventions to reduce poverty, constraining development and straining the social fabric and coping mechanisms (OCHA, November 2013). Since 2009, NSAGs have increasingly challenged the territorial control of the government as the geographical scope of the conflict has expanded beyond the southern and eastern regions of the country, leading to an expansion of areas from which people are displaced (OCHA, November 2013, p.3). Refugee return has decreased by nearly 50 per cent since 2012 and internal displacement has risen. In 2014, economic and security transitions will see a decrease in funding provided through military spending (FMR, May 2014, p. 4). The impact of the transition on humanitarian and development activities is considerable in terms of access to IDPs in conflict and insecure locations. Actors engaged in IDP response will need to develop flexible strategies such as using more local responders to provide assistance which could ensure continued aid in hard-to-reach areas.

The Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF) was established to support the sustainable growth and development of Afghanistan throughout the Transformation Decade (2015-2024). Donors have pledged US$16 billion through 2015, a sum which is meant to compensate for the end of military spending on reconstruction, development and basic services (OCHA, November 2013, TMAF, July 2013). The World Bank predicts that economic growth will decrease to 3.5 per cent in 2014, compared with 14.4 per cent in 2012 (WB, 2014).

During the meeting of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group in January 2014, the Government of Afghanistan acknowledged slow progress in the area of respect for human rights

and the implementation of transitional justice, attributing it to "terrorism, extremism, narcotics and insecurity in parts of the country" (UN HRC, January 2014, p.6.). Afghanistan continues to struggle with efforts to promote women's rights, gender equality and child welfare and the provision of health care and education for communities in remote areas. In January 2014, Kabul hosted the National Consultation Conference on Establishing South Asian Human Rights Mechanisms, with the aim to enhance political will in the region to adhere to national and international human rights norms and standards (AIHRC, January 2014).

In 2013, a 14 per cent increase in civilian casualties reversed the decrease reported in 2012 (UNAMA, February 2014). Documented civilian deaths and injuries were at their highest since 2001. Human rights observers from the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) documented 8,615 civilian casualties in 2013, the majority (74 per cent) attributed to NSAGs which include the Taliban, as well as individuals and other NSAGS including the Haqqani Network, Hezb-e-Islami, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and other armed groups that pursue political, ideological or economic objectives, including armed criminal groups acting on behalf a party to the conflict (UNAMA, February 2014, p.1). Throughout 2013, an increase in ground engagements has become the biggest cause of injuries to women and children and resulted in a number of short-term displacements. Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) remained the biggest killer (UNAMA, February 2014, pp.1-2). Intimidation, harassment and occupation of villages by insurgents also contributed to displacement, characterised by a breakdown in community structures and safety nets (OCHA, November 2013, p.15).

Afghanistan has some of the lowest socio-economic indicators in the world, ranking 175th of 187 countries on the 2013 United Nations Human Development Index. One third of the population lives below the poverty line, and some 28 per cent is experiencing crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity (WFP, February 2014). Nearly half of all deaths of women aged 15-49 in Afghanistan result from complications during pregnancy and childbirth (World Vision, March 2013).

Despite more than a decade of supported and spontaneous repatriations and the return of some 5.7 million people from abroad, more than one in eight Afghans still lives outside the country, either as refugees, undocumented migrants, or as part of the wider diaspora (IOM, January 2014, p.9, FMR, May 2014, p.4). Around ten million – one in three Afghans – has been a refugee in the past 35 years, with some 2.5 million currently registered as refugees in neighbouring Iran and Pakistan (ECHO, February 2014).

In July 2013, Pakistan's cabinet extended the Tripartite Agreement on Voluntary Repatriation and the Proof of Registration (PoR) cards, which enables Afghan refugees to remain in Pakistan until the end of 2015, a decision that affects nearly 1.6 million. The Pakistani government has also set about improving the legal frameworks for refugees, as well as drafting the country's first national refugee law (IRIN, January 2014).

A long history of displacement

Periods of displacement linked to conflict and political instability have plagued Afghanistan since the late 1970s. Up to five million Afghans fled the country during the conflict between the Soviet-backed government and the *mujahideen* and the subsequent Soviet invasion and occupation. The fall of the communist government in 1992 exacerbated in-fighting between *mujahideen* factions and displaced a further 200,000. Hundreds of thousands of Pashtun civilians fled violence by Uzbek and Tajik warlords in the north and east prior to the Taliban takeover in 1996. Following the Taliban's rise to power, the conflict with the Northern Alliance – made up of former *mujahideen* factions – forced a further million Afghans into internal displacement, particularly in north-

ern and central Afghanistan. Recurrent drought contributed to displacement between 1998 and 2003 (MoRR).

The 11 September 2001 attacks on the United States and the US-led military intervention in Afghanistan, along with armed conflict between the US-backed Northern Alliance and the Taliban and their supporters, as well as ethnic violence, led to further substantial displacement. By 2002, an estimated 1.2 million Afghans were internally displaced, with millions more living as refugees abroad (IDMC, April 2011, p. 13-14; BI/TLO, May 2010, pp. 7-14).

Causes of displacement since 2010

In the first four months of 2014, documented civilian deaths and injuries reached levels not seen since 2001. The UN reports a new trend in 2013 in civilian casualties and forced displacement due to clashes between Afghan security forces and NSAGs. Targeted attacks, intimidation and forced recruitment by armed groups, as well as inter-ethnic disputes and local conflicts over access to land and water, are also leading to displacement.

Armed conflict and generalised violence
All parties to Afghanistan's ongoing conflict, including ANSF, NSAGs and international military forces, contribute to displacement (BI/NRC, November 2010, p.10). Military operations by international and Afghan forces against Taliban strongholds have in the past led to large-scale displacements in the south, particularly between 2010 and the 2011 'surge' which saw greater deployment of international troops (Rizvi, June 2011). As of May 2014, the drawdown in the level of international troops has not led to a reduction in civilian deaths and injuries.

A new trend in the conflict has emerged that directly impacts the patterns of displacement. Increased military engagements between NSAGs and ANSF have led to spontaneous and often large movements of IDPs, predominately from rural areas towards urban centres. The majority of IDPs have fled to safety in their own districts, or to neighbouring districts in the same province (UNAMA, February 2014, p.70). Civilians caught in the crossfire accounted for 27 per cent of all civilian deaths and injuries in 2013 causing further displacement (UNAMA, February 2014, p.21 and p.70).

Displacement caused by natural-hazards
Highly prone to both slow and sudden onset disasters, Afghanistan often experiences earthquakes, floods, droughts, landslides, sandstorms, and avalanches that affect nearly 250,000 Afghans annually (USAID, May 2013). Vulnerability to displacement caused by natural hazards is, in part, heightened by the large percentage of the population exposed to the elements. Lack of adequate housing combined with lack of infrastructure and poor development further increases the need for humanitarian relief (UN, May 2014).

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which, among others, collects data relating to displacement caused by natural hazards, 9,300 individuals were displaced by disasters and more than 90,505 individuals were affected in 2013 (IOM, December 2013, IOM, January 2014). In particular, flooding in Kunduz and Takhar, as well as drought and related food insecurity in Ghor, greatly increased the number of IDPs.

Torrential spring rains resulted in flooding and flash flooding, causing massive displacement and affecting more than 150,000 (OCHA, June 2014). The three most affected provinces are Jawzjan, Faryab and Sar-e-Pul (ACAPS, May 2014). In May 2014, a landslide in Badakhshan, a remote province in north-east Afghanistan, displaced more than 4,000 and an unknown number, possibly in their thousands, are still missing or presumed dead (Reuters, May 2014).

Due to the lack of long-term assistance focused on disaster-induced displacement, many IDPs may report their cause of displacement as related to insecurity and conflict in order to receive tents and other aid earmarked for conflict IDPs (IRIN, February 2014).

Displacement figures

IDMC estimates that at least 667,200 people were internally displaced by conflict and violence as of April 2014. IDMC's estimate is based on figures published by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and provided by Afghanistan's National IDP Task Force, co-led by UNHCR and MoRR.

The IDP Task Force figure does not include all conflict IDPs living in urban and semi-urban areas who are often mixed with economic migrants and the urban poor. It also excludes IDPs in inaccessible conflict-affected areas, including in the south, south-east and west of Afghanistan. IDPs displaced for short periods may also be excluded, as humanitarians are unable to access them due to ongoing conflict and insecurity and once it is safe to access the area IDPs have moved or returned to their place of origin. In addition, the figure does not include the returns or secondary displacement. IDP data is not systematically disaggregated by age and sex and there are few profiling exercises and qualitative data available to inform protection programmes or progress towards durable solutions.

In early 2014, UNHCR conducted a field-based IDP verification exercise of 620,000 IDPs. The results will be made available later in 2014, with an anticipated reduction by 20 per cent in the total number of IDPs due to returns and IDPs finding a solution to their displacement (OCHA, March 2014).

At least 124,000 people were estimated as newly displaced by the conflict in 2013 compared to at least 100,400 the previous year (UNHCR, December 2013; IDMC, April 2013).

Continued gaps in IDP data

The identification of IDPs is a core challenge to ensuring that they benefit from timely and targeted humanitarian assistance (IDMC correspondence with UNHCR, March 2014). Community structures, lack of IDP profiling and obstacles accessing areas of displacement contribute to major gaps in data. Of particular concern is the lack of disaggregated data and household level surveys that capture immediate and long-term needs which can then be used to improve response needs and highlight gaps in assistance.

Informal settlements shelter around 80 per cent of Kabul's population and cover 69 per cent of the city's residential land. Due to the nature of informal settlements, it is often difficult to identify urban IDPs among the broader urban poor, who often exhibit the same needs and characteristics as those displaced from conflict or disasters (IDMC correspondence with UNHCR, March 2014).

Often access and delivering aid to areas where there has been displacement is delayed. Thus some IDPs may have returned home, or moved to other areas and are therefore not to be included in IDP figures (IDMC correspondence with UNHCR, March 2014).

Conflict and disaster induced IDPs are tracked and recorded separately. Conflict displacement is recorded by the IDP Taskforce and disaster induced displacement by IOM. Data gathered by IOM on individuals displaced by natural disasters does not include those displaced within their village, which are usually reported as 'natural disaster affected' persons, rather than IDPs (correspondence with IOM, April 2014). This definition is not in line with the internationally recognised definition of an IDP provided by the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* which does not provide for any geographical limitation.

Displacement patterns

Internal displacement in Afghanistan takes place in the context of many other population movements, including rural-urban migration and mass refugee return, which often complicates the task of identifying and assisting IDPs. IDPs tend to choose their areas of displacement in line with ethnic and familial ties, as well as with areas expected to have higher opportunities for livelihoods. IDPs in southern Afghanistan tend to live with families and friends, and have significantly less reported threats of forced evictions than those residing near urban centres (IDMC correspondence with a former staff member of the Organization of Humanitarian Welfare, March 2014).

Between 2011 and 2013 there were several geographical shifts in patterns of displacement. In 2011 and 2012, the majority of IDPs were displaced within western Afghanistan. In 2013, large-scale military operations in the southern Helmand province accounted for nearly half of the number of recorded IDPs (UNHCR, October 2013). As of early 2014, reports indicated that displacement in the east of the country was being caused by intimidation and harassment by NSAGs, rather than by armed conflict (UNHCR, February 2014).

Refugee returns decreased by 40 per cent in 2013 compared to the previous year. Only 50,000 refugees are forecast to return in 2014. Some 60 per cent of refugee returnees faced reintegration difficulties, which resulted in 15 per cent moving further, both within Afghanistan or to again become refugees by crossing its borders (UNHCR, September 2013). The adoption in September 2013 of a Joint Resource Mobilisation Strategy by the government, UNHCR and development partners is intended to assist with implementation of the 2012 Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) which was endorsed by Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan to support voluntary repatriation, sustainable reintegration and assistance for host countries (UNHCR, September 2013). The application of the SSAR in relation to IDPs remains unclear (IDMC mission notes, November 2013).

Armed conflict and insecurity have forced many refugee returnees into internal displacement when they attempt to return to their place of origin but due to conflict and insecurity are unable to re-settle there. The IDP Policy includes under its definition of an IDP "returnees who are unable to settle in their homes and/or places of origin because of insecurity resulting from armed conflict, generalized violence or violations of human rights, landmines or explosive remnants of war (ERW) contamination on their land, land disputes or tribal disputes" (Afghan National IDP Policy, p.10). In November 2013, around 33,300 refugee returnees were identified in the east, north, and north-east of Afghanistan as being internally displaced due to conflict. This is based on the number of IDPs who possess a Voluntary Repatriation Form, a document which attests to having been assisted by UNHCR to voluntarily repatriate to Afghanistan (UNHCR, July 2012, p.5; UNHCR, November 2013).

Increased trend in short-term displacement

Throughout 2013 the changing nature of the conflict, characterised especially by increased military ground engagements between NSAGs and ANSF, had a direct effect on patterns of displacement (UNAMA, July 2013; UNAMA, February 2014; OCHA, November 2013, p.15). Civilians flee during ground engagements seek safety in the same district or nearby areas, and in general for a shorter period than in previous years. IDPs who seek safety in nearby districts often find themselves caught in spreading insecurity and forced into secondary or even tertiary displacement, often to urban areas (UNHCR, November 2013). Due to insecurity, humanitarian organisations are prevented from accessing areas of displacement and people often return to their villages shortly after the engagement has finished (UNAMA, February 2014, Brookings, August 2013).

Protracted displacement
The length of displacement varies considerably, with some IDPs displaced for relatively short periods of time while others face years in displacement.

As of January 2014, nearly 74,000 IDPs are displaced since 2003 and they continue to live in displacement (IOM, January 2014). Protracted displacement has become a growing concern for humanitarians, as return options are limited by on-going-armed conflict and assistance is being shifted from chronic to acute needs (IDMC, March 2013).

A 2012 survey of over 1,000 IDP households found that 11 per cent had been displaced for over a decade, and nearly 50 per cent since 2009. For the long-term displaced, meeting their families' food needs and finding employment is just as much a struggle as for recently displaced IDPs (NRC/IDMC/Samuel Hall/JIPs, November 2012, p. 22, 69).

Urban displacement
Afghanistan is rapidly urbanising with more than 30 per cent of Afghans now living in cities and towns. Kabul's population alone has doubled from two million in 2001 to 4.5 million in 2010 and is projected to reach an estimated six million by 2020 (HPG/ODI, June 2012, p.7). Roughly 60-70 per cent of urban areas in Afghanistan have developed informally, with the majority of informal settlements in and around major cities (WB/UNHCR, May 2011, p.12). Urban growth has been fuelled by the return of refugees and arrival both of IDPs fleeing conflict and disasters and economic migrants from rural areas.

Forty per cent of IDPs have fled from rural areas and are estimated to live in or around the major cities of Kabul, Herat, Mazar-e-Sharif, Jalalabad and Kandahar (IDMC/NRC, February 2014, p.5, OCHA, November 2013, UNHCR/WB, 2011, p.12). Urban IDPs are even less likely than those in rural areas to wish to return to their place of origin. Their motivation for staying includes the expectation of increased access to livelihood opportunities and physical safety from insurgents and armed conflict. It is thus all the more imperative that the authorities should establish mechanisms for their local integration (Samuel Hall/NRC/IDMC/JIPs, November 2012, p.46).

There are no longer officially designated IDP camps. In areas where there were previously designated IDP camps, as in the case of the former IDP camp in Maslakh outside of Herat, they have been transformed into informal settlements (FMR, May 2014, p.16). Informal settlements can make up entire neighbourhoods or be dispersed throughout richer areas. They are frequently characterised by weak security of tenure, poor sanitation, lack of access to drinking water, high vulnerability to disasters and lack of investment in services and infrastructure as well as lack of access to livelihood opportunities, healthcare and education (IDMC, February 2014, p.8).

Since 2012, there have been over 100 confirmed IDP deaths in informal settlements in Kabul during the winter months, mostly children, who reportedly died from cold or illness (AI, February 2014, p.6).

Protection concerns

IDPs face enormous protection challenges related to access to adequate housing, security of tenure, vulnerability to injury and death due to crossfire from increased ground military engagements, as well as issues related to women's rights, child welfare, health and education.

Access to adequate housing and security of tenure
As the country faces an uncertain future, achieving durable solutions for Afghanistan's internally displaced and refugee returnee population remains inextricably linked to ensuring that housing, land and property (HLP) rights are respected (IDMC, February 2014, p.7).

Nearly 40 per cent of IDPs live in overcrowded poor quality shelters or shacks and often illegally occupy private or government land without access to basic services (IDMC, March 2013). Lack of security of tenure leaves IDPs at risk of eviction (UNHCR, February 2014, IDMC/NRC, February 2014). In areas where IDPs and refugee returnees co-exist in host communities, formal and informal settlements, including townships established under the Land Allocation Scheme (LAS) – an initiative launched in 2005 under Presidential Decree 104 to distribute unused state land to IDPs and repatriating refugees – IDPs were found to be even more vulnerable than refugee returnees (Samuel Hall/CFA September 2013, p.7 and p. 85).

IDPs and refugee returnees occupying government and privately owned land without authorisation face eviction to make way for urban development and infrastructure projects such as public housing, road-building, government offices, parks and private housing developments. In 2013, approximately 9,600 families (57,400 individuals) were estimated to be affected by threats of eviction, including 557 families actually subject to forced evictions (IDMC/NRC, February 2014, p. 10, 13).

The fundamental challenge is to provide IDP families with security of land tenure in an economically viable and suitable location and incrementally upgrade these areas through provision of basic services and infrastructure (FMR, May 2014, p.17). Some welcome initiatives include the *Policy on Upgrading of Informal Settlements* that provides for the protection from forced evictions and the *Afghan National IDP Policy*, both of which await implementation.

Other basic needs unmet

A needs assessment conducted in late 2013 found that IDPs and refugee returnees' needs differ from one province, and often one district, to the next. This may reflect differences in wealth of the provinces of displacement, level of displacement and absorption capacity of the host community. It may also reflect the length of time a person has been in displacement (UNHCR, March 2014).

Chronic under- and unemployment leaves many IDPs struggling to survive. Many IDPs have fewer vocational skills than non-IDPs, especially those traveling from rural to urban areas and most depend on casual daily labour. Many IDPs have incomes well below the national average and are unable to meet basic needs. The vast majority of IDPs spend over three quarters of income on food, with almost half spending above 90 per cent (NRC/IDMC/Samuel Hall/JIPS, November 2012, pp.25-33).

Women and children

Internally displaced women and girls are particularly vulnerable as their low economic status, social isolation and lack of traditional social protection mechanisms place them at higher risk of abuses such as prostitution and early and forced marriages. Widowed women, who represent an estimated 19.3 per cent of the IDP population, are disproportionately at risk due to the removal of their traditional social protection mechanism, a male family member, and often poverty prevents them from making inheritance claims (Samuel Hall, January 2014, pp.82-83, NRC, March 2014, p.59). This is related to economic hardship brought on by lack of income and hardships exacerbated through displacement. While domestic violence is a national concern, women reported that violence occurred more often during displacement, because their husbands were "more stressed" (FMR, May 2014, p. 34; Samuel Hall, January 2014, pp.82- 83; NRC, 2008).

Discrimination against displaced women is often exacerbated by detrimental social norms and practices within Afghan conservative society. In particular, the legal status of women and the decision-making power remain linked to that of a male relative, and they are unlikely to own land, inherit or have security of tenure should their husband or another male relative from which they

depend die, divorce or disappear (NRC, 2014). In eastern Afghanistan, maternal and child health, protection against sexual gender based violence and child abuse, are almost completely absent from sector responses and there are hardly any prevention and response mechanisms. Access to education is lowest among conflict-induced IDPs, with the strongest reluctance towards girls' education (Samuel Hall/CFA 2013, p.38 and p.85).

Children are often forced into child labour to support their families, preventing them from attending school and putting them at risk of child recruitment (OCHA, November 2013 p. 15) The Taliban have used children to carry-out suicide attacks. Interviews with children who survived due to mechanical failures or who were imprisoned after a failed attack, stated they did not even know what a suicide attack was (Xinhua, August 2013, HRW, August 2011). Afghanistan adopted a Juvenile Code-Procedural Law for Dealing with Children in Conflict with the Law in 2005 and in 2009 a Law of Juvenile Rehabilitation Centers which incorporate basic principles of juvenile justice set out in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)*. However, children in detention continue to face rights violations including sometimes being detained with adults, not adequately provided with food, care, protection, education and vocational training and abuse and torture (UN CRC, February 2011, p.17). Children are not also provided with legal aid, including before courts, and often statements are forcibly extracted (UN CRC, February 2011, p.17).

IDP children who go to unfamiliar places looking for firewood during the winter are at a higher risk of injury or fatality as they may readily mistake 'butterfly' mines for toys. UNAMA documented 511 child casualties in 2013 due to IEDs, a 28 per cent increase from 2012 while nearly 55 per cent or 964 child casualties resulted from actions of NSAGs (UNAMA, February 2014, p.59).

Durable solutions

Only limited information on IDPs' progress towards durable solutions is available. Local integration remains the preferred settlement option. Over three quarters of IDPs report they intend to settle permanently in their current location as they do not consider returning to their place of origin, even in the event that security improves (NRC/IDMC/Samuel Hall/JIPs, November 2012, p.45). Urban IDPs are even less likely than those in rural areas to return due to perception of increased access to livelihoods and security in urban centres. Nine out of ten IDPs plan to settle permanently in cities, most citing lack of livelihood opportunities in their place of origin (WB/UNHCR, May 2011, p.8). As of May 2014, there were no reported IDP returns in 2014 (IDMC correspondence with UNHCR, June 2014).

In urban areas, lack of access to adequate housing and security of tenure are serious challenges for many IDPs who wish to integrate locally. IDPs who live in informal settlements and occupy public or private land without permission face threats of forced eviction and secondary or tertiary displacement. IDPs report not having sufficient information or viable affordable alternative housing options and are often unwilling to uproot themselves again (IDMC/NRC, February 2014).

NRC/IDMC research found that many IDPs regarded land allocated to them under the LAS to be unsuitable, often in isolated areas with limited or no access to shelter, potable water, healthcare, employment opportunities, educational facilities and basic infrastructure (NRC, September 2007; NPC, May 2010; IDMC/NRC, February 2014, pp.14-16). The cost of participating in the LAS scheme, along with the application procedures and long delays, were a further deterrent (IDMC/NRC, February 2014, pp.14-16).

By 2013, some 5,000 areas covering about 545 square kilometres of land were contaminated with

mines and ERW, directly affecting over 1.3 million people creating further barriers to durable solutions (MAPA, 2013).

National response

The Afghan authorities have been slow to recognise IDPs as a vulnerable population. State efforts have been inconsistent in developing capacity to respond to the specific needs of IDPs. This has resulted in major gaps in IDP protection.

The MoRR is the lead ministry mandated to respond to displacement. Disaster management is regulated by the Law on Disaster Preparedness, Response and Risk Reduction, and it includes both natural and man-made disasters (ANDMA, 2010). The Afghan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA) coordinates all disaster management responses under the direction of the National Disaster Management Commission (NDMC). Numerous other line ministries handle issues affecting IDPs (IDMC, March 2013).

The budget allocated for ANDMA is minimal at the national and provincial levels. It is mostly used to respond to the IDPs needs, since no early warning systems and meteorological forecasting have been developed that could have strengthened resilience and reduce the impact of disasters (GoA, March 2013, p. 6, OCHA, November 2013, pp. 19-20). MoRR has also been plagued with deficiencies and allegations of corruption surfaced in September 2013 (Pahjwok, September 2013).

In 2013, MoRR distributed blankets, footwear and tarpaulins to families in Kabul and the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation Development (MRRD) implemented 12 disaster risk reduction projects along the Amu River (Arman and Milli, 2014, OCHA, June 2013).

Measures to address the lack of security of tenure in informal settlements are ongoing. The Land Reform in Afghanistan (LARA) project has assisted in surveying urban informal settlements, documenting land ownership boundaries and the size of land parcels for 2,800 properties in Jalalabad. The exercise has established new procedures for land ownership in unregistered settlements. These could potentially be replicated in other areas in Afghanistan, demonstrating that viable solutions to provide security of tenure for IDPs and refugee returnees in urban areas are possible (USAID, December 2013). Additional related projects include UN-HABITAT/UNHCR's formalisation of the Maslakh settlement near Herat that has resulted in provision of basic services and livelihood opportunities (FMR, May 2014, p.17).

Implementation of landmark IDP Policy lacking
In November 2013, Afghanistan adopted a landmark *National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons*. It acknowledges all three solutions to displacement – return, resettlement and reintegration. The IDP Policy applies to all persons who are forced to flee or leave their homes, including as a result of national or international military operations, Taliban abuses, natural disasters and development projects and those who remain in affected areas. The IDP Policy covers IDPs in both rural and urban areas, whether or not they have returned to their place of origin. It also aims to improve the living conditions for communities hosting IDPs or otherwise affected by displacement (IDMC, February 2014).The IDP Policy outlines for the first time the roles and responsibilities of different government ministries, humanitarian and development actors, and other partners who respond to displacement. A key component is acknowledgement of the government's responsibility to prevent situations leading to displacement, to minimise unavoidable displacement and to mitigate and resolve its adverse effects (UNHCR, February 2014).

The IDP Policy recognises that all Afghans, including explicitly IDPs, have the right to freedom of movement and residence within the country. This

means that Afghans may integrate in the place where they are living, return to their place of origin, or settle in another area. Under no circumstances should displaced people be encouraged or compelled to return or relocate to areas where their lives will be at risk (UNHCR, February 2014, Afghan National IDP Policy, November 2013).

The IDP Policy provides for the creation of task forces in provinces hosting IDPs. Under the supervision of the governor they are mandated to identify and implement durable solutions for IDPs and to draft a Provincial Action Plan, detailing how to promote durable solutions for IDPs. MoRR, DoRR, UNHCR and other humanitarian actors will be required to provide support to those task forces (UNHCR, February 2014).

However, lack of political will and capacity on the part of MoRR has stalled the implementation of the IDP Policy, despite calls from the international community for its immediate application (IDMC, June 2013, UN HRC, January 2014). Key to the effective implementation of the IDP Policy includes the development of a National Implementation Plan to help delineate national and sub-national government roles and responsibilities, the allocation of appropriate funds and resources to national, provincial and municipal authorities and the establishment of adequate oversight and monitoring mechanisms. Ensuring all levels of government understand the relevance of the IDP Policy for assisting and protecting IDPs is a task international humanitarian and development actors will need to support.

International response

As in previous years, the responses to IDPs have been coordinated through the cluster system which involves humanitarian organizations (UN and non-UN) working in the main sectors of humanitarian action, e.g. shelter and health and the National IDP Task Force, both established in 2008. UNHCR supports MoRR's response to IDPs displaced by conflict, while IOM assists those displaced by disasters. Members of the National IDP Task Force, co-chaired by MoRR and UNCHR, include NGOs, UN agencies and donors. There are also northern, southern, eastern and western regional IDP task forces.

Assistance to conflict IDPs and refugee returnees was one of the four strategic priorities identified in Afghanistan's 2014 Common Humanitarian Action Plan (OCHA, December 2013). IDPs were included in the strategies of most humanitarian agencies, although few have programmes specifically targeting the displaced. Humanitarian organisations provide shelter, food and non-food items, as well as winterisation packages to conflict and natural disaster IDPs. Humanitarians work in conjunction with local Departments of Refugees and Repatriations to distribute relief (OCHA, January 2014). In urban areas, assistance is provided to vulnerable groups and IDPs living in informal settlements. In 2014, OCHA launched an appeal for US$406 million for humanitarian needs, a decrease from US$474 million in 2013 (OCHA, December 2013). Some US$30.7 million has been requested to fund the protection cluster, responsible for monitoring IDPs and carrying out assessments and targeted profiling as well as coordinating IDP protection. As of the end of April 2014, US$ 161 million had been pledged (OCHA, April 2014).

Afghanistan is one of the world's leading recipients of humanitarian aid, yet on a per capita basis, it receives far less than occupied Palestine and significantly less than Somalia (Global Humanitarian Assistance, 2013). In keeping with what has become an annual decline in funding, the Afghanistan UN Humanitarian Appeal for 2014 decreased by 14 per cent from 2013. The European Commission's Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO) budget for Afghanistan in 2013 was US$30 million and has been cut by five per cent (to US$28.5) million for 2014 (ECHO, 2013, ACBAR, January 2014).

Politicisation and militarisation of aid has created a legacy of competing aims that have severely undermined aid effectiveness and blurred the lines between military, humanitarian and development objectives (Oxfam, October 2013, p.5; Feinstein International Center, January 2012, p.2). With the withdrawal of international troops there is less political will from the international community to support assistance. Thus, the US Congress has proposed to reduce civilian assistance from US$2 billion p.a. to one billion, forcing some humanitarian responders to prioritise acute and emergency needs over chronic needs in areas that are accessible (OCHA, November 2013, p.5; FMR, May 2014, p.5). This shift is likely to particularly affect IDPs in long-term displacement or those in short-term displacement in insecure areas.

The strain on access and aid highlights the growing need to bridge humanitarian and development assistance by addressing chronic needs through development assistance.

To better address IDPs in protracted displacement, especially those in urban settings, both development and humanitarian actors should support and participate in the National IDP Task Force, HLP Taskforce and other relevant coordination mechanisms so as to ensure a comprehensive approach to displacement (IDMC/NRC, February 2014).

In Afghanistan, aid workers continue to be proxy targets amid sustained, low-intensity conflict and asymmetrical warfare. In 2013 and 2014, an increase in targeted attacks against international aid workers, including demining teams and those working in development, impacted how humanitarian and development assistance was provided (Aid Worker Security, 2013). Many organisations have started to increase the number of national staff and reduce the number of international workers in order to decrease their visibility and vulnerability as potential targets.

To continue to meet the needs of IDPs, the humanitarian and development community must enhance its involvement in areas that are difficult to access by improving local community monitoring structures that would enable Afghans to monitor humanitarian aid and development projects. It is similarly vital to increase capacity building projects so to improve communication between humanitarian and development agencies and displaced populations (IRC, April 2014; IWA, 2013).

About the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) is the leading source of information and analysis on internal displacement. For the millions of people worldwide displaced within their own country, IDMC plays a unique role as a global monitor and evidence-based advocate to influence policy and action by governments, UN agencies, donors, international organisations and NGOs.

IDMC was established in 1998 at the request of the Interagency Standing Committee on humanitarian assistance. Since then, IDMC's unique global function has been recognised and reiterated in annual UN General Assembly resolutions.

IDMC is part of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), an independent, non-governmental humanitarian organisation.

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