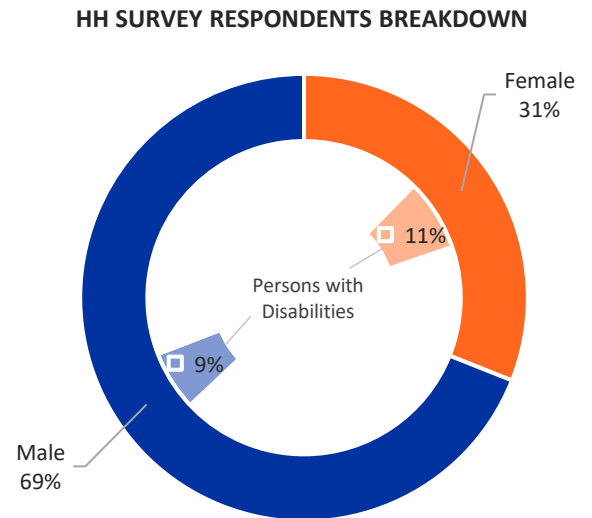
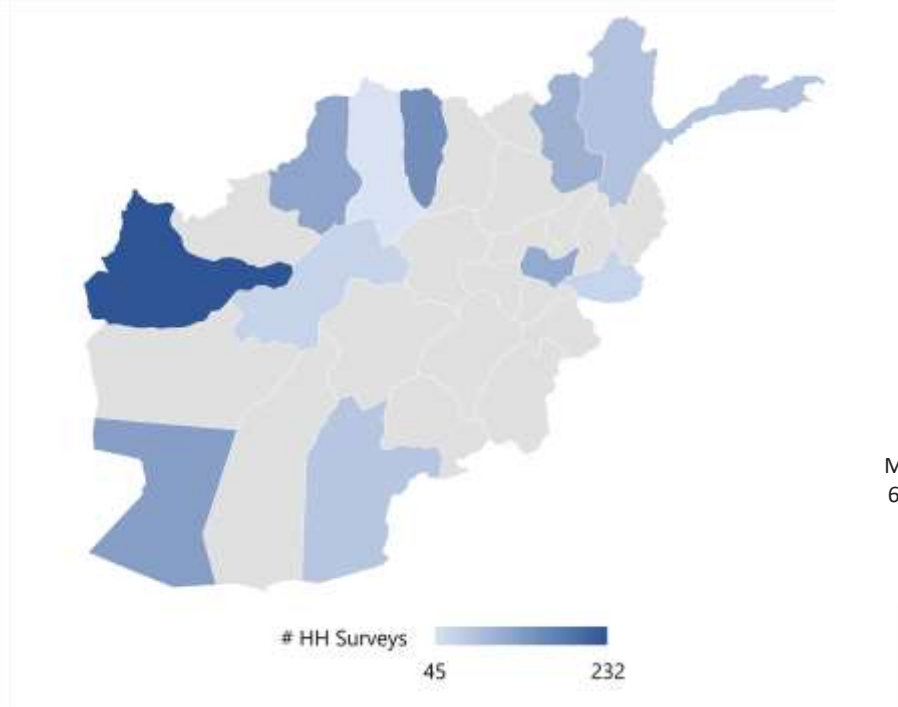


PROTECTION MONITORING REPORT

MARCH – MAY 2021



TOTAL RETURNEES: 349,974 # INDIVIDUALS	IOM PROTECTION MONITORING			HOUSEHOLD SURVEY COVERAGE			
		1,224 # HH Surveys	217 # FGDs	252 # KIIs	6 % Child- headed HHS	10 % Elderly- headed HHS	8 % PWD- headed HHS



Between 1 March to 31 May 2021, the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) recorded 349,974 total returns (345,999 from Iran and 3,975 from Pakistan) of undocumented Afghans from Iran and Pakistan. During this period, IOM conducted protection monitoring in coordination with the Afghanistan Protection Cluster to understand the protection environment across 11 provinces and 60 districts. The methodology included 1,224 household surveys (HHS) with undocumented returnees (UR) with at least one person with specific needs (PSN) in their household, 217 focus group discussions (FGDs) and 252 key informant interviews (KIIs) held in communities where undocumented returnees reside (includes IDPs and host communities). Surveys were undertaken in-person and over the telephone, depending on restrictions on movement, with PPE provided to respondents and staff to mitigate COVID-19 risks. This report was produced with the support of the EU’s Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG-ECHO) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.¹

Trends

1. Border Monitoring / Returns

Returns from Iran and Pakistan this year are 64% higher than the same period in 2020 with the majority (55%) deportees. One of the main reasons respondents cite for leaving Afghanistan for Iran and Pakistan is to find work (89%) – particularly high for male (94%) versus female (77%) respondents – followed by the need to escape insecurity in their home province. There are multiple reasons for migration but a reliance on daily wage labour due to a lack of diverse economic opportunities within Afghanistan continues to push people to seek income abroad to sustain themselves and their families. For women in particular, the reason for being in Iran or Pakistan is often that they were born or always lived there (16%), yet despite this fact they have no right to remain legally and are hence at risk of being deported.

¹ Previous reports are available at <https://afghanistan.iom.int/protection>



70%
HHS
respondents
deportees

Many women are deported alone or without all their children and this family separation results in significant distress, and in the case of female headed households, unknown levels of protection risks for children left behind. The key driver for single parents and single women returning to Afghanistan spontaneously from Pakistan is reunification with family members. IOM data shows undocumented returnees from Iran instead cite police/authorities' harassment and lack of job/livelihood opportunities (IOM-BSAF Database). Family separations also occur on the Turkish-Iranian frontier which has become increasingly securitized over the last three years (fencing,

additional security patrols etc). Additionally, it should be noted that border monitoring incidents have increased this year with use of lethal force by border authorities resulting in high numbers of casualties.

2. Safety and freedom of movement

2.1 Context Analysis

This quarter saw the announcement on 14 April that the US would undertake an unconditional troop withdrawal by 11 September 2021, with NATO allies following suit shortly thereafter. Intra-Afghan peace talks remain stalled, and the expected intensification in fighting following US draw-downs quickly became manifest. Prior to the US decision, NSAG-initiated attacks for the first three months of the year had increased some 37% compared to the same period in 2020. Civilian casualties during March-April were also up 29% on the same period in 2020 (UNAMA)², but with April's announcement came renewed levels of insurgent attacks and government airstrikes across the country. Whilst not out of step with seasonal conflict dynamics, this spring offensive by NSAG has been coupled with increases in targeted killings and use of M/IEDs and weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas causing a vast increase in civilian casualties, making May the month with the highest total death toll (civilian and combatant) in a single month since July 2019 (New York Times).³ Targeting of women and girls has been a particular feature of the violence over recent months, epitomized in the attack on a girls' school in a Hazara neighbourhood of Kabul in April which resulted in the death of 85 and injury of many more. This violence has also spurred significant internal displacement – by 21 June, 194,000 Afghans had been newly displaced due to fighting in 2021 (OCHA)⁴.

Humanitarian access impediments grew in this period – 98 incidents in March, 117 in April, peaking in May at 161 with military operations and kinetic activity increasingly the cause (OCHA). An upsurge in kinetic activity in May significantly impacted humanitarian movement and resulted in a reduction of humanitarian and health services, just as humanitarian needs increased due to conflict and a COVID-19 upsurge (OCHA)⁵. By the end of May, the average daily new COVID-19 cases surpassed figures seen during the peak of the first and second waves, with confirmed presence of delta and other variants in the country and a test positivity rate of 44%, suggesting overall under-testing of potential cases (OCHA)⁶. With confirmed arrival of new variants, the Government of Afghanistan announced school closures across 16 provinces from 28 May prior to which the Governments of Iran (from 29 April) and Pakistan (from 5-19 May) had both imposed lockdown measures resulting in closure of their borders with Afghanistan for all but commercial traffic and returns, including deportations.

2.2 Safety, freedom of movement and social cohesion

The temporary ceasefire during Eid did little to subdue an all-out intensification in conflict during May. In 7 of 11 provinces surveyed, the majority of respondents said the situation had worsened (the remainder were unchanged) with Ghor deteriorating most (83% in May), and an increase in conflict between government/NSAGs month on month – 46-59% – mirrors the uptick in hostilities reported across the country. Undocumented returnees report increased criminality as the key driver (64%) of worsening security – a concerning increase since the last reporting period (23% in November 2020-January 2021) which may indicate a deterioration in GoIRA control over law and order as well as people resorting to crime to stay afloat in a dire socio-economic situation. More than 65% of respondents in Kabul, Nangarhar, Balkh, Herat, Sar-E-Pul and Ghor reported increase in criminality. This is closely followed by armed conflict between GoIRA/NSAG (55%) and targeted attacks – peaking in April in Kabul (93%), Balkh (81%) and Herat (28%). These factors combine to reduce freedom of movement for men and boys in particular, whereas for women and girls, socio-cultural constraints in the guise of risk of harassment or abuse also predominate.

“There is no feeling of security and people are scared of thieves, armed men and explosions, especially in the mosque and crowded places.”

IDP & UR Men's FGD, Ghor, May

² [Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction \(2021\) Quarterly Report to the US Congress, 30 April 2021](#)

³ [‘Afghan War Casualty Report: May 2021’, New York Times, 3 June 2021](#)

⁴ [‘Afghanistan - Conflict Induced Displacements in 2021’ Dashboard, UNOCHA, accessed 23 June 2021](#)

⁵ [UNOCHA \(2021\) Afghanistan: Humanitarian Access Snapshot \(May 2021\)](#)

⁶ [UNOCHA/WHO \(2021\) Afghanistan: Strategic Situation Report: COVID-19, No. 98 \(3 June 2021\)](#)

Across the majority of locations assessed during this period, inter or intra-communal tensions were not reported amongst or between displaced/returnee and host communities. The presence of extended family and/or common ethnic, religious and cultural ties supports positive relations according to FGDs with UR and IDPs. This being said, the predominance of ‘lack of trust’ as a factor limiting undocumented returnee men’s movement in communities, coupled with concerns over community violence (in 6 of 11 provinces in KIIs) and a lack of economic opportunity, indicates particular challenges for undocumented returnees in terms of social cohesion.

Undocumented returnees report high levels of indebtedness (in some instances leading to ‘debt-related harassment or intimidation’), and against this backdrop it is thus unsurprising that respondents in Nangarhar (84%) and Kabul (48%) report significant rates of debt related concerns limiting movement. Some tensions were also reported in Balkh (related to religion between IDPs/returnees and HC) and Faryab (difficulty in integrating for recently displaced and returnee women), and in Kandahar political cleavages were mentioned as a point of division since the parliamentary elections: *“It was good in the past but after the parliamentary election mostly people divided to their party and every party is seeking their own benefits and interests.”* UR women’s FGD, April. An undocumented returnee women’s FGD also highlights stigma and social exclusion for those suffering from addiction: *“Addicted people are marginalised and are not in good relations with the rest of the community”*.

♂	♀
“After 10pm men and boys cannot go outside because of insecurity, targeted killing, theft and fear of bad persons in some parts of the community.”	“Women are mostly not allowed to go out after 3pm due to extortion and violence... sometimes for weddings and illness they can leave the house, otherwise they are not allowed out.”

– Undocumented Returnee Men’s FGDs, Kabul, April

2.3 Mine Action

A quarter of undocumented returnees report mine contamination in all provinces except Balkh. In Nangarhar, all key informants and 97% of undocumented returnee survey respondents confirm it to be the province with the highest presence of mines. Two thirds of HHS respondents say it is blocking or limiting their ability to access water (‘can’t, or walk further to, collect water’) potentially having particular impacts on women and girls who predominantly bear responsibility for water collection. Across other provinces, areas of significant contamination include Sar-E-Pul (69%), Ghor (65%), Badakhshan (45%) and Takhar (39%) where it is directly impacting the safety of children (60%) and blocking their access to education (52%). General access to services is limited by mine presence for 95% of respondents reporting their presence in Badakhshan, and curtailing people’s ability to graze livestock in provinces heavily reliant on agriculture – Badakhshan (75%), Ghor (62%) and Sar-E-Pul (81%). Kandahar, Balkh and Faryab have a notable minority (13-18%) reporting lack of awareness of presence of mines, potentially indicating a need for greater information dissemination targeting returnees to these areas. This should include information on improvised mines, also known as Victim-Operated Improvised Explosive Devices, which cause the most civilian landmine and ERW-related casualties and are particularly dangerous for people travelling on roads.

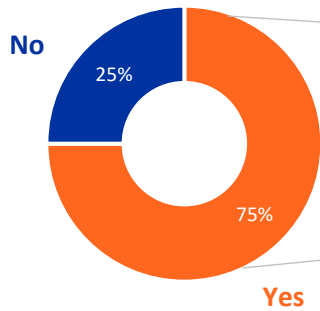
3. Access to services

Over the quarter, a 10% increase was observed in undocumented returnees reporting being denied access to services – by May, it affected more than a quarter (26%) of respondents. Persons with disabilities (29%) and female (27%) respondents are worst impacted. Further analysis of KIIs triangulates these findings, with service denials increasing from 22-35% over the reporting period and undocumented returnee KIIs in particular reporting an even higher rate of exclusion, the majority of which are in Herat and Nimroz.

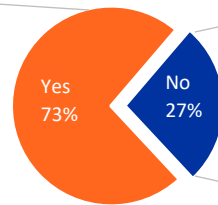
TOP FIVE SERVICES TO WHICH UNDOCUMENTED RETURNEES ARE DENIED				
Service	Overall	Male	Female	PWD
Livelihood Support	57%	58%	54%	38%
Health	53%	49%	61%	54%
Basic Services	52%	59%	38%	54%
WASH	39%	35%	46%	35%
Support for PSN	25%	22%	33%	35%

The reasons for denial of access to services showed a large proportion (62%) reporting harassment or exploitation in exchange for assistance – highest in Nimroz, Herat and Ghor. Discrimination by the host community who ‘block their way’ (including to access mosque), withhold information regarding available services, and demand payment of fees for services, were all mentioned by undocumented returnees in FGDs. Tensions between different ethnic groups – Pashtuns blocking Dari-speaking community members’ use of health services in Sharakh Sabz IDP site – were also reported.

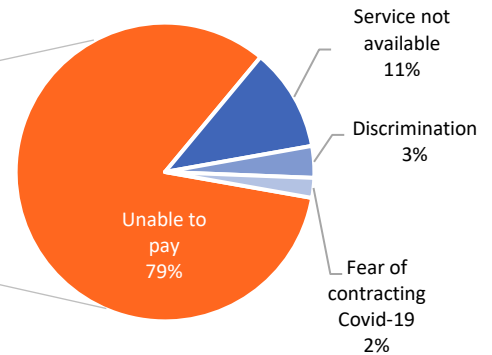
Functional health facility within 2 hours



Able to access health facility



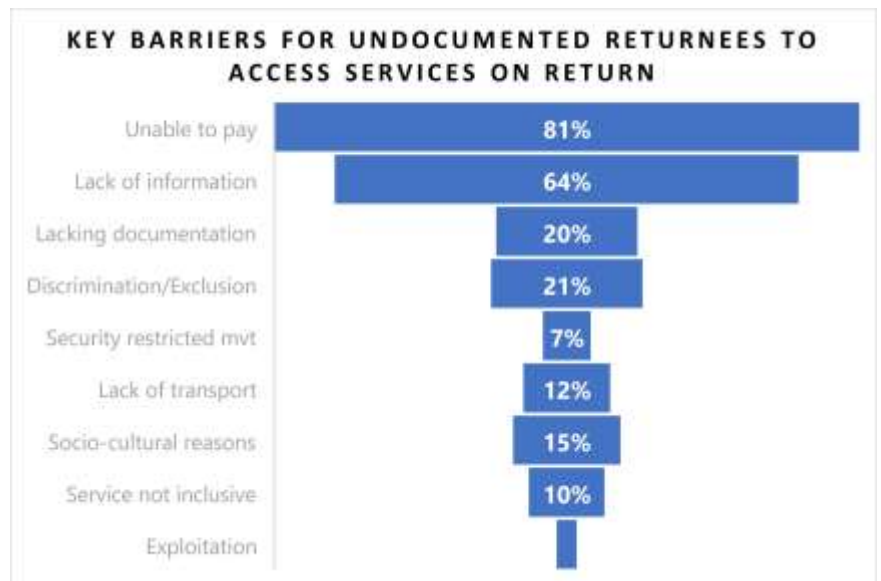
Barriers to Access



Nearly a third of undocumented returnees with disabilities report they cannot access services, with women (30%) also higher than average (29%). The top five services which people are unable to access are the same as those people report being denied access to [see table, page 3]. Barriers are consistent with previous monitoring – in FGDs, cost is highlighted in Herat, Takhar and Kabul, with some forced to borrow money to go to private clinics. Distance to services, and a lack of transportation and/or funds to pay for it (Balkh, Kandahar), also prove prohibitive. Lack of health facilities and barriers to accessing those that are present – predominantly due to cost – mean 45% of the respondent population lacks meaningful access to healthcare.

Services not being inclusive (of gender, age, disability) or ‘not what the community needs’ are reported by almost half of all PWD respondents experiencing barriers, and PWD are identified (after female headed households) as most likely to not be able to access existing services. Further, reports of discrimination/exclusion of undocumented returnees are particularly high in Nimroz including denial of access to healthcare on account of infection / suspected infection with COVID-19. Although not supported by HHS results, 1 in 3 key informants reported a direct link between lack of documentation and barriers in accessing services. FGDs also highlight movement restrictions due to security concerns, lack of transportation and services not being inclusive.

Three quarters of undocumented returnees are not aware of complaints and feedback mechanisms for humanitarian services. The responses indicates a lack of participation of affected communities in designing accountability mechanisms, which would allow wider and safer participation – e.g. PWD with additional access requirements.



3.1 Psychosocial Support (PSS)

More than a third of household survey respondents across 9 of 11 provinces say they have experienced psychological distress in the last 6 months – persons with disabilities (48%) and women (40%) report higher rates than male (36%) counterparts. Kabul, Nangarhar and Badakhshan all report double this average placing them considerably higher than other areas. For all demographics the key reason stated is lack of employment, indicating the level of stress and debilitating impact on wellbeing which economic insecurity engenders. For women and PWD, COVID-19 is the second highest factor (reducing over the quarter for PWD from 65-38%), whereas for men it is conflict. Women also report ‘family violence’ as one of the top three drivers of psychological distress (28%), at almost double the rate of male counterparts (15%).

Some 15% of undocumented returnees observed negative changes in their children’s behaviour in the preceding 6 months, most commonly manifesting as violent/aggressive conduct (65%) as well as becoming withdrawn (29%), evidence of eating disorders (27%) and self-harm (23%). Provision and dissemination of information on services should be prioritized as 90% of persons in need are unaware of

how or where to access PSS in their community – that number increases to 92% for children’s services. The most affected populations were in Herat, Nimroz, Takhar and Badakhshan.

3.2 Civil documentation

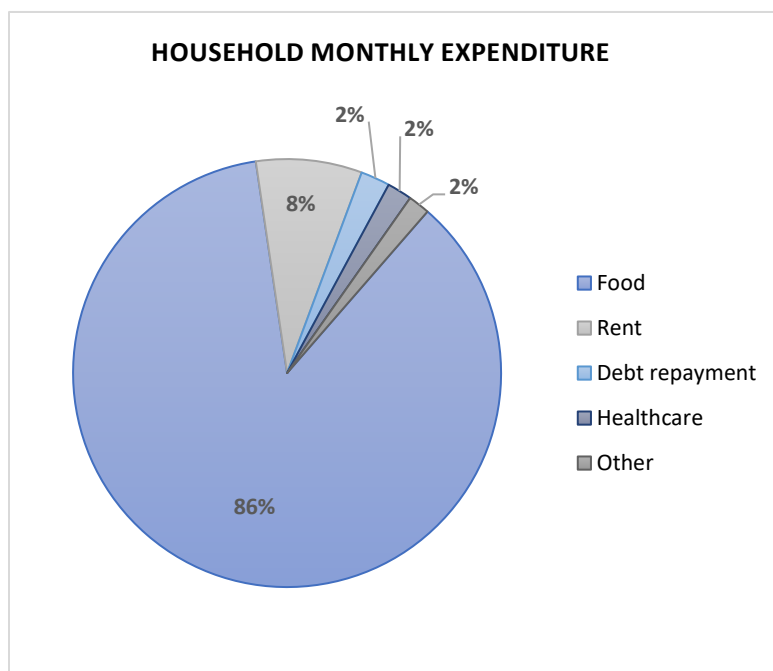
Overall, 16% of undocumented returnees (32% of PWD and 23% of women) lack at least one form of civil documentation. The most prominent documentation undocumented returnees report having is the paper Tazkira, with e-Tazkira mentioned infrequently in Kabul, Herat, Nimroz, and Takhar FGDs only. With the e-Tazkira increasingly being linked to access to Government services (pensions, cash assistance for families of martyrs and disabled, and passport issuance), lack of such documentation is likely to exacerbate existing vulnerability – particularly for women and persons with disabilities – by excluding them from services and driving migration through irregular pathways. Kandahar had the highest rate of respondents lacking documentation (56%) and women are most lacking across all areas.

The key reasons for lack of documentation for undocumented returnees are that it was never obtained (35%) or has been lost or destroyed (28%) – the latter being significantly above the Cluster Protection Brief average (5%)⁷. Women particularly report that they lack knowledge about the procedures for obtaining ID (21%), as well as concerns about costs. This is borne out in FGDs where the costs associated with obtaining e-/Tazkira (fees and transportation etc) are prohibitive as well as the dangers if home locations are unsafe to return to. Even if the need to obtain from one’s home province has formally been removed, in Herat FGDs respondents cite this as a key barrier indicating a lack of information on latest procedures. FGDs also reveal strong cultural barriers and assumptions driving women’s lack of documentation, limiting movement and revealing it is ‘shameful’ to be seen going to offices. Given women’s traditional roles, it is also not seen as necessary: “The women in [the] community do not need Tazkira because they don’t work” (Sar-E-Pul women’s FGD) and “Girls don’t need Tazkira. We don’t have a school and they don’t study. Also, they are house managers and will work at home,” (Sar-E-Pul men’s FGD). As a consequence of lacking documentation, KIIs report undocumented returnees experience barriers to accessing basic services (34%), emergency assistance (27%; corroborated by Kabul and Nimroz FGDs), and limits to people’s freedom of movement (22%).

4. Access to Livelihoods

While Afghanistan is still struggling to recover from the economic impacts of COVID-19, current political and security uncertainties have created barriers to economic recovery since many businesses have closed and employment opportunities have been lost (World Bank).⁸ It should be noted that lack of access to livelihoods, although now more pronounced, was not strong at any time in recent memory – e.g. in 2016, 55% of the population lived under the poverty line. With 83% of HHS respondents citing loss of livelihoods as the biggest impact of the pandemic, and the current drought limiting agriculture activities, it is expected that households will continue to resort to negative coping mechanisms deteriorating the protection environment.

Undocumented returnees present with particular economic vulnerability that can cause barriers to reintegration on return and also be push factors for re-migration. When asked whether they are better off now compared to before they left [for Iran/Pakistan], 45% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 22% said they in the same position as before going. In order to go to Iran or Pakistan, more than half of respondents sold assets to pay for the journey, 35% used their savings and a quarter sold their house/land. Upon return, 1 in 8 also report use of child labour with smaller numbers resorting to marrying their children (notably in Sar-E-Pul, Nimroz, Nangarhar and Herat) and selling a child (Herat, Kabul and Nimroz).



⁷ [Afghanistan Protection Cluster \(2021\) Protection Brief, Quarter 1 \(January – March 2021\)](#)

⁸ [World Bank Group \(April 2021\) Afghanistan Development Update](#)

PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS IN DEBT

■ Yes ■ No ■ No Answer



More than 4/5 undocumented Afghans are having to borrow money to meet their basic household needs once back, with respondents in Nangarhar (97%) and Badakhshan (92%) most reliant on this. In the event of quarantine (due to COVID-19), 61% say they have insufficient resources to support their basic household needs 'at all' without work outside the home, and 98% of all undocumented returnees would be unable to survive past four weeks.

Given the extent of income spent on food, any fluctuations in food prices are likely to increase vulnerability of households. 87% of HHS respondents also report that their household is in debt which means drought, conflict and further movement/border restrictions related to COVID-19 could pose considerable challenges for undocumented returnee households already living on the edge. Further, approximately 1 in 3 persons with disabilities cannot move

freely due to debt-related concerns which speaks to the particular vulnerability and risks facing undocumented returnees with disabilities.

4.1 Coping Mechanisms

Undocumented returnees are increasingly coping with their livelihoods situation by sending children to work – up from 31% in March to 37% in May – resulting in children being withdrawn from school and exposed to risks of abuse and exploitation. According to key informants interviewed in this period, sending children to work is most prevalent in Kabul, Nangarhar, Sar-E-Pul and Takhar.

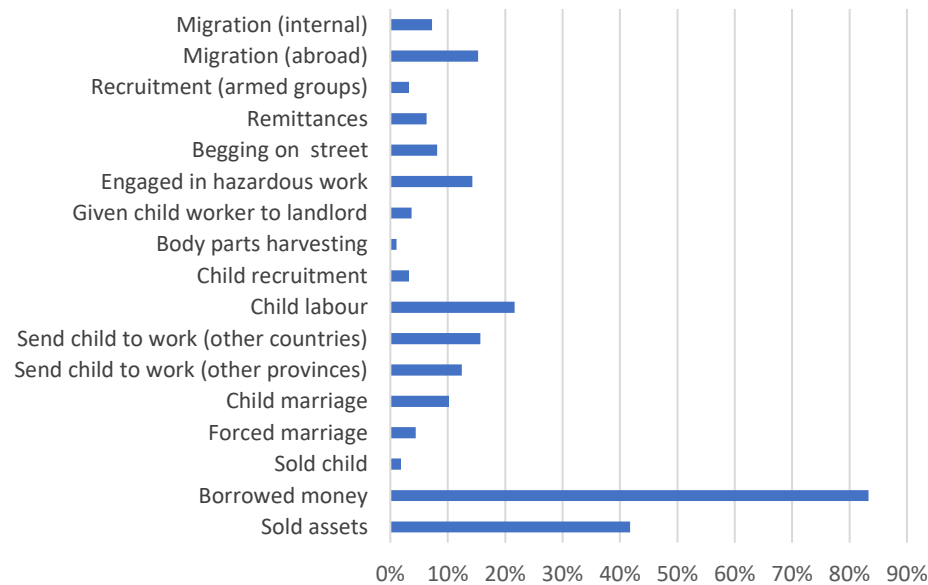
Child marriage and sale of a child is more commonly associated with girls, but not exclusively: "Most girls are not working but still they are in danger and at risk of child marriage, forced marriage and being sold. Families are forced to do one of these things with their girls to support other family members and as unfortunately boys have more value than girls in Afghanistan, people prefer to sell their daughters than their sons." (Undocumented returnee men's FGD, Herat, May).

"Some people sell their body parts, some send children for working in and out of the country, some of them beg on the streets, and some female headed household work in others' houses."

UR Men's FGD, Herat, May

Reports of child recruitment impacting boys also increased during the monitoring period from 1% to 4%, most instances noted in Nimroz (17%) and Faryab (10%). Recruitment by armed groups is also mentioned by FGD respondents in Balkh, Herat, Nangarhar, Sar-E-Pul and Takhar.

COPING MECHANISMS



Sale of body parts as a means to provide for their families has been reported specifically in Herat province in household surveys, KIIs and FGDs. According to media reports in February 2021, poor people selling their kidneys on the black market has become a thriving market.⁹

Sending family members elsewhere to work (20%) is one of the top three coping mechanisms people resort to for dealing with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic – Faryab, Kabul, Herat, Balkh and Takhar show highest prevalence. Among the respondents reliant on sending family members to work elsewhere, two thirds are migrating outside of the country, likely predominantly adolescent boys and men using irregular routes consecutively and exposing them to risks of human trafficking, death or serious injury.

⁹ ['In Afghanistan, A Booming Kidney Trade Preys on the Poor', *New York Times*, 15 February 2021](#)

Drought Snapshot

Afghanistan is prone to intense and recurring droughts which further spurs displacements and irregular migration, particularly amongst rural communities. Similar to 2018, when 22 of 34 provinces and two thirds of the population were directly impacted, monitoring shows that 74% of respondents are already experiencing drought this year driven by climate change and the *La Niña* weather phenomenon. A steep rise in reports of drought (26% in March to 58% in May in HHS) confirms that the predicted March to July peak phase for drought impacts has manifested with Faryab and Ghor particularly affected.¹⁰

Undocumented returnees and their communities are spending their income on food, healthcare and paying back debts. Over the three months, communities' means of obtaining sufficient food has shifted from growing their own or raising livestock to a notable increase in borrowing from shops or communities. This tenuous cycle of survival is vulnerable to shocks – e.g. loss of job, illness, price increases – and communities heavily reliant on agriculture and livestock are already reporting losses: *'The community's main source of income is farming and they lost their crops in this year due to drought.'* (Faryab).

Although drought affects people reliant on agriculture the most, those depending on other income sources are not immune: *"We are poor people and manual laborers. We work for other people. If drought affects these people in fact we lose our livelihood opportunities."* (Ghor undocumented returnee men's FGD, May). People are losing their livelihoods (88%), food security is already impacted (72%), and agricultural preparation/production is limited (34%). In provinces such as Ghor, Nimroz and Sar-E-Pul, people already face severe challenges in obtaining sufficient drinking water and overall, just 23% of respondents have enough water for agriculture.

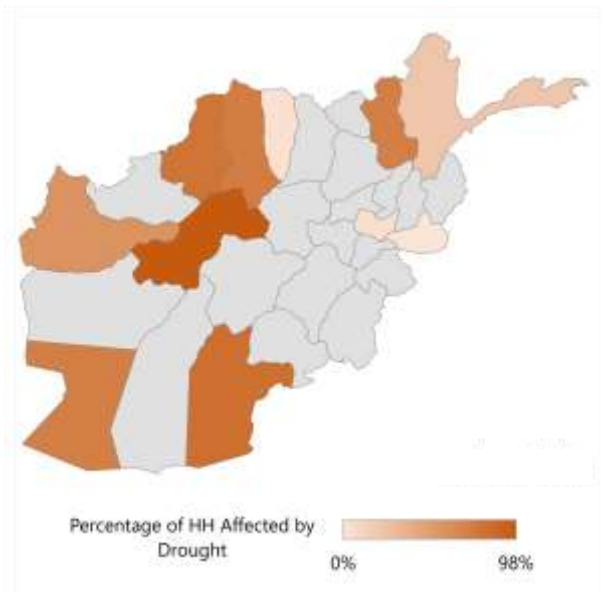
Protection Risks

In response, men are relocating or going abroad in search of work, with family members of PWD households at particular risk of being sent away for work. Resort to begging, further borrowing, and 1 in 3 respondents say they're relocating outside Afghanistan. In Takhar, a heavy reliance on child labour is confirmed by KIIs in communities impacted by drought, and child marriage is raised in Herat FGDs. Impacts of the drought on conflict dynamics are also evident as loss of livelihoods drives recruitment (Ghor) and rates of child recruitment have increased according to Nimroz FGDs. Insecurity is also a key constraint on food production for people with agricultural livelihoods. Respondents report food (92%), drinking water (69%), livelihoods (42%), and water for irrigation (29%) as priority needs during drought.

Recommendations

Drought is affecting Afghanistan in 2021. The window to act early especially in areas acutely affected by drought is shrinking. To mitigate risks of further displacement and resort to negative coping mechanisms:-

- **Donors** must act now to fund **humanitarian/development** programming to increase resilience to drought-related shocks. Long-term multi-sectoral investments built on community-based solutions should address livelihoods, humanitarian and recovery¹¹ measures to reduce internal displacement and facilitate return and reintegration for those in protracted displacement.
- **GoIRA** to implement recommendations of Action Aid's 2020 report including the Comprehensive Migration Policy (2019) and commit to build capacity of the National Environmental Protection Authority to support environmentally sustainable migration governance.¹²
- **Donors** to increase funding commitments for enhanced social protection and safety net programmes, particularly those linked to climate impacts and COVID-19 impacts, to reach more people for longer.



Coping Mechanisms Against Drought

-  **70%** Relocate to either urban centres within province, different rural community, different province
-  **52%** Looking for work / new source of income
-  **34%** Relocate outside Afghanistan
-  **33%** Children are working
-  **14%** Sending family members to work elsewhere
-  **11%** Moving in with relatives

¹⁰ [IFRC \(April 2021\) Afghanistan: La Niña Drought - Emergency Appeal \(n° MDRAF007\)](#); For comparator data see: [Afghanistan Drought Early Warning Decision Support \(AF-DEWS\) Tool](#) & World Bank's [Af-ECLIM \(CREWS\)](#). Five of IOM's surveyed provinces are in [UNOCHA's Spring Contingency plan](#) High Priority list.

¹¹ Drought-related needs: food, water, agricultural (e.g. drought-resistant seeds), livelihoods / health assistance, water(shed) management.

¹² See: [Action Aid \(2020\) Climate Change Drives Migration in Conflict Ridden Afghanistan](#)

Recommendations

Safety & Freedom of Movement

Increasing conflict coupled with reduced population resilience pose ongoing threats to civilians including in the use of children to maximise conflict parties' capacities.

- The protection of civilians and minorities must be a central component of the **international community's** support of the peace process and any violations of IHL/IHRL transparently reported and investigated.
- Strategic advocacy to be undertaken with conflict parties and public campaigns developed and implemented to end child recruitment as a matter of urgency.
- Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) targeting returnees at border points as well as outreach in provinces of returns, including in particular Kandahar, Balkh and Faryab where awareness is more limited.
- **Mine clearance** operations to focus efforts on improvised mines and Nangarhar, which shows particularly high levels of contamination.
- **Donors** to increase funding to Mine Action partners for clearance of explosive hazards in areas of returns and targeted EORE and information dissemination via trusted modes to inform communities (particularly new arrivals) on mine identification, presence, and preventative measures.

Access to Services including Health & Legal

Documentation

The majority of returnees lack meaningful access to health services, with women and PWD particularly impacted. Lack of documentation is limiting undocumented returnees' access to services with women and PWD particularly adversely impacted. Prematurely linking e-Tazkira to obtaining services or passports can lead to people – particularly women – being denied services and support, as well as resort to risky irregular means of migration.

- **PSS services** and information, including mental health sensitization, must be scaled up – particularly specialist services for children – given the impacts of conflict, economic instability, and the third wave of COVID-19.
- **Government and Education** providers to remove barriers to school registration for all undocumented families, particularly in provinces with high rates of forecast and current displacement.
- **Government, Health actors** and **Donors** should remove barriers to healthcare (fees, travel distance, lack of female

staff) as a matter of urgency, including through use of mobile health services and free medication/treatment to ensure access to healthcare and vaccinations is not conditional and equitably available.

- COVID-19 Risk Communication and Community Engagement messages should be shared and consistent practice (i.e. masks wearing, social distancing, avoid large gatherings) respected by all **Government, Humanitarian** and **Development** actors for safe service delivery.¹³
- **Government** and **supporting agencies** to improve safe access to civil documentation (especially e-Tazkira) by developing strategies for women and PWD in particular who experience higher constraints in movement – e.g. mobile missions to remote areas, community sensitization on benefits for all, concessionary fees)
- **Government** to ensure e-Tazkira centres have appropriate levels of female staff and assistance available to aid vulnerable persons (e.g. those who are illiterate, mobility issues) and ensure social distancing.
- **Government, Donors** and **supporting agencies** should advocate for reopening and expanding safe and legal routes for Afghans to migrate in search of safety and livelihoods.
- **Humanitarians** to strengthen feedback and accountability mechanisms by diversifying access points and modalities to ensure women, PWD, and those lacking mobile phones are able to lodge and follow up complaints safely.

Access to Livelihoods

COVID-19, drought and conflict are pushing undocumented returnees towards damaging coping mechanisms – many with lasting impacts for children, women and PWD.

- Integrated multi-sectoral programming by **Government/Humanitarian/Development** actors using community-based approaches in partnership with local leaders/communities to create diverse income generation opportunities for all community members, including promotion of women's livelihoods opportunities (home-based as desired) and access for PWD.
- Cash for work schemes instead of in-kind modalities to be used wherever possible by **Humanitarian/Development** actors to promote dignified and sustainable livelihoods for displaced and communities vulnerable to displacement.
- **Development actors** as far as possible extend their operations to hard-to-reach areas to address needs of persons of concern in those areas.

¹³ <https://afghanistan.iom.int/IOM-COVID-19-Response-RCCE>