



**Profile**  
at a glance

# Afghanistan



**2012**

*“The end result is a very strong recommendations section, with concrete and actionable recommendations that echo people’s needs and help define objectives”.*

Nassim Majidi, Director, Samuel Hall Consulting, Afghanistan

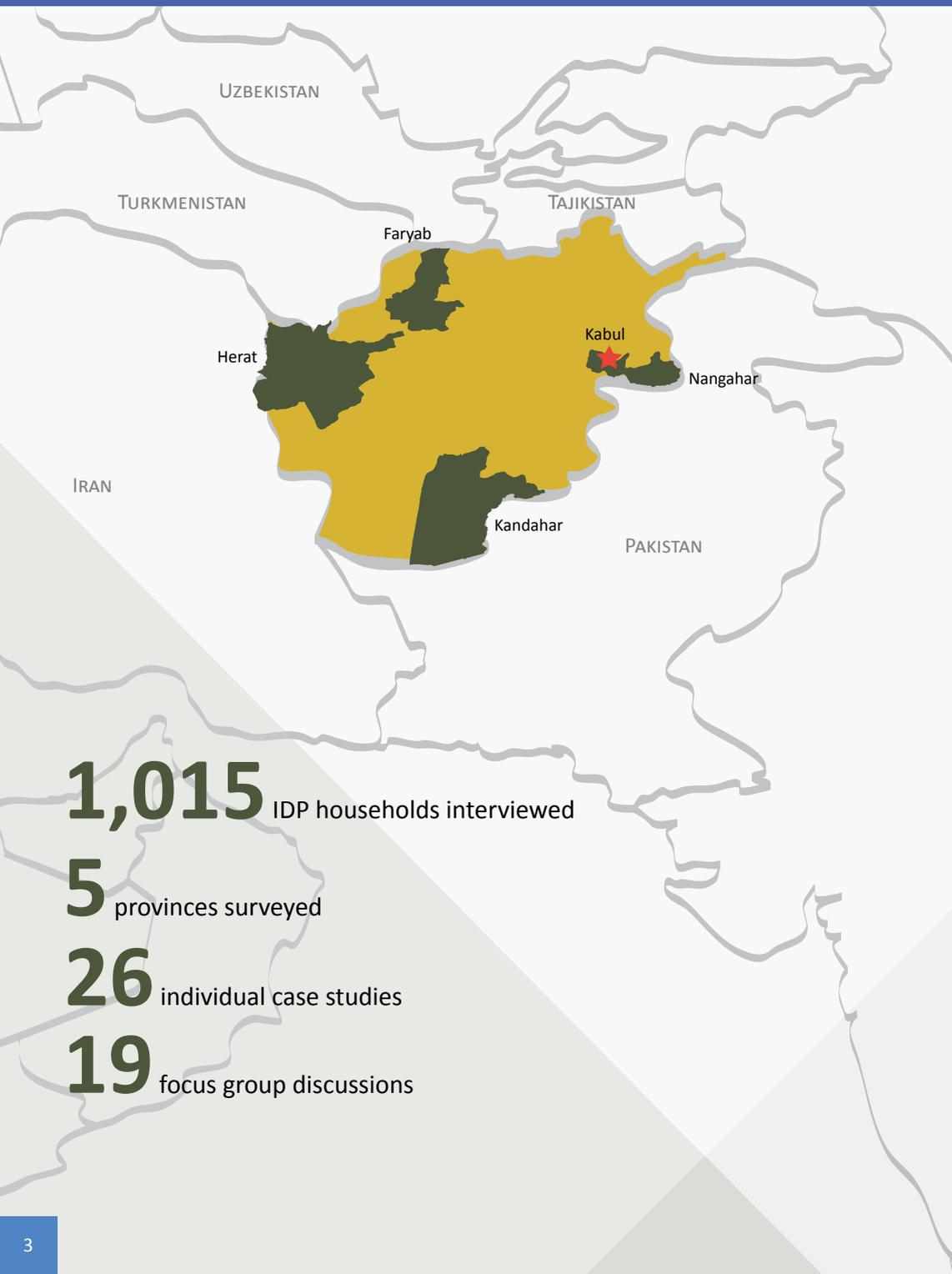


Three decades of conflict and repeated natural disasters has made displacement an increasingly salient issue for Afghanistan. Country analysts have long agreed that the level of protection provided to internally displaced persons (IDPs) has been insufficient. Neither Afghan national authorities nor international stakeholders are able to guarantee the right to physical security, the right to basic necessities of life or the right to social and economic equality.

Whilst there are a number of humanitarian organisations providing emergency relief to displaced populations, there are few who are consistently providing protection assistance. Moreover, significant information gaps exist about the core protection and humanitarian needs facing vulnerable displacement-affected communities.

To help to address this, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) commissioned a research study on the protection of IDPs in Afghanistan to improve the understanding of the dynamics during displacement. To ensure the results feed into the ongoing IDP policy development process, the Joint IDP Profiling Service supported the process during the analysis and reporting phase and through a recommendations workshop to facilitate consensus amongst stakeholders.

# Which methods were used?



**1,015** IDP households interviewed

**5** provinces surveyed

**26** individual case studies

**19** focus group discussions

The methodology of the protection study was designed to identify the self-perceived needs and protection priorities of displaced communities and to provide a clear picture of what it means to be an IDP in Afghanistan. To provide a comprehensive view of internal displacement, both conflict and natural-disaster induced IDPs were included in the sampling plan. In order to reach the most impactful recommendations, the research also reviewed the assessment, response and coordination efforts of relevant stakeholders in the country.

of displaced Afghan communities in urban, rural and semi-rural areas. At the individual and community levels, researchers conducted a survey, direct field observations, qualitative interviews and group discussions. At the institutional and organizational levels, the research team conducted key informant interviews and a desk review of secondary sources.

Strictly speaking, the results of this exercise cannot be extrapolated all over the country because a representative sampling could not be employed.

Both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods were used in locations identified as emblematic

# What was the impact?

- A recommendations workshop, hosted by the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) and attended by a range of humanitarian and development actors as well as donor community representatives, presented an opportunity to discuss the initial findings of the study. This helped to achieve consensus on the recommendations included in the report to feed into the development of a national policy on internal displacement.
- Findings from this study, whilst limited by the methodology, have for the first time provided clear evidence to both support and question a number of commonly held assumptions about IDPs in Afghanistan. This includes results concerning the length of displacement and intentions for return and other possible durable solutions.
- The research administrators had an open approach to information sharing, which has facilitated the use of the results by a variety of actors and different thematic clusters around the country for planning and advocacy purposes. This is especially notable in areas where little information exists for evidence-based responses, such as violence against women.
- The results and process of this research study have strengthened the impact of advocacy efforts for improved IDP profiling and IDP monitoring systems in the country. A joint NRC/UNHCR IDP Profiling Working Group has been established to assess current IDP data collection modalities and protection assessment methodologies. In addition, UNHCR has requested interagency collection and management of operational data on internal displacement to be pursued.

The report presents evidence on how responses have often been shaped by incorrect assumptions

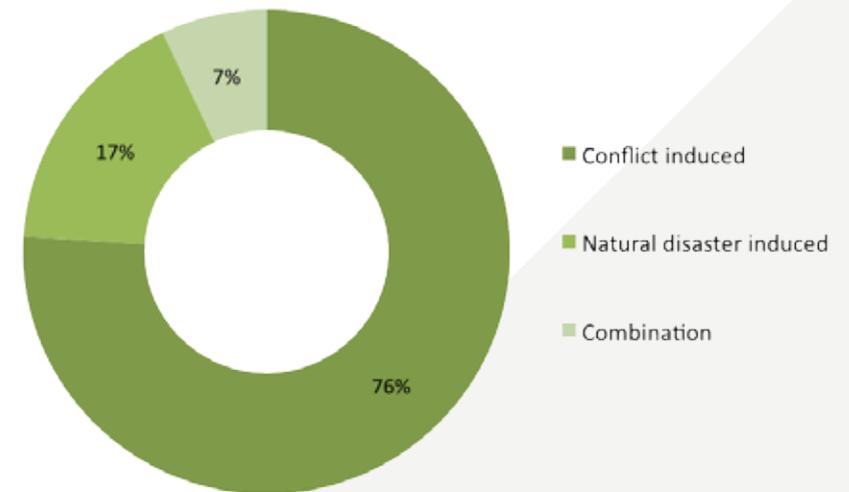
# What were the findings?

Following the last three decades of conflict and repeated natural disasters, displacement has become an increasingly pertinent issue for the country. A 2009 ICRC survey concluded that 76% of the Afghan population had experienced displacement. Since 2001, it is estimated that close to 6 million refugees and 1 million IDPs have returned. While this protection study did not intend to provide accurate population estimates, such figures exist from other sources: UNHCR estimates the presence of over 400,000 conflict-induced IDPs in Afghanistan, with the highest concentrations in the Southern, Western and Eastern regions. However, the study clearly highlights the need for improved IDP profiling systems in the country.

## Cause of displacement

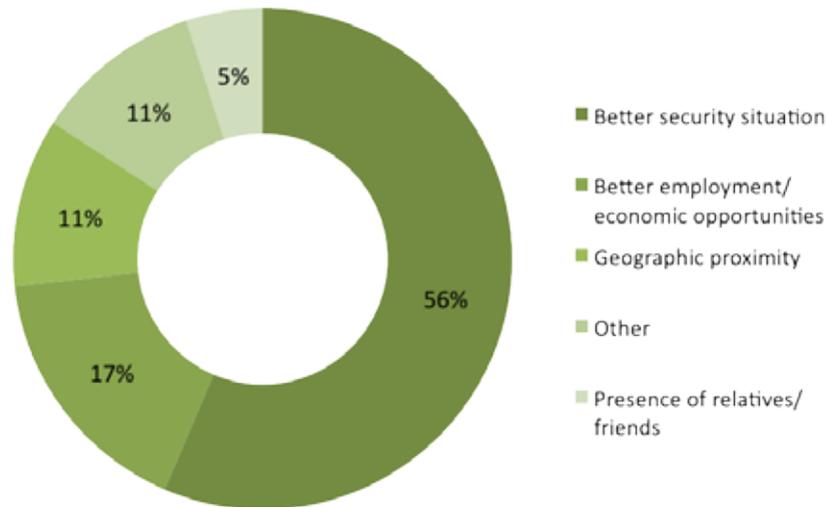
Conflict remains the primary cause of displacement among respondents (figure 1); however, recurring natural disaster events mostly in Western and Northwestern provinces also cause significant displacement due to flooding and avalanches.

Figure 1: Percentage surveyed by type of displacement



While stakeholders agree that the primary cause of displacement is security-related, some highlight the search for better economic opportunities as an explanation of population movement within Afghanistan (figure 2). However, the study obviously demonstrates that security-related concerns remain the primary consideration for families choosing locations when forced to flee their homes – clearly demarcating IDP respondents from economic migrants.

Figure 2: Primary considerations in choosing location of displacement



## Duration of displacement

Of the total number of IDPs surveyed, 49% were newly displaced since 2009 and 16% were displaced in 2012 alone. This finding supports the belief that internal displacement is not an issue of the past: it is growing at a rapid pace in Afghanistan. Moreover, the study shows that long-term IDPs still face severe humanitarian and protection challenges and needs.

## Employment

IDPs' basic protection needs are strongly intertwined with their economic situation. Without a sustainable and regular income, the displaced are unable to meet their basic food, health and other needs. In Afghanistan, under- and unemployment were by far the greatest challenges reported by IDP households, with 61% of respondents identifying employment as their main challenge.

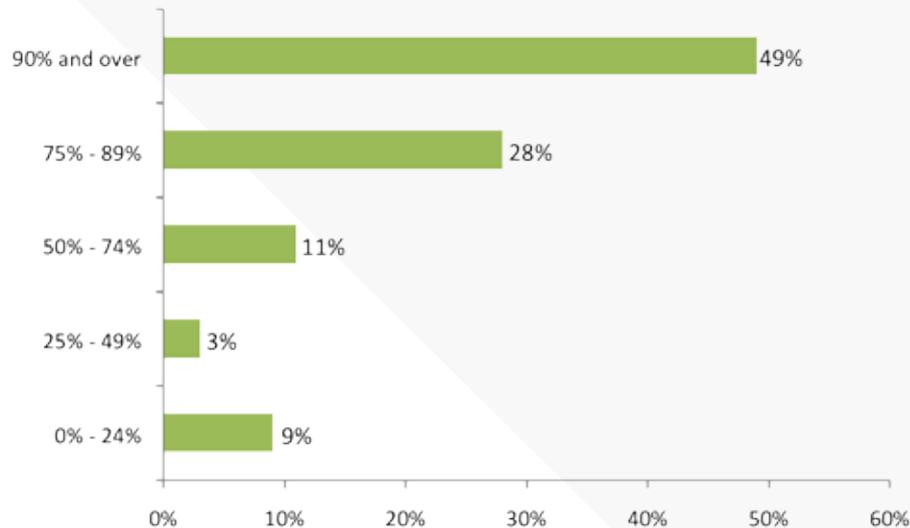
21% drop in monthly income per person during displacement

# Food

Access to food is a major concern and continues to be one for IDPs in both rural and urban areas. Respondents' inability to meet their most basic food needs is particularly revealing given that the vast majority spend over three quarters of their income on food, with almost half spending above 90% (figure 3).

High household expenditure for food items is a strong indicator for income-poverty rates among populations, and suggests that employment levels and incomes are insufficiently meeting household consumption needs, thereby forcing IDPs to adopt further coping strategies.

Figure 3: Percentage of IDPs' monthly income spent on food



*“We need oil, rice, milk, everything. We have nothing here. The money we have goes to rent and nothing is left for anything else including food. My children go hungry because of this.”*

18-year old female IDP displaced from Qaysar District to Maimana

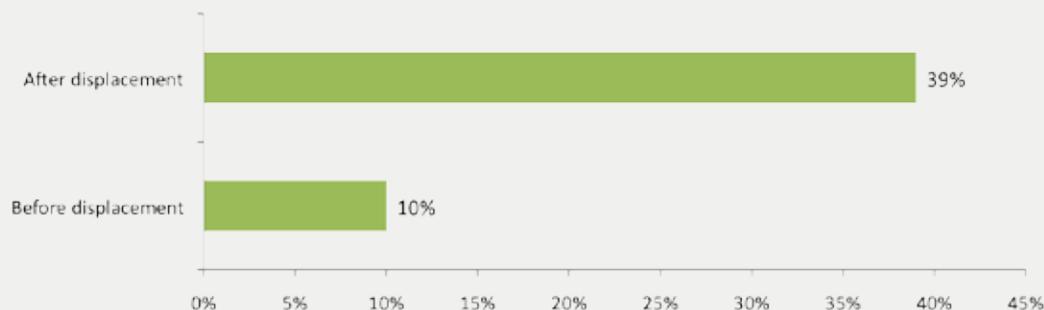
## Housing, land & property

Many displaced leave their land and homes behind quickly, arriving at their locations of displacement with few resources. They typically lack the financial resources and social networks to live anywhere but in tents and cramped, insubstantial mud homes.

Whilst the housing solutions vary from location to location, the survey findings show that displacement gave way to a significant rise in the number of IDPs living in temporary makeshift shelters, shacks and camp dwellings.

The findings indicate that before displacement, only 10% of households lived in temporary shelters, while during displacement this figure rose to 39%. Ownership levels during displacement dropped by 37%.

**Figure 4: Percentage of respondents living in temporary shelter before and after displacement**



## Education & child labour

IDP children's educational needs remain unmet during displacement. While most IDP children attend either formal or community-based schools (53% and 6% respectively), more than a third of IDP children lacked access to education primarily because the community lacked a school (65%). Findings also indicated that the vast majority of families (97%) with school-attending children allowed their girls to attend school.

Given their often desperate economic situation, the survey found that about 12% of IDP children (under 14) are in work instead of attending school. Most work in street vending, agriculture, construction and other employment sectors.

## Protection challenges

Findings suggest that displacement itself can greatly increase women's vulnerabilities to violence; displaced women are more likely to be socially isolated and to lack traditional protective mechanisms.

Qualitative data revealed that displaced women and girls' increased economic vulnerabilities not only place them at a higher risk of events such as prostitution and forced marriage, but also leaves them without the recourse to seek assistance.

Almost two thirds (64%) of female respondents reported the occurrence of domestic violence during displacement, with nearly a third (32%) reporting that it occurred often, very often or everyday and at a notable increase to pre-displacement experiences.

*"I'm still afraid from Kunar, that what happened there will happen here. The fear came with me here."*

5-year-old IDP displaced from Kunar to Nangarhar province

## Psychological & mental health

It is generally believed that accounts of mental illness in Afghanistan are under-reported, providing additional weight to high levels of psychological issues identified by respondents in this study.

Overall, 35% indicated that they themselves or members of their households needed some kind of psychological assistance. When disaggregated by gender, the findings indicated more willingness from female respondents to receive psychological support for both themselves (77%) and their family members.

Despite the apparent need for psychological support, less than 5% of IDPs reported receiving some form of counselling during displacement.

## Solutions/ return intentions

Findings show that the vast majority of respondents (76%) hope to settle permanently in their current location, with a smaller proportion hoping to return to their area of prior residence (23%) depending on a number of criteria being fulfilled (figure 4). The findings clearly demonstrate that urban IDPs are less interested in return than rural IDPs. Figures also indicate that the longer families are displaced, the less interested they are in returning home.

It is important to remain aware that all possible options for durable solutions should remain open for IDPs. In focus group discussions, IDPs indicated some intention to resettle elsewhere (even abroad) because return was not an option due to insecurity and local integration remained too challenging.

Figure 5: Resettlement solutions



# Humanitarian response

The research found that protection has not been mainstreamed into the humanitarian response to internal displacement in Afghanistan. Effective coordination between different Government bodies and other actors is also limited and demands improvement.

Another interesting finding is the disparity between actors' presence in Kabul city as compared to other parts of Afghanistan. Overall, there was significant disparity between provinces in the number of respondents who had received assistance. For example 11% of respondents in Kandahar had received assistance as against 95% in Kabul. This highlights the largest challenge to the protection of Afghan IDPs: access.



*“JIPS support in bringing stakeholders on board prior to the launch of the report linked the research to an important policy process.”*

Nassim Majidi, Director, Samuel Hall Consulting, Afghanistan

## What were the profiling lessons?

- When conducting research on internal displacement, it is good practice to design a collaborative process. In Afghanistan, an inter-agency recommendations workshop was held to discuss preliminary findings and collect input from a range of different stakeholders to feed into the recommendations.
- Clarity over the objectives, scope and limitations of any research methodology are crucial to help secure support from other actors and ultimately to increase the use and impact of the data collected. In the case of this study, the data collection methods were not designed to provide findings to be extrapolated to the entire IDP population; instead select locations were identified to collect in-depth protection-related data.
- The timing of undertaking research on internal displacement for advocacy purposes is important: results presented in a timely manner can have a larger impact. In Afghanistan, the protection study was conducted alongside efforts to initiate a development process for a national policy on internal displacement in order to provide protection-related information for this policy.

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The full report, containing further analysis, and the profiling tools can be found at:  
[www.idp-profiling.org](http://www.idp-profiling.org)  
The profiling data is also available upon request.

This summary provides a glimpse into a collaborative IDP protection needs assessment process. Governmental, non-governmental and multi-lateral actors contributed to the process, working together to design the project and feed into the research analysis.

JIPS supported these actors in the reporting and analysis as well as to come together through a collaborative workshop process to agree on the recommendations derived from the study. The study presents an over-due systematic attempt to provide protection-related information on internal displacement in Afghanistan; advocacy efforts will continue to ensure its results feed into the development of a national policy on internal displacement.

This glance into the profile of displaced persons in Afghanistan hopes to spark interest in both the country specific findings and profiling of IDP situations in general.

