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CLIMATE IMPACTS RETURN AND DISPLACEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN

Research Brief - May 2025

Acknowledgements

This research brief by UNHCR Afghanistan aims to better understand the impact of climate, extreme weather and disasters on the lived experiences of Afghan returnees from Pakistan and Iran, including in terms of exposure to secondary displacement and overlap with internal mobility trends in Afghanistan. Contextual unfamiliarity, stringent restrictions on basic rights, and depleted social capital tend to increase exposure to climate risks and challenges. In light of these challenges, and of the increasing returnee population, this research brief offers an opportunity to:

(1) Consolidate existing data on the nexus between climate impacts, return and internal displacement

(2) Clarify how extreme weather and disasters impact refugee return and internal displacement patterns in Afghanistan.

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH:
A child in Sabakhil village, Barmal District, Paktika Province, Afghanistan, are among the survivors of the devastating earthquake that hit the region in June 2022. © UNHCR/Oxygen Film Studio

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Executive Summary

On a global level, Afghanistan is among the countries most exposed to the impacts of extreme weather and disasters.[1] Post-August 2021, natural hazards, extreme weather and disasters are surpassing conflict as the main drivers of new displacement. This research brief highlights existing data on the nexus between climate impacts and displacement in Afghanistan, providing an overview of patterns and impacts on the lived experiences of refugee returnees, specifically. This summary highlights four key findings:

First, vulnerability to climate-related environmental hazards acts as a barrier to reintegration with distinct challenges faced by individuals returning to Afghanistan – notably the lack of information and preparedness. These returnees lack access to information on how extreme weather is impacting living conditions in areas of return. This concern is widespread among returnees from Iran and Pakistan, many of whom lived abroad for years, decades or generations, with a significant proportion of returnee children having been born in host countries. Certain individuals have either not returned to their areas of origin in decades, while others have simply never set foot there. They are unfamiliar with current weather conditions, climate shocks or impacts on local economies, basic service sectors, and/or food systems. This holds implications for their safety, health, livelihoods and access to basic services, as resilience and adaptation capacity are often low. As an example, houses made of mud – in which certain returnees reside following arrival to Afghanistan, alongside other vulnerable populations exposed to climate impacts, such as IDPs – are not disaster resilient, with reports of temporary housing and shelter being destroyed by flash floods in return areas. Overall, extreme temperatures and flash floods, and other non-climate-climate related environmental hazards such as air pollution[2], affect returnee families interviewed in Nangarhar, Kabul and Herat. Female returnees and female-headed households face added pressures and challenges to cope with climate-related shocks, including exclusion from adaptation planning, heightened barriers to safe water access, and disproportionate impacts on health, mobility and economic resilience.

Second, returnees to Afghanistan are often more vulnerable than host communities to climate-related environmental hazards that lead to secondary displacement – in part due to their exclusion from community-based mechanisms. Referring to "areas of origin" is misleading as returnees have often spent significant stretches – or the entirety – of their lives abroad. Upon return, the heightened vulnerability levels experienced by returnees stem from a combination of limited familiarity with climate patterns and economic landscapes in areas of residence, and limited access to social capital and community-based support or protection mechanisms when compared with host community members. This vulnerability, in urban areas, also stems from the perception and treatment of

1 *Shantie D'Souza (2024), "Meeting the Climate Crisis in Afghanistan", The Diplomat.*

2 *The levels of air pollution observed in certain urban areas of Afghanistan, while not the direct result of climate change, do nonetheless reflect some indirect impacts of climate-induced disasters in the country. In certain cities such as Kabul and Herat, displacement drives rapid urbanisation, while draining access to livelihoods and basic natural resources – such as firewood. This drives reliance upon toxic / unsafe materials for heating and cooking purposes, threatening the health of household members, and contributing to air pollution.*

returnees as temporary, rather than permanent residents, increasing the risk of relegation to poorly planned, informally developed settlements presenting varying degrees of disconnection from – or misconnection to – service grids. These settlements arise in areas unfit for construction (e.g. low-lying areas, floodplains, or steep hills), exposed to environmental hazards, and excluded from urban planning processes, including disaster contingency plans and risk reduction measures. Residents experience high levels of exposure to environmental hazards such as flooding or landslides, often accompanied by limited recognition from urban planners and municipal actors, undermining participation in decision-making processes conducive to risk mitigation. Following arrival back to Afghanistan, returnees remain vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, which may include onward, protracted or repeated displacement related to climate shocks. Rather than reducing exposure, cycles of secondary displacement drive upward spirals of vulnerability, and the gradual erosion of returnees' resilience to climate change, undermining prospects for durable solutions.

Third, population growth due to displacement and returns has exacerbated tensions and competition tied to resource scarcity in Afghanistan. Levels of scarcity – and resulting tensions – are amplified by a combination of (1) limited enforcement of regulatory frameworks surrounding access and use of natural resources such as underground water and firewood, resulting in (2) uncontrolled usage at local level, and (3) climate impacts, in particular shifting precipitation patterns, resulting in drought and driving desertification. Forced returns of Afghans from Pakistan in 2023-2024 have been projected to strain resources further given the inability of returnees to return to areas of origin devastated by climate shocks. The same can be said of planned forced returns from Iran in 2025. A 2024 expert analysis points to the fact that scarcity – the notion that there are not enough resources to meet population needs – is largely socially and politically generated.[3] In such contexts, newcomers to a location or community, whether refugee returnees or IDPs, become scapegoats for the perceived scarcity. For example, returns from Iran and Pakistan are adding to this perception of "the outsider" exacerbating water concerns. Despite these challenges, communities have adopted, with the support of returnees, various adaptation measures such as community livelihoods adapted to different seasons of the year, using technology to address water access issues, introducing new crops to their communities, and supporting urban solutions.

Fourth, the impacts of extreme weather and disasters on return and reintegration increasingly mirror and overlap with those tied to internal displacement dynamics in Afghanistan. Displacement due to environmental factors is on the rise, intertwined with economic vulnerability and limited access to resources. This climate-induced poverty impacts displaced groups in key districts in Nangarhar, Helmand, Jawzjan, Samangan and Ghor. Those displaced by climate and disaster-related patterns are often unable to go far from home, with most movements occurring over short distances, within districts and provinces of origin or departure. When climate-induced internal displacement occurs in parallel to climate-induced secondary displacement following return, it becomes a challenge to distinguish between members of either group and the challenges

3 *Alimia, Sanaa. 2024, Water, Climate, and Refuge across Afghanistan and the Sub-Region, Expert Analysis ADSP/Samuel Hall*

they experience on a daily basis. The combination of climate-induced mobility dynamics, moreover, results in the increase of pressure on local systems, resources and service points in hosting areas, disrupting social cohesion, and contributing to a range of protection and other risks among all concerned resident communities. Long-term investments in return and reintegration therefore must also take into consideration the interrelated risks and emerging evidence related to internal displacement, to ensure coherence in area-based approaches throughout Afghanistan.

At the operational and policy level, this research brief recommends a focus on:

Provincial durable solutions plans with opportunities for durable solutions (local integration, return and relocation)

Information sharing and awareness raising for refugees in Iran and Pakistan on climate related challenges upon return

Investments in climate change adaptation measures in high return and displacement affected areas

Identifying and utilising returnees' skills to strengthen community adaptation and acceptance at community leve

Introduction

On a global level, Afghanistan is among the countries most exposed to the impacts of climate change, which interacts with and amplifies a range of threats stemming from armed conflict, violence and social tensions, poverty, food insecurity, malnutrition, and forced displacement.[4][5] In 2024, Afghanistan ranked 181th out of a total 187 countries included in the Notre-Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN) Index, which aims to measure vulnerability to climate change and other global challenges.[6] This ranking had shifted to 179th by 2021, underscoring the deteriorating situation driven by climate change in Afghanistan.[7]

Afghanistan's heavy reliance on agriculture, which supports 85 per cent of the population, exacerbates vulnerabilities to climate crises, especially given the water management crisis nationwide. Increasing frequency and intensity of climate-related events, including flash flooding and unpredictable rainfall patterns, have devastated agricultural lands, destroyed houses and community infrastructure.[8] Ranked poorly on both the INFORM Climate Change Risk Index and the ND-GAIN index, Afghanistan faces a range of climatic risks:[9] Rising temperatures, which have increased by 1.8°C from 1951 to 2010—nearly twice the global average—along with chronic droughts, exacerbate food insecurity and economic burdens. Increased desertification, frequent sandstorms, and glacier loss threaten vital water sources, undermining resilience in the face of climate-induced disasters.[10] These weather patterns and subsequent struggles with food and water insecurity heighten socio-economic pressures and exacerbate gender-based vulnerabilities.[11] Afghanistan's climate vulnerabilities cannot be extracted from its legacy of conflict, economic crises, and political instability.

A recent (2022) study found that "Afghan civilians' capacity to respond to climate change has decreased".[12] The lack of physical, financial, and social capital, coupled with inadequate support from authorities, undermines effective climate adaptation efforts. Past research notably reveals how "women and children in Afghanistan are disproportionately affected by the effects of climate change, acting as shock absorbers by, for example, forgoing their education to bolster lower household income levels or cutting back on their caloric intake when crop yields are reduced".[13] Women specifically are found to face greater challenges in obtaining assistance during disasters compared to me. Their reliance on men for information, registration and now also movement, limits their ability to cope with disasters – especially for female headed households and those in split family configurations[14].

4 *Shantie D'Souza (2024), "Meeting the Climate Crisis in Afghanistan", The Diplomat.*
5 *IOM & Samuel Hall (2022), Unpacking the Realities of Displacement Affected Communities in Afghanistan Since August 2021.*
6 *Asian Development Bank & World Bank Group (2021), Climate Risk Country Profile: Afghanistan.*
7 *University of Notre-Dame (2021), ND-GAIN Index.*
8 *IOM / Samuel Hall (2022), Unpacking the Realities of Displacement Affected Communities in Afghanistan Since August 2021.*
9 *UNAMA & DPPA (2024), Climate Change, Peace and Security in Afghanistan: a Study on the Interlinkages*
10 *Ibid*
11 *Ibid*
12 *IOM / Samuel Hall (2022), Unpacking the Realities of Displacement Affected Communities in Afghanistan Since August 2021.*
13 *Ibid*
14 IOM (2025) Afghanistan Climate Vulnerability Assessment (ACVA), February 2025 edition

Climate change shapes the reasons for departure from Afghanistan, and the experiences of return, and reintegration. Among those leaving the country in 2021-2022, IOM reports that approximately 11 per cent cited climate events as informing their decision to leave.[15] This last driver has increased in proportion to others, reflecting both the impacts of drought on the agricultural sector, and the cessation of armed conflict post August 2021. This rising trend is evident when it comes to internal displacement in Afghanistan. Data compiled by IOM suggests that, following the Taliban takeover, disasters have replaced conflict as key drivers of internal displacement, accounting for 843,000 out of a total 1.01 million new internal displacements recorded in 2022.

Returns, including forced and coerced returns, have exposed Afghans to further tensions and vulnerabilities as they return to a context rendered more challenging by climate change and disasters. Key informants familiar with the climate-return mobility nexus link competition around overstretched resources – exacerbated by climate change – to reintegration challenges experienced by displaced individuals and households following return. OCHA reported in July 2024 that an estimated 550 tents in the Omari camp near the Torkham border crossing were destroyed by flash flooding which occurred on July 15 and 16, resulting in fatalities and injuries, as well as significant damage to WASH facilities.[16] Afghan returnees in Herat province have also highlighted challenges tied to coping with disaster scenarios, often tied to cumulative Impacts of natural hazards which may, in some cases (such as flooding), be amplified by the impacts of climate change.

Climate change and disasters are drivers of displacement in Afghanistan.[17] Internal displacement trends and figures underscore widespread climate change and related disaster events in the Afghan context. In 2023, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), in its annual Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID), revealed that the country presented the highest population of disaster-displaced IDPs in the world, amounting to an estimated 1.5 million persons.[18]. Drought is the main driver of such internal displacement in Afghanistan, accounting for 92 per cent of disaster-driven displacement events recorded between 2012 and 2022. Existing research further underlines the increased risks and vulnerabilities faced by IDPs, notably in terms of limited access to sustainable livelihoods, negative impacts on physical and mental health, and increased prevalence of protection risks such as child marriage and child labour, gender-based and domestic violence, often exacerbated among specific groups, including women and children. [19]

15 *IOM (2023), Afghanistan: Climate change as a driver of migration and internal displacement & climate change mitigation as a driver of economic growth and community development.*
16 *OCHA (2024), Afghanistan Floods: Flash Update #2 - Floods hit Eastern and Northeastern Afghanistan, 21 July 2024*
17 *Ibid*
18 *IDMC (2024), Global Report on Internal Displacement – 2023.*
19 *IOM / Samuel Hall (2022), Unpacking the Realities of Displacement Affected Communities in Afghanistan Since August 2021.*

These trends confirm that, post-August 2021, climate change and disasters are surpassing conflict as the main drivers of displacement in Afghanistan, based on UNHCR data, IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) and IDMC. In 2022, 83 per cent of one million newly displaced Afghans were forced to move as a result of climate change and disasters, while nearly 60 per cent of the population of Afghanistan was directly impacted by climate shocks, far surpassing the estimated 19 per cent suffering from security and conflict-related shocks. IDPs and returnees from Iran and Pakistan are facing increasingly difficult conditions tied to climate, which interact with the aftermath of armed conflict to compound risk exposure. As climate change weakens the foundations needed to return and reintegrate in safety and dignity, especially around livelihoods, economic opportunities and access to basic services, the absence of adaptative capacity in areas of high return makes it even harder to build the resilience needed to weather such stresses.

This research brief offers an opportunity to analyse the role played by climate change in displacement dynamics, and the lived experiences of returnees from Iran and Pakistan, as well as IDPs in Afghanistan.

Methodology

This brief begins with an overview of available quantitative data on the link between climate change, disasters, returns and displacement. Data has been extracted from the UNHCR REACH assessment covering 10,000 household surveys across 75 Priority Areas of Return and Reintegration (PARRs), with additional data integrated from the IDP locations dataset of UNHCR, IDMC's internal displacement dataset, and IOM's community based needs assessment (CBNA) covering the period between 2018 – 2023, with data on disasters collected from 2019.

The brief then turns to a discussion of key climate-related risks and threats experienced by returnees, drawing on available data from UNHCR, IOM and other relevant actors. In order to triangulate data, the research team employed a mixed methods approach with qualitative data collection in three provinces (Kabul, Kunduz and Herat) with the following methods informing the research brief:

Key Informant Interviews (10) conducted with (1) local leaders from both IDP and host communities – including religious leaders, (2) CSO representatives from or working with communities impacted by climate and/or disaster-driven displacement, (3) NGO and/or staff with significant experience responding to emergencies or providing services in displacement-affected communities or areas of Afghanistan; and (4) UN staff in Kabul for an overview of trends, drivers and dynamics.

Case studies and in-depth interviews (5) conducted with selected individuals with lived experiences of internal displacement, focusing on those displaced from climate- areas also affected by armed conflict or violence over the past five years. The case studies shed light on the interlinkages of various drivers, impacts – both direct and indirect, short and long term – and experiences of climate change, hazards, disaster and protracted displacement in Afghanistan. The analysis has been consolidated to provide a geographic overview of communities affected by returns, displacement, and climate change.

This research brief aims to:

1. Consolidate existing data on the nexus between climate change, return and internal displacement
2. Clarify how climate change and climate-induced disasters impact refugee return and internal displacement patterns in Afghanistan
3. Inform coherence between support for return and reintegration with emerging trends related to internal displacement.

Earthquake survivors shelter in UNHCR tents in Seya Aab village, Zindajan district, western Herat province, Afghanistan, after their houses were destroyed. Little more than rubble remains of the village after a 6.3 magnitude earthquake struck the area on 7 October.
© UNHCR/Abdul Wasi Shariq, ARAA

1. The Context

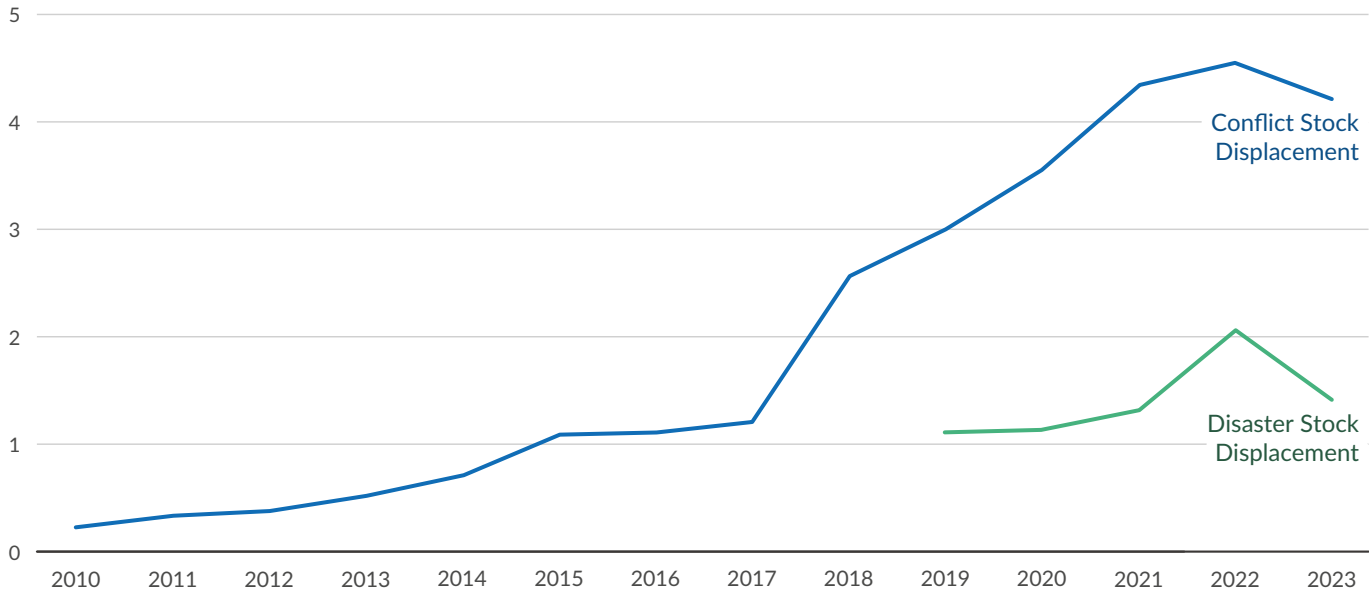
Displacement due to environmental factors is on the rise

Internal displacement caused by both conflict and disasters has been on the rise over the last decade in Afghanistan (Fig. 1).[20] Conflict-related displacement has steadily risen, peaking in recent years before showing a slight decline in 2023. Disaster-related displacement has also been increasing particularly after 2020, reflecting the growing influence of climate change, extreme weather events, and natural hazards.

Data confirms the increasing role of climate factors in driving displacement patterns in Afghanistan. The weight of disasters in decision-making processes surrounding mobility has increased in Afghanistan: while 42 per cent of respondents deemed disasters as either 'important' or 'very important' in their decision to move in 2019, this proportion had risen to 58 per cent by 2022.[21] On average, a large portion (44 per cent) of IDPs across the country had fled due to disasters. IDPs who fled provinces most affected by earthquakes and floods are more likely to list environmental factors as drivers behind their movements. In areas including

Figure 1. Trends in conflict and disaster stock displacement (2010-2023)

Number of displacements (million)



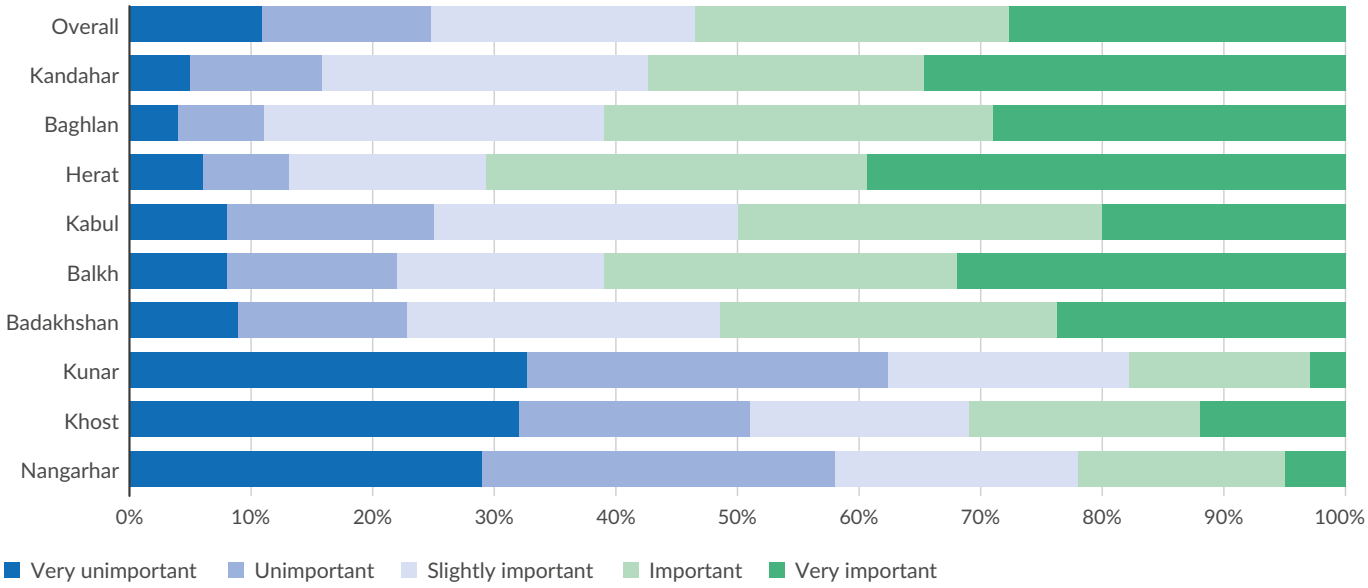
Source: IDMC
© UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency

20 *IDMC, Afghanistan Country Profile*
21 *IOM, Community Based Needs Assessment – Returns and Displacement in Afghanistan*

Herat, Baghlan, Balkh, Badakhshan, Takhar and Kabul, where people had been affected by earthquakes and floods, at least half of the respondents reported that disasters were an 'important' or 'very important' reason for IDP movements. More than half of IDPs arriving to Herat and Kabul attribute their decision to leave their previous homes to disasters (Fig. 2).

Based on PARR assessment data by REACH in 2024, the provinces of origin for climate-displaced IDPs reveal hotspots where environmental factors interact with pre-existing vulnerabilities to drive displacement. These include Nangarhar (74 households), Helmand (67 households), Jawzjan (38 households), Samangan (29 households), and Ghor (29 households).[22] For example, in Nangarhar, districts like Khogyani and Surkh Rod are key areas of origin for those displaced due to "climate-induced poverty". Similarly, in Helmand, Lashkargah and Nahr-e-Saraj face significant displacement due to precipitation deficits (droughts). In Jawzjan, the district of Shiberghan is heavily affected, with poverty linked to climate impacts as the primary driver. Dara-e-Suf Payin in Samangan and Feroz Koh in Ghor experience similar challenges. This poverty also means that those displaced by climate and disaster-related patterns are unable to go far from home. For households displaced due to disasters, most movements occurred within their district or province, underscoring the localized nature of their displacement. Factors such as familiarity with the area, social networks, and access to resources play a significant role in this pattern.

Figure 2. Importance of disasters in the decision to leave (by province)



Source: IOM Community Based Needs Assessment (CBNA)

22 *Sample size of IDP households who listed climate-related reasons for displacement was limited (n=679) based on the PARR assessment dataset (REACH-UNHCR, 2024).*

Climate vulnerable displaced populations and climate shocks driving displacement

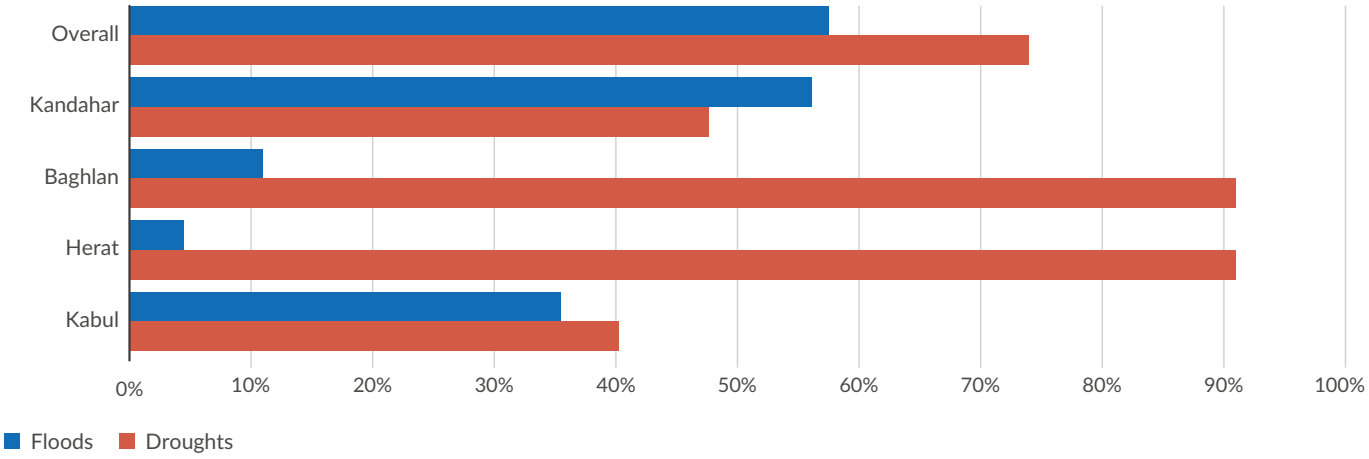
Climate-related displacement is rarely driven by environmental factors alone; it is intertwined with economic vulnerability and limited access to resources. A significant proportion of households returning from Pakistan and Iran depend on daily labour (54 per cent), agriculture-related income (42 per cent), or a combination of both (16 per cent) as their primary sources of livelihood, which means they are highly vulnerable to environmental risks, in particular the changes in precipitation patterns linked to climatic shifts in Afghanistan, and driving meteorological, hydrological, and agricultural drought episodes. While specific employment sectors providing daily wage work are not always directly exposed to climate impacts (as is the case with agricultural economies), the unreliable nature of daily labour undermines economic resilience of households facing climate-induced shocks and stresses.

Afghan refugee returnees, as well as the IDPs alongside which they often reside, are more vulnerable than host communities to environmental threats, reflecting the depletion of social capital in situations of displacement, as well as the higher risk of land tenure insecurity experienced by members of these groups.

In the second half of 2024, many have faced persistent hazard-related threats, including floods (24 per cent), droughts (28 per cent); earthquakes (3 per cent), avalanches and heavy snowfall (1 per cent). Uruzgan and Paktika are among the provinces most affected, with at least half of households reporting impacts from droughts, floods, or both. Droughts — the most widespread disaster — severely impacted households in Daykundi (91%), Kandahar (91%), Uruzgan (74%) and Zabul (75%), while earthquakes were most reported in Paktika and Paktya. Overall, displacement does not protect households from environmental and climate risks as their new locations may expose them to ongoing or increased hazards. This often reflects issues tied to land tenure insecurity and spatial planning: IDPs and returnees, often perceived as temporary residents, are assigned to areas (1) disconnected from – or misconnected to – service grids, (2) excluded from urban and other plans, including in certain cases disaster risk reduction measures, and (3) exposed to certain environmental hazards. For instance, residence in low-lying areas may increase exposure to flooding events, which fuel a range of protection, health and nutrition risks, particularly among women and children.

In terms of durable solutions, displaced households exposed to and impacted by environmental hazards are more likely to consider relocation compared to other households, with this relationship being statistically significant (p-value < 0.05). Earthquake-affected households in particular have lower “remain” intentions (75.9 per cent compared to 89–91 per cent for other disasters) and significantly higher “return to area of origin” intentions (17 per cent compared to 4–5 per cent for other disasters). For those affected by environmental shocks, Paktika shows the highest proportion of households intending to return to their area of origin (24 per cent), while Uruzgan has the highest share planning to move to a different province (8.2 per cent). Nangarhar, despite having many affected households, demonstrates high stability, with 97 per cent intending to remain. In contrast, Logar exhibits the highest number of households planning to move, mostly within Afghanistan, while Kunduz shows a notable proportion of households considering movements to another country. Samangan presents a mix of intentions, highlighting diverse responses to environmental challenges.

Figure 3. Flood and Drought Impact in Most Affected Provinces (past 6 months)



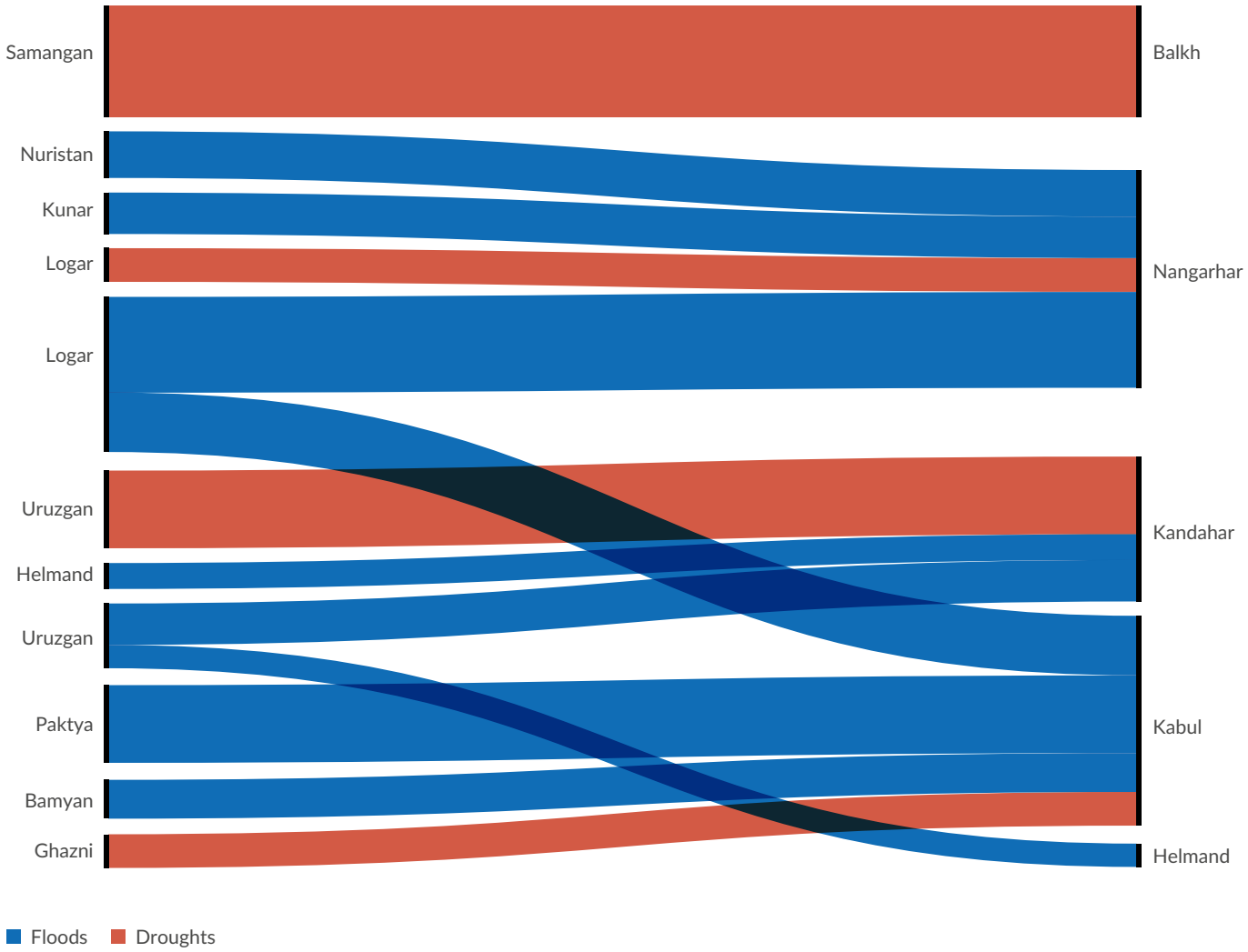
Source: UNHCR-REACH Socio-economic Vulnerability Assessment data collected in Priority Areas of Return and Reintegration (PARRs), 2024

Movement intentions are determined by displacement status and disaster exposure rather than income levels. Available resources, which tend to be dictated by income, factor into decisions made by households affected by environmental shocks, alongside the type of disaster, and the potential for long-term stability in potential areas of destination. Planning, especially if accompanied by positive steps towards mobility, may also denote longer-term plans, underscoring the availability of resources, or of human capital and support networks at intended destination. For those who experienced environmental shocks while in displacement, more urbanized provinces are often destinations of choice. Major urban provinces like Kabul, Nangarhar, Kandahar, and Balkh are the most common destinations.

Households that have experienced a disaster are 1.54 times more likely to plan a move ($p < 0.001$), while IDP households are significantly more likely to intend to relocate (51.5 per cent compared to 42.9 per cent for non-IDPs). Similarly, previously displaced households show higher movement intentions (29.1 per cent vs. 23.4 per cent).

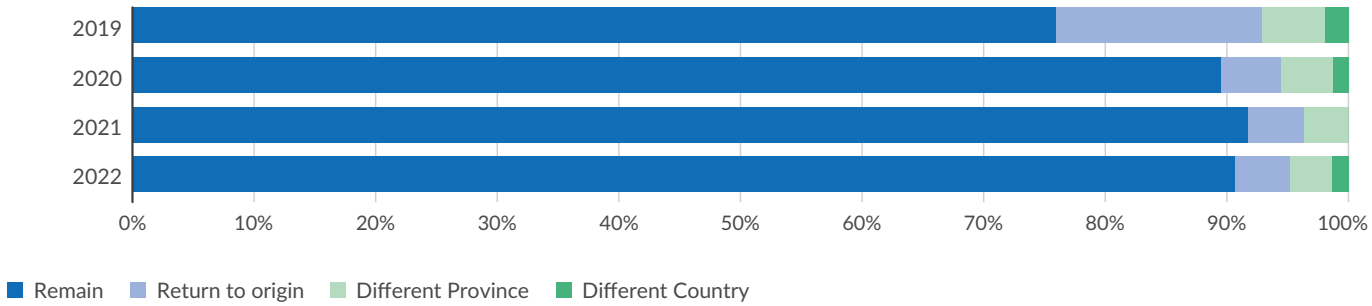
In contrast, income levels show no significant relationship with movement intentions ($p = 0.79$), and other factors, such as age, female-headed households, and receiving humanitarian aid, are also not significant predictors.

Figure 4. Planned movement by disaster type



Source: UNHCR-REACH Socio-economic Vulnerability Assessment data collected in Priority Areas of Return and Reintegration (PARRs), 2024

Figure 5. Movement intentions of those affected by environmental stress or disaster



Source: UNHCR-REACH Socio-economic Vulnerability Assessment data collected in Priority Areas of Return and Reintegration (PARRs), 2024

In Kunduz, A Fragile Refuge in a Changing Climate

In Kunduz many returnees are caught in a cycle shaped by conflict and climate shocks. Many fled the province due to war, only to return and find their home unrecognisable; hit by severe floods, relentless droughts, and freezing winters. Those who came back hoping to rebuild are being displaced again by an increasingly hostile environment. For families, coming back to Kunduz did not mean returning to stability.

Return to Uncertainty

“We first from Kunduz to Kabul because of the war, then to Iran when my father lost his job. But when things didn’t work out there, we came back,” Farah explained. However, the city they returned to is struggling under the weight of climate-induced destruction. “Floods destroyed my aunt’s house and, “My father repairs televisions, but when the cold sets in, his hands freeze, and he can’t work,” Farah said. Without employment or financial stability, rebuilding is impossible, leaving families exposed to further displacement.

Others, like Zubeida, headed to Kunduz after floods and earthquakes damaged their home. The destruction of homes, infrastructure, and livelihoods forces families from one area to another, seeking temporary shelter. “We lived in Bandar Khanabad after returning from Iran, but the house was in bad condition, so we moved again,” explains Zubeida.

Unlike other provinces, where returnees face social exclusion, many feel a sense of belonging. Families are not just struggling with extreme weather; they are trapped in a place where they cannot afford to leave. With Kunduz’s fragile economy, where jobs in winter, is often seen as the only

‘Here We Belong, Even If Life is Hard’

For some, the fear of losing everything again makes them reconsider leaving. “If climate change gets worse, we may have to leave,” explained Zubeida. But others, having experienced discrimination and hardship as refugees abroad, refuse to do so. “In Iran, we were not treated well. Here, we belong, even if life is hard,” Khadija said. Unlike other returnee communities, where social exclusion makes reintegration difficult, returnees in Kunduz —but that alone cannot protect them from displacement. Without homes, stable livelihoods, and climate-resilient infrastructure, their future remains uncertain.

2. Drivers and characteristics of climate impacts and displacement

Climate as a barrier to reintegration

Key informants underlined the barriers to reintegration caused by climate change. Nangarhar's northern Surkhrod district exemplifies many of these. Surkhrod counts over 40 villages and is home to various areas of high return such as the Chamtala returnee camp and Sheikh al Misri returnee township, but also returnee families most recently arrived from Pakistan and living in tents. It is one of Afghanistan's Priority Area of Return and Reintegration (PARR) as it has been classified as one of the highest return districts in the country. In this location, a key informant explains that refugee returnees face many challenges, including flash floods but also the continued challenges of pollution. Surkhrod is home to the brick kiln industry, a key source of livelihoods for Afghans returning from Pakistan, including of children. Returnees in Surkhrod district explain the various ways in which pollution, caused by brick factories, affects them. Families who do not have access to electricity have to sleep outdoors at night and wake up in the mornings covered with smoke on their faces from the factories.

Air pollution in Nangarhar has become a central topic. Surkhrod district counts more than 600 kilns and burn the materials that pollute the air. This pollution directly affects the health of returnees, making their situation even harder as they try to rebuild their lives. Surkhrod is also struggling with low groundwater level. Farmers use ground water for their crops, and as a result, many wells have dried up at a time of increasing returns from Pakistan. While there has been some awareness about drought, and requests to not use the ground water for crops, there are no alternatives offered.

> *"When we came back, we were happy at first, thinking that this is our homeland and our own people. We rebuilt our home with difficulty. But things didn't go as we hoped. The first year, heavy rains destroyed our rooms. There was no work, and we felt very sad and worried. The people here didn't treat us well and often harassed us. Villagers were rude and said that why did you come back? You shouldn't have returned from there."*
>
> **Case study participant in Nangarhar**

Extreme temperatures affect returnees. In Kabul, IDP families speak of the very cold weather and increasing illnesses that result from it in informal settlements across the city. Returnee families complain of the stark contrast with their lives in exile where they could afford electric heating systems. Upon return, the impact of the cold means that they have to restrict their children's time outdoors in recreational activities. Children are less able to play outside. In Nangarhar, the extreme hot weather resembles a "desert with no shade, no trees, no electricity, no fans", according to one respondent, while in the winter the lack of proper rooms or surrounding walls means that families are not protected from flash floods, storms or winds. In Kunduz, similarly, both the cold weather and hot weather have increased and are difficult for returnees to adjust to.

> *"We can't keep our children warm; in Iran, our children could sleep peacefully, here we do not have fuel to heat our home."*
>
> **Case study participant in Kunduz**

Flash floods. In Injil, respondents reflected on the loss of livestock and of land, due to flooding. A case study participant in Herat reports that when her community was hit by floods in 2023, it resulted in the loss of homes as well as agricultural lands. Her family lost their potatoes, wheat and other products they had cultivated to eat and to sell. This was followed by a period of drought that prevented the lands from being able to be used again. In the end, they left their homes, with no option to grow crops. A key informant in Herat confirms that returnee families were mostly engaged in farming and agriculture, prior to their movements but also in exile. Upon return, they tried their best to purchase land or work on other people's lands, to use their cultivation skills as a source of income. Unpredictable and increasingly scarce precipitation patterns, however, depleted agricultural production, undermining the livelihoods of returnee households.

> *"Everything we cultivated was taken away by floods. All our lands were covered in rocks and mud."*
>
> **Case study participant in Herat**

Gendered Barriers to Reintegration and Climate Resilience

Gender-specific barriers intersect with climate-related risks to deepen inequalities, limit women's coping strategies, and increase the likelihood of health, protection, and economic vulnerabilities. Key informants reported that female-headed households or households with husbands who are drug addicts often have to live in houses with no water at all. Sons bring water from distant areas and go to other people's homes for water. Among these families, the level of awareness on climate change among female returnees is low, as they mostly stay at home. While social media plays an important role in this area, women do not have access to a mobile phone or internet.

To access water, returnee women have to stand in long queues, waiting their turn to fetch a single barrel of water while others have to transport barrels from distant locations by cart. A respondent in Kunduz mentions that their houses have recently had water pipes installed but many people have had kidney problems using the unclean source of water. In Nangarhar as well, a respondent explains that her children have been getting sick and missing school because of illness as well as the family's poor conditions, but they have no money to be treated by a doctor.

A key informant in Kunduz confirms the impact of drought and shortage of drinking water on diseases like Helicobacter pylori (H. pylori), amoebiasis and kidney stones among individuals, as water sources are contaminated, and returnees lack access to clean drinking water.

Returnees reported that even in areas where private wells exist, the water is salty. In municipal water networks, they report finding contaminated water – often water mixed with wastewater – leading to worsening health conditions after their return. Case study participants in Herat speak of the severe droughts and earthquakes that cause many illnesses and health problems: sore throats, respiratory diseases, and cancer. Many local health clinics have also been destroyed by floods. This is the case of a case study participant in Nangarhar who explained that their closest clinic – Fatima Al Zahrah health clinic – was destroyed by midnight floods which occurred in 2023. She remembers the flash floods that hit their village *"There was no way to go out. One day, heavy rain coupled with a strong storm hit our place. The water entered our rooms and our windows and glass panes all broke. To keep the cold off, we put plastic sheets in*

some windows, but some are still broken and ruined. A few months ago, our area faced a dangerous flood. Everybody ran into the streets and alleys. Ambulances came, and rescue teams arrived to take people out of the rising waters. During that disaster, many families lost their homes. We were very frightened for our kids; there was a high risk of being drowned and taken away. Nothing else was to be done but to implore Allah. It was a night of terrors."

The experience of disasters combined with a lack of information prevents women's capacity to protect themselves. Women interviewed point out that earthquakes and disasters means more competition over limited humanitarian aid. A case study respondent in Nangarhar explains not knowing of the history of disasters in her community of return in Nangarhar, where she has suffered from floods and severe rains since returning from Pakistan a year ago. Her family brought solar panels from Pakistan, but the storm and rains broken both solar panels, and destroyed houses in her community. Her family cannot afford to buy new ones.

Returns and climate-induced displacement add pressures on water usage and scarcity

The pressures of climate change and disasters are compounded by a water management crisis. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) data provided by UNEP for 2022 show that Afghanistan had achieved 12 per cent of its implementation of integrated water resource management[23]. Kabul households rely on shallow wells as public water is distributed intermittently to 20 per cent of the population[24]. It is estimated that there are over 120,000 shallow wells in Kabul and over 40 percent are projected to be seasonally dry or completely dry by 2057 due to overexploitation[25]. Afghanistan has an overall surface water availability of 2,775m3 per capita per year, one of the highest in the region. Despite this relatively elevated volume of surface water, existing studies on the water population density (WPD) indicator[26] have found that countries like Afghanistan, which already face a water crisis, will see a decreasing per capita availability of water. The water population density (WPD) reveals the dual need for stronger management of population distribution and of water resources.

Population growth due to displacement and returns have intensified water stress. Previous research has shown that the absence of water was often a push factor driving Afghans to move to other communities and to urban centres.[27] Respondents interviewed in UNHCR's qualitative research emphasize that population density has grown over time with returns, with high levels of internal displacement and limited local integration posing problems not just for displaced and host communities. Key informants explain *"water from the government supply reaches storage tanks every two or three nights during the summer, for those who have water pumps in Kabul. However, the rest of the population faces numerous challenges. The water*

23 SDG data
24 USAID. Kabul Urban Water Supply Program
25 Mack, T.; Akbari, M.; Ashoor, M.; Chornack, M.; Coplen, T.; Emerson, D.; Hubbard, B.; Litke, D.; Michel, L.; Plummer, L.; Rezai, M.; Senay, G.; Verdin, J.; Verstraeten, I. Conceptual Model of Water Resources in the Kabul Basin , Afghanistan Scientific Investigations Report 2009 – 5262; 2009.
26 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/370867450_Water_population_density_Global_and_regional_analysis/figures
27 IOM/Samuel Hall 2022 – Infrastructure brief

table has dropped significantly and the government water supply for others is inactive. Some households have dug deep wells - at great personal expense - and they're going dry"[28]. Conversations with research participants highlight the need for awareness raising on the impacts of drought and implications for water consumption in a context of rapidly increasing urban populations, higher consumption needs and water levels which have dropped 130-150 meters in recent years. Forced returns of Afghans from Pakistan in 2023-2024 have been projected to strain resources further given the inability of returnees to return to home areas devastated by climate shocks. The same can be said of planned forced returns from Iran in 2025.

Returnees and IDPs can't afford to buy clean water. This affects public health, resulting in various diseases. It has affected relationships within the community and caused disputes. When there are health needs, access to healthcare is limited to private clinics – there are no public health centres in some of the high return areas.[29]

Afghanistan's climate-security-displacement nexus leads to continued displacement and greater sense of scarcity. The nexus between climate, security and displacement was explained by one civil society organization representative: *"Our homes were used as [defensive] shields [by combatants] for many years, leading to widespread destruction during the wars. Then, when we lacked water, we had to leave."* While armed conflict and violence have long played a major role in driving displacement patterns in Afghanistan, water scarcity is now increasingly presented as the tipping point directly informing the decision to move.

Many return areas were unsafe due to years of conflict, with insecurity being one of the main obstacles to achieving durable solutions. Many households returned to their land after August 2021, as a result of the improved security only to be secondarily displaced due to drought and water scarcity[30]. Disasters including earthquakes in Herat, and floods in Maidan Wardak, affect returnees, and lead to further displacement, forcing people to leave their regions, forced to restart afresh with few means. The pattern of returnee refugee mobility, whereby certain households are going 'home' to displacement, while others elect to establish residence in cities rather than return to their areas of origin, has been a reality in Afghanistan for over a decade. A 2017 study[31] revealed that 27 per cent of returnee-IDP respondents had been forced to move three times or more, meaning they had experienced exile, return and secondary displacement. The likelihood of those who are displaced accessing aid decreases in cases where they settle in rural areas, where they are simultaneously more exposed to the impacts of climate change, and to vulnerabilities associated with poor quality housing.

Tensions within communities are contributing to a perception of scarcity of resources[32]. A 2024 expert analysis produced by Sanaa Alimia for the Asia Displacement Solutions Platform (ADSP) refers to refugee returns, the politics of water and scarcity as a

28 KII1K
29 KII1K
30 UNAMA
31 ICMPD, NRC, Samuel Hall Going "Home" to displacement: Afghanistan's returnee-IDPs, December 2017.
32 UNAMA Study on the interlinkages between climate change, peace and security in Afghanistan ; IOM/Samuel Hall 2022

construct, pointing to the fact that scarcity – the notion that there are not enough resources to meet population needs – is largely socially and politically generated.[33] In such contexts of scarcity, newcomers to a location or community, whether refugee returnees or IDPs, become scapegoats for the perceived scarcity. The returns from Iran and Pakistan are adding to this perception of "the outsider" exacerbating water concerns expressed by various government and community representatives. KII1KZ speaks of the increasing tensions over access to water as returnees *"wait all day to get water. Those who have just returned, people don't let them use those sources [of water], they argue over water"*. The impacts of limited water access combined with political instability and economic hardship contribute to increasing levels of displacement and disproportionately affect marginalised groups such as returnees and IDPs.[34]

Community vulnerability is on the rise in refugee returnee hosting areas also impacted by internal displacement

Displacement-affected areas often lack resilience and adaptation capacity. Returnees interviewed explain that their economic situation does not allow them to live in disaster resilient housing. Living close to rivers due to limited financial means, leaves families vulnerable to from climate shocks. As explained by a case study participant: *"Our village is so close to the river that only a little space separates us from the water. Consequently, floods are very common. On days of heavy rain, we live in constant fear, worried that another flood might wash our home away."*

Houses made of mud – to which some returnees come back to, or where IDPs live – are not equipped for disasters and climate change. A case study participant said that houses which are not equipped to face earthquakes or rains – the combination of which increases the risk of landslides – as walls are constantly leaking. Another participant in Nangarhar reported that landlords were not willing to repair cracks in the walls caused by earthquakes, with certain cracks being so big that *"one could see through them"*. Instead, landlords increase rents. Others report that houses provided by the aid community have been destroyed by flash floods. A case study participant in Kunduz explained how their roof was destroyed. This was their first house upon return from Iran, in which they lived with their in-laws, but the roof was destroyed and they had to move to a different location within the province. A key informant in Kunduz explained that often times *"People don't want to rebuild their houses. Those who can afford it will buy land in higher areas where they are safe from flooding. But most returnees have no option but to live in lower areas where there is rising river water, and risks of secondary and tertiary displacement. The same areas are vulnerable to dust storms, and drought. Even if they don't move to another region, families are separate, and the head of household may relocate to earn a living for their families."*

Others in displacement-affected communities limit their expenditures and investments in adaptive measures, a spending pattern which itself serves as a coping mechanism, as it reduces the exposure of household capital, savings and financial resilience to climate change. They do not invest in their lands as they are

33 Alimia, Sanaa. 2024, Water, Climate, and Refuge across Afghanistan and the Sub-Region, Expert Analysis ADSP/Samuel Hall
34 Ibid

Sanam, resident of Aab Shirin village, Herat, who has received CRIs from UNHCR. © UNHCR/Faramarz Barzin

afraid to lose their investment when a disaster occurs. Communities are afraid that their crops will be destroyed by floods.. In lieu of adopting better harvesting and planting practices, including crop locations and rotations -they opt instead to minimise all investments. The absence of technology and poor crop management strategy is limiting productivity.[35]

At the community and household levels, climate vulnerabilities heighten tensions in displacement affected communities, over food as well as sources of energy. Climate induced hardship creates family tensions during displacement, notably over access to food for the family. A respondent in Kunduz explained that because her husband was unemployed, in their new location, she often questioned whether they would be able to feed their children, and whether they would even survive. In Nangarhar, respondents more explicitly linked competition for electricity to fights with the host community, often among family members hosting them. As refugee returnees from Pakistan, they found refuge in Afghanistan by staying with their in-laws. In the summer they are exposed to extreme heat in the absence of the means to pay for a fan. *"They often fight us not to use their electricity, but my kids return from school and insist on using the fan. What can I tell them? We didn't have to worry about such aspects of life in Pakistan."* Similarly, in Qarabagh, Kabul, returnees have joined others who had returned several years earlier. They are faced with challenges which did not exist in Iran. In Qarabagh, the water reservoir was destroyed, resulting in flooding and infrastructural damage to school facilities. Disasters also made it extremely challenging for locals to travel to clinics.

Tensions escalate in communities that need to share limited resources with IDPs and returnees from Pakistan and Iran. As explained by a key informant familiar with the return landscape of Afghanistan: *"Climate change has put serious economic strain on community relationships"*. Conversations with case study participants revealed that tensions were widespread and mainly tied to water access. This reflects the strain placed by climate change and precipitation deficiencies on local water systems and consumption habits, exacerbated by poor management practices alongside limited regulations and oversight. The same informant goes on to reveal how these tensions surrounding access to basic resources are often gendered, putting female community members at a disadvantage: *"I remember one elderly woman who was the head of her household. A nearby pipeline that was connected to a shop was meant to serve the area, but residents from other regions prevented her from collecting water"*

35 *Poole, N. et al (2022) Sowing the wheat seeds of Afghanistan's future in the New Phytologist Foundation, volume 4, issue 5.*

3. Operational and Policy Implications

Operational implications

Responding to climate change and disaster-induced displacement and to the multi-levelled impacts on return and reintegration requires an approach that covers both immediate needs and long-term solutions. Returns from Iran and Pakistan are often unprepared. Yet preparedness is key to the search for durable solutions.

Preparedness refers to a proactive and planned response to emergency, disasters, and in the context of this brief, to situations of return and displacement.

> *"Nowadays when floods take place, our people don't what to do except shouting and screaming. Because they don't know. If they know, it will give them ease. Knowing is big achievement. Public awareness is crucial for the people of our village. Because this village is on the flood's path"*
>
> **KII3N**

> *"The loss of lives occurs because we don't know when a flood will come or when an earthquake will happen"*
>
> **CS3K**

Returnees lack visibility on the conditions upon return and are unprepared for the multiple crises they might face upon return. A greater focus is needed to sensitise returnees on climate change, including on risks surrounding climate-induced disaster events. Returnees could also be directly involved in supporting the establishment and operation of Early Warning Systems, and more broadly to community-level disaster risk reduction. Returnees interviewed in Kabul had planned, upon return, to prioritise acquisition of legal identity documents. However, they had not foreseen that their attempts to obtain legal identification would be hindered by climate hazards and related environmental disasters. In turn, their ability to access aid for basic needs or even food assistance is undermined by a lack of official documentation. The bureaucratic barriers are exacerbated among female returnees (see Protection Brief), who tend to already experience heightened challenges and vulnerabilities as compared to their male counterparts, notably as a result of their limited access to public space, information and official support.

Resource scarcity, in many cases exacerbated by climate change, adds to the need to enhance awareness at a community level, targeting high return areas and displacement affected communities. Access to aid was raised by those interviewed as a competition between groups. In Nangarhar's Surkh Road, the locals did not want to share aid with the returnees nor provide information to support them, leading to arguments and fights, with the situation worsened during sudden climatic events and water scarcity. Returnee respondents recognized at the same time that villagers were traumatized by heavy rainfalls that had destroyed homes, limiting access to drinking water and other basic needs for all. A key informant in Kunduz spotlights the lack of awareness programmes and initiatives to address the gaps in accessing clean drinking water but also the many health impacts.

Information gaps: Refugee returnees, IDPs and others in situations of displacement often lack access to information channels. People who are better-off economically or who have stronger community networks can access information through the internet,

TV programmes and through their local networks - while people who do not have access to these resources remain unaware of such matters.

Self-funded solutions included returnees who collectively funded to drill a borehole in their community or with the help of NGOs and diaspora. In several locations of return, diaspora investments, through remittances, supported access to energy and water. Yet, these actions are often insufficient and represent short term solutions. The more permanent solution they would like to see is water from the Panjshir river supplied to them through a private company or through the municipality.

> *"Women play an important role in coming up with strategies. A man can run away and protect himself against potential danger, but a woman cannot do the same. When water levels rise, the woman is obliged to force her husband to shift to a safer place. Some prefer to stay here in the village. But, the walls that were built to reduce floods damage are not able to prevent floods from destroying everything. Houses are still exposed to great danger. After the interview, I can walk you through the area to see that walls are not built in an area to prevent the flood from ruining the houses."*
>
> **Key informant, Nangarhar**

Children in Gul Dar-e-Shaikha village are studying in the open air after recent devastating floods. Children used to study in 6 tents at this school - but they were washed away in flash floods, that also destroyed a protection wall and bridge. © UNHCR/Caroline Gluck

Community adaptation measures included:

Environmental protection and adapting community livelihood activities to seasons of the year: community leaders in Kabul province spoke of the need to *"change the climate"* or adapt to climate change through tree planting, flower planning and building greener parks. One community took the initiative to directly reach out to the Ministry of Water and Energy and hired one of their gardeners to build a space in the community to plant flowers and saplings.

Using technology to address water access issues. Returnees often bring back new skills from their time abroad that can contribute to improvements in their new communities' pathway to resilience. KII2K, a community leader, explains how he learned carpet weaving while a refugee in Pakistan, making new carpets look old and antique, giving them an "old wash" to increase the value. Upon return, he had the idea to bring this model to Afghanistan and brought machinery for washing carpets along with other tools and materials. He then proceeded to start a carpet business. However, despite resorting to mechanical borehole technology, this participant quickly encountered obstacles to accessing water in sufficient quantities to maintain his business, leading to a realisation that returnee are disproportionately affected by water scarcity in Afghanistan. Returnees also have limited access to effective water management technologies. The latter should be expanded, alongside efforts to regulate consumption and mitigate scarcity.

Sustainable agriculture and introducing new crops to their communities. Returnees from Pakistan living in Kabul began mushroom cultivation, which was not commonly practiced in Afghanistan. The crop can be grown across all seasons of the year and was reported in interviews as being a viable alternative to agricultural livelihoods impacted by drought. Mushroom farming has gradually become a significant source of home-based income generation according to the Food and Agriculture Organization in Afghanistan.[36] Such farming Is highly cost-effective, requiring minimal capital and basic materials, namely spawn, straw, thermometer, wheat brane, gypsum and an oven. Moreover, mushroom hold both nutritional and economic value for households. Since 2015 FAO has been actively introducing mushroom and spawn production in Afghanistan, working alongside Kabul University's Agriculture Department to further provide training on mushroom farming.

Supporting urban solutions: A research study with the municipality of Jalalabad found that more respondents were dissatisfied with their access to green spaces in 2022 than in 2021, with greater dissatisfaction among women, as their access to green areas had been further limited. One of the key takeaways of the Jalalabad city note – produced in 2024 by the municipality, displaced and community representatives, UN and NGOs, as part of the Protracted Displacement in an Urban World (PDUW) project – highlighted one core conclusion: the need to enhance urban planning with a focus on a greener city and dedicated spaces for youth and women.[37] This was confirmed in interviews with key informants and community leaders who believe a key to social cohesion and integration contribute to cleaner air.

36 *FAO 2023 – Mushroom farming : a major source of home-based income generation*
37 *Jalalabad city note 2024.*

Policy implications

This knowledge brief highlights the need to support durable solutions planning with a climate lens including:

Adjust and target funding to better address vulnerabilities among returnees and IDPs: Returnees are especially vulnerable to climate impacts, and often lack the necessary social and financial capital to withstand disasters and extreme weather. Specific challenges experienced by members of this group overlap with those observed among host and IDP communities. Efforts should be made to ensure funding and planning support area-based initiatives strategically respond to the specific needs arising in areas of high return, and recognising parallel challenges extending to a broader segment of local communities and populations. These interventions can create a basis for solutions from the early onset of return.

Link durable solutions programming to climate resilient interventions: The challenges faced by refugee returnees and IDPs in climate-affected areas reflect issues experienced by other segments of the Afghan population. Investments in building the resilience of those communities should be integrating into durable solutions policies and programmes to link reintegration with resilience to extreme weather and disasters. This is especially recognising the importance of avoiding tensions and building social cohesion to support reintegration.

Father-of-seven Sayed Gul, 42, a returnee from Pakistan who lost his house after flash flooding devastated villages in Baghlan province, Afghanistan, in May 2024, looks through the remains of his ruined home and belongings. UNHCR is supporting with a family tent, non-food items and a solar lamp. © UNHCR/Faramarz Barzin

Invest in disaster-resilient infrastructure and communities' maintenance capacity: This brief highlights the need to invest in measures such as drought-resistant crops, water conservation techniques, and sustainable livelihoods in areas of return. Other steps include providing returnees and IDPs with disaster-resilient shelters and working closely with communities to maintain infrastructure. A common question raised in interviews after disasters had caused extensive damage to infrastructure and public buildings, was: *'Who wants to rebuild anything here?'* Similar questions were asked in Herat and Kabul, with complaints that little to no action had been taken to repair damaged services while communities could not afford to repair wells and broken pumps on their own. Similarly, in Jalalabad, the cost of inaction was discussed when doctors no longer report for work at storm-damaged or destroyed clinics, or when children could no longer access schools due to damaged buildings or blocked roads. In these cases, infrastructure planning and supporting returnees and IDPs, e.g. through cash for work programmes, to maintain infrastructure becomes critical. Key informants stressed the importance of the private sector's role in climate change adaptation and help in rebuilding efforts.

Support planned relocations where necessary and through consultative approaches: Where investments in building resilience are not feasible or cost efficient, and to avoid further unprepared displacement, communities should be supported through adequate planning and consultation for alternative, resettlement approaches. It is crucial for partners and community leaders to ensure women's participation in the process, alongside people with disabilities and children, as their needs will need to be accounted for through proper safeguarding, and by providing adequate information and support to their resettlement. This aligns with UNHCR's global guidance on best practices on planning relocations to protect people from disasters and environmental change[38].

Inclusion of women in climate adaptation and reintegration planning: As this brief shows, women in returnee and displacement-affected communities face distinct challenges in accessing clean water, healthcare, and climate information, despite often playing central roles in household resource management and coping strategies. Female-headed households described long waits at water points, unaffordable medical care, and reduced access to communication tools such as mobile phones or the internet. They may be unable to contribute to self-funded adaptation solutions due to limited income, restricted mobility, and exclusion from community decision-making spaces. Targeted outreach to women is required to facilitate their participation in community adaptation plans. These challenges are compounded by exclusion from decision-making spaces and limited mobility. At the same time, women play a critical role in managing household resources and leading informal adaptation efforts. Programmes should take deliberate steps to ensure inclusive and meaningful participation in local planning processes, prioritise support to female-headed households, expand access to tailored climate information for women in low-connectivity contexts, and track progress through gender-disaggregated data and monitoring frameworks. Doing so is not only a matter of equity but a way to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of adaptation and reintegration efforts.

38 UNHCR (2017) A Toolbox : Planning Relocations to Protect People from Disasters and Environmental Change

CLIMATE IMPACTS RETURN AND DISPLACEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN

Research Brief - May 2025

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