

## Refugee Livelihoods Network (RLN) December 2004

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### Featured Links:

- [Website of Government of Afghanistan: e.a. Ministries, International Aid, Return](#)
- [Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit \(AREU\): independent research organisation with excellent publications and Internet links](#)
- [Site on Afghan development, e.g. Afghan diaspora, refugees-returnees](#)
- [Migration Information Source. General migration site](#)

### The case of Afghanistan

This RLN issue focuses on the case of a specific country and its people: Afghanistan. It brings together information on refugee livelihood initiatives and lessons learned from livelihood projects operating in this region, in order for those working in other areas to gain from these experiences. Afghanistan has experienced war and civil strife for over 20 years, and is currently finding itself in a very slow and extremely fragile process towards improved security and stability. While it is still the number one country of origin of refugees worldwide and there are large groups of IDPs in Afghanistan, over the last two years it has also been the destination of the largest voluntary repatriation movements. In large parts of the country, the security situation is still highly unstable and political developments are slow. On the other hand, huge investments are made in the country for 'post-conflict' reconstruction, and the return of refugees is being stimulated. Especially highly qualified members of the Afghan diaspora are invited to contribute to their country's future. This newsletter looks at the impact of these developments on the livelihoods of stayees, IDPs, refugees and returnees, and provides information on how organizations are trying to guarantee sustainable livelihoods for the Afghan people. Especially the AREU's extensive work on livelihoods in Afghanistan has proven extremely helpful, and can set a good example to data collection on refugee livelihoods elsewhere.

The RLN moderator invites subscribers to submit papers, reports, descriptions of projects and relevant website links for the two upcoming issues. The January 2005 edition will focus on refugee livelihoods upon return. Repatriation efforts have received increasing attention by the international community, and many initiatives have developed to stimulate voluntary return of refugees. Large return operations are underway, but it is clear that such operations create many challenges for the livelihoods of all those involved. Reintegration of returnees and IDPs is a very complex issue, as they have lost most of their local assets, often have no proof of property claims, and will return to an area where the infrastructure may have been destroyed. Stayees on the other hand will feel the burden of large groups of people returning to the area, and their livelihood options may worsen with the return of better-qualified people from Western countries. The February 2005 edition will focus on tools and methods that can be employed in conducting livelihood assessments and case studies. We are looking forward to learning from our subscribers about livelihood approaches they use, and will present information on the 'sustainable livelihoods toolbox' and other methodologies in order to improve the usefulness of data collected on refugee livelihoods. Send your contribution to Cindy Horst at [REF.NET@inter.NL.net](mailto:REF.NET@inter.NL.net); deadlines January 26th and February 24th.

[Click here for UNHCR statistical information.](#)

### Key publications and reports:

Three villages in Alingar, Laghman: A case study of rural livelihoods - Kerr-Wilson, A. & A. Pain (2003)

This paper is part of the AREU's Rural Livelihoods Monitoring Research Project, which started in late 2002. It aims to stimulate debate over the nature and diversity of livelihood strategies in rural Afghanistan and NGO responses to those strategies. The survey found that rural village and household economies are complex with differences between villages and within villages. It also found that non-agricultural activities - farm labour, wood collection and non-farm labour - are essential to village and household livelihood strategies, and raise important programming issues for NGOs. The findings prove a challenge for NGOs as they usually do not take into account differences between villages, wealth groups, households and individuals. Furthermore, in a rural setting they may have a particular focus on agriculture, while the role of agriculture may be variable.

[Click here to link to this rural livelihoods case study](#)

### Lessons from Afghanistan. Livelihoods and chronic conflict working paper

Adam Pain argues that there is a great need for consistent livelihood understanding and analysis-informing humanitarian practice in Afghanistan. The emerging reconstruction agenda in Afghanistan post 11 September gives greater emphasis to livelihood concerns, at least at the policy level, but this is not well translated into programming. Three case studies - on opium production, an economic blockade in Hazarajat, and carpet production in Northern Afghanistan - illustrate the complexity of livelihoods and the

dynamics of power relations, which need to be understood when setting up humanitarian programmes.

[Click here to view Adam Pain's paper](#)

### **Addressing Livelihoods in Afghanistan**

This paper by Adam Pain and Sue Lautze critically reviews the sustainable livelihoods framework in the context of conflict and political instability. Conflict and drought have been major structural determinants of recent livelihoods changes, with migration, diversification, and a merging of urban and rural spaces now characteristic of the livelihoods context. Recent rapid policy processes include some livelihoods concerns, but these are not systematically analysed or addressed and information on the content of livelihoods systems continues to be scarce. The paper offers a series of detailed recommendations for building livelihoods objectives and outcomes more systematically into policy and programming. These include investing in knowledge about livelihood systems, in empowered monitoring systems for livelihoods surveillance, and in systems for using this knowledge to identify livelihoods goals within programmes. Secondly, the authors recommend developing livelihoods approaches for relevant sectors and ministries, and effective co-ordinating systems across ministries and organisations for multi-sectoral communication.

[Click here to access this critical review of the sustainable livelihoods framework](#)

### **Cooperation, remittances, and kinship among the Hazaras**

During the past twenty years of war and spatial mobility the third largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, the Hazaras, have been able to use existing cultural resources to open new horizons. They have set up very efficient transnational migratory and trade networks and have developed strong political claims in Afghanistan. Money transferred through the hawalla system provides a very efficient strategy for millions of Afghans striving for survival. The amount exceeds by far the total amount of humanitarian aid, and allows for the reproduction of social ties despite insecurity and dispersion. The exchanges take place through the circulation of people, documents, goods and money; thus securing the livelihoods of many.

See: Monsutti, A. 2004. Cooperation, remittances, and kinship among the Hazaras. *Iranian Studies* 37(2): 219-240

[Monsutti's book on this topic \(French\) can be accessed here](#)

### **Urban vulnerability in Afghanistan. Case studies from three cities**

The term "vulnerability" has become a catch phrase of the assistance community working in Afghanistan, but little is known about the particular risks faced by so-called "vulnerable groups" and how they cope with these. This paper offers an initial examination of the asset vulnerability of the urban poor in Kabul, Jalalabad and Herat. Focus group discussions with residents in these cities revealed four intertwined risks common to all social groups: loss of income and indebtedness, food insecurity, deteriorating health, and social exclusion and disempowerment. The study also found that vulnerability is not confined to specific locations, and the report includes specific recommendations for how to tackle urban vulnerability that goes beyond programming solely targeted to "vulnerable groups."

[Click here to read this paper by Stefan Schutte](#)

### **Some notes on the livelihoods of the urban poor in Kabul, Afghanistan**

This qualitative research studies the livelihoods of urban poor in Afghanistan. It shows that a study of urban poverty from a livelihoods perspective should involve much more than simply income and assets measurement. Attention must also be paid to various other factors, such as a household's informal social networks with extended kin, neighbors, friends and sources of power in the community. Households most lacking in informal safety nets are often those most strikingly in need of immediate external assistance. Furthermore, it is crucial that project interventions support and build on existing household assets and strategies, as poor household members are active decision-makers. They could be assisted through the establishment of projects involving community organization, in order to strengthen much-needed social

and political capital.

[Click here to access Pamela Hunt's paper](#)

### **Afghanistan's IDPs**

Forced Migration Review 21 provides two articles on Afghanistan's IDPs; pages 34-36, 37-38:

A closing window? Are Afghanistan's IDPs being forgotten? By Pete Spink  
Afghanistan has developed a national IDP plan but, without resources, is failing to assist those who comprise three-quarters of the country's remaining IDP population - the Kuchi nomads.

Uzbek IDPs in western Afghanistan: to move onward, to stay or to return. By Elca Stigter

Microanalysis of intra-household decision making and movement patterns of a segment of Uzbek IDP households in Afghanistan facilitates a better understanding of how complex migration processes are shaped by social, political and economic factors. Transnational and national networks can facilitate sustainable return but, at the same time, promote further displacement for economic reasons.

[To read Elca Stigter's article, click here](#)

### **Trafficking in persons. An IOM analysis**

Afghanistan is confronted with a significant trafficking problem, with trafficking victims drawn from the most vulnerable communities. Displaced, destitute and indebted persons and families, young people seeking economic opportunity abroad and rural women are targets for trafficking crimes. Afghanistan's chronic insecurity, massive displacement and poverty born of conflict and drought contribute to making many people vulnerable to this kind of exploitation. The role of women and girls as objects for dispute resolution, the power of local assemblies applying customary law, and the limited autonomy of women are additional factors that contribute to trafficking and make it difficult to combat. Besides trafficking, human smuggling is a very common phenomenon, very well depicted in the 2002 movie 'In this world' directed by Michael Winterbottom, on two young Afghan men trying to move from Pakistani refugee camps to the UK.

[Click here to read this IOM report on trafficking](#)

### **Reversing the Brain Drain**

Afghan-American Diaspora in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding and Reconstruction. The loss of human resources that Afghanistan experienced following the Soviet invasion of 1979 is often referred to as the 'brain drain'. This paper postulates that a similar but 'reverse brain drain' is currently in progress as former Afghan nationals return to the country in droves to assist in the rebuilding of Afghanistan. While remaining aware of risks and challenges, the potential for building the capacity of civil society and the private sector is at its peak. This thesis is examined within the context of Afghan culture, opportunities for personal and professional growth in the United States for the diaspora, and how these positive externalities can be harnessed to bring the maximal value added to the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

[Click here to access this discussion paper by Nadia Afrin](#)

### **Taking refugees for a ride? The politics of refugee return to Afghanistan**

In the year 2002, Afghanistan saw one of the largest and most rapid assisted return movements to have been organized by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees since the early 1970s. Yet the return of so many people to a country devastated by 23 years of war caused widespread anxiety. This paper by David Turton and Peter Marsden charts the course of the assisted repatriation program, discusses consequences for those who repatriated and those who did not, and questions whether the pace of Afghanistan reconstruction should or could have been managed differently.

[Click here to access this paper on refugee return](#)

## UNHCR Returnee Monitoring Report Afghanistan Repatriation

Afghanistan is still recovering from 23 years of conflict that deeply affected the functioning of society and state structure. Although high numbers of refugees and IDPs are returning, the conditions they face are very harsh, both in terms of socio-economic prospects and in terms of security. For the reintegration of returnees to be sustainable, the international community must assist the Afghan government in building the country. With the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, UNHCR will endeavour to achieve the following priorities: 1) Increase information collection and dissemination; 2) Consolidate the capacity of national and local authorities to respect the rights of returnees; 3) Further develop and support a strategy on preventing and addressing violence against women.

[Click here to access the UNHCR Returnee Monitoring Report](#)

## Land issues within the repatriation process of Afghan refugees

Land related problems are amongst the most serious issues threatening the stability of Afghanistan, and reorganisation of the land tenure system in Afghanistan is a priority that merits the attention of the authorities, the international community and donor governments. UNHCR, together with other UN agencies, advocates for prioritising this issue on the national agenda and for assisting the authorities in identifying the key problems and devising practical and effective solutions. See also, on the same topic: [information on the ID21 site](#).

[Click here to access this document on land issues in Afghanistan](#)

## Learning and Good practice

DACAAR, Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees, is a development non-governmental organisation which works towards sustainable livelihoods for rural Afghans including the lasting return of refugees and internally displaced people. DACAAR works at village level in close cooperation with the local population in order to enable them to meet basic needs and secure improved livelihoods. At the national level, DACAAR is also actively involved in nation building with the Government of Afghanistan. DACAAR was established in 1984 specifically to provide support and relief to Afghan refugees in Pakistan. Since 1989, DACAAR has furthermore worked inside Afghanistan, concentrating on rehabilitation and development work.

[Click here for more information on DACAAR](#)

## ARTF Expatriate Services Program

The reconstruction of Afghanistan, after years of war, conflict and destruction is an enormous task requiring strategic planning, comprehensive, coordinated and sequenced actions, substantial amounts of capital, and above all, skilled human resources. Decades of conflict have resulted in the displacement of Afghanistan's professional work force and the collapse of critical services in a wide range of sectors. In order for the reconstruction efforts to succeed in a timely manner, the placement of highly skilled Afghan professionals with significant reconstruction and development experience to plug critical skill gaps in ministries and other government agencies is of vital importance. The ARTF (Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund) is a multi donor trust fund administered by the World Bank in support of Afghanistan's reconstruction efforts, which will be implemented with the assistance of the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

[Click here to learn about ARTF's Expatriate Program](#)

## Return of Qualified Afghans from the EU

The International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Return for Qualified Afghans programme (EU-RQA), which is co-funded by the [European Commission](#), is offering comprehensive assistance packages to qualified and highly qualified Afghans now residing in the EU who wish to return to their home country to work in the public and private sectors. The EU-RQA programme focuses on the development of critical sectors in Afghanistan including: private businesses that provide goods and services in the domestic market, civil and social services, public infrastructure, and rural development.

[Click here to access IOM's website on EU-RQA](#)

### **Enterprising across borders in Afghanistan**

Since 2002, the situation in Afghanistan has improved and there is a lot of commercial initiative going on, especially in Kabul and other major cities. This also offers market opportunities for Afghan entrepreneurs in the Netherlands. There is a need for many products and services in the reconstruction of the country. IntEnt, (Enterprising across borders), The Hague and DEG (Deutsche Investitions- und Entwicklungsgesellschaft mbH), Köln jointly offer a number of facilities and services to assist Afghan entrepreneurs resident in the Netherlands to start up businesses in Afghanistan. Services offered facilitate prospective entrepreneurs to develop and formulate their business plan, to assess market opportunities, to obtain co-financing and to receive assistance while implementing their business. This Internet site provides information in Dutch and English, but you can contact the organization if you need further details.

[Click here for more information on IntEnt's Afghanistan programme](#)

### **Forthcoming Events**

For those subscribers who will participate in the International Association for the Study of Forced Migration (IASFM)'s Conference in Brazil, we would be happy to meet up with you. Both the previous and current moderator of the RLN will be present, and can be approached after the livelihoods sessions and during the evening RLN display. Please come forward with your comments and suggestions, which will be of great help to us!

[Click here for the IASFM Conference program](#)

### **Discussions and debates**

The US Committee for Refugees has launched a campaign against what they call the 'warehousing' of refugees; confining refugees to camps or segregated settlements or otherwise deprived from their basic human rights for a period of ten years or more. Refugee protection and assistance does not have to involve spatial confinement and enforced idleness. The 1951 Refugee Convention recognizes refugees' right to work and freedom of movement but it is not being applied. The campaign aims at changing this situation by encouraging governments and organisations to denounce the practice of warehousing refugees and develop strategies that enable the greater enjoyment of Convention rights for refugees.

[Click here to access this campaign against warehousing](#)

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The Refugee Livelihoods Network is an initiative of UNHCR's Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit. (EPAU) The views expressed by contributors to the Network and in documents electronically linked to the Network are not those of UNHCR. For issues other than refugee livelihoods, EPAU can be contacted by e-mail at [hqep00@unhcr.org](mailto:hqep00@unhcr.org)