

FMO RESEARCH GUIDE: AFGHANISTAN

Author: Teresa Poppelwell

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UN agencies

Red Cross

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OFFICIAL NAME: ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN

Capital: Kabul

Estimated Population: 31,056,000 (2006 estimate as no systematic census has been held in decades)

Maps and data

[Assisted Voluntary Repatriation to Afghanistan: Return By Province of Destination](#)

[Afghanistan: IDPs Assisted Return to their Places of Origin 2003-2006](#)

[Assisted Voluntary Repatriation to Afghanistan: by province of country of asylum \(Pakistan\)](#)

[Assisted Voluntary Repatriation to Afghanistan: by province of country of asylum \(Iran\)](#)

<http://www.infoplease.com/atlas/country/afghanistan.html>

[Afghanistan: IDPs Population Estimate \(Individuals\) by Camps and Settlements \(Feb 2007\)](#)

[Afghanistan: UNHCR Assisted Repatriation Province of Destination](#)

[Relief Web](#)

[Afghanistan Information Management Service](#)

1.0 Summary

Twenty three years of civil war in Afghanistan created large numbers of refugees and IDPs - many of whom have returned home over the last six years following the fall of the Taliban in 2001. For many, their search for employment, adequate and affordable housing, access to basic services, reclamation of property, and reintegration into communities has been fraught with difficulty. At the same time, return is made difficult or in some cases impossible as peace and security remains illusive in some parts of the country. As the country struggles along the long road of reconstruction, the durability of the return is dependent on the establishment of the state – its institutions and the establishment of the rule of law - and its ability to create opportunities within an environment of security which enables its citizens to thrive rather than simply survive. Throughout, significant challenges lie ahead as Afghanistan’s development indicators continue to be poor. An estimated 20-40 per cent of rural Afghans are malnourished, and roughly 70 per cent of the population live on less than USD 2 a day. Over two-thirds of Afghans over the age of 15 cannot read and write; and one in five children die before they reach their fifth birthday.

In rural areas, lack of modernisation of the agricultural sector limits the productive capacity of farms – many of which can no longer support growing families or returnees. At the same time, Afghanistan has experienced unparalleled growth of the urban population in the last five years – due in part to the organised return of refugees (roughly one million) – as well as spontaneous migration to urban areas. Many of the urban settlements to which refugees have returned are ‘informal’ or lacking in basic services. Ongoing difficulty in resolving land disputes is proving to be a major hindrance to reconstruction and investment. Within this context, households must build sustainable livelihoods to ensure a successful return and reintegration.

The Government of Afghanistan and the international community have had to address, from 2002 onward, critical problems of security, demobilisation of combatants, facilitating the return and reintegration of refugees and IDPs, and the establishment of state infrastructure against the backdrop of serious deprivation and social vulnerability. Measures to ensure the *viability* of return have been undertaken on a number of fronts which target the general population but also aim to reintegrate returnees and IDPs. At the community level, reintegration of refugees and IDPs into the social and economic fabric is being addressed through targeted assistance which addresses severe deficits with regards to access to infrastructure and services in selected vulnerable communities with high levels of returnees and IDPs in a way that builds community cohesion and reduces social exclusion.

2.0 Overview

2.1 Historical political overview

2.1.1 The rule of the monarchy

Afghanistan was at the centre of commerce, religion and notable intellectual developments. Throughout its long history, the country has often been referred to as *Sarzameen-e-Bay*, ‘the lawless land’. In 1747, Ahmad Shah Durrani took steps to change this perception by establishing a confederacy under the unifying name of Afghanistan – the ‘land of the Afghan’. In 1923, the first Afghan Constitution was introduced marking a move away from autocratic rule.

In 1931, King Muhammad Nadir Shah (1929-1933), introduced the second Afghan Constitution which introduced further additions in systems of law, although, the country continued to be run as an oligarchy. The *loya jirga*, or grand council of tribal leaders, continued to enjoy great influence, although popular participation in political affairs was discouraged. During the King’s reign, a national army was formed, and investments were made in transportation and communication networks. Nadir Shah’s rule ended in 1933 when he was assassinated.

Nadir Shah’s son, Mohammad Zahir Shah, succeeded him and his rule lasted a remarkable 50

years. During his reign, Afghanistan enjoyed relative peace within the country, reasonably good relations with its neighbours, and the country became a recognized member of the international community when it joined the League of Nations in 1934. This period was characterized by greater political tolerance and liberalisation, but reverted back to oligarchic rule when it appeared that the King's power was in jeopardy. From 1963-73, during the last decade of the King's rule, Zahir Shah sought greater stability through limited democratic reform with the introduction of the Third Afghan Constitution of 1964. Under the 1964 Constitution, the rights of the individual were championed, and although *sharia* law (Islamic law) was referred to, the constitution introduced an independent judiciary, thereby establishing the supremacy of secular law. The new constitution created a constitutional monarchy, with a legislature. However, most of the power remained with the king.

In 1965, the first elections were held resulting in a relatively broad-based representation within the lower house of parliament, the *wolesi jirga*, including anti-royalists and people from both the left and the right of the political spectrum. Prior to the election, the king allowed the establishment of a community party, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). Despite the elections, the Afghan political system remained caught between that of a democracy and a monarchy. A form of democracy continued to exist in the lower house of parliament in the form of *jirgas* which were attended by the tribal leaders.

According to the 1964 Constitution, a second election was to be held four years later to elect members to parliament, but the next four years brought increased political instability and public discontent. In 1973, Daoud, the cousin of King Zahir Shah took advantage of the instability and carried out a *coup d'etat* - seizing power and marking the end of the rule of Pashtun monarchs which had existed since 1747. In 1977, the Fourth Afghan Constitution was approved through the *loya jirga* - replacing the monarch's rule with a presidential, one-party system of government. At the beginning of Daoud's rule, the Soviets had considerable influence in Afghanistan as technical advisors and through development assistance. By 1976, Daoud had broken ties with the Afghan PDPA and was re-establishing ties with nations such as Iran, India, and the USA. Daoud's rule ended in a *coup d'etat* in 1978 which resulted in the death of both himself and most of his family. Daoud was succeeded by the internally divided PDPA with the support of the Soviet Union.

Websites:

[US Department of State](#)

[BBC](#)

[Public Broadcasting Service](#)

[Afghanan dot Net](#)

2.1.2 Previous attempts at nation-building

Attempts at political reform in Afghanistan in the twentieth century did not have significant impact on broadening loyalties from the family and the tribe to that of the nation (Shahrani, 1940). This was due in part to the lack of progress in expanding communication and transportation networks, and limited success in increasing literacy rates. While ethnic and tribal differences always existed, the legitimisation of state power was hampered on two fronts. First, a lack of reliable sources of state revenue plagued the central state since its inception in the eighteenth century. The British were the main source of revenue throughout the nation-building exercise in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. This was followed by massive financial investment from the USSR during its occupation and later, during the *mujahudeen* era, contributions from the US and other Western nations.

Second, the state attempted to legitimise power by playing off one group against another through political and financial incentives, which turned religious and ethnic pluralism into social fragmentation. Tribal structures were further entrenched as the central government relied on local leaders for financial and military assistance (Shahrani, 1990). As a result, prior to the war and ensuing refugee crisis in Afghanistan which began in 1978, little progress had been made towards the formation of the nation-state (Janata, 1990). More recently, the international community is once again propping up the state in the reconstruction effort by paying government salaries and funding development projects. Such obstacles must be once again addressed in this current period of nation-building.

2.1.3 The Soviet occupation and the rise of the *mujahudeen*

The Soviet influence, which had increased over the years, culminated in a full-scale Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in 1979 and the drafting of the 1980 Interim Constitution. In response to the occupation, groups outside the country established political parties as a way of gathering support – both financial and human – to oust the Soviets. The most prominent parties included Rabbani’s Jamiat-i-Islami, Hizb-e-Islami led by Hikmatyar, and a second group of the same name led by Yunus Khales. Sayyaf headed up a fourth fundamentalist group, Ittehad-i-Islami. Other groups were formed to represent minority groups such as the Shia Muslims of Hazarajat. Despite their label as ‘freedom fighters’, (*mujahudeen*), their aim was not to bring democratic rule but to redefine Islam in Afghan society. At the same time, ‘traditionalist’ groups emerged – some of which were interested in restoring the exiled monarch as the head of state. Within the country, fighting between the communists and the *mujahudeen* groups broke out, triggering the world’s largest refugee crisis at the time. While many millions fled, others remained in Afghanistan to support the *mujahudeen* in guerrilla warfare against the Soviets and their communist Afghan supporters. Throughout this period, the west provided aid and military arms to these groups. At the same time, the drug trade flourished. In 1988, an agreement was reached for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan and the repatriation of refugees. The last troops left in February of 1989. With civil society in tatters, and the rise of an economy based on the drugs and the country awash with weapons, the *mujahudeen* groups that had worked towards a common goal turned on each other in an effort to take control of the country. (See [Conflict-induced displacement](#)).

Websites:

[Law Library of Congress](#)

[Afghanistan Online](#)

[U.S. Department of State](#)

[Wikipedia](#)

2.1.4 Rise of the Taliban

Between April 1992 and September 1996, the various *mujahudeen* factions battled for control of Kabul and other parts of the country. Throughout the fighting, ethnic divisions were as important as personal rivalries. Diplomatic solutions (Islamabad and Jalalabad Accords) were doomed to fail due to a lack of trust between the main players and outside interference – making it impossible to form a representative political body. At the same time, following the fall of Najib’s government and the disintegration of the USSR, the US administration pulled out of the region. Refugees entering Pakistan found a network of Islamist Afghan parties under the protection of the military and the Pakistani religious parties (mainly *Jamiat-i Islami Pakistan* and *Jamiat-i Ulama-yi Islami Pakistan*). Based on the leverage Pakistan had gained over the *mujahudeen* since the beginning of the civil war, it became a force for shaping events in the region. In time, the Peshawar parties became unwieldy, prompting the Pakistani leadership to form an alternative - the Taliban. A ‘talib’ is a student of Islam who attends a

madrassa or religious school. Saudi Arabia and other individuals from the Arab world, most notably Osama bin Laden, soon lent their financial and political support in an effort to create a pure Islamic model state.

Afghanistan had been carved up into fiefdoms controlled by commanders and warlords – many of whom had been armed during the *mujahudeen* era. The rule of law had completely broken down, and tribal or customary law was applied at will by those in power. Afghans lived in constant fear of sexual and physical assault. Out of this chaos, the Taliban emerged onto the scene and quickly gained support of the populace – particularly amongst the tribes - as a movement that would reinstate order and respect for the principles of Islam. Like Durrani had done with the tribes 200 years before, the Taliban unified the warlords and brought a measure of security to the southern region which had not existed since the beginning of the Soviet occupation. Once the Taliban had taken Kandahar, Herat fell in a bloodless take over and in September 1996, the Taliban pushed all commanders from Kabul. Over the next two years, front lines moved on a regular basis, but the most difficult battle came in 1998 with the take-over of Mazar-e-Sharif. From the outset, Taliban control of Mazar was viewed by its inhabitants as an ‘occupation’ – a reflection of the ethnic tensions which had been stirred up over years of war, and cultural and religious differences. To fight the Taliban, a number of the *mujahudeen* commanders loosely banded together under the banner of the Northern Alliance or the United Front (UF).

While military campaigns continued, the Taliban cobbled together some semblance of a administration in the areas it controlled. All policies originated from those at the core of the movement – most notably Mullah Omar who was their ‘anointed’ leader. By 1997, a number of events contributed to a growing lack of acceptance within the international community of the Taliban – primarily due to repressive policies towards women and girls, the strict implementation of *Shar’ia* law, and a general disregard for international law. In 1998, following the bombing of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the Taliban were requested to stop harbouring Osama bin Laden, who was believed to be the mastermind behind the bombings. They refused, and the UN responded by imposing sanctions against the regime in 1999. A second set of sanctions aimed at stopping the supply of arms and financial support to the Taliban were implemented in 2000 in an effort to bring down the regime. Despite the sanctions, the regime was unrelenting in its stance on bin Laden and remained convinced that it would win the territory controlled by the Northern Alliance.

Websites:

[U.S. Department of State](#)

[UNHCHR](#)

[UN – Islamabad: Situation in and around Afghanistan](#)

[UN Press Releases](#)

2.1.5 Post ‘9/11’

The tragic events which took place on 11 September 2001 in the USA marked the beginning of a new era in international security. It also marked the beginning of the demise of the Taliban. Within hours of the collapse of the World Trade Centre’s twin towers, Osama bin Laden was linked to the attack which was made possible by the support provided to him by the Taliban. After several weeks of unsuccessful negotiations with the Taliban to give up bin Laden, the USA invoked Article 5 of the Washington Treaty and launched a military campaign to find bin Laden and overthrow the regime which had played host to him and the terrorist network, al-Qaeda. The United Front (UF), with local knowledge and soldiers at the ready, were an effective ally in this effort. Within a matter of weeks, the UF once again had

control of Kabul. (See [Conflict-induced displacement](#)) .

Websites:

[U.S. Department of State](#)

[NATO](#)

2.2 Current Political Overview

2.2.1 The Bonn Agreement (2001-2005)

In December 2001, an interim administration was established under the UN-brokered Bonn Agreement. The agreement encompassed an interim power sharing arrangement, the creation of a new constitution, and elections in 2004. The agreement aimed to form a multi-ethnic broad-based government with the establishment of a thirty-member executive council, led by the Pashtun leader Hamid Karzai. The agreement acknowledges ‘the right of the people of Afghanistan to freely determine their own political future, in accordance with the principles of Islam, democracy, pluralism, and social justice.’ The transitional government was given a mandate of six months.

Key ministerial positions were filled by members of the United Front (UF) who were active during the *mujahudeen* era – some of which were responsible for countless human rights violations. Following the agreement, some commanders, such as Uzbek warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum, threatened to boycott the interim government. The exiled king Zahir Shah returned to Afghanistan as a figure head and a unifying force in the country. Despite the appointment of Karzai as the head of the interim government, many Pashtuns felt marginalized by the process, and remain unsatisfied with the high representation of UF commanders in the administration. The ‘Interim Authority’ was given a seat at the UN. The Bonn Agreement also established the mandate for a UN international peace-keeping force – the International Security Force for Afghanistan (ISAF).

A critical component of the Bonn Accord, was the emergency *loya jirga* which was convened in June 2002, with a participation of up to 1,500 Afghans from all over the country. The aim of the *jirga* was to give political legitimacy to the peace process and approve the broad-based Afghan Transitional Authority (ATA), which would run the country through to 2004. This was followed by a ‘Constitutional *loya jirga*’ which was convened in December 2003 and finalised in January 2004. Upon transfer of power, all *mujahedeen* and Afghan armed forces and groups were meant to come under the control of the ATA. Democratic elections for the Presidency were to be held in mid-2004 and in September/October 2005, parliamentary elections and provincial elections were held. This marked the end of the Bonn process which was formalised at the London Conference in 2006 with the signing of the Afghanistan Compact.

Websites:

[Human Rights Watch](#)

[Q & A on Afghanistan’s Loya Jirga Process](#)

[Afghanistan’s Bonn Agreement One Year Later](#)

[Afghan Government](#)

[International Crisis Group](#)

[George Washington University](#)

[International Constitutional Law](#)

[NATO](#)

2.2.2 The Afghanistan Compact (2006-2010)

The following broadly outlines the factors and conditions which currently characterize the development and political landscape in Afghanistan. From 2006 onwards, there is an actual and perceived spread of insecurity and growing pockets of insurgency – particularly in the south but also in city centres such as Kabul. The Taliban has been effective in rebuilding the organisation from bases within Pakistan and a support base in Afghanistan between 2002 and 2004, and re-emerged as a force to be reckoned with in 2006.

Many Afghans complain of a deepening disappointment in the government – particularly in Karzai’s administration – and its ability to ensure security, meet expectations, address corruption which is pervasive, and create meaningful and equitable economic opportunities. Five years on from the fall of the Taliban, there is, in many locations, limited visible impact or substantial change to people’s lives. This is the result of flagging security, poor governance/public administration, and slow progress towards development. There is a general perception that the government lacks capacity to deliver *meaningful* programmes/projects.

To redress these concerns, the London Conference held in January 2006 brought the international community together in order to focus efforts post-Bonn. The Compact identifies three pillars of action which are interdependent and are to be implemented over a five year horizon (2006-2010). These pillars are: security, governance, the rule of law and human rights; economic and social development; and the cross-cutting issue of counter-narcotics. The government, donors and assistance organisations are measuring success against the Afghanistan Compact and its objectives. A Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board has also been established to monitor progress on a regular basis. The declining insecurity in parts of the country – particularly the south –however is in the short-term at least an obstacle to achieving the goals defined in the Compact. Many also believe that even if the security climate had not declined, the timelines and benchmarks were overly ambitious and not well defined in terms of priorities.

Websites:

[UNAMA](#)

International Crisis Group

[Afghanistan country page](#)

[‘Countering Afghanistan’s Insurgency: No Quick Fixes’](#)

[‘Afghanistan’s Endangered Compact’](#)

AREU

[‘Provincial Governance Structures in Afghanistan: From Confusion to Vision’](#)

2.2.3 Security and the role of ISAF

Following the collapse of the Taliban in 2001, a US-led coalition force continued to undertake military operations throughout the country to root out terrorist elements such as al Qaeda. In addition, the Bonn Agreement authorised the deployment of a UN-mandated North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) led multi-national force, called the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The ISAF was initially comprised of 2,500 troops which were stationed in Kabul with a mandate to extend law and order, provide protection to political leaders, prevent violence, distribute supplies, and contribute to nation-building. At that time, an agreement was established for the creation of a three-way partnership between the Afghan

Transitional Authority, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and ISAF. ISAF is not a UN force but ‘a coalition of the willing’ acting under UN Security Council Resolutions (1386, 1413 1444, 1510, 1563, 1623, 1659 and 1717), all of which are related to the establishment and mandate of ISAF.

Since its inception, numerous requests were made to expand the force outside of Kabul to assist in stabilizing the country and to meet the security needs for undertaking humanitarian operations. While the expansion of the force might indicate that the central government did not have control of the country, others argued that an international presence was essential to bring regional warlords and armed gangs under control. In September 2002, the U.S. policy on peacekeeping in Afghanistan shifted to accept an expansion of international peacekeeping operations outside of Kabul.

On 11 August 2003, NATO assumed authority for the ISAF mission with the aim of creating a common command structure to enable better planning and coordination. In October 2003, the United Nations extended ISAF’s mandate to the whole of Afghanistan (UNSCR 1510) which created the legal conditions for the expansion of the mission. As of January 2007, there are currently 37 Troop Contributing Nations (TCNs) with a total of approximately 32,800 troops. In addition, the American led ‘Enduring Freedom’ has approximately 8,000 troops which continue to focus on hunting down Al Qaeda. Around the country there are five Regional Commands (RCs). Each of the Regional Commands has a varying number of Provincial Reconstruction Teams – each led by various contributing nations, which report to them.

Recent events indicate that NATO/ISAF’s engagement in Afghanistan will continue for the long term. On 6 September 2006, President Karzai and the Secretary General of NATO, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer signed the ‘Declaration by NATO and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan’ which is a framework for long term cooperation and partnership. This declaration, as well as the fact that the NATO presence in the region is an important element on the ‘war on terror’, indicates that NATO and the ISAF mission will have an enduring presence in Afghanistan for a number of years. ISAF will remain in Afghanistan until ‘the people of Afghanistan have developed government structures and security forces that are sustainable and capable of ensuring the security of all Afghans without outside support.’

ISAF’s primary role is to support the Government of Afghanistan in providing and maintaining a secure environment that will be conducive to establishing democratic structures, to facilitate the reconstruction of the country and to assist in expanding the influence of the central government. ISAF’s key military tasks include:

assisting the Afghan government in extending its authority across the country, conducting stability and security operations in coordination with the Afghan national security forces: mentoring and supporting the Afghan national army; and supporting Afghan government programmes to disarm illegally armed groups.

ISAF’s mandate does not enable them to participate in poppy eradication or the destruction of processing facilities or interdiction of drug trafficking, although it can support Afghan security forces in their efforts. ISAF forces conduct regular patrols from the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) located throughout Afghanistan in order to extend the arm of the government and improve security. The PRTs also carry out reconstruction activities in an effort to win hearts and minds and bring improvements to locations which are remote and in some cases insecure. ISAF has also been involved in the training of the Afghan National Army and National Police as well as the cantonment of heavy weapons, which is critical in reducing the influence and power of local commanders and extending the rule of law.

Websites:

[The Brookings Institution](#)

Human Rights Watch

[World Reports](#)

[Afghanistan country page](#)

[Relief Web](#) – Afghanistan country page

[Afghanistan Information Management Service](#)

[NATO - ISAF](#)

2.2.4 Protection and Human Rights

The record of human rights abuses in Afghanistan is long and grave. Throughout the years of conflict, violent acts of torture, rape and summary executions were commonplace. Under the Taliban, punitive justice was meted out as an instrument for strengthening control over populations and based on the justification of the implementation of a puritanical form of Shar'ia Law. The most notable violations include those which occurred during the Taliban's take-over of the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif in 1998, and executions of civilians in Hazarajat in 2001.

Immediately following the ousting of the Taliban, Afghanistan continued to be fraught with insecurity and outbreaks of violence - with no promise of justice for victims of war crimes. Investigation into abuses were not taken up immediately following the installation of the ATA for political reasons but also practical ones, such as the need to completely overhaul the justice system. The period 2001-02 continued to be characterized by ethnic, political and territorial divisions which led to conflict and tension in pockets throughout the country. In 2002 and early 2003, areas in the north of the country continued to be insecure, leaving many refugees and IDPs reluctant to return home. However, overall there was a general improvement in human rights. Issues pertaining to land and property restoration made return of displaced persons particularly difficult and assistance agencies were over stretched and in many ways, unprepared to address the problems. This was due in part to the sheer numbers of returnees and also a shortfall in budgets for both reconstruction and rehabilitation which was vital for facilitating return. Women and girls experienced relaxed restrictions on mobility, dress and employment. However, in some parts of the country they continued to experience discrimination and harassment.

Under the Bonn Agreement, the Interim Administration, with the assistance of the United Nations, an independent Human Rights Commission was established to document human rights violations committed over the last 20 years. The Commission was meant to monitor and investigate violations of human rights, and oversee the development of domestic human rights institutions. Human rights groups also called for the creation of an international commission of experts to investigate crimes against humanity and violations of international law – although no war crimes tribunal was established. Amnesty International called for the establishment of a mechanism which would allow for the investigation of human rights violations while helping to secure the protection of basic human rights. Amnesty International also argued that long-lasting peace in Afghanistan could only be realised if respect for human rights was widely promoted and violators – both past and future – were held accountable. In 2002, Karzai stated that he will bring those who have committed human rights violations to justice. The politics of the country have made this task difficult.

Throughout 2003 and 2004, the human rights situation did not see marked improvements, despite successes on the political front such as the drafting of the new Constitution. Once

again, warlords dominated the scene in areas outside of Kabul, making it difficult to ensure freedom of speech or political participation. Many groups have documented the abuses carried out by warlords which dominated each of Afghanistan's regional provinces. These include rape, forced displacement, human trafficking in women and children, and the seizure of property. Importantly, there was also a resurgence of Taliban in conservative Pashtun areas in the east and south of the country, which impacted the willingness of many to send girls to school or women to work. The rise of such groups has been attributed to the fact that legitimate political representation was not achieved throughout the Bonn process but rather served to further entrench existing factions. The monitoring of human rights by international agencies such as the UN has also fallen short. In 2005, the lack of adequate troops and resources meant that human rights remained poor in many parts. The rise of the drug economy has contributed to the problem and poverty remains widespread. Leaders and militias from Afghan warring parties and the resurgence of the Taliban are together contributing to insecurity and human rights abuses. This situation worsened still in 2006.

Groups such as Human Rights Watch continue to call for the government to undertake a programme to provide truth, reconciliation and accountability for war crimes and major human rights abuses which have taken place over the past 30 years of conflict. In 2007, legislation was introduced to the national assembly which would grant amnesty to all representatives of the *mujahudeen*. This created a considerable backlash amongst the international community which eventually led to a watered down text which would prevent blanket immunity of those who have committed war crimes. Indeed, progress in the reform of the justice sector has been slow and hampered the establishment of a functioning and effective system of law and order.

More than a year after the launching of the Afghanistan Compact, there are few signs of improvement in security and human rights. Insurgency is on the rise which has led to more direct contact between international forces and populations. Insurgency fighters often locate themselves within the civilian population leading to civilians deaths (frequently referred to as 'collateral damage'), displacement, loss of property, and destruction of livelihoods.

Websites

[Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan](#)

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

[Report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan and on the achievements of technical assistance in the field of human rights](#)

Human Rights Watch

[Letter to Security Council Regarding the Bonn Agreement](#)

[Afghanistan: Poor Rights Record of Opposition Commanders](#)

[Afghanistan: Slow Progress on Security and Rights](#)

[Afghanistan: US Should Investigate Civilian Deaths](#)

[Afghanistan: Justice for War Criminals Essential to Peace](#)

[Amnesty International](#)

2.2.5 Treaties and International Agreements

The following Conventions and Covenants have been ratified:

Geneva Conventions of 1949

Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
Convention on the Political Rights of Women
International Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Racial; Discrimination
Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or
Punishment
On the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict

Afghanistan is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol

Websites

[World LII](#)

[Foreign Commonwealth Office, UK](#)

2.2.6 Reconstruction and Development

Twenty three years of war has left Afghanistan one of the poorest countries in the world, with an economy based largely on the trade of drugs and guns, and an almost complete breakdown in systems. The reconstruction effort requires not only the rebuilding of the country's infrastructure but also the rebuilding of its institutions, including the military, police and the judiciary. Years of conflict and shifting front lines have left the country riddled with land mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) that must be removed before arable land can be returned to productive use. The task is enormous and requires a sustained effort on behalf of the international community.

At the end of January 2002, a donors' conference was held in Tokyo resulting in pledges of more than USD 4.5 billion. Such pledges were made by the following countries: United States (USD 297 million for 2007); Japan (up to USD 500 million over 3 years); the United Kingdom (USD 288 million over 5 years); the European Commission (USD 500 million for the current year); Germany (USD 362 million over 4 years); the World Bank and Asian Development Bank (USD 500 million each over the next 2.5 years); and Saudi Arabia (USD 220 million over 3 years).

In March 2004, Berlin hosted the Afghanistan Conference which produced the Berlin Declaration – outlining the way ahead. In December 2005 the Conference on Regional Economic Cooperation was also held in Kabul which focused participants on issues of trade, investment and regional cooperation.

In January 2006, at the London Conference on Afghanistan, the international community pledged approximately 10.5 billion USD towards reconstruction and development initiatives over the following five years. In early 2007, USD 11.6 billion were committed from the US focus on building the legal economy and alternative livelihoods, health care, education, sanitation, building administrative capacity, roads, energy and telecoms.

The Bonn Accord places emphasis on the role of the Afghan government and its institutions to take the lead in the country's reconstruction and development. Progress towards the re-establishment of state institutions however has been patchy and slow. Since 2001, the focus of aid and assistance has been on Kabul ministries, while less assistance has been directed at the strengthening of local government structures in the provinces. The need to redress this imbalance has become clear during 2006 and 2007, as security has declined in some of the regions and where the development has hampered due to lack of systems and functioning

institutions. There is still no cohesive agreement on governance structures and lack of human capacity is a chronic problem which will take years to overcome.

ISAF also aims to assist in reconstruction and development activities as part of the process of stabilization through Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). The concept for the PRT arose out of the recognition that the central government was weak and did not have a presence in all provinces/districts. Originally, it was recognized that it would be beneficial to have teams with a small presence in the provinces to extend the reach of the government and create *conducive conditions for development* under the label Provincial Stability Teams. But this was later retagged as Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). These PRTs assist local authorities in the reconstruction and maintenance of security in the regions. The presence of the PRTs is meant to be temporary with a view to creating the civilian government presence which will then enable them to roll back.

The PRTs are an interface for government, coalition and international organizations. The PRTs are meant to provide security for aid workers and help reconstruction work. They are a key component of a three-part strategy for Afghanistan – *security, governance and development* – in order to spread stability across the country. To this end, Area Development Zones (ADZs) were established in the south at the end of 2006 with the aim of focusing efforts on the PRT remit of security/governance/development to bring about a visible difference to counter the spread of insurgency. The assumption is that the problems experienced in these areas is borne out of a ‘governance gap’ which needs to be addressed. The identification of priority development projects has been ongoing through the Reconstruction and Development Working Group. The government is meant to lead or coordinate activities in each of the ADZs, identifying Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) and then also looking towards longer term capacity building initiatives.

Aside from funds, the reconstruction of the country will only take place if major armed conflicts are avoided and main trade routes are secured. Regional economic development was supposed to be promoted through the simultaneous undertaking of the following three endeavours: demilitarizing Afghan society; eradicating poppy cultivation (an activity which has grown exponentially over the last three years and one which remains a substantial source of income); and supporting the legal economy through the promotion of market-oriented reforms and the establishment of the manufacturing and service sectors in Afghanistan.

Websites

[Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#)

[Relief Web](#)

[The Brookings Institution](#)

[NATO](#)

2.3 Culture

2.3.1 Ethnic groups

The country is ethnically, linguistically and physically diverse. Afghanistan is comprised of four main ethnic groups including Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras. The actual number of each group is disputed. The dominant ethnic groups include the Pashtuns (38 per cent), Tajiks (25 per cent), Hazara (6 per cent) and a number of other groups including Uzbeks, Turkmens, Aimaks, Baloch and others making up the remainder. Over the centuries there has been considerable racial mixing creating ‘ethnic grey areas’ - particularly between Pashtuns, Tajiks and Uzbeks but also, to a lesser extent, between Hazaras and other ethnic groups. As is

often the case, ethnic groups do not conform to national boundaries, and national culture varies from region to region with the greatest differences existing between rural and urban communities.

2.3.2 Tribal customs

The Pashtuns are the largest tribal group. The Pashtuns of Afghanistan and Pakistan share a common descent and they speak the same language, and they both recognise the moral and legal code of social order and responsibility known as *Pashtunwali*. The concept of ethnic identity has played a major role in the development of Afghanistan's national politics and also in the country's protracted refugee crisis. In the Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan, like in rural areas in Afghanistan, the tribal system remained intact and male elders of the tribes made decisions and elected leaders through a tribal assembly (*jirga*) (Janata, 1990). As soon as refugees had established camps in Pakistan, *jirgas* were immediately held to deal with problems which arose in the camps. To a large extent, other ethnic groups were marginalised, and were not allowed to participate in the *jirga*. The initial hospitality extended to the Afghan refugees on behalf of the Pakistanis is due in part to historical and ethnic ties and adherence to *Pashtunwali*. Importantly, it lays out values which guide the behaviour of a Pashtun, including, honour (*namuz*), solidarity (*nang*), mutual support and revenge. All of these should be defended to the death.

While the tribal code of the Pashtuns is the most articulated, cultural practice varies between tribes and between rural and urban areas. Material culture plays a prominent role in all ethnic groups, each with a distinctive way of dress - particularly in the form of head dress. Embroidery on the dress – for both men and women – varies from group to group. Each region also has its own traditions of carpet and *gilim* (rug) design. The handicraft is done exclusively by women or young girls.

Websites:

[Library of Congress: Country Study](#)

2.3.3 Languages

In Afghanistan, three or possibly four major language families are spoken extensively: Indo-European, Uralic-Altaic, Dravidian, and possibly Semitic. A modified Arabic script is used, which is written right to left. The most common languages spoken in Afghanistan are Persian (Dari) and Pashto – both of which are official languages under the 1964 Afghan Constitution. Dari, the 'language of the court', is the *lingua franca* despite the fact that the Constitution refers to Pashto as the national language. (Most rural Afghans refer to the language as Farsi rather than Dari.) Traces of Baluchi, Kafiri, Punjabi, Urdu and Dardic also exist in certain regions of Afghanistan, but are spoken only in the home.

Regional dialects can also be found in the Hazarajat amongst the Hazara who speak Hazaragi, the Aimaq who speak Dari but with a Turkic vocabulary, and the Tajiki who speak Tajiki. The Farsiwan farmers in the west of Afghanistan speak Iranian Farsi and urban dwellers such as Heratis and Kabulis can also boast of a dialect specific to each location. Pashto is further divided into Pashto and Paktu. Pashtu is softer and spoken in and around the district of Kandahar while Paktu is found in the border areas with Pakistan's Northwestern Frontier Province (NWFP) and the tribal areas of Pakistan. Most Afghans speak both national languages as well as Urdu gained through exposure to the language through Indian films or as refugees in Pakistan.

2.3.4 Religion

Islam gained prominence in the region in the 7th Century, and has continued to be a major force in shaping cultural and political patterns. An estimated 84 per cent of the population is Sunni Muslim, and 15 per cent are Shi'a. There is no organised clergy in Sunni Islam, yet each village or neighbourhood mosque has a *mullah* who in most cases has been trained

locally. His role is to perform Friday prayers and oversee Muslim festivals and other important functions in the life cycle. During peace time, their role resembles that of a civil servant. During war time, these religious functionaries influence local and national politics. The remaining religious minorities include Ismaelites, Hindus, Sikhs, Jews, and Bahais. Most Hindus and Sikhs live in urban centres and are shopkeepers and moneylenders, many of whom remained throughout the war. In 2001, the Taliban implemented a law requiring religious minorities to wear a distinguishing yellow badge, at which time many left for Pakistan or India. Most of the Jewish community have left the country with only one family reported to be remaining in Kabul.

Islam, as the dominant religion, has had a pervasive impact on issues of social justice. The religion is practiced predominantly by the non-literate. In many cases, ideals and practices are based more on localized, pre-Muslim customs or tribal codes which may even conflict with Islamic principles. This is particularly prominent in Pashtun society which emphasizes the importance of honour and loyalty and revenge above other religious principles.

2.4 Country profile

2.4.1 Geography

Afghanistan is a land-locked country of 647,500 square kilometres which shares common borders with Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to the north, Iran to the west, and Pakistan to the east and south. The Wakhan corridor in the north east of the country protrudes into the Sinkiang Uighur Autonomous Region of China. The British and Russians drew the boundaries of Afghanistan, and the Durand Line between Pakistan and Afghanistan is an ongoing issue of political concern between the two countries – owing primarily to the fact that Pashtun tribal populations span both sides of the border.

The country is characterised by rugged mountains, reaching elevations of more than 7,000 metres, rolling deserts and semi-deserts. The Hindu Kush mountain range, which is the western extension of the Karakorum Mountains and the Himalayas, runs through the central region of the country and flattens out into deserts of the southwestern plateau. Throughout the country, climate varies greatly but is generally characterised by hot dry summers and cold winters. There are eleven distinctive geographic zones within the country.

2.4.2 Society

Human settlements throughout the country tend to be homogenous in nature, except for urban areas which are a mixing pot for all ethnic groups. Throughout the 20th Century, urban centres have attracted migrants – forced and voluntary – in pursuit of economic opportunities and services. Nonetheless, the proportion of urban population is estimated at only 22 per cent. Yet, the latest round of returns has meant that the population of Kabul has grown from an estimated 1.8 million in 1999 to 4 million in 2005. Indeed, like its Asian counterparts, Afghanistan is becoming increasingly urbanised. The recent wave of repatriation has led to rapid rates of urbanisation with over 50 per cent of all returnees choosing to return to urban areas. This is not surprising given the shortage of arable land and the lack of services in rural areas. In fact, the rate of urbanisation is the highest in Asia, owing to the high number of urban returns.

As a result of poverty, war, and lack of access to services, life expectancy at birth is only 47 years (2005), a small improvement from 2002 when life expectancy was 43 years. Infant mortality rates are high at 165 per 1,000 live births. Under-five mortality rates are even higher at 257 per 1,000 live births. Much of this is attributable to the limited access to water and sanitation. In 2002, only 13 per cent of the total population had access to safe water. This figure has risen to 39 per cent in 2004. In urban areas, there is a marked improvement in access to safe water with only 19 per cent having access in 2002 and 63 per cent in 2004.

Likewise, in 2002, only 12 per cent of the total population (25 per cent of the urban population) had access to adequate sanitation. In 2004, some 34 per cent of the total population have access to adequate sanitation (49 per cent of the urban population). In 2004, the adult literacy rate was 43 per cent among men and 13 per cent among women. The population is at risk of contracting a number of diseases including TB, polio and leishmaniasis. Much of the population suffer from diarrhoea on a regular basis.

Websites:

[UNDP Human Development Report](#)

[World Health Organization](#) (WHO)

[UNICEF](#)

[State of the World's Children](#)

2.4.3 Economy

The country lies at the centre of the trade route between the Far East and the Roman Empire in the 5th and 6th centuries. The region largely served as a thoroughfare for trade and marauding armies until the 15th Century when explorers sought alternative routes.

Today, Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world which is reflected in the country's indicators on poverty. Sustained economic growth over the long term is required to address the issue of poverty. While there were signs of a strengthening economy after 2001 (29% in 2002, 16% in 2003 and 8% in 2004), much of these gains have been in the construction sector which can only provide short-term growth. In the medium term, agriculture is likely to continue to drive the economy. However, Afghanistan will have to take significant steps to regain its place in the market in food exports, particularly dried fruit which was a significant component of the economy prior to the war. In the long term, exploitation of the country's natural resources, modernization of the agricultural sector and the attraction of direct foreign investment is essential for sustained economic growth. The development of human capital is also essential.

Poor economic growth is largely attributable to political instability which has left the economy in ruins and has also led to the rise of an illegal economy based on the trade of opium. The cultivation of poppy has grown exponentially since 2000, leading some to continue to label Afghanistan as a 'narco-state'. In 2006, 165,000 hectares were under cultivation, a 60 per cent increase from 2005. The opium trade accounted for 35-40 per cent of country's total GDP in 2004 and this figure continues to rise. In 2007, more hectares of poppy are under cultivation than ever before as poppy continues to be the most profitable crop for farmers to grow while at the same time generating employment for thousands of poor labourers. The establishment of alternative livelihoods is proving to be challenging, making poppy eradication more difficult as it only serves to antagonize rural populations where the battle for 'hearts and minds' is ongoing. Significantly, where eradication has occurred, the result has been a new wave of economic refugees.

Outside of the 'narco-economy', the economy is largely subsistence agrarian. Many eek out a living through pastoralism. Some of these groups are nomadic, while others are sedentary. Often groups practice a mix of animal husbandry and agriculture. Areas under extensive cultivation exist north of the Hindu Kush, and in the south and south-west in the Kabul Valley and Helmund-Arghandab Valley, Hari Rud Valley and the Turkestan Plains of the Amu Darya (Dupree, 1980). The crops grown include wheat, corn, barley, fruits and nuts. Industry is largely limited to the processing of fruit. Major industrial crops include cotton, wheat and tobacco. But much of this has been replaced with poppy production as it yields a higher return. Sheep farming and the production of sheep products such as wool are lucrative

and are often exported to neighboring Pakistan. Many farmers migrate to Pakistan in search of employment during the winter months. Afghanistan is rich in natural resources, such as precious minerals, natural gas and untapped petroleum stores. Some of these resources have been exploited, others have not.

There are extreme disparities between regions and between rural and urban areas. During the fighting, some regions benefited from open borders and cross-border trading, either in contra-band substances or trade in 'big ticket' items such as electronics and tires. Before the war, the government tightly controlled the economy, setting up government monopolies in petrol, wheat and other essential commodities. State economic planning has had little impact in the rural areas, where 80 per cent of the population reside. The Afghan economy is in the initial stages of being rebuilt and the informal economy continues to represent a large part of the economy, an estimated 80-90 per cent. This makes it difficult for the government to collect taxes and raise its own revenues, which are desperately required to cover both recurrent costs and development investment. Indeed, domestic revenue is collected on perhaps only 5 per cent of GDP, which represents one of the lowest levels in the world. The economy is being restructured in an effort to revise tax structures. The country's currency, the Afghani, has been reformed to bolster the economy and unify the country, as previously two currencies had existed. Long term planning efforts will be aimed at increasing cereal production, livestock production and exploit natural resources in a sustainable manner. Economic progress is slow due to limitations on the attraction of foreign investment, lack of a financial regulatory environment and poor security in general. Corruption and weak, or even dysfunctional, institutions also prevent economic growth and investment. Domestic revenue in 2005/06 was around USD 330 million while foreign aid was approximately USD 3 billion, an indication of the extent to which Afghanistan remains dependent on external assistance.

Websites:

[Afghan Online](#)

[U.S. Department of State](#)

[Department for International Development, UK](#)

[Brookings Institute](#)

[United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime](#)

3.0 Causes and consequences of forced migration

3.1 Conflict-induced displacement

For more than two decades, successive wars in Afghanistan have resulted in one of the world's largest refugee crises. In the late 1980s, prior to the withdrawal of Soviet troops, there were more than 6 million Afghan refugees. Despite the establishment of a new government and the presence of multi-national force under NATO, conflict within parts of the country continues to generate conflict-induced displacement.

3.1.1 The Soviet era (1979 – 89)

By the 1960s, rural-urban migration increased with developments in new roads and national development. During the Soviet occupation, IDPs fled their villages for the relative safety of major cities such as Kabul, Ghazni, Jalalabad and Mazar-e-Sharif. The population of Kabul increased by 100 percent in less than a decade. This situation changed when in 1992 when the *mujahudeen* entered Kabul.

In December 1979, the Soviets invaded Afghanistan and unleashed a 'wave of terror' on the

civilian population as the occupying army sought to consolidate power. By 1981, 1.5 million refugees had taken refuge in neighbouring Pakistan. Those who had fled quickly organised a resistance movement known as the *mujahideen* (holy warriors) in an effort to fight *jiḥād* (holy war) to rid Afghanistan of Soviet *infidels* (non-believers). At the height of the Cold War, Western governments capitalised on Afghans' anti-Soviet sentiment, providing massive quantities of military equipment and financial support to the *mujahideen*. Likewise, Pakistan provided a territorial base from which to organise the resistance movement. Massive fighting ensued throughout the country – particularly in urban areas. By 1986, as many as 5 million Afghans were refugees in Pakistan and Iran.

The first wave of refugees predominately consisted of ethnic Pashtuns, many of whom settled in camps located in NWFP and Baluchistan owing to their shared ethnic and cultural heritage. Smaller numbers settled in urban centres such as Quetta, Peshawar and Karachi. To some extent, refugees were able to 'carve out' a new life – finding work as labourers, or renting land to cultivate. Western nations also gave generously to aid agencies such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to support the refugees.

In contrast to the approach taken in Pakistan with regard to Afghan refugees, Iran (which was equally opposed to the Soviet presence and motivated by Islamic fervour) sought to 'integrate' Afghans into society. Refugees were given permission to work in designated occupations, provided with access to free health, education and food subsidies, in much the same way as the state would assist its own citizens who were in need. The state did not provide assistance when it came to housing, so for the most part refugees tended to congregate together creating spontaneous settlements along the border between Iran and Afghanistan close to Herat (Marsden 1999).

3.1.2 The *mujahideen* era (1989-94)

After almost ten years of war that had become a liability both politically and financially, the USSR agreed in 1988 to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan. Upon their departure, the Soviets put in place a communist administration headed by Mohammed Najibullah, an Afghan communist. Fighting continued as the *mujahideen* then resisted the new government. The UN facilitated peace negotiations between Najibullah and the *mujahideen* in an effort to pull together a settlement which would bring an end to the fighting. In 1988 the USSR formally agreed to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan. This prompted more than 900,000 refugees to return home (Ruiz 2002).

Following its exodus from Afghanistan, the USSR collapsed signalling the end of the Cold War and a reduction in funds for those groups fighting the West's proxy wars. Many Afghans proudly attribute the break up of the USSR as being a result of their armed struggle. For the Western donors, the huge challenge was reconstruction in Afghanistan, shifting support to repatriation programmes and providing assistance inside the country. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (UNOCHA) established programmes relating to Afghanistan in preparation for repatriation of Afghan refugees. Another UN agency, the United Nations Logistical and Transport Operations was formed to oversee the movement of supplies. In anticipation of refugee return, UNHCR and other UN agencies and NGOs focused their work on rehabilitation efforts inside the country. But while the West had finished waging war, local actors had not. By 1990, with Najibullah's government still in place, fighting continued throughout the country. While some refugees were returning in small numbers, most were on the other side of the border waiting for the fall of Najibullah and the ascendancy of the *mujahideen*. Despite the absence of substantial numbers of returnees, rehabilitation efforts in rural and urban areas continued.

In April 1992, the *mujahideen* captured Kabul, Najibullah was killed, and the communist era in Afghanistan drew to a close. This led to a wave of return with as many as 900,000 refugees repatriating voluntarily in 1992 and a further 500,000 in 1993 (USCR 2001: 11,19).

Throughout the repatriation, and in the reconstruction effort which followed, UNHCR played a key role. ‘Operation Salam’ aimed to create the conditions for return including mine clearance, health programmes, rehabilitation of essential infrastructure such as the water supply, and the provision of services such as health and education (USCR 2001:19). From the outset, the programme was fraught with financial, logistical, political and security problems. By 1993, the rate of return had declined. Although repatriation continued throughout the remainder of the 1990s, it was never highly significant. This is a reflection of the ever changing political and security situation in Afghanistan as well as access to assistance in Pakistan and Iran.

Cause for celebration was short lived, however, as *mujahideen* parties battling for power created a new era of conflict which led to further displacement. The fight for the control of Kabul, which resulted in the destruction of large portions of the city, led to the exodus of more than 100,000 Kabulis. Similarly, Kandahar and other parts of the country were carved up between commanders, making travel within and between cities risky for both civilians and humanitarian workers. Many of those who had recently returned home after as many as 13 years in exile, were once again forced to return to Pakistan (USCR 2001).

3.1.3 The Taliban era (1994-2001)

By 1994, the movement which came to be known as the Taliban had begun to take shape in *madrassas* in Pakistan. The name originated from the fact that a ‘talib’ is a student studying Islam in a religious school and Taliban is the plural of this term. Initially the Taliban gained support in the south of Afghanistan, largely on the basis that they were able to bring security to the region. This allowed refugees from just over the Pakistani border to voluntarily return to their homes, agricultural lands and orchards. As the movement grew – both in popular support and in territory - restrictive policies grounded in conservative interpretations of Islam and *Pushtunwali* (Pashtun tribal codes) were imposed. Despite this, rural villages in the Pashtun dominated areas did not experience significant changes in their daily life under Taliban rule as they tended to be conservative in both their interpretation of Islam, but more significantly in cultural practice. Support for the movement was also borne out of the fact that the Taliban was comprised of Pashtuns living in both the south and the eastern part of the country, who had fled to Pakistan during the communist era out of fierce dislike for the idea of foreign occupation. These groups were in the majority in refugee camps in Pakistan during the first wave of displacement. As a result, many who had spent time in exile were appreciative of the relative security in areas under Taliban control. This meant in the very least, that they were able to return home and they were familiar with their cultural and religious outlook.

The Taliban took Kandahar and Jalalabad with ease in 1994 as the tribes in these regions represented the bulk of the membership in the movement. In 1995, the Taliban took Herat before moving on Kabul in September 1996. Mazar-e-Sharif fell to the Taliban in May 1997 only to be retaken by groups of the UF in September 1997. Hazarajat was later taken by the Taliban in 1998. In both cases, UF fighters resisted the Taliban’s advances which led to considerable blood shed and human rights atrocities on both sides. Taliban military victories throughout 1996 and into 1998 continued to generate more refugees – predominantly from the North (non-Pashtuns) and urban educated elite– as they fled to escape fighting or ethnic persecution by the Pashtun dominated Taliban. Educated professionals or those who had held positions of relative power during the communist regime were looked upon with suspicion by the Taliban. This was largely borne out of the fact that the majority of Taliban were from rural areas and were poorly educated. Many of these urban refugees took up residence in cities in Pakistan and did not seek assistance from UNHCR. The battle for Mazar led to an exodus of 20,000 Afghans and by 1999, a further 100,000 refugees had fled, either to escape the fighting, or in fear of ethnic persecution by the Pashtun dominated Taliban (Marsden 1999). By the end of July 1997, approximately 2.61 million refugees had returned to Afghanistan from Pakistan and 1.33 million from Iran. An estimated 1.2 million refugees

remained in Pakistan and another 1.4 million in Iran. As fighting dragged on and the country was gripped by a nation-wide drought, by summer 2001 an estimated 900,000 Afghans were internally displaced and another 3.6 million were refugees, some of whom had been refugees for over 20 years (USCR 2001).

3.1.4 The ‘Bonn Accord’ era (2001-2005)

The ousting of the Taliban from power and the signing of the Bonn Accord led to the establishment of a new government in Kabul and once again opened the door for Afghans to return home. To this end, UNHCR facilitated the return of refugees and IDPs displaced due predominantly to conflict and drought. Despite large numbers of returnees, an estimated 3.4 million Afghans were still refugees at the end of 2002. This figure includes the 1.5 million refugees living outside the UNHCR-administered refugee camps. The bulk of the refugees remained in Pakistan and Iran.

Between 1994 and 2005, some 238,000 Afghans had sought asylum in industrialized countries outside the region. Germany alone received 50,000. The next largest recipient has been the Netherlands, which received 36,000 in the same period, followed by the UK with 34,000, Austria with 31,500, Hungary with 13,500, and Denmark with 11,500.

By 2005, Germany hosted the largest number of recognized Afghan refugees outside the region totalling 47,000. This was followed by the Netherlands with 26,000 and the UK with 24,000. Canada hosts around 15,000 Afghan refugees, mostly people that have resettled from the region.

Significantly, following the ousting of the Taliban from power, there was an 80 per cent drop in asylum applications in all industrialized countries between 2001 and 2004 with 54,000 Afghans applying in 2001 compared with 8,000 in 2004.

Of the neighboring countries, most of the returns came from Pakistan. A tripartite agreement, signed after the establishment of new government resulted in the return of more than 1.7 million refugees between the beginning of March and the end of October 2002. This is despite the fact that an agreement was not put in place until nine months after the initial flow of refugees began. Of that population, an estimated 500,000 went to Kabul. Despite the agreement, return slowed in late 2002 to a rate of 10,000 people per week from a previous rate of 100,000 per week. This was attributed to the onset of winter. At the end of 2002, an estimated 1.8 million refugees remained in Pakistan.

The voluntary repatriation of Afghans from Iran was based on a tripartite accord between Afghanistan, Iran and UNHCR signed in Geneva on 3 April, 2002. The agreement provided a framework for the expected annual repatriation of 400,000 Afghans from Iran. The voluntary repatriation programme which began in April 2001 resulted in the return of 300,000 Afghans. Of that number, 224,432 received assistance, while 71,099 returned unassisted. For those who did seek assistance, transportation to the border, small cash grants and assistance packages were offered to facilitate return.

In Tajikistan, some Afghans faced deportations in September 2002. UNHCR, however, was able to gain assurances that those Afghans which remained in the country would not be forcibly removed. As of October 2002, UNHCR had assisted more than 9,200 Afghans to return home voluntarily from Tajikistan, while approximately 3,000 refugees remained. By the end of 2002, the overall situation in the country was more positive than it had been in almost 20 years. Nonetheless, a number of issues – both in the neighbouring countries of asylum and in Afghanistan – continued to represent cause for concern in the effort to uphold the voluntary nature of the repatriation.

Firstly, Afghan refugees in Pakistan in the first part of 2002 faced harassment and

deportations, particularly in urban areas. This calls into question the voluntary nature of repatriation. Despite this, it is generally accepted that most returnees did so on their own volition. While more families did return than in past repatriation efforts, accurate information as to the conditions in the country were less than optimal raising concerns over the durability of the solution over the long term.

Secondly, in parts of the country, repatriation in ‘safety and dignity’ could not be assured. Afghanistan was heavily mined, representing considerable risk to the population and particularly those who wished to return to rural areas. The lack of access to productive agricultural land due to land mines prevented some returnees from going home, instead opting to return to urban areas within the country. In addition, political and ethnic rivalries persisted between regional factions making some areas insecure for the indigenous population, as well as impeding access of protection monitors and humanitarian workers, and thus hampering repatriation efforts.

Also linked to the protection concerns of returnees was the harassment of Pashtun communities in the north and the west, where they are the minority. In some cases, this resulted in new displacement, particularly from those areas under the command of Northern Alliance commanders. The ATA tried to promote national unity and reconciliation, peaceful solution of conflicts, and the rule of law, all of which provide the basis for a durable repatriation. UNHCR, in its role to make voluntary repatriation durable, played a strong advocacy role in this regard.

Finally, the ability of the new government to take full responsibility for the assistance needs of the returning population proved an impossible task, given that it is almost completely reliant on foreign aid. UNHCR actively raised funds for reconstruction activities. However, the provision of assistance was provided predominantly in Kabul and other main cities, with few activities in rural areas. Limited assistance was due in part to the slow pace of the international community in turning pledges from the January 2002 Tokyo meeting into reality.

Websites:

[UNHCR](#) – table showing changes in refugee numbers to industrialized countries

[US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants](#)

Forced Migration Review

[Hope on the brink](#)

[Afghanistan: conflict and displacement 1978 to 2001](#)

[Foreign policy considerations in dealing with Afghanistan’s refugees: when security and protection collide](#)

3.1.5 Afghanistan Compact (2006-current)

By October 2006, more than 2.8 million Afghan refugees had returned from Pakistan since 2002, under a UNHCR-assisted voluntary repatriation programme. In the first year of the programme, returns were high with 1.7 million Afghans repatriating from Pakistan. Numbers dropped to around 340,000 in 2003, in excess of 380,000 in 2004, and about 450,000 in 2005. By comparison, the number of returns during 2006 remained low, with only 132,000 Afghans repatriating, compared with initial UN expectations of 400,000.

In May 2006, President Pervez Musharraf, asked the UN to repatriate all Afghan refugees and the Pakistani government closed 32 camps hosting over 400,000 inhabitants. This was done on the basis that the camps along the Afghan border and those around Islamabad represented a risk to national security. Upon eviction, refugees were forced to move to alternative camps or to return to Afghanistan. In October 2006, the Pakistani Government began a registration

campaign and by December 2006, 1 million Afghans had been registered and provided with official identification which would enable them to remain in Pakistan for a period of three years. The closure of camps in locations such as Balochistan is of particular concern, as many of the occupants belong to provinces in the south of Afghanistan where fighting has intensified since 2006. In other cases, return is made difficult as land has been seized by local commanders or militants. Despite these concerns, the Tripartite Commission (UNHCR and the governments of Pakistan and Afghan) confirmed the closure of these camps in 2007.

In Pakistan, there are currently around 2.5 million refugees, of which over 1 million refugees are in camps assisted by UNHCR. According to a Pakistan government census in 2005, another 1.5 million Afghans live outside camps. Since January 2007, the number of returns has increased again, with more than 18,000 Afghans returning home under UNHCR's current voluntary repatriation programme. One of the reasons for this increase is that Afghans tend to prefer to go home in the summer months, facilitating the planting of crops and the rebuilding of homes. The majority of returnees in 2007 are from Pakistan's NWFP.

The pace of return is expected to further increase as the Pakistani government has stated that any Afghans who did not register during the 15-week registration exercise in 2006 (and therefore do not have Proof of Registration (PoR) cards) will be considered illegal migrants and could face prosecution. Unregistered Afghans have been given a grace period from the 1 March to the 15 April 2007 to repatriate voluntarily with assistance from UNHCR. In total, 2.15 million Afghans have registered and 82 per cent of those registered stated that they had no intention of returning. Some 41 per cent cited insecurity as the reason for their unwillingness to return. For those who are willing to return, they are eligible for an 'enhanced assistance package' for transport and reintegration including a grant of 100 USD. Those who are unwilling to return but must vacate camps will receive transport to a new Pakistan government-identified camp and assistance once there. UNHCR expects 250,000 Afghans from Pakistan and Iran to return during 2007.

The Iranian government has long insisted that all Afghans should repatriate, arguing that the Taliban regime had been removed and the circumstances that forced the refugees to flee their country no longer existed. However, unlike in Pakistan, where many Afghans live in refugee camps, the majority of refugees in Iran are concentrated in urban areas around the country and only around 5 per cent live in camps. This makes it more difficult to round up Afghans and send them home. Afghans share a common language and similarity in culture, particularly in the case of non-Pashtuns or Persian speakers, and hence have more easily integrated into Iranian society. Their children go to Iranian schools and they have access to health care. There are currently around 715 000 to one million Afghan refugees registered in Iran. More than 1.6 million Afghans have returned from Iran since April 2002, but the pace reduced significantly in 2006, with only around 5,000 returning. In spring of 2007, Iran forced 44,000 Afghans back to Afghanistan, separating many families and raising concerns of a humanitarian crisis. This forced repatriation has sparked criticism from the UNHCR and the Afghan government and discussions are underway to better manage the repatriation. Furthermore, Iran is forcibly repatriating people which it has labelled as 'illegal immigrants' rather than refugees, which is another cause for concern. Both the government and the UN have expressed concern over their ability to address the needs of those being pushed back to Afghanistan.

Websites:

[UNHCR](#)

[IRIN](#)

[US Committee for Refugee and Immigrants](#)

3.1.6 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

In late 2002, more than 920,000 people were still internally displaced in Afghanistan, of which 560,000 were of 'particular concern'. While many were displaced due to drought which had gripped the country since 1999, the invasion following the events in the United States on 11 September 2001 had also generated new IDPs who had fled in search of safe havens. For example, more than 60,000 people fled to the southern border town of Chaman, Pakistan. Another group of approximately 35,000 had difficulty crossing over into Pakistan and remained in unofficial camps on the Afghan side of the southern border. Many of the displaced were *kutchis* (see [Drought](#)), and many others were Pashtuns from the north who fled due to ethnic tensions which flared up after the fall of the Taliban. This was the result of reprisals from ethnic Uzbek and Tajik commanders who took revenge on local Pashtuns in the north on the basis of accusations that they supported the Taliban. In response, many were displaced to southern areas where they are the ethnic majority among those in search of safety.

In 2003, Afghanistan continued to have a large IDP population although there was some reduction in the IDP population due to progress in the peace process and mitigation of drought conditions (estimated figures: 2 million in 2001, 1,2 million in 2002 and 600,000 at the beginning of 2003). The government aimed to address the issues facing IDPs, while providing necessary protection and assistance when required. Throughout, the key drivers in displacement continued to be drought, human rights violations and conflict. Those affected were primarily pastoralists (affected by drought and conflict), drought affected farmers – mainly from the south which comprised more than 70 per cent of the caseload, and Pashtuns from the north and other displaced groups.

The government committed itself to the prevention of further displacement in accordance with the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, humanitarian standards and in the framework of relevant national IDP regulations. A consultative group dealing with refugees and IDPs was established to address these concerns which was chaired by the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation. The Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development and the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing were also requested to play a supporting role to the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR), particularly in areas of reintegration and in finding longer-term solutions for IDPs. Throughout, UNHCR provided information and operational support. Efforts focused on preventing further displacement, supporting existing IDPs, and the search for long-term solutions.

As of November 2006, the total number of IDPs in Afghanistan was estimated to be around 270,000 (according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre). Three types of IDPs have been identified: i) conflict displaced, ii) *kuchi* pastoralists, iii) Pashtuns from the north. Those displaced by conflict in the southern provinces (Kandahar, Helmand, Zabul, Uruzgan, and Farah predominantly), due to the intensification of fighting between insurgents and ISAF troops that began in September 2006. It is estimated that some 20,000 families, or 100,000 people, are displaced. A further 28,000 people returned to their homes in Kandahar province, while approximately 70,000 remain displaced in urban areas or neighboring villages where they have taken refuge with relatives. More recently, a reported 1,600 families have been displaced in Herat province due to US air raids. In addition, assets such as houses have been destroyed and thousands are in need of emergency assistance. The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has described the incident as 'possible indiscriminate use of force and possible civilian displacement'. *Kuchi* pastoralists were forced to abandon their livelihoods, as they lost their livestock in the drought that lasted from 1998 to 2002. They form the majority of the 132,000 people currently in IDP camps. Finally, Pashtuns from the north and west continue to be targeted following the overthrow of the Taliban government,

when thousands of Pashtuns were displaced from the north and west of the country. The majority of them have returned to their home region, but some remain in IDP camps as they fear persecution for being seen as having supported the Taliban.

Websites:

[Afghanistan Information Management Service](#)

[UNOCHA Integrated Regional Information Network](#)

[Human Rights Watch](#)

[IDMC, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre](#)

Forced Migration Review

[A closing window? Are Afghanistan's IDPs being forgotten](#)

Relief Web

[Afghanistan: fighting in the south sets off new wave of displacement](#)

[IDP Strategy for Afghanistan](#)

[UNHCR Map of IDP settlements and IDP population estimates \(July 2006\)](#)

UNHCR

[Map of IDP spread in Afghanistan \(2003\)](#)

Brookings Institute

[Afghanistan: The Taliban Resurgent and NATO](#)

3.2 Natural disaster-induced displacement

Natural disasters are common in Afghanistan and frequently result in displacement as well as loss of life, livelihoods and assets. Between 1970 and 1998, the country experienced no less than 57 large-scale natural disasters, worsening the plight of people already made vulnerable by armed conflict.

In order to respond to recurrent events, the government has established a Department of Disaster Preparedness which is supported by the UN and donors in an effort to mitigate, and in some cases prevent, the risk to the population. Efforts were focused at national and provincial levels with the aim of building the capacity of communities, civil society and the corporate sector in the development of community-based disaster management plans, information systems and training programmes.

When disasters do occur, the reconstruction and development pillar of UNAMA actively monitors displacement from natural disasters, conducts regular assessments and prepares appeals to finance humanitarian response.

3.2.1 Earthquakes

Afghanistan is located in a seismically active region. In February 1991, Pakistan and Afghanistan experienced an earthquake which left 1,000 dead and many more injured. In 1994, in the northwest of the country, an earthquake caused damage to infrastructure and affected many recent returnees from Iran and Pakistan. An earthquake in 1996 in the west of the country, led to the displacement of 500 families and caused damage to houses and mosques. In February and again in May 1998, a severe earthquake in Rustaq occurred, leaving more than 5,000 dead and the destruction of 50,000 homes. Again in February 1999,

an earthquake affected 18,600 families. Some of the affected remained displaced locally, while structures were rebuilt. Others left the area altogether. Smaller earthquakes occurred in 2000 and 2001, but with little damage to infrastructure. In spring of 2002, two significant earthquakes occurred in the Hindu Kush resulting in 25 deaths and collapsed structures, leaving up to 10,000 people homeless. Most of the affected were displaced locally, due to blocked mountain passes and a rapid response by international agencies.

Accurate information on the number of displaced due to earthquakes is difficult to obtain. In most instances, displacement occurred locally owing to the remoteness of the villages affected and extreme poverty which would make it difficult for most to leave the area. Those who are able to leave tend to migrate to urban centres within the country or to neighboring countries.

Many of those affected by earthquakes in the last decade were displaced locally and received varying degrees of assistance from either the UN or NGOs. In the case of the more significant earthquakes, such as Rustaq in 1998 and Nahrin in 2002, agencies mobilised quickly with food and non-food items to respond to needs and to deter migration out of the local area. In many of the areas, high elevation and poor or non-existent roads hampered the humanitarian effort.

In April 2004, a powerful earthquake measuring 6.6 on the Richter scale jolted the remote Hindu Kush Mountains along Afghanistan's north-east border with Pakistan. The epicentre of the earthquake was in Jurm District, 50 miles south south-east of Faizabad. The populations of Jurm District and Yangaan district in Badakhshan were affected. The quake also shook the city of Kabul and was felt in other population centres in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Websites:

Relief Web

[Afghanistan Earthquake Information Bulletin No. 01/2004](#)

[Map of earthquake affected areas](#)

[AIMS](#)

3.2.2 Floods and Landslides

The region has a history of floods to varying degrees. Many of these are characterised as 'localised' flooding due to lack of basic infrastructure such as protection dams and canals. In these cases, displacement is unlikely but livelihoods are compromised which may indirectly contribute to migration. Floods leading to displacement occurred in 1992, affecting villages in the Hindu Kush region resulting in loss of household assets and loss of life. In 1993, mudslides in Kabul destroyed houses and left 1,000 people homeless leading to displacement. In 1995, floods leading to landslides led to displacement and loss of life in the mountainous region of Badakhshan. In the northern region in 1997, floods led to the damage and destruction of houses and some livestock was lost. In spring of 2002, following three years of drought which continued to grip parts of the country until 2003, the west, north, north-east, and central highlands received high levels of precipitation in a short period of time resulting in flash floods and mudslides. While direct displacement did not occur in significant numbers as a result of the floods, more than 2,000 households in these regions were affected around the country. Some suffered crop damage, destruction of shelter and loss of household assets such as livestock. Increased vulnerability and loss of productive assets contributed to urban migration as people sought employment, although the extent of this can not be confirmed due to lack of comprehensive or reliable data.

In March 2007, severe flooding occurred in various parts of the country, including Uruzgan, Badghis, Helmand, Nimroz, Daikundi and Herat provinces. An avalanche hit the province of Ghor, where 40 families were reported to be affected. Houses and agricultural land have been

destroyed, animals have died and the OCHA's Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) reported that thousands of people have been displaced as a result.

Websites:

Relief Web

[Afghanistan: Aid delivery to flood victims delayed](#)

[Map of areas affected by floods and numbers affected](#)

[UNAMA - article, 26th of March 2007](#)

[WFP report on floods, Jan 2004](#)

[IFRC report, July 2004](#)

[Amu Darya River](#)

[UN News Service](#)

3.2.3 Drought

In the 20th Century, a particularly long drought which was widespread and reasonably well documented occurred during the early 1970s in Ghor, lasting for three years. This drought was severe, but mainly isolated to one region. Surrounding provinces were also affected, but to a much lesser extent. Government records indicate that it was able to provide minimum assistance to affected populations which enabled them to remain in place and to recover assets over time.

Thirty years later, parts of Afghanistan - notably Herat, Farah, Balkh, Samangan and Faryab - experienced four years of severe drought. Rain-fed crops failed and water sources dried up, severely affecting 2-3 million people and moderately affecting a further 8-12 million. As a result, entire villages were forced to move to camps near Herat, Mazar and Kandahar. At the height of the drought in 2000 and 2001, an estimated 500,000 people had been displaced to camps in and around Herat. Camps in other parts of the country were also established to enable the delivery of humanitarian assistance to those affected. The effects of the drought on the population varied greatly between the regions and between rural and urban areas. In rural areas in the south, south-west and the north, many families faced the risk of starvation due to failed crops and decreased purchasing power. In many cases, seed stocks were depleted as families ate whatever food remained before migrating to urban areas or IDP camps. In the south, ancient pomegranate and grape orchards withered. Loss of livestock and small ruminants were also widespread throughout the country, increasing vulnerability levels of some groups as they lost valuable household assets. In both rural and urban areas, wells dried up and streams disappeared leading to cholera outbreaks and dehydration. In the midst of a civil war, aid agencies scrambled to assist affected populations at a time when people were already struggling to survive after years of conflict. In some cases, the Taliban authorities intervened and blocked the delivery of aid in violation of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement with regard to access for humanitarian agencies during displacement.

Much of the aid that was provided was in the form of cash-for-work programmes aimed at increasing purchasing power. Food-for-work for vulnerable men and women and the provisions of seeds to encourage replanting were also effective. Little direct assistance for those who lost livestock was provided due to lack of funding and difficulties faced by aid agencies in targeting populations effectively (see [Nomadic pastoralists](#)). For those who found their way to camps, food and non-food items were provided, as well as shelter and access to basic healthcare. In those areas where people could return, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) provided transportation assistance, and food-for-asset creation schemes (FOODAC) run by the World Food programme (WFP) assisted in the rehabilitation of water sources and the distribution of massive amounts of wheat. In urban areas, water networks were rehabilitated, and wells were deepened to try to keep pace with the dropping water table. Even now, 75 per cent of the population does not have access to safe water and the water table continues to drop. In some provinces in the south, an estimated 30-40 per cent of the

population left their homes due to lack of access to water.

Despite the rains in 2003/2004, 2006 was the ninth year of drought since 1997. In 2005, around 40 per cent of the rural population were estimated to be food insecure. In July 2006, the Environment News Services (ENS) reported the drought in northern Afghanistan as being the worst in five years. The drought has mainly affected people in the north, west and central regions of Afghanistan. Many farmers from the north-western province of Badghis were on the move heading to the north-central Samangan region, more than 200 kilometres from their home. Their final destination was Kunduz, where they hoped they would get water from the nearby Amu Darya river. By October 2006, most rain-fed crops (estimated to constitute 85 per cent of the cultivated land) had failed. Many water sources have dried up. Due to the reduced availability of fodder, livestock mortality rates have increased and livestock prices have fallen. Families with dwindling assets or a lack of savings are migrating in search of work.

In January 2007, the drought was estimated to have affected nearly 2 million Afghans. Many of these were forced to leave their homes. Much of the aid provided has been in the form of food and shelter materials. In January 2007 for example, WFP began distributing 67 tons of wheat flour and pulses to the displaced and returnee population in Mazar city, while UNHCR provided essential shelter materials and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) distributed blankets and warm clothing.

Websites:

[Relief Web](#)

UNHCHR

[Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement](#)

[IDP Network](#)

[IRIN](#)

Reuters Foundation

[ACT Alert on Afghanistan](#)

[WFP](#)

Nomadic pastoralists

An estimated 9 per cent of the population is nomadic pastoralists. Of the ethnic groups which are nomadic, 80 per cent belong to the Pashtun ethnic group, known as *kutchis*. Each year the *kutchis* migrate with large flocks of sheep and goats and camels, from the desert winter settlements to the highland summer pastures in the Hazarajat and other regions above 1,000 metres. The livelihoods of these nomadic groups have been severely affected by war (land mines and front-lines in the conflict) and drought. Throughout the drought from 1999- 2003, the aid community has had a difficult time targeting aid to assist the *kutchis*. *Kutchis* continue to be a difficult to target, both in the provision of assistance and also in terms of gauging how affected they are by on-going conflict in the south.

3.3 Development-induced displacement

Under the rule of Amir Abdurrahman Khan, at the end of the 19th Century, Pushtun settlers from the south and south-eastern parts of Afghanistan were encouraged to move north. At the same time, pasture rights were usurped from the Hazaras and granted to Pushtun nomads in the central region of Afghanistan. Regarded by some as Pashtun colonialism, these events represent attempts to centralise the dynasty's rule over Afghanistan. (Janata, 1990)

During the period in which the country experienced some measure of political stability, specifically from the 1950s to the 1970s, a number of development projects were initiated and completed. Dam projects, mostly financed through external sources, led to some displacement. Both the Naghlu Dam, near to Jalalabad, which was financed by Russia. The German-financed Srobi Dam also led to displacement. In the latter case, a village of approximately 100 households was affected. But accurate figures on compensation are not readily available. The Kajaki Dam in Helmund was financed by the USA but direct displacement did not occur. The construction of the Dala Dam in Kandahar did lead to the destruction of a fort and displaced a village. While direct displacement is difficult to determine, it is even more difficult to assess the impact of the dam on migration patterns of the *kutchis* or the impact on households downstream. Based on Islamic principles with regard to property, it is likely that some compensation was provided to those households which were directly effected, but it is unlikely that much attempt was made to avoid displacement altogether.

Since 2001, Afghanistan with support from the international community has experienced a great boom in the reconstruction of its infrastructure. Across the country, an extensive road network is being constructed which will link the main regional centres of Afghanistan for the first time in its history. Likewise, in urban areas extensive construction of roads, drains, sewers and water supply networks is going on. Without reliable numbers it is impossible to estimate the extent to which such developments have resulted in displacement. Urban displacement is more likely to occur as infrastructure continues to be constructed in all of Afghanistan's cities. Compensation or remuneration for displacement or loss of assets due to the construction of infrastructure which is intended for improvements for the public good, is not clear and no legislation governing the process has been introduced. In and around large urban centres, such as Kabul, there are growing concerns over urban sprawl where the city is fast overtaking large tracks of agricultural land and farmers have complained that much of this activity has taken place without their approval. In addition, commanders and local warlords have taken over tracks of land, either to develop them or to give to their soldiers (often leading to the displacement of families). Generally, development-induced displacement mainly occurs in larger urban centres which have experienced an economic revival with rising land prices and increased rents, forcing many to relocate to the fringes of cities where housing is more affordable.

Websites

[Refugees International](#)

[The Brookings Institution](#)

4.0 Needs and Responses

4.1 Conflict-induced displacement

4.1.1 Mujahideen era

During the *mujahideen* era, Afghanistan was the 'largest and fastest repatriation programme [ever] assisted by UNHCR' (Ruiz 2002). Despite the voluntary nature of the repatriation, inadequate repatriation assistance, and infighting between the various *mujahideen* groups which seized power after the Soviet withdrawal, led once again to a climate of insecurity. Kabul and Kandahar were insecure for both civilians and humanitarian workers and as a result, UNHCR was not assured of unhindered access to returnees. By 1993, the rate of return had declined although repatriation continued, most of them being spontaneous returns. Repatriation continued throughout the rest of 1990s, a reflection of the ever changing political and security situation in Afghanistan and the access to assistance in Pakistan and Iran.

Despite optimism at the end of the Soviet occupation, which on the face of it provided a change in circumstances allowing for the return of large numbers of refugees, conditions on

the ground did not ensure the durability of repatriation. In the absence of a sustainable political solution, the country was once again embroiled in civil war. As a result, protection and assistance measures could not be assured and certainly the standard of return in ‘security and dignity’ could not be upheld.

Throughout this period, neighbouring countries such as Pakistan and to a lesser extent Iran, hosted the refugees. Pakistan largely welcomed the refugees and Western nations, showing a willingness to share the burden to support the refugees by giving generously to the aid agencies involved. Although the political tensions between Iran and Western nations did not facilitate similar types of Western support to Afghans in Iran, refugees were ‘welcomed’ in the sense that they were allowed to work and more or less ‘integrated’ into society. But they were provided little in the way of formal protection and assistance.

4.1.2 Taliban era (1994-2001)

Throughout this period, ensuring protection and assistance for Afghans in neighbouring countries, as well as within Afghanistan, in the post-Cold War era has been fraught with challenges. In Pakistan, assistance budgets of UNHCR and the WFP withered, and threats to the personal security of humanitarian workers – both nationals and internationals - hampered their ability to provide assistance. As a result of reduced assistance for refugees in Pakistan, a perceived favourable change of circumstances in the country of origin by some, and a diminishing relationship with the government of Pakistan, some refugees were prompted to return. As Afghans took on a more visible presence in Pakistani society, and the financial implications of hosting large numbers of refugees became evident, Afghans faced harassment from the Pakistani authorities. It was not uncommon for refugees to be blamed for country’s growing social and economic ills. Return was voluntary for the most part, but only occurred to certain areas of Afghanistan (Ruiz 2002).

During this period, official repatriation had been stopped but spontaneous returns from Pakistan were not uncommon. Despite the fact that the security in vast tracts of the country had improved since the *mujahideen* era, the presumptive rule of the Taliban did not represent a favourable change in circumstance in the country of origin which would allow for the return of vast numbers of refugees. Those who did return, did so on the understanding that they should return to areas where they might find ethnic affinity with either the Taliban or the Northern Alliance. In the case of the Taliban-controlled areas, they were also required to abide by restrictions on personal rights and fundamental freedoms. Conditions in Afghanistan were determined for the most part by information shared between refugees, who from time to time would return to parts of the country. UNHCR activities in Afghanistan were characterised by relief type interventions in the form of Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) and refugee returnee monitoring.

By the late 1990s, tensions between the international community and the Taliban grew, culminating in the imposition of sanctions in 1999. Humanitarian workers were evacuated for a short period during which time rioting led to the destruction of UN offices and the looting of relief supplies. Growing anti-UN sentiment and internal tensions within the movement hampered the assistance effort.

As conditions within the country declined, conditions in the neighbouring countries of asylum – both Iran and Pakistan – also rapidly deteriorated. In 1999, harassment of Afghans in the urban areas in Pakistan was widespread. As Ruiz (2002) reports,

[p]olice in Pakistan’s major cities stopped undocumented Afghans and deported many who did not pay bribes. In June 1999, police demolished the stalls of a number of Afghan traders at a market in Peshawar and assaulted the traders and the Afghan customers. Later that year, local authorities in Baluchistan pushed back across the border 300 Afghan asylum seekers and forced thousands of Afghan refugees who had

been living in Quetta to move to camps.

At the same time, Iran was engaged in a programme of forced return which saw the end of temporary protection status for many Afghans who had sought refuge there. UNHCR, in an effort to halt deportations, was able to establish screening centres in Iran. But like Pakistan, Iran had grown tired of hosting the refugees and seized every opportunity to both stop the entry of Afghans (by closing its borders on the basis of concerns for national security caused by a breakdown in relations between the two countries), and to deport many who had remained in Iran for extended periods of time.

In Pakistan, another mass influx came in 2000 as a result of heavy fighting in the north and deepening effects of the worst drought in 30 years. As a result, UNHCR estimated that more than 172,000 Afghans entered Pakistan in 2000 (Ruiz 2002). This time, in response to this influx and as a result of frustration with the international community, Pakistan did not offer temporary refuge. Rather it closed its border with Afghanistan in November 2000, signalling Pakistan's weariness with playing host to Afghan refugees. Throughout the US bombing campaign in Afghanistan in late 2001, Pakistan continued to keep their borders with Afghanistan closed, effectively preventing Afghans from seeking asylum. This was despite promises from the international community to assist. Similarly, Iran limited border crossings, and even deported 2,000 Afghans during the final months of 2001.

The border closures on the Pakistan side were on the one hand driven by fear of being inundated by refugees, and on the other, a direct result of requests by the US to keep borders closed as a security measure. These closures, whatever the reason, represent a blockage at the frontier which is equivalent to violating the principle of *non-refoulement*. 'Afghans were refused the right to seek asylum abroad and *refoulement* was implicitly condoned' (van Selm 2002). At the same time, despite the grave physical danger faced by the populace, both Pakistan and Iran continued to deport Afghans. In the last months of 2001, Iran limited border crossings and deported 2,000 Afghans. Both cases are examples of international and domestic security concerns taking precedence over protection obligations. There is also evidence that within Afghanistan, fear of being harmed by the US-led coalition bombing campaign led to further displacement within the country.

Websites:

Human Rights Watch

[Refugee Crisis in Afghanistan](#)

[Afghanistan: US Bombs Kill Twenty-three Civilians](#)

4.1.3 Bonn Accord (2001-2005)

Despite changes in Afghanistan's political situation, the population continued to flee in late 2001 in search of better economic opportunities. The UK continued to be the destination of choice. Many western countries were asked to turn away Afghan asylum seekers and to assist in their repatriation. The ATA also put measures in place which would prevent people from leaving. For those Afghans who had already left the region, tripartite agreements were put in place in mid-2002 which aimed to enable the EU to push ahead with plans to repatriate approximately 500,000 refugees residing in various EU countries. At the same time, both France and the UK agreed to focus on the voluntary return of the refugees. But neither have ruled out the possible need to force repatriation in the future. Immediate plans included the organisation of extra flights and cooperation with local authorities. Such agreements included safeguards to ensure that Afghans who still required international refugee protection were not neglected. In order to ensure repatriation was conducted in a 'phased, orderly, and humane' manner, to some extent facilitated repatriation, which was delayed until the spring of 2003 so as to ensure conditions were appropriate for return. All agreements which were entered into were in compliance with the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol.

The conditions of return varied depending on the household and the place to which refugees returned. Although some returnees have been able to accumulate wealth in exile, most have lived in poverty with few assets or little savings upon which to draw on in their country of origin. For those returning in 2001 and late into 2002, an assistance package was provided including USD 20 per person for travel and transport costs, 50 kg of wheat per family of four, mine awareness-training, and an assortment of non-food related items. Health agencies also established a system for immunizing school age children. Across the country, a number of programmes were provided by UN agencies and NGOs to assist the government in rebuilding infrastructure, improving services, constructing shelter, and in the creation of sustainable livelihoods. But many of these were focused in urban areas where access was easier and returnee numbers were significant. Efforts to meet the minimum standards for return and resettlement of both returning refugees, and IDPs around the country, were not always met.

Protection issues continue to represent a significant challenge. Throughout the war, sexual violence, arbitrary detention, and forced recruitment were commonplace. These human rights violations continued to occur in parts of the country (particularly in the north) with significant consequences for civilians and aid organisations. Specifically, there were reports of harassment of ethnic Pashtuns in the north by new leaders, who are ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks. Of the estimated 700,000 displaced people throughout the country, 400,000 are in the south and up to 15 per cent of them are thought to be Pashtuns who fled their homes in the north in fear of persecution following the Northern Alliance offensive late in 2001.

For some, return to certain parts of Afghanistan continued to be fraught with security concerns in late 2002. In those areas where many violent acts had taken place over the past years of fighting, retribution by local commanders (such as the stealing of crops and forcible recruitment) was cause for concern. To address these security concerns, particularly for ethnic minorities from the north, a Return Commission was established to help refugees and IDPs go back home. The Commission played a central role in facilitating the return of a large number of IDPs in the south of Afghanistan and refugees in Pakistan who were minority groups in northern areas. Initiatives such as the bringing together of commanders and communities were measures undertaken which paved the way for return. By late 2002, there were no attempts, however, to compensate victims of violence and displacement for lost property and land. The Commission represented a first step in the promotion of sustainable return and contributed to the effort of promoting greater adherence to the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

Fear of continued insecurity, cold winter temperatures, and lack of access to services prompted some of the new arrivals to return to Pakistan creating a situation of reverse migration. Although the numbers were initially small, the trend signified the need for continued support from the international community to refugees in neighboring countries. There was also evidence that families were choosing to migrate to urban areas for the winter months or until the situation in rural areas improved. Insecurity throughout the country prompted some to call for measures to be put in place which would ensure that repatriation of Afghan refugees was voluntary and that return would only take place in situations of safety. Specifically, there were concerns that in the push to repatriate, refugees would not be able to remain in safe countries until conditions of 'safe and voluntary' return could be guaranteed.

Human Rights Watch criticized UNHCR for encouraging governments to return refugees before the security situation inside the country was safe to do so. UNHCR later cautioned governments on return and in July 2002, suspended assisted returns to Faryab, Samangan and parts of Balkh province in northern Afghanistan. The UNHCR also raised concerns about the speed of the returns which questioned the ability of communities to adjust to the influx of returnees, thereby exacerbating an already tense security situation. UNHCR guidelines stress that return should not take place unless the majority can return 'in safety and dignity' and the country of origin has provided 'a formal guarantee, or adequate assurances for the safety of

repatriation refugees'. By late 2002, there was continued concerns that these conditions had not been met. The expansion of ISAF beyond Kabul was at the centre of the debate on the appropriateness of refugee repatriation. In late 2003, the UN Security Council passed UN Resolution 1510 which authorized expansion of ISAF throughout the country. At the same time, a programme of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) of former combatants was implemented by the government with support of the UNDP with the aim of improving security across the country and to extend the influence of the state. The programme was launched in 2003 and was completed in 2006. The programme has had mixed results – particularly with regards to the demobilization of soldiers, as many illegal armed groups remain.

Websites:

[Relief Web](#)

[European Council on Refugees and Exiles](#)

[Human Rights Watch](#)

[Afghan New Beginnings Programme](#)

4.1.4 Afghanistan Compact

Although the current situation is relatively more stable than prior to 2002, the situation in southern Afghanistan remains volatile and a number of issues continue to be a concern in the repatriation process. Firstly, there are concerns over the ongoing coercion and harassment of refugees in Pakistan calling into question the true 'voluntary' nature of repatriation. Reports of harassment and deportations in Pakistan – particularly in urban areas – are widespread. Refugees in all cities alleged eviction notices and police harassment, while some refugees were reported having to pay substantial bribes in order to escape abuse by the police.

Secondly, the situation in some parts of Afghanistan – particularly in the south - does not ensure return in safety and security owing to the continued presence of land mines, the destruction of homes, and on-going fighting due to the resurgence of the Taliban. Despite years of de-mining, Afghanistan is still heavily mined, presenting considerable risks, especially in rural areas. Many of those affected by landmines or lack of shelter tend to go to the cities like Kabul. In an attempt to address the lack of housing in Kabul, as well as the population explosion which has put considerable pressure on already overstretched public services, the government launched a plan to assist returnees by providing them with housing in their province of origin. For many of those who lacked land for housing, the government launched a land-allocation scheme under which it has distributed property to thousands of landless Afghans repatriated to northern and eastern Afghanistan.

On-going fighting in Southern Afghanistan has also hampered the return of refugees from this area. Around 90,000 people fled Panjwayi and Zhari districts in Kandahar province in September 2006 during combat between ISAF and local Taliban. Some 28,000 of these people returned to the two districts at the end of December 2006. Others have remained in urban areas such as Kandahar or with relatives in villages until they believe they can return home. Return home is made particularly difficult by the fact that many houses and productive assets were destroyed.

In the north, there is continued concern for returnees of particular ethnic groups. For example, the large majority of people who have returned to the north are ethnic Pashtuns. Although ethnic-based tensions in the north have seen a marked improvement, there have been reports of threats of illegal taxation and returnees finding land occupied.

Poverty as a result of landlessness and limited income-earning opportunities are ongoing

issues of concern. Many of the refugees and internally displaced are returning to places where they either have no land, or they return only to discover that their land is occupied or has been confiscated. The government has found it difficult to address competing property claims as registration books and documents are being forged or have been lost. Despite billions of dollars in aid assistance, the formal economy in most parts of the country is struggling and income-earning opportunities are limited and standards of living remain low. Landless families have tended to migrate to urban centres where the labour market is more diversified and education opportunities are greater. This has resulted in a dramatic increase in urban slums and deplorable living conditions. Since late 2001, the population of Kabul, for example, has increased from 1.5 million to an estimated 4.5 million people. Whilst the population has increased 300 per cent between 2002 and 2006, the physical size of Kabul has only increased by 35 per cent.

Websites:

[US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants](#)

[IRIN](#)

[UNHCR](#)

[UNDP](#)

Human Rights Watch

[Afghanistan: slow progress on rights and security](#)

[ILO](#)

AIMS

[Numbers repatriated \(March 02 to July 06\), their ethnicity and educational status](#)

AREU

[Urban livelihoods in Afghanistan](#)

4.2 Coping strategies

4.2.1 Rural/urban migration within Afghanistan

Rural to urban migration in search of employment opportunities and access to better services and infrastructure has been a trend in Afghanistan since the 1960s, but has been more common during the recent period of refugee return. This is particularly the case amongst landless returnee populations. A study conducted in 2005 by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) found that 71 per cent of migrants from rural areas were indeed landless. Furthermore, the majority of those who migrate tended to be young adults, with an average age of 31 years. Approximately 50 per cent of these migrants moved to urban centres with their families, while the others left families behind and instead sent money back to their villages.

For the majority of those who had remained in rural areas, the migrants' income constituted the household's main source of income. Seasonal migration is also common amongst rural populations, even amongst those with land. This is due in part to the fact that families have increased in size and land is no longer adequate to support larger rural populations (given limited improvement in agricultural productivity and infrastructure). It is also due to the fact that the protracted drought has resulted in a severe depletion of assets which would otherwise supplement a farmers income. Finally, urban migration has been found to be common among returnees, particularly those who have spent a number of years in urban centres in the country where they sought asylum. Despite the problems faced by the migrants such as finding a job or adequate and affordable housing, many of the respondents felt that they had managed to

improve their economic situation through migration. The length of time in which they had remained in an urban centre correlated positively with an overall improved economic situation.

4.2.2 Cross-border migration

Migration for economic reasons to countries outside Afghanistan, such as Pakistan and Iran and the Gulf region is also common. In smaller numbers, there is also migration to Europe and North America. Around 70 per cent of migrants in the study referred to above were found to have migrated to countries outside Afghanistan at some point in their lives, in search of work or other opportunities. Wage levels in Pakistan, Iran and the Gulf region are higher than in Afghanistan. In addition, religious, linguistic and cultural affinities play a major role in attracting people to one country over that of another. Shia Afghans tend to migrate to Iran whilst Sunnis prefer to go to the Gulf region. Importantly, households that have one or more members abroad are less likely to be 'poor' than households that have one or more members who have migrated to another region within Afghanistan, or those where all family members have remained within their region of origin. Economic migration is an important coping strategy for Afghans, and indeed the wider economy. While the banking system in Afghanistan has improved significantly since 2002, banks still only exist in large city centres and the banking culture is still being developed. An alternative to sending remittances home is the *hawala* system. This is an elaborate and effective means of avoiding the Islamic prohibition on interest rates, and is a substitute for lack of financial institutions in the country.

Websites

Relief Web

[Bound for the city: A study of rural to urban labour migration in Afghanistan](#)

[Moving out of Poverty Migration Insights from Rural Afghanistan](#)

[World Bank](#)

AREU

[Afghan Trans-national Networks: Looking Beyond Repatriation](#)

UNHCR

[Trans-national networks and migration from Faryab to Iran](#)

4.3 Vulnerable groups

4.3.1 Women

Throughout the war, women were victims of systematic violence. Under the Taliban regime, the situation worsened as women faced discrimination and strict controls on dress, behaviour and mobility. Women were excluded from public life, and girls were banned from attending school. During the US-led military action in Afghanistan, women continued to experience considerable difficulty in getting access to aid and in some parts of the country and fear for personal security increased. Women continued to face harassment, sexual violence, and restrictions on mobility. Although access to education, healthcare and employment has improved in urban areas (such as Kabul). But this is less so in smaller centres where the lives of many rural women remain virtually unchanged. In both rural and urban areas, many women continue to wear the *burqa* which is due in part to traditional cultural practice, but is also an indication of concern for personal safety. It is rare for women to travel far from home without a male relative (*maharam*) to accompany them. In addition, laws still exist which discriminate against women and violate international customary law and international treaties to which Afghanistan is a signatory. On a positive note, 40 per cent of the overall parliamentary membership should be comprised of women, which is beyond the quota stated in the constitution. Their presence in the parliament is however contentious and some women experience and harassment and even threats to their lives.

Websites

Human Rights Watch

[Afghanistan New War Puts Women's Rights in Peril](#)

[Afghanistan: Women Still Under Threat](#)

[Paying for the Taliban's Crimes](#)

4.3.2 Widows

Some 23 years of war has generated an estimated 1.5 to 2 million widows. In conservative cultures, widows face unique challenges. This is particularly the case for those residing in urban areas where they have minimal kinship support and a weaker social network than their rural counterparts. With the return of refugees from Pakistan and Iran, widows are particularly vulnerable to internal displacement, as they are pushed from rented homes by returning refugees. In addition to the problems of shelter, food, limited income and a lack of legal right to property, many suffer from psychological trauma. A number of NGOs and UN agencies have established programmes which aim to address these needs.

Websites:

[CARE Special Report](#)

4.3.3 Children

Children have been immensely affected by years of poverty and conflict. In 2002, an estimated one-in-five children died of preventable diseases before the age of five, and one-in-two suffered from malnutrition. Throughout the conflict, both the Taliban and the Northern Alliance actively recruited child soldiers – predominantly from *madrassas* in Pakistan or rural areas throughout Afghanistan - in violation of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the Convention of the Rights of the Child. In addition, Afghanistan is among the most densely mined countries in the world and children are often the victims of more than half of all landmine accidents.

Despite efforts by the international community, children in Afghanistan continue to be vulnerable. Victims of child labour have limited access to healthcare and education. In recent years, there have been reports of an increase in the trafficking of children – for labour, sale of their organs, and prostitution. Girls are particularly at risk of trafficking for sexual purposes, and especially refugee and IDPs girls.

Websites:

[Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children](#)

[Human Rights Watch](#)

[Amnesty International Children's Human Rights](#)

4.4 International and governmental organizations dealing with refugees and IDPs

4.4.1 The Government of Afghanistan

To facilitate returnees' needs and improve government responses, the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) was established by the ATA. The ministry has the overall responsibility for the returnee and IDP programme and is supported by a Consultative Group on Refugees and IDPs which includes: government ministries, UN agencies, NGOs and donors (see [IDPs](#)). The Consultative Group's role is to support the MoRR in coordinating and facilitating work related to the return and initial reintegration of refugees and the internally displaced. The other government ministries involved include the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) and the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing (MUDH).

In 2003, the government began implementing a National Return, Displacement and Reintegration Strategy, followed by a specific Regional Operation Plan for the internally displaced in the south. The strategy's main objective was to find sustainable long term solutions to the problems faced by the displaced over a period of three years, whilst continuing to provide assistance and protection.

In April 2004, the MRRD developed a National IDP Plan which encouraged a shift from care and maintenance to promoting the return of internally displaced to their areas of origin while ensuring reintegration and co-existence with receiving communities. As part of this plan, the MRRD launched a national land allocation scheme to benefit landless people including (but not exclusively) landless returnees. By September 2006, some 300,000 plots of governmental land had been identified, from which about 18,000 plots had been distributed.

In August 2004, the MoRR in partnership with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and UNHCR set up the Employment Service Centre to facilitate the returnee population's search for work. The Centre is linked to other initiatives and potential employers. Whilst the Government is making significant steps forward in tackling the issues faced by returnees and IDPs, its ability to do so is seriously hampered by the fact that it is still highly dependent on foreign aid.

4.4.2 United Nations

All humanitarian and human rights activities performed by the UN are coordinated by a central organising body - the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) - whose purpose is to provide support to the government. UN involvement is presently focused on, and limited to, Kabul and other major cities. Because of this, and the growing unrest in the south combined with ongoing drought, NGOs and governments have called for UNAMA's coordination capacity to be strengthened and its field of operation enlarged to cover some rural areas as well. This process is underway and there are now fifteen field offices throughout the country. This expansion reflects the need to deepen UN presence and to a lesser extent, to enable coordination with the ISAF-led Provincial Reconstruction Teams which are now in 25 locations around the country.

UNAMA has eight regional offices and a number of sub-offices. UNAMA aims to engage in political developments at the national and the sub-national level. But they are also very much geared towards the development agenda. Humanitarian activities are taken up as required, but actually play a small role in their overall agenda. The previous focus on relief/recovery/reconstruction has been reviewed and retagged as the reconstruction and development pillar. Many aspects which should be managed by the government at the provincial level are supported by UNAMA, particularly coordination. UNAMA does not programme for development, although it does assist in humanitarian response in times of emergency.

UNHCR is the UN organization which is primarily responsible for Afghanistan's internally displaced with support by the humanitarian arm of UNAMA (under pillar 2). UNHCR's role is to support the MRRD in assisting the internally displaced and integrating the needs of returnees into long-term national development projects. Since 2002, UNHCR has assisted 2.89 million Afghans to return home from Pakistan and over 830,000 Afghans to repatriate from Iran.

WFP provides a range of relief and recovery activities to IDPs and returnee populations in the form of gifts of food aid, food-for-work, food-for-training and food-for-education. These projects are implemented in partnership with the Afghan government and other UN agencies including UNHCR, UNICEF, as well as Community Development Councils (which have

been formed under MRRD's National Solidarity Programme) and NGOs. In the first half of 2006, WFP-assisted 118,000 IDPs with 4,200 metric tons of food.

4.4.3 Non-Governmental Organisations

NGOs have played an important humanitarian role in Afghanistan, providing assistance to Afghan refugees since 1979. By November 2003, more than 1,600 NGOs were registered with the Ministry of Planning. Whilst the majority of NGOs are Afghan, the largest programmes are implemented by international or multinational NGOs. Most of the NGOs provide emergency relief, health, education and agricultural programmes. A small number of NGOs are also involved in peace building, human rights and advocacy work.

In addition, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent and the Afghan Red Crescent carry out a range of activities related to protection, rehabilitation and development programmes, according to their various mandates.

Insecurity, poor access, and a reduction in aid budgets are the major challenges currently faced by national and international agencies in their attempt to deliver humanitarian relief to populations and returnees in need. At the same time, the most pressing issues faced by the internally displaced and returnees are those which are shared by the wider population - the lack of infrastructure and services, limited income-earning opportunities, inflation, protracted drought and resulting loss of assets, as well as rights-based issues such as securing access to land and property. In order for refugees and the internally displaced to return home voluntarily - in dignity and safely - these issues must be tackled across the country.

Websites:

UNHCR

[Global Appeal](#)

Relief Web

[List of NGOs in AFG and Programmes](#)

ILO

[Afghan labour market](#)

[WFP](#)

[Chr. Michelsen Institute \(CMI\)](#)

International NGOs

The following list of international NGOs is not exhaustive but contains those agencies that have been active in Afghanistan for a number of years or are well known organizations:

[Action Aid](#)

[Action Contre la Faim](#)

[Afghan Red Crescent Society](#)

[Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit \(AREU\)](#) (formerly Strategic Monitoring Unit)

[Aga Khan Development Network](#)

[Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief](#)

[Agence d'Aide a la Cooperation Technique Et au Development](#)

[Asia Foundation](#)

[CARE International](#)

[Catholic Relief Services](#)
[Christian Aid](#)
[Church World Service](#)
[Children in Crisis](#)
[Community Habitat Finance](#)
[Concern Worldwide](#)
[Danish Afghanistan Committee](#)
[Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees](#)
[Danish Demining Group](#)
[Deutsche Welthungerhilfe / German Agro Action](#)
[Handicap International \(Belgium\)](#)
[Handicap International \(France\)](#)
[Health Net International](#)
[GOAL](#)
[Halo Trusts](#)
[Human Rights Watch](#)
[International Assistance Mission](#)
[International Catholic Migration Commission](#)
[International Rescue Committee](#)
[Islamic Relief](#)
JEN (formerly Japan Emergency NGOs)
Madera International
[MEDAIR](#)
[Médecins du Monde](#)
[Médecins sans Frontières](#)
[Mercy Corps International](#)
[National Program for Action on Disability](#) (formerly Comprehensive Disabled Afghan's Program)
Norwegian Project Office
[Ockenden International](#)
[Norwegian Church Aid](#)
[Organisation for Mine Clearance and Afghan Rehabilitation International](#) (OMAR)
[Oxfam International](#)
[Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation Support for Afghanistan](#) (PARSA)
[Sandy Gall's Afghanistan Appeal](#)
[Save the Children \(UK\)](#)
[Save the Children \(USA\)](#)
[SERVE](#)
[Shelter For Life International](#)
[Solidarites](#)
[Swedish Committee for Afghanistan](#)
[World Vision International](#)

UN agencies

[FAO \(Crops\)](#)
[FAO \(Livestock\)](#)
[UN Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan](#) (MACA)
[Integrated Regional Information Network](#) (IRIN)
[International Labour Office](#) (ILO)
[International Organisation for Migration](#) (IOM)
[UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan](#) (UNAMA)
[UN Development Program](#) (UNDP)
[UN Office on Drugs and Crime](#) (UNODC)
[UN Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation](#) (UNESCO)
[UN HABITAT](#)

[UN High Commissioner for Refugees](#) (UNHCR)
[UN Humanitarian Air Service](#) (UNHAS)
[UN Development Fund for Women](#) (UNIFEM)
[UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#) (UNOCHA)
[United Nations Children's Fund](#) (UNICEF)
[UN Joint Logistics Centre](#) (UNJLC)
[United Nations Office for Project Services](#) (UNOPS)
[United Nations Population Fund](#) (UNFPA)
[World Food Programme](#) (WFP)
[World Health Organisation](#) (WHO)

Red Cross

[International Committee of the Red Cross](#) (ICRC)
[International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies](#) (IFRC)

Donor representation

[Canadian International Development Agency](#) (CIDA)
[Department for International Development](#), UK (DFID)
[European Commission](#)
[European Commission Humanitarian Office](#) (ECHO)
[Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit / German Technical Cooperation](#) (GTZ)
[Swedish International Development Agency](#) (SIDA)
[Swiss Development Cooperation](#) (SDC)
[US Agency for International Development](#) (USAID)
[Asian Development Bank](#) (ADB)
[World Bank](#)

Websites:

[AIMS](#)
[Afghanistan Development Forum](#)

5.0 Other Resources

5.1 Non-electronic resources and bibliography

Dupree, Louis, *Afghanistan*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980.

Farr, Grant, 'Afghan refugees in Pakistan: definitions, repatriation and ethnicity', in Ewan Anderson and Nancy Hatch Dupree (eds.), *The Cultural Basis of Afghan Nationalism*. London: Pinter Publishers, 1990, 134-143.

Hatch-Dupree, Nancy, 'A socio-cultural dimension: Afghan women refugees in Pakistan', in Ewan Anderson and Nancy Hatch Dupree (eds.), *The Cultural Basis of Afghan Nationalism*. London: Pinter Publishers, 1990, 121-133.

Janata, Alfred, 'Afghanistan: the ethnic dimension' in Ewan Anderson and Nancy Hatch Dupree (eds.), *The Cultural Basis of Afghan Nationalism*. London: Pinter Publishers, 1990, 60-70.

Majrooh, Sayd Bahaouddin, 'Afghan intellectuals in exile: philosophical and psychological dimensions', in Ewan Anderson and Nancy Hatch Dupree (eds.), *The Cultural Basis of Afghan Nationalism*. London: Pinter Publishers, 1990, 71-83.

Marsden, Peter, 'Repatriation and Reconstruction: The Case of Afghanistan', in Richard Black and Khalid Koser (eds.), *The End of the Refugee Cycle? Refugee Repatriation and Reconstruction*. New York: Berghahn Books, 1999, 56-68.

Shahrani, M. Nazif, 'Afghanistan: state and society in retrospect', in Ewan Anderson and Nancy Hatch Dupree (eds.), *The Cultural Basis of Afghan Nationalism*. London: Pinter Publishers, 1990, 41-49.

5.2 Most useful web sources

[UNHCR](#)

[IRIN](#) (Integrated Regional Information Networks)

[US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants](#)

[Relief Web](#)

[Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre](#)

[Brookings Institute](#)