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## AFGHANISTAN

# Comprehensive response urgently required as displacement crisis worsens

As international troops prepare to leave Afghanistan by 2014, more than half a million Afghans are estimated to be internally displaced. The on-going transfer of security responsibility from NATO to Afghan security forces has not been accompanied by a transition to stability. In 2012, internal displacement continued to rise significantly against a backdrop of continuing armed conflict, high civilian casualties, increased abuses by non-state armed groups and pervasive conflict-related violence. Over 100,000 Afghans were newly displaced by conflict and a further 32,000 by natural disasters in 2012. There are numerous challenges in accurately profiling the displaced. The actual number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) is undoubtedly far higher.



An Afghan man stands in front of tents home to IDPs in Bagrami district of Kabul. Many families came here from Tagab in Kapisa Province, Central Afghanistan, following increased insecurity over the past two years. (Photo: NRC/Farzana Wahidy, June 2012)

National and international responses have been largely inadequate. IDPs face a wide range of physical threats and restrictions to their freedom of movement. They often live in life-threatening conditions, without access to sufficient food and water, adequate housing, security of tenure or employment. Increasing numbers seek relative safety in cities and towns where they face discrimination and are even more deprived and marginalised than the non-displaced urban poor. Over three quarters of IDPs now wish to settle permanently where they are. This right is not recognised by the government, which continues to link assistance and solutions for IDPs to return to their place of origin. Under these circumstances, and without adequate international assistance, growing numbers of Afghans risk prolonged displacement in dire conditions.

With Afghanistan's displacement crisis set to continue, if not worsen, a comprehensive response is urgently required. President Hamid Karzai's 2012 decision to develop a national IDP policy was a welcome and timely signal of government commitment to protect the human rights of its displaced citizens. Adoption of a national policy would help to improve responses and prevent further displacement. This will require a policy which includes an IDP definition in line with the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* and (...)



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prioritises responses to IDPs' key protection needs. The policy must acknowledge that, while return is possible in certain circumstances, the vast majority of IDPs do not wish to return to their places of origin. It should therefore clearly address the needs of those seeking local integration, including urban IDPs. It must also outline appropriate financing modalities and coordination mechanisms and clearly define roles and responsibilities for assisting and protecting IDPs at all levels of government, as well as those of the international humanitarian and development communities. A concrete and time-bound implementation plan is essential.

Effective implementation will also require ongoing policy development to be genuinely participatory and reach out to a wide range of actors. With a first draft now complete, a consultative and rigorous review process must take place that includes relevant line ministries, local authorities, civil society the international community and donors. Meaningful consultation and consensus-building around the content and scope of the IDP policy is essential to ensure national ownership, and ensure its ability to deliver tangible change for IDPs across Afghanistan. A snap-shot IDP profiling exercise should also be undertaken in order to fill specific gaps in data and facilitate implementation.

## Background to displacement

Afghanistan has experienced extraordinary levels of forced displacement as a consequence of over three decades of armed conflict, generalised violence, natural disasters and human rights violations. Three-quarters of Afghans affected by conflict have faced some form of forced displacement at one time during their lives; over 40 per cent have been internally displaced at least once and 17 per cent have been displaced both internally as well as abroad (ICRC, June 2009, p.23; Oxfam, November 2009, p.4).

After over a decade of international military intervention, 2012 witnessed the ongoing transfer of responsibility for security from NATO's International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). Most foreign troops are scheduled to leave by the end of 2014 (NATO, March 2013). The reduction in the number of international forces has not been accompanied by a transition to stability. Armed conflict between international military forces and ANSF, on the one hand, and the Taliban and other non-state armed groups, on the other, continues across the country (UNAMA, February 2013, p.1).

In 2012, civilian casualties caused by armed conflict fell for the first time in five years; however, pervasive conflict-related violence still threatened thousands of Afghan families. Human rights observers documented 7,559 civilian casualties during the year, the vast majority (81 per cent) attributed to non-state armed groups. The numbers of civilians wounded or killed by non-state armed groups increased by nine per cent. Activity by illegal armed groups posed a growing threat to civilians who were rarely able to avail themselves of government protection (UNAMA, February 2013, pp. 1, 10, 13).

Afghanistan's western-backed government, led by President Karzai, continued to be challenged by poor governance, weak state institutions, corruption and drug production (BI, March 2013, pp.18-22). The authority of national authorities was contested by a proliferation of armed groups and other local power brokers as the central government struggled to exercise effective control over large parts of the country (BBC, 5 February 2013).

While a decade of unprecedented reconstruction assistance has led to development gains, endemic poverty and poor social and economic conditions ensure that most of the population is highly vulnerable. Afghanistan ranks 172 out of 187 countries on the Human Development Index. Major gaps in the provision of basic services require a

humanitarian response to grave health, education and housing needs. One-third of its 27 million population lives below the poverty line, over 30 per cent per cent of Afghans are food insecure and at least one Afghan woman dies every two hours due to pregnancy-related causes ([OCHA](#), December 2012).

Afghanistan's climate and terrain make is highly prone to droughts, earthquakes, flooding and bitter cold. Roughly half of Afghanistan's 400 districts are hazard-prone and 250,000 Afghans are annually affected by natural disasters, especially in the north. Building resilience at community level is critical ([NRC/IDMC/Samuel Hall/JIPS](#), November 2012, p.17). The recurrent need for humanitarian relief in the aftermath of natural disasters is, in part, a consequence of underdevelopment ([OCHA](#), December 2012, p.13).

In the last decade, mass migration of rural Afghans to towns and cities has led to rapid urbanisation. Up to 30 per cent of the population lives in urban areas and urban population growth is well above averages elsewhere in Asia ([HPG](#), June 2012, p.7). An estimated 60-70 per cent per cent of Afghanistan's urban population now live in unplanned – or informal – urban settlements characterised by inadequate water and sanitation provision and limited access to basic services. The population of Kabul doubled from two million in 2001 to 4.5 million in 2010: 70-80 per cent of the city's residents live in informal settlements ([WB/UNHCR](#), May 2011, p.12; [HPG](#), June 2012, p.7).

Some 2.7 million Afghans still continue to live as refugees, the vast majority in Iran and Pakistan ([UNHCR](#), December 2012). Voluntary repatriation is viewed by the governments of both neighbouring states as the primary solution for Afghan refugees and both have placed increasing pressure on them to return. In December 2012, Pakistan announced a six-month extension of the Pakistan Tripartite Agreement, which regulates the repatriation of Afghans from Pakistan, ensuring the

legal status of Afghan refugees until June 2013. However, the future of refugees in the region remains uncertain ([USAID](#), December 2012; [OCHA](#), December 2012, p.19).

More than 5.7 million Afghan refugees have returned to the country since 2002 constituting roughly a quarter of the population of Afghanistan. Voluntary return has declined significantly in recent years but is likely to continue. 2012 saw a 24 per cent increase compared to the same period in 2011. Refugees continue to face significant reintegration challenges ([HPG](#), June 2012, p. 6). In May 2012, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Afghan, Iranian and Pakistan authorities endorsed a multi-year Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees designed to support voluntary repatriation, sustainable reintegration and assistance for host countries ([OCHA](#), December 2012; [UNHCR](#), December 2012).

#### *A long history of displacement*

Since the late 1970s Afghanistan has experienced several periods of displacement linked to conflict and political instability. Following the Soviet invasion in 1979, conflict between the Soviet-backed government and *mujahideen* forced up to five million Afghans to flee abroad. With the defeat of the communist government in 1992, fighting between *mujahideen* factions displaced 200,000 more. Over the following years, before the Taliban took control of the country in 1996, hundreds of thousands of Pashtun civilians fled violence by Uzbek and Tajik warlords in the north and east. When the Taliban took power, conflict with the Northern Alliance, composed of former *mujahideen* factions, forced a further million into internal displacement, particularly in northern and central Afghanistan. Between 1998 and 2003, recurrent drought also contributed to ongoing displacement. In the aftermath of al-Qaeda's 2001 attacks on the United States and the US-led military intervention in Afghanistan, 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 2004*

With the resurgence of the Taliban and expansion of international military forces since 2004, armed conflict between ANSF/international military forces and the Taliban and other non-state armed groups has been a key driver of displacement ([IDMC](#), April 2011; [NRC/IDMC/Samuel Hall/JIPS](#), November 2012, p.20). The effects of armed conflict have been compounded by recurrent natural disasters, often making it difficult to distinguish a specific cause of displacement ([OCHA](#), December 2012, p.20). Armed conflict has also aggravated local conflicts, such as land disputes, causing additional displacement ([HPG](#), June 2012, p.5; [NRC/IDMC/Samuel Hall/JIPS](#), November 2012, p.21).

All parties to the conflict, including the government, non-state armed groups and international military forces, have contributed to displacement ([BI/NRC](#), November 2010, p.10). Military operations by international and Afghan forces against Taliban strongholds have led to large-scale displacements in the south, particularly during the 2010/11 'surge' in the number of international troops deployed ([Rizvi](#), June 2011). Night raids and air strikes destroyed homes and agricultural land, fuelling displacement across the country ([AI](#), February 2012, p.18). Civilian casualties caused by international and Afghan forces decreased significantly in 2012; however, military operations still led to displacement. Abuses by the Afghan Local Police have reportedly led to significant displacement in the north, but also Uruzgan province in the south ([HRW](#), September 2011; [TLO/NRC](#), December 2011; [UNAMA](#), July 2012 p.49).

Indiscriminate and unlawful use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), targeted killings, attacks on schools and hospitals and forced recruitment by

Taliban and other non-state armed groups have all driven internal displacement. In 2012, harassment and intimidation by non-state armed groups was increasingly reported by IDPs as a trigger for their displacement ([UNHCR](#), 2012). A survey found that over half of those displaced by conflict attributed their displacement to the Taliban or other non-state armed groups ([NRC/IDMC/Samuel Hall/JIPS](#), November 2012, p.21).

Pervasive conflict-related violence and insecurity increasingly threaten the lives and livelihoods of civilians and are a growing cause of displacement. In 2012, a growing number of local militia and other armed groups targeted civilians through intimidation, coercion, extortion, abuse and targeted killings. This was of particular concern in the north and north-west. Conflict between armed groups also contributed to displacement. Land disputes and conflict over access to natural resources – such as the recurrent clashes over access to pastoral land between predominantly nomadic Kuchis and sedentary Hazara populations in the central highlands – regularly cause internal displacement ([UNHCR](#), December 2012; [UNAMA](#), February 2013, p.9).

In the absence of effective early warning and preparedness measures, or disaster risk reduction mechanisms, frequent, but relatively small-scale, natural disasters still contribute to displacement. Many flee drought and floods, while others are displaced by avalanches, earthquakes, landslides, river bank erosion and severe winter conditions ([MoRR](#), July 2012). Between January and August 2012, natural hazards affected approximately 250,000 people, caused 441 deaths and damaged or destroyed 27,430 homes ([OCHA](#), December 2012, pp.4-5).

## **Displacement figures**

An estimated 100,400 people were newly displaced by conflict in 2012 ([UNHCR](#), December

2012; [UNHCR, January 2013](#)). According to the National IDP Task Force, co-chaired by the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) and UNHCR, 493,000 people remained displaced by conflict, insecurity and human rights violations as of January 2013. The total number of Afghans displaced by conflict has risen rapidly year on year since 2007, and more than doubled since 2008 ([UNHCR, January 2013](#); [UNHCR, December 2011](#)).

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which collates official data relating to natural disaster induced displacement, a further 13,800 individuals were displaced by natural disasters (IOM interview, February 2013). IDMC estimates were significantly higher however, with 32,000 individuals believed to have been displaced during the year. As many as 5,000 people were forced to leave their homes in June 2012 following a series of earthquakes in north-east Afghanistan. Flash flooding left thousands more displaced in May in Sari Pul province (IDMC, forthcoming March 2013; [OCHA, May 2012](#); [OCHA, June 2012, p.5](#)).

#### *Major gaps in IDP data*

The comprehensive profiling of IDPs remains a major challenge for both the government and the humanitarian community. Official IDP figures are widely considered to under-represent the scale of displacement as they exclude both IDPs displaced in urban and semi-urban areas and those in inaccessible conflict-affected areas of the south, south-east and west. Figures do not capture returns, secondary displacement or onward migration to other countries. IDP data is not systematically disaggregated ([UNHCR, July 2012, pp.4-7](#)).

Displacement caused by conflict and natural disasters is tracked and recorded separately. Official data on individuals displaced by natural disasters does not include those displaced within their village who are usually reported as 'natural disaster-affected' persons, rather than IDPs (correspondence with IOM, February 2013).

## **Patterns of displacement**

The south, east and west of Afghanistan continue to host around three-quarters of all individuals displaced by conflict, over half of whom reside in the provinces of Herat, Nangahar, Helmand and Kandahar. The recent spread of armed conflict and insecurity to other parts of the country is changing this pattern. While in May 2010 IDPs in northern and central Afghanistan accounted for only five per cent of all conflict displaced IDPs, by December 2012 these regions hosted 20 per cent of conflict IDPs, with particularly high numbers in the northern province of Faryab and the central province of Ghazni ([UNHCR, July 2012, p.9](#); [UNHCR, December 2012](#)). The majority of IDPs displaced by natural disasters lived in the north, north-east, west and south of the country, with Balkh, Ghor, Badakshan and Takhar reporting the highest numbers ([IOM, February 2013](#); correspondence with IOM, February 2013).

Data available suggests that, like the general population, 65 per cent of IDPs are under the age of 18. There are almost equal numbers of male and female IDPs ([UNHCR, July 2012, p.13](#)). On average, IDPs live in larger households than other Afghans ([NRC/IDMC/Samuel Hall/JIPS, November 2012, p.23](#)). Displacement on the scale witnessed in Afghanistan deeply affects communities hosting the displaced, as well as society at large ([BI/NRC, November 2010, p.9](#)).

#### *Protracted displacement*

The length of displacement varies considerably, with some IDPs displaced for relatively short periods, and others facing longer displacement ([MoRR, July 2012](#)). With options for durable solutions increasingly limited, large numbers of IDPs face protracted displacement. According to UNHCR, an estimated 74,000 people, or one in five of Afghanistan's current total IDP caseload, were displaced prior to 2003 ([UNHCR, July 2012, p.8](#)). 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 arrived IDPs ([NRC/IDMC/Samuel Hall/JIPS](#), November 2012, p.22, 69).

#### *Complex population movements*

Some IDPs flee within their provinces or districts, often to a provincial or district capital, while others chose to seek safety further afield in neighbouring provinces (MoRR, October 2012). IDP populations are highly mobile and are often forced into secondary or tertiary displacement due to lack of services and jobs, ongoing armed conflict or natural disasters in areas of their primary displacement. Those displaced to urban areas have often been displaced at least once previously.

Afghans flee both preventatively and in response to threats. Preventative displacement often occurs in the form of displacement of individuals or families rather than mass movements, making it more difficult to track ([UNHCR](#), July 2012, pp.4-6). Economic factors linked to conflict or natural disasters can frequently trigger displacement. Thus there is often no clear distinction between 'forced' and 'voluntary' movements.

Internal displacement takes place in the context of many other population movements, including rural-urban migration and refugee return, often complicating the task of identifying and assisting IDPs. (MoRR, October 2012). Approximately 40 per cent of returning refugees have not reintegrated into their communities of origin ([HPG](#), June 2012, p.6). Refugee returnees who cannot reintegrate often find themselves in IDP-like situations. Others are forced into secondary displacement due to conflict or natural disasters and become IDPs ([MoRR](#), July 2012).

#### *Growing urban displacement*

IDPs live in a variety of settings in rural and urban areas. Some seek refuge with relatives and fellow members of tribes or ethnic groups while others

live dispersed in host communities where they construct or rent their own homes ([NRC/IDMC/Samuel Hall/JIPS](#), November 2012, p. 30).

Urban displacement is a growing concern in Afghanistan. Since 2001, tens of thousands of IDPs have sought the relative protection found in such cities as Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif and Herat. Here they live among the urban poor in informal settlements often lacking title deeds, formal tenancy agreements or the consent of private or state landowners to settle or develop the land on which they reside. In Kabul approximately 32,000 acutely vulnerable people, including numerous IDPs, live in dire conditions in over 50 illegal settlements ([Samuel Hall](#), December 2012, p.7). Urban IDPs have been displaced for an average of six years; one in four fled before 2003. More than 90 per cent of urban IDPs come from rural areas. Urban IDPs face particular discrimination and are even more vulnerable and deprived than the non-displaced urban poor ([WB/UNHCR](#), May 2011, pp.7-8, 20).

## **Protection concerns**

#### *Threats to life and freedom of movement*

Although information on those displaced within conflict zones is limited, it is clear that armed conflict, natural disasters and pervasive conflict-related violence result in a wide-range of threats to physical security. In 2012, non-state armed groups increasingly targeted civilians. The indiscriminate use of IEDs causes most deaths and remains a grave concern. Other abuses include targeted killings, intimidation, abduction, extortion and forced recruitment. While international military forces and the ANSF have taken measures to reduce civilian casualties, eight per cent of civilian deaths were attributed to international and Afghan security forces, with aerial attacks the major cause of death. In 2012, civilians also faced increased abuse by armed groups. Mines and unexploded ordinance remained a major threat ([UNAMA](#), February 2013, pp.1-10).

IDPs face a range of restrictions on their freedom of movement. Illegal checkpoints are reported to often delay movement to safe locations ([UNHCR](#), July 2012, p.16). Provincial and municipal authorities have been unwilling to assist IDPs arriving from other provinces, arguing they should remain close to their former homes to expedite return (MoRR, October 2012, p. 10). In urban areas, officials have restricted humanitarian programming for IDPs to avoid encouraging permanent settlement ([AI](#), February 2012, pp.65-68). Growing 'asylum fatigue' limits cross-border displacement options as Pakistani and Iranian authorities have stated that voluntary repatriation is the primary solution for the remaining estimated 2.7 million Afghan refugees in their countries ([UNHCR](#), December 2012). Insecurity, the closure of refugee camps and the deportation of unregistered refugees and migrants present further challenges for Afghan refugees and migrants in Iran and Pakistan.

#### *Basic needs unmet*

IDPs are unable to enjoy even basic rights to food and water, adequate housing, health, education or employment. Chronic under- and unemployment leaves many struggling to survive. IDPs have fewer vocational skills 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). With few resources at their disposal, large numbers of IDPs (40 per cent) live in overcrowded poor quality shelters or shacks, often illegally occupying private or government land without adequate sanitation, electricity or access to basic services. Lack of security of tenure leaves IDPs at constant risk of eviction. Exposed to the elements, over 100 IDPs, including children, died in Kabul's slums during the severe winter of 2011-2012 ([AI](#), February 2012, p.30; [AI/NRC](#), October 2012).

#### *Vulnerable groups*

Displaced women and girls are particularly vulnerable due to their low economic status, social isolation and lack of traditional social protection mechanisms. As a result of their displacement they are more likely to be unemployed and face forced and early marriages or other types of exploitation. The practice of *purdah* (gendered seclusion) can also limit access to assistance and basic services. IDP children face a greater risk of forced recruitment than the non-displaced and many are engaged in child labour ([NRC/IDMC/Samuel Hall/JIPS](#), November 2012; pp.34-38; [UNAMA](#), February 2013, p.12).

## **Durable solutions**

Information on the extent to which IDPs are able to find durable solutions is limited. In 2011, some 75,000 IDPs reportedly found a solution to their displacement, with assistance provided by humanitarian actors in a small number of cases ([UNHCR](#), June 2012). Following a comprehensive review of IDP data conducted by UNHCR field offices in early 2012, 125,350 IDPs were removed from the total number of displaced. It was not known whether they had returned to places of previous residence or moved into secondary displacement ([UNHCR](#), July 2012, p.8). Determining when displacement ends is challenging in the context of a large conflict and natural disaster affected population itself subject to human rights abuses.

Local integration is the settlement option of choice for the great majority of IDPs. Over 75 per cent of IDPs intend to settle permanently in their current location and are not considering returning to their places of origin even if security improves ([NRC/IDMC/Samuel Hall/JIPS](#), November 2012, p.45). Urban IDPs are even less likely than those in rural areas to return. Nine out of ten plan to settle permanently in cities, most citing lack of livelihood opportunities in their place of origin ([WB/UNHCR](#), May 2011, p.8). While most IDPs wish to



integrate locally, this right is not formally recognised by the government which continues to promote return as the primary settlement option ([UNHCR](#), July 2012, p.18). Against a backdrop of rapid urbanisation, urban IDPs present particular challenges for local authorities who are reluctant to recognise their right to integrate locally for a variety of economic, political, security and ethnic reasons ([HPG](#), June 2012, p.39)

#### *Multiple obstacles to durable solutions*

Options for return are limited by insecurity and lack of livelihoods and basic services. The lack of effective remedies for loss of land and property remains a further constraint. Displaced individuals whose property is damaged during armed conflict are not eligible for government compensation schemes. Under Presidential Decree 104, a government-administered Land Allocation Scheme grants some returning refugees and IDPs access to land. However, the scheme has been marred by corruption and mismanagement ([CIVIC](#), 2013, p.37; [AI](#), February 2012, p.71). In the absence of effective disaster risk reduction measures, slow-onset natural disasters such as drought also continue to hamper return in the north and west.

Afghans who wish to integrate locally face numerous barriers including a lack of access to adequate shelter, security of tenure, civil documentation, unemployment or adequate food and water. Both recent and longer-term urban displaced have been left without any significant government support or public services for many years. Ensuring security of tenure is critical where IDPs live in informal or illegal settlements yet Presidential Decree 104 excludes IDPs seeking to integrate locally by requiring them to return to their places of origin or nearby areas in order to be eligible for assistance ([MoRR](#), July 2012; [IRIN](#), 7 February 2013; [NRC/IDMC/Samuel Hall/JIPS](#), November 2012, pp.45-49; [HPG](#), June 2012, p.39).

In this highly challenging context solutions to displacement are likely to vary significantly

across the country. Localised context-appropriate approaches are needed to guarantee land and property rights. In urban settings, effective local integration may require a community-based approach encompassing both the urban poor and host communities. Improved urban planning, settlement upgrading and expansion and poverty reduction programmes will be crucial. A comprehensive, coordinated response to displacement is required from development and humanitarian actors ([MoRR](#), October 2012, p.13; [OCHA](#), December 2012, p.20).

## **National response**

The MoRR is the lead ministry mandated to respond to displacement. The Afghan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA), a sub-ministerial body within the National Commission on Disaster Management, is responsible for short-term responses to those displaced by natural disasters. Both are tasked with coordinating national and provincial responses to internal displacement, including the coordination of assistance with international humanitarian and development actors ([BI/NRC](#), November 2010, p.16). Numerous other line ministries also deal with issues affecting IDPs.

#### *Inadequate state response*

The government's response to internal displacement has been inadequate. Insufficient political will, weak local governance and the presence of non-state armed groups in areas where IDPs live remain major challenges to the exercise of effective national responsibility. Basic disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness measures are lacking. The state has been unable to provide its citizens with sufficient protection to prevent displacement by non-state and other armed groups.

The 2008-2013 Afghan National Development Strategy provides a basic framework for the protection of IDPs. However, it does not formally define IDPs nor set out measures to achieve

durable solutions other than return ([BI/NRC](#), November 2010, p.14). Officials have not always acknowledged their responsibility for protecting and assisting IDPs. At provincial and district levels authorities struggle to identify IDPs and continue to describe them as 'economic migrants'. The government has also taken measures that deny IDPs access to long-term support in their place of refuge ([AI](#), February 2012, p.33, [NRC/IDMC/Samuel Hall/JIPS](#), November 2012, p.52). Lack of support for local integration and lack of recognition of urban IDPs by municipal authorities are major barriers to improving national responses ([IRIN](#), 7 February 2013).

Neither MoRR nor ANDMA have the institutional capacity, political authority or funding required to effectively achieve their mandated objectives. In 2012/13, MoRR's budget was a mere \$4.7 million ([Ministry of Finance](#), 2012, p.30). There is a need to strengthen the coordination of IDP responses across government and clearly define the roles and responsibilities of relevant line ministries and other state actors at all levels, particularly of ANDMA and MoRR ([MoRR](#), July 2012; [NRC/IDMC/Samuel Hall/JIPS](#), November 2012, pp.52-53; [IRIN](#), 7 February 2013).

#### *Towards a National IDP Policy*

The government had yet to adopt a comprehensive legal framework or other national instrument protecting IDPs. This has hindered coordination of humanitarian and development responses to IDPs and complicated the task of building government capacity ([UNHCR](#), July 2012, p.5).

However, in 2012 the government announced its intention to develop a comprehensive national IDP policy. Following a presidential instruction in February 2012 development of the policy began in mid-2012, led by MoRR with international support. Technical support is also provided by an IDP Policy Working Group. In July, MoRR hosted a National Consultative Workshop on the policy process, with the UN Special Rapporteur on hu-

man rights of IDPs, Dr. Chaloka Beyani, participating. At the workshop, the Minister of Refugees and Repatriation re-stated the government's policy commitment to addressing the needs of all IDPs through inclusive and consultative processes. After initial consultations with provincial governors, mayors, *shuras*, IDPs and national ministries, drafting began in late 2012. A consolidated first draft was completed by early 2013, with a second-round of provincial and national level consultations being undertaken in March and April 2013, prior to formal adoption of the policy ([MoRR](#), July 2012; [IDP Policy WG](#), May 2012; [Schrepfer/Tyler](#), August 2012).

Given that internal displacement is likely to continue, if not worsen, the development of a national policy on displacement is a welcome and timely initiative. Adoption of a national IDP policy would help improve responses to the displaced and prevent further displacement. To be effective, the policy must adopt measures in line with the *UN Guiding Principles* and develop appropriate financing and coordination mechanisms. It is essential to clearly define roles and responsibilities for IDPs at all levels government, as well as those of international humanitarian and development actors. Successful implementation requires ongoing policy development to be genuinely participatory and reach out to a wide range of actors across government, civil society and the international community. A one-time snap-shot IDP profiling exercise should also be undertaken in parallel so as to fill specific gaps in data.

## **International response**

Humanitarian organisations provide significant short-term assistance to thousands of IDPs but major gaps in protection and assistance remain. Response has been hampered by a lack of reliable and timely data and analysis, lack of access to large numbers of IDPs and a steep drop in levels of humanitarian funding. Lasting solutions for

IDPs also require comprehensive and coordinated action by humanitarian and development actors.

Response to IDPs is coordinated through the cluster system 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 natural disasters. Members of the National IDP Task Force, co-chaired by MoRR and UNHCR, include NGOs, UN agencies, government and, at the national level, donors. There are also Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western Regional IDP Task Forces ([UNHCR](#), July 2012, p. 5).

Humanitarian actors have prioritised emergency food and non-food assistance to the newly displaced. Life-saving winter assistance is also distributed to vulnerable urban groups, including IDPs. Nearly 246,000 conflict-induced IDPs were assisted by members of the emergency shelter and non-food item (NFI) clusters in 2012 ([UNHCR](#), January 2013, p.2; [OCHA](#), December 2012, p.5; [NRC/IDMC/Samuel Hall/JIPS](#), November 2012, p. 56). Assistance to IDPs, returnees and host communities is also one of four strategic priorities identified in Afghanistan's 2013 Common Humanitarian Action Plan, which seeks \$471 million in humanitarian funding ([UNHCR](#), July 2012, p.7; [OCHA](#), December 2012, p.v). IDPs are included in the strategies of most humanitarian agencies' although few have programmes specifically targeting the displaced. Other relevant interventions for IDPs include livelihoods support, water and sanitation, legal aid and demining.

#### *Gaps in assistance and protection*

Constrained access and fluid population movements have hampered IDP profiling. These challenges have been compounded by a lack of standardised data-gathering and analysis systems that provide a comprehensive overview of all types of displacement. A new Population Movement Tracking (PMT) system introduced by UNHCR in 2012 goes some way to addressing concerns with

respect to those displaced by conflict. However, there is still an urgent need to improve the quality of data gathered and to strengthen information management systems. Plans to develop a collaborative displacement tracking system were initiated by MoRR, UNHCR and IOM in mid-2012; however, by year's end the initiative had not moved forward ([JIPS](#), Mission Report, May 2012). Limited follow up and referral networks also leads to gaps in protection in several regions ([NRC/IDMC/Samuel Hall/JIPS](#), November 2012, pp.56-62).

In 2012, the Afghanistan UN Humanitarian Appeal was less than 50 per cent funded. The Common Appeal Process (CAP) aimed to raise \$437 million for 146 projects, with targeted beneficiaries including 600,000 conflict-induced IDPs. However, the majority of projects could not be implemented due to lack of funding. Donor fatigue with Afghanistan, the drawdown of international troops and the more competitive global funding environment are explanatory factors. There are disturbing indications that post-transition Afghanistan may struggle to attract requisite levels of humanitarian funding ([OCHA](#), December 2012, p.v, 5, 11).

At a conference in Tokyo in July 2012, donors pledged \$16 billion over the following four years for a package of National Priority Programmes focused on long-term development. During the year, a multi-year Regional Solutions Strategy for Afghan refugees to support voluntary repatriation and reintegration of Afghan refugees was also endorsed. In addition, following a decision to pilot the UN Secretary General's *Framework on Durable Solutions in the Aftermath of Conflict* in Afghanistan, preparation of an inter-agency Durable Solutions Strategy was also planned to support delivery of durable solutions to Afghan IDPs and returnee refugees. To ensure a comprehensive approach to forced displacement, and to avoid diverting attention and resources away from IDPs, these strategies should be coherent and mutually reinforcing. They should not under-

mine the implementation of Afghanistan's national IDP policy.

The great majority of Afghanistan's IDPs remain beyond the reach of humanitarian agencies, thus leading to significant provincial variations in the level of assistance IDPs receive ([NRC/IDMC/Samuel Hall/JIPS](#), November 2012, p.64). The south and south-east face the worst access restrictions. Violence decreased in 2012, but Afghanistan remains the world's most dangerous country for aid workers ([Humanitarian Outcomes](#), 2012, p.3).

Given the regular blurring of humanitarian activities with political and military objectives, continued advocacy is needed to promote principled and needs-based humanitarian assistance and expand available space for humanitarian action. However, the fragmentation and radicalisation of non-state armed groups have made attempts to negotiate access increasingly difficult ([OCHA](#), December 2012, p.33). Efforts to negotiate access are also complicated by the absence of an overarching humanitarian access strategy. A joint strategy of negotiated access based on humanitarian principles must be prioritised during and beyond transition to ensure the preservation of humanitarian space and to enable IDPs in conflict-affected areas to receive critical assistance.

## About the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) was established by the Norwegian Refugee Council in 1998, upon the request of the United Nations, to set up a global database on internal displacement. A decade later, IDMC remains the leading source of information and analysis on internal displacement caused by conflict and violence worldwide.

IDMC aims to support better international and national responses to situations of internal displacement and respect for the rights of internally displaced people (IDPs), who are often among the world's most vulnerable people. It also aims to promote durable solutions for IDPs, through return, local integration or settlement elsewhere in the country.

IDMC's main activities include:

- Monitoring and reporting on internal displacement caused by conflict, generalised violence and violations of human rights;
- Researching, analysing and advocating for the rights of IDPs;
- Training and strengthening capacities on the protection of IDPs;
- Contributing to the development of standards and guidance on protecting and assisting IDPs.

For more information, visit the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre website and the database at [www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org)

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