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Briefing Note

The Asia Displacement Solutions Platform (ADSP) is a joint initiative of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).

ADSP contributes to the development of comprehensive solutions for Afghans affected by displacement. Drawing upon its members' operational presence, the ADSP engages in research, constructive dialogue, and evidence-based advocacy to support improved outcomes for displaced Afghans.

This briefing paper on Local Integration in Kandahar, utilises data collected by DRC and its partners, supplemented by qualitative research by Samuel Hall. It is our hope that this timely, relevant and evidence-based brief will support practitioners, policy makers, and donors when assessing the prospects for local integration for IDP populations in Kandahar, Afghanistan.

Local Integration for IDPs in Kandahar? Insights from the field

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ACRONYMS

ADSP	Asia Displacement Solutions Platform
AFN	Afghani (currency)
CCM	Community Conflict Mediation
CCCM	Camp Coordination and Camp Management
DfA	De facto Authorities
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
DTM	Displacement Tracking Matrix
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GoIRA	(Former) Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
GRN	Global Refugee-Led Network
HEAT	Household Emergency Assessment Tool
HLP	Housing, Land, and Property
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
ISET	Informal Settlement Assessment
KII	Key Informant Interview
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
PD	Police District
rCSI	reduced Coping Strategies Index
ReDSS	Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat
SSI	Semi-Structured Interview
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

INTRODUCTION

Why this brief?

The Asia Displacement Solutions Platform (ADSP) is a joint initiative of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), and the International Rescue Committee (IRC) to contribute to the development of comprehensive solutions for displaced populations in Asia. ADSP draws on its members' operational presence throughout the region to engage in constructive dialogue and evidence-based advocacy initiatives. This is done to facilitate improved outcomes for displaced populations, focusing on the development of innovative and transitional solutions to displacement challenges.

ADSP was established in 2017 with a mandate to promote durable solutions via three core pillars – research, advocacy, and coordination. Since its inception, the platform has focused on research initiatives that build an evidence base for ADSP members and other humanitarian actors to facilitate understanding around durable solutions to displacement.

Since 2022, [Samuel Hall](#), a research organisation founded and based in Kabul, has been working with ADSP to create a space for research and advocacy on internal displacement, building on existing data being collected by member organisations. The aim is to harmonise durable solutions data across ADSP members and contribute to a collective vision and common source of data and knowledge on durable solutions. Since August 2021, the need for collaboration and coordination around evidence and data on durable solutions has become even more pronounced.

It is in the context of severe challenges facing Afghanistan and its people that Samuel Hall, DRC and ADSP are delivering this brief on ***Local Integration in Kandahar***, which puts forward data collected by DRC and its partners. **It is our hope that this timely, relevant and evidence-based brief will be of use to practitioners, policy makers, and donors as there are currently, multiple conversations on durable solutions happening in Afghanistan, focusing on returns, as well as on the prospects for local integration. This brief addresses specifically the latter.**

Context

Despite the reduction in conflict after August 2021, many drivers of displacement in Afghanistan persist or have been exacerbated, leading to Afghans moving in search of protection or remaining in protracted displacement. At the same time, discussions led by the De facto Authorities (DfA) on durable solutions continue to centre on returns. This brief seeks to highlight prospects for local integration in Kandahar, one of the urban areas in Afghanistan that remains a hope for protection for many displaced. According to 2022 data from IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), there were **close to 250,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) settled in Kandahar province, representing about 30% of the province's population**.¹ Within this specific urban population are IDPs from Badghis, and other protracted IDP groups. This brief will focus on both groups and elaborate on why IDPs from Badghis are often in more precarious situations compared to other IDPs in Kandahar's informal settlements.

Nearly all urban IDP settlements in Kandahar are informal settlements. Previously, there were 12 formal settlements but many closed due to the relocation or return of IDPs to their areas of origin. While certain IDPs returned following the fall of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the end of active fighting, other IDPs were pressured to return. Most remaining informal settlements are adjacent to host communities, and located in the 7th, 8th, 9th and 12th districts of Kandahar where data collection for this brief took place.

"The IDP families that we have met, the situation of their shelter, healthcare facilities and other life's needs are not good at all. They are mostly in survival mode and don't have much money to pay for their other expenses except for being able to barely pay for their food. Their main concern is food nowadays. In a situation like this, it is not possible to consider other things. Their main objective is getting food to eat. Most of them are living in muddy houses and in tents. Their homes are not that good at all." – KII 1

¹International Organization for Migration (IOM). "Afghanistan - Baseline Mobility Assessment." Displacement Tracking Matrix. Accessed February 7, 2023.

Local integration has long been championed as one of three possible durable solutions to displacement. However, despite a concerted push for increased recognition of, and support for local integration, it is frequently overlooked by governments and policy makers, who favour return as the preferred solution. As early as twenty years ago, experts lamented the fact that local integration is too often a forgotten solution². The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Framework on Durable Solutions was published in 2010 to provide guidelines for local integration, alongside resettlement in a third location, as the primary pathways to achieving durable solutions.

This brief will review existing evidence on key dimensions and criteria identified by the IASC and that are foundational to “solutions analyses” in other regions of the world as well, as seen through the work of the Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS) in the Horn of Africa. By documenting where information exists and where the gaps lay, it is the hope of this research brief to present areas for consolidated efforts and joint data collection to explore the viability of durable solutions in the Afghan context.

Objectives and Methodology



The four objectives above are supported by key questions which will be explored throughout the brief.

Theme	Question
Local integration	<p>What are the living conditions in Kandahar’s informal IDP settlements?</p> <p>What resources and avenues can aid local integration of IDPs in Kandahar?</p> <p>What are the challenges and obstacles to local integration in Kandahar?</p> <p>Is local integration more difficult for some social groups than others?</p> <p>What are the attitudes of the host community and/or authorities towards IDPs?</p>
Durable solutions	<p>Which durable solutions are most wanted by IDPs and displaced persons?</p> <p>How can achievement of durable solutions be supported?</p>

This brief is based on data collected between September 2022 to March 2023 in informal IDP settlements in Kandahar submitted by DRC and analysed by Samuel Hall, with qualitative data gathered by Samuel Hall and DRC.

- *Quantitative Data*: The quantitative data analysis was compiled using the Household Emergency Assessment Tool (HEAT) data. For the HEAT survey, 1,452 respondents were located in Kandahar.
- *Qualitative Data*: The qualitative data collection included key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), and Camp Coordination and Camp Management Working Group (CCCM WG) ISET (Informal settlement assessment) dataset and DRC’s protection monitoring data.

² Jacobsen Karen, ‘Local Integration: The Forgotten Solution’, Migration Policy Institute, 1 October 2003.

- CCCM WG ISET:** This dataset consists of 14 assessed ISETs in which two KIIs were interviewed per ISET for a total sample of 28 KIIs. The resulting dataset was then aggregated to ISET level. The dataset contains high level information on infrastructure, services and population estimates. The data was collected in September 2022. According to CCCM WG data, the ISET population predominantly consists of either protracted or prolonged IDP households, usually but not always mixed with a non-displaced host community. In only one ISET (Kharabad Lisa 2) is there a reported population of recently arrived IDPs.
- DRC protection monitoring data:** DRC launched in February 2023 a protection monitoring data collection exercise in Kandahar's ISETs. The data collection is still ongoing at the time of writing this brief. During the first week of data collection (from 12-19 February), DRC carried out 7 KIIs with IDP community members, in 6 different Kandahar settlements. All interviews were conducted remotely through phone calls due to the ban on Afghan female staff. Five interviews were carried out with women and two interviews were carried with men, between the ages of 25 and 50.
- Key informant interviews:** Samuel Hall conducted seven KIIs with program managers, officers and staffers involved in the support and assistance to IDPs in Kandahar. Interviewees described the conditions of IDP settlements and the experiences and challenges of IDPs in regard to integration, as well as existing and potential programs for durable solutions in Kandahar City.
- Focus group discussions:** A total of 14 FGDs were conducted over two data collection phases. The first phase, which took place in December 2022, consisted of 4 FGDs, including 2 Male and 2 Female FGDs with IDP members settled in settlements in Kandahar city; and 1 Host Male FGD with host community members based in selected areas of Kandahar city.

Following discussions with DRC, Samuel Hall decided to carry out a second set of fieldwork, between February - March 2023 to fill remaining data gaps. As part of the second round of fieldwork, Samuel Hall conducted 3 Male and 3 Female FGDs with members of the Badghis IDP community and 3 Male FGDs with members of the host community that lived close to Badghis IDP inhabited settlements.

Tool	Target Group	Sampling	Location	Total
DRC HEAT	IDPs in ISETs	Variable by ISET	14 Kandahar ISETs	1,455 surveys
CCCM WG ISET	KI Interviews	2 / ISET	14 Kandahar ISETs	28 KIIs
DRC protection monitoring data	IDPs	5 Female KIIs 2 Male KIIs	6 Kandahar ISET	7 KIIs
Key Informant Interviews	DRC and IOM staff	Program managers, officers and staffers	Kabul and Kandahar (remote and in person)	7 KIIs
Focus Group Discussions	Hosts	4 Male FGDs (19 respondents)	PD12 PD15 PD3 PD2	13 FGDs (68 respondents)
	IDPs	5 Male (27 respondents) and 4 Female FGDs (22 respondents)	PD7: Dara Daimi Kochyan PD2: Haji Baqi Colony PD15: Balochano Kocho PD3: Qadri Jama Site	

This brief was complemented by separate reports designed by DRC based DRC HEAT and CCCM WG ISET data. These included 14 ISETs profiling reports as well as one overall report regarding Kandahar informal settlements.

The ReDSS Solutions Framework

The research team used the above data and applied the existing Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS) Solutions Framework, albeit with adaptations to reflect the context of Afghanistan. Affirming that the three solutions (voluntary repatriation, local integration, or resettlement) are processes to achieve integration, ReDSS operationalized the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Framework for Durable Solutions to develop the ReDSS Solutions Framework for displacement-affected communities. The ReDSS Solutions Framework is a rapid analytical tool that offers a snapshot in time to assess the extent to which durable solutions for displaced populations have been achieved in a particular context. Building on this framework provides guidance to ADSP and its members on durable solutions monitoring in Afghanistan.

Criteria	Sub-criteria
Physical safety	Protection
	Safety and security
	Social cohesion
Material Safety	Adequate standard of living (Access to basic and social services)
	Access to livelihood (Job creation and income generation)
	Housing, land, and property
Legal Safety	Access to effective remedies and justice
	Participation in public affairs
	Access to documentation
	Family reunification

There are three criteria – Physical, Material and Legal safety – and 10 sub-criteria to assess whether a population has achieved or is on track to achieving a durable solution. These criteria reflect the existing eight IASC criteria. The data then is plugged into the framework, and, with a traffic light system, each indicator is used to reveal the status of progress towards achieving meaningful and durable solutions.

Two key variables are needed to inform the rating of the indicators: 1) A comparison between the situation of IDPs and that of the host community, and 2) A comparison of the situation with relevant national and international standards, where such standards exist. In the Afghan context, given the lack of current, up-to-date data on the general population, such comparisons are, today, not available quantitatively, but qualitative information was used to assess such comparisons.

	The indicator is met or well on the way to being met. IDPs experience similar or better conditions than the host community and international/national standards (if applicable) are met.
	The indicator has not fully been met and obstacles exist. Conditions are inferior to the host community and international/national standards (if applicable).
	The indicator is far from met. The situation for IDPs is significantly worse than that of surrounding communities, and national/international standards (if applicable) are not met.
	No data is available for this indicator, or some data exists, but it is incomplete

KEY HIGHLIGHTS ON LOCAL INTEGRATION

Prior to commencing the analysis, DRC informed Samuel Hall that, among the IDPs currently present in the Kandahar settlements, IDPs originating from Badghis were perceived to be facing more difficult conditions compared to non-Badghis IDPs. As a result, additional qualitative data collection was conducted to understand potential reasons for such differences and provide a durable solutions analysis to compare the situation of 1) non-Badghis IDPs, and 2) IDPs from Badghis (referred to in this note as Badghis IDPs). The analysis is presented below in the form of a traffic light representation which shows that:

1. Most IDPs are facing obstacles to durable solutions
2. Badghis IDPs fare worse than other IDPs or surrounding communities
3. Data gaps remain on legal safety.

Using the Solutions Framework to analyse local integration of IDPs not from Badghis

Physical Safety

IASC Sub-Criteria	Durable solutions indicator	
Protection	IDPs who have suffered violent crimes or experienced safety incidents, including sexual and gender-based violence in the last 6 months compared to resident population	IDPs who do not face more discriminatory or arbitrary restriction of freedom of movement based on their displacement status compared to resident population
Safety and Security	f IDPs who have adequate access to police and judiciary, when needed, compared to the resident population	IDPs feeling safe in their current place of residence compared to host population
Social Cohesion	IDPs who do not face any stigmatisation (verbal violence, insults, exclusion, etc.) in their current place of residence, compared to local population	IDPs feeling they are accepted in the community where they live compared to resident population

Material Safety

Adequate Standard of Living (Access to basic and social services)	IDPs with food consumption comparable to local population and as per international/national standards	Prevalence of GAM/SAM among IDPs/returnees compared to resident population and as per national/ international standards
	IDPs with adequate access to potable water, sanitation and hygiene compared to local population and above international / national standards	IDPs with adequate access to health care compared to resident population or national average as appropriate
	IDP children with adequate access to formal education compared to resident population or national average as appropriate	IDPs who have adequate access to safety net interventions or receive remittances from abroad compared to local residents with comparable needs
Access to Livelihoods (Job creation and income generation)	IDPs who face legal or administrative obstacles to employment or economic activity compared to resident population	Unemployment among IDPs compared to the resident population, the situation before displacement or the national average, as appropriate
	IDPs who have access to sustainable employment conditions compared to local residents	Poverty levels among IDPs compared to resident population, the situation before displacement or the national average, as appropriate
Housing, Land & Property	IDPs with adequate housing (not overcrowded housing/shelter and/or precarious structure and/or at risk of sudden eviction) in comparison to the resident population	Existence of effective and accessible mechanisms to ensure access to land and/or secure tenure
	IDPs with lost HLP who have had their claims resolved, compared to the resident population	IDPs who have secured the right to housing, land and property (with documents to prove ownership/tenancy) compared to resident population

Legal Safety

Access to Effective Remedies & Justice	IDPs who consider that violations suffered have been effectively remedied and a sense of justice restored, compared to local population	Existence of accessible mechanisms that have the legal mandate and actual capacity to provide IDPs with effective remedies for violations suffered
	IDPs who accessed formal or informal/traditional justice mechanisms last time they needed it, compared to local population	

Participation in public affairs	IDPs face no legal or administrative obstacles that prevent them from voting, being elected or working in public service compared with resident population	IDPs participating in community or social organizations (youth / women / environmental / sports groups and others) compared to the resident population
	IDPs involved in public decision-making processes, or local reconciliation/confidence-building initiatives (e.g., local peace committees, public debates, fora, cross-community activities and others) compared to resident population	
Access to Documentation	Existence and effective accessibility of mechanisms to obtain/replace documents for IDPs bearing in mind the local context	IDPs without birth certificates, national ID cards or other personal documents relevant to the local context compared to resident population or national average, as appropriate

Using the Solutions Framework to analyse local integration IDPs from Badghis

Physical Safety

Protection	IDPs who have suffered violent crimes or experienced safety incidents, including sexual and gender-based violence in the last 6 months compared to resident population	IDPs who do not face more discriminatory or arbitrary restriction of freedom of movement based on their displacement status compared to resident population
Safety and Security	IDPs who have adequate access to police and judiciary, when needed, compared to the resident population	IDPs feeling safe in their current place of residence compared to host population
Social Cohesion	IDPs who do not face stigmatization (verbal violence, insults, exclusion, etc.) in current place of residence, compared to local population	IDPs feeling they are accepted in the community where they live compared to resident population

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Housing, Land & Property	IDPs with lost HLP who have had their claims resolved, compared to the resident population	IDPs who have secured the right to housing, land and property (with documents to prove ownership/tenancy) compared to resident population
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Access to Effective Remedies & Justice	IDPs who consider that violations suffered have been effectively remedied and a sense of justice restored, compared to local population	Existence of accessible mechanisms that have the legal mandate and actual capacity to provide IDPs with effective remedies for violations suffered
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Participation in public affairs	IDPs face no legal or administrative obstacles that prevent them from voting, being elected or working in public service compared with resident population	IDPs participating in community or social organizations (youth / women / environmental / sports groups and others) compared to the resident population
	IDPs involved in public decision-making processes, or local reconciliation/confidence-building initiatives (e.g. local peace committees, public debates, fora, cross-community activities and others) compared to resident population	
Access to Documentation	Existence and effective accessibility of mechanisms to obtain/replace documents for IDPs bearing in mind the local context	IDPs without birth certificates, national ID cards or other personal documents relevant to the local context compared to resident population or national average, as appropriate

The traffic light rating system above provides a visual representation of obstacles to local integration. The data also reveals key findings summarised below.

Finding 1. Accumulation of displacement and vulnerabilities, and the inability to move

The DRC dataset reveals two complementary findings. On the one hand, those who have returned from exile abroad (returnees) and were displaced again:

- Depend on more emergency level coping strategies
- Are most reliant on food consumption strategies
- Have far higher debt on average than respondents from other displacement profiles
- They also show a lessened ability to move again.

According to one KII, this situation may be due to biases against returnees among host populations. The accumulation of layers of displacement and additional vulnerabilities are an obstacle to solutions.

“Sometimes, the treatment of returnees is biased. People blame them for living in Pakistan and Iran and being their spies or their people (supporters of these foreign governments). But IDPs are not biased that way at all.” - KII 7

Overall, most IDPs, especially those that have newly arrived, report living in deplorable conditions. The hosts report that those who leave, often tend to come back again. *“Many IDPs moved out back, but after some 2 weeks they return and say that life was more difficult there.” - FGD 1 (1)* Even though needs appear high for many individuals residing in the assessed ISETs, **98% reported that they intended to remain in their current location for the coming months**, expressing their inability to plan further. This means that moving again is unfeasible for households within the assessed ISETs.

Disability and health needs

Two further elements make it harder for displaced groups to move or to integrate – one relates to disability, the other to the lack of assistance to support their needs. The HEAT respondent profile shows that, across the sample, 1% of households report having a household member with a disability and 20% of these reported that the heads of

household suffered from disability.³ This is a specific concern for male headed households who are on average 2-3 times more likely to have a household member with a disability (34% for male headed households to 14% for female headed households).

Furthermore, **56% of respondents report living in a household in which one member has a chronic condition or illness that has required medical care.** This is more likely to be the case in female headed households (68%) as compared to male headed households (54%). 82% of interviewees were male (1,191) respondents and 89% of respondents (1,297 respondents) reported that they live in a male headed household.

DRC's protection monitoring data revealed that disability, and hence persons with disabilities were stigmatised. Certain interviewees reported that persons with disabilities are considered "sub-human" and as a result are marginalised and unable to find work. Such conditions often force them to rely on more extreme coping mechanisms to survive such as sending their children to work.

Lack of assistance

Many of the IDPs have claimed not receiving aid under the DfA. Only 12% of DRC HEAT respondents reported having received any assistance. Female headed households report higher needs along a variety of indicators in the DRC HEAT data, they were 9 percentage points less likely to have received aid than respondents in male headed households (4% to 13% respectively). Of the displacement profiles, returnee-IDPs were the most likely to have received aid (15%). Households with a member with disabilities were also 8 percentage points more likely to have received aid than those without a member with disability (17% to 9% respectively), suggesting they may have been a targeted group. For those who have received aid, 69% report that they last received assistance over six months ago, with 14% reporting that it was received in the last month. The most received form of aid, regardless of demographic or displacement profile, was food.

"In the past, during the republic, most of the IDPs were living better. Under the current administration, the general perception is that IDPs have received enough aid during the past two decades, so they want that aid to go to furthest areas where more poorer people are living. Since most of the aid is going to far districts, the IDPs currently living in the city do not have access to aid" – KII 6

Samuel Hall data collection and DRC's protection monitoring dataset both confirm **IDPs' claims of inequitable aid distribution across the various settlements.** Host community leaders and DfA members have been accused of diverting aid meant for IDPs. Badghis IDPs, displaced single women / widows and internally displaced persons with disabilities have reportedly been disproportionately affected by aid diversion. Community leaders have been accused of not writing up IDPs on the lists, rationing provided aid, or simply keeping the aid meant for IDPs for themselves and their families and friends. Other IDPs have accused the DfA and the host community of using aid as a coercive mechanism to promote return to their area of origin. IDPs claim they are deprived of aid under the pretext that the aid is meant for the host community only.

"The host population do not give us social and humanitarian assistance which is intended for us. They argue that it is for the host communities of Kandahar. They taunt us that we should go to our own area for getting aid. Actually, we cannot go to our own area as we do not have the capacity to pay for our expenses there." – FGD 4 (1)

Finding 2. Physical Safety: Violence disproportionately affecting IDP women and children

Security

Overall, despite potential kidnapping issues highlighted by DRC protection monitoring data, IDPs felt safe in their current place of residence compared to host populations. Conversely, host populations claimed that IDPs, especially IDP children, are behind increased thefts within their community. Certain male IDP respondents claimed that safety was correlated with poverty. IDPs in more precarious situations claimed to not have many possessions to lose, and hence estimated they were safe from theft and other violent acts.

³ Disability defined as a household member who has difficulty seeing, hearing, walking or climbing stairs, remembering or concentrating or communicating.

“We are safe because we are poor. We are safer than them (host). They are afraid because of their wealth, but we don’t have that fear, because we have nothing to lose.” – FGD 2 (2)

In contrast, female IDPs reported being restricted to their tents, especially if they were in good condition. Often, poorer female IDPs, such as IDPs from Badghis, found themselves bound to their shelters, not only because of movement but because their current habitations lacked any type of lockable windows, doors or fencing. **Female IDPs claimed to be forced to stay home to prevent thieves from stealing their household items** – but more importantly – from stealing their only shelter. Unfortunately, such self-imposed restrictions directly act as obstacles to the integration of female IDPs within society. One female IDP from Badghis said:

“Compared to men, we have a lot of difficulties. Because we cannot go out of the good tents. Our men always go out, work in the market and are more in contact with local people in Kandahar. But if we women also interact with the local people, we can become friends with their women and have relationships with them.” - FGD 7 (2)

Freedom of movement

The many restrictions on the freedom of movement of women and girls have been especially harmful for female IDPs and IDP female-headed households. Decreases in rights has rendered them more vulnerable and at risk of precarious livelihoods, as unlike men they are now required to be accompanied by a *mahram* (male chaperone) everywhere they go. Male IDPs have reported being able to come and go from the settlements without any obstacles, while many women have been forced to stay home. According to KII 2, 70% of women have claimed they cannot access markets or health centres without being accompanied by a man. We can assume that female headed households are at greater risk of the negative consequences of such restrictions in movements⁴ as they might lack old enough male members within their family to take on the mahram role.

Although certain female IDPs have claimed to be able to move around without any obstacles, especially among Badghis IDPs, additional monitoring data concurred that female IDPs were at risk of arrest for moving around without a mahram. Female interviewees claimed that even female heads of households have been arrested for walking alone in public. *“Even women who beg for money are in Taliban jails. They catch orphans, widows and unsupervised women.” - FGD 4 (1)*

Such restrictions on women’s movements can be devastating for families in which women are heads of households. Widows, and/or left-behind women often must assume the breadwinning role within their family if they have no other sources of income. However, such restrictions prevent women from working and hence losing a potential source of income. Consequently, negative coping strategies such as the sale of children or child labour has become for many their only survival strategy.

“My life is very difficult compared to others because I am a widow. At least other families have men who work and earn some income, but I don't have anyone to work for me. I cannot afford to buy medicine for my sick child. I pay 800 Afghanis monthly for the land where we have set up our tent. My sick child is forced to leave home and work. He earns 50 Afghanis per day, and with this money, I am forced to sustain my own life” - FGD 7 (2)

In situations where children are too young to work, women have to risk arrest and assume the breadwinning role. Yet, IDP children also figure among the groups most at risk of having their movement restricted. Two reasons are behind this trend. Firstly, because of the precarious livelihood situation of IDPs, many children have been forced to work and/or collect garbage. However, the DfA would like to see them in schools (boys primarily) and has thus put restrictions on children’s movement. The DfA believes that by restricting children's movements, they will be able to prevent children from working and thus increase school attendance among IDP children. Another reason why respondents have claimed that children face increased restrictions on their movement is theft. Certain IDP children have been accused of spending all their time in the streets and stealing from people. Consequently, the DfA have reportedly tried to curb such actions by limiting children’s movements and arresting them⁵.

⁴ 82% of the interviewed were male (1,191) respondents and 89% of respondents (1,297 respondents) reported that they live in a male headed household.

⁵Female FGDs conducted in Kandahar, Nov-Dec 2022

One FGD respondent accused Taliban members of taking advantage of such restrictions for their own gain. Restrictions on children's movements have been accompanied by security issues such as risks of children's arbitrary imprisonment and violence. Parents have claimed that while in detention, children have been beaten and threatened to prevent them from loitering and gathering trash. Certain children also had their fingerprints digitally recorded to further deter them from recidivism. Often IDPs claim that the Taliban do this for personal gain and hope to get money from the children's family. One female IDP respondent claimed that the Taliban only arrest children to embezzle aid in the name of IDP families. Such arrests also prevent children from financially or materially help their families.

"My sons were imprisoned for five days by the Taliban. They were caught when they were collecting fuels for home. They catch the children to refer them to social organization and gain aid in our names. Taliban tell us only to live in house. They do not care about our hunger or thirst. They only want to keep us at homes without finding something."
- FGD 4 (1)

Protection

Compounding what are already challenging livelihood conditions, **75% of DRC HEAT respondents reportedly suffered an event which negatively affected their household in the last six months. The most commonly reported negative events were climatic i.e., either floods or drought.** Non-displaced individuals were the most likely to report that they were not impacted by a negative event in the last six months (43% of non-displaced individuals).

Female respondents and those in female headed households within the assessed ISETs show greater vulnerability than men or respondents in male headed households. They are more likely to have encountered violence in the last 6 months, exhibit worse food coping strategies, have less capacity to enact livelihood coping strategies, and are more likely to be undocumented.

Protection data such as data on gender-based violence (GBV) are often difficult to gather given the sensitivity of the issue and the reticence of participants to share. DRC protection monitoring data for example only pointed to one GBV case, but the numbers are known to be higher based on previous research on the topic in Afghanistan⁶.

The risks of domestic violence were also raised in qualitative interviews in relation to the necessity for girls to marry at a young age, especially in displacement affected and poor communities: *"there is another major problem that families due to poverty are marrying their daughters at a very young age, resulting in domestic violence."* – KII 5

Children in poorer families, especially among Badghis IDPs, are at increased risks of child marriage and sale. Multiple respondents declared their intention to sell their children if the opportunity arose. Others have even claimed to have already sold their children while they were in their province of origin to pay for debts.

"I have a 7-year-old daughter. We had planned to sell her for 300,000 Afghanis so that we could use the money for my husband's surgery and treatment, but since my daughter became sick, no one is willing to buy her. We have been forced to consider selling our own children." - FGD 7 (2)

Social cohesion gaps and the absence of social interactions

Social cohesion greatly varied across districts and settlements, and was especially dependent on the province of origin of the IDPs. One group, namely IDPs from Badghis, seem to be an exception among others and often face increased social cohesion problems. Reasons for such differences are covered under *Finding 5* below.

Many mentioned their current location as being safer than their areas of origin, which was a reason why people interviewed preferred to integrate rather than return. When asked if they felt like they belonged in their community of displacement, some claimed that there are not many clashes between IDP and host groups. Some IDPs claimed to have friendly encounters with the host community while others claimed that they do not even cross each other's paths much for them to have social cohesion problems.

⁶ Majidi, N. (2014) Resilience in Displacement? Building the Potential of Afghan Displaced Women, *Journal of Internal Displacement*.

“The relationship is not that good nor that bad, because we don’t have any sort of interaction with them [hosts] as we don’t take part in their weddings and funerals, the only thing which we noticed is that in comparison to the host community our access level to the public services is very low.” - FGD 1 (1)

All IDPs interviewed claimed they never participate or are invited to community events or social organisations (youth, women, environmental, or sports groups, among others). Others mentioned that clashes with hosts and their upsetting behaviour have prevented IDPs from integrating and made them wish to return to their province of origin.

“I am ready to get back to my origin tomorrow, because the behaviour of some people here toward us is extremely worse.” - FGD 1 (1).

Data from both Samuel Hall and DRC show that **IDP status can also be a barrier to local integration**. Certain host community members believe that IDPs do not belong to their community and as a result should not integrate and are thus discriminated against. Mentions were made by IDPs of being barred or excluded from accessing local mosques. Although access to mosques and certain services varied depending on the district within Kandahar, according to DRC protection monitoring data, IDPs have certain rooms within their ISETs they use as mosques instead. Although not directly mentioned, often aid or water is accessed through coordination with religious and community leaders. Limited access to these sites can potentially decrease IDPs’ access to basic services.

Overall, the level of social cohesion that used to exist has been disrupted, as one explains: *“In the past, there were some groups that had gatherings in formal and informal ways. But with the coming of the new government, the previous unions and community groups are all discarded and are considered unnecessary by the current government.” –KII 6*

Finding 3. Material Safety: When public services are lacking for all & for IDPs in particular

An adequate standard of living, in other words access to basic and social services, is not being met for host communities and for IDPs alike. The overall level of public services in the areas visited was very low. This section reviews key indicators pertaining to the IASC dimension of material safety.

Health and WASH

According to CCCM WG data, in the assessed ISETs, **healthcare is a distinct need**. There are no reported available medical facilities in their locations.

- 91% of DRC HEAT respondents report that there are medical facilities within two hours of their place of abode.
- **Female respondents (49%) were much less likely to report access to medical care within two hours compared to male respondents (100%)**, as women’s access to transportation and ability to travel long distances has been curtailed by poverty and policies restricting their freedom of movement.
- One of the biggest problems in Kandahar, especially in informal settlements, is the lack of clean water, primarily due to drought. Certain NGOs have been working on constructing water supply systems (water networks, pipe schemes, etc) to provide IDPs with drinking water.

Although all categories of displaced populations noted behavioural changes, **IDP returnees in ISET communities most often expressed deteriorating mental health and added stress upon family units** because of the challenges they faced. In 96% of IDP returnee households, at least one member reportedly displayed negative behavioural changes in the past month⁷, higher than in any other assessed displacement category.

“As you know, clinics and hospitals are built based on the need of the community. Most of these schools and clinics were built on the basis the existing population, but the sudden movement of IDPs to those areas have increased the population two or three times. So, the clinic that was built for 100 families, must provide services to 300 families, which negatively impacts the quality of the service and not everyone can get it. There is a public hospital and is

⁷ Negative behavioural changes include: sleeping issues, nightmares, increased aggression, withdrawn behaviour / isolation, difficulty in concentrating / feeling tired, clinging behaviour, or drug addiction.

available for everyone. However, most IDPs are living far from this public hospital, and cannot reach it on time. Most of the time, IDPs can't receive healthcare services. Also, IDPs cannot afford private health centres.” – KII 6

So overall, while in certain districts, hospitals and clinics, such as the famous Mirwais Hospital exist and offer services to all (day and night), **some IDPs claim being denied services and/or receiving inadequate services.** In certain cases, discrimination because of IDPs' displacement status was given as the main reason for the denial of service, while in other cases, long lines, the lack of financial capacity or lack of medication were the primary obstacles. However, in some situations, IDPs were admitted and received adequate services. As one woman claimed, *“When I go to the clinic, they assist me in obtaining malnutrition services. They give me anaemia medication and food for treating malnutrition every month. All services are free at the clinic, and I am very happy with access to these services and the behaviour of the employees there.” FGD7 (1)*

Latrine access was reportedly low for surveyed respondents living in the assessed ISETs (55% of respondents had access to a latrine). Respondents in households with members with disability, headed by males and classified as returnee-IDPs were all more likely to report that they did not have access to a latrine.

Regarding water access, **only 44% of DRC HEAT respondents reported having enough access to water for drinking, cooking and bathing.** For male headed households hand pumps or bore wells were the most common source of water (54%) whereas for female headed households, water was most commonly sourced from dug wells (37%) or a pipe scheme (29%). Alternatively, returnee-IDPs were the most likely to purchase their water (38%) as compared to other displacement profiles.

“The hygiene situation for IDPs is not good. As there are no basic services, there are no waterpipes and they don't have access to clean water, therefore the hygiene situation is poor in IDP settlements. In most places, they pay for water, and cannot waste a lot of water on hygiene, all they can do is to provide for their drinking.” – KII 6

“The sites that we have visited, who have been living here from a long time ago, are relatively in better hygiene than those who have come recently. Due to a lot of crowd, limited space and lack of access to hygienic resources, the condition for hygiene is very bad. Even when we visit their tents for surveys, we try to have our masks on and we are trying not to be infected with any disease. To tell you the truth, the hygienic situation in those camps is absolutely unacceptable. Their waste from the restrooms is open in the public space which adds to the dirt.” – KII 5

Education

Data reveals a lower access to education among IDPs than hosts. These trends are even starker among IDPs from Badghis. Although access to education varies from district to district, regardless of area and availability of schools, **financial capacity is the main obstacle to access education.** Poorer IDP populations such as Badghis IDPs, often refused to send their children to school and instead made them work to contribute to family finances. This situation is more concerning among female headed households. As one female head of household describes:

“Our children do not go to school. I have an 8-year-old son who is the only breadwinner of our family. Instead of going to school, he has to work and make 50 Afghanis per day for us. If our economic situation improves, we may be able to send him to school.” - FGD 7 (2)

Even when parents understood the importance of education for their children, they deplored their lack of financial means to even buy the necessary school materials, let alone to pay for tuition fees. Thus, most child IDPs from Badghis can be seen collecting trash and plastic instead of going to school.

“Some families are forced to send children to work instead of school because they do not have any other source of income. We don't have the ability to provide our children with pens and notebooks, which cost 50 Afghanis.” FGD 1 (2)

Another obstacle that prevented IDP children from attending school, was the parents' lack of or inadequate information about the procedures / dates to register their children. Many IDPs instead claimed it was discrimination that prevented them from attending. Although being denied access to schools because of IDP status is a possibility, in most cases it was lack of information that prevented IDP children from attending.

In cases where schools are inaccessible to IDPs, madrasas are often chosen as they are cheaper. Yet depending on the financial situation of IDP families, even madrasas are often overlooked. IDPs have also pointed to NGOs helping deliver classes and school in the settlements, yet many of those seem to no longer be active. Instead, children are sent to work.

While quantitative data is missing on this specific indicator, it remains key in the context of any durable solutions analysis in Afghanistan. Education is important for the livelihood and future of the younger generations, but it is also an integration and socialisation mechanism. Its lack can dramatically impact durable solutions.

Nutrition

According to CCCM WG ISET profile data, the most common sources of food in the assessed ISETs are marketplaces (79% of assessed ISETs) and support from family and friends (71% of assessed ISETs). These sources appear to be insufficient or inaccessible to many ISET residents as DRC HEAT data suggests that most households are unable to meet their basic food needs. Another reason for this insufficiency may be because of the more limited social network of IDPs beyond the IDP population itself (which is disproportionately socio-economically vulnerable compared to host community). Consequently, 96% of DRC HEAT respondents reported using food consumption strategies considered as ‘high’ severity (rCSI > 10). Female respondents were more likely to report using more severe food coping strategies, with all female respondents recording ‘high’ severity as compared to 95% of male respondents.

As illustrated in *Table 1*, returnee IDPs and refugees, on average, had to use all food coping strategies for more days than their displaced and non-displaced counterparts, suggesting that food security is poor for both these profiles.

Table 1: Average amount of days using relevant food coping strategy by displacement category

Food Coping Mechanism	Displaced	Non-displaced	Refugee	Returnee IDP
Rely on less preferred or expensive foods	5.3	4.1	5.6	6.6
Borrow food or rely on help from friends	2.9	3.3	3.9	5.0
Limit portion size	3.4	3.6	5.0	5.1
Adults restrict consumption	2.8	3.2	5.1	4.3
Reduce number of meals in a day	2.7	3.1	5.1	3.7

Both IDPs and hosts have claimed that in certain situations, IDP children especially but also IDP women would knock on the host populations’ houses to beg for food. Although usually met with a sympathetic response and material help, certain hosts have mentioned that this habit has become a nuisance for them. Such actions have decreased for some their patience and potential acceptance of IDPs integrating.

Access to livelihoods

CCCM WG ISET profile data suggests that the most common income generating activity is daily uncontracted labour, as reported by at least one KII in 93% of assessed ISETs. Due to the informal nature of this income activity, it is likely that income for many households is volatile. Supporting this claim, only 21% of DRC HEAT respondents reported that their household had enough money or food to meet the household’s essential needs in the 30 days before being interviewed. Respondents in male headed households, with a member with disability and having an IDP returnee displacement profile were all more likely to report that they did not have sufficient money or food.

Of all displacement profiles, returnee IDPs were far more likely to resort to more extreme livelihood coping strategies. 30% of non-displaced respondents report using crisis or emergency level coping strategies compared to 39% of displaced individuals and 76% of returnee IDPs. Complementing this finding, IDP returnees also hold the highest average debt (AFN 77,499), suggesting that these individuals are resorting to borrowing money to cope with these livelihood challenges, potentially compounding their existing vulnerabilities.

While respondents in female headed households were more likely to report that they had sufficient food and money for their family’s needs, they were also more likely to report that livelihood coping strategies were either

unavailable to them or had been exhausted than respondents in male headed households. It can be implied that when female-headed households are lacking money or food, they often do not have the resources to employ even negative livelihood coping strategies to cover their immediate needs.

According to the qualitative transcripts, **most IDPs live in poverty and cycles of precariousness**. Even when able to find jobs, IDPs often have to settle for daily wage and hard labour jobs. Yet, some hosts have criticised IDPs for being a cheaper workforce and, hence taking jobs away from them. While some lack the adequate education or skills for other professions and an urban job market, many IDPs have claimed that their lack of connections remains a problem. IDPs claim that members of the host population often have more connections and hence faster and better access to opportunities compared to the displaced population.

Some of the informal IDP settlements are close to bazaars or have their own bazaars allowing access to markets and some employment for IDPs.

Housing, land, and property (HLP)

All settlements visited for this assessment are informal: most of the houses have been built illegally across several years, with at best verbal agreements, and prices that range from 500AFN to 2000AFN for a mud houses' rent. While some IDPs depending on their financial capacity live in mud, brick or concrete houses, Badghis IDPs usually live under tents. Lower financial capacity often forces Badghis IDPs to rent and share a piece of land together in which they will pitch in their tents. This is often cheaper: 500AFN to 1000AFN (instead of 500AFN to 2000AFN for a mud house).

According to DRC HEAT data, most households live in mud houses or traditional constructions (77% of respondents), with 10% living in tents or emergency shelters. However, this trend is not valid when discussing settlements which shelter IDPs from Badghis in majority. For example, DRC HEAT data shows that in Haji Baqi Colony, which hosts many IDPs from Badghis, the trends are different and in fact more people live in tents (48%) compared to mud houses (36%). FGDs also confirm such trends.

Challenges faced by respondents in relation to their shelter arrangements were largely linked to the type of shelter in which they reside. Respondents living in tents or emergency shelters are 28 percentage points more likely to report that they are unable to afford rent or face a threat of eviction. As **respondents in female headed households are 17 percentage points more likely to live in tents or emergency shelters than those in male headed households** (25% of respondents living in female headed households) as compared to respondents in male headed households (8%), **they are disproportionately affected by eviction and poor security of tenure.**

“The IDPs who live far from the city are living in old muddy houses which are substandard. There are no roads and are not part of the master plan. Because the house rents are cheap, most IDPs are living in those areas. Most of those houses don't have doors, windows and their quality is bad. They are located in peri-urban areas.” – KII 6

Such informal dwellings are often not only not connected to the electricity grid, but they are also highly vulnerable to changing weather conditions. Mud houses and especially tents often get flooded or destroyed by rain and winds.

As we have been able to see in this brief, and also backed by ADSP research, since the DfA's rise to power in August 2021, Taliban authorities have been “increasing pressure on IDPs in some informal settlements to return, and for humanitarian actors to support returns from informal settlements to areas of origin.”⁸ While some pressures to address prolonged displacements are indirect, **some IDPs in informal settlements have been forcibly evicted**. In addition to formal efforts to implement return as a durable solution, informal rental contracts and increased development and construction projects in areas currently occupied by informal settlements also often convince landowners to evict their tenants⁹ or arbitrary increase rent prices.

⁸ Asia Displacement Solutions Platform (ADSP). “IDP returns in Afghanistan: are durable solutions possible?”. Briefing Note, October 2022

⁹ ACAPS, Continued risk of forced eviction due to complex land rights and tenure (in)security, 2023

Finding 4. Legal Safety evidence is a gap, and community-based conflict resolution mechanisms are on the decline

Access to Documentation

There is no DRC HEAT/CCCM WG ISET data about documentation, but all the KIIs and FGDs discuss access to documentation. There are different levels of access to documentation. Based on FGDs, **children and women were identified as having lower levels of documentation**. In general, given that IDPs without proper ID have to return to their province of origin and get a letter from their community leader to be able to go through with the application processes, they are often stuck in a cycle of non-representation. **This is particularly hard for Badghis IDPs** as they are often in precarious situations and the processes they have to go through to get ID documents can be difficult for them, as most have to travel back to Badghis which is often one of the farthest provinces of origin among IDPs in Kandahar. The lack of access to documentation can deprive IDPs of accessing services such as humanitarian aid, or school for their children.

“Most IDPs don’t have passports or ID cards. Some have come from districts that did not have ID card distribution centres. Now that they have come to the city, they cannot get an ID card because they need to refer to their district of origin. It is difficult for them to get back to their place of origin to get an ID. Or some of them don’t know the mechanism of how to get their ID cards. - KII 4

Certain IDPs also mentioned being discriminated against and not given access to employment based on the province written on the Tazkiras. These employers claimed that certain jobs, like municipality jobs, are only open to the host population. IDPs from Badghis are often the primary victims of such discrimination given their negative perception among certain members of the host population.

Birth certificates are available at every clinic and hospital a child is born, regardless of the displacement status of the parents. On the other hand, parents will need to officialise the certificate at official Tazkira offices. Many IDP parents often do not go through this extra step – some because they are unaware of the necessity of the procedure – while others lack proper identification.

Access to Effective Remedies & Justice

The use of community-based conflict resolution mechanisms is widespread to solve intra-IDP or inter host and IDP community conflicts. Jirgas, elders and imam’s arbitration and counsel are usually the first steps. If situations escalate, government resources have been reportedly used. **Community based protection networks are widely used to solve community level disputes and disagreements.** Programmes promote Community Conflict Mediation (CCM) in which youth, elders, persons with disabilities and others can work together.

“It is not easy, it needs a lot of time, coordination, efforts, and governmental support. One of the aims of the CCCM is to build those connections and empower communities to work together so that they can represent themselves and fight for their rights.” - KII 1

A key informant claimed that under the DfA, IDPs are no longer allowed to refer to community-based conflict resolution mechanisms and are met with violence from DfA security forces instead. Some have claimed that district offices have turned a blind eye to IDPs problems. When involved, the DfA have been claimed to arbitrarily favour one side over the other. Usually, poorer people fall victim to this. Despite these claims, most IDPs seem to be confident they can go to the DfA forces in case of major problems.

Finding 5. IDPs from Badghis face additional displacement-related vulnerabilities and greater obstacles to local integration

Key informants confirmed that, **out of the IDP population as a whole, Badghis IDPs are those who have least integrated into their environment of displacement.** Badghis IDPs have often been singled out for their practices, and way of life while in settlements. One of the complaints often raised by the host community was the IDPs’ usage of plastics, bottles, and other garbage for cooking on open fires which pollutes the environment and results in smell and health hazards. The host community also complained that Badghis IDPs bother them more than others, by

knocking at their doors, sometimes being accused of stealing from their homes. Part of that negative reputation is linked to the specific and multifaceted situation of Badghis IDPs.

One of the major reasons that prevents local integration is **the inferior financial capacity of Badghis IDPs** compared to host populations as well as other IDPs. This has directly and indirectly contributed to their decreased physical, legal and especially material safety. The situation for Badghis IDPs, regardless of their time since displacement, is often significantly worse than that of surrounding communities. The overwhelming presence of the colour red against multiple indicators on the Solutions Framework demonstrates that many standards are far from being met, when it comes to durable solutions for IDPs from Badghis.

The first factor behind the inferior financial capacity of Badghis IDPs is related with **the living conditions and geographic location in Badghis** from where the IDPs have come from. Most, if not all, Badghis IDPs in Kandahar originated from two specific areas of Badghis: Murghab and Ghurmach districts. Both areas are among the poorest in the province. This is primarily due to their geographic, historical, security and climate characteristics. Badghis IDPs in Kandahar not only fare worse than the host population and IDPs from other provinces, but they also seem to fare worse than other IDPs from Badghis displaced to other provinces. Attestation from Samuel Hall staff has shown that when comparing the situation of Badghis IDPs in other provinces, such as in Herat, with that of Badghis IDPs in Kandahar, we notice that Badghis IDPs from Murghab and Ghurmach (usually displaced to Kandahar) fare worse than Badghis IDPs from other districts. Murghab and Ghurmach's economies are largely based on agriculture and farming. The vast plains and agricultural lands that constitute these two areas are largely dependent on rain (rainfed), making them highly vulnerable to changing climatic conditions, and only profitable in certain seasons.

As one respondent noted *"here, I can find labour work at least for 3 to 4 days in a week. I can live my life with it, but in Badghis I have to borrow money. In Badghis, there is only three months' work in a year, for the rest of the year there is nothing to do. No work, no money"* - FGD 2 (2)

Drought and its consequent economic repercussions were the most cited reason for displacement among male IDPs from Badghis. According to Afghanistan-Humanitarian-Needs-Overview-2022 "Findings from the 2021 WoA confirmed drought as the third most frequently reportedly experienced shock with 39 percent of all households reporting so. 74 percent in Badghis report being affected by drought [...]The abnormal severity of the drought [2020/2021] was first observed in the water scarce areas, such as Badghis, Ghor and Faryab provinces, with 53 percent of the water points dried up due to the recent drought, 35 percent water points reporting drops in water levels. Only 35 percent of water points had water and only at reduced levels."¹⁰

"The place where I live in Badghis province is entirely farming land. If it rains, we can harvest a good crop. In case, there is no rain, we don't earn anything. Therefore, we left our areas because of drought" - FGD 2 (2)

Increased and consecutive negative consequences of climatic change have prevented Murghab and Ghurmach populations from adapting to the changing conditions, and are often forced to use maladaptive strategies, negative coping mechanisms (sale of children, loans...) and finally displacement to survive. IDPs that do not own land or livestock are often the first and hardest hit among the pastoralist population of Badghis. Data shows that they represent the primary stratum of the population forced to migrate out of precariousness to Kandahari settlements.

"We are not satisfied with our lives here, but we are forced to live here [Kandahar]. Because we did not have agricultural land in Bādghīs, where we could farm. If we had land, we would never have come here. Our greatest happiness is that we can find work for one or two days a week and we can earn up to 200 Afghanis. But there is no work in our areas in Bādghīs. I have stayed here because of those problems." - FGD 1 (2)

The **underdeveloped potential of Ghurmach and Mughrab** plays an important role in the inferior financial capacity of IDPs from Badghis from these two locations. Border provinces are often economically active, as we can see from Herat (Iran border) and Kandahar (Pakistan border). Yet, despite Ghurmach and Murghab position as border districts with Turkmenistan, they lack economic growth. This is due to the minimal cross-border movements and

¹⁰<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/afghanistan/document/afghanistan-humanitarian-needs-overview-2022>

relations between Turkmenistan and Afghanistan over the past decades. Fear of irregular migration and security concerns were among the primary reasons for this.

Murghab and Ghurmach are two of the only districts in Badghis of majority Pashtun demographics which explains the movement of these populations to Kandahar, instead of Herat, where the majority of IDPs from Badghis reside. Such ethnic characteristics have made Murghab and Ghurmach primary provincial targets of the two-decade long Taliban insurgency that affected Afghanistan. Continuous wars paralysed the regions' economic growth, thus increasingly pushing Badghis populations into poverty. Although male IDPs also mentioned it in passing, female IDPs were the ones that most often cited war as their primary reason for displacement. This was particularly the case for female headed households who had lost their male head of household to the ongoing conflict that ravaged their province. So, although conflict and war have decreased since the DfA assumed power, climatic conditions have increased, thus potentially not allowing for any economic improvements among IDPs from Badghis.

Distance represents the final geographic constraint. Murghab and Ghurmach are not only rural districts located far from the provincial capital of Qala-e-Naw, but they are also far from Kandahar province. Like in most rural areas, distances decrease access to basic infrastructure and services, such as clinics and schools. Many IDPs from Badghis, when comparing themselves with other IDPs and host populations, claim having less education and skills. Decades of war, continuous droughts, and the significant distance from urban areas have greatly diminished access to basic services. A lack of education and skills has further reduced the chances of IDPs from Badghis acquiring non-labour demanding jobs, and has forced them to settle for low skilled and low paying daily wage jobs. Such a situation will only perpetuate the poor state of IDPs from Badghis, even after their displacement. In addition, it will also possibly affect their children's educational future.

Kandahar is located farther from Badghis than most other locations from which IDPs have come to these settlements from. Most IDPs from Badghis have to stop for a night or two along their route, which carries additional costs. Current roads in Afghanistan make it that in order for IDPs from Badghis to reach Kandahar, they first need to stop in Herat, before being able to reach Kandahar.

Longer distances from Kandahar also mean that IDPs must spend more of their money on the initial displacement and thus have less to start with, compared to other IDPs from closer provinces. Unlike other IDPs, those from Badghis will not be able to return home as easily. This prevents them from having a financial or seasonal "base" to return to. Seasonal migration is very common in Afghanistan. Farmers often migrate to urban areas during the cold season while their agricultural activities are on pause, however because of their initial poverty and distance from their province of origin many Badghis IDPs are not able to afford to return. All this can help explain why IDPs from neighbouring or closer provinces are 'better off' than Badghis IDPs.

"I don't think the people of other province are as poor as the people of Badghis. People from Badghis are faced with problems like a lack of work and illiteracy. I have seen camps of people from other provinces such as Farah; the people of those camps have shops, houses, and they work in markets. Maybe their income is from their lands and farms or they may have some other source of income. But people of Badghis do not have anything." - FGD 3 (2)

Long distances and poverty have had direct consequences on Badghis IDPs' perceptions and social dynamics within Kandahar. What is often wrongly perceived as the "culture" is largely responsible for the many concerns that were voiced among the people of Kandahar and international organisations regarding the practices and lifestyle of Badghis IDPs.

The smell of burned plastic and trash, poor hygiene, and dilapidated tents are often associated with Badghis IDPs. The smell and smoke created from such actions represent one of the major nuisances that hosts complain about. Their lifestyle has further ostracised them and has possibly perpetuated their state of poverty as the negative perceptions directed at them have affected their access to basic services, livelihoods, and aid.

Most often, Badghis IDPs are unable to afford mud, brick or concrete houses. Therefore, they often live in makeshift tents and shelters, renting one plot of land and installing tents for multiple families there. This allows IDPs that have settled on that land to share costs among multiple families and even further reduce prices.

“We live on rent here. All of these houses are rentals. Many families live on one four-walled land. We collect the rent between us and then we give it to the owner of the land. The rent money is collected monthly. Every family pays a different amount of share. It depends on the size of land that the family has reserved for his house. Some of the families pay 2000, and some of them pay 1500. It depends. If the family size is large and have reserved a wide range of land, he must pay more money. We pay the money at the beginning of every month. [...] This way we live together, but if we get separated, then we will not be able to pay the rent as it is too high.” - FGD 2 (2)

This economic strategy has certain social advantages. Sharing land allows IDPs from Badghis to be with their own community and despite the distance to their province of origin, feel like they are with people that understand them and their situation and with which they share a common background. Many of the families who share their land come from the same villages and described it as a ‘support community’. This support system is not only emotional, but it can also be financial. For example, families that share land can help cover the rent costs for another family that can’t afford that month’s rent.

“This is the third month that I cannot move. My neighbours pay my rent. They collect 100 Afghani per family and pay my rent. I did not have flour yesterday. The neighbours collected money and bought me a pack of flour. Our life is like this” - FGD 2 (2)

One participant explained that all the people she shares and has rented land with, had their displacement to Kandahar facilitated by the same man. Such facilitators or middlemen usually recommend the displacement location and organise the transportation.

“We are all from the same village but different families. The one who brought us here, he is the head of Badghis IDPs community. We did not know how to come here. He contacted the person, and then he brought us here. His name is Aziz. We don’t know anything. He is a good man. We have good relations with him. He is our voice. He takes our problems to the authorities, and he brings us the solutions.” - FGD 8 (2)

Although certain individuals may have access to community leaders and representatives, others claimed to **lack adequate representation for their specific community**. Most often, the representative for the area is a member of the host community. However, **many Badghis IDPs claimed that host community leaders and representatives often overlook their needs and complaints** and favour the needs of the host population. A lack of adequate representation decreases the advocacy and negotiation capacity of Badghis IDPs, who often claim to be deprived of access to basic services and aid.

Our research has shown that Badghis IDPs are often victims of increased discrimination and deprivation compared to other IDPs. The reputation of Badghis IDPs often precedes them and has created the image of an untrustworthy and non-hygienic population in the hosts’ minds. Many Badghis IDPs have thus claimed they have been denied job opportunities because hosts do not trust them and because they lacked the necessary connections. In other cases, hosts have refused to rent houses or land to Badghis IDPs.

“We cannot live with them the way they treat us. There is a land surrounded by four walls. The owner promised to give it on contract to me. I told him that our families will live here. He asked me: are you the residents of Badghis? I said yes. He said I cannot give it to you to live in, it is not for Badghis people. I asked why. He said if only fifteen families live in it, and each of your families has five kids, it became 75 kids and it disturbs us. We cannot live like this together with them. In fact, we can live with them. We can suffer any kind of situation, but they will not live with us. Poverty is also a problem.” - FGD 2 (2)

Such actions further push IDPs from Badghis away from the host population, decreasing chances of integration because hosts refuse to rent land to them. This pushes them away from urban areas and from easy access to basic services such as clinics and schools. Badghis IDPs have specifically been singled out and prevented from accessing employment opportunities, humanitarian aid and access to school.

Claims over fraud and disputes over aid distribution were common among hosts and IDPs (especially Badghis IDPs). In some cases, IDPs were accused of moving from one site to another to receive extra support from NGOs. This was confirmed by other key informants who reported a conflict over aid distribution as the IDPs also complained that the host community, DfA and community leaders were taking away aid intended for the displaced.

“Here was an organization, its office is behind the court. They wanted to take people for labour work. We went to them to enrol our names in the list. They did not enrol us. I have not gone personally, the other friends went to their office. They were told that Badghis people are not taken in the list.” - FGD 2 (2)

Despite these accusations, NGOs are doing their best to distribute aid equally. The tension between communities was clear in most interviews, and especially when prompting about the situation of IDPs from Badghis. Host populations have also been accused of preventing their children from playing with Badghisi children. Such actions can be major obstacles to the children’s integration within their host communities as they grow.

“The locals don’t allow their children to play with ours. They think our children are a source of disease, and their proximity to our children will transmit diseases to theirs.” - FGD 3 (2)

Badghis IDPs have often been described as *Kuchis* (nomads) or *Magats* (“service nomads”¹¹) by host communities. Although many IDPs from Badghis do have a pastoralist background and are used to living under tents and moving around, many are simply forced to do so and have no other choices. For example, hosts have accused Badghis IDPs of moving from settlement to settlement and have blamed it on their Kuchi characteristics. Certain KIIs with IOM and DRC protection staff also point to Badghis IDPs moving from settlement to settlement to access aid multiple times. However, one of the primary reasons behind these displacements seems to be in line with *Finding 3*. Often hosts and the DfA are behind many of these movements. Taliban have been accused of coercing IDPs to promote returns, while some hosts simply want their land back to build on. The term Kuchi, despite not being a negative term in essence, has been increasingly used in a pejorative way to describe Badghis IDPs.

“They make a joke of us. They say that we are nomads. When they are crossing the road, they call from their cars, NOMADS! This is the difference between us. We live here due to the bad days that we have gone through and we are still going through, but they call us nomads. What can we say? Yeah, we are nomads because it is not our original place of living” - FGD 8 (2)

Despite their precarious situation, most interviewed IDPs from Badghis reporting wanting to stay in Kandahar rather than return to their province of origin. All believe they can live a better life in Kandahar than in Badghis. Surprisingly, despite the increased ostracization and discrimination against Badghis IDPs many still perceive their co-ethnic Pashtun hosts as *“angels”*. Badghis IDPs were often thankful of the host populations’ hospitality and claimed to understand that there are people that will dislike them everywhere, while others will help them instead.

“Although we live under these tents, we are still happy with our living conditions in Kandahar. There were no job opportunities in Badghis province, but here in Kandahar, we can find work to survive.” - FGD7 (2)

“There are five different fingers in one hand. There are different people in a community. Some of the people respect us as a poor community living in their community and some don’t.” - FGD 2 (2)



CONCLUSIONS: FROM CHALLENGES TO OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCAL INTEGRATION

While data is still lacking on some key dimensions - notably on legal safety - and on specific criteria under the physical and material safety dimensions, numerous conclusions can be drawn from the available data.

First, living conditions in the IDP settlements in Kandahar are very concerning – especially for women and children. IDPs lack clean drinking water, live in poor hygiene conditions, in situations of acute malnutrition for some women and children, and in overall poor shelter conditions.

Second, IDP sites are divided into two groups: IDPs from provinces close to Kandahar and IDPs from Badghis. The situation of Badghis IDPs is of particular concern as they face additional patterns of discrimination and exclusion, by members of the host population and the DfA. In sites where Badghis IDPs live, emergency tents needed to be replaced, while in other sites most people lived in mud shelters covered by some kind of tarpaulin. Across a range of indicators, such as shelter, WASH, social cohesion and access to livelihoods, Badghis IDPs are worse off. There were, at the time of the field visit, 173 households in five informal settlements, living adjacent to host communities.

Third, the level of assistance remains low compared to the needs. DRC is working in 14 sites in which no other NGOs are directly engaged. All service providers other than DRC are referred to by DRC. The DfA have not provided any support.

Fourth, despite all the challenges and discrimination faced in displacement, IDPs' overwhelming preference is for local integration, not return. Protection needs remain a key concern:

- Access to health services
 - 91% of residents need up to two hours to reach a functional health facility near their settlement
 - In most sites, there is no on-site clinic or mobile clinic
 - Lack of waste management
 - No water and sanitation systems available
- Access to education and child protection
 - None of the children between 6-17 were attending school in Badghis sites, neither boys nor girls. Some have claimed IDP children are being discriminated against at schools by the host community children and by the host community
 - In other sites, there are some restrictions on girls who can only attend until grade 6
 - Increased protection risks and risks of early marriage among IDPs
- Freedom of movement
 - Men are free to walk, work and go out. However, almost 70% of women said that they cannot access markets or health centres without being accompanied by a male
- Access to livelihoods
 - There is an overall lack of livelihood opportunities. Those that work, do so as daily wage earners
 - Many Badghis IDPs are left to gather garbage and plastic to earn their living
- Under the DFA
 - Suspension of government services in informal settlements made it harder for NGOs to work. Advocacy is needed to continue operating in this context as the needs are very high.

Overall, health, insecurity, lack of documentation, lack of shelter and livelihoods are all barriers to local integration - spanning all aspects of physical, material and legal safety in this area. **Key durable solutions indicators must be tracked across time.** In the recommendations, we review which actions can be taken to increase the protection of IDPs in informal settlements in Kandahar.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADVANCING SOLUTIONS IN KANDAHAR

The data presented in this briefing paper opens opportunities for 1) inclusive and integrated programmatic interventions, 2) advocacy and learning, 3) community engagement and awareness raising.

Inclusive and integrated programmatic Interventions

Given the widespread needs across all IDPs living in Kandahar, area-based approaches that **integrate livelihood interventions, social cohesion efforts, and access to basic services** are key requirements of any intervention in displacement-affected communities, as well as interventions that are **inclusive of the needs of specific groups identified in this brief** (Badghis IDPs, women, children and IDPs with disabilities).

Integrated programming

Livelihood challenges for men and women are a major gap revealed by the data – and specifically finding adequate livelihood options for female IDPs requires a joint effort by actors – across the UN, INGOs and local NGOs – to work together to identify income generation opportunities for men and women alike, beyond the current reliance on day labour. Participatory methods to listen to these communities to identify their skills and their cultural context should be linked to market assessments in Kandahar to find how IDPs could contribute to their own livelihoods and to the local economies and environments in their surroundings.

On access to services, DRC reports ongoing discussions to improve the water management system – which would solve a key need of the IDP population and improve overall levels of sanitation and hygiene locally. Further efforts are needed on education as many IDPs in these locations rely on child labour to support family income. Involving education partners in the interventions in Kandahar will be a key step towards more durable solutions. Improvements for their access to education would also have a positive impact on social cohesion locally, which will require greater efforts and investments in community engagement and awareness raising as detailed below.

HLP interventions are a critical programmatic need in a context where all the settlements are informal. While some IDPs live in housing and pay rent, Badghis IDPs live under tents as they arrive with little resources. The link between displacement, poverty, poor HLP conditions, and threats of eviction, is one that will require strong advocacy and monitoring, in a context where very few IDPs have anything more than makeshift shelters to rely on. Further interventions could focus on the issue of rent and financial inclusion of IDPs. They could also include a gender component given female headed households greater likelihood of living in tents or emergency shelters, and hence greater exposure to threats of eviction and overall nonexistent security of tenure.

Inclusive programming

Furthermore, **inclusive programming will be a key to durable solutions through community-based protection efforts** that should include support to:

- **Female-headed households and IDP women** overall, who are found to have higher needs, face greater violence, lack of documentation, inhospitable shelters and have to resort to severe coping mechanisms that lead to acute malnutrition for themselves and their children.
- **Child protection support** given the prevalence of child labour and out-of-school children
- **Households with disabilities**. DRC's protection monitoring reveals the stigmatisation of households with disabilities, further affecting those already facing displacement-affected vulnerabilities. Further disability-focused data will be required, to ensure more evidence base on those whose household heads or members suffer from disability. Based on global practices, projects in displacement-affected communities need to integrate the protection and inclusion of IDPs living with disabilities.

As a result, when budgeting, issues related to training of staff, partners, and the DfA on these issues will be critical to engage in an inclusive response that adapts to the needs identified in the data.

Advocacy & Learning

While the DfA continues to maintain a focus on returns, IDPs have been asking for and seeking local integration options. This gap needs to be addressed through sustained and targeted advocacy.

An evidence-to-policy gap needs to be addressed and worked on to devise plans for integration at a local and context specific level, given the interest among many IDPs interviewed to stay in their locations of displacement, to be protected and integrated locally. Many do not have prospects of return or may even fear return. This is particularly critical as the DfA have been increasing pressure on IDPs to leave informal settlements and to return to areas of origin.

Specifically, the needs of IDPs from Badghis came through strongly in the data, alongside a location-by-location approach to finding solutions. At a time when there are ongoing discussions on durable solutions in Afghanistan, notably by the United Nations Durable Solutions Working Group and sub-regional working groups, this data can be linked to these efforts to inform localised interventions and advocate for various stakeholders to collectively meet the needs of IDPs in displacement. **It is strongly recommended that the UNDSWG focuses on pilot programmes for local integration in Kandahar** through interventions suggested above.

The durable solutions framework presented in this brief can also serve as a tool for ADSP members and others to convene to collect missing data on durable solutions in Afghanistan and to build a common agenda on durable solutions monitoring in the country. This can provide further support to the UN Secretary General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement which features Afghanistan as one of the priority countries, and further guidance on areas for evidence building and research on internal displacement in Afghanistan.

Community engagement & awareness raising

The brief concludes on the need to **work with communities to reinforce community-based conflict resolution mechanisms and community-based protection systems**. A specific component of any community conflict mediation should focus on participatory processes to facilitate the inclusion of women's voices and persons with disabilities, both often being groups who are less mobile and more isolated in this context. They should also be represented in community leadership structures and their leaders invited to weigh in on community-based protection mechanisms.

Further data is needed to address the missing indicators in the durable solutions analysis but also to provide more data on disability inclusion and durable solutions.

Awareness raising among the host communities of the challenges faced by IDPs, notably IDP women, IDP children and IDPs with disabilities, and as presented in this brief, can support more local conversations, decrease discrimination and promote more citizen-based solidarity systems that can have a direct impact on specific sub-groups of the IDP population.



