



Afghanistan submission to the UN Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan strongly welcomes the establishment of the UN Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement and the important facilitation work undertaken by the associated Group of Friends; both frameworks constitute a once-in-a-generation opportunity to direct global attention towards enduring internal displacement crises and to identify concrete and durable solutions.

Afghanistan is currently at the forefront of one of the world's most acute internal displacement situations and the largest IDPs population in the region. During year 2019 around 40,000 families were displaced across the country, with this figure the annual displaced population reached 1,954,807 in 24 provinces. They were uprooted by conflict, insecurity and natural hazards. Both, the challenge of conflict- as well as of disaster-induced displacement deteriorated in terms of frequency and intensity over the last decade. Those internally displaced within Afghanistan boundaries have urgent and persistent assistance and protection needs, concerning inter alia the provision of adequate nutrition, shelter, basic services and livelihood opportunities. Additionally, internal displacement rendered certain social groups particularly vulnerable, such as women, children and persons with disabilities, which are disproportionately affected by the effects of displacement or negative coping strategies respectively.

The IDPs deserve more attention in terms of education, health care, job and other opportunities. One of the challenging issues of the IDP is that they have nothing to lose, since they already got the risk to move from their own village for a better life and more opportunities. Due to lack of attention and lack of adequate assistance, they may cross the international borders illegally or may join the organized criminal groups or even insurgent ranks.

The I.R. of Afghanistan has been active in addressing these challenges on the national level, as manifested in the adoption of its 2013 National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons and of the 2017 National Policy Framework for Returnees and IDPs. Afghanistan, thereby and in other frameworks, importantly acknowledges the nation-state's chief responsibility in providing IDP protection, the balanced pursuit of all types of durable solutions, and also the developmental potential of those internally displaced. Afghanistan remains strongly committed to these policy frameworks and their effective implementation, while simultaneously calling for impactful innovations at all levels of governance.

1. Key issues for panel consideration

Building on its specific experiences, the I.R. of Afghanistan recommends to the Panel the following issues for prioritized examination:

- **Protection challenges:** A sizeable portion of IDPs face persistent assistance and protection challenges notwithstanding the commitment by national governments and the international community in addressing internal displacement crises. For better addressing of this challenge, identification of further effective and innovative remedies to the IDPs' protection gap is considered essential; this includes the formulation of recommendations

- on tailored support for particularly vulnerable groups.
- ***Whole-of-Displacement-Approach***: The Afghan case showed that IDPs cannot be addressed in isolation from other types of displacement. On the contrary, a continuum exists between refugees, returnees and IDPs (e.g. occurrence of so-called ‘returnee IDPs’). We hope for that this refugee-returnee-IDP-nexus can be further substantiated and that important implications for broader migration governance will be communicated accordingly.
 - ***Humanitarian-Development-Nexus***: Improved coordination and cooperation between governmental, humanitarian, development and peace actors will be central to preventing, responding to, and solving internal displacement crises. In this regard, the I.R. of Afghanistan notices the need to innovatively advance action on the issues of disaster risk management and resilience; urbanization, and land allocation; as well as adequate documentation for IDPs. These issue fields constitute the necessary pre-requisites for subsequent, long-term development action.
 - ***Whole-of Community-Approach***: Honoring the concept of whole-of-community engagement on displacement, close attention should, furthermore, be awarded to effective and innovative ways to meaningfully integrate IDPs into peace processes and humanitarian-developmental response design.
 - ***Intergovernmental cooperation***: Lastly, options for institutionalized intergovernmental coordination and cooperation on internal displacement should be investigated. Enduring internal displacement situations require a targeted and sustainable mode for dialogue and knowledge-sharing between states which goes beyond the frameworks currently available.

2. invoking national responsibility and capacity for IDPs

Drawing lessons from the built-up of its national policy structure on internal displacement since 2013, the I.R. of Afghanistan understands as key factor for successful nation-state engagement the establishment of an effective implementation infrastructure. This requires capacity-building at all levels of government through inter alia training, information-sharing, adequate budgeting, and monitoring. Especially the subnational levels should be assisted comprehensively, considering that decentralized contingency and response planning is vital to properly address regional variance in causes and circumstances of displacement. IDP is national issue, but Responses are always local and decentralized

Beyond the sole realm of governmental institutions, also public outreach and awareness-raising with people of concern and host communities about IDP policies and rights is essential to promoting successful implementation. In case of reticence by local communities and politicization of local IDP integration, institutionalized and case-sensitive mediation and conflict resolution mechanisms are of utmost importance. It is always advised that return and reintegration should be via discursive process not degree

The necessary political will to be catalyzed for the benefit of IDPs, importantly, extends beyond the nation-state grappling with internal displacement to include the continuous commitment of countries of asylum to the standards of safe, orderly and voluntary return, and of donor states to the comprehensive and equal treatment of all subgroups of displaced persons (avoidance of status targeting in funding).

3. Relevance of humanitarian, development, peace, climate change, and disaster reduction action

The intertwined nature of the drivers of displacement renders integrated responses of the abovementioned action fields indispensable to achieving actual relief for IDPs.

Special attention should be awarded to strengthening prevention and preparedness measures for sudden- and slow-onset natural disasters as a management tool for disaster-induced displacement. In the case of Afghanistan, a close cooperation project with the World Bank aims to precisely develop the Afghanistan disaster risk management and resilience.

Similarly important, however, is the engagement with development and private sector actors on the enhancement of IDP livelihoods, marketable skills, and economic self-reliance as well as on the provision of priority public services and overall improvement of living conditions in areas of high displacement.

The I.R. of Afghanistan runs a successful and potentially transposable program in this regard with funding by the World Bank and interlinked with the UNHCR Priority Areas of Return and Reintegration: the so-called ‘Citizen’s Charter National Priority Program (NPP). This framework foresees the participation of IDPs in Community Development Councils (CDCs) and, thereby, not only facilitates IDP participation in local governance and development decision-making, but also the needs-based and locally owned identification of priority services.

4. Obstacles to durable solutions and ways forward

Drawing again on the experience of Afghanistan internal displacement in Afghanistan, durable solutions can be stalled by a variety of factors, including: (1) the deterioration of the underlying security/conflict or disaster situation, limited success of prevention and preparedness measures, and the occurrence of new displacements; (2) aggravating factors related to the exceptional circumstances, such as poverty, unemployment, shelter shortage, and weakened governmental service provision which are adversely affecting communities’ capacities and willingness to absorb IDPs; (3) the severing of IDPs’ social and communal ties through secondary and multi-generational displacements undermining their support systems; (4) accessibility and integration challenges for IDPs as manifested in, for example, their vulnerability to eviction or the problem of adequate identity documentation and correlated access to assistance as well as basic services; lastly, also (5) operational obstacles in implementing durable solutions have to be considered, such as insufficient information on durable solutions options or further inadequate support measures for IDPs.

Within this context, the I.R. of Afghanistan would like to specifically underline the far-reaching importance of increased tenure security and expanded issuance of identity/civil documentation for IDPs as necessary preconditions for subsequent developmental action and major avenues for promoting durable solutions for IDPs. On tenure security, Afghanistan has positive experiences with the regularization and upgrading of settlements, as shown by the respective treatment of the *Maslakh* settlement (wider Herat City). Regarding the issuance of documents, mobile registration teams and procedural adaptations have been tested in collaboration with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).