



Coming in from the Margins Ending Displacement & Increasing Inclusion in Afghan Cities



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AFGHANISTAN

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MINISTER'S FOREWORD

Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation



*H.E Sayed Hussain Alemi Balkhi
Minister of Refugees and Repatriation*

Displacement is a critical and persistent challenge in many parts of the world, and UN agencies and national and international NGOs continue to provide humanitarian and development assistance to IDPs, returnees and refugees. In Afghanistan, a deteriorating security situation combined with worsening economic and political conditions continue to generate record levels of internal displacement, whilst simultaneously refugees are returning from abroad at record levels.

In order to address the current situation, the Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GoIRA) must encourage both immediate and longer-term solutions through humanitarian and developmental assistance linked with national development programs. The GoIRA sees IDPs and returnees as the driving force behind their own integration into their host communities. As this report demonstrates, local integration is the preferred solution by most IDPs and returnees, and as such it offers a durable solution for displaced persons in Afghanistan. The efforts made by UN-Habitat in Kabul, Nangarhar and Herat provinces over the last two years shows how local integration can be achieved through a gradual upgrading of settlements. The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation supports the continuation of these activities in partnership with the international community.

DEPUTY MINISTER'S FOREWORD

Deputy Ministry of Municipalities



*H.E Abdul Baqi Popal
Deputy Minister of Municipalities*

The case studies discussed in 'Coming in from the Margins' demonstrate the potential for displaced populations to be productive contributors to hosting areas and to Afghanistan as a whole. Working to achieve tenure security in appropriate locations and remove barriers to integration allows returnees and IDPs to fully participating in urban life. This creates opportunities for these groups to become the catalysts of their own integration. As Afghan society continues to urbanise, it is vital that the displaced are included in the urban development process, for the benefit of some of the most vulnerable Afghans, for cities and for the country as a whole.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

'Coming in from the Margins' examines the issue of urban displacement in Afghanistan. The report focuses on case studies of inner-city and peri-urban IDP hosting sites in three cities; Kabul, Herat and Jalalabad. The outcomes of the traditional response to displacement are examined in the context of conditions on the ground, through an in-depth study of living conditions and levels of household resilience in target areas. Additionally, the current state of the official discourse surrounding displacement is examined, through an in-depth perceptions survey of key government officials in target areas. The report is a key output of the Local Integration of Vulnerable Excluded & Uprooted People (LIVE-UP) program, developed by UN-Habitat in conjunction with the key partners the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR), Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG), Ministry of Urban Development Affairs (MUDA) and the municipalities of Kabul, Herat and Jalalabad, with the support of the European Union Delegation to Afghanistan.

Between November 2015 and March 2016 a comprehensive 'Resilience Index' quantitative survey was conducted, to facilitate an in-depth examination of the core components that contribute to standard of living and household ability to cope with shocks and stressors in the target population. A total sample of 14,763 households (130,722 individuals) in six locations in the vicinity of the three target cities were surveyed. Locations were chosen based on the presence of a significant number of displaced households (IDPs & returnees), an evident need for improvements to basic services, shelter and tenure security and the potential for the site to be developed into a durable solution in the form of 'local integration'.

The report finds that while there is significant variance in living conditions and levels of resilience, the displaced and migrant households on the whole overcome significant barriers to locate in urban areas. Issues with civil documentation, inadequate services and infrastructure, inadequate shelter, restriction of assistance and a lack of tenure security are pervasive problems. In locating in the city-despite being marginalized-displaced households display considerable endogenous resilience.

The official discourse surrounding displacement is focused on 'return' (to the location of origin) as the only feasible durable solution. This does not however reflect conditions on the ground or the intentions/preferences of the overwhelming majority of IDPs in cities. The displaced can indeed represent a considerable burden to a hosting area, many of which in Afghan cities are already over-populated and have their own development challenges. However the current approach of exclusion to encourage return can be seen to be counterproductive for three main reasons: Firstly, decades of continuous occupation of urban and peri-urban areas by the displaced demonstrate unequivocally that exclusion is not an effective disincentive to long-term settlement. Secondly, opportunities for those populations to become self-sufficient are undermined. A potentially highly productive contribution to the local economy and the city as a whole is squandered; reinforcing degraded urban enclaves and a cycle of disadvantage for the displaced. Thirdly, a large proportion of displacement situations are protracted (>15 years), meaning many of the displaced were born in their current location and have little or no connection/identification with their families' place of origin. Reducing or removing the

barriers to the participation of the displaced could be an extremely significant step towards increasing the capacity of Afghan cities to accommodate more urban citizens and upholding the human right of Afghans to locate where they choose.

In light of the current migration crisis and facing the prospect reintegrating tens of thousands of returned

asylum seekers, the resilience of the displaced is a resource that Afghan cities cannot afford to waste. If the capacity of cities to accommodate more urban citizens is to be augmented, it is vital that the barriers that these groups face to fully participating in urban life be reduced or removed. Local integration of the displaced has the potential to 'unlock' and harness that resilience for the benefit of all urban Afghans.



Key Messages

The prevailing approach of systematically excluding the displaced is counterproductive in that it does not achieve its primary aim of discouraging long term settlement and avoiding the creation of 'pull factors'. At the same time it undermines the self-reliance of populations that will regardless be located in urban areas.

A number of barriers to integration in Afghan cities have negative impacts on the resilience of displaced and migrant households. Reducing/removing these barriers will bolster the self-reliance and productive capacity of these

- Contrary to the dominant narrative, the presence of government or other assistance is not a significant 'pull factor' for displaced and migrant households in the majority of cases. Rather security and the presence of livelihood opportunities are by far the most significant determinants for locating in a certain area.
- By locating in urban areas for prolonged periods (in some cases >20 years)-despite being marginalized-the displaced have demonstrated considerable endogenous resilience. Excluding these groups from urban development does little or nothing to encourage them to leave and undermines opportunities for that resilience to make a positive contribution to Afghanistan's cities.
- Among the most pervasive barriers to integration for displaced and migrant households are insufficient access to livelihood opportunities and land and property insecurity.
- A correlation exists between length of displacement and perceptions of the most significant barriers to integration; newly displaced households (<3 years) tend to place a higher priority on more immediate needs such as shelter

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