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# MIGRATION POLICY PRACTICE

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This camp for internally displaced persons is one of the many recipients of donations from US Service members, Department of Defense civilians, and coalition forces under the Volunteer Community Relations (VCR) programme. The VCR programme, facilitated by the Camp Eggers chaplains, utilizes military and civilian volunteers to distribute goods donated by individual and charitable organizations in the United States and abroad. © US Air Force Senior Airman Brian Ybarbo, 20 February 2010

## CONTENTS

### 2 Introduction

Marie McAuliffe

### 4 The effects of Afghanistan's political evolution on migration and displacement

Nematullah Bizhan

### 10 Deconstructing Afghan displacement data: Acknowledging the elephant in the dark

Susanne Schmeidl

### 17 The "invisible" Afghans in Central Asia

Anita Sengupta

### 22 Integration of Afghans in Iran: Patterns, levels and policy implications

Mohammad Jalal Abbasi-Shavazi and Rasoul Sadeghi

### 30 Afghans in Greece and Turkey seeking to migrate onward: Decision-making factors and destination choices

Katie Kuschminder and Khalid Koser

### 36 Return and reintegration to Afghanistan: Policy implications

Nassim Majidi and Laurence Hart

### 42 Afghan settlers in Australia: Experiences, satisfaction and belonging

Andrew Markus

### 50 Publications

### 52 MPP Readers' Survey

SPECIAL ISSUE ON  
**AFGHAN  
DISPLACEMENT**

Published jointly by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Eurasylum Ltd.



# Introduction

Marie McAuliffe<sup>1</sup>

Displacement within and from Afghanistan is complex and dynamic. It is also enduring. Afghans continue to be displaced in high numbers because of armed conflict, persecution, poverty and relative deprivation as well as environmental degradation – and often a combination of these factors. Afghanistan has been a major origin country of refugees for many years, having been overtaken as the top refugee origin country only by the Syrian Arab Republic more recently. For many Afghans, displacement has become protracted, survival continues to be challenging and migration outcomes are attainable for only a small proportion of those in need.

Against this backdrop, this special issue on Afghan displacement explores some of the major aspects of the topic as well as the policy implications, including in relation to underlying displacement factors, current displacement data holdings, movements to Central Asia, Afghan integration in neighbouring Iran (Islamic Republic of),<sup>2</sup> decision-making in transit, return and reintegration to Afghanistan, and identity and belonging of Afghan settlers. The genesis of this special issue came from a conference on Afghan migration convened at the Australian National University in March this year,<sup>3</sup> with its strong focus on empirical research conducted in the region and the framing of policy responses. Conference organizers were conscious that while displacement from the Syrian Arab Republic quite rightly has been a primary and central focus of policymakers and researchers alike, there is a risk that the important and challenging issue of Afghan displacement could be increasingly neglected. The movements of Afghans through

Turkey in 2015 highlight, for example, the ongoing importance of the topic with Afghans accounting for almost one quarter of all maritime arrivals to Greece last year, second only to Syrians (at 56%).

The opening article by Nematullah Bizhan, Oxford-Princeton Global Leaders Fellow at the University of Oxford, frames the issue by examining the political context in which Afghan displacement has evolved. The article describes the three stages of development in Afghanistan post-2001: the emergence of an atmosphere of hope and renewal; the dramatic deterioration in security; and the “triple” security, economic and political transitions, and their effects on displacement. The author argues that recognition of all three transitions, and their interconnections, is critical in understanding Afghan displacement and migration, the implications for policy being the need to address systemic issues in tandem with those concerning acute displacement.

The second article by Afghanistan researcher and analyst, Susanne Schmeidl of the University of New South Wales, provides a critical examination of Afghan displacement data – its evolution, current weaknesses and some proposals for improvement. This article has particular salience in the context of the perennial discussion on the need for better and more accessible migration data globally. The article argues that timely and reliable information on displacement within and from Afghanistan is the cornerstone of sound decision-making for policy, including for the protection of those displaced from their homes and communities.

The third article by Anita Sengupta, Calcutta Research Group and the Observer Research Foundation, examines the current status of Afghan migrants in Central Asia, with particular reference to their “invisibility” in the region. While Central Asia is geographically contiguous and movement patterns often enduring in nature, we have tended to hear less about Afghan displacement and migration to Central Asia. The article sheds light on this somewhat neglected area of research and analysis, including how States in the region have at times framed Afghan movement in a security context.

1 Marie McAuliffe is the recently appointed head of IOM’s Migration Policy Research Division in Geneva and guest editor of this special issue. At the time of its commissioning by co-editors Solon Ardittis and Frank Laczko, Marie was at the Australian National University (ANU) and on leave from the Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP).

2 Hereinafter referred to as “Iran” due to space issues.

3 The conference was supported by ANU’s College of Arts and Social Sciences, the DIBP and the Sir Roland Wilson Foundation.

The next article by Jalal Abbasi-Shavazi and Rasoul Sadeghi from the University of Tehran and the National Institute of Population Research in Iran, draws on empirical research and census data to examine the extent to which Afghans have been integrated into Iranian society. The analysis finds that Afghans have exhibited a variety of adaptation patterns in Iran, particularly along generational lines. While literacy levels at all ages have been improving, there remains a significant lag for the first-generation Afghans. Occupational mobility, however, continues to be a challenge with the policy implications twofold: acknowledgement that education access has positively contributed to integration, and that adjustment to labour laws would further support integration and stabilization of Afghan populations in Iran.

The following article by Katie Kuschminder and Khalid Koser from Maastricht University analyses the decision-making of Afghans in Turkey and Greece. Based on empirical research conducted in mid-2015, and as part of a broader research project on transit migration decision-making, the article calls into question some of the assumptions made about decision-making of Afghans. The findings highlight that living conditions in transit countries are a central consideration in contemplations of onward migration. The research also found that close social connections, such as friends and family most commonly in destination countries, were more important sources of information than social media and migrant smugglers.

Nassim Majidi of Samuel Hall and Laurence Hart of IOM examine the critical area of return and reintegration of Afghans, including in the context of a marked increase in the number of people returned from Europe as well as Pakistan this calendar year. They argue that the application of the Multi-Dimensional Integration Index has the benefit of being able to measure sustainable return and reintegration outcomes, highlighting where adjustments to policy and practice are needed. In dynamic settings, such as unstable and post-conflict situations, the authors contend that the ability to assess the effectiveness of individualized versus community-based development return programmes, for example, will enhance long-term approaches to return and reintegration.

The experiences of Afghan settlers to Australia are examined in the concluding article by Andrew Markus from Monash University. The article draws on results of the Australia@2015 survey, which sought to better understand the factors related to the experiences of Afghan (and other) settlers, their levels of satisfaction with life in Australia and their sense of belonging. Migration status was found to be of particular relevance to a sense of belonging, although the overall finding was that Afghans are positive and keen to contribute to Australian society. The article argues that within the three government levels in Australia, opportunities exist to maximize the educational and other support as a means of realizing the potential contributions of Afghan settlers.

Many thanks to all the contributors to this issue of *Migration Policy Practice* as well as co-editors Solon Ardittis and Frank Laczko for inviting me to edit this special issue. It has provided an important opportunity to share some of the work presented at the conference, and make a contribution to how we could improve both policy and practice aimed at the prevention of, and responses to, Afghan displacement.

The editors would also like to encourage readers to spare a couple of minutes to participate in a survey, which aims to help us identify our readers' profiles, the institutions they represent and their primary interests in our journal. Should you wish to participate in this survey, please [click here](#). ■



## The effects of Afghanistan's political evolution on migration and displacement

*Nematullah Bizhan<sup>1</sup>*

### Introduction

Afghanistan represents a case in which the erosion of political order due to armed conflict and economic decline since 1978 has resulted in major changes in the demography of the country. Conflict has forced about one third of the population to either take refuge outside Afghanistan, mostly in Pakistan and Iran, or to move outside their communities within Afghanistan. By 1990 about 6 million Afghans were living outside Afghanistan as refugees (UNHCR, 2016). However, a new political order arising after the fall of the Taliban regime in late 2001 changed this pattern. It affected migration and internal displacement at three stages – renewal and hope, the rise of insurgency and the triple transitions. The establishment of a new political order based on the principles of democracy and the emergence of international consensus to stabilize Afghanistan along with the flow of development and military aid had positive impact on the return of Afghan refugees to Afghanistan and of displaced people to their communities inside Afghanistan. But the resurgence of the Taliban and the deterioration in the security situation after 2005 slowed down the return of refugees. Subsequently, following the triple transition in 2014, in which the foreign aid sharply declined, the bulk of the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) troops left Afghanistan and the 2014 presidential election was poorly governed, the return of refugees reversed. This time most Afghans, mainly youth, decided to go to Europe, comprising the third biggest number of asylum-seekers in Europe. Political evolution in Afghanistan since 2001 therefore shows that the movement of people by large depends on security, economic and political conditions.

This article first examines the three stages of development in Afghanistan post-2001: an atmosphere of hope and renewal; deterioration of security; and the triple transitions. This article argues that both security and economic conditions are major drivers of population movements. Thus, the policies that tend to address the problems of refugees and displaced people should balance between short- and long-term needs concerning stability and economic conditions. Finally, this article makes some concluding remarks and highlights policy implications.

### An atmosphere of hope and renewal

After the Taliban regime fell in late 2001, representatives of Afghan factions – mujahidin commanders, representatives of Afghanistan's different ethnic groups, expatriate Afghans, and representatives of the exiled monarch (Zahir Shah), while excluding the Taliban – met under the auspices of the United Nations (UN) in Bonn to agree on a new political order. They signed the Bonn Agreement on 5 December 2001, emphasizing the right of people to democratically determine their political future according to the principles of Islam and promoting national reconciliation, stability and respect for human rights (United Nations Security Council, 2011). The Bonn Agreement focused on the creation of a central authority around which a State could be reconstructed with external military and financial assistance. This agreement urged the UN, the international community, and donors to support the rehabilitation of Afghanistan and guarantee its national sovereignty. The deployment of International Assistance Security Force first in Kabul, which the UN Security Council authorized, and the flow of foreign aid that donors pledged at the Tokyo conference in January 2002 further supported the implementation of the Bonn Agreement (Afghanistan Ministry of Finance, 2010).

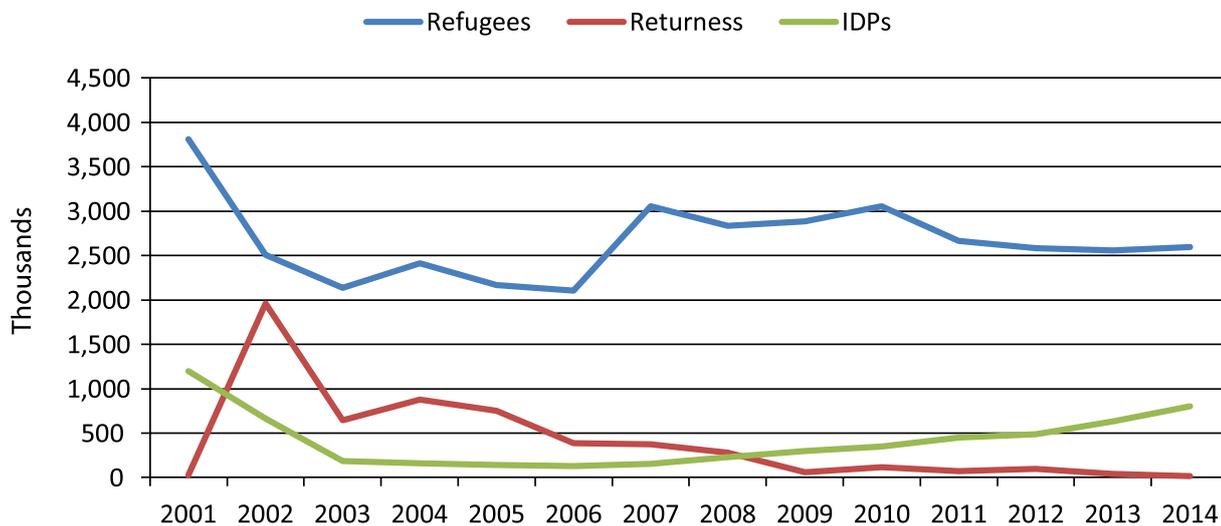
The return of Afghan refugees mainly from Pakistan and Iran and of the displaced people to their communities was another major development in post 2001. Between 2001 and 2006, as Figure 1 shows, about 4.5 million Afghan refugees returned

1 Nematullah Bizhan is an Oxford-Princeton Global Leaders Fellow at the University of Oxford and a Visiting Fellow at the Australian National University's Development Policy Centre. He has served as Youth Deputy Minister and Director General for Policy and Monitoring of Afghanistan Development Strategy. His areas of academic interest and expertise include the political economy of State building and State–society relations, development economics, comparative politics, post-conflict transition and reconstruction, public health and government accountability.

to Afghanistan and the number of displaced people also significantly declined, from above 1 million to about one tenth of a million (UNHCR, 2016). Integration of the returnees was a major challenge, as the Afghan economy had no capacity to provide them with jobs that they expected and public services – such as electricity, water and access to health services – were either limited or ineffective. The Afghan migrants, especially, who lived in major urban centres in Pakistan and Iran, had better access to electricity and drinking water in comparison to those in Afghanistan. While Pakistan and Iran developed since the conflict erupted in Afghanistan, Afghanistan lagged

behind (World Bank, 2016). Not only did the country not change much but also its nascent institutions and infrastructure were destroyed. In addition, the land which was supposed to be distributed for housing to the returnees was not adequate and was not effectively distributed (Hamdard, 2014). While the land in the long run could help the beneficiaries, the problem with this programme was that the land was outside the major urban centres and lacked basic infrastructure, making the returnees’ access to health services, education and employment difficult. Thus, while for the returnees it was a big relief to be back in their country, their reintegration was very challenging.

**Figure 1: Refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons – Afghanistan, 2001–2014**



Source: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Population Statistics, 2016.

The international community provided USD 56.8 billion in military and development aid for Afghanistan reconstruction and State building between 2002 and 2010 (Afghanistan Ministry of Finance, 2010:104). While this aid contributed to reconstruction and economic growth, it was not effectively used (Bizhan, 2014 and 2015). GDP per capita (in constant USD) rose to USD 459 from USD 119 in 2000 (World Bank, 2016). Despite this improvement, more than one third of Afghans lived under the poverty line (Afghanistan Ministry of Economy and World Bank, 2010).

Overall, the developments in the first years after the fall of the Taliban created an atmosphere of hope and renewal and encouraged many Afghan refugees to return. However, the return of Afghan migrants

slowed down with the resurgence of the Taliban and the deterioration in the security situation.

### Deterioration of security

The attacks by the Taliban, Al-Qaida and affiliated groups increased after 2006. This challenged the relative stability which Afghanistan experienced at the beginning of the decade. The Obama administration significantly increased the number of US troops in Afghanistan to address the deterioration. The flow of aid also increased. A major initiative that some donors focused on was to “win the hearts and minds of people” by funding quick-impact projects in more insecure areas of the country especially in the south and south-east (Fishstein and Wilder, 2012). The

troop surge helped to keep the Taliban and Al-Qaida at bay but did not dismantle the insurgency as the United States mainly failed to contain the safe haven of insurgents in Pakistan, which helped the insurgents to sustain their activities (Riedel, 2013).

The economy grew and the level of aid to the country continued to increase. The major spending included security. Of the total aid that Afghanistan received between 2002 and 2010, about 51 per cent was spent on security. A small fraction (6%) of total aid during this period was spent on social protection that tended to help the most vulnerable segments of society including returnees and internally displaced persons (Afghanistan Ministry of Finance, 2010:98). After 2006, the number of Afghan refugees outside Afghanistan increased, showing a slowdown in the return of refugees.

While between 2006 and 2011 the flow of aid to Afghanistan steadily increased and public services such as health and education expanded, the return of the Afghan refugees remained low. One can argue that most of the Afghans who needed to return did so at the beginning of the decade. The rest were those that were, to some extent, integrated into communities outside Afghanistan so were more pragmatic about whether to return or to stay outside Afghanistan. Yet, data is not available to confirm this claim. It is evident, however, that security had a major impact on the inflow and outflow of Afghan migrants. In a country like Afghanistan, in which people easily recall the negative human and economic costs of war, they may be less likely to accept the significant risk of major conflict re-erupting.

The Taliban and affiliated groups launched a large number of attacks including bombing, shooting, kidnapping and execution, and other forms of violence. Suicide attacks increased from 2 in 2001 to 139 in 2006. In 2006, 189 bomb attacks killed 492 civilians and injured approximately 773, a total of over 1,000 casualties (Human Rights Watch, 2007). *The Guardian* reported in 2011, “[t]he annual United Nations report on civilian casualties shows that more than two-thirds of the 2,777 civilians killed last year were the victims of insurgents – a 28 per cent increase on 2009” (Boone, 2011). Afghan optimism waned, dropping from 44 per cent in 2006 to 38 per cent in 2008 (The Asia Foundation, 2015). The deterioration of the security situation had an adverse impact on the return of Afghan refugees, which later led to a new wave of migration from Afghanistan to Europe (Shaheed, 2015).

### The triple transition: International forces withdrawal, political crises and economic decline

The withdrawal of the bulk of the international combat forces from Afghanistan, along with the contested presidential election (2014) and economic decline, not only further slowed down the return of Afghan refugees but also caused a new wave of migration outside Afghanistan. The US and NATO forces decreased from 140,000 in 2011 to 13,000 in 2014 (*BBC*, 2015). While the international community committed in the NATO Summit in Chicago in 2012 to sustain its funding for the Afghan Security Forces, the level of total aid for Afghanistan significantly declined (NATO, 2012). In addition, the 2014 presidential election – due to allegation of fraud – prolonged and undermined political stability. Eventually, Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah agreed on a power-sharing arrangement and formed a national unity government. Ghani and Abdullah were declared President and Chief Executive, respectively. These three processes negatively affected security and the political and economic stability of the country (Norldand, 2014).

The management of the transition proved challenging, especially as the State remained weak and corruption threatened its effectiveness. The Taliban insurgents tried to fill the vacuum left after the withdrawal of the international forces from Afghanistan. Thus, they increased their attacks in major cities and other strategic areas. *The Guardian* reported in 2015:

**More Afghan civilians were killed or injured in 2015 than any other year on record, the UN has said in a report. 11,002 casualties is the highest toll since the UN began documenting in 2009, and constitutes a 4% jump from the previous year, following a worrying pattern: as the international military presence in Afghanistan diminishes, more civilians are caught in the crossfire or directly targeted (Rasmussen, 2016).**

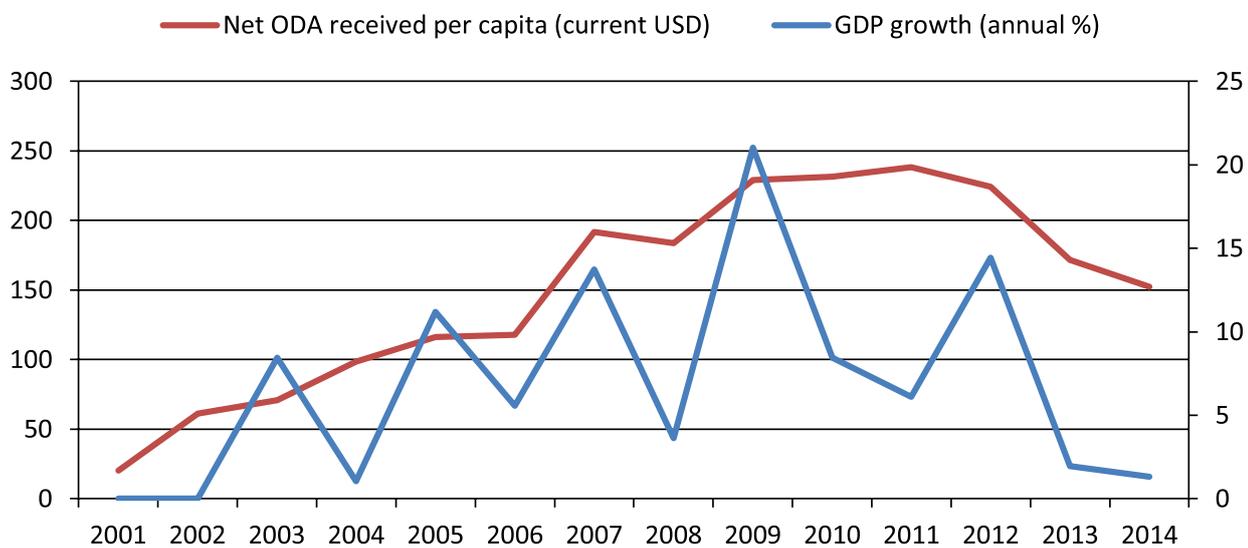
The Asia Foundation (2015:7) found that people mostly remained concerned about security. “More than two-thirds (67.4%) of Afghans report that they always, often, or sometimes fear for their personal safety, the highest percentage in a decade”. This situation encouraged people to migrate outside Afghanistan, mostly to Europe, as mainly Pakistan and Iran were not welcoming and, in addition, security and economic conditions in these two countries were worsening, respectively. In 2014, there were 41,000

Afghan refugees in Greece, close to the number of all Afghan asylum applications (48,000) in 2001 in Europe (Donini, Monsutti and Scalettaris, 2016:4).

While the expectation was that the flow of aid to Afghanistan would increase to mitigate the negative effects of the withdrawal of international security forces, it instead declined sharply. Economic growth, as Figure 2 shows, also slowed down. A large number of Afghans lost their jobs. If we use the World Bank

estimate that half a billion US dollars – if spent outside the government budget and national mechanisms – could affect between 11,000 and 18,000 short-term jobs (on a six-month basis), one can argue that a large number of people lost their jobs (Hogg et al., 2013:64). As in Afghanistan families are mostly dependent on single income earners, unemployment had severe adverse implications on the well-being of many families.

**Figure 2: Aid\* and economic growth – Afghanistan, 2001–2014**



Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators 2016.

Note: \*Oversees development assistance (ODA) does not include military aid.

Security, economic and political transitions, as discussed above, have reinforced each other’s adverse impacts. While the Government of Afghanistan and the international community later adopted some measures, such as the announcement of their commitments to support the country through the London Conference in Support of Afghanistan in 2015 to mitigate the negative implications of the transitions, it was too late and too little. Donors kept the projects on hold because of a prolonged presidential election process. Investment in Afghanistan significantly slowed down. The fall of Kunduz City in the north of Afghanistan in the hands of the Taliban in September 2015, for 15 days, further added to people’s concern about their security. The Afghan Security Forces retook Kunduz City shortly (Ali, 2015). However, the impacts of the transitions were significant and not only they were associated with a slow pace of the return of

Afghan refugees but also many Afghans migrated outside Afghanistan. While it is expected that the situation in the country will improve in the coming years because of major regional transit and trade projects and the commitment of the international community to not undermine stability with their complete withdrawal of troops and termination of aid, assessment of post 2014 is beyond the scope of this article.

### Conclusion

The movement of people in and from Afghanistan has been largely related to security, economic and political conditions. In the last three decades, political instability, conflict and economic decline have led to migration and displacement of a large number of people. This had severe negative implications

on Afghanistan's social fabric, human capital and institutions. While in some cases the return of refugees has reversed the brain drain, the overall loss seems to be huge. The case of Afghanistan demonstrates that the movement of people is closely linked to three drivers: security, politics and economics. An interesting finding is that when these three processes, though interlinked, move in the same adverse direction, this can act to reinforce insecurity, political instability and economic decline, thereby having a major impact on the perception of people and thus where they decide to live. External factors also impact on the choices of people living outside of Afghanistan. As noted, a worsening security situation in Pakistan and worsening economic conditions in Iran, along their policies towards Afghan migrants, led to a new wave of Afghan migration to Europe.

The three stages of developments – renewal and hope, the rise of insurgency and the triple transition – had distinct effects on migration and internal displacement. Thus, political evolution in Afghanistan since 2001 shows that the movement of people by large depends on political stability, security and economic conditions. While it is important that refugee-related organizations focus on short-term responses to refugee and displacement crises, the international community also needs to take into account and further engage in major political processes to address the main drivers of migration and internal displacement. ■

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## Deconstructing Afghan displacement data: Acknowledging the elephant in the dark

Susanne Schmeidl<sup>1</sup>

People are migrating at record levels, with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimating that one in seven people worldwide are on the move either by choice or force (IOM, 2015). The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), for example, reported forced displacement at the end of 2015 at “the highest [level] since the aftermath of World War II” (UNHCR, 2016). With so many people on the move, it is worth re-examining how well the phenomenon is documented. Timely and reliable information is the cornerstone of sound decision-making for policy and service provision, including for the protection of those fleeing from conflict. The ongoing and protracted nature of displacement within and from Afghanistan provides a useful case to examine.

### The jungle of displacement statistics: Not seeing the forest for the trees

People move for a variety of reasons within and between countries, and fall into a variety of categories for policy purposes – when voluntary we speak of internal or international migrants, and when forced we talk about internally displaced persons (IDPs) or refugees. Increasingly, there is a trend for mixed migration. All this variety considered, it is unsurprising “that there is no single source of data that provides comprehensive and reliable information about the volume, complexity and distribution” of flows, especially as some statistics come from sources that are not meant to track mobility such as population registries (Stillwell et al., 2011:115–116). This reminds of Rumi’s poem “The Elephant in the Dark”, where a group of men are trying to understand an animal they do not know by touching parts of it in a dark room, each coming to a different conclusion depending on the part of the elephant they were able to explore. Only when combining and sharing what we know of the elephant can the entire “beast” be illuminated and understood.

Although we have come a long way in terms of open and accessible data on mobility, I am somewhat surprised of how freely and perhaps even uncritically we still embrace existing estimates of populations on the move. For example, only about 20 years ago, statistics of the forcibly displaced were hard to come by, buried inside UNHCR and the US Committee for Refugee reports, and taken with a large grain of salt due to problems with enumeration, politics and access to those on the move (Schmeidl, 2000).

Today, much is accessible on websites, both for UNHCR (forced migration) and IOM (migration more generally) and some of the questioning seems to have dissipated. Yet, some key problems remain, such as the absence of quality “flow” data for displaced (and migrant) populations. With exceptions, most figures are (annual) stock data – those residing in a given place at the end of a given time period (mostly year) – in contrast to flow data, which captures people travelling in a specific time frame. Stock data of course changes due to inflows and births as well as outflows and deaths; though without the additional detail we cannot know what impacts on this change. While flow data does exist in some cases, it necessitates excellent registration mechanisms, and of course, contact with the population on the move. The latter is difficult in some settings, not least because some migrants or refugees do not wish to be counted.

Depending on the volatility of a situation, the cooperation of governments and access by international organizations, it might even be difficult to obtain accurate stock data, in both countries of origin and destination, as I will illustrate later using the case of Afghanistan. Unsurprisingly, the *UNHCR Statistical Yearbook 2014* highlights a “growing concern about the availability and quality of statistical information about forcibly displaced persons, including refugees, asylum-seekers, and internally displaced persons” (Aalandslid et al., 2014:21).

Lastly, there is of course the frequently asked question as to when displacement ends, which does not always has an easy answer, least for those on the move internally. For refugees and international migrants, displacement ends when a person either returns

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home or has found a durable solution in another country (residency or citizenship) in the form of local integration or resettlement. For those on the move, internally similar propositions have been made, though it is often harder to ascertain when a new residency can be considered permanent or durable, especially in light of tenure insecurity, which many internal migrants struggle with. Clearly not everybody will return “home” – even if that is often the easiest solution in the eyes of many policymakers.

Having long advocated accessible displacement figures, I am not one to decry the use of existing statistics, but I would perhaps recommend more caution when citing numbers, at minimum understanding of the limitations that exist. Using the example of the Afghan refugee population, I will try to address the elephant in the room.

### Afghan displacement data gaps

Afghanistan makes a good case study because in terms of mobility it was known for many “firsts”. Post-World War II, Afghanistan was the single largest refugee crisis in the world, an infamous position it held for decades until the Syrian Arab Republic entered the displacement theatre. After, the United States-led invasion in late 2001, it was the focus of UNHCR’s largest refugee return operation in history. At the height of the refugee crisis, a staggering 8.3 million Afghans were estimated to be displaced; nearly half of the population abroad (6.3 million), another 2 million (15%) were internally displaced (see Schmeidl, 2014). Although the bulk of Afghan refugees remained in the region – Pakistan and Iran – refugees scattered to around 70 countries. This in addition to mobility being used as a survival strategy long before the mass exodus began. Afghan displacement, as well as migration, never really ceased, making it the most protracted refugee population in the world.

As a result of being in the media spotlight, especially after 2001, Afghanistan has become one of the countries that we are seemingly familiar with. And much has been written about the country and Afghan displacement. In reality, however, we know remarkably little about the country in general and demographic trends in particular. Much as the country itself, migration in Afghanistan is very much like the elephant in the dark. To date, we know only parts of the “beast”, much of which is linked to the problematic nature of data availability in Afghanistan and displacement

contexts more generally. The darkness clouding the elephant is due to a combination of factors, not all impossible to rectify.

What we know is that despite refugee return post 2002, the Afghan diaspora remains one of the largest in the world, estimated at around 4–6 million (Marchand et al., 2014). Today, Afghan mobility is comprised of 2.6 million refugees, 1 (plus) million asylum-seekers, 3–4 million undocumented international migrants, 1.2 million officially counted IDPs, an annual count of about 20,000 disaster-induced IDPs, and possibly as much as 4–5 million other types of internal displacement (Schmeidl, 2014). As a result, close to half of the Afghan population might be currently on the move (nearly equally internally as abroad).

The absence of any recent housing and population census in Afghanistan to provide crucial demographic information and baseline data, however, means that much of Afghan reality is based on estimates or projections (Kronenfeld, 2012). The last and most comprehensive population census in Afghanistan was conducted over three decades ago in 1979 by the then “communist” Government and only covered two thirds of the country (ICMPD, 2013:10). Thus, the most recent real baseline was shortly before the country descended into over three decades of social upheaval, war and displacement – all having a dramatic impact on the sociodemographic composition of the country. Despite death and displacement, the country has grown considerably since 1979 when the population was estimated at around 13 million. Today, in the absence of a census, estimates vary considerably between sources. While the Government’s Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey (ACLS) 2013–2014<sup>2</sup> (CSO, 2016) puts the Afghan population at around 28 million, UN figures believe this to be 32 million (UN DESA, 2015); the 4 million difference is not necessarily a negligible margin of error. Of the 28 million, at least 20 per cent are refugee returnees (Government of Afghanistan, 2015).

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2 Produced by the Central Statistical Organization (CSO) of Afghanistan since 2003, and previously known as National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment, “it is the longest standing and most comprehensive survey” for the country (CSO, 2016:xxvi–iii).

### The remarkable “overnight” growth spurt of the Afghan refugee population in Pakistan

How little we knew of the Afghan refugee population in exile was painfully demonstrated during the large-scale UNHCR repatriation operation in Pakistan, which started in 2002. By 2005, half a million more refugees had returned to Afghanistan from Pakistan than had been estimated to be living there (Kronenfeld, 2008:44). Even more startling was that at a time when 4 million refugees had returned home, about 3.5 million were estimated to still remain in Pakistan. Thus, miraculously, the refugee population in Pakistan had doubled to 8 million, which as I noted earlier was roughly the total estimated displacement figure for Afghanistan.

Explanations for this remarkable overnight explosion of the Afghan refugee population in Pakistan (other than some repeated recycling of the same people moving in and out of Afghanistan in order to benefit from returnee support) were multiple, all showing the lack of attention paid to protracted refugee populations such as the Afghans. For example: Why was the high birth rate of Afghans not applied to existing stock figures of the refugee population in exile? After all, refugees continue to procreate (as well as die) just as any other populations do and the Afghan population is presently estimated to be one of the youngest in the world, with nearly half (47.5%) under the age of 15 and two thirds under the age of 25 (CSO, 2016).

Furthermore, many refugees had begun to leave camp settings and begun to “self-settle” in urban centres. This also could have been captured by Pakistani census data, and was in 2005 when Pakistan started to enumerate Afghan refugees when handing out proof-of-registration cards. Iran started a similar process in 2003 through its Amayesh scheme. Lastly, of course, there is the tradition of population flows between Afghanistan and neighbouring countries, much of which is irregular and not counted. Part of this could have been avoided by Pakistan “controlling” the official border crossings more effectively, which it only does sporadically (AFP, 2016).

### Lost in categories: When displaced populations fall between the cracks

Differences between estimates is often associated with the rather “fluid conceptual terrain” of who is counted and in what category (refugee versus migrant) (Kronenfeld, 2008; Koser, 2013; McAuliffe, 2013). Enumeration processes are mostly driven by either host governments or aid organizations for reasons of assistance or containment and are only then in the interest of the people on the move if they are to benefit from it (as the example of refugee returnees recycling through the return process between Pakistan and Afghanistan). Often such processes are ad hoc and serve political agendas. For example, today both Pakistan and Iran are refusing to register newly arriving Afghan refugees as such (Human Rights Watch, 2013 and 2015), forcing most others that cross the border into undocumented status. This makes for rather fuzzy numbers, with Pakistan reporting about 1.84 million refugees and asylum-seekers and around 1 million irregular migrants, and Iran reporting around 900 registered refugees and anywhere between 1.4 million and 3 million undocumented Afghan migrants (Schmeidl, 2014; *Tehran Times*, 2016). It is unclear once again what is happening to the offsprings of these card-carrying refugees and if indeed they are counted or not.

The problem with counting or accounting is not restricted to developing countries, but it also happens elsewhere, such as most asylum-seekers entering illegally into Europe first, changing the category only after a final decision is made on their status (either being accepted as refugee or rejected). Importantly, the time period until the status of migrant is determined can range from days to years (Kraler and Reichel, 2011:100).

Lastly, there is also the issue of multiple displacements to contend with, such as internal (often between multiple locations) to external, with many crossing more than one country until reaching a final destination. This was demonstrated very recently with the flow of asylum-seekers into Europe via the Mediterranean route, which means that one person is counted multiple times, in multiple places and possibly even in each place within a different migration/displacement category.

### The fog of politics

In addition to clear capacity issues, there is also a rather persistent tendency to perhaps not even wanting to see the elephant in the room, or only see the parts that suit. For example, in the early 2000s, the rapid return of millions of Afghan refugees was seen as an important signal that Afghanistan at last had turned a leaf in its conflicting history and was on the path to change (Turton and Marsden, 2002). It took UNHCR until 2012 to acknowledge that there had been a failure of sustainable return with as many as 60 per cent continuing to struggle upon return. In contrast, over the last few years it was not politically convenient to acknowledge renewed displacement from Afghanistan at a time when international military forces were preparing for withdrawal, declaring the situation in Afghanistan under control.

Here, I wish to return to the issue that displaced populations increasingly end up blending with the urban poor, both abroad (as Afghan refugees did in Pakistan) and at home. By some estimates, about 80 per cent of all refugees and IDPs end up in cities. This rapid urbanization in Afghanistan was only recently problematized in the 2015 *State of Afghan Cities* report (Government of Afghanistan, 2015). Afghanistan's urban explosion is one of the most significant in the world. It has an urbanization rate of 4 per cent per annum, which is commonly attributed to a combination of three factors: rapid population growth; rural–urban migration; and refugees disproportionately returning to cities (rather than to areas of origin). Around 40 per cent of the urban population constitutes returned refugees (Government of Afghanistan, 2015).

The inflow of IDPs into informal settlements at urban fringes, however, is far less acknowledged. This might explain why official population estimates for Afghanistan's main urban centres vary considerably between official estimates and individual case studies into urban sprawl and displacement. For example, while the *State of Afghan Cities* report speaks of an urban population of 8 million, with the population in capital Kabul at just over 4 million (Government of Afghanistan, 2015:11), 2011 estimates put the city population at 7.2 million (Giovacchini, 2011:4). Furthermore, the regional centres of Kandahar (south) and Jalalabad (east) are officially estimated well under half a million and 300,000, respectively (Government of Afghanistan, 2015:11), while other

sources put them as high as 1.5 million and 1 million, respectively (Schmeidl et al., 2010; Giovacchini, 2013). All this simply makes for a vast underestimation of internal displacement, officially standing at 1.2 million (UNHCR, 2016).

### Conclusion: Lessons and implications

In light of the above, even though we have learned a lot, some mistakes are repeated when dealing with internal and international population flows. Considering the current worldwide displacement situation, including that in Afghanistan, it is not a time to stick one's head in the sand but enlighten our understanding of the elephant, as suggested at the end of Rumi's poem.

For starters, it is worth acknowledging the quality (or perhaps lack thereof) of the data that is currently available for Afghanistan and not present it “as credible when in fact the uncertainties render it unacceptable for use in planning” (Cordesman, 2012:5). Only when we understand data limitations and why they occur can we work to remedy them. Although IOM produced a detailed profile of Afghan migration in 2014 based on extensive desk research complemented by field research, discussion of data quality and gaps was almost an afterthought exiled to the end of a very long report (Marchand et al., 2014:246–247) where it might not be read and does not feature in the executive summary other than the recommendations (Marchand et al., 2014:27). This is almost a lost opportunity to clearly analyse not just what is there and how credible some of the data presented in the report really is. Perhaps this is something IOM should consider for the update it is planning to work on. In terms of spelling out data limitations and caveats, the ACLS does a better job, including by placing it front and centre (CSO, 2016).

Secondly, we should learn our lessons and move forward. Obviously delaying a census for political reasons has been unhelpful, particularly for a country that has undergone such dramatic changes as Afghanistan. Currently, the security situation makes a full census difficult, but more resources could be spent on profiling urban populations, including informal settlements which are known to be home to displaced populations. It is disappointing that the *State of Afghan Cities* considers its report to be “the first-ever comprehensive and reliable assessment of Afghanistan's 34 Provincial Capital Cities” when much of its data is based on the counting of dwellings

via satellite imagery and extrapolating population figures using an average household number from the 2011–2012 ACLS (Government of Afghanistan, 2015:vi, xvi). In displacement situations, especially in informal settlements, dwellings are often far more crowded than average household figures.

Thirdly, we could start utilizing existing enumeration methods more efficiently such as Afghanistan's Population Registry system. At present anybody who wishes to obtain an identity card has to return to his or her area of origin, even if he or she has not lived there for a very long time. While this is sometimes waived for displaced populations, it is not done so consistently. If one would allow registration "en suite", understanding that official documentation is linked to accessing services, a win-win situation could be created, both for the individual migrant (becoming legal) and urban governance systems.

Fourth, both local and international actors need to move beyond politics and simply get better at profiling displaced populations, especially in urban settings where access issues are less of an issue. Ignoring migration trends or categories does not make the problem go away; it rather becomes harder to manage. It has served neither Iran nor Pakistan well to no longer issue refugee registration cards without leaving other legal (even if only temporary) options open for Afghans to be counted under. This has only led to a confusing picture of how many Afghans really reside in these countries. At present the outflow of Afghans from their home country and within Afghanistan into cities is unlikely to cease. Thus, Pakistan (and Iran) could be more consistent in counting the flow of people at the official border crossing and to enumerate more frequently in their urban populations (in addition to camps). Again, not counting refugees does not make population flows go away; it simply makes them more unmanageable. Obviously, Pakistan and Iran have worked on registering refugees, which is commendable, but more could be done to ensure its frequency, as well as disconnecting it from political processes (i.e. the message of not wanting more refugees).

The Government of Afghanistan has taken the first steps to tackle the issue, even if perhaps a decade late, and it is important to assist it in continuing to improve its enumeration efforts in future iterations of the reports *Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey* (which in its most recent edition has a chapter dedicated to migration, although the presentation could still be improved) and the *State of Afghan Cities*. As noted, the first *Afghanistan: Migration Profile* by IOM Afghanistan was based on secondary data, which has its utility, though data quality could have been more thoroughly analysed. This is something IOM wishes to address in the region with its Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), which aims to improve the systematic collection and dissemination of mobility data for better policy and assistance. For a region that has struggled to get a grasp on its migration and displacement figures, the DTM will be an invaluable tool. ■

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# The “invisible” Afghans in Central Asia

Anita Sengupta<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

The article examines the current status of Afghan migrants in Central Asia and notes that while mostly un-enumerated they form a significant though largely “invisible” group in the region. Their “invisibility” is due to a number of factors. Geographically contiguous, ethnic groups traverse the borders between Afghanistan and several countries in Central Asia. Traditionally, there has been mobility and social interaction across border regions. As such, when the first waves of migration began it was easy to avoid large cities and move in with kin groups in the peripheral towns.

Afghans in the region became in a sense “invisible”, as over the years the attempt was to escape detection,

settle within the local population through marriage or move further West. They are also imperceptible in the migration debate within the region where the focus has, in recent times, been on labour movement from Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan, and the effects of stagnant economies and the declining rates of the rouble on remittances sent back home. Similarly, in the global arena, while the security situation in Afghanistan continues to be critical, the Afghan conflict is fading from international memory and Afghan refugees are perceived to be less of a priority than refugees from States like the Syrian Arab Republic. However, while perhaps less significant in number, Afghan refugees represent a security dilemma within the region and the reluctance of States to open borders has as much to do with economic issues as perceptions of threat.



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### Regulating migration in the region

State policy on refugees in the region has been restrictive and not all States are signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention (hereinafter referred to as the 1951 Convention). Uzbekistan is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention or the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees (hereinafter referred to as the 1967 Protocol). However, in 1999 the President signed the Charter for European Security, paragraph 22 of which contains a commitment by signatory States to respect the right of asylum-seekers and ensure protection of refugees as set out by the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol. This is a purely political commitment and does not constitute a legally binding obligation.<sup>2</sup> Uzbekistan is a signatory to the Minsk Agreement on the Free Movement of Citizens within the Commonwealth of Independent States; however, this is restricted to a 45-day stay and has limited scope in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan. There is no law on refugees in Uzbekistan and the legislation of Uzbekistan does not contain any procedure for obtaining refugee status or asylum. The only reference to the institution of asylum is in the 1994 Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan and in the Constitution of Uzbekistan, adopted in 1992. Article 223 of the Criminal Code notes:

**Foreign citizens and stateless persons, who have arrived illegally in Uzbekistan, may be exempted from the visa and registration obligations, if they have applied for political asylum to the President, as foreseen under the Constitution of the Republic.<sup>3</sup>**

However, since the Constitution merely states that “the President of the Republic shall rule on the granting of political asylum”, without stipulating an application procedure, Article 223 of the Criminal Code cannot be invoked, as the Constitution neither foresees a right to apply for asylum nor indicates a procedure in which to file an application. This lack of refugee legislation along with strict control over foreigners meant difficult conditions for migrants particularly in the light of the fact that Uzbekistan was itself a struggling and transitional economy. Uzbekistan’s refugee and

migrant policy has been shaped by security concerns and after the bombings in Tashkent in 1999 and the incursions of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan from the south. While, to a large extent, Uzbekistan has been able to restrict entry, the Kyrgyz borders are more difficult to control and easy to penetrate.

On the other hand, as a signatory to the 1951 Convention, Kyrgyzstan has been legally bound to provide asylum to refugees. However, in the post-2001 era, there has been apprehension about the resettlement of Afghans in the southern Osh and Jalalabad regions given the possibility of social conflicts due to density of population and scarcity of land. In addition, there is also apprehension that southern Kyrgyzstan (particularly Batken) has faced extremist incursions which could intensify.<sup>4</sup> There is also an ongoing debate over their status, and whether Afghan asylum-seekers meet the grounds for refugee status. In the post-2010 period, following the violent clashes in Osh, southern Kyrgyzstan is no longer a preferred destination for Afghan migrants. It is mostly in the ubiquitous Kitaiski bazaars that Afghans, some married to local women, run their own businesses or work in businesses owned by Kyrgyz. Some Afghans who have lived there for a number of years have obtained Kyrgyz citizenship and been incorporated as “new Kyrgyz”. Some had come as students and remained in Kyrgyzstan. There are also funded and self-financed students at the American University, the OSCE Academy and the Ataturk Alatau University.<sup>5</sup> Non-governmental organizations and support groups like Dosti provide them with support. However, given the fact that a significant section of the Kyrgyz workforce has had to move to the Russian Federation or Kazakhstan for work, and economic opportunities are restricted and similar to the rest of the region, Kyrgyzstan is mostly a transit State for movements towards Canada, Western Europe or the United States.

2 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), “Background information on the situation in the Republic of Uzbekistan in the context of the return of asylum seekers”. Available from [www.refworld.org/pdfid/3f6861782.pdf](http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/3f6861782.pdf) (accessed on 25 November 2015).

3 Ibid.

4 G.K. Kyzy, “Afghan Refugees: Another headache for Kyrgyzstan?”, *Central Asia–Caucasus Institute Analyst*, 11 July 2001.

5 S.R. Kazemi, “Afghans in Kyrgyzstan: Fleeing home and facing new uncertainty”, *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 9 October 2012. Available from [www.afghanistan-analysts.org/afghans-in-kyrgyzstan-fleeing-home-and-facing-new-uncertainty](http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/afghans-in-kyrgyzstan-fleeing-home-and-facing-new-uncertainty)

Similarly, Kazakhstan has a small number of officially registered refugees: 662 (593 Afghans, 27 Syrians and others).<sup>6</sup> In Kazakhstan, the Commission on Citizenship under the Office of the President plays a central role in the asylum management process.<sup>7</sup> The Resolution of the Commission on Refugees contains a definition of “refugee” that is wider but similar to the 1951 Convention. The Resolution states that the Chairman of the Commission has the right to grant political asylum. There are only two migration departments in Kazakhstan that grant asylum – located in Almaty and Shymkent – with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) accepting applications only in Almaty. Only selective categories of people have access to the Refugee Status Determination Commission and Afghans are a major category of persons allowed into the national asylum process. Most requirements for asylum are consistent with international standards, although there are reports that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has introduced an additional requirement that political asylum cannot be granted to a person if it would significantly affect bilateral relations with another State. This means that most Afghans remain outside the legal protection process, making movement to third countries more desirable.<sup>8</sup>

Tajikistan hosts the largest number of Afghan refugees among the Central Asian States. Movement from northern Afghanistan across the border with Tajikistan intensified when the Taliban again became a visible presence across northern Afghanistan. This movement was impelled by the withdrawal of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Families tend to arrive without proper documentation and experience problems registering as asylum-seekers. Some, who came a number of years ago and married local Tajiks, now face difficulties as they often did not register as Tajik citizens and do not have documents to prove that they are from Afghanistan. Once accepted by the State, Afghan refugees are generally given a residence permit for the town of Vahdat, 20 kilometres from the

capital, and most commute to work. While there is some attempt to rebuild their lives in Tajikistan, most agree that this is a transitional phase and that the final destination is Canada or Europe.<sup>9</sup> This is because freedom of movement and residence is restricted, the asylum system is fragile and statelessness remains a major challenge. In a study aptly called “Lives in Limbo”, UNHCR underlines a number of issues that have contributed to less than ideal conditions.

**Tajikistan is a post-conflict [S]tate which has few resources, limited governmental capacity, no functioning social welfare system and poor socio-economic indicators. Livelihoods opportunities are scarce, obliging nearly half of the adult male labour force to work abroad and to support their families by means of remittances.<sup>10</sup>**

Most Afghans in Turkmenistan have been living there since the 1990s when they fled the Taliban and the battles for control in northern Afghanistan. Proximity made Turkmenistan an attractive destination for Afghans. In addition, Turkmenistan had a diplomatic mission in Kabul and a consular office in Mazar-e-Sharif, which enabled Afghans to obtain visas. Turkmenistan is a signatory to the 1951 Convention and although compliance with the Convention has remained problematic in many instances, Afghan refugees living in rural areas have been given land and encouraged to earn independent livelihoods. However, despite this the trend is to seek resettlement in third countries.<sup>11</sup> In fact, UNHCR noted that no new asylum-seekers have been registered in Turkmenistan in recent years.<sup>12</sup>

6 J. Lillis, “Syrians find asylum in Kazakhstan”, *Eurasianet.org*, 1 December 2015. Available from [www.eurasianet.org/node/76356](http://www.eurasianet.org/node/76356)

7 A. Zimmerman (ed.), *The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011).

8 *IRIN*, “Kazakhstan: Afghan refugees seek third-country resettlement”, *IRIN*, 10 March 2005. Available from [www.irinnews.org/news/2005/03/10/afghan-refugees-seek-third-country-resettlement](http://www.irinnews.org/news/2005/03/10/afghan-refugees-seek-third-country-resettlement)

9 M. Dustmurad, R. Majidov and G. Faskhutdinov, “Afghan refugees rebuild lives in Tajikistan”, Institute for War and Peace Reporting, RCA Issue 721, 12 December 2013, available from <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/afghan-refugees-rebuild-lives-tajikistan>. Also: E. Lemon, “Tajikistan: Afghan refugees find security, but seek a quick escape”, *Eurasianet.org*, 11 January 2011, available from [www.eurasianet.org/node/62689](http://www.eurasianet.org/node/62689)

10 UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation Service, *Lives in Limbo: A Review of the Implementation of UNHCR's Urban Refugee Policy in Tajikistan* (Geneva, UNHCR PDES, May 2011). Available from [www.unhcr.org/research/evalreports/4dc261419/lives-limbo-review-implementation-unhcrs-urban-refugee-policy-tajikistan.html](http://www.unhcr.org/research/evalreports/4dc261419/lives-limbo-review-implementation-unhcrs-urban-refugee-policy-tajikistan.html)

11 *IRIN*, “Afghan refugees want third-country resettlement”, *IRIN*, 30 July 2003. Available from [www.irinnews.org/report/20566/turkmenistan-afghan-refugees-want-third-country-resettlement](http://www.irinnews.org/report/20566/turkmenistan-afghan-refugees-want-third-country-resettlement)

12 C.A. Fitzpatrick, “Turkmenistan: Welcome to refugees less than it seems”, *Eurasianet.org*, 10 November 2011. Available from [www.eurasianet.org/node/64520](http://www.eurasianet.org/node/64520)

### Security and Afghan migration to Central Asia

Afghanistan's proximity to Central Asia has meant that security or perceptions of insecurity dominates the strategic discourse in the region. Issues that stand out include the challenges that the Central Asian States will face in terms of stability, ethnic tensions, radicalization of youth, destabilization of commodity flows and energy security, and the impact that these could have on Central Asian society including an array of issues like movements across borders, radicalism within States, sharing of water and various multilateral attempts at combating insecurity. Afghanistan was assumed to be in a "state of permanent strategic uncertainty" and this had a negative impact on the security situation in the neighbourhood, particularly Central Asia.<sup>13</sup> The Afghan neighbourhood is seen as being affected by extremism and the resultant migratory movements, both of which posed threats to security. The sheer volume and duration of Afghan displacement in West Asia, along with the fact that they were portrayed as having contributed to the overall criminalization of society through drug deals and transfer of arms, meant that they began to be viewed with suspicion. More importantly, the emergence of an aggressive version of Sunni Islam that was seen as transcending boundaries in the region was viewed as particularly problematic as was the fact that the Taliban began to grant refuge to various extremist groups, including the banned Islamist Movement of Uzbekistan.

Despite the relatively small numbers of Afghans in the region, the possibility of "influx" remains alive in the rhetoric of the State and an unstable Afghan State looms large in terms of the security discourse. To Central Asian States, Afghan migration represents a security dilemma although the reluctance of States to open borders has as much to do with economic issues as perceptions of threat. Continuing global conflicts and the fact that today terror organizations have become international recruiting units also means that despite shared frontiers and the rhetoric of a common economic space, the migrant remains an "abnormal subject" ignored by the State except in rhetoric on the necessity of closed borders. Susanne Schmeidl argues that the case of the Afghan refugees is also interesting, as migration was not linked to security till a number of years after the movements

began and at a time when their numbers were not at their height. She also argues that States with smaller numbers of refugees felt more threatened than those hosting the majority.<sup>14</sup> This poses the question whether it was actual or perceived threat that was more important and whether "Talibanization" was a myth that was developed to deal with domestic issues. For Uzbekistan, which shares a long border with Afghanistan, this perception of threat from a perceived influx is clear from this comment by President Islam Karimov:

**What is Uzbekistan supposed to do to maintain freedom and independence in the lawlessness that surrounds us? Who are we supposed to turn to for support when the Taliban are seizing one city after another, making no secret of their euphoria, and threatening to move even further north?<sup>15</sup>**

### Conclusion

It is generally assumed that Afghanistan is no longer at "war" since it has all the functional trappings of the State and recently held elections. However, anyone familiar with the country would note that conflict continues particularly in the margins and fears of chaos with the withdrawal of the ISAF remain a reality for many. Also, the repatriation process has faced difficulties. A "refugee" remains a political concept, with the 1951 Convention noting that it refers to someone "unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin due to persecution". This is the category that States that are signatories to the Convention pledged to protect and allow into their territories. However, with changes in global perception or because asylum remains a political issue closely related to security concerns, there is often reluctance to identify a "migrant" as a "refugee" – someone who qualifies for unrestricted entry. Identification as a "migrant" means that the person becomes subject both to the laws of the State where he or she seeks

13 I. Yakubov, "Wither Afghanistan beyond 2014", in: *Central Asia and Regional Security* (P.L. Dash, A. Sengupta and M.M. Bakhadirov, eds.), (New Delhi, Knowledge World, 2014).

14 S. Schmeidl, "(Human) security dilemmas: Long-term implications of the Afghan refugee crisis", *Third World Quarterly*, 23(1):7–29.

15 President Islam Karimov's statement in an interview with *Moscow Times*, 8 October 1998, as cited in T.E. Heath, "Instability and identity in a post-Soviet world: Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan", in: *Central Asia: Aspects of Transition* (T.E. Heath, ed.), (London and New York, RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).

entry and the requirements of the labour market.<sup>16</sup> The distinction between “forced” and “voluntary” migration, however, remains blurred and dependent on perceptions of the host State and the global community, and the case of the Afghan refugees is a classic example. New terms, more appropriate for migratory movements, need to be developed that would take note not just of the reasons but also the intentions and motivations of the migrating group since it is this that makes the Afghan migrant “invisible” within systems that fail to take note of complex realities that lead to movements. ■

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<sup>16</sup> The disclaimer that the *BBC* uses is interesting. It says that it uses the term “migrant” to refer to all people on the move who have yet to complete the legal process of claiming asylum. This group includes people fleeing war-torn countries such as the Syrian Arab Republic, who are likely to be granted refugee status, and people seeking jobs and better lives who governments are likely to rule as economic migrants.



## Integration of Afghans in Iran: Patterns, levels and policy implications

Mohammad Jalal Abbasi-Shavazi and Rasoul Sadeghi<sup>1</sup>

*Iran has been one of the main destinations for Afghan refugees and migrants. The long-term settlement of Afghans in Iran along with the emergence of their second generation, as well as the social, economic, and political situation in Afghanistan, suggest that Afghans will remain in Iran in the foreseeable future. One of the main policy questions is the degree to which Afghans have been integrated into the Iranian society. Utilizing the 2010 and 2015 surveys of Afghans as well as the 2011 census data, this article examines the level of integration of Afghans in Iran at both macro and microlevels. Results show that at the macrolevel, the second-generation Afghans have made significant educational achievements but less so in the job market partly due to lower human capital and some legal constraints. At the microlevel, Afghans have shown a variety of adaptation patterns. Integration is the most prevalent pattern of adaptation, followed by separation, assimilation and marginalization. The level of integration has increased over time and across generations. Overall, the results indicate the adaptability of Afghans and the sustainability of their settlement in Iran.*

### Introduction

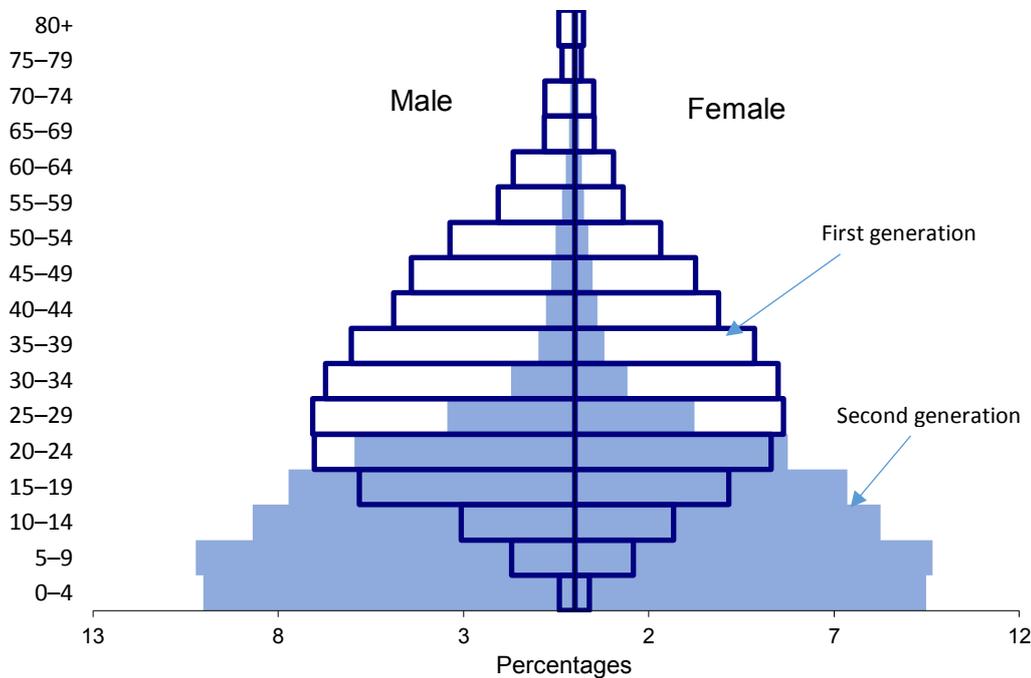
Iran has been one of the main destinations for Afghan refugees and migrants over the last three decades. Since 1979, Afghan migration to Iran has been primarily motivated by war, insecurity, threat to female honour, unemployment and inflation. The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan resulted in a massive influx of 3 million Afghans into Iran between 1979 and 1989. The Soviet withdrawal in 1989 was followed by

an eventual ascendancy of the resistance movement to power in 1992, resulting in an initial wave of Afghan returnees. Between 1989 and 1992 around 3 million Afghans lived in Iran (Abbasi-Shavazi et al., 2007). However, in 1992, about 650,000 of Afghans returned from Iran to Afghanistan (Kibreab, 2003). The eruption of the ensuing civil war in Afghanistan after 1992 produced a new wave of refugees, in particular from the urban, educated middle class, albeit much smaller than before. The rise of the Taliban movement, the repressive rule of the Taliban militants, and fighting between Taliban and opposition groups between 1994 and 2001 reinforced this wave of migration. With the fall of the Taliban at the end of 2001, forced migration halted, while economic migration (especially by young Afghan men) started to increase after 2004 (Abbasi-Shavazi et al., 2012:830).

Despite fluctuations in the number of Afghan migrants in Iran in recent years, it is estimated that around 2.5 million Afghans, including 1.5 million documented and another 1 million undocumented, are residing in Iran. Of the approximately 1.4 million migrants of Afghan nationality recorded in the 2011 census, around half of them were born in Iran, and can be considered second generation (Figure 1). The majority (72%) resided in urban areas in Iran, and less than 3 per cent lived in refugee camps.

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Figure 1: Age structure of first and second generations of Afghans in Iran, 2011



Source: Iranian census, 2011.

The second generation comprises a particular demographic group whose experiences and aspirations, while not homogenous, are different from their parents' generation, and from their counterparts in Afghanistan. Educational achievements, occupational skills, and economic opportunities in Iran have inspired different values and aspirations. They have also been raised in an arguably more liberal social and religious environment, and exposed to values, attitudes and practices that are different from those of their parents (Abbasi-Shavazi et al., 2012:829).

The long-term settlement of Afghans in Iran (Abbasi-Shavazi et al., 2005a, 2005b, 2005c and 2007; Sadeghi and Abbasi-Shavazi, 2010; Abbasi-Shavazi and Sadeghi, 2015) and their slow repatriation back to Afghanistan have raised concerns on the degree of integration of Afghans into the Iranian society. Their integration patterns and levels have implications for a sustainable settlement in the host society, their return to their homeland and for their secondary movement to other countries. Thus, the present paper examines the integration of Afghans into the Iranian society at both macro and microlevels.

### Integration: A framework

The integration of immigrants into the host society has been a major area of immigration research, and there is now a rich and growing scholarly tradition in the study of the integration and adaptation of second-generation immigrants (Gans, 1992; Portes and Zhou, 1993; Zhou and Bankston, 1994; Portes, 1996; Perlmann and Waldinger, 1997; Portes and Rumbaut, 2001 and 2006; Berry et al., 2006; Farley and Alba, 2002; Waldinger and Feliciano, 2004; Abbasi-Shavazi et al., 2008; Berry and Sabatier, 2009; Abbasi-Shavazi and Sadeghi, 2015).

In general, immigrants' adaptation can be defined as a process of change that occurs among groups or individuals as a response to the demands of the social context (Ward and Kennedy, 1993). Adaptation models in migration studies tend to theorize that as migrants adapt to the society of destination, their behaviour converges towards that of the natives (Hurth and Kim, 1984; Foner, 1997:965). Several theories have been advanced to explain the adaptation process of immigrants to the host society. *Classical assimilation* theory treats the process of integration in assimilation mode, as a linear shift from

being un-assimilated to being fully assimilated to the host culture (for example, see Gordon, 1964). Based on *segmented assimilation* theory (Portes and Zhou, 1993), assimilation is no longer considered a linear process because immigrants experience segmented assimilation into different spheres of life in the host society. Adaptation of migrants to the host society can be examined from educational and occupational perspectives.

At the microlevel, Berry's framework (1992) takes into consideration orientation to both original and new cultures and societies, the degree to which people maintain their heritage culture and identity, and the degree to which people seek involvement with the larger society. Based on attachment to origin and host societies, migrants' adaptation can be classified into four categories – assimilation, integration, marginalization and separation. *Assimilation* refers to rejecting the individual's cultural identity and accepting the host society's identity and culture. *Integration* occurs when the individual maintains a positive attachment to a new society as well as to his or her original culture and community. *Separation* refers to retaining the original culture and rejecting the new culture. *Marginalization* involves non-adherence to either culture.

Adaptation of migrants to the host society can be analysed at both macro (society) and micro (individual) levels. The degree of adaptation and integration of Afghans into the Iranian society is examined from these two approaches in the following sections.

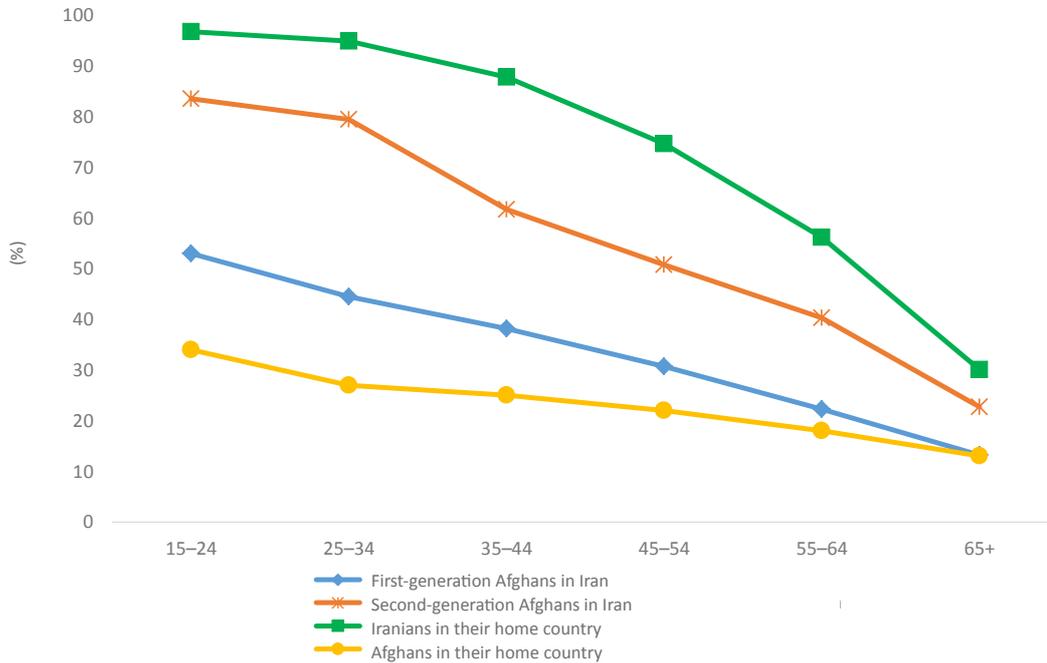
### Integration of Afghans into Iran: A macro perspective

The degree of structural integration of Afghans into the Iranian society is examined using their educational and occupational mobility. Their educational achievement is considered their human capital and their occupation indicates the degree by which their human capital is utilized by the host society or not. The extent to which refugees engage in the economy of the destination country is relevant not only to their own well-being but also in terms of their contribution to development in the origin and destination countries. Their engagement as members of the workforce in the destination is a key factor in their development impact. Accordingly, in this section we examine the educational achievements and labour engagement of Afghans in Iran.

The Iranian educational policy towards Afghan refugees has fluctuated with changes in government attitudes towards the influx of refugees. Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, Iran adopted an open-door refugee policy, granting asylum to Afghans on a *prima facie* basis, considering them "religious migrants". At this time, Afghan refugees were granted access to education on the same basis as Iranian nationals, although enrolment was not compulsory. After 1993, however, Iran's policy towards Afghan refugees changed and they were no longer given the special status of "religious migrants" (Glazebrook and Abbasi-Shavazi, 2007) and issued with temporary registration cards. In 2003, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran signed a revised tripartite agreement with the Government of Afghanistan and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to facilitate the voluntary return of Afghans. As a result, in the 1990s, Iran started to incrementally reduce services to Afghans, particularly educational and medical services. As a result, many Afghan children were unable to continue their education in Iranian schools. However, some NGOs have played a role among Afghan refugees in providing access to education. For instance, self-regulated schools were established by the Afghan community in response to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran legislating to preclude "undocumented" Afghan children from State-run schools (Hugo et al., 2012). In 2015, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran issued a statement that all Afghans, regardless of their legal status, should have access to education.

Figure 2 shows the literacy rate by age for Iranians as compared with first and second generations of Afghans in Iran as well as those in Afghanistan. There is definite evidence of literacy rates being improved among Afghan refugees. These relative differences between the first- and second-generation Afghan settlers and native Iranians are maintained when the percentages attending school are examined. There is clearly a difference between the first- and second-generation Afghan refugees in Iran in their educational engagement. Clearly, both first and second generations have recorded significant educational upward mobility, but there is still a literacy gap between Afghans and Iranians.

**Figure 2: Age-specific literacy rates of Iranians and Afghans by generation, 2011**

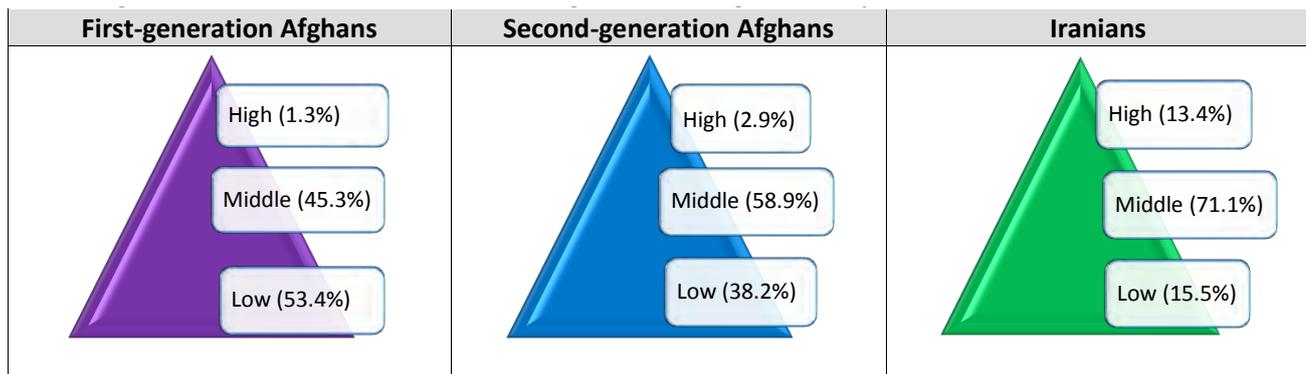


Source: Iranian census, 2011; United Nations Development Programme, 2008.

As indicated, Afghans have lower levels of human capital than Iranian natives, and this influences the work they can do in Iran. There is evidence of restrictions for Afghans in the Iranian labour market,

as through a law instituted in 2000 (Article 48), the Government sought to restrict access for Afghans to certain areas of employment.

**Figure 3: Job levels of first and second generations of Afghans compared with Iranians, 2011**



Source: Iranian census, 2011.

The difference between Iranians and the first- and second-generation Afghans in their job levels are clear in Figure 3.<sup>2</sup> As is the case with education, it is apparent that there is a massive difference between Iranians

and first-generation Afghan migrants, with the second generation occupying an intermediate position; this suggests that there is some intergenerational mobility. The majority of first-generation Afghans are employed in the low- and middle-level job categories, while Iranians are more employed in the middle- and high-level categories.

<sup>2</sup> Low-level jobs refer to unskilled labourers; middle-level jobs include technicians, administrative and sales workers, and operatives; and high-level jobs include managers and professionals.

### Integration of Afghans into Iran: A micro perspective

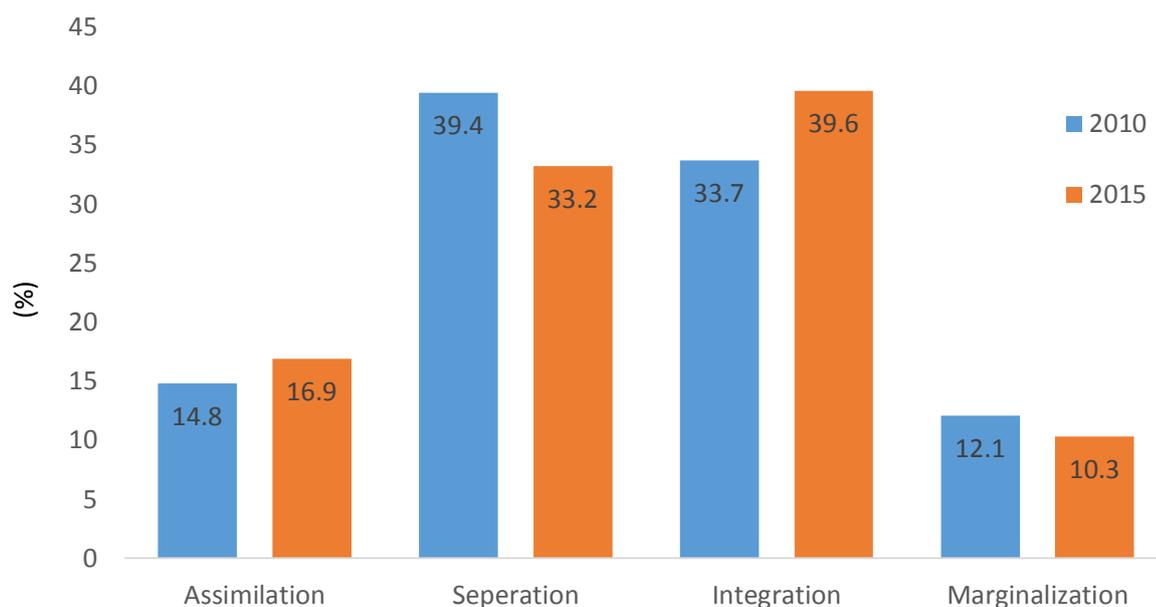
For measuring integration at the microlevel, a sociocultural adaptation scale based on Berry's framework (1992) is used. The scale is a composite index that includes seven different life domains such as: (a) identity and sense of belonging; (b) social network and interactions; (c) language and accent used; (d) media and cultural consumption; (e) customs, values and norms; (f) in-/out-marriage preference; and (g) return and future plans. Based on orientations in these domains, second-generation Afghans were divided into four forms (assimilation, separation, integration and marginalization), each representing different levels of adaptation. High

sociocultural adaptation to the host society usually relates to **assimilation** and **integration** patterns, while the lowest level of adaptation is associated with patterns of **separation** and **marginalization** (Unger et al., 2002:235).

The data for measuring the adaptation of Afghans comes from the 2010 and 2015 surveys of Afghans in Iran. The earlier was conducted in the cities of Tehran and Mashhad, while the latter survey was conducted in Isfahan, Mashhad and Tehran.

As Figure 4 shows, Afghans have experienced a variety of adaptation patterns. Integration is the most prevalent pattern of adaptation, followed by separation, assimilation and marginalization.

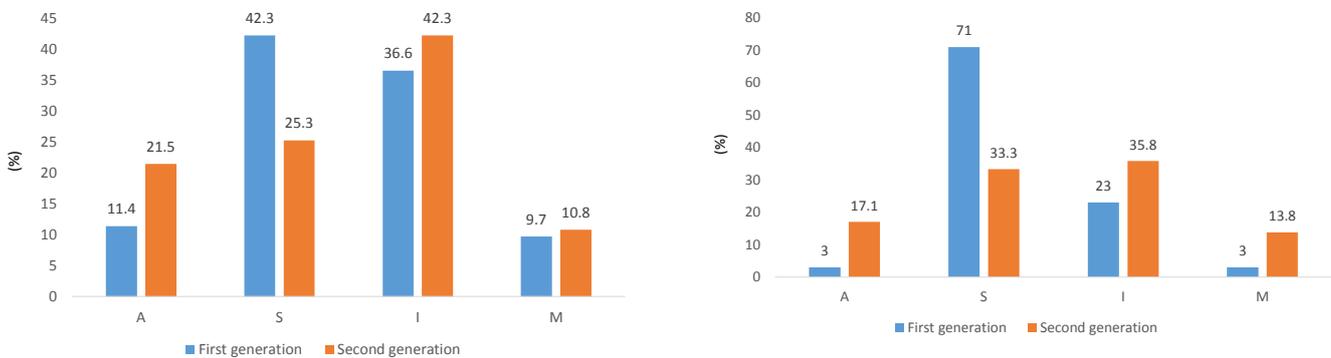
Figure 4: Adaptation orientations of Afghans in Iran, 2010 and 2015



Note: The 2010 survey includes 620 Afghans aged 15–29 (Sadeghi and Abbasi-Shavazi, 2010), while the 2015 survey includes 1,202 Afghans aged 18–44 (Abbasi-Shavazi, Hosseini-Chavoshi et al., forthcoming).

Adaptation patterns can be influenced by generation (Figure 5). It is expected that the second generation is more likely to be integrated and assimilated into the host society. Generational patterns are similar in the two surveys, but there has been a change towards integration in 2015.

Figure 5: Adaptation orientations of Afghans in Iran by generation, 2010 and 2015



Note: A – assimilation; S – separation; I – integration; M – marginalization.

In general, the second generation was more likely to be integrated, assimilated and marginalized, but the first generation was more likely to be separated. However, in 2015, the level of integration and assimilation was more prevalent among both generations as compared with the earlier survey. The higher level of integration and assimilation of Afghans is due to their birthplace being in Iran as well as their educational achievements as compared with the first generation.

### Conclusion and policy implications

This article examines the structural and behavioural integration of Afghans in Iran. Their integration patterns and levels have implications for sustainable settlement in the host country, their return to their homeland and for their onward movement to other countries.

The results have demonstrated that Afghans exhibited a variety of adaptation patterns in Iran. At the macrolevel, the second generation has achieved significant progress in the literacy and education levels as compared with the first generation. The literacy level of the second generation at all ages is moving towards Iranians, while there is a significant gap between the literacy levels of the first-generation Afghans and Iranians. This pattern does not hold for occupational mobility. The second generation is employed in middle-level job positions. At the microlevel, a variety of adaptation patterns were experienced by Afghans. While in 2010 they were more likely to be integrated or separated than assimilated or marginalized, their adaptation pattern shifted more towards integration and assimilation in the later survey.

The results have two main policy implications. First, successful implementation of policies and durable solutions for Afghans in Iran rests on the diversity of the adaptation patterns of the second generation. Second, restrictions on employment opportunities have led to downward assimilation and marginalization of some of Afghans in Iran. Improvement in labour laws would promote further the integration of Afghans into the Iranian society, which in turn would provide them the opportunities to stay in the host country and prevent their secondary movement towards Europe and other countries. ■

**Improvement in labour laws would promote further the integration of Afghans into the Iranian society.**

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## Afghans in Greece and Turkey seeking to migrate onward: Decision-making factors and destination choices

Katie Kuschminder and Khalid Koser<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

Afghans have been migrating to Turkey and Greece since at least the early 1990s. More recently, the number of Afghan migrants coming to both of these countries has increased, although precise numbers of these mainly irregular movements are not known. It is clear that Afghans accounted for the second largest country-of-origin group arriving in the European Union (EU) in 2015, primarily transiting into the EU from Turkey. At the same time, it is important to note that not all Afghans in Greece and Turkey are transit migrants, as Afghan communities have also developed in both countries over the past two decades.

The purpose of this article is to understand the migration intentions of Afghans in Greece and Turkey, and the factors influencing their decisions. The article is based on data collected within the “Understanding Irregular Migrants’ Decision Making Factors in Transit” project funded by the Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection and the Australian National University’s Collaborative Research Programme on the International Movement of People.<sup>2</sup> A survey was conducted with a total of 1,056 respondents from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and the Syrian Arab Republic in May–July 2015 in Athens and Istanbul, and was supplemented with qualitative interviews. This article focuses solely on the Afghan respondents included in this sample (n=375). For the purposes of this study, Greece and Turkey are considered as transit countries while recognizing that they in fact are also countries of immigration and emigration.

This article is divided into four sections. The first section examines the respondents with plans to migrate onward, the second section explores their destination choices and decision-making factors for their destination choices, the third section discusses information sources used in their decisions and the final section offers policy implications.

### Onward migration

In both Greece and Turkey, the majority of Afghans responded to the question: *At this moment, do you want to: 1) stay in Greece/Turkey; 2) migrate to another country; 3) return to your country of origin; 4) return to the country you were last living in*, by indicating that they wanted to migrate to another country (Greece – 72%, Turkey – 59%). It is somewhat surprising that more Afghans wanted to move onward from Greece than Turkey. One possible explanation that emerged from the research is Afghans feel more comfortable among Turkey’s predominantly Muslim population. A second is that once in Greece they have already started their onward migration and thus want to continue. As will be shown through this research, economic conditions and employment opportunities also contribute to this difference, as Afghans cited their living conditions and economic opportunities to be worse in Greece than in Turkey. Thirty-nine per cent of Afghans responded that they wanted to stay in Turkey and 28 per cent wanted to stay in Greece. Very few wanted to return to either Afghanistan or the last country they were living in (most commonly Iran) – overall less than 1 per cent in Greece and 5 per cent in Turkey. This article therefore primarily focuses on the decision to migrate onward.

The results showed some clear differences between the choice whether to migrate onward or stay with regard to conditions in the transit countries. First, it was evident that respondents who considered their current living situations as “bad” or “very bad” were more likely to seek to migrate onward (83%) than respondents who considered their living conditions as “average”, “good”, or “very good” (46%). Second,

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2 The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection or the Australian National University. The full results of the study are expected to be published as an occasional paper on the Department’s website in September 2016.

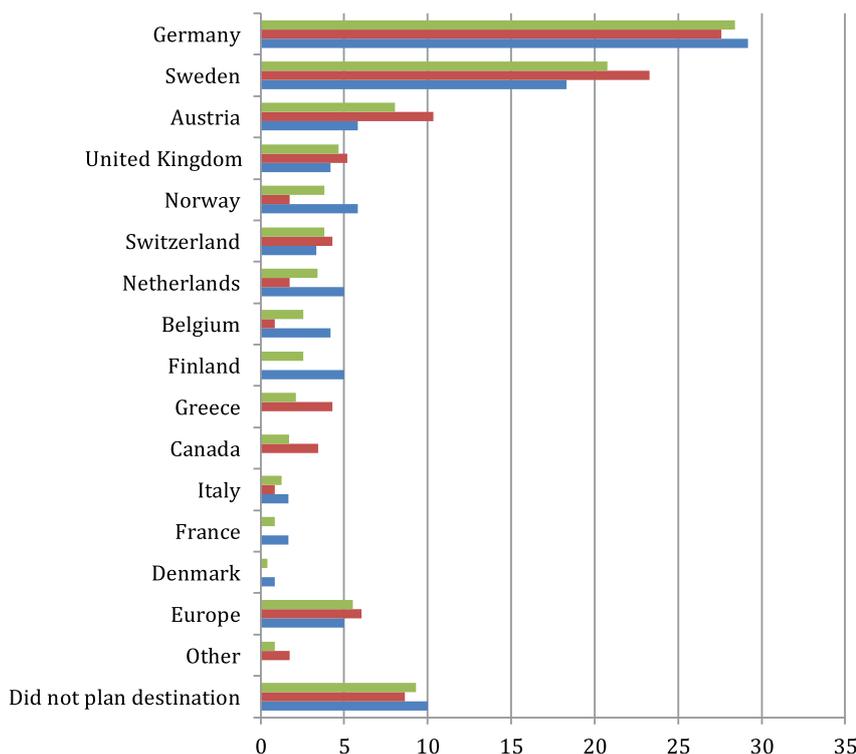
those who had experienced verbal or physical abuse were more likely to seek to migrate onward (67%) than stay. Third, those who were unemployed were more likely to seek to migrate onward (76%) than those who were employed (45%). It is important here to note that 82 per cent of respondents who were working were employed informally. Fourth, respondents who had previously tried to migrate onward unsuccessfully were more likely to want to migrate onward (70%) than those who had never done so previously (63%). Finally, the shorter the duration that the respondents had been in the transit country, the more likely they were to plan to migrate onward. Eighty-three per cent of respondents who had been in Greece or Turkey for less than three months were planning to migrate onward compared with only 41 per cent who had been in Greece or Turkey for more than three years. It should be noted that a larger percentage of respondents had recently arrived in Turkey in the three months prior to the survey (45%) as compared with Greece (25%), and conversely that 44 per cent of respondents in Greece had been there for more than three years compared with only 9 per cent in Turkey.

Respondents who had arrived in Greece or Turkey directly from Afghanistan (69%) were more likely to seek to migrate onward than those who had been living in Iran (59%). In terms of ethnicity, Hazaras were the most likely to seek to migrate onward (74%), followed by Tajiks (60%), other ethnic groups (52%) and Pashtun (50%). It is striking that in regard to current migration status, respondents with refugee or temporary protection status were also the most likely to seek to migrate onward (78%). Those with other status (which was inclusive of tourist and student visas) were least likely to seek to migrate onward (41%), followed by asylum-seekers (53%) and irregular migrants (68%). There was little variation across the category “main reason for the most recent migration”, with the majority of all respondents planning to move onward, whatever their recent migration experience. Respondents who were married were more likely to seek to migrate onward (68%), while there was little variation in onward migration intentions on the basis of education levels.

**Destination choices and decision-making factors**

Figure 1 shows the destination choices of the respondents who were planning to migrate onward.

**Figure 1: Descriptive results of onward migration destination choices by transit migration country (%)**



Note: n=236.

The top three planned destination countries were ranked in the same order by respondents in Greece and Turkey, namely Germany (28.4%), Sweden (20.8%) and Austria (8.1%). It is important to note that the fieldwork was conducted prior to Germany opening its border to refugees in August 2015. Both Germany and Sweden have been key target destinations for Afghan migrants over the past decade (UNHCR, 2010; Dimitriadi, 2015; Kuschminder and Siegel, 2016). Roughly 10 per cent of respondents in Greece and Turkey did not have a planned destination and 5 per cent named the broad destination of Europe.

Table 1 shows the factors cited by respondents as influencing their destination choices. Three of the top five most frequently cited factors were the same for respondents in Turkey and Greece, namely “safe country”, “better living conditions in the destination country”, and “my intended destination country has good social assistance/health policies”. It is important to emphasize that these are based on the respondents’ perceptions of the intended destination country, which may or may not be the actual situation.

In Greece, the other two most frequently cited factors were “democracy and freedom” and “I want to continue my migration aspiration”. The latter factor was infrequently cited in Turkey in contrast. In Turkey the other two most frequently cited factors were “my intended destination has good opportunities to become a citizen/resident” and “my intended

destination country has high acceptance rates of asylum-seekers”. One possible reason that these final two factors were more important to respondents in Turkey is that the majority of respondents in Turkey were in an irregular situation, whereas in Greece slightly more than half of respondents had refugee or temporary protection status. This was also clearly reflected by 89 per cent of respondents in Turkey, citing being “tired of living as undocumented” as a factor influencing their destination choice, compared with 64 per cent in Greece.

Two other factors are also notably different and worth further discussion. First, more than double the proportion of respondents in Greece (58%) cited “experience abuse/discrimination in Greece/Turkey” than in Turkey (27%). It is quite striking that experiencing abuse or discrimination was cited so frequently in Greece, an EU Member State. Fully 56 per cent of respondents reported experiencing verbal or physical abuse in Greece, compared with a still significant 22 per cent in Turkey. This could be a reflection of the actions of the right-wing Golden Dawn movement that is strongly anti-migrant in Greece; that Afghans are more culturally similar to Turks and therefore experience less abuse and discrimination there; or that Afghans in Istanbul live in more ethnically segregated communities with predominantly other Afghans as compared with those in Athens.

**Table 1: Descriptive results of reasons to migrate onward by transit migration country**

	Greece	Turkey	n
	(%)	(%)	
Democracy and freedom	95.8	77.6	205
Safe country	95	90.5	219
I want to continue my migration aspiration	95	59.5	183
Better living conditions in destination country	90	95.7	219
My intended destination country has good social assistance/health policies	90	92.2	215
My intended destination country has good opportunities to become a citizen/resident	86.7	90.5	209
My intended destination country has good asylum-seeker treatment	85.8	89.7	207
Education opportunities	84.1	81	195
My intended destination country has high acceptance rates of asylum-seekers	84.1	90.5	206
Reputation as a good country	80	75	183
I feel I have no other choice	80	69.8	177

	Greece	Turkey	n
	(%)	(%)	
Employment opportunity or better job/earning prospects in destination country	68.3	81.9	177
I am unable to find a job in Greece/Turkey	68.3	68.1	161
I am tired of living as undocumented	64.2	88.8	180
The situation in Greece/Turkey is hostile (i.e. more crackdowns by police)	64.2	50.9	136
Experience abuse/discrimination in Greece/Turkey	58.3	26.7	101
I do not have the right to work in Greece/Turkey	57.5	69	149
I want to make money to support my family	49.2	81.9	154
Reunification with family/friends already living in destination country	35	37.1	85
My friends are migrating onward	35	27.6	74
I am living on the streets	32.5	27.6	71
Told by other people in Greece/Turkey it is a good place to go	29.2	26.7	66
My asylum is not being processed	20.8	13.8	41
Language	12.5	23.3	42
Other relevant reasons	10	4.3	17
Received a negative decision regarding my asylum request in Greece/Turkey	6.7	6.9	16
Resettlement waiting times are too long	–	51.7	60

Note: n=236.

Second, a much higher percentage of respondents in Turkey (82%) reported “I want to make money to support my family” than in Greece (49%) as a reason for deciding to migrate onward to their intended destination. This suggests that respondents in Turkey are under more pressure to provide economically for their families. Finally, the variable “resettlement waiting times are too long” was only included in the Turkey context, as resettlement does not occur in Greece. This factor was cited by 52 per cent of respondents in Turkey, which suggests that the slow process of resettlement or giving up hope of resettlement influences the decision to migrate onward. Qualitative interviews with Afghans in Turkey

revealed high levels of frustration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for not doing more to support Afghan refugees.

#### Information sources on the intended destination country

Respondents were also asked how they received information on the intended destination country and the results are presented in Table 2. Family and friends in destination countries were the main sources of information for onward migration, even more so in Turkey than in Greece.

**Table 2: Descriptive results of onward migration information sources by transit migration country**

	Greece	Turkey	n
	(%)	(%)	
Family/friends in intended destination country	48.3	62.1	130
Family/friends in other country	39.2	15.5	65
Internet	35	11.2	55
Social media	32.5	3.5	43
Family/friends in origin country	12.5	23.3	42
No information	8.3	1.7	12
Newspaper	6.7	0.9	9
Radio	6.7	–	8
Television	5.8	4.3	12
Other	4.2	0.9	6
Smugglers	0.8	–	1

In Greece, respondents more frequently accessed the Internet and social media to gain information for their onward journey. Given the emphasis on the role of smugglers as information sources in recent research and literature, it is quite striking that only one respondent, residing in Greece, mentioned receiving information from that source.

### Implications for policy

Three implications for policy emerge. First, it is clear that decision-making by Afghan migrants in transit is complex, dynamic, and influenced by a range of factors across the transit and intended destination country, as well as individual and network variables. Migration and non-migration policies clearly have an influence on these variables. For example, the ability of policy levers to decisively influence migrants' decision-making factors is not clearly demonstrated.

Second, conditions in their transit countries are central to Afghans' decisions whether to migrate onward or stay. Poor living conditions and unemployment, combined with the perception of better conditions in the intended destination country, are central drivers for onward migration from the transit countries. It follows that access to employment and better living conditions may impact the decision of Afghans to choose to stay in transit countries rather than migrate onward. At the same time, it appears that legal status may not be an important anchor. This highlights that policies focused on improving living conditions for migrants in transit and increasing employment opportunities may be the most effective in increasing

the number of people that choose to stay in transit countries. The proposal for special economic zones in Turkey by Alexander Betts and Paul Collier (2015) to increase industrial development is an example of one such policy that may achieve these objectives. In essence, policies should be focused on factors that enable people to stay in transit countries. For this to be sustainable, people clearly need to make a voluntary choice to stay, meaning that adequate living conditions and employment are essential.

Third, the primary information source for Afghans seeking to migrate onward from Greece and Turkey were network ties of family and friends, most commonly in the intended destination country. In contrast and contrary to current orthodoxy, social media and smugglers were not the primary information sources used by migrants to make decisions regarding their destination choices, in particular in Turkey. It is important that policymakers recognize this, so as to not overinflate the role of social media and smugglers in migrants' decision-making and destination choices. Further research is required to elicit further policy implications. ■

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Poor living conditions and unemployment, combined with the perception of better conditions in the intended destination country, are central drivers for onward migration from the transit countries.



## Return and reintegration to Afghanistan: Policy implications

*Nassim Majidi and Laurence Hart<sup>1</sup>*

**R**eturn and reintegration can be at odds with the practice of mobility in Afghanistan. Return and reintegration is often built on a sedentary assumption, understood as a one-way process that leads to people being anchored (Natta, 2014) back in their homes. This represents a narrow view of Afghan mobility, which is in reality built on decades of cross-border, regional and international migration to “seek safety, jobs and more” (Majidi et al., 2016). Migration has been a key, and essential, coping mechanism for Afghans. As a result, return migration programmes can either be aligned with the mobility patterns of Afghans or have a potential to create disorder (Majidi, 2016a). This requires a critical analysis of return and reintegration initiatives to date in Afghanistan, and of policy implications for the future.

### Introduction: A critical analysis of return and reintegration

We must first set the scene, and present the changing context and motivations behind returns to Afghanistan. The number of returnees is once again on the rise. From Europe, the increase from an estimated 1,400 assisted returns in 2015 to over 5,000 returnees in 2016 – until mid-August – has marked a sharp focus on returns of failed asylum seekers and other migrants (IOM, 2016a). From neighbouring Pakistan, the current average reveals over 113,378 returns of documented refugees and undocumented returnees in the East until mid-August; while, in the West, an additional caseload of deportees continue to arrive from Iran, predominantly in Herat and Nimroz, with an average of over 30,000 deportees per month (IOM, 2016b and 2016c).

This dynamic situation requires a preface based on three key commentaries.

*First*, the interest of States in funding return and reintegration in Afghanistan is very broad and has spanned a range of migration categories since 2002 – from refugee returnees, to voluntary migrants returning home temporarily or permanently, and most recently, to include forced returns from Europe, Australia and the region, with the highest number of deportations recorded from Iran. Facilitating return has shifted away from a development discourse to a security discourse, from the reconstruction and rebuilding of a nation in Afghanistan, to the management of migration abroad. This is aligned with a global evolution of return migration as a tool of public policy aimed at securing borders in destination countries and acting as a deterrent to migration while also an effect of the reduced optimism in nation-building in Afghanistan. We will argue for return and reintegration to be planned, instead, with the origin context in mind.

*Second*, the discourse on reintegration is often disconnected from local realities and from people’s aspirations. This has led analysts to ask in whose interest return and reintegration programmes are framed. In Afghanistan, many still hold the belief that migration is better than non-migration. These rising aspirations to migrate are clear, as seen in the “Afghan exodus” in recent years. If there is something that return programmes can offer, we should learn from them and scale them up. But where they fail, we should also be honest and transparent.

*Third*, on the implementation side, there is a lack of a common framework on return and reintegration activities in Afghanistan. This article reviews several approaches, looking at different modalities of implementation and seeing the gaps recorded through research. Reintegration is not properly defined nor understood; there are no common tools to measure it or clear investment by donors in reintegration. This is slowly beginning to change in Afghanistan, with promising initiatives for national and global lessons learned.

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## Analysing recent and current dynamics

Returnees' aims are not only jobs but also social inclusion, protection, and access to housing and health services. The reality is that they are often not fulfilled by cash grants or business start-ups, which constitute the core of return and reintegration programmes' focus. Here we will take three examples to illustrate this trend.

### *Reintegration of refugee returnees*

When speaking of returns to Afghanistan, the largest operation has focused on the repatriation of refugees since 2002, with over 5.8 million assisted by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), mainly from the region's host countries: Iran and Pakistan. The earlier waves of returnees had a successful reintegration process, due to three core elements: the voluntariness of their return; their capacity to link back to job opportunities, housing and belongings upon return; and the structural opportunities and booming economy in the post-2002 era. UNHCR and partners have built on these components and delivered livelihood programmes for reintegration. Yet, the budgets for return and reintegration activities in the earlier years had been planned on more conservative estimates, well under the actual number of returns recorded. "UNHCR's initial plans for reintegration assistance had to be scaled down drastically because the returnees so greatly exceeded the number budgeted for" (Turton and Marsden, 2002). With security slow to set in outside of the main urban centres, most of the refugee return flows concentrated on specific urban hubs of Afghanistan around five cities – Kabul, Jalalabad, Kanadaha, Herat and Mazar. Fourteen years later, two imperatives are key to ensuring that returns lead to reintegration: first, understanding the regional imperative, which involves planning not only for regional initiatives but also for cross-border programming that will allow refugees in exile to understand better the realities upon return; second, the urban imperative, which involves planning for urban livelihoods and urban solutions to new ways to plan for the reintegration of refugees and other displaced populations.

### *Reintegration after assisted voluntary returns*

Migrants who sign up to return permanently face difficulties in "fitting in" once home (Oeppen and Majidi, 2016). They broadly face two challenges: first, the difficulty to resume networks and acquire jobs to match their skills and the economic context; and second, the fear of violence leading some to not want to leave their houses and gain employment. The inability to "settle in" has to do with social and economic factors that make re-migration seem easier, and more feasible, than reintegration. Under- and unemployment remains a major problem – for Afghans in general and for returnees specifically given the hiring practices based on networks and connections. Returnees from Europe repeatedly mentioned in interviews the challenges of facing corruption and nepotism in employment processes. The livelihood component of reintegration packages – whether through start-up grants or cash grants – could help, but they are often invested in businesses that are either not aligned with the returnees' skills or not in high demand (or in over supply) in the location of return. A one-size-fits-all approach to assisting returns and reintegration has meant that often the same schemes are applied, which do not necessarily align to the needs of the place of return.

Another one of the most successful programmes, and yet least well-known, is the Temporary Returns of Qualified Nationals (TRQN) facilitated by International Organization for Migration (IOM) with the Government of Afghanistan. These programmes match returnees' skills with specific gaps in public sectors to fill the human resources deficit, contribute to capacity development and lead to an impact on key sectors of the economy (e.g. health and education sectors). Through these schemes, returnees contribute directly to their country's reconstruction. The added advantage of temporary returns means that nationals abroad, or members of the diaspora, can stay connected with their country. There are now ways to connect these nationals with the permanent returnees: to help them in countries of destination; to brief them about the realities of return; and to assist them in countries of return through peer-to-peer support, whereby permanent returnees can train and work in tandem with individuals under the TRQN programme, to ensure sustainability and continuity after their departure. Upon return, TRQN schemes should be expanded outside of Kabul, to go beyond the current centralization and intervene with skilled resources at the regional and local levels.

Taking the example of the Government of Australia, and also extending to other Western government programmes, such as the United Kingdom's Return and Reintegration Fund, the return of failed asylum-seekers falls under the pillar of return and reintegration assistance, with governments mandating organizations – such as IOM – to provide reintegration assistance to each returnee through “individually tailored reintegration assistance plans for returnees . . . including the provision of accommodation, skills training, small business creation and/or job placement” (UNHCR, 2011). Failed asylum-seekers return to Afghanistan generally through the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programme. It is important to note that although AVRR is officially considered a voluntary process, it is one that occurs with limited other options for the individual. While most of the return and reintegration assistance framework in Afghanistan has evolved around the concept of voluntary returns, recent policy shifts towards increased border restrictions and the use of deportation as a migration management tool, in the region (Iran) as much as in the West (Europe) and Australia, have made AVRR a more attractive last-resort option. Recent research also points to other factors involved in return decision-making, including a lack of integration in destination countries and migrants' preference to be seen as law-abiding (Koser and Kuschminder, 2015). Each State often has a different return and reintegration package offered to AVRR beneficiaries; however, between 2002 and 2007, the European Union (EU) Member States collaborated to facilitate the Return, Reception and Reintegration of Afghan Nationals (RANA) programme. This programme was designed to complement States' existing programmes and offer enhanced reception and reintegration assistance to Afghan nationals returning from one of the EU Member States (Hunzinger, 2007).

### *Reintegration after forced return*

The reality in Afghanistan today is one of involuntary and forced returns – with induced returns on the east, and deportations – defined as the physical removal by means of force of the territory of one country back to the origin country. These deportations from neighbouring countries are recorded at four border points in Herat, Nimroz, Kandahar and Nangarhar, with the majority occurring in the West. Deportations remain constantly high: the first quarter of 2015 saw 53,915 returns, while the first quarter of 2016 recorded 48,799 at border points. The reality for deportees is

by far the most concerning in Afghanistan. Research has shown that deportees systematically fare worse than other returnees (whether refugees or voluntary migrants) across a set of key indicators, namely, income, transition, and social difficulties and mental health needs.

### **Income generation**

The data collected from a longitudinal research conducted in 2009–2011 (Majidi, 2009) shows that respondents earned on average USD 1,275 a month working in the United Kingdom, ranking them at the level of national minimum wage in the United Kingdom. In comparison, upon return to their home country and at the time of their interview, deportees reported a monthly wage of USD 151. The cost of living in Kabul and in London not being comparable, the actual income-generation potential of these men is still far greater in the United Kingdom.

*“In the UK, I earned 600 pounds/week. Here it is only 100 dollars a week. I cannot support my family with this money. Over there, one person can earn enough to feed 50 people in Afghanistan if he is reasonable and moderate in his life in the UK.” – Ahmad, 25, returned to Afghanistan in the winter of 2007 after six years of living in the United Kingdom*

### **A transition phase**

The reintegration package was viewed as a way to accommodate a difficult transition, to provide the initial funds to return home without too much shame and without empty pockets. The ability to count on six months of an income (albeit limited) or the opportunity to start a business gave these deportees a dignified post-arrival assistance. Nonetheless, in this study, 63 per cent of returnees claimed that the assistance provided fell short of offering the tools needed for a permanent return in Afghanistan. On average, 80 per cent of enforced returnees stated their willingness to leave Afghanistan again (Majidi, 2009).

*“I am going to leave gain. I want to go through Moscow to Canada this time. I just got my passport from the Afghan Government. Now I need USD 18,000 to pay for my entry to Canada. I will sell a property in Kabul that still belongs to my family to pay for it. I contacted a smuggler a week ago in Pakistan for him to start arranging the trip.” – Farid, 26, deported from the United Kingdom in June 2006*

### Social difficulties and mental health needs

The shame of failure and the perceptions of “contamination” in the West are clear among those forced to return from the West, as analysed in an article published in the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (Schuster and Majidi, 2015). The concept of stigma and contamination applies to the experiences of deported Afghans. This is particularly true for deportees from Europe who fall on the margins of their society: they are looked at differently and treated differently. A recent study on urban displaced youth (Samuel Hall, 2016a) goes a step further and shows the mental health needs among all youth, and specifically among deportees. According to the Health Index developed for this study, deportees remain more than 50 per cent more likely to be deprived from basic access to health care and have fewer socioeconomic ties to the local communities than other returnees.

The difficulties of deportees upon return go beyond the economic and financial aspects, to include the importance of stigma, contamination and rejection upon return. The biggest impediment remains the lack of attractiveness and of suitability of the assistance packages to the profiles of these deportees. The inherent focus on policy and not on social aspects and the inability of international organizations and non-governmental organizations to accompany the deportation process (before, during and after deportation) have created an environment of distrust among deportees (Samuel Hall, 2016b). These are part of the repelling factors (Schewel, 2015) that lead to negative perceptions about reintegration that influence migration decision-making and rising expectations of migration. As a result, deportees from Europe to Afghanistan maintain a disbelief in assistance to reintegrate, a consciousness of levels of relative deprivation and of the significant difference between life in Afghanistan and elsewhere, with a continued belief that greater opportunities are accessible abroad.

### On reintegration: Standards and post-return monitoring framework

Stakeholders are piloting new return and reintegration initiatives, moving from the exclusively individual approach incentivizing the returnee to take the return decision towards a community-of-origin support. For example, the EU Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development is

preparing programming for Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh to reduce the fragility of communities that are prone to migration. Individual reintegration amounts continue to differ considerably between one EU Member State and another, with some of them allowing only for pocket money to cover immediate expenses, while others funding vocational training and housing allowances. Harmonization should be sought and, in Afghanistan, the importance of linking reintegration to local development plans will be key to support returnees back as active agents in their communities. It is too early to say whether these approaches will be more effective, but they should be launched with a monitoring framework to know the outcomes and learn from them.

There is now a global call for more rigorous and scientific data on the resilience, self-reliance and well-being of migrant populations. This global conversation also includes Afghanistan. The Reintegration Working Group, chaired by the Government of Afghanistan and UNHCR, has spearheaded an inter-agency process to develop a Multi-Dimensional Integration Index (MDI) for Afghanistan. The MDI, which was developed by the independent think tank Samuel Hall (2016c), is a common tool that allows partners to assess the level of integration of returnees and internally displaced people. Several partners have piloted this standardized tool in 2016 to answer key questions: *What are the needs of the displaced after the initial phase of displacement? Are they at par, or above, the needs of the host community?* We can learn from these initiatives to build evidence on post-return outcomes and monitor integration in such a sensitive context.

Monitoring outcomes is a responsibility, especially in a context where conflict is on the rise. Reintegration must be planned before return even takes place. It cannot be thought about as a sequence of activities but rather a longer-term plan drawn up early on with a framework that includes the country of destination and the country of return. Such monitoring will need to include: a pre-return component, to assess skills and profiles to better match them with opportunities and tailored assistance upon return to increase the chances of a sustainable reintegration; and a clear post-return monitoring framework that includes common assessment forms and indicators. The MDI incorporates objective indicators and subjective ones, recognizing that people’s own self-assessment will be key to understanding their integration process.

There is, however, still an overall uncertainty as to the commitment by States to reintegration post-return. The political commitment is required: if returns continue, they should be closely tied to a clear post-return monitoring framework. Return and reintegration has become a paired concept, not yet a reality. If States want return and reintegration, are they ready to put in what is needed – from a proper monitoring framework to a longer-term investment in returns? Rethinking return and reintegration is required. What is needed is “an agenda not [centred] on [S]tates’ priorities but an agenda [centred] on people, contexts and coordination around return” (Majidi, 2016b). ■

**The political commitment is required: if returns continue, they should be closely tied to a clear post-return monitoring framework.**

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## Afghan settlers in Australia: Experiences, satisfaction and belonging

Andrew Markus<sup>1</sup>

The migration of Afghans to Australia has a long history, commencing in the nineteenth century. In recent decades, Afghans have arrived as refugees and asylum-seekers as a result of mass displacement from Afghanistan and challenging host-country conditions in Pakistan and Iran. Most of those who have arrived since the late 1990s have been Hazaras – a group with a strong ethnic identity that is politically active but significantly marginalized and excluded in Afghanistan and the region. In this context, the article considers the numbers, visa categories and demography of recent arrivals, and attitudes revealed in the Australia@2015 survey. In the concluding section policy implications are discussed for optimizing successful integration.

### Afghan migration to Australia

Small numbers of Afghans, some Baluchis from an area in present-day Pakistan, arrived in Australia beginning in 1859 to work as cattle drivers and camel drivers, transporting goods in remote regions in the interior of the continent.<sup>2</sup> With the development of the railway network and improvement in transportation, their place in the workforce was lost. There was no further movement to Australia for much of the twentieth century, the period of the White Australia policy. The Afghanistan-born population, as recorded in the Australian census, declined from 393 in 1901 to 22 in 1947, after which there was no enumeration of persons born in Afghanistan until 1986. In 1991 the Afghanistan-born population was 2,713, with rapid increase over the following two decades, the largest numbers arriving between 2006 and 2013.

Table 1: Australian population born in Afghanistan

Year	Population
1901	393
1911	200
1921	96
1933	47
1947	22
1986*	(1,503)
1991	2,713
1996	5,826
2001	11,296
2006	16,751
2011	28,599

Note: \*In 1986, persons born in Afghanistan were listed in the category “Other Asia”.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Australian Historical Population Statistics, 2014, catalogue number 3105.0.65.001.

Analysis of the Afghan population resident in Australia in 2011 finds that 3,871 persons arrived between 1986 and 1995; 10,822 during the 10-year period from 1996 to 2005; and 10,558 during the 5-year period from 2006 to 2011. The peak of arrivals occurred in 2012 and 2013, as discussed below. Of the population resident in 2011, 83 per cent had arrived in 15 years between 1996 and 2011.<sup>3</sup>

### Refugees and asylum-seekers

Nearly all Afghans who have gained residence in Australia in recent decades have done so as refugees, having obtained a visa offshore under the humanitarian programme, or a protection visa onshore after reaching Australia by boat, in most cases by making the hazardous boat journey from Indonesia to Australian territory. Over the five years from 2009–2010 to 2013–2014, 7,873 obtained a humanitarian visa and 7,332 a protection visa. Within the humanitarian programme, 1,755 visas granted to

1 Andrew Markus is the Pratt Foundation Research Professor in the Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation, Monash University.

2 Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), Community Information Summary, Afghanistan-born.

3 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011 census, analysed using TableBuilder Pro.

Afghanistan-born were under the “woman at risk” category (visa subclass 204), which prioritizes women living outside their home country who do not have the protection of a male relative and are in danger of victimization, harassment or serious abuse because of their gender. Over the five years to 2013–2014,

Afghanistan-born were within the top three countries of humanitarian visa grants, including the highest number of subclass 204 grants, and received the largest number of protection visa grants. Between 96 per cent and 100 per cent of protection visa applications by Afghanistan-born were successful.

**Table 2: Humanitarian visa grants to persons born in Afghanistan, including subclass 200 (refugee) and subclass 204 (woman at risk)**

	2008–2009	2009–2010	2010–2011	2011–2012	2012–2013	2013–2014
Visa grants	840	950	1,026	712	2,431	2,754
% of total grants	8	10	12	11	20	25
Country rank order	3	4	3	3	2	1

Source: Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), *Australia’s Offshore Humanitarian Programme: 2012–13*, p. 28; Australian Government Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP), *Australia’s Offshore Humanitarian Programme: 2013–14*, p. 26.

**Table 3: Final protection visa grants to persons of Afghan citizenship (onshore, irregular maritime arrivals)**

	2008–2009	2009–2010	2010–2011	2011–2012	2012–2013	2013–2014
Visa grants	176	1,440	1,336	1,970	2,354	232
% of total grants	84	67	49	41	47	43
Country rank order	1	1	1	1	1	1

Source: J. Phillips, “Asylum seekers and refugees: What are the facts?”, Parliament of Australia, 2015; DIBP, *Australia’s Migration Trends 2013–14*, p. 66.

### Characteristics of the Afghanistan-born population in the 2011 census

In the 2011 census, Afghanistan-born men outnumbered women in the ratio of 6:4. Of languages spoken in the home, 50 per cent spoke Dari; 21 per cent, Hazaraghi; 12 per cent, Persian (excluding Dari); and 7 per cent, Pashto. Of those who spoke a language other than English at home, 28 per cent spoke English not well or not at all. Australia’s Afghan population is relatively young, with a median age of 30 compared with 37 for the total Australian population.

The Afghan education level in part reflects a population disrupted by war and displacement: just 34 per cent of the Afghanistan-born aged 15 and over have some form of higher non-school qualifications, compared with 56 per cent of the Australia-born population. Of the Afghanistan-born aged 15 and over, 24 per cent were still attending an educational institution, compared with 9 per cent of the total Australian population. The median weekly income of the Afghanistan-born in Australia was USD 272 in

2011, compared with USD 538 of all overseas-born and USD 597 of all Australia-born.<sup>4</sup>

### The Australia@2015 survey

The Australia@2015 survey (henceforth referred to as Au@2015) was an online survey conducted between September 2015 and February 2016. The survey was available in 20 languages, including Dari and Persian, and was completed by more than 10,000 respondents.<sup>5</sup> Promotion of the survey to members of the Afghan community was assisted by the Afghan–Australian Initiative based in Dandenong, Victoria; a second organization – MDA – in Brisbane, Queensland, assisted with recruitment of asylum-seeker participants, of whom a number were Afghan.

4 DIAC, Community Information Summary, Afghanistan-born.

5 For further details, see: A. Markus, *Australians Today* (Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation, Monash University, 2016), available from [www.monash.edu/mapping-population](http://www.monash.edu/mapping-population)

A total of 199 Afghanistan-born persons completed the survey. Of the survey participants born in Afghanistan:

- all but one person indicated that both of their parents were born in Afghanistan, indicative of a homogenous population; by contrast, close to one half of the Australia-born population has a parent born in a country other than Australia;
- 80 per cent (159) were male, 20 per cent (40) female;
- 94 per cent were Muslim, with just one Afghanistan-born person of the Christian faith and four (2%) of no religion;
- 26 per cent (51) of the participants were awaiting final determination of their claims to asylum; of these, 45 (88%) arrived in 2012 or 2013;
- 61 respondents indicated that they arrived on a humanitarian visa and 37 on a family reunion visa – a total of 98; of these, 56 per cent arrived since 2010, and 44 per cent before 2010; and
- 25 per cent (50) had a university degree; 13 per cent, a diploma or certificate; the highest level of education of 52 per cent was year 12 or below, including 21 per cent who had only attended primary school.

The following discussion considers survey respondents who arrived in Australia between 2005 and 2015. Four visa-related categories are analysed: survey respondents born in Afghanistan who are (a) asylum-seekers or (b) humanitarian and family visa entrants, aggregated as humanitarian visa holders<sup>6</sup>; and *all respondents* who arrived between 2005 and 2015 as (c) business (subclass 457) and (d) skill independent visa holders, included to contextualize the Afghanistan-born within Australia's immigration programme.<sup>7</sup>

In the Au@2015 survey, of arrivals between 2005 and 2015, there were 78 Afghanistan-born respondents who entered on a humanitarian or family visa and 49 asylum-seekers. Over these years, of all survey respondents, 140 entered on a business visa and 403 on a skill independent visa.

Three general findings on Afghan entrants are discussed in the following.

First, attitude towards Australia is consistently positive. Thus, in response to the question "Has your experience of Australia been more positive than you expected before arrival, or has it been more negative?", only a small proportion of Afghan humanitarian entrants (16%) and asylum-seekers (14%) indicated that it was more negative, compared with 16 per cent of business visa holders and 21 per cent of skill independent visa holders. A positive response was indicated by 61 per cent of humanitarian entrants and 59 per cent of asylum-seekers.

**Table 4: Experience of Australia, by visa category**

Question: *Has your experience of Australia been more positive than you expected before arrival, or has it been more negative?*

	Business visa (subclass 457) holders (%)	Skill independent visa holders (%)	Humanitarian entrants (Afghanistan-born) (%)	Asylum-seekers (Afghanistan-born) (%)
Much more positive	18	13	31	12
More positive	33	33	30	47
As I expected	29	28	19	27
More negative	16	18	15	8
Much more negative	0	3	1	6
Decline/Don't know	4	5	4	0

6 Family typically enter under the Special Humanitarian Programme (i.e. within the Humanitarian Programme).

7 Business visa holders are nominated by employers to fill a labour requirement and obtain entry on a long-stay visa of up to four years. Skill independent visa holders are admitted for permanent residence on the basis of a test that includes qualifications and English language competence, but they are not required to have pre-arranged employment and may experience difficulty in obtaining work in their areas of qualification.

There is a similar pattern of response when Afghan asylum-seekers were asked concerning their level of satisfaction with life in Australia: 59 per cent indicated that they were satisfied, with a relatively high proportion providing a mid-range response (31% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied), and just 10 per cent

indicated that they were dissatisfied. In contrast, a higher 89 per cent of humanitarian entrants indicated that they were satisfied, at the same level as business visa holders (88%) and higher than skill independent holders (78%).

**Table 5: Satisfaction with life in Australia, by visa category**

Question: How satisfied are you with life in Australia?

	Business visa (subclass 457) holders (%)	Skill independent visa holders (%)	Humanitarian entrants (Afghanistan-born) (%)	Asylum-seekers (Afghanistan-born) (%)
Very satisfied	26	24	48	10
Satisfied	62	54	41	49
Neither satisfied/dissatisfied	10	14	7	31
Dissatisfied	1	5	3	9
Strongly dissatisfied	0	0	0	1
Don't know	0	3	1	1

One positive in the lives of Afghans in Australia is their ability to maintain contact with relatives and friends in Afghanistan and in refugee camps outside the country; 56 per cent of asylum-seekers and 62 per cent of humanitarian entrants indicated that they were in contact with their relatives and friends every day or several times a week through social media, such as Facebook. Almost the same proportion of asylum-seekers (51%) but a lower proportion of humanitarian entrants (37%) indicated that they maintained communication with relatives and friends by mobile phone at least several times a week.

Second, the survey provides evidence of difficulties faced by Afghan settlers in obtaining employment, and of their difficult financial position. Of business and skill independent visa holders, a majority indicated that they were in full-time employment, a much lower 31 per cent of humanitarian entrants and 24 per cent of asylum-seekers, who may not have work entitlement. The proportion indicating that they were unemployed was in the range of 9 per cent to 12 per cent for three of the visa categories, and 48 per cent for asylum-seekers.

When asked, however, if they were satisfied with their financial circumstances, only 19 per cent of asylum-seekers and 12 per cent of humanitarian entrants indicated that they were dissatisfied. This was a lower proportion than the 25 per cent of business and 28 per cent of skill independent visa holders who indicated dissatisfaction. Satisfaction with financial circumstances was highest among humanitarian entrants at 63 per cent, followed by 58 per cent among business visa holders, 45 per cent among skill independent visa holders and 30 per cent among Afghan asylum-seekers.<sup>8</sup>

A high proportion of asylum-seekers (48%) indicated that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, which may indicate a reluctance to provide a response that may be seen as critical of Australia. This pattern is evident in the response to a number of questions, some already noted.

8 A 2012 survey of irregular maritime arrivals utilized a different approach, asking respondents if their experience of life in Australia was more difficult or easier than expected. It found a correlation between indicated difficulty and English language competence and noted that less than 1 per cent of Afghan respondents stated that English was their primary language. See: M. McAuliffe, *Seeking the Views of Irregular Migrants: Decision Making, Drivers and Migration Journeys*, Occasional Paper Series, 05|2013 (Department of Immigration and Border Protection, Canberra, 2013), p. 29, available from [www.border.gov.au/ReportsandPublications/Documents/research/views-irregular-migrant-decision-drivers-journey.pdf](http://www.border.gov.au/ReportsandPublications/Documents/research/views-irregular-migrant-decision-drivers-journey.pdf)

**Table 6: Satisfaction with present financial situation, by visa category***Question: How satisfied are you with your present financial situation?*

	Business visa (subclass 457) holders (%)	Skill independent visa holders (%)	Humanitarian entrants (Afghanistan-born) (%)	Asylum-seekers (Afghanistan-born) (%)
Very satisfied	8	7	12	3
Satisfied	50	38	51	27
Neither satisfied/dissatisfied	15	25	23	48
Dissatisfied	17	20	6	17
Strongly dissatisfied	8	8	6	2
Don't know	3	2	3	2

When asked if they had experienced discrimination over the last 12 months on the basis of their skin colour, ethnicity or religion, the lowest proportion indicating experience of discrimination was among humanitarian entrants and asylum-seekers. Just 4 per cent of Afghan asylum-seekers indicated that they had experienced discrimination, despite the difficulties typically encountered during the long process of status determination. This may indicate the reluctance to criticize Australia, as noted, but may also be explained by the terrible conditions experienced prior to arrival, after which forms of discrimination in Australia may be seen as of minor consequence. A considerably higher 22 per cent of Afghan humanitarian entrants indicated experience of discrimination, but this is still lower than the 32 per cent of business visa holders and 38 per cent skill independent visa holders who indicated the same.

A third major finding is the high level of identification with Australia. When asked what they most like about Australia from a list of 13 options, 49 per cent of asylum-seekers selected “there is freedom and democracy”; this was also the first choice of humanitarian entrants, at 37 per cent. The Afghanistan-born placed greater importance on Australia’s “freedom and democracy” than skill independent visa holders (15%), business visa holders (5%) and Australia-born (22%).

When asked, however, concerning sense of belonging, there was a marked contrast between asylum-seekers and those who had been given permanency through a humanitarian visa: 47 per cent of asylum-seekers indicated that they had a sense of belonging to a great or moderate extent, compared with 90 per cent of humanitarian entrants, the highest of the four groups analysed. Sense of belonging was indicated by 69 per cent of skill independent visa holders and 65 per cent of business visa holders.

**Table 7: Extent of sense of belonging in Australia, by visa category***Question: To what extent do you have a sense of belonging in Australia?*

	Business visa (subclass 457) holders (%)	Skill independent visa holders (%)	Humanitarian entrants (Afghanistan-born) (%)	Asylum-seekers (Afghanistan-born) (%)
To a great extent	18	30	58	20
To a moderate extent	47	39	32	27
Only slightly	28	18	11	6
Not at all	3	7	0	0
Don't know/Decline to answer	4	7	0	48

### Policy implications

The survey findings point to much goodwill among the Afghans in Australia, a desire to become citizens and contribute to their new homeland. Focus group discussions provided further evidence of positive disposition:

There's no single Hazara who [is] unhappy about Australia. I know even those people [who] have some challenges in Australia . . . [concerning] the cost of living and the lack of attention from agencies and governments, especially Immigration, . . . are happy [with the] freedom and security. . . . We consider ourselves as very proud Australian citizens.

Others spoke of their “love [for] this country”. Some said “We are thankful to God that we are here. . . .”

There is the opportunity at the three levels of government to engage with the relatively young Afghan community, to listen to current needs, provide support at a meaningful level to nurture further development of mutual support, sponsor engagement with the mainstream, and maximize the educational opportunities of those who have been deprived by war and displacement. Investment today will return benefit to Australia many times over. ■

**Investment today  
will return benefit to  
Australia many times over.**

# Crowdfunding for migration, asylum and human rights projects worldwide

Create new futures

Fund your business, development, humanitarian or research project through your Diaspora and other supporters and benefactors



Crowdfunding is an increasingly popular and successful mechanism to generate funding for worthwhile projects and initiatives.

MigFunder ([www.migfunder.com/](http://www.migfunder.com/)), the first and only crowdfunding platform dedicated solely to migration, refugee and human rights initiatives worldwide, was launched a few months ago.

The platform caters to migrants looking to create (or grow) their businesses abroad or in their countries of origin, as well as to migrant organizations, public agencies, non-governmental organizations, and individuals looking to launch a development or humanitarian initiative in support of immigrant and refugee communities worldwide, or a research project/conference in the field of migration, asylum or human rights policy.

This is a pioneering initiative that will contribute potentially to reducing the effects of budget cuts and underfunding in major refugee, migration

and human rights programmes around the world. MigFunder was established by a group of European migration policy experts, including former senior government officials, reputable researchers and IT developers, who set out to extend the facilities and benefits of a crowdfunding platform to the specific needs of immigration, refugee and human rights affairs worldwide.

MigFunder targets, primarily but not exclusively, members of the diaspora who are willing and able to support viable business projects from their compatriots, as well as development, humanitarian and research initiatives in the countries of immigration or origin.

Current campaigns on MigFunder originate from organizations such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Doctors of the World, the Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS), Business in the Community Ireland and Quist Solicitors, among others. Most are concerned with the current refugee crisis.

For any further information, or to submit a campaign, please contact **Solon Ardittis** ([sardittis@migfunder.com](mailto:sardittis@migfunder.com)) or **Don Ingham** ([dingham@migfunder.com](mailto:dingham@migfunder.com)).

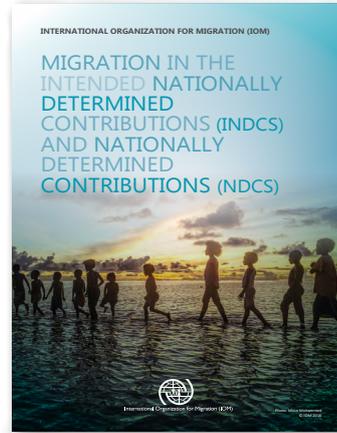
# Publications



**Global Migration Data Analysis Centre: Data Briefing Series | Issue No. 4, August 2016**  
2016/10 pages/English  
ISSN 2415-1653

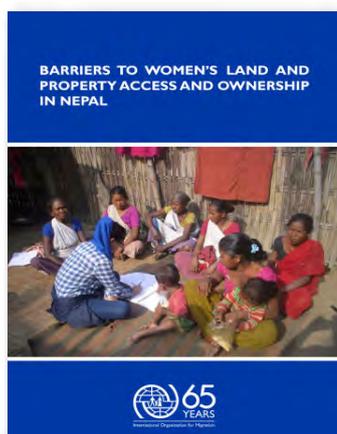
IOM’s Missing Migrant Project has recorded over 3,700 people who lost their lives or went missing in the course of migration in the first half of 2016. This startling figure is a 28-per cent increase compared with the numbers recorded in the same period in 2015. While this can partly be attributed to improving data collection, it also speaks to the level of risk associated with attempting to move across international borders in 2016.

This data briefing, produced by IOM’s Global Migration Data Analysis Centre, outlines data recorded by the Missing Migrants Project in the first half of 2016. The contexts in which people died and went missing while migrating in key regions around the world, including Central America, South-East Asia and the Middle East, are discussed. The data show, for instance, a decrease in the number of deaths recorded in South-East Asia in the first half of 2016 compared with the same period in 2015, and that more migrants have died in the Middle East and North Africa due to violent means in the first six months of 2016 compared with the whole of 2015. The Mediterranean Sea, which accounts for 78 per cent of the data collected from 1 June to 30 June 2016, is also discussed, with analysis of the three main routes taken by those attempting to migrate towards Europe: the Eastern, Central and Western routes. The challenges involved in identifying those who die during irregular migration are also examined.



**Migration in the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)**  
2016/8 pages/English

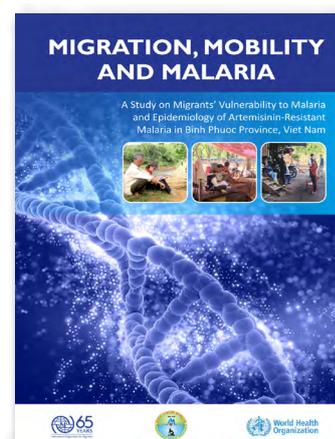
This research produced by the Migration, Environment and Climate Change (MECC) Division of the International Organization for Migration summarizes the references to migration in the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the United Nations Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and provides an analytical overview of the migration dimension of the submitted climate action commitments. According to the research, 20 per cent of the current submissions mention migration in one of its different forms and the references mostly focus on the three dimensions of climate migration: managing the effects of climate change, using migration as a possible adaptation strategy and leveraging financial transfers from migrants to contribute to climate action.



**Barriers to Women's Land and Property Access and Ownership in Nepal**  
2016/75 pages/English

A number of studies have suggested that strengthening women's rights to land and property not only enhances their bargaining power within their family and community, but also contributes to greater agricultural productivity and household welfare through better nutrition and food security. In addition, securing land and property rights of women also contribute to reducing domestic violence. While it has been established that women's ownership of land and property can have far-reaching positive impacts, these rights are not easily realized, and women in Nepal remain significantly less likely than men to own land and property. According to the population census of 2011, only in 19.71 per cent of the households in the country, women have ownership of land and property.

This report analyses significant barriers that women in Nepal are facing in accessing land and property. In addition to identifying the gaps and loopholes in the legal framework, the report also identifies institutional, sociocultural, structural, administrative and institutional barriers, including knowledge and information gaps to women's right to land and property. The report also reviews experiences in terms of constitutional and legal interventions of four neighbouring South Asian countries in relation to women's land and property rights. Lastly, the report provides a set of recommendations to the Government of Nepal, as well as community-based organizations in addressing the identified barriers for promoting women's rights to land and property in Nepal.



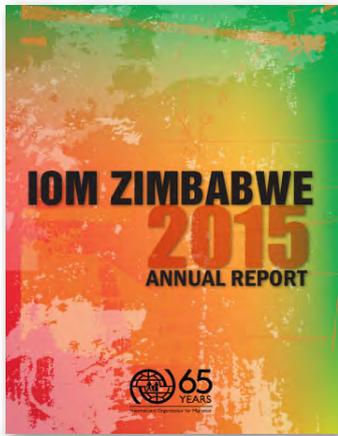
**Migration, Mobility and Malaria: A Study on Migrants' Vulnerability to Malaria and Epidemiology of Artemisinin-Resistant Malaria in Binh Phuoc Province, Viet Nam**  
2016/84 pages/Vietnamese

In 2015, 12.6 per cent of Viet Nam's population lived in malaria-endemic areas. Considerable progress has been made in decreasing overall rates of malaria and malaria-related deaths. However, there are some worrying trends, with noted slower progress in reducing malaria-related admissions and deaths in 2013 and 2014. Also of concern is the increasing level of resistance to artemisinin, a key drug for combatting malaria. Despite growing awareness of the importance of including migrants and mobile populations (MMP) in malaria strategies, this group of people continues to be referred to as a "homogenous risk group". More-so, according to the World Health Organization, not enough is known about how "population mobility shapes malaria transmission and epidemiology" (WHO, 2015).

This report highlights the findings from an empirical study on migration, mobility and malaria conducted in Binh Phuoc, Viet Nam, with financial and technical support from IOM and WHO.

Situated at the border with Cambodia, Binh Phuoc was selected as the research site on account of its high levels of both malaria and migration. The Province recorded Viet Nam's first case of artemisinin resistance in 2009, and the highest malaria prevalence in 2015, with 1.96 cases per 1,000 population.

This report is valuable also on account of it providing important information which documents significant gaps between the different MMP groups, as well as between MMP and the local population in terms of knowledge, exposure and access to malaria treatment services.



**IOM Zimbabwe Annual Report 2015**  
2016/14 pages/[English](#)

In response to the decade long migration crisis in Zimbabwe, IOM – with support from various donors – has been implementing a comprehensive humanitarian assistance programme for internally displaced persons in new cases of internal displacement, returned migrants and third-country nationals, as well as facilitate the transition towards community stabilization and recovery for communities affected by long-term internal displacement and cross-border migration.

The project was based on the IOM Framework for Assistance to IDPs in Zimbabwe (2011) and the Community Stabilization Interventions for Migration-affected Areas (2013), which are grounded in local government leadership, community mobilization and socially and economically inclusive participation processes.

## MPP Readers' Survey

*Migration Policy Practice (MPP)* was launched three years ago and the editors would now like to invite readers to spare a couple of minutes to participate in a short readers' satisfaction survey.

The purpose of this survey, which can be taken anonymously, is to help us identify our readers' profiles, the institutions they represent and their primary interests in our journal. The survey's responses will contribute, in particular, to adjusting and improving, as appropriate, *MPP's* content and style, and thus the reader's experience.

Should you wish to participate in this survey, please [click here](#).

Thank you.





## Call for authors/Submission guidelines

Since its launch in October 2011, *Migration Policy Practice* has published over 110 articles by senior policymakers and distinguished migration policy experts from all over the world.

### Past authors have included, inter alia:

*Eric Adja*, Director General of the International Migrants Remittances Observatory (IMRO) and Special Adviser to the President of Benin; *John K. Bingham*, Global Coordinator of civil society activities in the United Nations High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development and the Global Forum on Migration and Development; *Ambassador Eva Åkerman Börje*, Chair of the GFMD 2013-2014; *Mark Cully*, Chief Economist at the Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection; *António Guterres*, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; *Khalid Koser*, Chair of the World Economic Forum Global Agenda Council on Migration; *Khalid Malik*, Director of the Human Development Report Office, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); *Cecilia Mamlström*, EU Commissioner for Home Affairs; *Ali Mansoor*, Chair of the GFMD 2012; *Andrew Middleton*, Director of Culture, Recreation and Migrant Statistics, Australian Bureau of Statistics; *Najat Maalla M'Jid*, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; *Robert A. Moczny*, Director of US-VISIT, US Department of Homeland Security; *Imelda M. Nicolas*, Secretary of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO), Office of the President of the Philippines; *Ignacio Packer*, Secretary General of the Terre des Hommes International Federation; *Kelly Ryan* (Coordinator of the Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees – IGC, Geneva); *Martin Schulz*, President of the European Parliament; *David Smith*, Director of Surveys and Reporting, Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection; *Sir Peter D. Sutherland*, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Migration; *Ambassador William Lacy Swing*, Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM); *Myria Vassiliadou*, EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, European Commission; *Catherine Wiesner*, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, US Department of State.

### *Migration Policy Practice* welcomes submissions from policymakers worldwide. As a general rule, articles should:

- Not exceed five pages and be written in a non-academic and reader-friendly style.
- Cover any area of migration policy but discuss, as far as possible, particular solutions, policy options or best practice relating to the themes covered.
- Provide, as often as applicable, lessons that can be replicated or adapted by relevant public administrations, or civil society, in other countries.

Articles giving account of evaluations of specific migration policies and interventions, including both evaluation findings and innovative evaluation methodologies, are particularly welcome.

### To discuss any aspect of the journal, or to submit an article, please contact:

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