

REFUGEES RETURN TO POVERTY, UNEMPLOYMENT AND DESPAIR

Afghanistan's labor market and the status of women



Photo: Noorullah Shirzad/ADPRO

Ali Ahmad

November 2018

CONTENT

1. Summary	4
1.1. Overview	4
1.2. Summary of Afghan labor market characteristics	4
1.2.1. Employment sectors.	5
1.2.2. Female labor force profile	6
1.3. Summary of major findings and analysis of in-depth interviews	7
1.3.1. The National Unity Government (NUG)	7
1.3.2. Development organizations, employers, trainers and experts	9
1.3.3. Returnees	10
1.4. Recommendations	12
1.4.1. To development organizations and donors	12
1.4.2. To the National Unity Government of Afghanistan	12
1.4.3. To the Austrian Government	14
1.5. Methodology.	14
2. Introduction	15
2.1. The history of Afghan migration and displacement	18
2.2. Research methodology	20
2.2.1. Research team	22
2.2.2. Limitations and constraints	23
3. Characteristics of Afghanistan's labor market	26
3.1. Background	26
3.2. Labor market participation in Afghanistan	27
3.2.1. Unemployment.	27
3.2.2. Informal sector employment	28
3.2.3. Sectors of employment	29
3.3. Agriculture	30
3.4. Education.	30
3.5. Poverty	32
3.6. Female labor force profile	32
3.6.1. Education/Literacy	34
3.6.2. Cultural barriers	35

4. Major findings and analysis of in-depth interviews . . . . .	.37
4.1. The National Unity Government (NUG) of Afghanistan . . . . .	.37
4.1.1. Economic bubble . . . . .	.38
4.1.2. Support Afghanistan Livelihood and Mobility (SALAM) . . . . .	.39
4.1.3. Women's empowerment programs . . . . .	.40
4.1.4. Vocational training . . . . .	.43
4.2. National/International organizations, potential employers, trainers and experts . . . . .	.44
4.2.1 Employment programs . . . . .	.44
4.2.2. Women in the economy . . . . .	.46
4.2.3. Success Stories . . . . .	.48
4.3. Returnees. . . . .	.50
4.3.1. Overview . . . . .	.50
4.3.2. Nangarhar Province – Pul-e Behsud and Gambiri settlements . . . . .	.51
4.3.3. Life after return in Pul-e Behsud and Gambiri settlements . . . . .	.53
4.3.4. Employment opportunities for returnees in Pul-e Behsud and Gambiri settlements. . . . .	.55
4.3.5. Problems hindering returnee women's participation in the labor market. . . . .	.56
4.3.6. Barikab settlement – Kabul/Parwan . . . . .	.57
4.3.6.1. Jobs for women in Barikab . . . . .	.58
5. Conclusion . . . . .	.60
I. Work cited . . . . .	.62
Useful links on Afghanistan . . . . .	.65
II. Annex . . . . .	.66
List of Interviewees . . . . .	.66

1. SUMMARY

1.1. OVERVIEW

This study has been carried out by the Vienna Institute for International Dialogue and Cooperation (VIDC) in cooperation with its Afghan research partner, the Afghanistan Development and Peace Research Organization (ADPRO). It provides an overview and analysis of Afghanistan's labor market, focusing in particular on the informal sector and the participation of women in the labor force. The study is part of a larger project called "Dard Kush – strengthening livelihoods of Afghan refugees and Pakistani host communities" currently being implemented by FACES Pakistan in Lahore, together with Caritas Austria and Caritas St. Pölten. The Austrian Development Agency (ADA) commissioned the research.

Background: In the second half of 2016, Pakistan forcibly expelled more than half a million Afghan refugees, the greatest number of returnees from Pakistan since U.S. forces ousted the Taliban in 2001. This massive influx exacerbated Afghanistan's already critical socioeconomic situation. Tens of thousands of returnees settled in and around Kabul and other major cities in eastern Afghanistan, hoping to find employment. Many however have inadequate skills to adapt to life in urban economic settings.

During the field research period, it became clear that the National Unity Government (NUG) has insufficient resources to address the proper reception of this enormous number of returnees. The absence of data and expertise about the Afghan labor market, integration of returnees and women in the labor force presented a key challenge to researchers.

1.2. SUMMARY OF AFGHAN LABOR MARKET CHARACTERISTICS

Of an estimated population of 30 million, 15.9 million Afghans (54.6%) are of working age (15-64 years). Approximately 6.5 million Afghans are either employed (5.2 million) or underemployed (1.3 million). Another 2.1 million people – 24% of the working age population – are unemployed. Men constitute more than 80% (5.5 million) of the workforce, while women make up under 20% (1.1 million). More than 77% of the working population (5 million) live in rural areas. There is a significantly lower rate of labor force participation in urban areas due to limited employment opportunities for women, youth and the elderly.



Almost 20% of Afghans in the labor force (1.3 million) are engaged in the service sector, which includes retail, food services, and health care. The service sector is the largest employer of women in the labor force, with 48% of female employees.

1.2.2. Female labor force profile

Insecurity, cultural barriers and low levels of education/literacy are the most commonly cited obstacles hindering women's engagement in the labor market. Aside from domestic work, female employment is typically restricted to agriculture, manufacturing and services. Over 78% of workers in the clothing and textile manufacturing industries are women, while agriculture employs around 65% of the total female labor force.

Self-employment provides a vital and dominant source of income for women in the informal labor sector, particularly in areas where they are prevented from working outside their homes due to cultural norms and/or restricted mobility. Home-based economic activities range from carpet weaving, sewing, embroidery and tailoring to agricultural work, such as taking care of livestock and selling dairy products.

Education/literacy: Only 34.8% of Afghans aged fifteen and over are literate, with a high variation between men (almost 50%) and women (20%) and between urban and rural areas. In urban areas, over 40% of women are literate, while 66.8% of men can read and write. In rural areas over 45% of men are literate compared to 13.1% of women. Nationwide, six million women and almost four million men over the age of fifteen are unable to read or write.

Cultural barriers: Women face significant cultural barriers and social stigmatization if they work outside the home. Dr. Lina Abirafeh, a leading gender studies scholar and author of 'Gender and International Aid in Afghanistan: The Politics and Effects of Intervention' (published in 2009), says many Afghan men and women "view women's employment as a reflection and reminder of their absolute poverty and destitution, an insult to men's dignity, and a questioning of men's ability to provide."

Farzana, a female returnee in Barikab, a settlement near Kabul, offered a similar viewpoint: "Men feel ashamed if they see their women work outside the home. Men think this would be against their *ghairat* (honor) if their wives work outside the home. The man is so *be ghairat* that he cannot feed his wife."

Afghan women may have been legally and politically empowered since the overthrow of the Taliban, but cultural practices affecting their status largely remain unchanged. Noorina, a tailoring master returnee from Pakistan, told researchers, "when I leave home for work, the neighbors think I have a sexual relationship with my employers". Ms. Noorina said she has to ignore such gossip otherwise she wouldn't be able to work.

1.3. SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS OF IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

1.3.1. The National Unity Government (NUG)

“Women have been trained in the past in fruit and vegetable processing and in agriculture, but we failed to help them find a market for their products.”

Spozhmai Wardak, Deputy Minister of Women's Affairs (MoWA)

The research team in Afghanistan conducted fourteen in-depth interviews (nine men and five women) with senior NUG officials, representatives of the Afghan Chamber of Commerce, Afghanistan's Central Statistics Organization and various labor and craft workers unions. The following themes emerged from these interviews:

Vocational training: Not all vocational training programs were welcomed by the Afghan government. Faizullah Zaki, minister of the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs & Disabled (MoLSAMD) was critical of current training trends and believes some skills taught do not match the demands of the rapidly growing younger generation for long-term employment. Mr Zaki's ministry and its partner organizations provide training for around 38,000 Afghans, including 17,000 women, in 82 centers across the country. No data was available on the number of returnees and/or IDPs engaged in these programs.

Development aid: Since the U.S.-led invasion in 2001, the international community has injected billions of dollars into Afghanistan, in an attempt to guarantee a peaceful and prosperous future for the country. Afghan officials complained that these funds were principally invested according to donor interests, rather than directed towards developing Afghanistan's industrial, agricultural, water infrastructure and transportation sectors, which would have created sustainable long-term employment opportunities. The minor investments made in these sectors over the past seventeen years have been adversely affected by the country's worsening security situation.

Security/Poverty: The withdrawal of NATO forces in 2014 has severely impacted both the security and economic situation in Afghanistan. Since the troops' departure, poverty levels have risen dramatically: 55% of the estimated 30 million strong population now live under the poverty line, an increase from 38% in 2011-2012. Tens of thousands of Afghans employed by foreign forces and international organizations have lost their jobs, the Taliban have resurged and expanded their control, ISIS (Daesh) has appeared on Afghan soil and civilian casualties have reached a record high.

Returnees: In response to the overwhelming number of returnees expelled from Pakistan in the second half of 2016, three United Nations Agencies (UNDP, UNHCR, and ILO) collaborated with MoLSAMD to design the Support Afghanistan Livelihoods and Mobility (SALAM) program. SALAM aims to meet the long-term needs of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and returnees, especially women and youth. SALAM began in January 2017 with a pilot implementation phase in six provinces, including Nangarhar.

Khan Jan Alokozai, deputy head of Afghanistan's Chamber of Commerce criticized the NUG and its international backers for failing to provide life-saving services to Afghans, in particular to IDPs and returnees. "The Afghan government and the international community only talk and show sympathy but in practice there is nothing to show for their actions. People are living in tents in a desert where there is no water, no clinic, no doctor – no services," Mr. Alokozai said.

Women: Many uneducated Afghan women seek employment in agriculture and non-farm activities. Both the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) specifically target women by providing vocational training programs, along with financial and technical support. In recent years MoWA has established twenty-two female-only complexes across Afghanistan comprising gardens, workshops and marketplaces; where 7000 women have been trained in fruit and vegetable processing, embroidery, tailoring and bead work.

Government projects: Since 2016, more than 270,000 women-headed households, marginalized poor families, physically disabled people and displaced persons with access to arable land have benefited from the support of MAIL's Family Economy Department. Projects are carried out in both urban and rural areas and include agricultural and livestock-related projects such as saffron production, food processing, gardening, building greenhouses, beekeeping and chicken farms. In regions with minimal cultivatable land, the Family Economy Department provides women-headed households with livestock to assist them in generating an income.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), in collaboration with the Afghan government, launched an extensive women's empowerment program in 2014 called 'PROMOTE', which aimed to improve the status of 75,000 Afghan women and ensure greater female representation in government, business and civil society. The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) reported in September 2018 however that the program was a failure and a waste of taxpayer's money.



1.3.2. Development organizations, employers, trainers and experts

“The National Unity Government is a failed government because it promised to create jobs for people but on the contrary, even more people have lost their jobs. The NUG and foreign countries use returnees and refugees as political tools to advance their political agendas.”

Fatana Gilani, Director of the Afghanistan Women’s Association

Researchers carried out fifteen in-depth interviews (ten females and five males) with representatives of several international NGOs, employers, trainers and experts. More than 2000 NGOs have registered with Afghanistan’s Ministry of Economy, primarily in the areas of social services, health, education and agriculture. The following section provides a brief overview of employment promotion programs provided by various stakeholders.

Hashim Rasuli, program coordinator for the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) in Kabul, believes skills alone are insufficient for returnees and IDPs to find employment. Without money to start or invest in businesses and/or connections to the Afghan elite, says Mr Rasuli, it is extremely difficult for returnees to integrate into the workforce. Bilal Zadrán, Livelihoods and Food Security Coordinator for the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), observed that returnees’ skills do not

match the demands of Afghanistan's labor market. According to Mr. Zadrán, there is no comprehensive program to assist returnees and IDPs to find work in Afghanistan.

Various international organizations have developed programs to promote employment and integrate returnees, IDPs and women into the labor market. GIZ launched the Sustainable Economic Development and Employment Promotion (SEDEP) project across seven northern provinces in 2014. A returnee component was added in 2018 to offer assistance to the influx of Afghans from Europe and Pakistan during the previous two years.

The Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR) aims to train 2800 returnees, IDPs, youth and hosting communities, and provide employment opportunities in both farm and non-farm activities.

Return Assessment and Development for Afghanistan (RADA) supports 30,000 vulnerable Afghans – youths and women in particular – returning from Europe, Pakistan and Iran with technical and vocational training programs.

Success stories: Despite the challenges facing women, female returnees are active in both the formal and informal labor sectors: as entrepreneurs, business owners, employers and employees. Sherin Akbari spent seventeen years as a refugee in Pakistan, where she worked in the carpet weaving industry. Now she employs fifty to sixty families in her own carpet and handicraft business, 'Khaharan' (Sisters), in Kabul. Ms. Akbari acknowledged that significant cultural and financial difficulties exist for women, but believes they could contribute more to the economy if granted greater opportunities.

Maryam Jami-ul Ahmadi runs 'Banu Cultivation, Harvesting and Processing Food Enterprise' in Western Herat province. Once a refugee in Iran, Ms. Ahmadi now employs thirty-one women. She too is confronted by numerous hurdles, but is determined to fight against Afghanistan's restrictive cultural norms. According to Ms. Ahmadi, investment in empowering women through agriculture will give them control over decision making at home and beyond.

1.3.3. Returnees

"This is a dry place. There is no water here. There is no work for people here either. At times, we ate nothing for three days. We returned to Afghanistan hoping our life would be better than in Pakistan, but this is a poorer country, worse than Pakistan. There is no respect for girls and women here. This is a land of unemployed people. People don't help the poor, don't feed them because they are also poor."

Zarsanga, female household-head, Eastern Afghanistan

Twenty-one interviews were conducted in two informal and one formal returnee settlements. Interviewees included one woman and four men in Pul-e Behsud – a camp within Jalalabad accommodating around one hundred families, seven males and one female in Gambiri – a poor rural area in eastern Afghanistan between Nangarhar and Laghman provinces, and two males and six females in Barikab, an hour drive to the north of Kabul on the border with Parwan province.

“My children now ask me why we returned to a country that has nothing to live on. No house, no water, no job,” said Azam, who was deported from Pakistan with his family in 2016 and now lives in Gambiri. The returnees in Pul-e Behsud and Gambiri shared similar frustrations: no work opportunities, no housing, no water and no provision of basic services. They felt universally neglected, stereotyped and harassed by both the provincial government and local warlords. The three hundred residents of Barikab also suffered from lack of employment, housing, medical care, water, electricity and a high school and all felt their lives had been better in Pakistan.

For many interviewees finding shelter was their main priority, as they were reluctant to leave their women and belongings unprotected to search for work. “Housing first and then employment,” said one returnee in Gambiri. Interviewees in Barikab however were unimpressed with their decade-old, Western-style housing with no protection walls, built on dry, rocky land with financial assistance from the Australian government.

Afghan women wishing to enter the labor market are confronted by multiple obstacles: illiteracy, low levels of education, cultural, familial and societal barriers all restrict women’s participation in economic activities. The most common source of income for working female interviewees in all three returnees’ settlements is home-based carpet weaving, tailoring, embroidery, and bead work. This income however is unreliable and irregular. Women rely mainly on their ‘mahram’s (close male relative) employment for survival. Men are engaged in itinerant labor such as driving, mechanic work and teaching at a UNICEF-funded school in Gambiri.

“I regret returning to Afghanistan. My life as refugee in Pakistan was much better. I expected things would get better each year but it has been the opposite. I would not hesitate to migrate again if I ever get a chance again.”

Samar, Barikab.

1.4. RECOMMENDATIONS

1.4.1. To development organizations and donors

- Prioritize employment sectors: Agriculture is a major sector requiring significant support and investment to ensure workers are able to earn adequate livelihoods.¹
- Establish vocational training centers in rural districts and villages: This will enable people in remote areas easy access to training centers and ensure families feel it is safe for women to attend. These centers will adapt to agricultural seasons and aim to increase the income-generating potential of both men and women.²
- Involve village mullahs and community leaders during the planning and implementation phases of vocational training programs. Community and religious leaders have leverage to soften the concepts of *ghairat* and *nang* (honor) and can gradually sensitize their communities to the benefits of women taking on productive roles in the economy.³
- Marketing strategy training: Many national and international organizations have provided training since the U.S. military intervention in 2001, but more instruction in the usage of technology and networking in marketing is needed.⁴
- Basic literacy and numeracy classes should be provided parallel to vocational training.⁵
- Offer training in marketable skills for women and youth, including instruction in design and networking for non-farm income-generating projects. Develop short-term refresher courses for women who have received vocational training in the past.⁶
- Help women with financial resources: Women cannot get loans because almost all property is registered in the name of male relatives.⁷
- Psychological counseling: Increase and intensify psychosocial and psychiatric counseling in provinces such as Nangarhar with large numbers of returnees.

1.4.2. To the National Unity Government of Afghanistan

- Develop a multi-dimensional policy to both increase the productivity of Afghanistan's agricultural sector and create more jobs.⁸

1 Spozhmai Wardak, Deputy Minister of Women's Affairs

2 Maryam Jami-ul Ahmadi, Founder of 'Banu' Harvesting, Cultivation and Processing Enterprise in Herat.

3 Ibid

4 Nafas Gul, head of Zemarai Aghan enterprise

5 Zuhail, Food Processing Instructor in Nangarhar and Fatana Gilani, Head of Afghanistan Women's Association

6 Nafas Gul, head of Zemarai Aghan enterprise

7 Sherin Akbari, Head of 'Khaharan' Carpet Weaving and Handicrafts Industry.

8 Maryam Jami-ul Ahmadi, founder of 'Banu' Harvesting, Cultivation and Processing Enterprise in Herat and Asad Aziz, owner of 'Tabassum' Raison Cleaning Factory in Kabul.



Photo: Noorullah Shirzad/ADPRO

- Link farmers to the market by building infrastructure and the effective use of technology.⁹
- Improving coordination: The Afghan government must strengthen coordination at ministerial and provincial levels and establish a centralized information system.¹⁰
- Reform labor laws for women and end discrimination against women. Men are given preferential treatment over women as they 1) don't require maternal leave, 2) are able to work longer hours, 3) are contactable at any time of day or night and 4) don't require transport.¹¹
- Reform property rights for women: According to the Afghan constitution, men and women have equal rights and responsibilities. Customary and cultural norms however prevent women from owning property in their own names. Owning property would help women obtain loans to fund projects which could create employment opportunities for other women.¹²
- The NUG must secure rights for vulnerable workers in the informal labor sector. Although this sector occupies the majority of the Afghan labor market, income is typically low and unreliable.

9 Ibid

10 Ibid

11 ⁸Soraya Pakzad, Director of Voice of Women Organization, Latif Salehi, Head of Craftsmen Union, Habiba Fakhri, Head of Gender Unit at National Labor Union, and Asad Aziz, owner of Raison Cleaning Factory.

12 Sherin Akbari, Head of 'Khaharan' Carpet Weaving and Handicrafts Industry

- The Afghan government and international organizations must begin an awareness campaign involving the media about labor market opportunities and challenges.¹³
- The issue of returnees and IDPs should become part of the national discourse. The war is unlikely to end soon and people will continue to be displaced, so it is crucial to organize and provide basic services wherever people are forced to live.
- Strengthen the private sector's role in the agricultural and informal sectors by encouraging investment and promoting agribusiness.¹⁴

1.4.3. To the Austrian Government

- Support local initiatives through the Afghan diaspora: Engaging the Afghan diaspora in Austria will deliver a longer-lasting impact on the ground in Afghanistan. The diaspora know the situation in the country and are able to effectively monitor and report on projects.
- Identify expertise among the diaspora and utilize women in particular to channel development and humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan.
- Afghanistan is not safe: Afghan asylum seekers should not be deported to Afghanistan: The situation in Afghanistan is a humanitarian catastrophe from both a security perspective and a humanitarian aspect.

1.5. METHODOLOGY

This report is based on desk and field research conducted between November 2017 and August 2018 and attempts to understand the characteristics of the Afghan labor market, and its informal sector in particular.

The Afghanistan Development and Peace Research Organization (ADPRO) team conducted fifty in-depth interviews with key informants, including representatives of relevant ministries of the Afghan government, international organizations, potential employers, businesswomen and experts. Interviewees also included twenty-one male and female Afghan returnees who had been forcibly expelled from Pakistan and have since settled in eastern Afghanistan. All interviews were conducted and recorded in Dari and Pashto languages then translated into English, apart from one which was conducted in English.

13 Sabrina Saeed, Women Rights Activist

14 Khan Jan Alokozai, Deputy Head of Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce

2. INTRODUCTION

Despite being the world's largest recipient of aid, 55% of Afghanistan's population live below the poverty line. According to a 2016-17 survey by the country's Central Statistics Organization (CSO),¹⁵ almost 16 million people from an estimated 30 million population suffer from poverty, both in rural and urban areas.¹⁶ The departure of U.S.-led NATO combat forces at the end of 2014 has had a profound and lasting impact on the country's economy. In the year following the withdrawal, at least 100,000 jobs were lost in the transport sector alone, accounting for 22% of the country's total GDP.¹⁷ Increasing security threats due to the ongoing insurgency and political chaos in the capital have also adversely affected the employment situation and contributed to rising poverty levels.

Nearly half of Afghanistan's population (48%) is under the age of fifteen,¹⁸ and 60% is under the age of twenty-four, making it one of the youngest nations on earth.¹⁹ There are not enough jobs available to supply the demand of this rapidly growing labor market and provide livelihoods for a predominantly unskilled and illiterate work force. Youth unemployment is at 31%, even higher for female youth.²⁰ According to the Asia Foundation's Survey of the Afghan People 2017, unemployment is the biggest problem facing Afghans, surpassing security and other social issues.²¹

Only 54% of the Afghan population are of working age (15-64 years) and available to participate in the labor market.²² According to the Afghanistan Living Condition Survey 2016-17, of this number, 24% have a regular job and only 13% of those have adequate employment. Of the total number of working aged Afghans, 20% are under-employed and in need of more work. The survey also found that 80% of all jobs are classified as vulnerable, characterized by job insecurity and poor working conditions, and 67% of jobs in non-agricultural employment are informal.²³

Agriculture – including farming and livestock-related activities – forms the backbone of Afghanistan's rural economy, followed by non-farm and off-farm sectors such as manufacturing and food processing. The World Bank estimates around 70% of the

15 Central Statistics Organization (2018), Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey 2016–17. (ALCS-2016-17) Kabul. http://cso.gov.af/Content/files/ALCS/ALCS%20-%202016-17%20Analysis%20report%20-%20pre-print%20for%20web_rev.pdf (accessed 10 July 2018)

16 Ibid

17 Koelbl, Susanne (2015). Interview with Afghan President Ghani: 'I have to hold our country together', Spiegel online. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/spiegel-interview-with-afghan-president-ashraf-ghani-a-1064978.html> (accessed 20 June 2018)

18 Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey – 2016-17 (accessed 10 July 2018)

19 The Asia Foundation (2017). A Survey of the Afghan People. Afghanistan in 2017. Kabul, The Asia Foundation https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/2017_AfghanSurvey_report.pdf (accessed 10 June 2018)

20 The unemployment rate of persons aged 15-24 (according to ALCS – 2016-17)

21 The Asia Foundation (2017). A Survey of the Afghan People. Afghanistan in 2017. The Asia Foundation. Kabul, https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/2017_AfghanSurvey_report.pdf (accessed 10 June 2018)

22 Nabi, Sami. Interview by ADPRO, Head of Operations Unit, Central Statistics Organization. Kabul, 10.01.2018 Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey – 2016-17 (accessed 10 July 2018)

23 Ibid

population in rural areas are engaged in agricultural work.²⁴ According to the ALCS 2016-17 report, 44% of all jobs in Afghanistan are in the agricultural sector.

High population growth and the return of approximately seven million Afghan refugees over the past seventeen years has put enormous pressure on both the labor market and the land. Access to irrigated or rain-fed land is vital to economic security in rural Afghanistan. Recent drought has severely affected 1.4 million people in the north and west of the country, creating a massive humanitarian crisis that has received minimal attention and assistance from the international community.²⁵

The improvement of gender equality and empowerment of women were high on the U.S. agenda during the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan. Under the Taliban rule during the 1990s, women were banned from all public life, including educational centers. Since the ousting of the Taliban in 2001, tremendous financial and political support from the international community has improved the lives of Afghan women. Despite these gains, women still face numerous challenges, particularly in the areas of education, health care and mobility. Forced marriages and domestic violence also remain urgent issues for Afghan women.

“In order to have a balanced society, we need to create job opportunities for women. International organizations and the Afghan government have provided vocational training for women in recent years, but no work has been done to help them find market for their products.”²⁶

Spozhmai Wardak, Deputy Minister of Women's Affairs

Providing work opportunities for women is key to reducing poverty, fostering development and creating an inclusive society. Afghanistan has one of the world's lowest rates of female employment. From an estimated 30 million Afghans, just over one million women have work, compared to over five million men.²⁷ Labor force participation by women in rural areas is higher than in urban areas, as agriculture provides major work opportunities for both men and women.

The Afghan government and its international donors have identified job creation as a key priority to bring stability to the country and prevent migration flows. Recently, the Afghan government pledged to create one million jobs over the next three years.²⁸ This promise is unlikely to be fulfilled however due to limited resources and the deteriorating security situation. Significant areas of the country are continuing to fall to the Taliban, while Islamic State has emerged as another major destabilizing force.

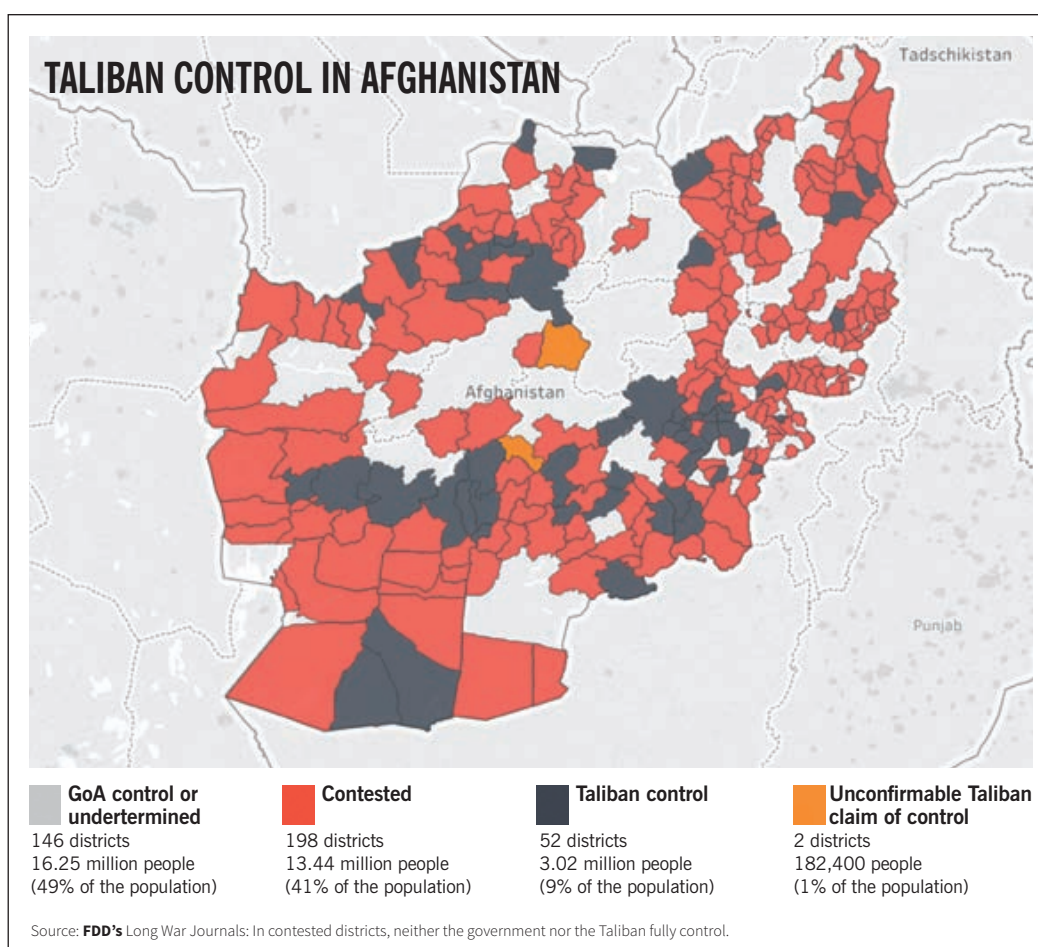
24 Kar, Anuja, and Ahmed, Mansur (2017). For rural Afghan women, agriculture holds the potential for better jobs. The World Bank <http://blogs.worldbank.org/endpovertyinsouthasia/jobs/rural-afghan-women-agriculture-holds-potential-better-jobs> (accessed 1 August 2018)

25 Farmer, Ben and Makoi, Akhtar (22 July 2018). Afghanistan faces worst drought in decades, as UN warns 1.4 million people need help. The Telegraph <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/07/22/afghanistan-faces-worst-drought-decades-un-warns-14m-need-help/> (accessed 10 August 2018)

26 Wardak, Spozhmai. Interview by ADPRO, Deputy Minister of MoWA. Kabul, 17.01.2018

27 Nabi, Sami. Interview by ADPRO, Head of Operations Unit, Central Statistics Organization (CSO). Kabul, 10.01.2018

28 Zaki, Faizullah. Interview by ADPRO, MoLSAMD Minister. Kabul, 26.12.2017



In the second half of 2016, Pakistan forcibly repatriated more than half a million refugees to Afghanistan, the highest number of returnees in the post-Taliban era.²⁹ Human Rights Watch described this expulsion as “the world’s largest unlawful mass forced return of refugees in recent times.” The Afghan government and its international allies accuse Pakistan of harboring international ‘terrorists’ and Taliban insurgents who launch attacks on government and foreign targets inside Afghanistan.

The integration of hundreds of thousands of Afghan returnees into the labor market requires comprehensive policies both nationally and internationally. Most returnees have settled in and around major cities – particularly in Nangarhar in eastern Afghanistan – in order to access services and the labor market. Increasing insecurity in rural areas is also pushing returnees to move to cities. Those once engaged in agriculture or livestock production prior to their displacement typically have limited skills to adapt to urban economic settings. Most shift to construction or other menial work. The vaca-

29 Human Rights Watch (2017). Pakistan coercion, UN complicity. HRW 2017 https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/pakistan0217_web.pdf (accessed 15 March 2018)

tion of rural districts and villages has provided militants with an opportunity to roam freely and capture territory.

Various studies have highlighted a distinct gap in poverty levels, income and literacy rates between returnees and IDPs compared to the surrounding host population.³⁰ A recent project designed by the Afghan government in cooperation with its international partners – Support Afghanistan Livelihood and Mobility (SALAM) – aims to provide vocational training for returnees and assist them with finding work.³¹ The Labor Ministry confirms this project is still in the preparatory phase, but so far SALAM appears inadequate to cope with the scale of migration, unemployment and poverty in the country.

2.1. THE HISTORY OF AFGHAN MIGRATION AND DISPLACEMENT

Afghanistan is the second largest producer of refugees after Syria, with 2.6 million people living outside the country's national borders.³² These statistics include only documented refugees registered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Undocumented refugee numbers are far higher. Afghanistan's Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) confirms more than five million Afghans (both registered and unregistered) live in neighboring countries and beyond. In Pakistan alone there are 1.6 million registered Afghan refugees and up to two million unregistered.³³ Nearly one million Afghans are registered in Iran, while almost two million more are without legal documentation.³⁴ In Pakistan, 'unregistered' refers to Afghans who do not hold Proof of Residence (PoR) cards. In Iran, the term refers to those without Amayesh cards or valid visas.³⁵

Afghan refugees in Pakistan: Throughout the various phases of the Afghan conflict, Pakistan has hosted the greatest number of refugees. Almost three million Afghans fled to Pakistan after the Soviet Union invaded in late 1979 to support the then pro-Soviet Communist government. The second wave of refugees left when Afghanistan descended into civil war during the early 1990s. A third wave fled to Pakistan as the Taliban took control of vast tracts of the country between 1996 until 2001.³⁶ After the overthrow of the Taliban by U.S.-led international forces in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, hope began to grow that a return to peace in Afghanistan was finally possible.

30 Samuel Hall Consulting (2013). Designing livelihood programs for displaced population in urban settings in Afghanistan: Labor market assessment in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Commissioned by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Afghanistan. <https://drc.ngo/media/1181591/drc-labour-market-survey.pdf> (accessed 15 July 2018)

31 Mirzakhwal, Mirwais. Interview by ADPRO, advisor to MoLSAMD. Kabul, 18.11.2017

32 The UN Refugee Agency (2018). Figures at a glance. UNHCR. <http://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html> (accessed 1 July 2018)
Fifty seven percent of refugees worldwide came from Syria (6,3 million), Afghanistan (2,6 m) and South Sudan (2,4 m) as of June 2018. Source: UNHCR

33 Alimia, Sanaa (2014). Violence and vulnerabilities: Afghans in Pakistan. <https://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/afghanistan/alimia.pdf> (accessed 18 June 2018)

34 IOM and UNHCR (February 2018). Return to Afghanistan in 2017: Joint IOM-UNHCR summary report. https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/press_release/file/joint_returnee_report_iom_unhcr_final.pdf (accessed 25 July 2018)

35 Ibid

36 Alimia, Sanaa (2014). Violence and vulnerabilities: Afghans in Pakistan. <https://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/afghanistan/alimia.pdf> (accessed 18 June 2018)

Unfortunately this optimism was short-lived. Over the following decade, the Taliban began to reassert power, spreading violence across the country and triggering a new wave of migration. Pakistan did not consider Afghans fleeing after 2001 to be war refugees and declared them illegal.³⁷

The majority of Afghan refugees in Pakistan live in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan provinces along the border with Afghanistan. A significant number have also been accommodated in major cities such as Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore. Almost three-quarters (74%) of Afghan refugees currently living in Pakistan were born in Pakistan, with only 26% born in Afghanistan.³⁸ More than seven million Afghans have returned home from neighboring countries and beyond since the Taliban were ousted in 2001.³⁹

Forced return: The relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan has worsened in recent years, a situation which has affected the status of refugees. Once warmly welcomed and encouraged by both Pakistan and the West in their war against the Soviet Union during the 1980s, Afghans are now considered undesirable 'aliens'. Discrimination, police extortion, humiliation and harassment at the hands of Pakistani authorities is a daily occurrence for Afghans in Pakistan. Each time a criminal or security incident occurs, Afghans are used as political scapegoats by the Pakistani government and threats of mass deportation escalate. The first mass arrest and deportation took place in 2009.⁴⁰

In 2017, 60,000 registered and 100,000 unregistered refugees relocated from Pakistan to Afghanistan.⁴¹ Since 2002, Kabul, Nangarhar and Kunduz provinces have become the top destinations for returning registered refugees, while 52% of unregistered refugees returned to Nangarhar and Kabul.⁴² Jalalabad, the provincial capital of Nangarhar province, received an estimated 200,000 returnees during 2016-17.⁴³ There are however limited resources within Afghanistan to absorb the massive influx of returnees and provide them with support in finding employment and assistance with their resettlement.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs): One in every four Afghans has been displaced from their homes at least once in their lifetime.⁴⁴ With each passing year, ongoing vio-

37 Alimia, Sanaa (29. July 2012). Afghans in Pakistan face a perilous future. Al Jazeera English. <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/07/20127291012146593.html> (accessed 12 July 2018)

38 Alimia, Sanaa (March 2018). Afghanistan in Pakistan: Vienna Institute for International Dialog and Cooperation (VIDC). http://www.vidc.org/fileadmin/Bibliothek/DP/Foto_Veranst/Fanizadeh/Afghanistan_6.3.18/VIDC_Documentation_Afghanistan_in_Pakistan_6_March_2018.pdf (accessed 1 August 2018)

39 Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations. Statistics. Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. <http://morr.gov.af/en/page/2204> (accessed 10 July 2018)

40 Alimia, Sanaa (29. July 2012). Afghans in Pakistan face a perilous future. Al Jazeera English. <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/07/20127291012146593.html> (accessed 12 July 2018)

41 IOM and UNHCR (February 2018). Return to Afghanistan in 2017: Joint IOM-UNHCR summary report. https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/press_release/file/joint_returnee_report_iom_unhcr_final.pdf (accessed 25 July 2018)

42 Ibid

43 Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (March 2017). Policy Framework for returnees and IDPs. Afghanistan. <http://www.unhcr.org/5a577a037.pdf> (accessed 25 July 2018)

44 IOM and UNHCR (February 2018). Return to Afghanistan in 2017: Joint IOM-UNHCR summary report. https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/press_release/

lence and the collapsing economy have added significantly to the number of IDPs within the country. In 2010, there were 351,900 conflict-induced IDPs in Afghanistan.⁴⁵ By the end of 2017, that figure had jumped to 1.8 million.⁴⁶

In November 2013, the Afghan Government endorsed a National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons to improve the situation for displaced communities. In practice however, after nearly five years, the lives of IDPs have worsened, an outcome attributed to the economic, political and security transitions which occurred during 2014 with the withdrawal of the international security forces. The lack of political will in the Afghan government, particularly within the responsible ministry – the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation – has also contributed to the failure of the policy.⁴⁷

2.2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research was mainly conducted using qualitative data collection methods. The study reviewed existing papers dealing with labor market demand and women's integration into the labor market in Afghanistan, along with statistical data collected by national and international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), public data records, and government and private agency sources. Screening grey literature also provided information not produced by organizations and research institutes.⁴⁸

The second stage of the research was carried out by a team from the Afghanistan Development and Peace Research Organization (ADPRO), which conducted fifty in-depth interviews with key informants (Key Informants Interviews – KII). The team developed a semi-structured set of questions for each of three categories of respondents:

1. Various ministries in Afghanistan dealing with the government's labor market agenda, vocational training programs and the integration of Afghan returnees and representatives of labor unions,
2. National and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), employers, including enterprises run by women, trainers and experts.
3. Returnees from Pakistan

The interview with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) was conducted in English while the remaining forty-nine interviews were conducted in Pashtu and Dari.⁴⁹

file/joint_returnee_report_iom_unhcr_final.pdf (accessed 25 July 2018)

45 Amnesty International (2016). My children will die this winter: Afghanistan's broken promise to the displaced. <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/ASA1140172016ENGLISH.PDF> (accessed 2 August 2018)

46 The UN Refugee Agency (2018). Global Trends: Forced displacement in 2017. UNHCR. P32 <http://www.unhcr.org/5b27be547.pdf> p32, (accessed 15 September 2018)

47 Amnesty International (2016). My children will die this winter: Afghanistan's broken promise to the displaced. <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/ASA1140172016ENGLISH.PDF> (accessed 2 August 2018)

48 Grey literature means searching beyond academic literature which includes government reports, policy statements, press releases, etc..

49 Both Pashtu and Dari are the official languages of Afghanistan.



Photo: Nangarhar-eastern Afghanistan. © Noorullah Shirzad/ADPRO

Objectives of research: This report is an attempt to examine the specific characteristics of the Afghan labor market. The local economy relies largely on the informal sector (including illicit drugs), so it is important to profile this sector in particular. The report also investigates the imbalance between labor supply and demand, with a focus on how this affects Afghan returnees and IDPs. The research takes into consideration that the majority of Afghans survive on subsistence agriculture, informal trade, and increasingly, on construction activities. In cities, most Afghans are either self-employed or casual wage laborers, both of which deliver low and unreliable incomes. The embeddedness of this informal sector and lack of basic services has undermined Afghanistan's ability to cope with the greater international push for the organized return and reintegration of Afghans.

The current study set out to explore the following questions: What skills and training does the labor market demand? What skills do the returnees have? What barriers are faced by returnees and women in accessing employment? Which employment sectors have opportunities for job seekers?

Structure of the report: The report begins with a summary of the whole study and set of recommendations. The remainder is as follows: 1) introduction, research methodol-

ogy and limitations 2) Afghanistan labor market characteristics and female labor force participation 3) Major findings and analysis of in-depth interviews 4) Conclusion.

2.2.1. Research team

Ali Ahmad, the report's author, acted as project manager and was responsible for coordinating and analyzing the interview transcripts. Since 2014, Mr Ahmad has been a consultant for the VIDC, advising on political and social topics related to Afghanistan. He has also published internationally. Ahmad trained as a physician, later graduating from a master's program in Peace and Conflict Studies at the European Peace University. Currently Mr Ahmad is pursuing his PhD at the University of Vienna.

Michael Fanizadeh holds a Master in Political Science from the University of Vienna. From 1997 to 2008, Fanizadeh worked as coordinator of the anti-racism sport project "Fairplay – Many Colors. One Game", as well as the European Network "Football Against Racism in Europe – FARE". Since 2008 he has been the project manager at VIDC dealing with migration and development, anti-discrimination and the Middle East. From 2011 to 2014 he was coordinator of the European project CoMiDe – Initiative for Migration and Development. Since 2012, Fanizadeh is head of the working group Migration and Development at the AG Globale Verantwortung.

Afghanistan Development & Peace Research Organization (ADPRO) is an independent non-governmental, non-political organization. ADPRO's primary focus is on empowering communities and local capacity building for peace in Afghanistan. With an outstanding team of experts, ADPRO is committed to offering and facilitating first-hand research surveys on peace building, conflict resolution, migration and people and cultures. Since 2011, ADPRO has conducted numerous projects, including one on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in six provinces of Afghanistan, which resulted in the government changing policy toward DRR; and another on the history of photography in Afghanistan.

Mohammad Emal Naweed Haidary is an Afghan journalist, writer, editor, documentary filmmaker, media advocate and lawyer. Mr. Haidary was born in Kabul, graduated from the Law Faculty of Kabul University and obtained his Master in Intellectual Property and Information Technology laws from Fordham University in New York. For over a decade, Mr. Haidary has worked for various national and international media organizations, including the Los Angeles Times in the U.S. and Deutsche Welle in Germany. Currently Mr. Haidary is a senior correspondent for Agence France Presse (AFP) and head researcher and director of ADPRO. He has conducted research into topics including Disaster Risk Reduction and the history of photography in Afghanistan and speaks Dari, Pashto, English, Urdu, Hindi and basic German.

Saeed Ahmad is currently studying Business Administration at Quest Group of Institutions in Chandigarh, India. Mr. Ahmad transcribed all 50 interviews and provided analysis based on the interviewees' recordings. He also attended several labor-related conferences, including the 'Decent Work' conference held in Kabul in January 2018, and provided a full transcript of an interview with Faizullah Zaki, Minister of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD). Mr. Ahmad's contribution to writing and the analysis phase was crucial.

Ghezal Nazari is a member of the Women for Afghan Women Organization in Kabul. Ms. Nazari has been advocating for women's rights and providing consultation on women's issues since 2015. She has a wide range of connections with Afghan women and organizations supporting women.

Geographical areas of research: The research was conducted in three provinces: Nangarhar, Kabul, Barikab (a formal settlement in Kabul province, on the border with Parwan) and Herat provinces. The vast majority of returnees from Pakistan from 2016 onwards settled in and around Jalalabad, the provincial capital of Nangarhar, and Kabul.

Data analysis: All interviews were analyzed using a multi-step process, as per Ellen Taylor-Powell and Marcus Renner's guide.⁵⁰ The ADPRO team began by transcribing and translating the interviews from Dari and Pashtu into English. Next, a preliminary analysis was carried out by reading the interview transcripts to obtain a general sense of the data. The information was then categorized into themes, with similarities and differences identified between these categories (content analysis technique⁵¹). This information reflected the specific thoughts, attitudes and experiences of the research participants. The last step involved the interpretation of data obtained in order to develop a set of findings.

2.2.2. Limitations and constraints

Security: Throughout the research period, security issues posed a major obstacle to the field team, particularly in Kabul and Nangarhar provinces where the bulk of the interviews were conducted. Between 20-29 January 2018 alone there were five major attacks in Kabul and Jalalabad which brought work on the project to a standstill.⁵² On January 20, Taliban insurgents occupied the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul, killing forty-two people. Four days later, Islamic State (Daesh) militants stormed the Jalala-

50 Taylor-Powell, Ellen and Renner, Marcus (2003). Analyzing qualitative data. University of Wincosin-Extension, Madison, Wincosin. <https://deltastate.edu/docs/irp/Analyzing%20Qualitative%20Data.pdf> (accessed 10 March 2018)

51 Glaser, Barney G. and Strauss, Anselm L. (1967). The discovery of grounded theory: strategies for qualitative research. Aldine, Chicago.

52 Rutting, Thomas (5 Feb 2018). Five questions to make sense of the new peak in urban attacks and a violent week in Kabul. Afghanistan Analysts Network. Kabul. <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/five-questions-to-make-sense-of-the-new-peak-in-urban-attacks-and-a-violent-week-in-kabul/> (accessed 2 March 2018)

bad office of Save the Children. Six people were killed and twenty-seven injured.⁵³ A car bomb in the securest zone of Kabul on January 27 killed and injured hundreds of civilians.⁵⁴ These incidents made it extremely difficult to access many interview partners whose appointments were cancelled when government and NGO offices were forced to close. Kabul and Jalalabad were locked down for over two weeks, making movement impossible.

During the final stages of field research, Emal Haidary (ADPRO director and head researcher) lost several long-time media colleagues and friends in an attack in a secure zone of Kabul. Reporters, photographers and cameramen had rushed to the scene of a blast on April 30 when a Daesh suicide bomber disguised as a journalist detonated explosives amongst them. Nine journalists were killed and dozens more civilians injured.⁵⁵

The United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA) documented 2,258 civilian casualties during the first three months of 2018.⁵⁶ The International NGO Safety Organization (INSO) documented nearly 5,000 security incidents⁵⁷ – both conflict and criminal related – affecting the safety of NGOs between January to April 2018.⁵⁸ All these incidents highlight the level of insecurity and danger in Afghanistan.

Lack of information: Another key challenge which became obvious during the research period was the lack of expertise relating to the topic. Apart from the Afghanistan Living Condition Survey (ALCS 2017), there is no nationwide data on the labor market, participation of women in the labor force, or on skill supply and demand. The Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD) and the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) are primarily responsible for dealing with issues relating to the integration of returnees and IDPs into the labor market. Neither ministry however was able to provide significant information. It became evident during our multiple attempts to seek their views on the re-integration of returnees/IDPs that the MoLSAMD lacks the vision and capability to deal with the issue of unemployment. Questions were passed on to other departments but no answers were forthcoming.

Cultural and other factors: High levels of insecurity, low literacy rates, local traditions and culturally justified violence against women deter women from speaking about their situations. In Pashtun-dominated Jalalabad for example, a local female researcher

53 Safi, Michael (24 Jan 2018). ISIS claims attack on Save the Children office in Afghanistan. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/24/explosion-attack-save-the-children-office-jalalabad-afghanistan> (accessed 25 Jan 2018)

54 BBC News (28 January 2018). Kabul attack: Taliban kill 95 with ambulance bomb in Afghan capital. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-42843897> (accessed 15 April 2018)

55 Dehghan, Saeed Kamali (30 April 2018). Afghanistan: The 10 journalists who died in deadly day for media. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2018/apr/30/afghanistan-the-10-journalists-who-died-in-deadly-day-for-media> (accessed 1 May 2018)

56 UNAMA Human rights Service (12 April 2018). Quarterly report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict: 1 Jan to 31 March 2018. UNAMA, Kabul. https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unama_protection_of_civilians_first_quarter_2018_report_11_april_0.pdf (accessed 25 May 2018)

57 It includes conflict and criminal related incidents; serious (i.e. bombings) and non-serious events (i.e. demonstrations); and both security improving (i.e. arrests/seizures) and security-deteriorating incidents (i.e. attacks).

58 International NGO Safety Organization (INSO) (2018). Afghanistan context analysis. Afghanistan. <https://www.ngosafety.org/country/afghanistan> (accessed 5 July 2018)



Photo: Nangarhar-eastern Afghanistan. © Noorullah Shirzad/ADPRO

deleted her own voice from recordings made while questioning female interview partners. This was due to a Pashtun custom that dictates that a woman's voice can only be heard by her close relatives. Such cultural practices and attitudes are not limited to local communities. The Deputy Minister for Women's Affairs, Ms. Spozhmai Wardak, believes women's participation in government is predominantly to attract international support rather than a genuine attempt to involve women in running the country. "The women's issue is a second priority topic in our government. Our leadership does not believe in equal participation of the sexes," said Wardak.

3. CHARACTERISTICS OF AFGHANISTAN'S LABOR MARKET

3.1. BACKGROUND

Afghanistan has received billions of dollars in international aid since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, yet remains one of the world's poorest, most insecure, corrupt and politically unstable countries. This unprecedented amount of funding brought significant progress in terms of reconstruction, restoration of education for girls, freedom of the media and the appearance of women in the public domain. Much of this growth however was due to the presence of international forces securing the country against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. Until the withdrawal of U.S.-led NATO troops at the end of 2014, Afghanistan's economy relied largely on this foreign military aid.⁵⁹ The international community paid little attention to exploring strategies to support income-generation projects that could be used as a future lifeline for ordinary Afghan families.

Military spending and international aid jumped from \$404 million in 2002/2003 to a massive \$15.7 billion in 2010/2011,⁶⁰ a figure roughly equivalent to Afghanistan's gross domestic product (GDP).⁶¹ The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)⁶² contributed to Afghanistan's economy through twenty-eight Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) situated throughout the country to provide security and aid for reconstruction by both internal and external players.⁶³ When international combat forces withdrew at the end of 2014 and financial aid ceased, the PRTs were disbanded and their functions transferred to the Afghan government. NATO's new mission in Afghanistan, known as the Resolute Support Mission (RSM) was to train, advise and assist Afghan security forces.⁶⁴

The 2014 withdrawal took the country into an unanticipated economic depression. Several hundred thousand Afghans working in security, construction and transportation companies lost their jobs when military aid stopped and companies were forced to close. In the transportation sector alone, at least 100,000 jobs – contributing 22% of the country's GDP – were lost.⁶⁵ Distracted by the deteriorating security situation, the government has been unable to deliver services to improve the lives of ordinary Afghans.

59 NATO (16 July 2018). NATO and Afghanistan. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_8189.htm (accessed 28 July 2018)

60 Ghiasy, Richard, Zhou, Jiayi and Hallgren, Henrik (October 2015). Afghanistan's private sector: Status and ways forward. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2016-04/SIPRI_Afghanistans-Private-Sector_Report-2015.pdf (accessed 16 July 2018)

61 Ibid, p4

62 NATO's mission termed as International Security Assistance Force or ISAF

63 NATO (16 July 2018). NATO and Afghanistan. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_8189.htm (accessed 28 July 2018)

64 Ibid

65 Koelbl, Susanne (2 December 2015). Interview with Afghan President Ghani: 'I have to hold our country together', Spiegel online. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/spiegel-interview-with-afghan-president-ashraf-ghani-a-1064978.html> (accessed 20 June 2018)

Population data: Afghanistan's Central Statistics Organization (CSO) – the only reliable and nationally representative source of information – estimates the country's population at 29.1 million, including 1.5 million Kuchi (nomads). Of this figure, 14.8 million are men and 14.3 are women. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) estimates the population at 32.5 million,⁶⁶ while the World Bank Data's estimate is more than 34 million.⁶⁷ Over two-thirds of the population, some 20.7 million people (71.2%), live in rural areas, 6.9 million (23.8%) live in urban areas and 1.5 million are nomads (5%).⁶⁸

3.2. LABOR MARKET PARTICIPATION IN AFGHANISTAN

A number of factors determine the rate of participation in Afghanistan's labor force: the young and rapidly growing population, the low number of females, the strong urban-rural divide, low levels of literacy and education, and a high ratio of dependents to employed.⁶⁹ Afghanistan is one of the youngest countries in the world, with nearly half its population under the age of fifteen and only 54% of working age (between 15-64).⁷⁰

According to Afghan Living Condition Survey data, some 6.5 million Afghans are employed or looking for work, of which five million (77.7%) live in rural areas. Urban areas show a lower employment rate due to the decreased participation of women, youth and elderly people.⁷¹ More than 80% of working aged males have some form of employment, while less than 20% of women are engaged in income-generating activities.⁷² Over 20% of working age Afghans are underemployed – a total of 1.3 million people. The CSO classifies 80% of all work as vulnerable, with poor working conditions and irregular income. Only 13% of the working population have reliable salaried employment.

3.2.1. Unemployment

After security, the Asia Foundation's 2017 survey found unemployment is the most urgent problem facing the Afghan population.⁷³ Almost one quarter of the total available labor force is unemployed. Unemployment amongst youth (ages 15-24) is 31%. For females it is much higher, at 47.4%. Youth unemployment and underemployment pose

66 United Nations Development Program (UNDP): Human Development Indicators. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/AFG> (accessed 10 July 2018)

67 The World Bank Data. Afghanistan. <https://data.worldbank.org/country/afghanistan> (accessed 10 July 2018)

68 Central Statistics Organizations (2018). Estimated population of Afghanistan in 2018-19. Central Statistic Organization, Kabul. P23.<http://cso.gov.af/en/page/demography-and-socile-statistics/demograph-statistics/3897111> (accessed 10 Aug 2018)

69 The age dependency ratio is the ratio of people in dependent ages (younger than 15 or older than 64) to the population of principal working age (working age 15-64). Source ALCS 2016-2017

70 Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey – 2016-2017

71 Acaps (2014). Afghanistan's job challenge. https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/key-documents/files/afgh_jobs_challenge_final.pdf (accessed 15 March 2018)

72 Female labor participation force is discussed in details under the same title.

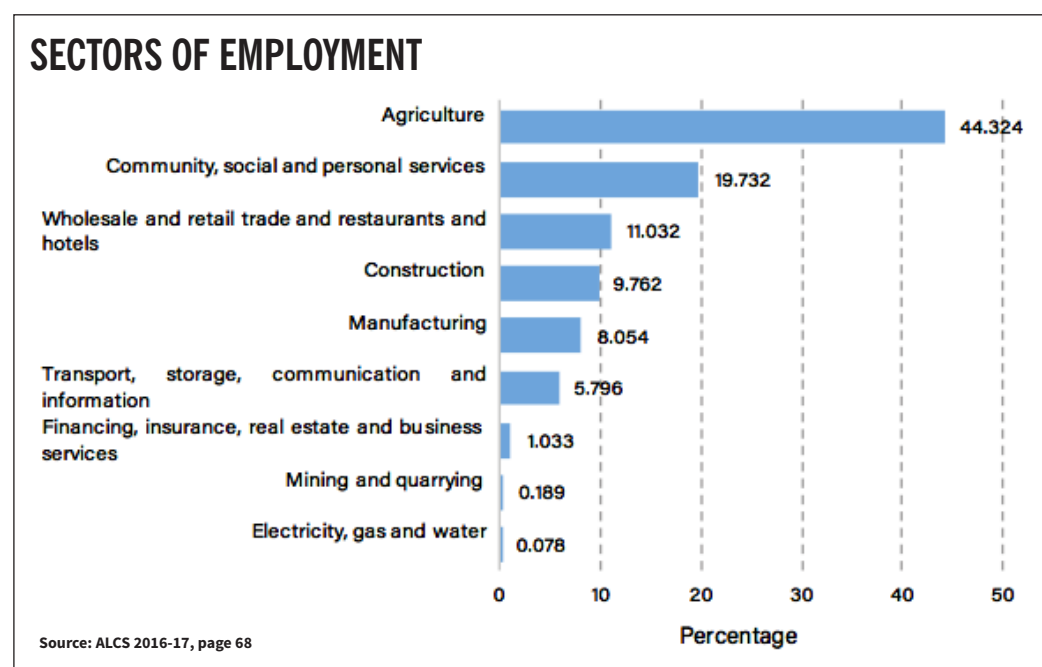
73 The Asia Foundation (2017). A Survey of the Afghan People. Afghanistan in 2017. The Asia Foundation, Kabul. https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/2017_AfghanSurvey_report.pdf (accessed 10 June 2018)

an increasing threat to the social, political and economic stability of the country and are a major concern to both the Afghan government and the international community.⁷⁴

The ALCS identifies 'youth not in employment, education or training (NEET)' as being vulnerable to social exclusion and exploitation by insurgent groups. The total NEET population is 2.3 million people, from which 1.9 million (80.1%) are women. It is anticipated that between 400,000 to 500,000 predominantly uneducated and illiterate young people will enter the labor market each year over the next decade, adding further pressure to an already critically stretched labor market.⁷⁵ Increasing numbers of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and returnees from Pakistan in recent years are compounding the crisis.

3.2.2. Informal sector employment

The informal sector plays a vital role in the economy of developing countries by providing an important survival strategy in times of economic upheaval. This is particularly the case in Afghanistan where public sector wages and pensions are very low and no distinct line exists between the formal and informal labor markets.⁷⁶ According to a study by the International Labor Organization (ILO) in 2012, the informal labor sector made up 80 to 90 percent of total economic activity in Afghanistan.⁷⁷



74 Azeng, Therese F. and Yogo, Thierry U. (2013). Youth unemployment and political instability in selected developing countries. Working paper series N 171 African Development Bank, Tunisia. https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/Working_Paper_171_-_Youth_Unemployment_and_Political_Instability_in_Selected_Developing_Countries.pdf (accessed 10 June 2018)

75 Acaps (2014). Afghanistan's job challenge. (accessed 15 March 2018) https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/key-documents/files/afgh_jobs_challenge_final.pdf (accessed 15 March 2018)

76 International Labor Organization (ILO). Informal economy: http://www.ilo.org/ilostat-files/Documents/description_IFL_EN.pdf (accessed 20 March 2018)

77 The State of Employment in Afghanistan – ILO – 2012

Despite occupying up to 90 percent of the workforce, the sector is often ignored.⁷⁸ The Afghanistan Living Condition Survey 2016-2017 defined the informal sector as follows:

*“The most important characteristic of business, including in the informal sector, is that the government is not involved in that business, or in other words, one or more persons start a business without government being involved.”*⁷⁹

Afghanistan's employment growth has largely been in the informal sector. Unregulated micro-, small- and medium-enterprises (MSMEs), as well as criminal activities including opium production and smuggling, continue to form the bulk of the economy.⁸⁰ Four decades of war, rampant corruption, increasing drug cultivation and trade by criminal networks and an ethnicized and unstable political situation have all contributed to fluctuating economic growth. Between 2003-2013, Afghanistan's economic growth was 9%. This figure declined to 2.7% in 2014 and lower again to 1.5% in 2015. By 2016, there was a slight recovery (2.3%) and by 2017, Afghanistan's economic growth reached 2.7%.⁸¹

Low-skilled jobs including daily laborers, tradespeople, agricultural, craft and unpaid family workers dominate the informal sector. These workers are especially vulnerable as the informal nature of their arrangements means they have no legal protection. Their jobs are not secure, they earn inadequate and unstable salaries and frequently suffer economic hardship.

Women are predominantly engaged in the informal sector.⁸² More than three-quarters (78%) of the female labor force is engaged in unpaid family work in households and the informal agriculture sector.⁸³

3.2.3. Sectors of employment

Agriculture occupies 44% of Afghanistan's working labor force (2.8 million). Nearly 20% (1.3 million) are engaged in the service sector, with sub-sectors including security services (army and police) (4%), education (4%) and other social services (5.7%). The remaining economic sectors are almost invisible in the employment statistics.⁸⁴

78 Schlyter, Charlotta, (2002/3). International labor standards and the informal sector: Development and dilemmas. Employment sector: ILO. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_122056.pdf (accessed 15 July 2018)

79 Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey 2016/17

80 Ghiasy, Richard, Zhou, Jiayi and Hallgren, Henrik (Oct 2015). Afghanistan's private sector: Status and ways forward. p5, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2016-04/SIPRI_Afghanistans-Private-Sector_Report-2015.pdf (accessed 16 July 2018)

81 Afghanistan Development update (August 2018). The World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/30293/129163-RE-VISED-AFG-Development-Update-Aug-2018-FINAL.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> (accessed 12 October 2018)

82 International Labor Organization (2012). Afghanistan: Time to move to sustainable jobs: Study on the state of employment in Afghanistan. P33. Commissioned by the ILO. May 2012. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_182252.pdf (accessed 1 May 2018)

83 Acaps (2014). Afghanistan's job challenge. https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/key-documents/files/afgh_jobs_challenge_final.pdf (accessed 15 March 2018)

84 Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey 2016-17. p76

3.3. AGRICULTURE

Agricultural work provides almost 70% of employment in rural Afghanistan⁸⁵ and contributes 23% to the country's total GDP.⁸⁶ It is carried out primarily for basic subsistence in small family businesses and seldom provides sufficient resources to sustain families throughout the year.⁸⁷ Agriculture has the highest prevalence of low skilled jobs, with 87% of workers having no formal education and being unable to read or write.⁸⁸

During 2018, the agricultural sector has been severely impacted by drought, particularly in the north and west of the country, which saw the lowest level of snow and rainfall in decades last winter.⁸⁹ Almost fifteen million Afghans in the twenty provinces affected rely on farming, livestock or agriculture-related work.⁹⁰ More than two million people are expected to become food insecure in the coming months and are in desperate need of life-saving humanitarian assistance.⁹¹ The drought has displaced thousands of people, adding to the number of IDPs already forced from their homes due to war.⁹² The conflict has exacerbated the effects of the drought by limiting communities' access to markets and aid.⁹³

3.4. EDUCATION

Afghanistan's education system comprises the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education and various religious institutions.⁹⁴ Children attend primary school for six years (from age 7-12), middle school for three years (from age 13-15) and secondary school for three years (from age 16-18).⁹⁵ Pupils aged 13-14 have the option to continue with vocational training in lower and upper middle schools (six years) or in technicals (three years). The Ministry of Higher Education is responsible for tertiary education, which includes bachelor's degrees (four years) and master's degrees (two years).

85 Acaps (2014). Afghanistan's job challenge. https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/key-documents/files/afgh_jobs_challenge_final.pdf (accessed 15 March 2018)

86 Afghanistan Investment Support Agency (AISA). Investing in agriculture sector. <http://investinafghanistan.af/investing-in-agriculture-sector/> (accessed 15 March 2018)

SIGAR report says it contributes to 22 percent of total GDP. P159. <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2018-04-30qr-section3-economic.pdf#page=23> (accessed 15 May 2018)

87 Acaps (2014). Afghanistan's job challenge. P7. https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/key-documents/files/afgh_jobs_challenge_final.pdf (accessed 15 March 2018)

88 Ibid

89 Jain, Rupam (23 April 2018). Emergency alerts loom as drought takes hold in war-torn Afghanistan. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-weather/emergency-alerts-loom-as-drought-takes-hold-in-war-torn-afghanistan-idUSKBN1HU1M4> (accessed 20 May 2018)

90 OCHA (6 June 2018). Drought grips large parts of Afghanistan. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). <https://www.unocha.org/story/drought-grips-large-parts-afghanistan> (accessed 20 July 2018)

91 Ibid

92 Mashal, Mujib. (27 May 2018). Drought adds to woes of Afghanistan, in grips of raging war. New York Times (NYT). <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/27/world/asia/afghanistan-drought-war.html> (accessed 20 July 2018)

93 OCHA (April 2018). Drought grips large parts of Afghanistan. United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/20180525_ocha_afghanistan_monthly_humanitarian_bulletin_april_2018_en_final.pdf (accessed 20 July 2018)

Norwegian Refugee Council (4 June 2018). Afghans fleeing conflict face worsening hunger. Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) <https://www.nrc.no/news/2018/june/afghans-fleeing-conflict-face-worsening-hunger/> (accessed 20 July 2018)

94 Ibid

95 Ibid

Photo: Nangarhar-eastern Afghanistan. © Noorullah Shirzad/ADPRO



Religious education begins in the primary years and takes place parallel to school in mosques and private religious institutions.⁹⁶

More than three and half million Afghan children between the ages of seven and seventeen do not go to school.⁹⁷ Across Afghanistan as a whole, girls make up 60 percent of this figure, however in the Pashtun-dominated provinces of Kandahar, Helmand, Wardak, Paktika, Zabul and Uruzgan, girls account for 85 percent of children not receiving an education. The worsening security situation, lack of female teachers, extreme poverty and, most significantly, discrimination against females, prevent millions of children from attending school. Sociocultural factors such as early marriage, forced marriage, distance to schools, patriarchal attitudes and behavior towards women affect the school attendance rate of females.

⁹⁶ Ahmad, Dr. Ali (May 2017). The perception of gender relations and gender-based violence of Afghans living in Austria: Findings of small-scale micro-sociological research. Vienna Institute for International Dialogue and Cooperation (VIDC). http://www.vidc.org/fileadmin/Bibliothek/DP/Nadja/Gender_-_Afghanistan/VIDC_Afghanistan_Gender_Study_2nd_revised_edition.pdf (accessed 20 August 2018)

⁹⁷ UNICEF (2018). All children in school and learning: Global initiative on out of school children – Afghanistan country study. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/afg-report-oocs2018.pdf> (accessed 28 August 2018)

3.5. POVERTY

As one of the poorest countries in the world, more than half the Afghan population live on less than a dollar a day.⁹⁸ Close to 16 million Afghans, or 55% of the total population, live under the national poverty line according to the ALCS 2016-17 report, an increase from 38% since 2011-2012. More than half of all Afghans do not have sufficient money to cover their basic needs. Families are generally large, with an average household size of 7.7 persons. Due to rapid population growth and restricted resources, half of the population lives in households of nine or more people, with more than three people in one room.

There is a strong correlation between the level of education, literacy rate and poverty.⁹⁹ The more educated the head of the family, the less the family is affected by poverty. Having an educated household and paid work however is not necessarily a guarantee against poverty. More than half of the households whose heads are employed suffer from poverty due to the irregularity, type and conditions of their work.

Economic activity status of the head of household	Poverty rate	Share of poor population	Share of total population
Employed	51.1	57.6	61.4
Underemployed	63.0	17.6	15.2
Unemployed	58.8	13.9	12.9
Inactive	57.2	10.8	10.3

Source: ALCS 2016/17 page 113

The poverty rate has doubled in the four years since the reduction of international aid and withdrawal of NATO combat forces from Afghanistan at the end of 2014.

3.6. FEMALE LABOR FORCE PROFILE

Despite seventeen years of involvement by the international community, the Thomson Reuters Foundation poll (2018) ranked Afghanistan as the world's second most dangerous country for women in the category of non-sexual violence, including conflict-related violence and domestic abuse. Afghanistan also rated second worst in terms of lack of access to health care, economic resources, jobs and land.¹⁰⁰ Male domination

98 Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey 2016-17, p107

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Learning to live together. Poverty. <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/poverty/> (accessed 1 May 2018)

99 Poverty is defined as being unable to satisfy basic food and non-food needs (World Bank).

100 Thomson Reuters Foundation (2018). Afghanistan: The world's most dangerous countries for women 2018. <http://poll2018.trust.org/country/?id=afghanistan> (accessed 1 September 2018)

is visible in every aspect of Afghanistan's patriarchal, conservative society. Some token pro-women's rights policies aside, the government of Afghanistan is no exception.

“Women are still a second priority issue. The government of Afghanistan does not believe in equal participation of women. We have to change this mentality.”

Spozhmai Wardak, MoWA

The gender gap in Afghanistan's economy is extreme. From a total of 6.5 million Afghans participating in the labor force, just over one million are women. The average age of women in the labor force is 32.3 years, with an average family size of eight.¹⁰¹ More than two thirds of women in the labor force are married and have more than one child under the age of five years and 6.2% of the female labor force are in polygamous marriages.¹⁰² Engagement in economic activity by women varies with age and education. The ILO study indicates that 78% of women with tertiary education have employment.¹⁰³ More than 45% of women in the labor force have never attended school, 16% have secondary education and over 18% have tertiary education. The most common reported occupation of educated women is that of schoolteacher, followed by skilled workers and domestic or unskilled workers. Other occupations include farming, informal sales, government and private office workers and self-employed.¹⁰⁴

Self-employment is a vital means of earning a livelihood for women in Afghanistan, particularly in areas where cultural norms prevent women from working outside the home or where women cannot work due to conflict and/or household responsibilities.¹⁰⁵

Apart from household duties, women work predominantly in the agricultural, manufacturing and service sectors.¹⁰⁶ Of the total number of workers employed in the manufacturing sector, 64.4% are women. In the clothing and textile industry, women comprise 78.7% of all workers. Women in provincial and rural areas are mainly engaged in home-based income-generating activities such as carpet weaving, sewing, tailoring, agricultural work, taking care of livestock and selling dairy products.¹⁰⁷

101 Desai, Ishani and Li Li (March 2016). Analyzing Female Labor Force Participation in Afghanistan. Identifying the key barriers that prevent women from entering the labor force. John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard Kennedy School. https://wapp.hks.harvard.edu/files/wapp/files/desai_li_sypa_final_0314.pdf (accessed 20 July 2018)

According to ALCS – the average household size is 7.7 persons.

102 Ibid

103 Central Statistic Organization. Labor force characteristics. P30. Kabul, <http://cso.gov.af/Content/files/Chapter4%20LABOUR%20FORCE%20CHARACTERISTICS.pdf> (accessed 20 June 2018)

Desai, Ishani and Li Li (March 2016). Analyzing Female Labor Force Participation in Afghanistan. Identifying the key barriers that prevent women from entering the labor force. John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard Kennedy School. https://wapp.hks.harvard.edu/files/wapp/files/desai_li_sypa_final_0314.pdf (accessed 20 July 2018)

104 Ibid

105 International Labor Organization (ILO). Informal economy: http://www.ilo.org/ilostat-files/Documents/description_IFL_EN.pdf (accessed 20 March 2018)

106 Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey 2016-17 mid-term report

107 International Labor Organization (2012). Afghanistan: Time to move to sustainable jobs: Study on the state of employment in Afghanistan. P33. Commissioned by the ILO. May 2012. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_182252.pdf (accessed 1 May 2018)

3.6.1. Education/Literacy

“A girl’s education is not only a moral imperative but an economic necessity”.

UNICEF Afghanistan

For many Afghan families, investing in girls’ education is not a high priority. It is expected that women will get married and move to their husbands’ home, therefore spending money on girls is considered a waste of resources. Instead, families focus on boys’ education and their futures.

“Families bolster the self-esteem of boys so they consider themselves stronger and better than girls. People believe that girls are not permanent members of the family, one day they will leave the house and belong to the husband’s family, while boys will stay with them until the end of life. It means the boys are their property...”

AREU research female participant 2016¹⁰⁸

For many Afghan women, education/literacy is even more important than domestic violence and security. The Asia Foundation’s Survey of the Afghan People 2017 cited lack of education/literacy as the biggest problem faced by women (36.4%). Unemployment was the second biggest problem (22.7%) followed by a lack of basic rights (18.8%) and domestic violence (14.9%).¹⁰⁹

The Afghan Living Condition Survey 2016-17 estimates only 34.8% of Afghanistan’s population of fifteen and over are literate, one of the lowest literacy rates in the world.¹¹⁰ This means approximately 9.9 million people (six million women and 3.9 million men) cannot read or write. Empowering these six million women through education and literacy would be the first step toward achieving equality between the sexes.¹¹¹

Nationwide, less than 20% of women aged over fifteen can read and write, compared to almost 50% of men. In urban areas, over 40% of women are literate compared to 66.8% of men. In rural areas more than 45% of men are literate, compared to 13.1% of women. Kuchis, as nomads, are the least educated. Only 5.8% of Kuchis are literate, with just over 10% of men and only 0.7% of women able to read and write.¹¹² The total literacy rate for youth (15-24 year olds) is 53.6%, with a high variation between rural and urban

108 Achavez, Chona R., Mosavi, SayedMahdi, and Pilongo, Leah Wildfreda RE (January 2016). The other side of gender inequality: Men and masculinities in Afghanistan. Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), Kabul. p32. <https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/1601E-The-Other-Side-of-Gender-Inequality-Men-and-Masculinities-in-Afghanistan1.pdf> accessed 1 June 2018)

109 The Asia Foundation (2017). A Survey of the Afghan People. Afghanistan in 2017. The Asia Foundation, Kabul. P30-31 https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/2017_AfghanSurvey_report.pdf (accessed 10 June 2018)

110 Literacy generally denotes the ability to read and write and to use written words in everyday life. (ALCS 2016-17, p172)

111 Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey 2016-17, p173.

Ahmad, Dr. Ali (May 2017). The perception of gender relations and gender-based violence of Afghans living in Austria: Findings of small-scale micro-sociological research. Vienna Institute for International Dialogue and Cooperation (VIDC). http://www.vidc.org/fileadmin/Bibliothek/DP/Nadja/Gender_-_Afghanistan/VIDC_Afghanistan_Gender_Study_2nd_revised_edition.pdf (accessed 20 August 2018)

112 Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey 2016-17, p173

areas and amongst Kuchis.¹¹³ These statistics clearly indicate the inadequacy of the Afghan education system. Despite seventeen years of international community engagement, the majority of the population remain illiterate, which naturally affects the participation of both men and women in the labor market.

3.6.2. Cultural barriers

“The main challenge is unfortunately how women are perceived in patriarchal society. There is systematic discrimination against women in the government of Afghanistan. There are patriarchal layers within the system and within the society which makes it difficult for women to get through.”

Sabrina Sageb, Women’s Rights Activist in Kabul

Various social, familial, religious and traditional aspects of Afghan culture, such as *pardah* (veiling),¹¹⁴ *nang* (honor),¹¹⁵ *namus* (modesty),¹¹⁶ and interaction with *namahram* (non-relatives)¹¹⁷ actively prevent women from participating in the labor force. In a 2016 survey on gender inequality by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) the majority of respondents agreed “men should be the breadwinners in the family”. The AREU results also showed that education did not necessarily change a person’s worldview and perception of the gender normative principle that “a man is someone a wife can rely on in all situations”.

These cultural barriers present major obstacles for women in Afghanistan’s conservative, patriarchal society. Men automatically take on decision-making roles in the family, including deciding whether women should work or not. Afghan households rely on female employment as a last resort.¹¹⁸

“Men feel ashamed if they see their women work outside the home. Men think this would be against their Ghairat if their wives work outside the home.”

Farzana, Barikab resident

¹¹³ Ibid, p175

¹¹⁴ *Pardah* is a social norm according to which women are allowed to talk with men only from behind a curtain. (Indian Journal of Gender Studies – Gender roles in agriculture: The case of Afghanistan. Feb 2013)

¹¹⁵ A sense of honor, bravery and shame. It is a man’s social capital that motivates him to protect his *namus*. (AREU 2016)

¹¹⁶ Female member of the family as mother, sisters, wives, daughters. *Namus* refers to integrity, modesty and respectability of women and makes men absolute guardians of women. (AREU 2016)

¹¹⁷ A *mahram* is a male relative (father, brother, son, uncle) with whom a woman can be in close proximity; in the presence of *namahram* (not related) males, there must be either gender segregation or the chaperoning of women in public. (AREU 2016)

¹¹⁸ Afghanistan’s Job Challenge report

Afghan men must be the *naafaqa* (provider)¹¹⁹ for their extended families, and are expected to meet the needs of all family members.¹²⁰ This puts extreme pressure on men to work and protect their families.¹²¹ Dr. Lina Abirafeh, a leading gender studies scholar and author of 'Gender and International Aid in Afghanistan: The Politics and Effects of Intervention' (published in 2009) argues that many Afghan men and women "view women's employment as a reflection and reminder of their absolute poverty and destitution, an insult to men's dignity, and a questioning of men's ability to provide."¹²² *Ba Ghairat* (honorable) and *Be Ghairat* (dishonorable) are two other social tags referring to men who can or cannot perform and fulfill their masculine responsibilities.¹²³

"The man is so Be Ghairat that he cannot feed his wife." Farzana – Barikab resident

Women are culturally obliged to obey their male relatives, with fathers and brothers deciding who girls should marry. Forced marriages¹²⁴ and early marriages are common, despite such customs being against Afghan law. Fifty seven percent of Afghan marriages involve girls under the age of sixteen with most being either forced or arranged.¹²⁵ Once married, women are further hindered from pursuing an education.

Continued cultural and social stigmatization against girls' education, along with the influence of violent extremism, keep Afghan women illiterate and uneducated. The international community's intervention may have empowered Afghan women politically and legally, but cultural practices have remained largely unchanged.

Afghanistan needs the full and active participation of its women in order to tackle poverty, injustice and domestic violence.¹²⁶ The economic empowerment of women is key to breaking Afghanistan's conservative, tribal and patriarchal family structures. Negotiating women's working rights from a position of economic strength will give women leverage to free themselves from dependence on men. To achieve this however, it is vital to fight the restrictive cultural and traditional barriers to education and inclusion in the labor force from which Afghan women have suffered for generations.

119 A man, as the husband and the head of a family, is obliged to provide his family's maintenance and upkeep. Based on Islam, Nafaqah is "a woman's right and a man's duty" and includes all needs of the wife and the children of a man, notably food, clothing, housing, medical care and education, which are provided through his earnings. (AREU 2016)

120 Ibid, p44

121 Ibid, p44

Ahmad, Dr. Ali (May 2017). The perception of gender relations and gender-based violence of Afghans living in Austria: Findings of small-scale microsociological research. Vienna Institute for International Dialogue and Cooperation (VIDC). http://www.vidc.org/fileadmin/Bibliothek/DP/Nadja/Gender_-_Afghanistan/VIDC_Afghanistan_Gender_Study_2nd_revised_edition.pdf (accessed 20 August 2018)

122 Odell, Heather C. 2016. "Economic Empowerment: An Avenue to Gender Equality in Afghanistan," Global Tides: Vol. 10. <https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1233&context=globaltides> (accessed 5 June 2018)

123 Achavez, Chona R., Mosavi, SayedMahdi, and Pilongo, Leah Wildfreda RE (January 2016). The other side of gender inequality: Men and masculinities in Afghanistan. Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), Kabul. <https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/1601E-The-Other-Side-of-Gender-Inequality-Men-and-Masculinities-in-Afghanistan1.pdf> (accessed 1 June 2018)

124 A forced marriage is a marriage conducted without the consent of one or both parties, where pressure is a factor. An arranged marriage is performed with the full and free consent of both parties. (BBC ethic guides <http://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/forcedmarriage/introduction.shtml> (accessed 11 September 2018))

125 Tava, Srinivas, Abdelali-Martini, Malika, Aw-Hassan, Rischkowsky, Barbara, Tibbo, Markos, and Rizv, Javed (2013). Gender roles in agriculture: The case of Afghanistan. Indian Journal of Gender Studies. SAGE. file:///Users/ali/Downloads/Tavvaetal2013.pdf (accessed 1 June 2018)

126 Ganesh, Lena (July 2017). Women in agriculture in Afghanistan. Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), Kabul. <https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/1707-Women-in-Agriculture-in-Afghanistan.pdf> (accessed 15 July 2018)

4. MAJOR FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS OF IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

“Afghanistan remains a milking cow for Afghan politicians and neighboring countries. Returnees have become good business for them. The only way to end the refugee and migration problem is to end the war in Afghanistan.”

Fatana Gilani, Director of Afghanistan Women's Association

The findings and analysis in this chapter reflect data collected from fifty in-depth interviews with Afghan government officials, representatives of national and international organizations and Afghan returnees from Pakistan. Interviewees also included potential employers, providers of vocational training for Afghan men and women, along with female economic and political experts.

Afghanistan today is characterized by high unemployment, poverty, government corruption, lack of infrastructure, insecurity, drought, increasing displacement and a low rate of female participation in the labor force.¹²⁷ The country remains mired in violent conflict, with a record 5,000 civilian casualties in the first half of 2018. According to the United Nations, the majority of Afghanistan's national resources are directed towards tackling the insurgency.

The following issues emerged from the research team's interviews.

4.1. THE NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT (NUG) OF AFGHANISTAN

The findings in this section are mainly based on fourteen interviews conducted with senior National Unity Government of Afghanistan (NUG) officials, from the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR), the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL), the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD) and the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA). Interviews with representatives from the Afghan Chamber of Commerce (both men and women), Afghanistan's Central Statistics Organization (CSO) along with various labor and craft workers unions are also included.

¹²⁷ Afghanistan is ranked 177 out of 180 countries by Transparency International 2018: https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2017 (accessed 20 September 2018)



Photo: Nangarhar-eastern Afghanistan. © Noorullah Shirzad/ADPRO

4.1.1. Economic bubble

Billions of dollars in financial aid have been pumped into Afghanistan by the international community since the ousting of the Taliban regime in 2001. The establishment of a new government raised hopes for a peaceful and prosperous future for the country.¹²⁸ According to multiple interview partners across three provinces however, the economy created during these years was based on the agendas of donor countries rather than on the real needs of Afghans.

“The reality is that the economy of Afghanistan in the last 16 years has been a fake economy. This development has not been natural, based on our own progress. We have created an economy based on the needs of investors, not on economic principles.”

Khan Jan Alokozai, Deputy Head of the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Alokozai complained that foreign donors gave money to projects only they considered important. The Afghan government and international donors should have invested more in sectors such as the mining industry, agriculture, water infrastructure

128 Qaderi, Maroof. Interview by ADPRO, President of National Labor Union, Kabul 25.11.2017

and transportation, said Mr. Alokozai, as these sectors create more sustainable employment.¹²⁹ Since the departure of NATO troops by the end of 2014, the minor investments that were made in those sectors have been affected by the worsening security situation.¹³⁰

As the level of international aid dramatically reduced with the withdrawal of foreign combat forces, thousands of Afghans lost their jobs. Poverty and a sense of hopelessness increased as attacks on civilian targets reached a record high.¹³¹

“Problems are increasing day by day. Factories have stopped operation. The situation is worse than last year. There is no infrastructure. There is rampant corruption within government institutions. There is no security. Unfortunately, the wealthy, rich people and investors have run away from this country.”

Khan Jan Alokozai, Deputy Head of the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce.

4.1.2. Support Afghanistan Livelihood and Mobility (SALAM)

The National Unity Government (NUG) has collaborated with three UN Agencies (UNDP, UNHCR and ILO) and the private sector to develop a program to improve the livelihoods of Afghans in crisis.¹³² The Support Afghanistan Livelihood and Mobility (SALAM) project aims to both find long-term solutions for the high unemployment rate and to prevent irregular migration through the establishment of formal structures to increase income-generating opportunities for men and women, particularly for returnees and IDPs.¹³³

“SALAM raises public awareness about the dangers of illegal migration. The program also provides vocational training to returning Afghans. The project covers both those who are already here and returnees.”

Mirwais Mirzakwal, Advisor to MoLSAMD

The SALAM program began in January 2017 with a pilot implementation phase in Nangarhar, Kabul, Balkh, Herat, Kandahar, and Kunduz, and is scheduled to finish at the end of 2021.¹³⁴

129 Nabi, Sami. Interview by ADPRO, Head of Operations Unit, Central Statistics Organization. Kabul, 10.01.2018

130 Balkhi, Sayed Husaain Alimi. Interview by ADPRO, Minister of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR). Kabul, 12.11.2017

131 Alokozai, Khan Jan. Interview by ADPRO, Deputy Head of Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce. Kabul, 10.12.2017

132 Mirzakwal, Mirwais. Interview by ADPRO, Advisor to MoLSAMD. Kabul, 18.11.2017

SALAM Project document: UNDP Afghanistan. <https://info.undp.org/docs/pdc/Documents/AFG/SALAM%20Project%20Document%202017.pdf> (accessed 10 September 2018)

133 Ibid

134 Ibid

Ghulam Haider Faqirzai, Director of Refugees and Repatriation in Nangarhar province, says a previous program to address the needs of IDPs – the so-called IDP National Policy, adopted in 2013 – has not been adequately implemented. Mr Faqirzai claims almost no progress has been made, predominantly due to the absence of qualified staff in relevant ministries. Corruption and nepotism, Mr. Faqirzai adds, are endemic in the Afghan ministries, particularly in the MoSLAMD, and he remains skeptical about the potential effectiveness of SALAM.

Afghanistan faces multiple crises simultaneously, meaning the situation for IDPs and returnees remains a low priority.

“We have many educated and uneducated Afghan youth who are unemployed. When these refugees return to Afghanistan, they become a burden on society. They can’t find work and just add to the number of unemployed people in the country. They create extra pressure on the labor market.” Abdul Latif Salehi, Head of Taskhkilat-e Peshawaran (Craftworkers Union)

According to Qasim Kobari, Head of Economic Statistics at Afghanistan’s Central Statistics Organization, resources provided by the international community are mainly being used to tackle the insurgency, with little funding remaining to cope with the massive influx of returnees. The Afghan government has no figures on migration and IDPs/returnees: the need for systematic data on both regular and irregular displacement and IDP/returnee unemployment is crucial to manage a policy framework.

“The Afghan government and international community only talk and show sympathy, but in practice there is nothing to show for what they are doing. People are living in tents in a desert where there is no water, no clinic, no doctor – no services.”

Khan Jan Alokozai, Deputy Head of the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce

4.1.3. Women’s empowerment programs

The Afghan government identifies illiteracy as the biggest challenge for women’s economic development. The inability to read and write has prevented many women from utilizing vocational training and women’s empowerment programs.¹³⁵ Currently less than 30 percent of Afghans participating in the country’s formal employment sector are women.¹³⁶

In November 2014, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and Afghan government jointly launched a project called PROMOTE.¹³⁷ This program aims to empower 75,000 women between the ages of 18-30 to ensure women are represented in policy and decision making processes in the Afghan government, as well as in

¹³⁵ Wardak, Spozhmai. Interview by ADPRO, Deputy Minister of MoWA. Kabul, 17.01.2018

¹³⁶ Wahab, Parwiz. Email Communication. Director of Skills and Vocational Training Director, MoLSAMD, 28.11.2017

¹³⁷ Workplace obstacles: Analysis and recommendations report (2016). Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MoWA), Islamic Republic of Afghanistan: [http://mowa.gov.af/Content/files/Final%20English%20WOAR%20Report-16-05-17\(1\).pdf](http://mowa.gov.af/Content/files/Final%20English%20WOAR%20Report-16-05-17(1).pdf) (accessed 2 August 2018)

business and civil society.¹³⁸ The program targets women with some level of education, but does not specifically mention women returnees and IDPs. PROMOTE's Women in the Economy (WIE) program supports women-owned businesses with a minimum of ten percent female employees and facilitates access to market-oriented vocational training for other women in need.¹³⁹

In March 2017, the Afghanistan Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AWCCI) was established to recognize the economic contribution of women in the overall development of the country. So far 1,400 businesswomen have registered small and medium-sized enterprises with AWCCI.¹⁴⁰

“Women’s participation in the labor market will boost their confidence and men will accept them as important players in their households and society.”

Hosai Andar, AWCCI

The Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) provides vocational training for women in twenty-two complexes across Afghanistan.¹⁴¹ These female-only spaces include gardens, workshops and marketplaces. The Deputy Minister of MoWA, Spozhmai Wardak, says 7000 women have undertaken training at these locations over recent years, in skills such as fruit and vegetable processing, embroidery, tailoring and bead work. According to Ms. Wardak, the women love to be engaged. MoWA does not specifically target returnees with its activities.¹⁴²

The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) also identifies and implements projects vital for poverty reduction and women's empowerment. According to eight Afghan government interviewees, agriculture and livestock related activities are key areas where women can be economically active.

One MAIL project aims to promote food security and improve the livelihoods of women-headed households in urban, peri-urban and rural Afghanistan through income-generating programs. MAIL's Family Economy Department provides financial and technical training specifically targeting women, marginalized poor families, displaced and physically challenged persons.¹⁴³

“Supporting one woman means supporting the whole family because she executes the projects with her family. One woman means one family.”

Nazira Rahman, Director of Family Economy Directorate, MAIL

Nazira Rahman, Director of MAIL's Family Economy Department, says projects include gardening, building greenhouses, food processing, the distribution of agricultur-

138 Ibid

139 Wardak, Spozhmai. Interview by ADPRO, Deputy Minister of MoWA. Kabul, 17.01.2018

140 Andar, Hosai. Interview by ADPRO, member of AWCCI and businesswoman. Kabul, 02.12.2017

141 Wardak, Spozhmai. Interview by ADPRO, Deputy Minister of MoWA. Kabul, 17.01.2018

142 Ibid

143 Rahman, Nazira. Interview by ADPRO, head of Family Economy Directorate, MAIL. Kabul, 22.11.2017



Photo: Family Economy Department, Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL)

al products and saffron production. Livestock-related activities range from distributing milking cows, chickens and beekeeping, in particular to woman who work collectively.

During her interview, Ms. Rahman outlined details of the program and explained how female household heads benefit from the project. Families interested in agricultural work must have a minimum of 100 square meters of land as a prerequisite in order to receive financial support and training. In mountainous provinces with less arable terrain, the department distributes livestock such as goats to help improve the families' income. Returnees living in informal settings do not qualify for the project due to their limited access to land.¹⁴⁴ The department also offers workshops, technical support and assistance to link families with the marketplace to sell their products. Tribal elders and community leaders introduce eligible women to Ms. Rahman's department to avoid criticism and nepotism. Funding for the project comes from the government's development budget.

Support for agricultural and livestock projects differs from province to province. A family receives a one-off payment of \$USD100-400 to purchase agricultural projects. They are then monitored regularly to assess whether their income has increased. Over the past three years more than 270,000 families have benefited from such Family Economy programs (2016/17/18).¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ Ibid

¹⁴⁵ Ibid

“Agriculture is a dominant sector and creates many jobs.”

Mohammad Sami Nabi, Operational Head at the Central Statistics Organization in Afghanistan.

4.1.4. Vocational training

The NUG, along with its national and international partner organizations, conducts vocational training programs for Afghans in need.¹⁴⁶ Anisa Omrani, director of the Women's Affairs Department in Nangarhar, says such programs are particularly important for uneducated and low-skilled women and for returning families. Ms. Omrani's department coordinates training for hundreds of women in farm and non-farm activities, assisting them to gain skills which will enable them to generate an income and contribute economically to their families and beyond.

“Women have been trained in the past in fruit and vegetable processing and in agriculture, but we failed to help them find a market for their products.”

Spozhmai Wardak, Deputy Minister of Women's Affairs (MoWA)

Around 38,000 Afghans, including 17,000 females, receive vocational training at 44 centers run by the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD) and 38 centers run by partner organizations across all 34 provinces.¹⁴⁷ Up to sixty different skills are taught, including tailoring, embroidery, carpet weaving, literacy classes, carpentry, repairing mobiles and beauty parlor work.

The Minister of MoLSAMD, Faizullah Zaki, was critical of the type of vocational training offered, as in his view it did not match the current job market. Mr. Zaki also rejected the view that the government alone should create employment opportunities, suggesting the private sector should take more initiative and leave the government to play a supporting role.¹⁴⁸

“These crafts are not marketable skills and do the minimum for the rapidly growing younger generation with employment in the long term.”

Faizullah Zaki, Minister of MoLSAMD

For many trainees, learning to repair mobile phones, cars or electrical items, video and photography, carpentry and wood carving, and beauty parlor work are the most desirable skills. Each program lasts six months and those who complete the training have little difficulty finding a job or starting their own small business. Amongst young men,

¹⁴⁶ Balkhi, Sayed Husaain Alimi. Interview by ADPRO, Minister of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR). Kabul, 12.11.2017

¹⁴⁷ Mirzakwal, Mirwais. Interview by ADPRO, advisor to MoLSAMD. Kabul, 18.11.2018

¹⁴⁸ Zaki, Faizullah. Interview by ADPRO, MoLSAMD Minister. Kabul, 26.12.2017

repairing mobile phones is the most common profession, while beauty parlor work is most common amongst women.¹⁴⁹

MoLSAMD has no data on participation rates of IDPs and returnees involved in their training programs, nor do they have a clear strategy on absorbing IDPs/returnees in the labor market.

“Violence and unemployment are interconnected. When there is violence, there is no work for people. When there is insecurity, fighting takes place and people feel obliged to leave the village.”

Khan Jan Alokozai, Deputy Head of the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce

4.2. NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS, TRAINERS AND EXPERTS

The findings and analysis in this section are based on fifteen in-depth interviews with several international organizations including: the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR). Various employers, trainers and experts were also interviewed.

4.2.1 Employment programs

The Afghan government lacks both the expertise and administrative structure to design economic development programs. State corruption, legal and ethnicized political uncertainty and the security crisis have also negatively impacted on the labor market and investment climate.¹⁵⁰

More than 2,000 non-governmental organizations, both national and international, have registered poverty alleviation projects with Afghanistan's Ministry of Economy, primarily in the areas of social services, health, education and agriculture.¹⁵¹

“Three factors are vital for returnees to integrate in the Afghan labor market. You must have a skill and knowledge, enough money to invest, and you must have connection to elites to succeed. If you lack one of these, you can't even start your business.”

Hashim Rasuli, GIZ Program Coordinator

149 Wahab, Parwiz. Email communication with the author, Skills and Vocational Training Director, MoLSAMD. 28 November 2017

150 Gilani, Fatana. Interview by ADPRO, Founder of Afghanistan Women's Association. Kabul, 14.02.2018

151 Ministry of Commerce <http://ngo.gov.af/> (accessed 20 August 2018)

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) launched the Sustainable Economic Development and Employment Promotion (SEDEP) program in late 2014 to create jobs for families in rural areas. The project covers the northern provinces of Baghlan, Badakhshan, Balkh, Kunduz, Samangan and Takhar. GIZ added a refugee and returnee component to the program in 2018 which will benefit around 70% of returnees from the EU and Pakistan, in addition to IDPs.¹⁵²

According to GIZ's Mr. Rasuli, SEDEP aims to build the capacity of small businesses and make them more competitive by conducting market analysis and offering assistance to address weaknesses. The program supports the entire production chain, from producers to consumers.¹⁵³

GIZ also offers psychological and legal counseling for returnees from Pakistan, in addition to training in environmentally and culturally sensitive income-generating projects. Women are specifically trained in home-based activities such as poultry keeping and almond peeling. Other courses include English, graphic design, photography, mobile phone repairing, beauty parlor work and tailoring. Women must make up 30 percent of the beneficiaries of GIZ's employment promotion programs.

“The National Unity Government is a failed government because it promised to create jobs for people but on the contrary, even more people have lost their jobs. NUG and foreign countries use returnees and refugees as political tools to advance their political agendas.”

Fatana Gilani, Director of Afghanistan Women's Association

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has developed a four year project in eight provinces with high numbers of returnees and IDPs: Baghlan, Balkh, Herat, Kabul, Kunar, Kandahar, Laghman and Nangarhar.¹⁵⁴ Funded by the EU, the Return Assessment and Development for Afghanistan (RADA) program supports the reintegration of over 30,000 vulnerable Afghans returning from Europe, Pakistan and Iran.¹⁵⁵ The IOM and its partner organizations have developed community-based programs to create income-generation opportunities for the returnees. RADA also aims to assist the MoRR and MoLSAMD with capacity building and technical advice.¹⁵⁶

Supporting local small businesses within communities and connecting them to the private sector and labor market is a crucial element of RADA. Beneficiaries receive training on running their businesses and how to employ more people, particularly other returnees. Kabul-based IOM staff told researchers that the program also provides

¹⁵² Rasuli, Hashim. Interview by ADPRO, GIZ Program Officer, Kabul, 08.01.2018

¹⁵³ Ibid

Afghanistan – Sustainable Economic Development and Employment Promotion (SEDEP). GFA Consulting Group. https://www.gfa-group.de/projects/628822/Fact-sheet_Asia-Afghanistan_SEDEP.pdf (accessed 10 August 2018)

¹⁵⁴ International Organization for Migration (IOM). Interview by ADPRO, IOM Kabul Office, 31.01.2018

IOM and UNHCR (February 2018). Return to Afghanistan in 2017: Joint IOM-UNHCR summary report. https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/press_release/file/joint_returnee_report_iom_unhcr_final.pdf (accessed 25 July 2018)

¹⁵⁵ International Organization for Migration (IOM). Interview by ADPRO, IOM Kabul Office, 31.01.2018

¹⁵⁶ Ibid

technical and vocational training to women, youths and adults, especially returnees from Pakistan and Iran.¹⁵⁷

The Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR) assisted 650 Afghans (33 percent women) with vocational training in nine provinces between 2014-17. The organization aims to train another 2800 people across twelve provinces by 2021. DACAAR, in cooperation with MoLSAMD, targets IDPs, returnees, youth and hosting communities with capacity building and employment opportunities. Non-farm vocational training is mainly in the areas of tailoring and handicrafts. On-farm training includes dairy production and saffron cultivation, along with assisting farmers to package, process, brand and sell their produce at local markets.¹⁵⁸

Livelihoods and Food Security Coordinator of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Bilal Zadran, criticized the Afghan government and his fellow international organizations for failing to develop a comprehensive program to assist returnees and IDPs. In his view, a key element missing in past income-generating projects was the linking of trainees to the market.¹⁵⁹ Mr Zadran believed most of the returnees' skills are not marketable and that the government and its international partners need to design a strategy to involve the private sector, which he says has the financial capacity to engage women, youth and IDPs/returnees.¹⁶⁰

4.2.2. Women in the economy

Women's inclusion in the labor market is essential for their family's economic development. Decades of war however have left a generation of women illiterate, uneducated and ill-equipped to participate in the labor force.¹⁶¹ Patriarchal traditions, cultural, familial and social barriers¹⁶² are also a major influence on the low number of women in employment.¹⁶³

In Afghan culture, it is a man's duty to provide for his family,¹⁶⁴ while women are responsible for managing household tasks, a mindset which may take generations to change.¹⁶⁵ Female interviewees frequently cited *ghairat* and *nang* (honor) as Afghan concepts which allow men to prohibit women from working outside the home.

Women's primary participation in economic activities is in the agricultural sector, particularly in animal husbandry and poultry keeping. Their role is typically peripheral and women generally have limited access to resources. According to at least ten female respondents in Kabul and Nangarhar, many women seek work in the agricultural

¹⁵⁷ Ibid

¹⁵⁸ Alamyar, Ershad. Interview by ADPRO, Head of Fundraising and Communications for DACAAR, Kabul, 10.12.2017

¹⁵⁹ Zadran, Bilal. Interview by ADPRO, Livelihoods and Food Security Coordinator, NRC. Kabul, 10.12.2017

¹⁶⁰ Ibid

¹⁶¹ Gilani, Fatana. Interview by ADPRO, Founder of Afghanistan Women's Association. Kabul, 14.02.2018

¹⁶² Andar, Hosai. Interview by ADPRO, member of AWCCI and businesswoman. Kabul, 02.12.2017

¹⁶³ Pakzad, Soraya. Interview by ADPRO, Director of Voice of Women Organization (VWO), Herat, 15.03.2018

¹⁶⁴ Noorina. Interview by ADPRO, Tailoring Master. Jalalabad, Nangarhar, 25.03.2018

¹⁶⁵ Asefi, Maryam. Interview by ADPRO, Tailoring Trainer. Jalalabad, Nangarhar, 14.03.2018



Photo: Nangarhar-eastern Afghanistan. © Noorullah Shirzad/ADPRO

sector. Non-farm, home-based work such as carpet weaving, tailoring, embroidery and handicrafts are crucial activities for women.¹⁶⁶

“Men are not supporting their women to be active in society. Afghanistan is a traditional country. The interpretation of Islam in regards with women is different in Afghanistan. That is the reason that women have lesser economic opportunities outside their homes.”

Ershad Alamyar, Head of Fundraising and Communications, DACAAR

Men are also wary of people gossiping about their women, which often happens when women leave home for work or otherwise. This was the case with Noorina, who recently returned from Pakistan and found a job as a tailoring master and trainer in the women’s directorate in Jalalabad. Noorina says she had to fight these cultural barriers to be able to work and ignores what people say about her.

“When I leave home for work, the neighbors think I have a sexual relationship with my employers.”

Noorina, Tailoring Master

¹⁶⁶ Zuhail. Interview by ADPRO, food processing instructor, Qalatak village, Nangarhar 25.03.2018

4.2.3. Success Stories

Seventeen interviews were conducted in Kabul, Herat and Nangarhar with women entrepreneurs, business owners, and trainers: many of whom, addition to running their own businesses have provided vocational training to a large number of women. Many are themselves returnees with skills acquired in neighboring countries. Training is predominantly offered in agriculture and livestock production activities as most Afghan communities accept women's involvement in these sectors.¹⁶⁷ Poultry keeping and non-farm activities such as tailoring, embroidery and carpet weaving are other areas where these small and medium size business train women.¹⁶⁸

Nafas Gul heads a thriving small-scale enterprise in Jalalabad, 'Zemarai Afghan', which she established to support her own family and create employment opportunities for other women. As a refugee in Pakistan, Ms. Gul learned carpet weaving, shoe-making, tailoring, embroidery and food processing. After her return to Afghanistan over a decade ago, she and her four daughters established six training centers specifically for women in Nangarhar. The majority of the four hundred women trained by Ms. Gul are engaged in embroidery, tailoring and handicrafts. Many have started their own businesses.

"I have employed about 60 and trained 400 women. Now these women have become financially independent and are busy making clothing and handicrafts."

Nafas Gul, Head of Zemarai Afghan Enterprise

Nafas Gul must negotiate regularly with religious and community leaders to convince families to allow women to work, even though most activities are home-based. Female trainees are predominantly IDPs and returnees, but she also assists women from poor socio-economic backgrounds.¹⁶⁹

"One thing we need is training in new design. Our designs must change every six months to one year. If we change our designs regularly, this means we are able to compete with neighboring countries and this will be a way to find markets for our products." Nafas Gul, Head of Zemarai Afghan

Sherin Akbari, a mother of nine, spent seventeen years in Pakistan, where she and her family worked in the carpet weaving industry. After returning to Afghanistan, Ms. Akbari set up her own carpet weaving and handicraft business, 'Khaharan' (Sisters), in Kabul, with financial support from a Japanese donor. Despite only having an eighth grade education, Ms. Akbari's company now employs between fifty to sixty families.

Cultural and financial issues are the major obstacles facing women in employment, said Ms. Akbari. She focuses on engaging women who are unable to work outside their homes without their 'mahram's' (relative) permission. Ms. Akbari is a focal point be-

167 Gul, Nafas. Interview by ADPRO, head of Afghan Zemarai Company. Kabul, 16.01.2018

168 Omrani, Anisa. Interview by ADROP, director of Women's Affairs Department. Jalalabad, Nangarhar, 07.12.2017

169 Gul, Nafas. Interview by ADPRO, head of Afghan Zemarai Company. Kabul, 16.01.2018



Photo: Nangarhar-eastern Afghanistan. © Noorullah Shirzad/ADPRO

tween working women and the market, arranging for raw materials to be delivered and completed carpets to be collected. She also helps women get loans from the bank.

“Women cannot get loans because banks want property documents. Since they do not own property, their husbands do, these women are denied loans because they are not allowed to use property papers.”

Sherin Akbari, Khaharan Carpet Weaving and Handicrafts Industry

Maryam Jami-ul Ahmadi established “Banu Cultivation, Harvesting and Processing Food Enterprise” in Western Herat province in 2012. Before the U.S. invasion in 2001, Ms. Ahmadi was a refugee in Iran. She began her career as a social and cultural activist in the Guzara district of Herat province. With the support of the ILO, she ran a vocational training center for women until 2008. She then began an enterprise called ‘Welfare and Development of Afghanistan’ with financial support from Catholic Relief Services (CRS), through which she trained nearly 6,000 women in embroidery, literacy and English.

After 2012, Ms. Ahmadi turned her focus to agriculture, in particular cultivation, harvesting and processing. Ms. Ahmadi observed many agricultural products were being wasted in villages and decided to purchase this excess produce from families and process it for marketing.

“More investment to support women in the agricultural sector equals more empowerment for women. This involves them in decision making processes at home and beyond,” said Ms. Ahmadi in an interview in Herat.

Banu has hired thirty-one women on a permanent basis and fourteen seasonal male farmers. Recruiting women however is difficult for Banu due to familial and cultural barriers. Ms. Ahmadi conducts face-to-face meetings with village elders and male relatives of women to obtain permission for them to participate in training. Women don’t enjoy the same benefits – such as holidays, drivers, travel, ability to make decisions – as their male colleagues.¹⁷⁰

“It is in men’s blood that women should stay inside and men should work. Men are wary of what the neighbors may say about their women.”

Maryam Jami-ul Ahmadi, Director of Banu Food Processing Company

4.3. RETURNEES

4.3.1. Overview

Almost half a million IDPs and returnees have moved into various formal and informal settlements throughout Nangarhar and Kabul provinces. REACH has profiled several of these communities in an attempt to provide reliable information which will enable the needs of these vulnerable people to be assessed.¹⁷¹ Nangarhar has accommodated more than 400,000 returnees/IDPs across twenty-six informal settlements, the first of which was established in 1990. Around two-thirds of this population are recent returnees from Pakistan, along with a small number from Iran. The other third are IDPs who have predominantly moved in from other districts of Nangarhar due to conflict.¹⁷² REACH data from January 2017 indicates that of 408,210 residents in various informal settings, 275,390 (40,430 households) are returnees and 132,820 (19,179 households) are IDPs.¹⁷³

Throughout Kabul province, more than 10,000 IDP and returnee households live in 60 different informal settlements of varying sizes. According to REACH data, 43,643 individuals are IDPs from Nangarhar and Laghman, while 20,987 are returnees from Pakistan and Iran seeking shelter, security and employment opportunities.¹⁷⁴

The following section focuses specifically on three IDP/returnee communities; two informal settlements in eastern Afghanistan inhabited by returnees who repatriated in 2016 and one formal settlement in Kabul.

¹⁷⁰ Jami-ul Ahmadi, Maryam. Interview by ADPRO, director of Banu Production, Processing and Packaging. Herat, 24.02.2018

¹⁷¹ REACH is a joint initiative of IMPACT, ACTED and UNOSAT to strengthen evidence-based decision making before, during and after an emergency situation.

¹⁷² REACH (January 2017). Nangarhar informal settlement profiling, Afghanistan, http://www.reachresourcecentre.info/system/files/resource-documents/reach_afg_factsheet_nangarhar_informal_settlement_booklet_january2017_1.pdf (accessed 20 July 2018)

¹⁷³ Ibid

¹⁷⁴ Ibid

In order to understand the returnees' experiences, the research team conducted thirteen interviews in Pul-e Behsud camp and Gambiri, both in Nangarhar Province, and another eight interviews in Barikab – a formal settlement north of Kabul on the border with Parwan province.

4.3.2. Nangarhar Province – Pul-e Behsud and Gambiri settlements

Pul-e Behsud is a small camp within Jalalabad, the capital of Nangarhar province in eastern Afghanistan. The settlement houses around one hundred families, mainly returnees who spent the majority of their lives as refugees in Pakistan. The five interviewees (four men and one woman) had no formal education. All had large families, with one or two males responsible for providing for everyone, typically by casual laboring work. Their children were all born in Pakistan and for them, Afghanistan was a new country.

“I am so fed up with life in Afghanistan that I want to put petrol on myself and set myself alight. I don’t want this life anymore.”

Ahmad Mashooq, returnee from Pakistan living in Pul-e Behsud

The interviewees in Pul-e Behsud said they had decided to return to the country they called home as their lives were becoming harder in Pakistan. Physical and verbal harassment, beatings, threats of arrest and extortion by Pakistani authorities was routine.

Photo: Pul-e Behsud in Jalalabad. © Noorullah Shirzad/ADPRO





Photo: Gambiri settlement. ©Noorullah Shirzad/ADPRO

Gambiri settlement is a poor rural area located between eastern Laghman and Nangarhar provinces. Around six hundred families (10,500 people) live in Gambiri, most of whom have returned from Pakistan and still live in makeshift houses and tents.¹⁷⁵ The settlement is characterized by poor accommodation, lack of water, electricity, insufficient sanitation facilities and insecurity. Eight interviews were conducted in Gambiri, with seven men and one woman. The returnees in Gambiri were either born in Pakistan or had spent most of their lives there as refugees. As a result of tense diplomatic relations between the neighboring countries, along with a number of security incidents in Pakistan, the Pakistani government apparatus began to inflict systematic pressure on Afghan refugees to leave.

“If there was a robbery or a terrorism-related incident, then the police of Pakistan raided our house, arrested men, and imprisoned them for weeks. We had to pay bribes to get ourselves released.”

Ayub Khan, 30, Teacher at Gambiri settlement.

¹⁷⁵ Action Against Hunger (May 2017). Rapid SMART Assessment Report: Baba Sahib, Khairo Khail and Gambiri Returnees Camp's Qaraghai and Mahtherlam districts, Laghman province. https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/assessments/babakai_khailgambiri-camp_-_r-smart_report_2017_-_final.pdf (accessed 15 August 2018)

The seven male interviewees said they had suffered oppression, restriction of mobility, threats of arrest and beatings by Pakistani authorities. Each time a security or criminal incident occurred, they said, Pakistani police would raid homes of Afghan refugees in different parts of Pakistan, in particular in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This daily harassment ultimately forced them to become 'refugees' again in their 'home' country.

"We could not sleep all night long. The Pakistani police entered our homes at night while we were asleep. We were so much under pressure that we decided to leave."

Ayub Khan, 30, Teacher at Gambiri settlement.

At least five returnees in Gambiri reported open support by the Pakistani Inter-Ser-vice Intelligence (ISI) for Taliban insurgents, stating that Taliban leadership, training facilities and political support existed in Pakistan. "If you lived as refugee in Pakistan, you see it and know it that Taliban are used to promote Pakistan's destructive role," said Azam in Gambiri.

"Pakistan uses the Taliban and Afghan refugees to destabilize Afghanistan. They use refugees to pressure the Afghan government and use the Taliban to secure their interests in Afghanistan."

Returnee in Gambiri.

4.3.3. Life after return in Pul-e Behsud and Gambiri settlements

For all interviewees in both settlements, life has worsened since their return from Pakistan. All reported that they faced less pressure from Pakistani authorities than they are experiencing now in Afghanistan. Harassment by provincial authorities has become a daily occurrence. Local warlords and police visit Pul-e Behsud regularly, attempting to force returnees to leave the government-owned land, but they have no other place to go. Most want to return to Pakistan but lack the financial resources to move again.

"We have lived in this desert for over six months, in cold, hot and windy weather. Local commanders threaten us and call us land grabbers. We used to have a better situation in Pakistan. Our children could go to school."

Zargul, resident in Gambiri

All eight interviewees in Gambiri cited security as their biggest concern. Despite the presence of the Afghan Army's 201 Selab Corps headquarters nearby, the interviewees said militant groups are still active and that they trusted neither the Afghan gov-

ernment nor the Taliban for protection. Daesh, the local name for Islamic State, has a strong base in eastern Afghanistan, particularly in Nangarhar, and this is also a cause of serious concern.

“The government’s control over its territory ends when it gets dark. Then it becomes the Taliban’s kingdom.”

Returnee in Gambiri settlement

The returnees said they believed Afghanistan would have developed over the past fifteen years as so much international aid has been given to the country, but were shocked to find their ‘home’ country was poorer than Pakistan. They had hoped to establish new lives and find work, but felt ignored and abandoned by the Afghan government. All interviewees were unanimously angry at the Afghan government for failing to do enough to help them integrate into social and economic life. Lack of security, employment, roads, drinking water, shelter/housing, health and education services were critical issues in both settlements. The residents of Gambiri had sold all their belongings in Pakistan before returning to Afghanistan, but had been forced to spend that money on food and water.

“I sold my shop in Pakistan and opened a new one here but that collapsed financially. I made no profit.”

Returnee in Gambiri settlement

Local warlords and the provincial government frequently accuse the returnees of being land grabbers in Islam Dara (Islam valley in Gambiri). Loss of identity was the most frequently cited negative feeling experienced by returnees in both settlements. In Pakistan, they were considered refugees from Afghanistan, while in Afghanistan the local government and warlords consider them Pakistanis. They believe this is the reason why the government does not provide them with services.

According to residents in both settlements, the Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR), UNICEF and UNHCR have supported returnees, providing them with Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) tents, in addition to basic health and education services.

“We don’t want cash from the NGOs rather we need infrastructure. Our children are growing up in uncertain circumstances. We want education for our children so they can shape their own future”

Returnees in eastern Nangarhar province.



Photo: Gambiri settlement. ©Noorullah Shirzad/ADPRO

4.3.4. Employment opportunities for returnees in Pul-e Behsud and Gambiri settlements

Despite having moved to Afghanistan almost two years earlier, many returnees had little idea how to find work in the chaotic Afghan labor market. At the time the interviews were conducted, housing, water, and roads were more urgent issues than the lack of employment. Returnees also felt insecure about leaving belongings and women unprotected while they searched for jobs. “House first and then work,” one returnee in Gambiri told the research team.

The most common sources of income for Pul-e Behsud returnees are daily labor in nearby markets for the men and home-based carpet weaving for women and girls. Earnings from both activities however is inconsistent and unstable.

During their time in Pakistan, the men in Gambiri had been engaged in running grocery stores, keeping cows and carpentry, while the women had earned money from cleaning, embroidery and carpet weaving. According to Wali-ur Rahman in Gambiri, the young people were weaving carpets most of the time in Pakistan, but that skill is little use in Afghanistan as there is insufficient investment in the sector.

Since 2016, returnees in Gambiri have been living on money acquired by selling their property and businesses in Pakistan, along with itinerant labor such as tailoring, carpet weaving, embroidery, teaching, driving and mechanic work. There is intense competi-

tion with both locals and IDPs for this work as employment opportunities in rural Afghanistan are limited. The lack of water and land also means agricultural work is also restricted.

“My children now ask me why we returned to a country that has nothing to live on. No house, no water, no jobs.”

Azam, Returnee in Gambiri

4.3.5. Problems hindering returnee women's participation in the labor market

The women in both settlements had never attended school. Returnee boys attend school until a certain grade then drop out to work, while girls go to primary school then stay home. Women are only able to work with permission from their male guardians, and even then only in exclusively female workplaces. Male interviewees believed it was their job to earn and provide for women and children.

Male returnees were largely reserved when speaking about their women, referring to them as ‘Siyasar’.¹⁷⁶ Several even avoided answering questions about women being engaged in the labor market. For at least ten out of thirteen returnees interviewed, securing housing was more important than finding employment. Most avoided leaving their settlements to look for work and said they would allow their women to work only when they found shelter. Many said home-based work was ideal for women as no male employer was involved.

Life for women household-heads is far more difficult, as patriarchal support is non-existent. Zarsanga, 40, lives in an informal male-dominated settlement with her three children. In Pakistan she worked as a cleaner, but since her return she has been living on charity and Zakat.¹⁷⁷

“This is a dry place. There is no water here. There is no work for people here either. At times we ate nothing for three days. We returned to Afghanistan hoping our life would be better than in Pakistan, but this is a poorer country, worse than Pakistan. There is no respect for girls and women here. This is a land of unemployed people. People don't help the poor, don't feed them because they are also poor.”

Zarsanga, household-head, Eastern Afghanistan

¹⁷⁶ A folkloristic term used by Afghan men to describe women; sometimes it refers to the significant female kin like mother, wife, sister or daughter to avoid mentioning their names (The other side of gender inequality – AREU January 2016)

¹⁷⁷ Zakat is one of the five pillars of Islam and means alms-giving to poor and needy people. It is obligatory for every adult Muslim of sound mind when he/she owns a specific amount of wealth or savings (Islamic Help <https://www.islamichelp.org.uk/zakat/> accessed 25 September 2018)

4.3.6. Barikab settlement – Kabul/Parwan

Barikab village is a one hour drive north of Kabul, on the border with Parwan province. The tiny settlement was built on a stretch of dry and rocky land in June 2007 to house returnees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) previously living in tents in the Chaman-e Babrak district of Kabul.¹⁷⁸ The Australian government contributed approximately \$USD10 million to the resettlement project.¹⁷⁹ The Afghan government supplied land and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) helped residents construct houses, schools and roads. The project was intended to provide sustainable livelihoods and housing to 1,400 asylum seekers who had failed to obtain protection in Australia, in addition to returnees from Iran and Pakistan.¹⁸⁰

According to all eight interviewees (six females and two males) in Barikab, Western-style housing is of limited value if residents have no access to social services and/or employment opportunities. Despite the settlement's establishment over a decade ago, Barikab still suffers from lack of water and electricity. The health center has no specialized doctors and a severe shortage of medical supplies. Residents complained that in emergencies they have no option but to drive privately to Kabul, if they can afford it, as no public transport connects the village to the capital. At the time the interviews were conducted, three hundred people lived in Barikab.

Barikab has one intermediate school catering for children up until the ninth grade. The only high school is many miles walk away, and girls in particular drop out of school after the ninth grade. Security issues, distance to the high school, cost and lack of public transport were cited by all eight interviewees in Barikab as major factors hindering girls from continuing their education. The existing school in Barikab is inadequately resourced, with insufficient teachers and learning materials to meet the demands of school children.

Rahila, who like most Afghan women uses only one name, is a teacher at the school. Her two daughters had no option but to discontinue their education after ninth grade. Rahila said she was too scared to send her girls to school and is concerned their low level of education will affect future employment opportunities. Many girls in Barikab are in the same situation as her daughters, said Rahila.

Over one thousand residents have moved away from Barikab to seek employment in the city, despite receiving repeated promises from the Afghan government and international donors that their concerns will be addressed. Kabul is too far for people to commute to work without public transportation and the district center (Qarabagh) is also 30 km away.

¹⁷⁸ UN Development Program (June 2007). Inauguration of the AliceGhan project – in support of the reintegration of Afghan returnees and IDPs. Reliefweb <https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/inauguration-aliceghan-project-support-reintegration-afghan-returnees-and-idps> (accessed 25 July 2018)

¹⁷⁹ Ibid

¹⁸⁰ Ibid

Some interviewees in Barikab confirmed the receipt of aid from NGOs, while others said they had received no long-term support from any organization. Itinerant laboring jobs are common among men but even they are not available on a regular basis.

“Men still hardly find any work. We are barely surviving here. We don’t have enough water, no electricity, no good roads. There is no regular work neither for men nor for women.”

Samar, Barikab

4.3.6.1. Jobs for women in Barikab

According to the six female interviewees in Barikab, the most common income sources for women are home-based activities such as carpet weaving, tailoring and embroidery bead work. While in Pakistan, many Afghan refugee families were able to earn sufficient money through carpet weaving, but in Afghanistan the industry is severely impacted by a lack of investment as a result of the adverse security situation. Women complained that finding a market to sell their products is a major challenge and demanded training in marketing. Restricted mobility is also a serious issue facing women.

“I have to peel almonds and bake bread for people. I did all sorts of work to earn some money and feed my children.”

Shah Bibi, Barikab

Most women in Barikab don’t work and rely on their husbands and/or male relative’s earnings to cover expenses. The women cited social and cultural tags such as ‘ghairat, be ghairat, and nafaqah’, which state that men have primary responsibility for supporting their families. Some women in Barikab had participated in short-term projects, but the village lacked basic services and there was no suitable market for the products. Several residents believed their lives as refugees in Pakistan were easier and more comfortable than in Afghanistan.

“I regret returning to Afghanistan. My life as refugee in Pakistan was much better. I expected things would get better each year but it has been the opposite. I would not hesitate to migrate again if I ever get a chance again.”

Samar, Barikab

“The biggest problem in Barikab is how to find work. This is common for all men here. We have expenses and we have to find our ways to feed ourselves, but there is no work.”

Abdul Salam, Barikab



Photo: Gambiri settlement. ©Noorullah Shirzad/ADPRO

5. CONCLUSION

The current research attempted to explore and profile the Afghan employment market, with a special focus on the situation for women, returnees and IDPs. Afghanistan experienced a severe economic depression following the departure of U.S.-led NATO troops by the end of 2014. Tens of thousands of jobs were lost, and almost simultaneously, Pakistani authorities began to force hundreds of thousands of refugees to return to Afghanistan, putting the National Unity Government under extreme pressure to provide services for a both significantly larger and newly unemployed population. At the same time, the NUG and its international allies have been distracted by an expanding Taliban insurgency which has dramatically increased the level of violence in the country.

Creating employment opportunities was meant to be a key priority in the stabilization of Afghanistan, but the country's labor market remains chaotic, with no clear line separating the formal and informal sectors. With already critically high levels of unemployment, the huge numbers of IDPs and returnees have little prospect of finding work in the near future. They also suffer from lack of housing, education, health care, food

and water. Insecurity, poverty and a sense of hopelessness are so rampant that many Afghans have been pushed to seek a better life through migration to Europe.

The research evaluated the existing skills and training programs available, the demands of the labor market, along with possibilities for including women and returnees in Afghanistan's employment sector. Familial and cultural barriers preventing women from active participation in the workforce were also detailed.

The Afghan government has collaborated with international organizations on a range of initiatives to improve the livelihoods of Afghans, including women and returnees, but so far there are few tangible results to show for their efforts.

I. WORK CITED

- Achavez, Chona R., Mosavi, SayedMahdi, and Pilongo, Leah Wildfreda RE (January 2016). The other side of gender inequality: Men and masculinities in Afghanistan. Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), Kabul. p32. <https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/1601E-The-Other-Side-of-Gender-Inequality-Men-and-Masculinities-in-Afghanistan1.pdf>
- Action Against Hunger (May 2017). Rapid SMART Assessment Report: Baba Sahib, Khairo Khail and Gambiri Returnees Camp's Qaraghai and Mahtherlam districts, Laghman province. https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/assessments/babakai_khailgambiricamp_-_r-smart_report_2017_-_final.pdf
- Ahmad, Dr. Ali (May 2017). The perception of gender relations and gender-based violence of Afghans living in Austria: Findings of small-scale microsociological research. Vienna Institute for International Dialogue and Cooperation (VIDC). http://www.vidc.org//fileadmin/Bibliothek/DP/Nadja/Gender_-_Afghanistan/VIDC_Afghanistan_Gender_Study_2nd_revised_edition.pdf
- Alimia, Sanaa (2014). Violence and vulnerabilities: Afghans in Pakistan. <https://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/afghanistan/alimia.pdf>
- Alimia, Sanaa (July 2012). Afghans in Pakistan face a perilous future. Al Jazeera English. <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/07/20127291012146593.html>
- Alimia, Sanaa (March 2018). Afghanistan in Pakistan: Vienna Institute for International Dialog and Cooperation (VIDC). http://www.vidc.org//fileadmin/Bibliothek/DP/Foto_Veranst/Fanizadeh/Afghanistan_6.3.18/VIDC_Documentation_Afghanistan_in_Pakistan_6_March_2018.pdf
- Amnesty International (2016). My children will die this winter: Afghanistan's broken promise to the displaced. <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/ASA1140172016ENGLISH.PDF>
- Amnesty International (2016). My children will die this winter: Afghanistan's broken promise to the displaced. <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/ASA1140172016ENGLISH.PDF>
- Azeng, Therese F. and Yogo, Thierry U. (2013). Youth unemployment and political instability in selected developing countries. Working paper series N 171 African Development Bank, Tunisia. https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/Working_Paper_171_-_Youth_Unemployment_and_Political_Instability_in_Selected_Developing_Countries.pdf
- BBC News (28 January 2018). Kabul attack: Taliban kill 95 with ambulance bomb in Afghan capital. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-42843897>

- Central Statistics Organization (2018), Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey 2016–17. (ALCS-2016-17) Kabul. http://cso.gov.af/Content/files/ALCS/ALCS%20-%202016-17%20Analysis%20report%20-%20pre-print%20for%20web_rev.pdf
- Central Statistics Organizations (2018). Estimated population of Afghanistan in 2018–19. Central Statistic Organization, Kabul. P23. <http://cso.gov.af/en/page/demography-and-socile-statistics/demograph-statistics/3897111>
- Dehghan, Saeed Kamali (30 April 2018). Afghanistan: The 10 journalists who died in deadly day for media. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2018/apr/30/afghanistan-the-10-journalists-who-died-in-deadly-day-for-media>
- Desai, Ishani and Li LI (March 2016). Analyzing Female Labor Force Participation in Afghanistan. Identifying the key barriers that prevent women from entering the labor force. John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard Kennedy School. https://wapp.hks.harvard.edu/files/wapp/files/desai_li_sypa_final_0314.pdf
- Farmer, Ben and Makoi, Akhtar (22 July 2018). Afghanistan faces worst drought in decades, as UN warns 1.4 million people need help. The Telegraph <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/07/22/afghanistan-faces-worst-drought-decades-un-warns-14m-need-help/>
- Ganesh, Lena (July 2017). Women in agriculture in Afghanistan. Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), Kabul. <https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/1707-Women-in-Agriculture-in-Afghanistan.pdf>
- Ghiassy, Richard, Zhou, Jiayi and Hallgren, henrik (Oct 2015). Afghanistan's private sector: Status and ways forward. p5, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2016-04/SIPRI_Afghanistans-Private-Sector_Report-2015.pdf
- Glaser, Barney G. and Strauss, Anselm L. (1967). The discovery of grounded theory: strategies for qualitative research. Aldine, Chicago.
- Human Rights Watch (2017). Pakistan coercion, UN complicity. HRW 2017 https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/pakistan0217_web.pdf
- International Labor Organization (2012). Afghanistan: Time to move to sustainable jobs: Study on the state of employment in Afghanistan. P33. Commissioned by the ILO. May 2012. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_182252.pdf
- IOM and UNHCR (February 2018). Return to Afghanistan in 2017: Joint IOM-UNHCR summary report. https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/press_release/file/joint_returnee_report_iom_unhcr_final.pdf
- Jain, Rupam (23 April 2018). Emergency alerts loom as drought takes hold in war-torn Afghanistan. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-weather/emergency-alerts-loom-as-drought-takes-hold-in-war-torn-afghanistan-idUSKBN1HU1M4>
- Kar, Anuja, and Ahmed, Mansur (2017). For rural Afghan women, agriculture holds the potential for better jobs. The World Bank <http://blogs.worldbank.org/endpoverty-insouthasia/jobs/rural-afghan-women-agriculture-holds-potential-better-jobs>

- Koelbl, Susanne (2 December 2015). Interview with Afghan President Ghani: 'I have to hold our country together', Spiegel online. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/spiegel-interview-with-afghan-president-ashraf-ghani-a-1064978.html>
- Mashal, Mujib. (27 May 2018). Drought adds to woes of Afghanistan, in grips of raging war. New York Times (NYT). <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/27/world/asia/afghanistan-drought-war.html>
- Norwegian Refugee Council (4 June 2018). Afghans fleeing conflict face worsening hunger. Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) <https://www.nrc.no/news/2018/june/afghans-fleeing-conflict-face-worsening-hunger/>
- OCHA (April 2018). Drought grips large parts of Afghanistan. United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/20180525_ocha_afghanistan_monthly_humanitarian_bulletin_april_2018_en_final.pdf
- Rutting, Thomas (5 Feb 2018). Five questions to make sense of the new peak in urban attacks and a violent week in Kabul. Afghanistan Analysts Network. Kabul. <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/five-questions-to-make-sense-of-the-new-peak-in-urban-attacks-and-a-violent-week-in-kabul/>
- Safi, Michael (24 Jan 2018). ISIS claims attack on Save the Children office in Afghanistan. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/24/explosion-attack-save-the-children-office-jalalabad-afghanistan>
- Samuel Hall Consulting (2013). Designing livelihood programs for displaced population in urban settings in Afghanistan: Labor market assessment in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Commissioned by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Afghanistan. <https://drc.ngo/media/1181591/drc-labour-market-survey.pdf>
- Schlyter, Charlotta, (2002/3). International labor standards and the informal sector: Development and dilemmas. Employment sector: ILO. http://www.ilo.org/wcms-sp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_122056.pdf
- Tavva, Srinivas, Abdelai-Martini, Malika, Aw-Hassan, Rischkowsky, Barbara, Tibbo, Markos, and Rizv, Javed (2013). Gender roles in agriculture: The case of Afghanistan. Indian Journal of Gender Studies, SAGE
- The Asia Foundation (2017). A Survey of the Afghan People. Afghanistan in 2017. Kabul, The Asia Foundation https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/2017_AfghanSurvey_report.pdf
- The UN Refugee Agency (2018). Global Trends: Forced displacement in 2017. UNHCR. <http://www.unhcr.org/5b27be547.pdf>
- UN Development Program (June 2007). Inauguration of the AliceGhan project – in support of the reintegration of Afghan returnees and IDPs. Reliefweb <https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/inauguration-aliceghan-project-support-reintegration-afghan-returnees-and-idps>
- UNAMA Human rights Service (12 April 2018). Quarterly report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict: 1 Jan to 31 March 2018. UNAMA, Kabul. <https://una->

ma.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unama_protection_of_civilians_first_quarter_2018_report_11_april_0.pdf

UNICEF (2018). All children in school and learning: Global initiative on out of school children – Afghanistan country study. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/afg-report-oocs2018.pdf>

Workplace obstacles: Analysis and recommendations report (2016). Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), Islamic Republic of Afghanistan: [http://mowa.gov.af/Content/files/Final%20English%20WOAR%20Report-16-05-17\(1\).pdf](http://mowa.gov.af/Content/files/Final%20English%20WOAR%20Report-16-05-17(1).pdf)

USEFUL LINKS ON AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan Analysts Network: <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/>

Afghanistan Central Statistics Organization (CSO): <http://cso.gov.af/en/page/1500/1494/nrav-report>

Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU): <https://areu.org.af/>

Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR): <https://www.sigar.mil/>

The Asia Foundation Publications – Afghanistan: <https://asiafoundation.org/publication/afghanistan/>

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA): <https://unama.unmissions.org/>

United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA): <https://www.unocha.org/afghanistan>

II. ANNEX

LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

- Akbari, Sherin. Interview by ADPRO, Head of Khaharan Carpet Weaving and Handicrafts Industry. Kabul, 17.03.2017
- Akrami, Hanifa. Interview by ADPRO, Head of Mashal Geeti Social Association. Herat, 24.02.2018
- Alamyar, Ershad. Interview by ADPRO, Head of Fundraising and Communications for Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR). Kabul, 10.12.2017
- Alokozai, Khan Jan. Interview by ADPRO, Deputy Head of Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce. Kabul, 10.12.2017
- Andar, Hosai. Interview by ADPRO, Member of Afghanistan Women Chamber of Commerce (AWCC) and businesswoman. Kabul, 02.12.2017
- Asefi, Maryam. Interview by ADPRO, Tailoring Trainer. Jalalabad, Nangarhar, 25.03.2018
- Aziz, Haji Asad. Interview by ADPRO, Head of Tabassum Raisons Cleaning Factory. Kabul, 21.12.2017
- Balkhi, Sayed Hussain Alimi. Interview by ADPRO, Minister of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR). Kabul, 12.11.2017
- Bareckzai, Naqiba. Interview by ADPRO, Head of Journalist Association in Western Afghanistan. Herat, 24.02.2018
- Fakhri, Habiba. Interview by ADPRO, Head of Gender Uni, National Labor Union. Kabul, 09.12.2017
- Faqirzai, Ghulam Haider. Interview by ADPRO, Director of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR). Jalalabad, Nangarhar, 04.12.2017
- Gilani, Fatana. Interview by ADPRO, Founder of Afghanistan Women's Association. Kabul, 14.02.2018
- Gul, Anis. Interview by ADPRO, Female Entrepreneur. Nangarhar, 25.03.2018
- Gul, Nafas. Interview by ADPRO, Head of Afghan Zemarai Company. Kabul, 16.01.2018
- International Organization for Migration (IOM). Interview by ADPRO. IOM Kabul Office, 31.01.2018
- Jami-ul Ahmadi, Maryam. Interview by ADPRO, Director of Banu Production, Processing and Packaging. Herat, 24.02.2018
- Mirzakwal, Mirwais. Interview by ADPRO, Advisor to Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD). Kabul, 18.11.2017
- Nabi, Sami. Interview by ADPRO, Head of Operations Unit, Central Statistics Organization. Kbaul, 10.01.2018

Noorina. Interview by ADPRO, Tailoring Master. Jalalabad, Nangarhar, 25.03.2018

Omrani, Anisa. Interview by ADPRO, Director of Women's Affairs Department. Jalalabad, Nangarhar, 07.12.2017

Pakzad, Soraya. Interview by ADPRO, Director of Voice of Women Organization (VWO). Herat, 15.03.2018

Qaderi, Maroof. Interview by ADPRO, President of National Labor Union, Kabul, 25.11.2017

Rahman, Nazira. Interview by ADPRO, Head of Family Economy Department, Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL). Kabul, 22.11.2017

Rasuli, Hashim. Interview by ADPRO, GIZ Program Officer. Kabul, 08.01.2018

Salehi, Abdul Latif. Interview by ADPRO, Head of Tashkilat-e Peshawarn (Craftsmen). Kabul, 09.12.2017

Saqeb, Sabrina. Interview by ADPRO, Women Rights Activist and Journalist. Kabul, 24.02.2018

Wardak, Spozhmai. Interview by ADPRO, Deputy Minister of Women's Affairs (MoWA). Kabul, 17.01.2018

Zadran, Bilal. Interview by ADPRO, Livelihoods and Food Security Coordinator, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). Kabul, 10.12.2017

Zaki, Faizullah. Interview by ADPRO, Minister of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD). Kabul, 26.12.2017

Zuhal. Interview by ADPRO, Food Processing Instructor. Qalatak Village, Nangarhar, 25.03.2018

Another 21 Interviews with returnees in Pul-e Behsud, Gambiri and Barikab settlements.

Publisher:

Wiener Institut für Internationalen Dialog und Zusammenarbeit – Vienna Institute for International Dialogue and Cooperation (VIDC), Möllwaldplatz 5/3, A-1040 Vienna,
www.vidc.org

Author: Ali Ahmad (VIDC)

Interviews: Afghanistan Development and Peace Research Organization (ADPRO)

Editors: Michael Fanizadeh and Sybille Straubinger (VIDC)

Copyright pictures: © Noorullah Shirzad/ADPRO

Proof reading and editing: Kim Traill

Published in accordance with §25 of the Media Law.

Copyright: Vienna Institute for International Dialogue and Cooperation (VIDC), Möllwaldplatz 5/3, A-1040 Vienna.

Basic issues: discussion papers on development policies, international cooperation and north-south cultural exchange in addition to anti-racist campaigning.

The study is part of “Dard Kush – strengthening livelihoods of Afghan refugees and Pakistani host communities”, a project currently being implemented by FACES Pakistan in Lahore in cooperation with Caritas Austria and Caritas St. Pölten. The views expressed in this publication are those of the author, and not necessarily those of the editors/VIDC.

