Christian Jepsen // NRC

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 IDP settlements situated in the provincial capitals of Uruzgan, Kandahar, Helmand, Herat, Ghor, and Badghis, utilises data collected by an Afghan, women led non-governmental organisation (NGO), supporting NRC in its programming in the country. It is our hope that this timely, relevant and evidence-based brief will be of use to practitioners, policy makers, and donors as they work towards prospects for local integration.

Local Integration? Insights from the field, and from a local NGO working on improving the resilience of displacement affected communities

Contents

ACRONYMS

ADSP	Asia Displacement Solutions Platform
AFN	Afghan Afghani (currency)
CCM	Community Conflict Mediation
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
MORR	Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation
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
WCLRF	Women and Children Legal Research Foundation

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) which works 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 to 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 durable solutions, 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, NRC and ADSP are delivering this brief on *Local Integration? Insights from the field, and from a local NGO working on improving the resilience of displacement affected communities* which puts forward data collected by an Afghan, women led non-governmental organisation (NGO), supporting NRC in its programming in the country*. It is our hope that a 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.*

Data for this brief has been drawn from qualitative work conducted under the *Recovery, Resilience and Rehabilitation (R3)* project - a programme that addressed vulnerability and needs in areas of high displacement in Afghanistan, led by NRC with multiple national and international organisations, and Samuel Hall as the learning partner. Through the programme, the Women and Children Legal Research Foundation (WCLRF) worked on an assessment for CARE, as active members of the consortium. Key findings from WCLRF's work have been used for this brief - further discussions are taking place between Samuel Hall and NRC to see how to strengthen and support the analysis deriving from the R3 consortium data, and with ADSP on how to support evidence fit for a solutions analysis in the Afghan context.

Context

According to IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix *"Baseline Mobility and Emergency Community-Based Needs Assessment, Round 15"* conducted between March and April 2022 close to 5.9 million persons were deemed to be internally displaced in Afghanistan. Almost one-third (31%), were displaced between January 2021 and April 2022[1]. The analysis produced to date in the country shows that following years of conflict and political instability, the economic and social structures of communities across Afghanistan have been severely tested, putting into question what durable solutions can mean in this context. Various and overlapping shocks - economic crisis, humanitarian crises, natural disasters and political instability - have tipped millions of Afghans into extreme poverty and into displacement.

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[1] International Organization for Migration (IOM). "Afghanistan: Baseline Mobility and Emergency Community-Based Needs Assessment, Round 15 (March-April 2022)."
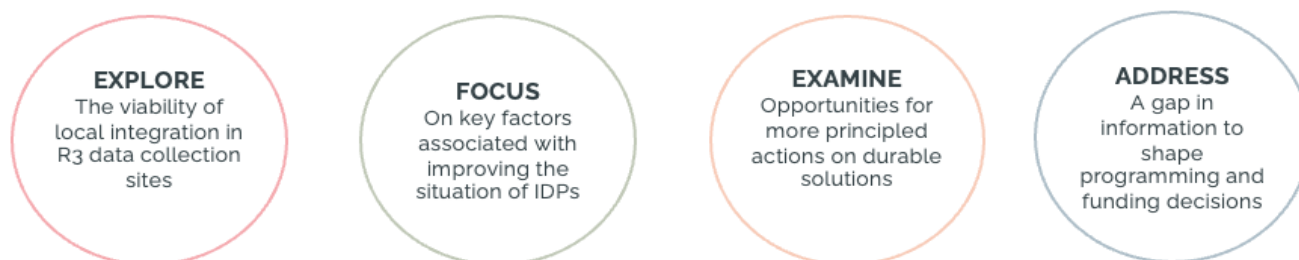
Research by Samuel Hall for IOM in 2022[2] showed that community health is on the decline - meaning that communities do not have the resources to protect their own, with concerning signs of decreasing social cohesion and community protection systems. The WCLRF report confirms that community structures and local systems have been damaged, losing the capacity to cope with shocks, events, or emergencies that impact the lives of men, women and children.

While internally displaced persons (IDPs) are living under emergency conditions, they also face long-term challenges that impact their overall protection, for current and future generations, and their search for solutions adapted to their needs. This is why the NRC R3 consortium's focus on recovery and resilience was one 'key' to the durable solutions conversation in Afghanistan.

There are opportunities for engagement, beyond humanitarian aid, and for advocacy with donors to support IDPs in the short and long term. This conversation is aligned with the United Nations Secretary General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement at the global level, as Afghanistan has been identified as one of the priority countries to transform the way in which internal displacement is addressed.

While the De facto Authorities (DfA) favour returns to areas of origin, all three durable solutions - including local integration and resettlement or relocation - need to be considered for a solutions-oriented approach, inclusive of the voices of the displaced. IDPs will likely remain in host communities for longer than expected from a cycle of displacement. It has also been documented that social support structures in the country are still fragile and are not able to support the reintegration or returns of IDPs at a large scale. Interim and emergency measures that support the resilience and local reintegration of IDPs, are needed alongside designing and implementing longer term plans.

Objectives and Methodology

EXPLORE
The viability of local integration in R3 data collection sites

FOCUS
On key factors associated with improving the situation of IDPs

EXAMINE
Opportunities for more principled actions on durable solutions

ADDRESS
A gap in information to shape programming and funding decisions

The research brief reviews key factors associated with improving the situation of IDPs in areas where they are displaced to (host communities) and ensuring that they do not remain protracted for an extended period of time. It reviews challenges and opportunities for local integration in R3 sites through data collected by a local NGO partner, WCLRF, in Afghanistan. It is based on qualitative and quantitative data collection in Afghanistan in September 2022 carried out by WCLRF for Care Afghanistan in IDP settlements situated in the provincial capitals of Uruzgan, Kandahar, Helmand, Herat, Ghor, and Badghis with additional key informant interviews from Kabul.

Quantitative data collection: The quantitative data collection was based on two sets of questionnaires. The first consisted of a set of 35 questions addressed to IDPs specifically. The questions were classified into four groups starting with questions for general information, followed by specific questions about IDPs who wish to integrate within their host community, then with specific questions about people who wish to return/reintegrate to their place of origin and finally specific questions addressed to IDPs that wish to relocate to a third location. A total of 551 people were interviewed, with attention to keeping gender parity and an equitable sample distribution across provinces. Close to 79 IDPs with disability were also interviewed as part of the sample.

The second quantitative questionnaire was designed for returnees and addressed their situation prior and following their return to their province of origin. It consisted of 49 interviews divided across 5 provinces. This data has only partially been used for this brief as local integration is the primary focus.

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[2]International Organization for Migration, and Samuel Hall. "Displacement Trends and Challenges in Afghanistan since August 2021 - Mental Health." IOM: Unpacking the Realities of Displacement Affected Communities in Afghanistan Since August 2021, 2022.

Qualitative data collection: The qualitative data collection included focus group discussions (FGDs), consultations with community leaders and another set of key informant interviews (KII) with relevant governmental and non-governmental organisations that are working with IDPs. Finally, 3 civil society organisations (CSOs) as well as 1 international organisation R3 consortium member were interviewed as part of the KIIs conducted in Kabul.

Overall, a total of 10 focus groups discussions were conducted with the participation of IDP representatives, local leaders and representatives of Directorate of Refugees and Returnees in the areas populated with IDPs. A similar composition of FGD participants were chosen in each targeted province to pave the ground for IDPs to share their situation with local authorities and host community. However, as a result of the way the FGDs were conducted and transcribed, the interaction between IDPs, authorities and the host community were not reflected. An equal number of women and men were interviewed as part of the FGDs in each province, however because of transcription issues, gender and age were also not reflected in the transcripts.

No	Tools	Respondents	Gender/Quantity		Total
			Male	Female	
Data collection methods	Questionnaires	IDPs	277	274	551
		Returnees	25	24	49
	KIIs	Government	6	0	6
		Community leaders	6	0	6
		Organisations	1	3	4
	FGDs	IDPs, community leaders and representatives of DRR	36	36	72
			351	**337**	
		Total		**688**	

Field limitations and constraints: WCLRF had originally planned on conducting at least two FGDs per targeted province, however because of obstacles from local Helmand officials, no FGDs were conducted in that province.

Given the nature of the study, there was reticence by local authorities to engage collaboratively during the process. Furthermore, the narrow operating environment for WCLRF meant that there was additional scrutiny and challenges liaising with the DfA. There was also some direct interference from the authorities that impacted the ability of researchers in Helmand from carrying out the research with IDPs there, even when they coordinated and invited the participants in a different selected location.

WCLRF colleagues also pointed out that the DfA seemed primarily interested in humanitarian assistance, such as cash, food or non-food items. They tended to overlook the "other" areas such as research, advocacy and awareness raising, even though these "other" areas are often intricately connected to humanitarian assistance. Because of such preconceptions and stance against the usefulness of research, the DfA did not support this research. In the same line, IDPs themselves expected to receive aid in exchange for their participation in the research, and some thus refused to participate in research without compensation.

The ReDSS Solutions Framework

Samuel Hall's team has used this data and applied an existing solutions framework, adapted to the context of Afghanistan. Affirming that the three solutions (voluntary repatriation, local integration, or resettlement) are processes to achieve integration, the Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS) operationalized the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) 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 to what extent 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. Available data 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

The use of the ReDSS Framework reveals many data gaps, in white below. However, some key sub-criteria were covered in the data and reveal notable obstacles for social cohesion, adequate standards of living, access to livelihoods and to housing, land and property, specifically. These are presented in a "traffic light" rating system below, that helps identify key data gaps, but the data also reveals key findings.

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 their 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	DPs who do not face any form of stigmatization (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 the 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

Finding 1. A lack of integration plans for IDPs

At a time where return conditions are not in place in many communities across Afghanistan, the lack of any planning for local integration was a concern raised by IDPs. Respondents planned to stay in their host community or community of displacement, making local integration the preferred durable solution by 63% of respondents. Only 37% indicated that they are not intending to stay in the host community for the long-term, although it remains their "home" for the short term. The WCLRF analysis points to the fact that the areas covered were receiving appropriate humanitarian assistance, with an overall satisfaction from IDPs on the quality and quantity of support provided. The alternatives for IDPs would be to return to areas where they had "lost everything in displacement"[3] and where a lack of humanitarian assistance constituted a strong enough reason not to return.

When prompted further, most respondents (64%) interviewed by WCLRF declared they would be willing or "possibly" willing to return to their area of origin, but with clear conditions: *if* the conditions for a safe and stable life were provided, and *if* they were assisted from the point of displacement to their reintegration process. For IDPs, assurances over these conditions are necessary for any return decision to be made.

Respondents consider that there is currently a lack of concrete integration plans for IDPs, on the side of authorities - or of concrete return and reintegration plans. IDPs have felt that the conditions for returns are not in place and that returns are *"either by force or consent. Since the takeover of Afghanistan by IEA all assistance for IDPs has been cut except health and education services so they lose their hopes and think about returning to their original places."*[4]

In fact, according to ADSP and data gathered by WCLRF, *"to address prolonged internal displacement, the 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."*[5] Such actions make any steps IDPs take towards local integration more difficult and potentially ephemeral.

Finding 2. Perceptions of integration differ and are shaped by the lack of access to aid

There are hopes for local integration as 47% declared being already integrated within their community, and a quarter (25%) were partially satisfied regarding their level of local integration. However, perceptions remain localised and context or group specific. Those satisfied with their integration were found mainly in Kandahar (79%) and Uruzgan (74%). IDPs in Herat, Badghis, Ghor and Helmand displayed more negative perceptions of integration than IDPs in other areas. Some of these context-specific and group-based analysis of local integration are covered in our brief on *Local integration in Kandahar,* which highlights the differences between protracted and new IDPs, as well as the specific situation of IDPs from Badghis.

Of those who contemplated leaving the community or returning to their area of origin, the lack of assistance and aid from the host community or from organisations was a key push factor. A considerable number of IDPs in Uruzgan, Ghor and Helmand are unable to access humanitarian assistance. This can closely be tied to the lack of documentation and registration among IDPs. A key cause for the inability to access aid and protection, based on the data consulted for this brief, is linked to the question of registration and legal safety and protection. These will be covered in greater detail in the legal safety section of this brief.

Finding 3. Physical Safety: low and deteriorating social cohesion

A sense of security is one of the main reasons why IDPs continue to stay in protracted displacement situations, hoping to remain and integrate in their host-community. Safety and security are key to durable solutions, and are often closely associated with social cohesion. WCLRF data showed **low and deteriorating social cohesion between host and IDP populations**. Such trends could result in protection and security risks. Data reflected negative perceptions of host populations towards IDPs and their possible integration within their community. In fact, the intolerance of the host community towards IDPs was cited as one of the major challenges preventing IDPs' local

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[3] Extracts from the main WCLRF study report for Care International.
[4] KII with Badghis representative of MoRR, September 2022
[5] Asia Displacement Solutions Platform (ADSP). "IDP returns in Afghanistan: are durable solutions possible?". Briefing Note, October 2022

integration. Intolerance was rarely mentioned in Kandahar, Herat and Ghor provinces, whereas it was mentioned by 60 IDPs in Badghis, 50 IDPs in Uruzgan, and 35 IDPs in Helmand.

Tensions over resources were often the primary reason behind the reluctance of host populations towards IDP integration.
- Host community leaders pointed out that host populations have to face an already precarious economic situation and they believe that with the integration of IDPs within their communities, their economic situation will be exacerbated given the increased competition. Such perceptions play an important role in limiting social cohesion between IDPs and host communities.
- Tensions over resources are also reflected when it comes to aid distribution. Hosts believe that resources that are spent on IDPs are resources that could have been spent on helping hosts. Such perceptions create a dislike of IDPs by hosts. Yet, data from one of the FGDs mentioned that the presence of IDPs attracted aid, from which hosts were able to benefit as well. At the same time, respondents from host communities unanimously stressed that the quality and quantity of the services provided to the IDPs are inadequate.
- Often the land IDPs have settled and built a house on belongs to host populations. Sometimes tents and temporary shelters are built on the host community's land without their approval thus leading to conflict between hosts and IDPs.

IDPs are often blamed for many of the problems of the community. A few community leaders have described: *"the IDPs cause some problems for our society. For example: they take the local people's land, they destroy agriculture, pollute the air and soil, and do not observe hygiene issues. Some IDPs are begging in the city in which their situation affects us emotionally"*[6].

Secondly, **cultural and language differences were highlighted** by respondents. Cultural differences with the host community were cited 10% of the time as one of the major challenges preventing IDP integration. In contrast, 19% expressed that a shared culture between the host and IDP populations often facilitated and enabled coexistence among communities. Respondents in Herat, Badghis and Uruzgan claimed they do not have the opportunity to speak and share the same language and culture as their hosts. They are also the most likely to highlight the importance of shared culture for better integration. The province of origin of the IDPs can also play an important role in the integration processes.

Finding 4. Material Safety: Health needs are a context-specific barrier to solutions

Access to healthcare, water and sanitation
Access to healthcare varies by location. Some 40% of respondents indicated either lacking or having very limited access to health services, a key challenge for them following their displacement. Given that most of the data collection was conducted in provincial capitals and urban areas, the true number is undoubtedly much higher.

While health facilities were reported to be adequately available for a large proportion of IDPs in four provinces - Herat, Helmand, Ghor and Badghis - this was not the case for **IDPs in Kandahar and Uruzgan provinces for whom access to health services were limited, to the point that IDPs reported not receiving any health services at all**.

Mental health was also highlighted by IDPs as a key health-related challenges following displacement. IDPs explained that mental health concerns are caused by their current living conditions, the difficult situation their children are exposed to, and the overall distance from their families which can be psychologically difficult for them to deal with. **Lastly, host community members and community leaders raised their concerns over the deteriorating levels of hygiene within IDP communities**. This was raised as a concern specifically for Badghis and Uruzgan.

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[6] Badghis FGD, September 2022

Access to education

The majority of the IDPs were found to be illiterate, and their level of vocational and basic education was low. Most education related challenges were reported in Badghis province. Although, for many, access to education facilities is their main challenge following displacement, other **IDPs claimed that their children's access to education is one of the reasons that people have decided to stay in their host community**. Due to the precarious economic conditions of IDPs, children are often forced to work. Many parents feel forced to sacrifice their children's education to have them instead collect garbage or beg in the streets so that they can help with family expenses. Education then becomes a key factor in the decision to stay, or to return.

Income and consumption

The data consulted by WCLRF confirms that **food insecurity is common**, with half of respondents (52%) expressing that their nutrition requirements were not met. One quarter also reported not having the minimum required home appliances to cook and feed their children, and clothes.

Out of 551 respondents, 50% reported being unemployed, while 45% stated they were self-employed or working based on daily wages, and 5% reported having some form of official employment. It implies that unemployment and limited sources of income remain immense challenges among internally displaced population.

Housing, land, and property

The data was collected by WCLRF mainly from IDP camps (42%) and among displaced persons living in rental houses or rooms (44%) or in relatives' houses (6%), and about 8% reported not having any shelter or place for living at all. Some IDPs interviewed lived in tents, and considering the seasonal conditions and changing climate, this represents an important challenge and source of shock for them. **Those living in tents also reported not having any home to return to**, as they had lost their possessions or original homes as a result of displacement.

Finding 5. Legal Safety: IDPs lack registration in their community of displacement

The lack of legal support and registration in displacement is both a cause and a consequence of the lack of integration and the lack of planning by authorities. This is a higher challenge in some areas: for instance, IDPs that were displaced to Badghis province more frequently reported not having access to legal support following their displacement.

Both the lack of access to Tazkiras and the lack of registration are twin challenges to integration for IDPs. In the WCLRF data, 22% of IDPs were not registered as IDPs in their host community. This fluctuated across provinces. For instance, IDPs in Helmand were found to be the least likely to be registered which correlates with the lower access to humanitarian aid in that province.

In addition, despite data collection being carried out in IDP settlements, a considerable number of IDPs live outside IDP settlements, in rental homes, rooms or with relatives, and are ostensibly invisible and not registered. Not being registered can prevent them from access to basic services and aid. **A key challenge - and opportunity - will be to engage in an identification process** to understand where IDPs are, and what their needs are, outside of camp-based settings, as their current locations might better prepare them for achieving durable solutions, if adequately identified and supported.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADVANCING LOCAL INTEGRATION SOLUTIONS

The data presented in this briefing paper creates opportunities for 1) advocacy and learning, 2) community engagement, and 3) awareness raising.

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 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 displaced to 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.

The durable solutions framework presented in this brief can 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

In the absence of registration and documentation, local leaders and elders in host communities have been engaged in identifying the needs of IDPs. They can be further counted on to support and assist with registration, maintaining up to date lists of IDPs who are entering their area, supervising aid distribution, promoting access to health services and advocating for the support of IDPs with the local government and with members of host communities.

Yet, such **access to community leader help differs by province**. For instance, respondents displaced to Badghis largely claimed they do not have the opportunity to reach out to community leaders and host populations for help. In fact, IDPs in Badghis were most affected by the host community's intolerance. This goes to show that active advocacy by local leaders and elders of host communities as well NGOs will most likely lead to the creation of bridges between host and IDPs and hence a better integration of IDPs.

Although this study was conducted close to provincial capitals, certain IDPs mentioned the use of mobile health teams that provide health related services in remote areas. Similarly, mobile schools were also mentioned by interviewees as a way to promote education in IDPs communities. Educational and vocational courses for youth and older IDPs can also be beneficial to their future livelihood and integration.

Awareness raising and education as a pathway to solutions

Awareness raising and better access to education can contribute to local integration. The data showed that when IDP children attend school, not only will they better integrate within society but it will also cause a snowball effect and allow their family to become increasingly familiar with their host community. Unfortunately, because of the precarious livelihood opportunities of IDPs, children are often deprived of education and forced to work, thus preventing a stop to the vicious cycle.

Although the most optimistic of the respondents claimed that cultural and language differences represent an opportunity to learn, most saw it as a challenge. This is why they have called for launching educational programs for IDPs to get more acquainted with their new local language and promote integration.

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