



Rethinking Durable Solutions in Peri-Urban Areas in Pakistan

by Dr Sanaa Alimia, Aga Khan University (International), Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations

ADSP Expert Commentary #2

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----------|
| Overview | 2 |
| 1. Who are Pakistan's Afghans? | 2 |
| 2. From theory to practice | 3 |
| 3. Key findings: A reflection on land tenure as a pathway to solutions | 3 |
| Land tenure along the peri-urban frontier | 3 |
| RTVs and their challenges | 4 |
| Informal housing areas and their challenges | 5 |
| 4. Conclusions and suggested ways forward | 7 |

Overview

An estimated three to four million Afghans live in Pakistan, mainly in urban areas. These Afghans fall into different legal categories, as listed below in Section 2. **This paper centres on Afghan registered refugees and undocumented migrants**, who form the bulk of the Afghan population in Pakistan and are almost exclusively the populations living in the areas this paper is concerned with i.e. those in urban and peri-urban areas, informal housing areas (slums), and refugee tented villages (RTVs)¹. This paper proposes, first, that Afghans should be better **legally integrated** into Pakistan and, second, that **spaces must urgently be integrated** – referring to the areas within which Afghans live. By integrating RTVs and informal housing in peri-urban areas, as part of Pakistan’s urban planning and disaster management and climate change plans, refugees would be much better placed to access long-term solutions.

1. Who are Pakistan’s Afghans?



Few Afghans in Pakistan have viable routes to citizenship or long-term legal residency. Additionally, all Afghans are required to register their presence at local police stations. This has been a consequence of anti-terror bills, such as the 2014 National Action Plan (revised in 2021).

Most registered refugees and undocumented migrants live in informal housing areas or RTVs in urban or peri-urban areas.

- 1. Registered refugees.** Most registered refugees moved to Pakistan in the 1980s and 1990s, and were assessed as *prima facie* refugees. Conversely, Afghans who arrived in Pakistan in the 2000s, unless directly related to a registered refugee, were generally not classified as refugees. Registered refugees are one of the largest Afghan populations in the country. Some 1.3 million persons are considered to be refugees and have “temporary protection” through the issuance of a Proof of Registration (PoR) card.² They are managed by two government departments, the Chief Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees (CCAR) and the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON). They receive limited support from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and its implementing partners.
- 2. Undocumented Afghans.** Starting in 2001 and becoming more concrete by 2005, the Government of Pakistan declared Afghans entering Pakistan would no longer be considered refugees – the country effectively ended *prima facie* status. This meant that Afghans entering Pakistan without visas or permits were classified as undocumented Afghans, whilst those who entered on visas and permits that expired and were not renewed were also classed as undocumented Afghans. Accurate numbers of undocumented Afghans are not available, but estimates vary from 1.5 million to as high as 2.5 million. The majority of undocumented Afghans arrived in Pakistan in the early 2000s, with smaller numbers arriving in the decade immediately prior and after.

Undocumented Afghans do not have a legal right to remain in the country. They have received some support from international institutions such as the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) for registration processes that provide them with an **Afghan Citizen Card (ACC)**. The main goal of the card, however, is to speed up returns process.³ ACC holders currently number 840,000 persons, with the UNHCR estimating there are an additional 500,000 undocumented Afghans in the country.⁴

Since the August 2021 Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, a number of Afghans have arrived in Pakistan. Some have done so without any documentation and, using social networks, settled in major cities. These Afghans would also be classed as undocumented Afghans.

- 3. Visa and work permit holders.** There are a number of Afghan nationals in Pakistan with visas, these are often university students or business traders. Since August 2021, many Afghan nationals with valid Pakistani visas have arrived in Pakistan, with many often awaiting third country resettlement. Afghans with work permits are usually daily wage labourers.
- 4. Post-August 2021 registered arrivals.** A number of Afghans have arrived in Pakistan without visas but have proceeded to register with the UNHCR in order to seek asylum and/or third country resettlement. Their status is pending, as the Government of Pakistan does not place them in the category of registered refugees. Most are managed under the Interior Ministry.

1 RTVs are also often referred to as Refugee Villages

2 UNHCR, “Pakistan Overview of Refugee and Asylum-Seekers Population as of June 30, 2022”, Islamabad, 2022.

3 IOM, “USD 21 Million Needed to Help 400,000 Afghan Returnees from Pakistan By Year-End: IOM”, 2016.

4 UNHCR, “Pakistan Overview of Refugee and Asylum-Seekers Population as of September 30, 2022”, Islamabad, 2022.



2. From theory to practice

Pakistan is not a signatory to the United Nations 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol —although UNHCR has been active in the country since 1979.⁵ The country also does not have domestic legislation in place to specifically protect refugees. All Afghans in Pakistan are governed by the Constitution of Pakistan and the colonially inherited *1946 Foreigners Act*.

Since 2007 there have been repeated efforts by the Government of Pakistan and supporting international institutions to register Afghans (both refugees and undocumented Afghans) with smart ID cards and/or to verify existing cards, for example the 2021-2022 DRIVE initiative.⁶ Yet registration drives have rarely translated to improved access to services and were, at least until August 2021, primarily motivated to improving processes of return.

Between 2001 to 2021 Pakistani government policy centred on Afghan repatriation programmes—although these programmes have been perceived as coercive.⁷ In 2017, Human Rights Watch also brought into question the UNHCR's "refugee protection mandate" accusing it of "effectively supporting" Pakistan's attempts at "mass refolement".⁸

For the **Government of Pakistan**, the rationale for repatriation drives was threefold. Firstly, repatriation supported peacebuilding efforts in Afghanistan. Secondly, many branches of the Pakistan government expressed fatigue in having to host Afghan refugees. Thirdly, a number Afghans wanted to return to Afghanistan for reasons such as economic opportunity, family networks, and connections to their home villages, towns, and cities. Yet many Afghans remained in Pakistan and are highly unlikely to return to Afghanistan. The reasons for not wanting to return include not having land in Afghanistan, religious and ethnic persecution in Afghanistan, especially of Shi'a Hazaras, no longer having family members in Afghanistan, family and social ties in Pakistan, and access to work and education in Pakistan. The Taliban's recapture of power in August 2021 has reinforced a desire of many to remain in Pakistan.

Questions over how to integrate and legalise a sizeable, largely urban Afghan population in Pakistan—both in terms of individual legal status and the places where they reside (RTVs) and informal housing areas)—**have been unaddressed by the Government of Pakistan and the international humanitarian and migration regime.** These have had a direct impact of the quality of life of residents in RTVs and informal housing areas in urban and peri-urban areas.



3. Key findings: A reflection on land tenure as a pathway to solutions

Land tenure along the peri-urban frontier

69 percent of registered refugees in Pakistan live in urban or peri-urban areas.⁹ The remaining 31 percent live in the country's 54 RTV's. Accurate figures for where undocumented Afghans live are not available, although it can be deduced that a sizeable portion live in informal housing areas, usually in urban and peri-urban areas in major cities, including Peshawar, Quetta, Islamabad, and Karachi. In some cases, driven by altruism, landholders have "given" unregistered Afghans land for free, although this support has no formal legal standing within Pakistan and as such remains a flimsy arrangement. Afghan nationals cannot own land or immovable property in Pakistan. As a consequence, Afghans generally live in RTVs, paying no rent, or in rented accommodation including:

1. rented apartment or house/ house portion in a regulated housing area;
2. rented home in informal housing areas (slums), usually situated in peri-urban areas of major cities.

Pakistan has the fastest rate of urbanization in South Asia.¹¹ For years, Pakistani policy makers boasted the building of "world class" cities. But urbanisation in the Global South is riddled with inequalities, driven by colonial legacies of urban spatial segregation and the impacts of the restructuring of economies by international financial institutions, which has pushed millions from rural to urban areas.¹² Pakistan also faces the added caveat of urbanisation being driven by population movements as a consequence of forced migration. This includes Afghan migration into Pakistan, Pakistani citizens being displaced via counterinsurgency campaigns, the movements of Rohingya refugees after persecution in Myanmar, amongst others. Migration is also the result of climate disasters, such as the 2010 and 2022 national floods, and mega-infrastructure development projects.

5 Alimia, Sanaa, *Refugee Cities: How Afghans Transformed Urban Pakistan*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022, p. 26.

6 Government of Pakistan and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees in Pakistan, "DRIVE Report 2022: Document Renewal and Information Verification Exercise," Islamabad 2022.

7 Alimia, Sanaa, "Performing the Afghanistan-Pakistan Border Through Refugee ID Cards," *Geopolitics*, 24: 2 (2019), 391–425; Human Rights Watch, "Pakistan Coercion, UN Complicity: The Mass Forced Return of Afghan Refugees," Islamabad, 2017.

8 Human Rights Watch, "Pakistan Coercion, UN Complicity".

9 UNHCR, "Pakistan Overview of Refugee and Asylum-Seekers Population as of June 30, 2022", Islamabad, 2022.

10 Ibid

11 Kugelman, Michael, ed., "Pakistan's Runaway Urbanization: What Can Be Done?" Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2014.

12 Davis, Mike, *Planet of the Slums*, London: Verso, 2006.

Much of Pakistan's urbanisation consists of low-income and displaced persons. Whilst some of these people move to city centres, many more move to newly emerging settlements on peri-urban land. RTVs and informal housing settlements have emerged primarily along the rural-to-urban interface and reflect a broader trend whereby most of Pakistan's urbanisation is taking place beyond municipal boundaries.

An alarming challenge for residents along the peri-urban frontier is **the devastating impacts of climate change that are rapidly intensifying.** Despite being responsible for less than one percent of historic and contemporary carbon emissions, Pakistan is one of the highest at-risk countries to the impacts of climate change.¹³ Within this framework, urban areas are especially vulnerable. Given that most of Pakistan's cities sit along floodplains, "growing incidences of extreme weather events such as floods, cyclones and storm surges,"¹⁴ are a major concern. Cities are also vulnerable to water shortages, which are intensifying because of heat waves. **When thinking about durable solutions for Afghans in Pakistan, it is essential, then, for Afghans to be meaningfully brought into conversations about climate change and urban planning, especially along peri-urban areas.**

RTVs and their challenges

Pakistan's RTVs were established in the late 1970s and 1980s, primarily in the provinces neighbouring Afghanistan i.e., Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Afghans have never been legally restricted to living in RTVs, but they were, initially, a popular place to settle as a way of receiving international humanitarian assistance. By the mid-1980s there were over 330 RTVs in Pakistan,¹⁵ however in 2022 only 54 RTVs remain. Most residents in RTVs are registered Afghan refugees, although in more recent years, internally displaced persons (IDPs) who are affected by conflict and climate disasters, have moved into these areas. RTVs give the impression of being in rural areas (refugee tented *villages*). However, a sizeable number are situated on the outskirts of cities or even within city boundaries. Additionally, as urbanisation has started to spread into rural areas, if an RTV is in a rural area it may become more urbanised or takes on a more rural-to-urban constitution.¹⁶

Historically, settlement in RTVs was either spontaneous (refugee led) or directed by the government. In all cases, **RTV's have never been built in the city centre itself, but on its outskirts. Positioning RTVs on urban peripheries is understood as a way of maintaining spatial segregation between citizens and non-citizens.**

RTVs sit under the jurisdictional control of the Government of Pakistan and receive funding from the international humanitarian and migration regime, usually via the UNHCR and its implementing partners. RTVs are built either on government or private land—in the case of the latter, the land is leased to the government for a small amount of yearly compensation. In RTVs, the UNHCR and implementing partners have funded and maintained primary school facilities, basic health units, and water and sanitation services. In recent years, however, **the UNHCR has consistently expressed concerns of a 50% funding gap for Afghans in Pakistan,¹⁷ which places the burden on local communities to manage and maintain RTV facilities.**

The UNHCR runs a Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas (RAHA) programme, that seeks to alleviate the burden on host communities and promote social cohesion—yet reduced funding has affected its impact.

Being situated in RTVs in peri-urban areas and/or newly urbanising areas poses a number of challenges for residents. These include:

Access and distance challenges

- Poor access to basic facilities, such as public transport, resulting in having to travel longer distances for work, to access shops, healthcare, and schools.
- Poor infrastructure, such as roads, electricity, and water and sanitation services.

Ecological and health challenges related to climate change

Most houses in RTVs are a mixture of mud and concrete structures. The land in which RTVs are situated were not well-levelled and not built for long-term use. Most RTVs situated on peri-urban areas are also situated in exposed areas with limited natural and other shelter. Additionally, many RTVs are built along flood plains. These factors combine to mean RTV areas are subject to the vulnerabilities of climatic shifts that are intensifying in Pakistan via climate change.

13 German Watch, "Global Climate Risk Index 2019." Available at:

14 Anwar, Nausheen and Malini Sur, "Climate change, urban futures, and the gendering of cities in South Asia", in "Climate Justice and Migration Mobility, Development, and Displacement in the Global South." Edited by Ali Nobil Ahmad and the Heinrich Böll Foundation, 2021.

15 Alimia, Sanaa, Refugee Cities, vx.

16 Qadeer, Mohammad, "Do's and Don'ts of Urban Policies in Pakistan," in Pakistan's Runaway Urbanization: What Can be Done? edited by Michael Kugelman, 21–44, Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2014.

17 UNHCR, "Pakistan Overview of Refugee and Asylum-Seekers Population as of June 30, 2022", Islamabad, 2022.

The impact of these various factors on residents of RTVs is multiple and includes:

- Increased health difficulties.
- Housing structures and entire neighbourhoods being destroyed in flash floods and/or major flooding. For example, in the 2022 floods, a number of RTVs were affected.
- Exposure to extreme heat, leading to poor health and death.
- Poor access to safe drinking water.

UNHCR funding gaps and poor RTV maintenance

The UNHCR funding gap for Afghans in Pakistan means that infrastructure in RTVs is poorly maintained including sanitation lines, electricity lines, and access to safe drinking water. Poor maintenance also contributes to growing health issues for residents. It makes these areas more vulnerable to destruction when big climatic events take place, such as heavy rainfall that leads to flooding.

Land tenure, evictions, and closure challenges

Since the 2000s, a number of landholders have demanded the return of their land upon which RTVs have been built. In a number of cases, they have pressured the government to evict residents, or taken to threatening residents themselves.¹⁸ Since the 2000s, many RTVs have also closed down. In part, closures have been a result of reduced funding for RTVs; they have also been a strategy used by the government and UNHCR to encourage refugee repatriation. When RTVs do close – for the many people who do not repatriate to Afghanistan – people have moved to other parts of the city, most commonly informal housing areas.

Police harassment

Since the late 2000s, Afghans in Pakistan have been subject to growing levels of police harassment. It is commonplace after major terrorist attacks or criminal activity for Afghans to find themselves being made scapegoats by the police, media, and government officials—even when they have had no involvement in such affairs. In 2014, after the Army Public School attack in Peshawar, the Government of Pakistan's National Counter Terrorism Authority came up with a twenty-point National Action Plan to combat terrorism (updated in 2021). Point number 14 is the "Repatriation of Afghan Refugees and dealing with their issues," thereby conflating Afghan refugees with terrorist activity in Pakistan.¹⁹ In a context where Afghans are constructed in negative terms by government action plans, as well as the media,²⁰ the conditions for Afghans to be subject to police profiling are ripe and many Afghans have reported harassment by the police, i.e., asked to pay a bribe, on entering and leaving their places of residence.²¹

Informal housing areas and their challenges

Large numbers of registered refugees and undocumented Afghans live in informal housing areas that are also home to Pakistani citizens. It is estimated that the majority of people in many of Pakistan's cities live in informal housing areas, including, for example, over 70% of the population of Karachi.²²

Residents of these areas face a number of similar challenges to Afghans, including: (a) poor access to affordable healthcare, education, utilities, transport links, and infrastructure; (b) significant vulnerability to the impacts of climate change; (c) insecure land tenure; and (d) inadequate support from government institutions and civil society actors.

Residents of informal housing areas are subject to anti-poor urban planning. The term "informal housing area", gives the impression that these areas exist out of sight and the political control of the government and separate from the formal economy. However, often these areas are key sources of cheap labour for the formal economy. Moreover, the modern state, including in the Global South (even in cases of conflict), does not ignore the populations that live within its territories, especially in the city. The state, represented by government institutions and actors, is not absent. Instead, the state chooses to act in a different, discriminatory way with certain groups: the poor, the marginalised, refugees.²³

18 Alimia, *Refugee Cities*, pp. 92-94.

19 National Counter Terrorism Authority. National Action Plan. Islamabad. 2014 [2021] Available at: <https://nacta.gov.pk/revised-national-action-plan-2021-2/>

20 Jehangir, Asma. "Finding Peace Journalism: An analysis of media discourse on Afghan refugees and their forced repatriation from Pakistan", *Journal of Media, War, and Conflict*, 2023.

21 Alimia, Sanaa, "Performing the Afghanistan-Pakistan Border Through Refugee ID Cards".

22 Hasan, Arif, *The Unplanned Revolution: Observations on the Processes of Socio-Economic Change in Pakistan*, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2009.

23 Alimia, Sanaa, *Refugee Cities*.

Whilst Pakistan's urbanization rapidly speeds up, there are limited housing schemes in place in Pakistan to meet the demands of larger numbers of people who are moving to the city, especially if they are poor. There are many housing schemes across Pakistan led by global firms, Pakistani corporations, the government, and Pakistan's own military industrial complex. However, none cater for the poor and lower middle classes reflecting Pakistan's an anti-poor bias in urban planning.

For the urban poor and lower middle classes, renting or buying a home through official channels and in regulated housing areas is too expensive (upfront costs, deposits, and taxation) and too time-consuming (long queues in government offices). For non-citizens, such as Afghans, it is simply impossible. So, most people turn to informal housing areas as a quasi-solution.

Types of informal housing areas

In local vernacular, informal housing is called *katchi abadi* (a "raw" place of living). The legal status of housing areas varies across different cities, yet broadly informal housing areas are built on either:

- a) Government land;
- b) Private agricultural land;
- c) Contested land.

Yet residents in these areas are vulnerable to a range of issues, including insecurity of land tenure, extortive rents from landholders and middlemen, and the growing impacts of climate change. This is also contingent upon the type of informal housing area that one resides in. Security of land ownership—or lack thereof—is key to understanding the (in)security of residents in these areas.

Legalizing informal housing areas on government land: Informal housing built on government land helps the government to manage populations that it cannot and will not reach itself. Historically the Government of Pakistan has regularized squatter settlements on government land.²⁴ The drive toward legalization is made possible by the efforts of activists, civil society organizations, and government departments concerned with social welfare that have pushed forward legislation, including Katchi Abadi Acts in each province.²⁵ Additionally, different municipal and federal government initiatives are in effect that seek to improve the quality of life in these areas.

Informal settlements on private and contested land: Most government land is occupied, however, many people have moved to private agricultural land on the rural-to-urban interface, which is leading to expanding urban boundaries into rural areas. This settlement occurs either by individual cases of squatting, or, more usually, by being brought into the area by a middleman that has connections to a private landholder. In other cases, individuals and groups that are trying to claim they own a plot of land will bring people to live in the area to "change facts on the ground".

Being situated in peri-urban areas poses several challenges that mirror the challenges of RTVs in similar areas. This includes:

Access and distance

Poor access to basic facilities, such as public transport, results in long distances for work, to access shops, healthcare, and schools. In addition, residents can be left out of government and international vaccination initiatives. Polio numbers have, for example, dramatically risen in Pakistan, especially in low-income areas in major cities, and amongst non-citizen groups. Poor infrastructure, such as roads, electricity, and water lines are also a problem.

Ecological and health challenges

Most houses in informal housing areas, akin to RTVs, are a mixture of mud and concrete, where structures are built either by residents or contracted builders. There are limited regulations in place in informal housing areas, this is especially pronounced for informal housing areas that are built on private and contested land. The land in which informal housing areas are built varies widely. As urbanisation spreads into rural land, it is common for informal homes to be situated close to riverbanks or areas where there is depressed standing water. In other instances, informal housing areas are situated on or near industrial areas. Increasingly informal housing areas are home to a growing "scrapyard" economy, where residents collect and sort through urban waste for a middleman and paid a daily wage as a result. Many newly expanding informal housing areas cut trees and bushes, which reduces natural shelter and contributes to rising urban temperatures.

24 Hasan, Arif, *Participatory Development: The Story of the Orangi Pilot Project-Research and Training Institute and the Urban Resource Centre*, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010.

25 For example, Government of Sindh, *The Sindh Katchi Abadi Act of 1987*, Karachi, 1987.

These various factors have resulted in a number of negative impacts for residents, including:

- Increasing disease, including respiratory issues, dysentery, cholera, and tuberculosis.
- Housing structures and entire neighbourhoods being destroyed in flash floods and/or major flooding.
- Exposure to extreme heat, leading to poor health and death.
- Poor access to safe drinking water.

No funding, no regularisation, no improvements?

Informal housing areas built on private or contested land do not receive government interventions for improving the quality of life unless lobbied by the landholder, activists, or local NGOs.

The UNHCR and its implementing partners do not offer individualised support to registered Afghan refugees who may be living in informal housing areas beyond refugee registration programmes. They also do not offer support to undocumented/irregular Afghans or Pakistani citizens. **Any improvements to informal housing areas must be carried out by residents alone or the discretion of the landholder and/or middlemen.** Whilst this can result in high levels of altruism, it can also result in high levels of neglect and exploitation. In some cases, activists, civil society organisations, and government bodies will intervene in the informal housing areas for healthcare initiatives surveys, and service delivery. However, many activists remain unclear as to how to engage with Afghans and other non-citizens.

High rents, insecure land tenure, evictions, and demolitions

Residents are often subject to shifting demands of landholders and middlemen, including high rents. In cases where the land in which people are living is contested, residents are subject to routine threats and actual evictions or housing demolitions. In instances where Afghan refugees or undocumented migrants are displaced through evictions and demolitions, these groups are especially vulnerable. The government claims no responsibility for undocumented Afghans and, instead, threatens deportation, using narratives of criminality. Meanwhile civil society groups are unsure of how to intervene in their favour, instead often simply referring them to the UNHCR.

Police harassment

Police harassment is repeated in informal housing areas and often made worse here, as the police are aware of the special vulnerability that undocumented persons have.



4. Conclusions and suggested ways forward

The situation of Afghans in Pakistan, which includes refugees and undocumented Afghans, remains vulnerable. This is especially pronounced in cases of peri-urban habitation. **Ways forward for Afghans in peri-urban areas require rethinking durable solutions, protection, and avenues of aid.** Solutions include: (a) encouraging the Government of Pakistan to provide viable routes to long-term legal residency to the country's Afghan population, either in the form of citizenship or permanent residency; (b) integrating concerns of Afghan urban residents with civil society actors; (c) incorporating RTVs into Pakistan's urban planning; (d) integrating RTVs and informal housing areas with large Afghan residents into pre- and post-disaster management and climate change management planning.

Solution 1:

Steps toward long-term legal stay and pathways to citizenship

Why? The government should offer viable routes to Pakistani citizenship and/or permanent resident status. Pakistan's longer-term Afghan populations, both registered refugees and undocumented Afghans, are highly unlikely to return to Afghanistan because of political instability, insecurity, religious persecution (especially of Shia Hazaras), a lack of economic opportunities, and other issues in Afghanistan. Additionally, most Afghans in Pakistan have lived in the country for 30 to 40 years or were born in Pakistan, and have strong sense of belonging in the towns and cities of which they are a part.

For the Government of Pakistan, legalising a long-term population will integrate populations that are already contributing to society and the economy.

Legalising Afghans will also integrate them better into efforts by civil society and local, provincial, and national governments to improve living standards in informal peri-urban areas. Legalising Afghans, will also help regularise existing governance practices.

For Afghans, being legal residents or citizens will offer better access to housing and pathways out of informal housing areas. It is also a key route to overall security for Afghans in the country and offers a likelihood of reduced police harassment.

Who? Local activists, advocates, and political groups, as well as international actors, including humanitarian agencies, NGOs, and governments should advocate for the basic rights of registered and undocumented Afghans to remain in the country as citizens and/or permanent residents.

How? Pakistan's citizenship laws state that anyone born in the country is eligible for citizenship—which certainly applies to large numbers of registered and undocumented Afghans. This, however, has never been applied to Afghans. Greater efforts should be made to increase attention on this issue within Pakistan and by international organisations working on migration in Pakistan. This can be encouraged by Pakistan's legal fraternity and political parties as well as the UNHCR. Pakistan should be encouraged to sign up to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, and pass domestic legislation enshrining the rights of refugees, which to date has repeatedly been stifled at various governmental levels.

Efforts should also be made to offer viable pathways to citizenship or permanent residency for Afghans not born in the country. Again, there are pathways to this under Pakistan's Citizenship Laws (under naturalisation), but have not been put into effect.

Solution 2:

Integrating Afghans into civil society actions in informal housing areas

Why? Pakistan has a rich array of urban based community organisers, NGOs, and government organisations that are doing crucial work on the ground to alleviate challenging conditions faced by the urban poor. This includes provision of basic utilities, healthcare, rations, and the prevention of housing demolitions. In many cases, however, there is lack of clarity over how to manage Afghans, with the assumption that Afghans fall under the remit of UNHCR.

Who? Charitable organisations, urban think tanks, activists, government departments, and anti-housing demolition groups.

How? Reach out to targeted actors working in peri-urban areas with education programs, briefings, and information that will empower these actors to integrate Afghans into their campaigns, research, and policies.

Solution 3:

Regularise RTVs as Pakistani areas

Why? RTVs could be formalised and incorporated into municipal administration and urban planning by the Government of Pakistan. Given that Afghan residents of RTVs are unlikely to return to Afghanistan in the short, medium- or long-term - and many RTVs also now host Pakistani citizens - regularising RTVs offers routes to better management of residents living in these areas, a better provision of utilities, and greater security of land tenure.

Who? Government of Pakistan, including urban planning departments and provincial governments, and refugee rehabilitation programmes, such as RAHA, led by the UNHCR.

How? Reimagine durable solutions in Pakistan in bolder terms. The Government of Pakistan should work to develop and pass legislation that can legalise RTVs as regulated housing areas in which Afghans (and others) can live. This can and should be integrated with municipal authorities as well as the UNHCR's existing RAHA programme.

Solution 4:

Integrating RTVs and informal housing areas into disaster management plans

Why? Housing for the urban poor in peri-urban areas, especially areas where refugees and undocumented migrants live, is vulnerable to the growing effects of climate change. Greater efforts need to be made to incorporate refugees and undocumented migrants into pre- and post-disaster management programmes by the Government of Pakistan and international humanitarian organisations. Greater efforts also need to be made to more generally understand the vulnerability of peri-urban areas to the effects of climate change.

Who? Government of Pakistan departments at the municipal and federal level. This includes, CCAR, SAFRON, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), as well as the municipal authorities, such as the Peshawar Development Authority, Capital Development Authority, Islamabad, Karachi Municipal Council, and Sindh Katchi Abadi Authority.

How? Greater communication across different Pakistani government departments at the municipal and federal level.