The Multi-Dimensional Integration Index: Pilot results

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This publication is the result of a collaborative effort.

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FOREWORD

"Reintegration" is the stated goal of the government as well as other stakeholders working with the displaced, and considered a prerequisite for sustainable return. UNHCR's handbook for Repatriation and Reintegration (UNHCR 2004) defines this concept as a process that should result in the disappearance of differences in legal rights and duties and the equal access of returnees to services, assets and opportunities. Reintegration is thus understood relative to the local host population. Beyond this intuitive truth lies a host of technical challenges when it comes to measuring the degree of integration in a context of staggering numbers of displaced and complex patterns of mobility, overall low levels of development, recurrent conflict and a general lack of services and protection.

From a focus on reintegrating refugees (post-2002) to reintegrating "the people who have left" (GIRoA 2015), policy categories have expanded across migrant groups in Afghanistan. But important data gaps remain: No common, harmonized source of information is available today which would allow for a *comparative* assessment of the needs of refugees, returnees, IDPs and migrants to target support in the most appropriate manner.

In November 2015, discussions around an innovative index adopting an area-based approach to reintegration emerged. UNHCR and the members of the Reintegration Working Group (RWG) spearheaded the initiative resulting in the Multi-dimensional Integration Index (MDI) presented in this report. Research support was provided by Samuel Hall in collaboration with a Technical Working Group composed of academics and practitioners working on (re-)integration measures worldwide.

The MDI brings scientific rigor to operational imperatives. It is a complementary tool designed for use by practitioners in the field, intended to identify the particular challenges faced by the displaced compared to the local host community in the interest of eliminating observable differences between the two, thus achieving measurable reintegration. It employs sophisticated machine learning techniques to identify which indicators set returnees apart from hosts in a given location, and computes an index of integration along several dimensions. It allows to assess the integration status of a large variety of displaced populations in different contexts and locations through a common method adaptable to all categories and measure evolution through a baseline and regular updates.

The index is designed to allow comparisons across return areas, and measure which groups are better integrated than others. It should be used to measure evolutions across time for a longitudinal and dynamic assessment to better fine-tune the types of activities needed to support both the displaced and their host communities.

This document presents the pilot phase of the MDI. It constitutes the conclusion of phase I of this ambitious initiative. The next phase of the project will see the establishment of integration baselines in locations all across Afghanistan by agencies which can use this add-on tool as part of their routine data collection, building a common, shared and constantly updated source of information regarding reintegration of displaced groups across Afghanistan. Beyond its operational value for practitioners, the index thus represents a symbol of enhanced coordination and information sharing.

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Acronyms

AKF	Agha Khan Foundation
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
HFIAS	Household Food Insecurity Access Scale
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MDI	Multi-Dimensional Integration Index
MPI	Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
RWG	Reintegration Working Group
TWG	Technical Working Group
UNDP	Development Programme of the United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations Refugee Agency

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This study is the second in the MDI reporting series, and a follow-up to the report

Samuel Hall 2016, "Developing a Multi-Dimensional Integration Index for Afghanistan – Phase 1 – An Inter-Agency Approach", commissioned by UNHCR.

Since the finalization of that last study, further pilots of the MDI approach were conducted in the Afghan towns of Herat, Kandahar and Jalalabad as well as the rural Northern provinces of Baghlan and Takhar. This report presents the findings of these pilots. It is accompanied by a methodological note laying out techniques used, challenges encountered and suggested next steps.

Glossary

Concept	Definition	Source
Returnee	Refers broadly to [an individual] going back. This could be within the territorial boundaries of a country, as in the case of returning IDPs and demobilized combatants; or from a host country (either transit or destination) to the country of origin, as in the case of refugees, asylum seekers, and qualified nationals. There are subcategories of return which can describe the way the return is implemented, e.g. voluntary, forced, assisted and spontaneous return; as well as subcategories which describe who is participating in the return, e.g. repatriation (for refugees).[1]	IOM Glossary p.56
Refugee returnee	Refers broadly to [a refugee] going back [...] from a host country [where he/she had a refugee card] to the country of origin" The return can be either spontaneous or assisted. Spontaneous returnees are defined as individuals who return outside the framework of an established returns mechanism.	IOM Glossary p.56
Reintegration	Reintegration *"is a process that should result in the disappearance of differences in legal rights (i.e. access to formal and informal justice mechanisms) and duties between returnees and their compatriots and the equal access of returnees to services, productive assets and opportunities" as well as social assets and networks leading to a "sustainable return – in other words, the ability of returning refugees to secure political, economic and social conditions needed to maintain life, livelihoods and dignity."*	UNHCR Handbook for Repatriation and Reintegration Activities, p. 5, refined based on the input of the MDI Technical Working Group members.[2]
Sustainable Return	"The individual has reintegrated into the economic, social and cultural processes of the country of origin and feels that they are in an environment of safety and security upon return." This definition therefore claims reintegration to be an essential pre-requirement for sustainable return.	Koser and Kuschminder 2015
UNHCR Dimensions for assessing Integration	• Legal • Political • Economic • Social	UNHCR Handbook for Repatriation and Reintegration Activities, p. 5

[1] This definition may be expanded in future phases to deportees and other types of returnees from Europe.
[2] This definition specifies therefore that reintegration is a relative situation, one that compares the situation with that of the host community. As such, indicators to be developed need to apply to both groups, equally.

Executive Summary

I. What is the Multi-Dimensional Integration Index (MDI)?

The Multi-Dimensional Integration Index (MDI) focuses exclusively on displacement-related vulnerabilities. Based on UNHCR's definition of reintegration, it assumes that the displaced are integrated when they are indistinguishable from the local non-displaced population.

Assessing the integration of displaced populations and returnees in Afghanistan

Synthesizing the existing definitions, indicators and components of integration outlined in this report, a model has been defined to assess integration:

a) **An assessment in relative terms and in comparison with local populations**: Do the displaced continue to show displacement-related vulnerabilities, or is their situation at par with hosts?
b) **An assessment of the range of integration experiences** with disaggregated data by experiences of displacement;
c) **An assessment of self-perceptions of integration**, focusing on the level of information about and the expectations held before and after displacement and return. Whether they define their own integration as successful impacts how the household will situate itself within a given community.

The multiple dimensions of integration are studied through a tool compatible with other field assessments and include multiple dimensions:

- Economic (housing, employment, income, expenditure, credit…)
- Social (education, social and political inclusion …)
- Safety / security (civil documentation, physical safety, food security, …)

Piloting an innovative approach

The initial objective of the project was to establish a tool to measure post-return outcomes, starting with refugee returnees, which constitute the bulk of returns to Afghanistan since 2002. Adapting to changes in displacement, and the rise of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and of multiple returns, the MDI index is designed to be adaptable to current displacement trends and assess the multi-dimensional integration of the displaced and returnees at large. The proposed terminology is all encompassing, depoliticized, and outlines the scientific nature of the initiative, in support of durable solutions for all.

Developed through an inter-agency approach with the Government of Afghanistan, the United Nations and NGOs via the Reintegration Working Group (RWG) chaired by the Government and UNHCR, the Multi-Dimensional Integration Index (MDI) brings scientific rigor to operational imperatives. It employs sophisticated machine learning techniques to find out which indicators set returnees apart from hosts in a given location, and computes an index of integration along several dimensions. This index was:

- Tailored to and tested with a sample in Kabul province studied during Pilot 1 (UNHCR, Samuel Hall)
- Further tested, using the same question set, in three other locations: Jalalabad (East), Kandahar (South) and Herat (North, Pilot 2 - Norwegian Refugee Council, Samuel Hall) and again in Herat (Pilot 3, DRC/UNHCR with support from Samuel Hall) in order to ascertain whether the index also proved usable in contexts outside of the capital or where it required further adjustments.
- Based on the experiences in Herat, the methodology was amended and re-tested in the rural settings of Baghlan and Takhar (Pilot 4, AKF/UNHCR, Samuel Hall) and in the urban setting of Jalalabad (pilot 5 - NRC, Samuel Hall).

II. What did the MDI pilot findings reveal?

The findings illustrate (re-)integration challenges that were essentially known but needed evidence, and a measurement, to assess its nuances. They reveal

- ✓ **Geographic disparities**, with different integration scores that will allow stakeholders to tailor interventions in each area to further improve area-based approached based on interventions along economic, social, safety and security dimensions.
- ✓ **Different degrees of integration between different groups of displaced** such as IDPs and returnees in Jalalabad.
- ✓ **New issues** that may have not been known, such as the potential for microcredit schemes in Kabul specifically, and the important of addressing access to civil documentation through literacy first as a key action point to improve (re-)integration.
- ✓ A measure that can help monitor and **track progress** on (re-)integration of long-term interventions. In the last 15 years of implementation on returns, no common measure has been designed by agencies involved. The MDI allows for a common, comparable baseline to be updated through data collection using a unique tool, and a set of measurable indicators.

1. The gap between returnees / IDPs and hosts differs between locations

Profiling of the populations surveyed over the course of the five MDI pilots reveals that a contextualized approach to integration programming is crucial. The needs are not the same between the important return areas such as Kabul and Jalalabad, between rural and urban contexts, between IDPs and returnees. Blanket targeting of the displaced may result in a relative disadvantage to host populations in areas where integration scores are already high, and assuming that urban recent returnees in Baghlan share the challenges of those in Herat would be to oversimplify the complex landscape of returns.

In **Kabul,** there are significant differences between returnees and hosts. Returnees show bigger needs than hosts on most indicators, justifying a continued programming focus. Concerning to the research team is the example of social integration**:** those who arrived in Kabul ten years ago fare better in terms of social integration than those who arrived three years ago, as they had time to develop a support network, enjoy an improved participation in society and gain access to infrastructure. The findings then point to the need to further disaggregate along the lines of timing of return in Kabul.

In **Herat,** host and returnee samples exhibit more similar characteristics. What is striking is the high number of deportees (15%), a finding that requires follow-up on the protection and integration levels post-deportation; and the high number of those assisted by UNHCR (one in five returnees) which calls for a significant evaluation potential using the MDI. Of concern are the security scores for returnees in Herat, which tend to decline with the duration of exile. In a largely protracted situation, the longer a household was abroad, the lower its perceived and real level of safety and economic security today.

In **Kandahar,** the findings are quite different. Economic, security and (as a result) the overall MDI are slightly *negatively correlated* with time since return. While the reasons for this warrant further examination, it might imply that the cohort which returned to Kandahar recently differs from that which returned 15 to 20 years ago and still finds itself in a protracted state of need, quite apart from the host community in many respects.

In **Jalalabad,** finally, only 5% of displaced stated it was their place of origin, meaning most were unable or unwilling to return "home". What does integration imply in this context, then? With the increased inflows from Pakistan, of documented and undocumented returnees, the findings for Jalalabad are particularly telling. Illiteracy among returnees is a prominent issue, alongside the lack of school enrollment of children. Jalalabad seems particularly inhospitable to non-locals with low scores on the social dimension. Vulnerable migrant households in Jalalabad exhibit significantly lower integration scores than their non-vulnerable peers.

The second **Jalalabad** pilot was the first to allow a comparison of integration between IDPs and recent returnees from Pakistan. Results suggest that IDPs fare better, particularly in terms of social and economic integration, while the differences between documented and undocumented returnees are marginal. This suggests that the recently augmented cash grants given to returnee households do not appear to contribute to integration, at least in the short term.

In **Baghlan/Takhar,** the research team found that unlike in more crowded urban environments such as Kabul, returnees moving to the town (as opposed to a peri-urban environment) tend to suffer in terms of economic integration, as well as perceived security integration. Unlike in other areas where the index was piloted, returnees who enjoyed UNHCR assistance are less well integrated than those who returned spontaneously. Deportation again has a highly negative impact on integration outcomes, most likely due to the social stigma associated with forced returns. The importance of basic literacy of at least one household member, access to food and access to credit was re-confirmed.

2. MDI scores shed light on progress along the path to integration

The analysis of MDI scores is designed to be conducted in light of explanatory, or profiling, variables of interest within a given location. Overall scores in different provinces reveal identifiable differences of populations with respect to their progress along the path to integration. The following tables present the MDI results by pilot and location, with circled values shedding light on findings of particular interest.

Table 1MDI score summary

	Pilot 1 (SH)		Pilot 2 (NRC)			Pilot 3 (DRC)		
	Kabul		Herat	Jalalabad	Kandahar	Herat		
	Rural	Urban				Abade	Babali	Monarar
Number of displaced	150	165	286	279	286	153	289	143
Number of hosts	52	51	111	104	104	87	95	68
MDI economic mean	0.681	0.836	0.911	0.890	0.906	0.836	0.884	0.733
MDI social mean	0.771	0.779	0.842	0.826	0.904	0.835	0.816	0.765
MDI security mean	0.868	0.827	0.860	0.886	0.879	0.901	0.685	0.774
MDI average mean	0.773	0.814	0.871	0.867	0.897	0.857	0.795	0.758

	Pilot 4 (AKF)					Pilot 5 (NRC)			
	Baghlan		Takhar			Jalalabad			
	Doshi	Puli Khumri	Dasti-e-Qala		Taloqan	Urban		Peri-Urban	
	Returnee	Returnee	Returnee	IDP	Returnee	Returnee	IDP	Returnee	IDP
Number of displaced	206	279	102	152	280	314	197	393	173
Number of hosts	92	79	88		95	144		237	
MDI economic mean	0.899	0.829	0.859	0.807	0.928	0.833	0.872	0.860	0.878
MDI social mean	0.912	0.787	0.914	0.923	0.912	0.891	0.92	0.895	0.916
MDI security mean	0.902	0.799	0.910	0.909	0.919	0.915	0.926	0.916	0.917
MDI average Mean	0.904	0.805	0.890	0.880	0.920	0.879	0.906	0.890	0.903

Keeping in mind that a difference of about three percentage points (i.e. 0.03) translates into a significant result,

- ✓ Pilot 1, in Kabul, identified that returnees in urban and in rural settings fare similarly in terms of social integration, but those in the rural outskirts are at a considerable disadvantage in terms of security and, especially, economic well-being compared to their local host cohort.

- ✓ If in the case of pilot 2 in Herat, Jalalabad and Kandahar, overall integration states among returnees do not appear to differ very much, a glance at the social integration scores reveals that the displaced in Kandahar have a considerably easier time adapting to their new environment than those in Herat and, especially, Jalalabad.

- ✓ Pilot 3 in Herat was the first to illustrate that integration need not be compared across the entire country – local differences can be very important. Although closer to their hosts in terms of economic well-being, returnees interviewed in the Babali neighborhood for instance displayed much lower security integration outcomes than their peers in nearby Abade. An actor aiming to improve integration outcomes in Herat may thus want to focus on different factors in different parts of the city.

- ✓ Pilot 4 allowed the research team to explore a more rural environment: the Northern provinces of Baghlan and Takhar. It revealed that in Baghlan, the displaced were much closer to achieving social and security integration in remote Doshi than in the provincial capital of Puli Khumri. While this is doubtlessly due to the fact that the *local* standards of social and security well-being are higher in the capital, and the differences thus larger, it means that it makes sense to target the entire population of Doshi with measures designed to improve social factors and security, while in Puli Khumri there remains room for further measures aimed at returnees only.

- ✓ Pilot 5 facilitated a city-wide index of integration, and showed that recent returnees in Jalalabad are at a considerable disadvantage in terms of integration compared to their IDP peers. This difference exists both in urban and in peri-urban environments, but is particularly pronounced in the economic realm in the city itself. As is often the case with integration assessments, the *absence* of differences can be as telling as the presence thereof. For instance, in Jalalabad, the research finds much fewer observable differences between returnees and IDPs in terms of integration in peri-urban environments.

! *When looking at these results, keep in mind that a higher integration score does not mean that returnees are better off in these locations, but only that they bear a closer resemblance to the studied host sample.*

3. Credible evidence on what drives integration can be presented

Results suggest that the impact of assisted returns packages was significant in Kandahar and Herat, but negligible in a context of massive recent returns to Jalalabad.[3] In the latter case, the fact that the differences between recent documented and undocumented returnees in terms of integration are marginal means that the cash grants given to returnee families do not appear to contribute to integration in the short term.

[3] Note that pilot 5 focuses on a sample of those having returned since June 2016.

The analysis of results with respect to the effect of urban vs peri-urban and rural environments on integration outcomes reveals that displaced households in urban settings tend to fare better (i.e. resemble their hosts more) in terms of economic integration. Safety integration on the other hand tends to be higher in the outskirts. The pilot conducted in the Northern province of Baghlan suggests that the economic benefits of returning to a local hub may well disappear in more remote areas.

Overall, returnees are well-advised to return to their place of origin. While the impact varies considerably by location (Jalalabad appears particularly inhospitable to non locals), this holds true for all location studied thus far.

The impact of time spent abroad deserves further analysis, but appears to differ depending on location. While returnees in Kabul display integration scores which are positively correlated to time spent abroad, possibly reflecting resilience attributes gradually acquired over time, those in Herat tend to score lower, particularly in terms of security integration, the longer they were abroad.

Finally, an analysis of the effect of a number of acknowledged vulnerability factors reveals that vulnerable households in Jalalabad exhibit significantly lower integration scores than non-vulnerable ones. The pilot in Takhar and Baghlan illustrates that female-headed households suffer an important penalty in terms of social integration.

III. What is the (operational) value for money of the MDI?

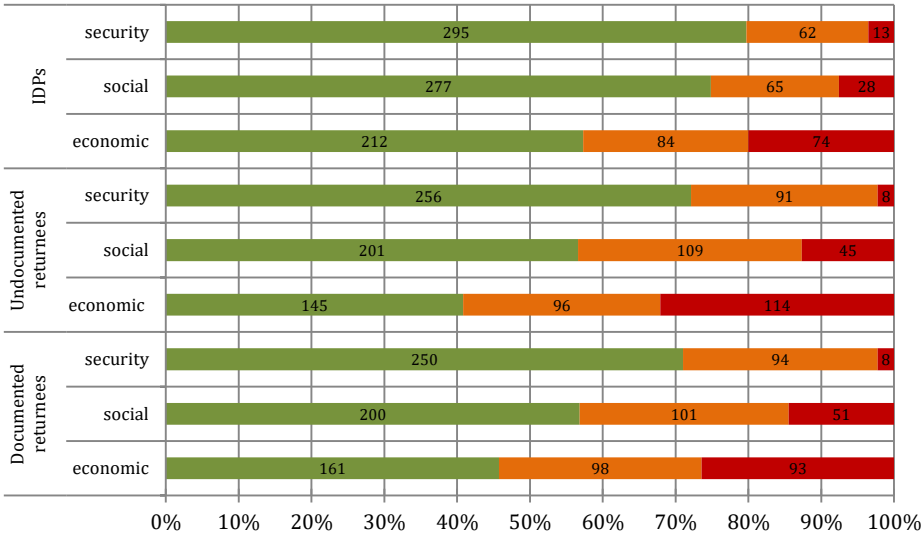
The MDI can be used by governments, international organizations, UN agencies and NGOs to practically enhance coordination and inform programming with the goal to improve integration outcomes for the displaced. Beyond resource allocation, the MDI allows to see a sense of urgency alongside key dimensions – economic, social, safety and security – to better contribute to a division of responsibilities between humanitarian and development actors, and better linkages of "who does what where" (3Ws) to address integration needs.

Overall, the implications from MDI findings are threefold, with the capacity of the MDI to inform:

1) **Area-based programming for the displaced in Afghanistan:** with strategies to integrate the displaced in planning on return, in a rising context of urbanization and urban choices made by the displaced. The promises of urban areas may not be fulfilled when looking at security and safety (in Herat), adequate standards of living (in Jalalabad), and economic integration (in Baghlan/Takhar). This requires further counseling and awareness-raising among returnees who may not always be choosing the most adequate locations for their needs upon return.
2) **Early recovery planning and durable solutions for the displaced in Afghanistan:** to look beyond humanitarian aid to understand the transitions needed to achieve durable solutions upon return. Durable solutions remain return, local integration and relocation within a third location in the country of return. The MDI can help inform voluntary choices and durable solutions from an early recovery perspective, emphasizing the needed safety nets that involve governmental actors, the aid community, civil society and private sector actors.
3) **The type of assistance made available to communities of return in Afghanistan:** with a broader view on communities of return and an area-based approach, the MDI can inform area-based action plans that can be measured across time through the evaluative capacity of the index. The same tool can then be used by actors to measure how the action plan, in a particular area, improves the overall cohesion and standards of living among all Afghans, regardless of their displacement and migration background.

Presented in an intuitive manner through a "traffic light" system[4], MDI scores can shed light on gaps in integration, and constitute a valuable tool for programming and monitoring efforts as well as evidence-based policy support.

Figure 1 Categories of integration in Jalalabad



A PROGRAMMING TOOL. Analysis of MDI scores in different locations allow stakeholders to

- ✓ Identify opportunities for integration of displaced populations beyond emergency or humanitarian assistance;
- ✓ Plan for early recovery and early solutions – linking emergency and development actors and interventions
- ✓ Better prioritize activities to boost integration, by area, for instance through
    - Promoting debt reduction before access to finance
    - Promoting literacy before civil documentation
    - Improving female-headed households' social rather than economic integration
    - Developing livelihood programmes for the displaced in the peri-urban areas of Herat but the urban center of Puli Khumri,
- ✓ Develop area-based programmes based on the knowledge of which areas would benefit from activities targeting the displaced and which areas display a generally high degree of vulnerability with negligible relative disadvantages faced by the displaced compared to the local hosts. Lower integration scores point to the fact that specific resources should be allocated to the returnee population there. (In Kandahar, for instance, higher integration scores would point to the need to spend resources not on returnees specifically but on the overall population. Funds spent on improving the lot of returnees currently risk not contributing to the integration process.)

[4] As laid out in the methodological note, displaced scores above 0.9 indicate full integration (green), while those who fall within the range of 0.8 to 0.9 are distinguishable from hosts (orange) and could benefit from further integration programming . Displaced households scoring below 0.8 are distinguishable from their local host cohort across a range of indicators and are thus in definite need of improved integration.

A MONITORING TOOL for increased accountability and improved reporting standards to donors and the Government. The tool can be locally calibrated in each location and be used by agencies to attain better access to communities. These are the evidence base needed to inform policy.

- ✓ A common set of measurable indicators used among all agencies in order to improve coordination and allocation of resources to specific areas. Pilot 5 for instance provided a city-wide view of integration levels in Jalalabad, shedding light on particular neighborhoods which would benefit from increased assistance to further integration outcomes.
- ✓ A baseline allowing to conduct longitudinal analyses on progress made on the road towards integration, in a given context. Data will allow to confirm subjective impressions of trends in this regard.
- ✓ Over time, examine progress towards measurable outcomes with respect to any driver of interest. Pilot 4 conducted in Baghlan and Takhar for instance has resulted in a baseline which will allow AKF-A to assess whether programming efforts in the districts of interest have a measurable impact on integration there. UNHCR will be able to measure the impact of cash assistance for returnees in the context of repatriation, for instance from Pakistan, to Kandahar.

The MDI will allow for a dynamic understanding of (re-)integration and displacement-affected vulnerabilities, for instance by identifying hitherto unknown drivers of integration outcomes. The Kabul pilot helped identifying a time factor in integration – at the 4 year mark where significant changes are apparent. The Herat pilot identified the needs of deportees – more debt, higher dependency ratio and lower safety perceptions. It also confirmed that voluntary returnees supported by UNHCR were more successfully integrated compared to undocumented returnees, with deportees being the least integrated. Vulnerable migrant HHs exhibit significantly lower integration scores in Jalalabad. Voluntary returnees are significantly better integrated in some areas but not all, while the negative impacts of deportation on integration are clear. The pilots showed that returns to the households' place of origin tend to improve integration outcomes.

Linking the MDI with programming interventions: Examples of practical applications

Based on the findings retrieved to date through several pilots, examples of practical applications required to improve integration levels include a specific focus required (and a gap identified on):

1. Vulnerable households in Jalalabad;
2. Recent returnees compared to IDPs, in Jalalabad;
3. Deportees rather than other types of returnees in Herat;
4. Female-headed households in Baghlan and Takhar;
5. Older returnee caseloads' security and safety in Herat;
6. Diversified income sources in Kabul.

AN EVIDENCE BASE TO INFORM POLICY in order to, for instance

- Support advocacy: multiple displacement negatively impacts on integration;
- Confirm assumptions: forced returnees/deportees display lower integration scores;
- Draw critical attention on the diverse needs of urban, peri-urban and rural planning;
- Support the efforts of the Displacement and Returns Executive Committee (DiREC) by directly informing the Policy Framework of the GOIRA and support the executive committee on its key responsibilities of analysis of current patterns of returns, improving access to education, and livelihoods, as well as representation in communities of return.

1. Introduction

UNHCR's handbook for Repatriation and Reintegration (UNHCR 2004) defines reintegration as a process that should result in the disappearance of differences in legal rights and duties and the equal access of returnees to services, productive assets and opportunities as well as social assets and networks. A stated goal of the government as well as other stakeholders working with returnees (and internally displaced persons - IDPs) and considered a prerequisite for sustainable return, (re)integration is thus understood relative to the host population. Yet while the concept is intuitively clear and agreed upon by all, (re)integration is surprisingly hard to measure.

In a context where the majority of the population has moved at least once over the course of the last generation[5], hosts can be hard to find. Even with a commonly accepted definition for hosts and migrants, it is challenging to define *which* differences should disappear. Which attributes should be equal in order for a household to be considered (re)integrated? Yet without having found answers to these questions, how can we measure progress towards this stated goal of many programming efforts?

Afghanistan is the scene of various patterns of mobility. Migratory flows into, and out of, the country are composed of refugees, IDPs, documented and undocumented returnees, migrant workers, etc. These displacement patterns are in constant flux – as Pakistan, which has hosted legions of displaced Afghans since 1979, is encouraging the return of approximately 1.5 million documented and 1 million undocumented Afghans, the very fabric of displacement and returns is currently shifting in cities like Jalalabad and Kandahar. It is more necessary than ever to assess the status of a large variety of displaced populations through a common method adaptable to all categories, and measure evolutions through a baseline and regular updates.

Developed through an inter-agency approach with the Government, the United Nations and NGOs via the Reintegration Working Group (RWG) chaired by the Government and UNHCR, the Multi-Dimensional Integration Index (MDI) brings scientific rigor to operational imperatives. It employs sophisticated machine learning techniques[6] to find out which indicators set returnees apart from hosts in a given location, and computes an index of integration along several dimensions. This index was:

- Tailored to and tested with a sample in Kabul province studied during Pilot 1
- Further tested, using the same question set, in three other locations: Jalalabad (East), Kandahar (South) and Herat (North, Pilot 2 with the Norwegian Refugee Council) and again in Herat (Pilot 3 with DRC/UNHCR) in order to ascertain whether the index also proved usable in contexts outside of the capital or where it required further adjustments.
- Having determined that it did need adjustment, a refined methodology was successfully employed in the more rural zones of Baghlan and Takhar (Pilot 4 with AKF/UNHCR) and in the city of Jalalabad (Pilot 5 with NRC). A grid-approach to sampling and the inclusion of IDPs was also piloted at these occasions.

This report presents the findings of the five MDI pilots.

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5 ICRC's 2009 Afghanistan Opinion Survey notes that virtually everyone (96%) in Afghanistan has been affected in some way by the armed conflict there, and that 76% of those who have experienced conflict report having to leave their homes.

6 Please refer to the accompanying Samuel Hall MDI Methodological Note for more detail.

Structure of the report

1. Brief overview of fieldwork methodology
2. Profile of the population
3. Focus on selected MDI components - using a selection of the questions which enter into MDI calculations to illustrate results and regional differences.
4. Presentation of MDI results - shedding light on a number of factors which impact results – representing drivers of, and impediments to, integration along the dimensions of interest.
5. Conclusions and Recommendations on "putting the MDI to work".

Methodological note

This study focuses on results obtained. It is accompanied by a technical methodological note which lays out techniques used and the reasoning behind them, sampling methodologies and proposed profiling question sets. The methodological note addresses in detail the methodology employed in terms of sampling, data collection and analysis. It presents the challenges encountered and solutions found, and lays out the suggested way forward for this ambitious experimental approach.

Is integration enough?

Addressing the challenges of (re)integration is in many respects a more challenging endeavor than other broad-target initiatives, such as poverty alleviation or disaster mitigation. Post-migration Afghans live amongst other citizens of Afghanistan, who also suffer from various and varied privations dependent on location and the consequences of war and decades of political instability.

Integration is also more difficult to address, in some respects, than the difficulties faced by traditional at-risk groups, such as minority ethnicities, child laborers or female heads-of-household. In the first case, there exist broad, identifiable communities with well-defined needs which can be targeted through local and regional remediation efforts such as food relief and cash transfer programs. At risk populations are easily identified, and blanket remediation can be expected to achieve measurable results. In the second, the specific needs of at-risk segments of the population can be addressed through need-specific programming: outreach programming, educational initiatives, media campaigns, and institutional support.

The victims of involuntary migration are characterized by a change in situation (and, in the case of returnees, a second change) which adds a degree of complexity, since one must consider the drivers of migration as well as the effects, once if not twice. Second, in the Afghan context, migrant status is somewhat difficult to define, given that such a large part of the country's population has relocated, either domestically or cross-border, over the last generation. Finally, the impact of migration, unlike that of natural disasters or conflicts, or gender or ethnic discrimination, cannot be assumed to be universally negative in terms of well-being, as evidence from some returnees from Iran suggests.

Given the difficulty of identifying the true liabilities of the phenomenon, the opportunities for remediation must be confined to isolating the particular challenges faced by migrants compared to local non-migrants (the host community) in the interest of eliminating observable differences between the two, while avoiding promoting the interests of this group beyond the conditions of their non-migrant fellow citizens.

KEY FINDINGS & IMPLICATIONS

Covering the locations of Kabul, Herat, Jalalabad, Kandahar, Baghlan and Takhar, Section 2 presents findings, by location, on the profile sampled populations. It is designed to introduce the reader to the demographics studied, with an eye to a number of indicators which enter into the MDI analysis and differences between profiled demographics. Taking the example of a number of common measures of difference between hosts and returnees, it illustrates the importance of a contextualized approach to integration assistance.

- In **Kabul**, discernible differences exist across all dimensions. In the economic realm, land ownership, electricity and additional income sources are important differentiators, while in the social dimension there are small but significant differences in terms of civil documentation and large ones in terms of literacy. Hosts are more likely to feel safe and less likely to go hungry.
- In **Herat**, debt and additional income sources are the main differentiators in the economic dimension. In the social dimension on the other hand, the gap was small in terms of civil documentation as well as literacy. In spite of the fact that perceived levels of safety and food security are comparable, the displaced are less certain when it comes to remaining in the city.
- In **Jalalabad,** home ownership was a significant differentiator between hosts and the displaced economically, as was access to water and electricity. In the social realm, literacy and school attendance of children shows larger gaps than civil documentation. Hosts are more likely to feel perfectly safe, and although the majority of both hosts and non-hosts would prefer not to migrate, many of the latter feel they might be obliged to to so
- **Kandahar** was the location that showed the fewest differences between host and displaced cohorts. Economically, gaps were noted in terms of home ownership only. In a context of generally low levels of education, there were hardly any discernible differences in the social dimension. Both hosts and displaced score high on safety indicators.
- The Northern provinces of **Baghlan and Takhar** saw important differences between hosts and the displaced in terms of economic integration indicators such as land and dwelling ownership, additional income and subjective assessment of the economic status. Socially, the displaced are at a disadvantage in terms of education. Safety measures showed considerably discrepancies with the displaced much more likely to have experienced hunger recently, and to contemplate remigration.

In locations where a baseline was established, important attributes of the host community are now known, as are the differences between that host community and the displaced in 2016. Will these differences decrease over time? Will subsequent waves of arrivals resemble their hosts more or less than the cohort studied here? Are these differences larger or smaller in Herat than in Mazar-e-Sharif? These questions can only be answered if comparable indicators and a comparable sampling methodology are used across locations and over time.

2. What are the key differences between hosts and returnees in different contexts?

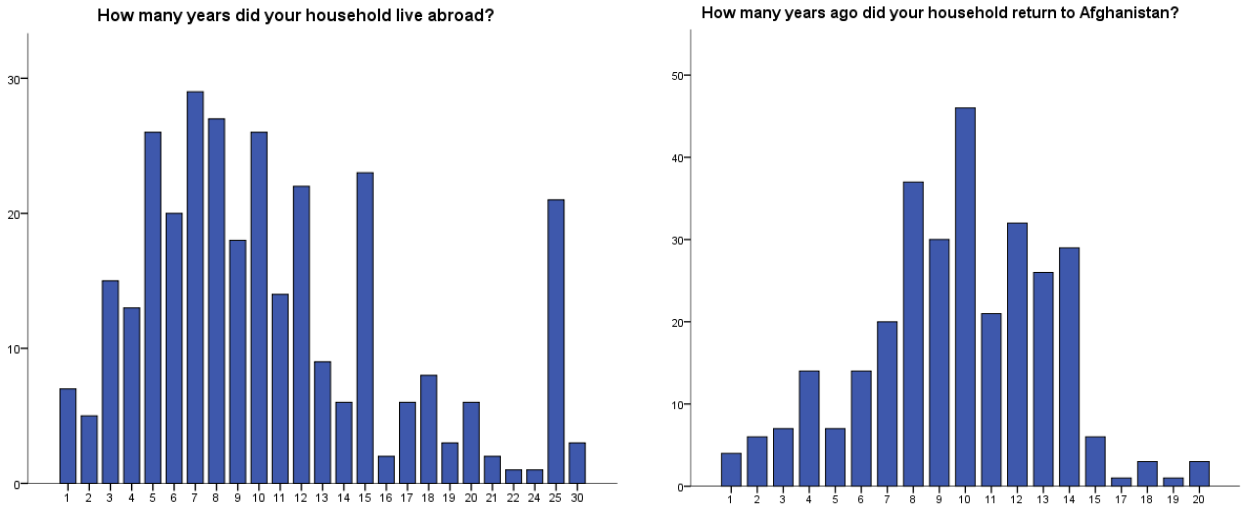
2.1. Pilot 1: Kabul

- **The population of interest: 300 returnees and 100 hosts, evenly split between urban and rural environments**

Conducted in January 2016, the Kabul pilot included 400 respondents[7]: 150 'urban returnees' and 50 'hosts' in Kabul proper, and 150 'rural returnees' and 50 'hosts' in a rural area near Kabul. Hosts and returnees were not sampled in close proximity to each other.

Background. The returnee population (self-identified, as with all pilots, pending the elaboration of objective criteria) had different migration backgrounds, with just over half (55%) of the interviewed households having lived in Pakistan before their return, and over a third (37%) having lived in Iran. One in ten returnee households had also been internally displaced to another province in Afghanistan before settling in Kabul. The returnees from both Iran and Pakistan had spent ten years abroad on average[8], and returned approximately ten years ago.

Figure 2 Kabul returnee profile: time spent abroad and time since return



- **Key findings: Important differences between hosts and returnees in terms of land ownership, amenities, income sources and debt, literacy and perceptions of safety.**

Economic dimension. While hosts and returnees interviewed for this study display a similar likelihood of owning their house / apartment (some two thirds state that they do), hosts are considerably more likely to own land in the area (33% of hosts compared to 15% of returnees). Differences are significant here between rural and urban environments: over half of the hosts in the semi-urban outskirts of Kabul own land, compared to 14% of returnees. Hosts and returnees are equally unlikely to own land in the town itself, at around 15%.

In terms of amenities and services, Kabul hosts are significantly more likely to benefit from electricity, with a difference that is particularly pronounced in the rural outskirts of the city. Hosts

7 A small sample dictated by budgetary constraints, but sufficient to test and showcase the MDI methodology.

8 A mean which is somewhat skewed by the large group of returnees who spent 25 years abroad.

are also much more likely to have access to piped water. Access to healthcare is a clear differentiator, as hosts are considerably more likely to have received medical treatment over the past year.

Unsurprisingly given their tendency to own agricultural land, hosts are more likely to derive **income** from agriculture or livestock than returnees. Only a small minority of both groups stated benefiting from aid, while four out of five respondent households do receive an income from trade or services. Hosts are less likely to hold more debt than they spend over the course of a month, but the majority of both groups does. The perception of the household's economic situation relative to others differs only marginally: a plurality of both host and returnee households in Kabul considers that their situation is worse (45%) than that of their neighbours, or the same (47%).

Social dimension. Kabul hosts are slightly less likely to hold a tazkera than the returnees who have often needed to possess ID during their migration but possession rates are universally high. Both groups are equally likely to possess a birth certificate. Bank accounts are universally rare.

Overall, hosts in Kabul appear to be more likely to be literate than returnees. In terms of school attendance, the differences are only marginal, with some two thirds of host and returnee households stating that all school-aged boys were in school and approximately half making the statement for school-aged girls.

Safety and security dimension. Hosts in Kabul are more likely to feel very safe, both at home and outside, and state more frequently that they can rely on a network for support. They are less likely to have recently felt the need to reduce the quality or quantity of their meals, and more likely to enjoy (perceived) tenure security. Returnees on the other hand are slightly more likely to be aware of government programmes they might benefit from. (Re)Migration intentions, or rather the stated lack thereof, differs little among the two demographics of interest in Kabul. Two thirds of hosts and returnees do not expect to leave their current place of residence.

- **Conclusion: Two distinct samples facing distinct challenges**

Returnees covered by the Kabul pilot are easily distinguishable from the local population using the indicators which constitute the MDI. In comparison with their hosts, returnees in Kabul appear to be deprived across a number of dimensions in the economic, social and security realm.

2.2. Pilots 2 and 3: Herat

- **The population of interest: 835 returnees and 462 hosts, interviewed over the course of two separate pilots**

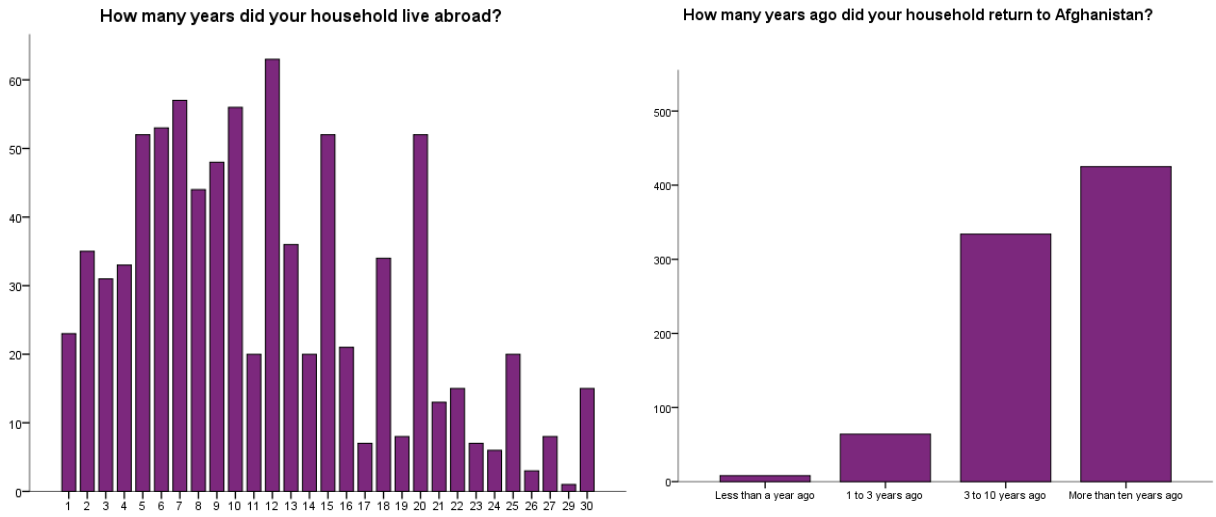
A study conducted by Samuel Hall for the Norwegian Refugee Council in June 2016 sampled 397 households in urban Herat (72% self-identified returnees and 28% self-identified hosts) and presented them with a questionnaire containing indicators relevant to the MDI. Furthermore, enumerator teams managed by the Danish Refugee Council presented the MDI questionnaire to 900 households in Herat, of which 61% were returnee families.

Background. A significant share (42%) of the returnees in the DRC sample had also been internally displaced. Host and returnee populations sampled in Herat over the course of both pilots were located in close proximity to each other.

The returnee population interviewed in Herat had almost exclusively (>99%) lived in Iran before returning to Afghanistan. Similarly to Kabul, households had lived abroad for an average of 11 years. However, compared to the Kabul sample, households returned significantly earlier: close to half (45%) of the interviewed returnee households had settled in Herat over ten years ago.

Some two thirds of returnees interviewed in Herat returned spontaneously, while 15% self-identified as deportees. One returnee in five in the Herat sample (22%) had returned with the assistance of UNHCR. Just over half of the returnees interviewed in Herat stated that the region was the place of origin of their household.

Figure 3 Herat returnee profile: time spent abroad and time since return



- **Key findings: At universally high levels of access to amenities and education, the differences between the host and returnee populations are less pronounced than in the case of Kabul.**

Economic dimension. Few respondents among the Herat (returnee and host) sample own land (1 in 10), and it is of note that those who do can rarely produce a land deed for their property. The vast majority of hosts and returnees (>90%) alike benefit from electricity in their dwellings. With few exceptions, all Herati respondents name piped water or a well as their source of water. Access to healthcare is also comparatively good, with no marked exceptions: Over 90% of respondents report being able to access healthcare within an hour's travel from their dwelling. Hosts are slightly more likely to have accessed healthcare over the past year, but overall proportions remain high compared to, for instance, Kabul.

Hosts are more likely to derive income from agriculture and/or livestock than returnees, at 17% vs 7%. Close to half of the respondents in both categories state receiving income from trade and services. Returnee households are considerably more likely to hold more debt than the household spends in one month, at 72% vs 60%. The earner ratio of returnee households is slightly lower than that of their host peers, indicating that fewer earners support a given number of non-earners. Returnee respondents are more likely to subjectively assess their economic situation as worse than that of their peers.

Social dimension. Almost all respondent households of both categories count at least one member who has a tazkera. Yet data collected for NRC showed, anecdotally, that returnees in Herat were slightly more likely to name civil documentation as a legal concern.

Literacy levels are universally high, even if hosts in the Herat sample are slightly more likely to count at least one literate member among them and returnees are slightly more likely to state that no member of their household had received any schooling.

Safety and security dimension. Although the overwhelming majority of both host and returnee respondents in Herat feels quite **safe** at home and outside, hosts are more likely to strongly stress this point. They also believe more strongly that their tenure security is guaranteed. Similarly, they are more likely to insist on support structures, with 75% of hosts (but only two thirds of returnees) noting that they can rely on their network in case of need. Hosts and returnees in Herat are equally (un)likely to spend time outside their houses (close to one in three) and socialize with unrelated families. Occurrences of reduced food intake were found at a similar frequency for both the host and the displaced cohorts. When asked about migration intentions, returnees encountered in Herat are less certain of the durability of their stay than their host peers.

- **Conclusion: Profiling reveals two populations facing similar circumstances**

To the extent that hosts and returnees were exclusively co-located, they appear to be living in comparable circumstances and are thus harder to differentiate using the MDI indicators relevant to the Kabul context.

2.3. Pilots 2 and 5: Jalalabad

Jalalabad was the site of two distinct MDI pilots. Between the two pilots (2 and 5), the calculation of the MDI evolved, with a sampling methodology was adjusted to a city-wide view of twelve sampled locations, and the target group changed from returnees overall to *recent* returnees (undocumented and documented having returned since July 2016) and IDPs.

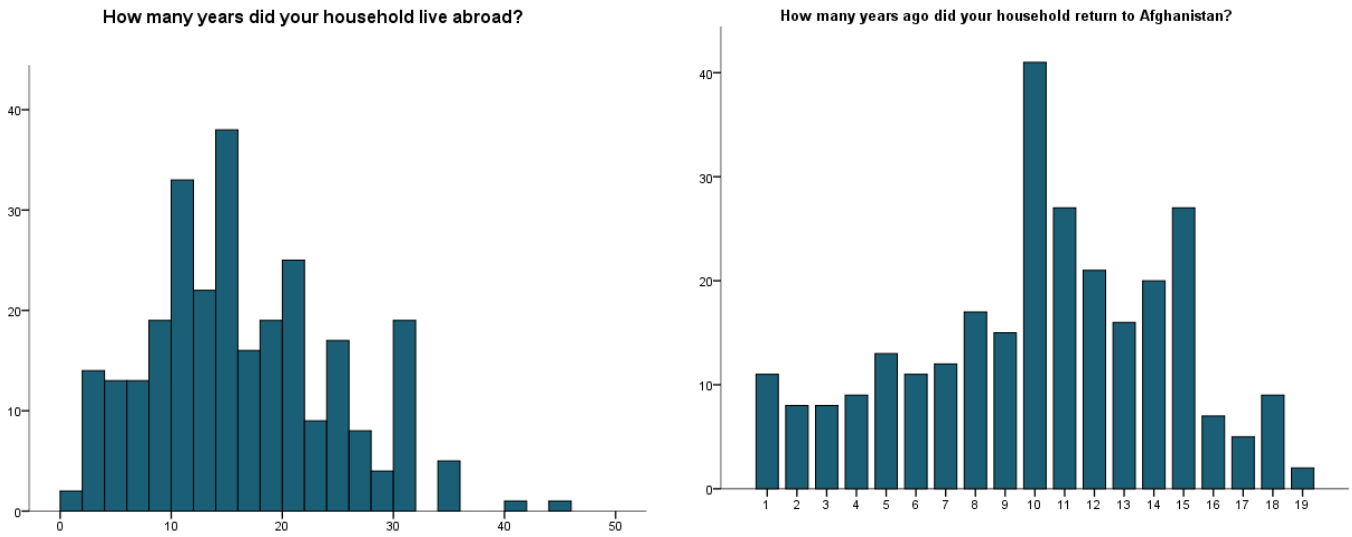
2.3.1. Pilot 2: May 2016

- **The population of interest: 280 returnees and 103 hosts**

The MDI was first tested in Nangarhar thanks to a study conducted by Samuel Hall for the Norwegian Refugee Council in May 2016. A sample of 383 households, 27% of them hosts and 73% of them self-identified returnees, was presented with a question list including indicators relevant to the MDI. Almost without exception, the returnees interviewed in Jalalabad had previously lived in Pakistan. The sample was split between an urban (38%) and a peri-urban (62%) group.

Returnees in Jalalabad had, on average, spent 16 years in Pakistan, with a significant share of households who had lived abroad for decades. The average time since return was 10 years.

Figure 4 Jalalabad returnee profile: time spent abroad and time since return



Only 5% of returnees interviewed for this research in Jalalabad stated that this was indeed their place of origin, which would indicate that the city draws a considerable number of returnees unwilling or unable to return to their original home district. Close to half of the former migrants were deportees, while a third stated having returned spontaneously / on their own. One returnee respondent household in five had benefited from UNHCR assistance for their return.

- **Key findings: Distinct differences between hosts and returnees in terms of land ownership, access to amenities, literacy levels and perceptions of safety.**

Economic dimension. Hosts in Jalalabad are considerable more likely to own the dwelling they live in, at 55% compared to 41% of returnees. A third of hosts and a quarter of returnees own land. Hosts are more likely to own land both in urban and peri-urban zones of Jalalabad – interestingly however, and unlike other locations, land ownership does appear to be more common in the city (34%) than the outskirts (23%). The earner ratio in Nangarhar stands at .18 for hosts and .16 for returnees, meaning that host earners support fewer dependents than returnee earners. Hosts and returnees in Jalalabad are equally likely to consider their economic situation the same as that of their neighbours or worse.

Hosts in Jalalabad are considerably more likely to benefit from electricity than returnees, at 65% vs 52%. Water for both is usually drawn from a pipe or a well, and seven respondents out of ten have a source of safe drinking water in their compound. Healthcare is available to all respondents without exception, generally within an hour's walk or less.

Social dimension. As in other locations, hosts are significantly more likely to have benefited from health services within the past year but overall proportions remain rare at under 30%. The sample interviewed in Nangarhar is overall very likely to possess a tazkera. Most of those owning land claim possessing a formal proof of ownership.

Returnee households in Jalalabad are considerably more likely to be entirely illiterate than host ones, with 37% of returnee respondents stating that no one in their household could read or write.

Unsurprisingly given the literacy rates, returnee households are also more likely, at one household in three, to not have a single member who has been to school. A majority of interviewed host households state that all school-aged children do attend school regularly – this is the case for just under half of the interviewed returnee households.

Safety and security dimension. Hosts in Nangarhar are significantly more likely to feel perfectly safe for themselves and their families at home. Close to half of Nangarhar respondents feel that they participate, directly and/or indirectly, in local decision making. Host households in Jalalabad are less likely to harbor migration intentions or expectations, but the majority of both groups express a preference for remaining in place. It is of note that one returnee household in five interviewed in Jalalabad stated not wishing to migrate, yet expected to have to do so nonetheless.

- **Conclusion: Significant differences between hosts and returnees along several key MDI indicators, but less in terms of livelihoods than other dimensions**

Migrants sampled in Jalalabad appear deprived in many ways compared to the cohort of local hosts, leaving room for improved integration.

2.3.2. Pilot 5, January 2017

In order to maintain comparability of results presented here, this brief overview will focus on hosts and returnees.

- **The population of interest: 380 hosts and 706 returnees**

The fifth MDI pilot, and second conducted in Jalalabad, comprised 1,457 respondents composed of hosts, documented and undocumented returnees and internally-displaced households. The 1,087 respondents thus under consideration are split into 35% hosts and 65% returnees. The sample was also split into an urban (58%) and a peri-urban (42%) group.

Background. Given the research's focus on recent returnees (from July 2016 onwards), virtually the entire returnee cohort examined had returned in the past six months. Jalalabad was the place of origin for about half of the interviewed returnee sample. The interviewed returnees had spent decades in Pakistan (31 years on average, with only 2% stating having lived abroad for 10 years or fewer). Two returnee respondents out of three (69%) stated having been deported, while 12% had benefited from UNHCR assistance.

- **Key findings: A cohort of recent returnees disadvantaged in terms of infrastructure, education and perceived local influence**

Economic dimension. Four hosts in five said they owned their residence, compared to only 10% of returnees. Land ownership is more common among the host population: 28% of hosts own land in the area of Jalalabad, compared to only 3% among the returnees - hardly surprising given the length of their stay in Pakistan and the short period since return. Land ownership among hosts seems to be a little more common in peri-urban areas (33%) compared to urban areas (27%). While hosts were more likely to earn livestock than returnees, this was generally not a common occurrence (9% vs 3%) in this rather urban sample.

Earner ratios are similar at .17 for hosts and .16 for returnees. One host respondent in three would deem his economic situation worse than that of his neighbours, compared to two returnee respondents in three. The displaced are relatively worse off than their hosts, with important differences between the outskirts and the center of town.

Two thirds of hosts have access to electricity in their residence whereas only half of the returnees do. Some 80% of hosts have access to water in their compound either from a pipe or a well, compared to 70% of interviewed returnees. Healthcare is available to all respondents, and four out of five respondents had sought medical attention over the course of the past year without migration-related differences.

Social dimension. More than 95% of both hosts and returnees are in possession of a tazkera. Literacy of returnee households was again found to be lacking compared to that of hosts: Fewer than 10% of host households are entirely illiterate, compared to 31% of sampled households having recently returned from Pakistan. Accordingly, returnee households stated in 25% of the cases having no member with school education, compared to 6% of host households. Over three quarters of host households send their boys to school – this is the case for only 37% of returnee households' sons, and 22% of returnee households' daughters.

Safety and security dimension. While all host and returnee respondents feel safe at home, returnees are more much more likely to have had to reduce the quality or quantity of their food very recently. Differences are flagrant when it comes to the involvement in local decision making: only a quarter of host respondents stated not being able to influence local affairs, compared to 90% of returnees. Yet this is not the main factor influencing migration intentions: Around one in ten host respondents wish to move in the coming year, compared to more than 42% of the returnee respondents - for most of the respondents who wish to migrate the current economic situation is the driving motive.

- **Conclusion: Recent returnees feel worse off than non-recent returnees, and are disadvantaged along several key MDI indicators**

Recent returnees from Pakistan in Jalalabad are at a disadvantage compared to longtime residents in a number of respects – economic hardship is the factor driving many of them to contemplate further displacement, but differences also exist in the social realm.

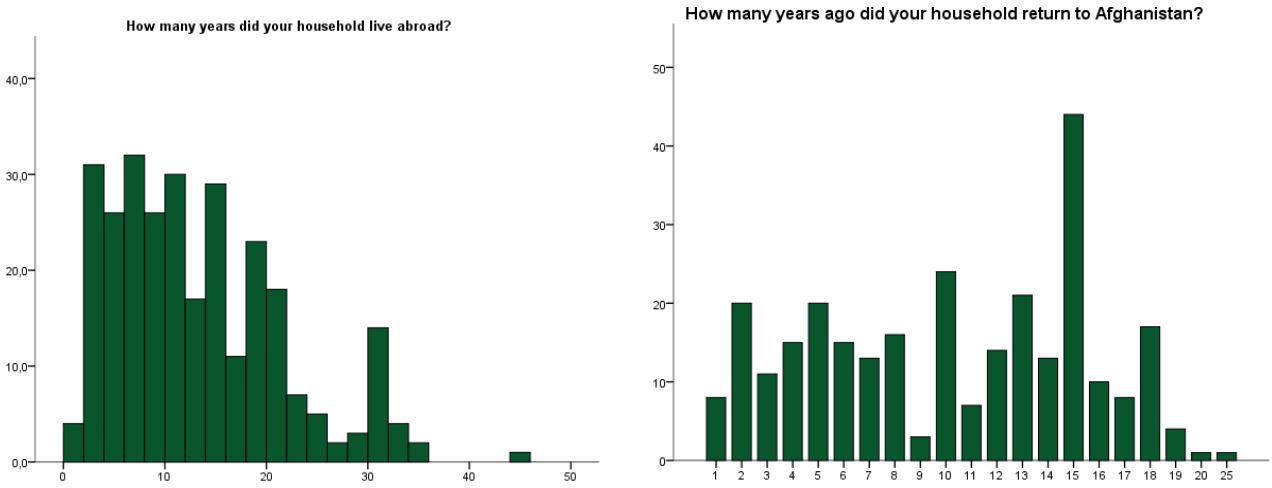
2.4. Pilot 2: Kandahar

- **The population of interest: 285 returnees and 105 hosts**

The MDI was piloted in Kandahar in May 2016 as part of a study conducted by Samuel Hall for the Norwegian Refugee Council. The migrant and host populations were sampled in close proximity to each other.

Background. Almost without exception, the returnees interviewed in Kandahar had previously lived in Pakistan. Returnees interviewed for this study in Kandahar had on average spent 13 years in Pakistan – a mean driven by certain respondents who had been living there for decades. The majority had in fact spent less than a decade abroad. As was the case in the other locations, the average time since return was 10 years.

Figure 5 Kandahar returnee profile: time spent abroad and time since return



34% of the returnees interviewed in Kandahar had come back to their place of origin. 29% of respondents encountered in Kandahar had been deported by the Pakistani authorities, while 55% had returned spontaneously / on their own. 16% had benefited from UNHCR assistance.

- **Key findings: At comparable levels of access to amenities and education, the differences between the host and displaced populations are not generally pronounced.**

Economic dimension. Hosts in Kandahar are considerable more likely to own the dwelling they live in. No big differences were found in terms of land ownership, with about one respondent in four owning land. Between urban and peri-urban areas of Kandahar, differences in land ownership are slight. Two respondents in five own livestock among both Kandahari returnees and hosts.

Some three respondents in Kandahar out of five benefit from electricity at their dwelling, with no difference between returnees and hosts. Water is drawn from a pipe or a well for the vast majority of respondents, and both hosts and returnees are for the most part (three out of four) able to collect safe drinking water in their compound / dwelling. Healthcare is available to almost all respondents regardless of their migratory profile, but distances are longer compared to the other locations. Over half of both host and returnee respondents note that it requires an hour's walk or more to reach a source of formal healthcare. Hosts are slightly more likely to have benefited from health services over the past year, but rates are low overall at less than 30%.

In Kandahar, the earner ratios differ very slightly in favor of returnees. Hosts and returnees in Kandahar are equally likely to consider their economic situation the same as that of their neighbors (49%) or worse (38%).

Social dimension. Again, tazkera possession is almost universal. Land-owning returnees in Kandahar are considerably less likely to possess a formal proof of land ownership than their host peers.

There is no discernible difference in literacy between hosts and returnees in Kandahar – half of interviewed households of both groups stated that their household did not count a single literate member. Returnee households are slightly more likely to state that the highest level of schooling enjoyed by anyone in their household way "no schooling" (44%). Slightly less than half of interviewed host and returnee respondents state that all school-aged children are currently in school.

Safety and security dimension. Close to three quarters of respondents feel very safe in their dwelling, with no marked differences between hosts and returnees. The displaced are however more likely to feel unsafe outside. Food security levels are comparable. Hosts and returnees in Kandahar generally (four out of five) do not wish to or expect to migrate over the next year. Close to one respondent out of five however does state that migration may happen despite their wishes to remain**.**

- **Conclusion: Profiling reveals two populations facing similar circumstances**

To the extent that hosts and returnees were exclusively co-located, they appear to be living in comparable circumstances and are thus harder to differentiate using the MDI indicators relevant to the Kabul context.

2.5. Pilot 4: Baghlan and Takhar

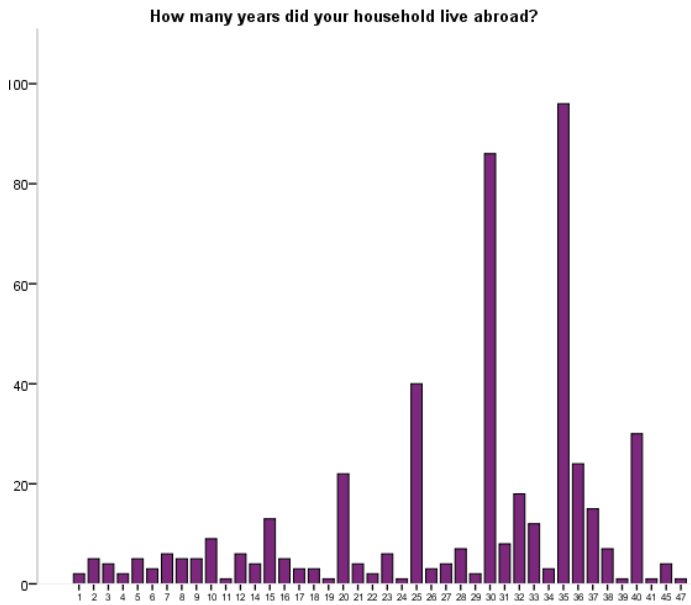
In December 2016, with the assistance of AKF-A, the MDI was piloted in in Puli Khumri and Doshi districts in Baghlan and Taloqan and Dashti-e-Qala district of Takhar. The fieldwork locations were selected in close collaboration between AKF-A local staff, UNHCR field officers and Samuel Hall researchers, with the selection designed to cover communities containing recent returnees, IDPs as well as hosts living in close proximity (frequenting the same bazaar).

2.5.1. Pilot 4: Baghlan

- **The population of interest: 176 hosts and 480 returnees**

This pilot took place in December 2016. Most of the interviewed returnees had spent decades in exile, with a mean period abroad of 28 years. Only one returnee household in ten had lived in Pakistan for less than ten years. Again, the survey focused on recent returnees. The majority (70%) of respondents had returned less than two years ago, and one in three had suffered deportation. Two thirds of respondents noted that they had indeed returned to their place of origin.

Figure 6 Baghlan returnee profile: time spent abroad



- **Key findings: Considerable dissimilarities particularly in terms of land and shelter ownership and education, migration intentions rather common for returnees**

Economic dimension. A third of interviewed returnees in Baghlan own their current shelter, compared to 83% of the hosts. Land ownership is also considerably less common with returnees (15%) than with hosts (26%), as is owning livestock (15% vs 43%). Although the dependency ratio is more favourable for returnees than for hosts (0.19 earners per household member vs 0.16), returnee households are considerably more likely to subjectively declare their economic situation to be worse than that of others around them (at 45% compared to a third of hosts).

In this rural context, hosts are only at a slight advantage compared to returnees in terms of electrification (78% for hosts vs 70% for returnees), but drinking water is harder to come by than in the urban locations sampled: Less than half of returnees, and only slightly more than half of the interviewed host households have access to clean water at home.

Respondents had access to healthcare almost without exception, and for nine returnee respondents out of ten and all hosts this source of healthcare is less than one hour away. However, hosts are considerably more likely to avail themselves of healthcare, with 81% having sought medical advice over the past year, compared to two thirds of the returnees sampled.

Figure 7 A returnee shelter in Puli Khumri, Baghlan

Social dimension. When asked whether at least one member of the household was in possession of an identification document, the great majority of respondents (nine out of ten) responded in the affirmative.

Returnee households are less well educated than host households (60% of returnee respondents have at least one literate member, compared to almost three quarters of hosts). They are much less likely to send their boys (41% vs 72%) and their girls (21% vs 55%) to school.

Safety and security dimension. In remote and poor rural settings, the majority of respondents in all categories report had to reduce their food consumption for lack of means in the past, and one in four respondents had to do so within the past week. At over 70%, those with a migration background were considerably more likely to have done so than non-displaced host households. People in Baghlan generally feel safe at home no matter what their migration status. They do not, however, feel able to influence local affairs. Hosts are much more likely to intend to stay in their current location, at 85% compared to 58% of returnees.

- **Conclusion**

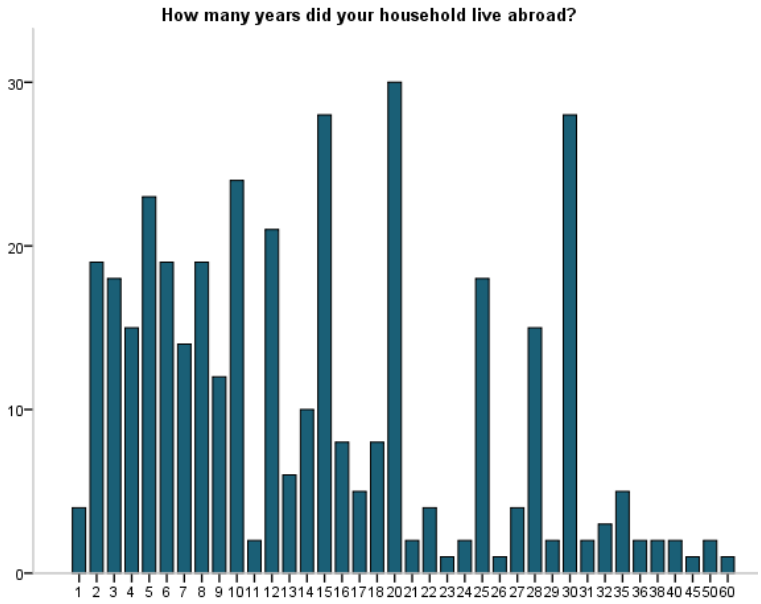
Returnees sampled in Baghlan's Doshi and Puli-Khumri districts appear deprived in many ways compared to the cohort of local hosts, leaving room for improved integration.

2.5.2. Pilot 4: Takhar

- **The population of interest: 203 hosts and 382 returnees**

This pilot took place in December 2016. Returnees spent on average 15 years in exile with 37% having been in exile for less than 10 years. 44% of returnees returned less than two years ago. Half of the returnees were deported and 91% responded that Takhar is their original birthplace.

Figure 8 Takhar returnee profile: time spent abroad



Economic dimension. 55% of returnees said that they owned their residence compared to 83% of the hosts. Returnees own land in 10% of the cases compared to 29% of the hosts. Correspondingly, owning livestock is also less common for returnees (29% vs 43% of the hosts).

The earner ratio in Takhar stands at .2 for hosts and .19 for returnees, meaning that host earners support fewer dependents than returnee earners (note this earner ratio is favourable compared to a number of urban agglomerations studied over the course of these pilots). Over half (54%) of the interviewed returnees judges their economic situation to be worse than that of those who live around them – compared to 29% of hosts.

Electricity appears to be a luxury in rural Takhar, and only one respondent household in four benefits from it, regardless of migration history.

Hosts are three times more likely than returnees to have safe drinking water available at their dwelling, but at 18% that also remains a rare luxury. Healthcare appears to be available to both hosts and returnees at an equal rate (some three quarters of respondents), but again hosts are more likely to seek medical help than their returnee peers (at 72% vs 64%).

Social dimension. Host households in Takhar are very likely to have at least one household member who is in possession of an identifying document (94%) – this is only the case for four returnees out of five. Returnees are less educated than hosts with only one third of Takhar returnees having at least one literate household member (compared to almost half of the interviewed local hosts). Hosts are much more likely to send their children to school (at a still low 42% for boys and girls, compared to 29% for boys and 17% for girls in the case of recent returnees).

Safety and security dimension. Close to 90% of respondents feel safe going about their daily lives in Takhar province. The majority (close to two thirds) of respondents does not feel that they have the possibility to influence local affairs, with few differences in terms of migration history. Both the hosts and the returnees interviewed would mostly (59% and 54%) like to stay in Takhar for the foreseeable future, though a non-negligible quarter of respondents of both categories are unsure.

- **Conclusion: Distinct challenges for returnees in a generally deprived setting**

Returnees covered by the pilot in the North are easily distinguishable from the local population using the indicators, which constitute the MDI. In comparison with their hosts, returnees appear to be deprived across a number of dimensions in the economic, social and security realm.

3. Focus on selected components of the three dimensions of the MDI: The Economic, Social and Safety Realm

KEY FINDINGS & IMPLICATIONS

While the previous section reviewed findings by location and dimension, this section illustrates the MDI by presenting a selection of indicators that compose the different dimensions of the index.

The **economic dimension** is represented by the following indicators and key markers of integration:

- Access to **electricity** is a good example of how much the local context matters, as it is near universal in Herat but a luxury in the rural North. There remains an opportunity for improving integration here in most locations but not in Herat and Kandahar.
- **Debt** levels are an important differentiator and alleviating them would contribute to integration in most areas.
- A car is a valuable **asset**, and the differences in the rates of car possession indicate a lack of integration in all locations without exception.
- The existence of **remittances** is an excellent example of the local nature of integration. Although not many households in the sample benefit from them, the differences between hosts and migrants are significant and telling.

The **social dimension** is illustrated by a range of example and markers of integration:

- **Literacy** is an important predictor for many other social indicators, and represents an important differentiator and thus opportunity for improved integration.
- Possession of a **tazkera** is a differentiator in the opposite sense: in many cases, the displaced are more likely to possess it than their local host cohort.
- The presence of a **local network** is an important contributor to (re)integration, and unsurprisingly the displaced are often (but not always) more pessimistic in their (subjective) assessment of the quality of their support network.

The **safety and security dimension** includes both safety and physical security, food and land tenure security in a broader understanding of security:

- **Food security** speaks directly to resilience and is a significant indicator of integration in all locations save Herat.
- Perceived **tenure security** is rather high across the board in the cities but not in more remote Baghlan and Takhar. Significant differences between hosts and the displaced show that improving land tenure security would contribute to integration.
- Concrete migration plans are more pronounced among the displaced than hosts in all locations but Kabul.

Identifying the most relevant differentiators between host and displaced samples is identifying those which best lend themselves to programming efforts designed to improve integration in a given dimension. An absence of differences on the other hand implies that the opportunities for integration lie elsewhere.

<u>It is important to note that the index considers host and displaced cohorts separately in each location – responses to all questions are weighted differently in each province, reflecting the relative difference in importance of indicators in various contexts.</u>

Table 2 Components of the different dimensions of the MDI

Economic dimension	Social dimension	Safety / security dimension
Refrigerator ownership	Tazkera possession	Possible sources of financial assistance
Car ownership	Possible sources of financial assistance	Last occasion of reduced food intake
Bank account	Literacy	Migration intentions and expectations
Electricity	Distance to healthcare	Perceived safety in daily life
Piped water	Social activities	Perceived tenure security
Remittances	Psychological state	Existence of a support network
Income from agriculture	Perceived safety in daily life	Self-perceived access to employment
Income from trade	Perceived tenure security	Earner redundancy
Income from aid	Political participation	
Debt to spending ratio	Existence of a support network	
Self-assessment of relative economic situation	Domestic conflict	
Possible sources of financial assistance		
Last occasion of reduced food intake		
Professional skills		
Self-perceived access to employment		
Earner redundancy		

Nota bene: A number of questions figure in several dimensions given that their impact cannot be reduced to solely one realm. The weights of indicators that appear multiple times vary considerably from dimension to dimension.

3.1. The economic dimension

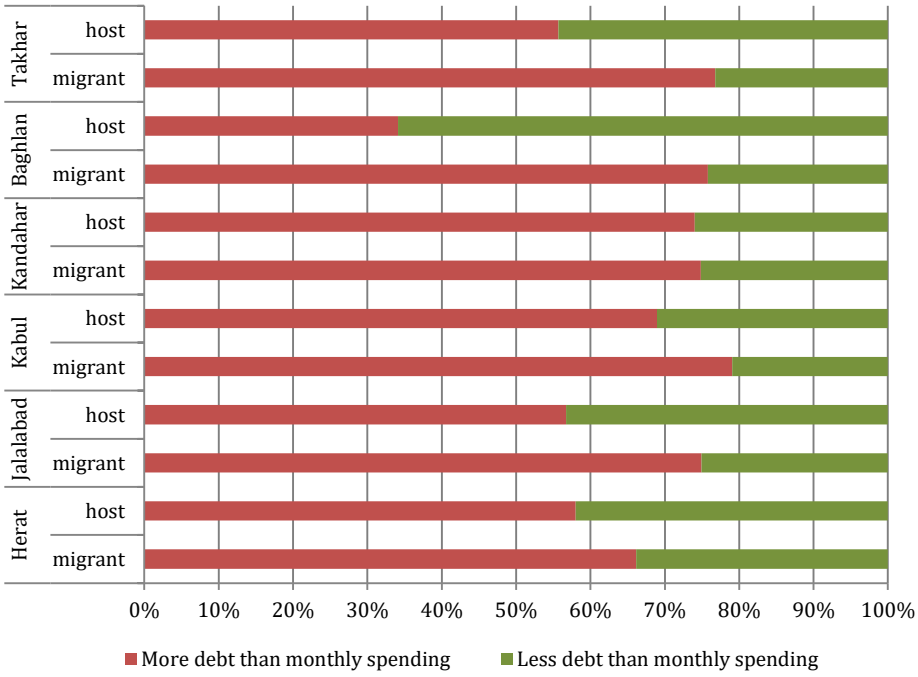
The economic dimension of the MDI aims to assess the *prevalence of differences* between hosts and returnees / IDPs, in terms of tangible assets, access to services and amenities, additional income sources and debt. It also contains subjective assessments on the kind of assistance a household might be able to rely on if in financial need, and the relative financial situation the household considers itself in compared to others around it.

Figure 9 Electricity

Access to electricity differs considerably between provinces – it is near universal in well-electrified Herat and a luxury for a good part of the population in rural Takhar which does not benefit from access to the power grid. This research finds significant differences between hosts and non-hosts in terms of electricity access in Jalalabad, Kabul, Baghlan and Takhar, implying that there remains an opportunity for increased integration in terms of electricity provisions at these locations – but not in the other two, where the absence of differences implies that the opportunities for *integration* lie elsewhere and to the extent that programming were targeted towards the provision of electricity, it would serve a purpose other than integration per se.

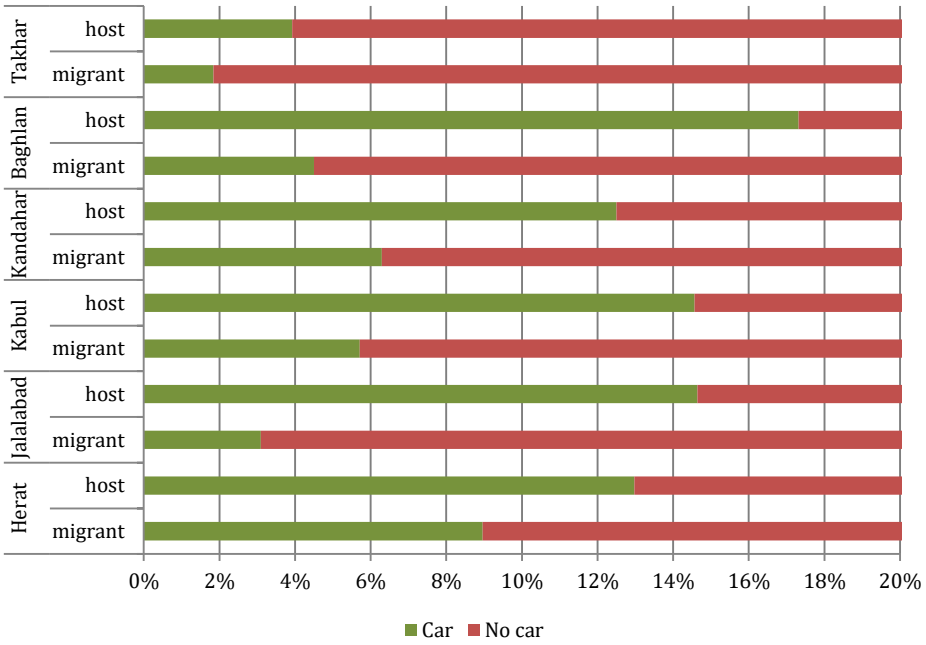
As was noted by peer reviewers, access to electricity will likely correlate with household income. This is also the case for other indicators constituting the economic dimension of the MDI (for instance car possession). The MDI method identified these factors as relevant distinguishing factors between hosts and hon-hosts, a proxy for wealth in a context where data on household income is notoriously unreliable.

Figure 10 Debt levels exceeding monthly spending



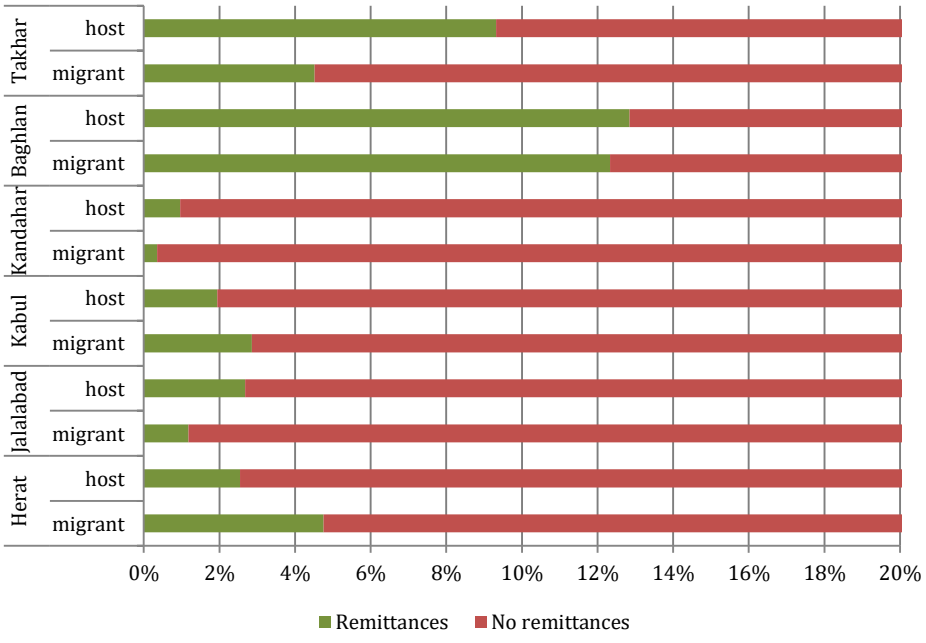
Reported levels of income and debt are notoriously unreliable in a context such as Afghanistan, but asking respondents to estimate them with respect to household spending has shown promising results. The research team finds that the existence of an overall debt burden exceeding a household's expenses in a given month is a strong differentiator between host and non –host households. Assisting displaced households in alleviating the burden of their debt would thus contribute to integration in all locations save Kandahar, and in particular in the Northern regions of Baghlan and Takhar.

Figure 11 Car Possession



In all pilot locations hosts were considerably more likely to possess a car than returnees, at 13.5% vs 7.6% overall. A car is a valuable asset - car-owning households could afford to purchase the vehicle and can potentially sell in case of an emergency, thereby increasing their resilience to shocks. Although car ownership enters into the economic dimension in MDI calculations, it also entails a social and safety component, allowing for mobility in case of need. If the household's main income earner is a driver (which is the case for a non-negligible 8% of the NRC pilot sample for instance), the car is also a crucial means of livelihood. Car possession is thus something to aspire to, and differences in rates of ownership indicate a lack of integration.

Figure 12 Remittances



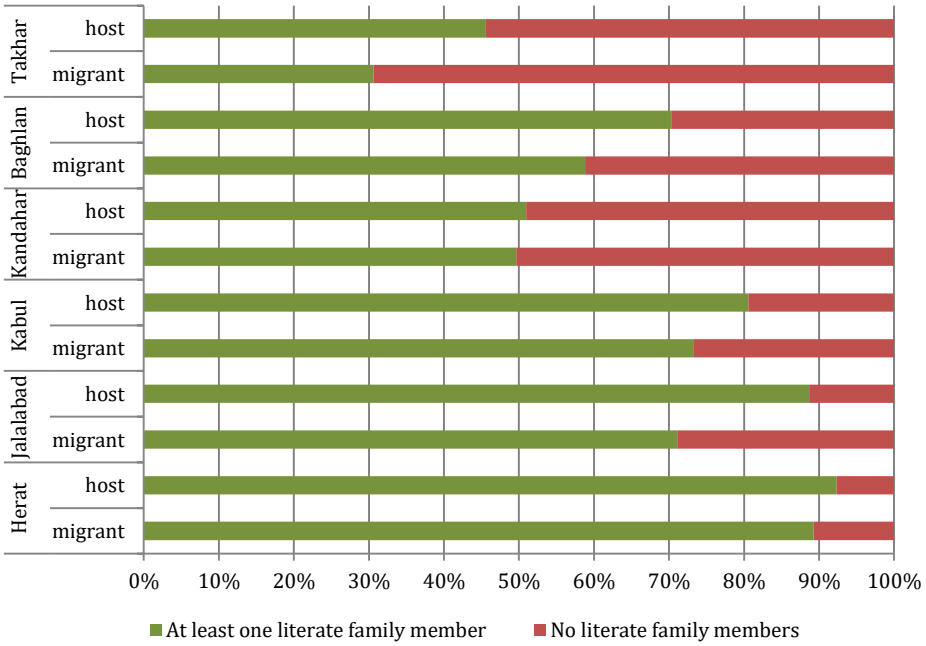
Data on remittances can be somewhat unreliable, but they are an excellent illustration of the local nature of integration. Although the proportion of households benefitting from this source of income is small throughout, migrant families are almost twice as likely to receive remittances as hosts in Herat and in Takhar, while in Jalalabad, hosts are more than four times as likely to do so. These differences are significant, and suggest differing integration dynamics in the two cities. Thus if we assume migrants to be more vulnerable, we might find that remittances in Herat are driven by the lack of alternative income sources, while in Jalalabad remittances are perhaps inhibited by a lack of earners outside the local context. In either case, the difference is the measure of integration. Thus diminished reliance on remittances is a sign of integration in Herat, while access to such indicates greater integration in Jalalabad. The fact that in Baghlan a significant portion of both migrant and host households does receive additional income through remittances might indicated that recent returnees there maintain strong links to their former place of exile, and that the local population also benefits from these connections.

3.2. Social dimension

The indicators entering into the social dimension of the MDI include civil documentation (tazkera, birth certificate…), but also educational indicators and social practices involving time spent with others and political participation. Furthermore, symptoms of trauma[9] were included in the social sphere for the purpose of this exercise.

In this dimension, like in the economic and safety ones, subjective indicators are used to contextualize human stories, experiences and aspirations.

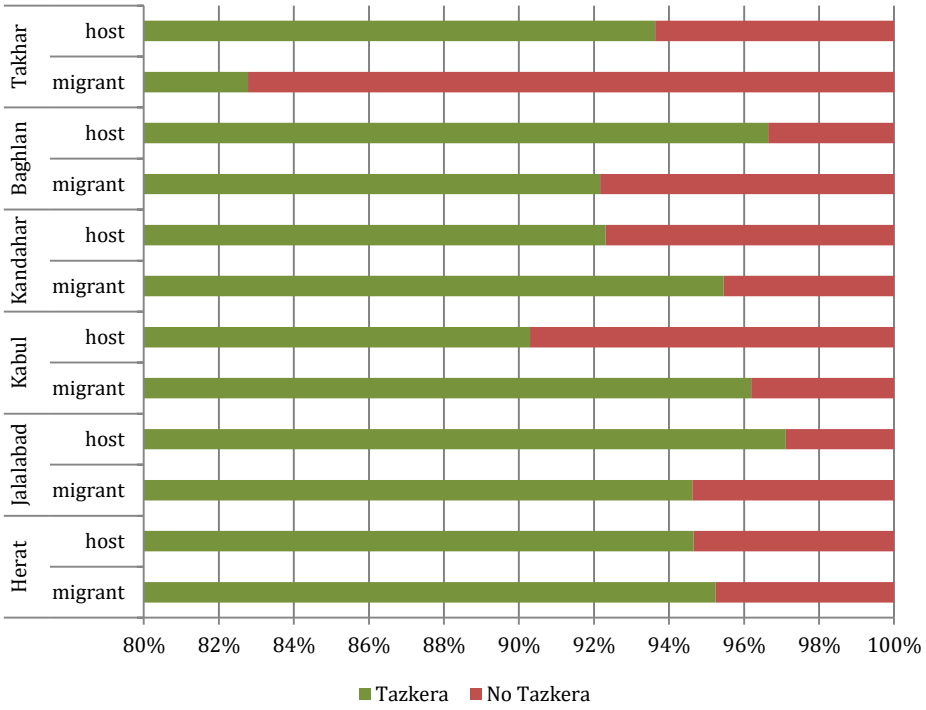
Figure 13 Literacy



9 Depression, anxiety, anger and guilt.

Literacy is an important predictor for a number of other factors of interest such as child protection, sanitary health practices, civil documentation and many more. It varies widely among the locations studied over the course of the three pilots. **In all provinces, hosts are significantly more likely to have at least one literate household member than those with a migratory background.** We conclude that an improvement of returnee and IDP literacy rates would contribute to improved integration. Again these differences are considerably starker in Kabul, Jalalabad and the northern provinces than in Herat and Kandahar.

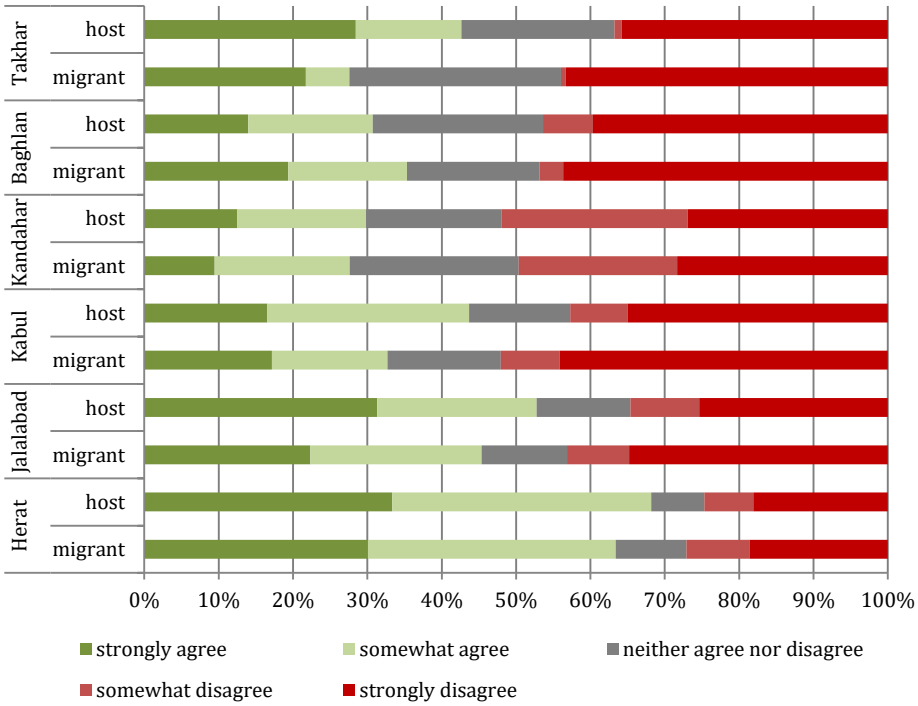
Figure 14 Tazkera possession



Possession of a tazkera by at least one member of the household is considered an important element of civil documentation and may impact access to formal government or private sector services. However, in all locations except Jalalabad, migrants were more likely to have a tazkera in the household. Since for the most part, this difference is neither prejudicial (there is no apparent disadvantage to holding a tazkera), nor is it likely to diminish over time (migrant households are unlikely to lose tazkeras over time), the contribution of tazkera ownership to MDI scores in most locations is minimal.[10]

[10] This finding suggests that the RWG may consider removal of the tazkera question from the MDI question set to be replaced by a more telling differentiator such as birth certificates for all children born in the household.

Figure 15 We have a network we can rely on for support

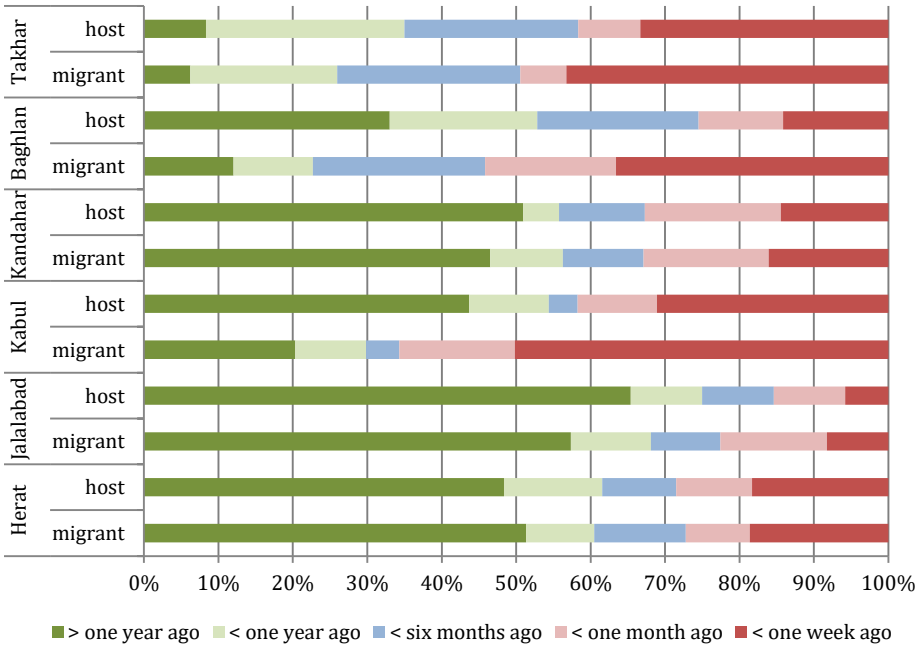


Afghanistan is a relational economy, and having a network to rely on is essential in the quest to access jobs, credit, shelter, etc. The presence of a network is thus general considered an important contributor to (re)integration. In the pilots conducted for the MDI, respondents' subjective assessment of their ability to rely on a network proved to be a significant differentiator between hosts and former migrants.

3.3. Safety/security dimension

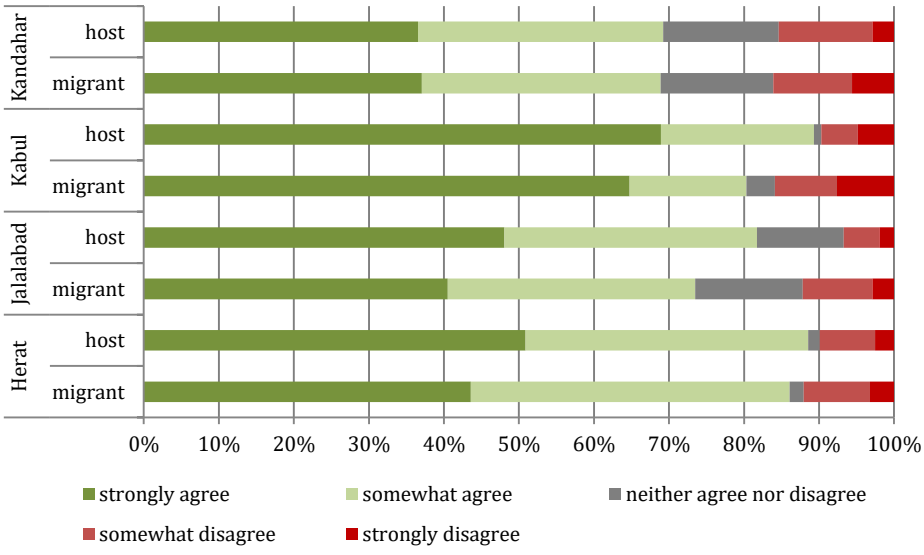
The security and safety dimension of the MDI includes both perceived safety from bodily harm (at home as well as outside) and other types of security, measured for instance through earner redundancy and perceived tenure security. Hunger impacts both the economic and the security dimension of the MDI. Since ultimately migration decisions are often formed based on a perceived lack of security, whether economic or in terms of concrete threats faced, they were included in the safety/security facet of the index.

Figure 16 Last occasion of reduced food intake



The answer to the question: "When was the last time your household had to reduce the quantity or the quality of your family's food for lack of means?" speaks directly to resilience and contributes to both the security/safety and the economic dimension of the MDI. A significant indicator of integration in all locations but Herat, and particularly in Kabul and the northern provinces, food security remains an important angle for programming aiming to improve integration outcomes.

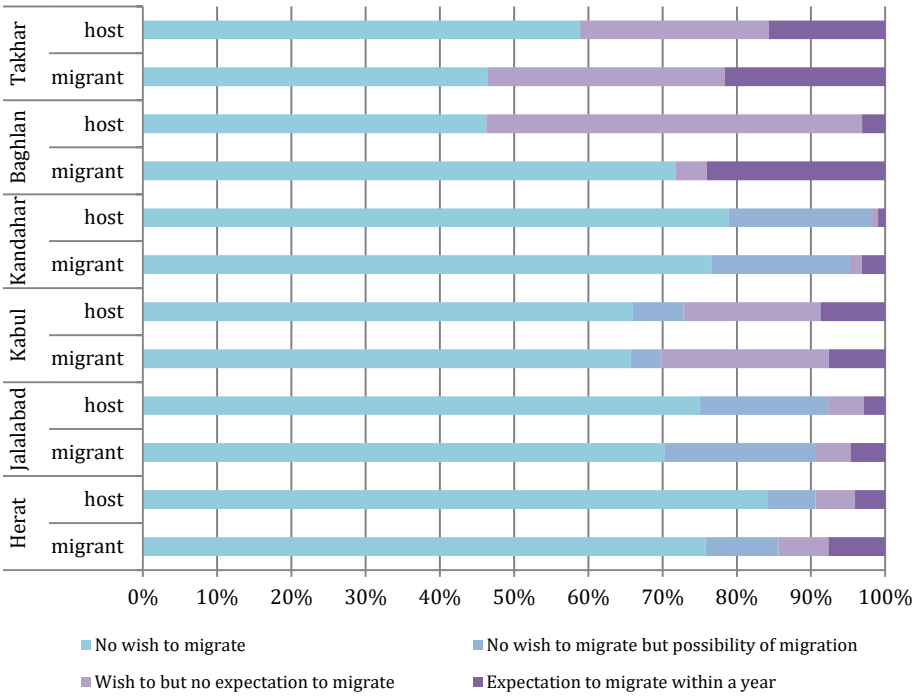
Figure 17 I feel secure I can remain in my dwelling



Nota bene: Baghlan and Takhar are not listed in this graph as there is cause for concern this question may have been misunderstood.

Perceived tenure security, or the absence thereof, contributes to integration in a number of ways. A household which fears for its right to remain in a given house will feel less comfortable making plans to become a part of the community, enroll their children in school, look for long-term livelihood solutions, etc. Perceived tenure security is rather high across the board in the cities (though not in rural Baghlan and Takhar), but differences among (former) migrants and hosts indicate that improving it would contribute to integration outcomes. It should be noted that this is a relative and subjective indicator rather than an objective one: only 12% of respondents in the NRC study (conducted in Herat, Jalalabad and Kandahar) stated holding an *official* land deed. However, as agreed with the stakeholders involved in conceptualizing the index, the way a household will navigate its integration is strongly shaped by perceptions, information and expectations surrounding return.

Figure 18 Migration intentions and migration plans



In the context of the MDI, migration intentions only speak to a failure of integration insofar as hosts do not harbor them to the same extent as former migrants. In the case of the five pilots conducted for the MDI, significant differences in migration expectations point to the fact that they are a relevant differentiator – interestingly, however, not in the same way in all locations. Hosts are more likely to want to remain in their current location, especially in Jalalabad and Herat. Returnees in Kabul display a greater tendency to wish to migrate (perhaps to Europe) while assuming that it will not happen. Concrete migration plans within the coming year are more pronounced among the displaced than hosts, except in Kabul.[11] It is of concern that over 20% of the non-hosts interviewed in Baghlan and Takhar have concrete plans to re-migrate within the next twelve months.

[11] Note that this question, like all others, is weighted differently in each location.

4. Findings on integration

KEY FINDINGS & IMPLICATIONS

This section presents the MDI scores in the different locations and sheds lights on a number of drivers of, and impediments to, integration. The analysis of numeric integration scores results in a number of findings, for instance:

- All else being equal, displaced households contemplating where to settle in Afghanistan would currently find it easier to achieve integration in Kandahar or Herat than in Kabul.
- Those choosing Kabul will fare better, particularly in terms of economic integration, in the city than in the rural outskirts.
- Those headed to Herat will find integration with respect to safety much more challenging in the Babali neighborhood than in nearby Abade.
- Unlike in more urban provinces studies, returnees in Baghlan fare much better in rural Doshi than in the provincial capital of Puli Khumri.
- Recent returnees in Jalalabad are at a considerable disadvantage, in terms of integration, compared to their IDP peers.

Overall, it is important to remember that high integration scores do not imply that no assistance is needed, but merely that said assistance may not be required to improve *integration* outcomes.

An analysis of some "drivers of integration", focusing on those prioritized by the Draft Afghanistan Comprehensive Voluntary Repatriation and Reintegration Strategy, suggests that

- The impact of voluntary returns packages was significant in Kandahar and Herat, but negligible in a context of massive recent returns to Jalalabad.
- The link between return assistance and integration even appears negative in the Northern regions of Baghlan and Takhar, implying that households which will be well integrated may not feel the need to seek assistance.
- The analysis of results with respect to the effect of urban vs peri-urban and rural environments on integration outcomes reveals that displaced households in urban settings tend to fare better (i.e. resemble their hosts more) in terms of economic integration. Safety integration on the other hand tends to be higher in the outskirts. The pilot conducted in the Northern province of Baghlan suggests however that the economic benefits of returning to a local hub may well disappear in more remote areas.
- Overall, returnees are well-advised to return to their place of origin. While the impact varies considerably by location (Jalalabad appears particularly inhospitable to non-locals), this holds true for all location studied thus far.
- The impact of time spent abroad appears to differ depending on location. While returnees in Kabul display integration scores which are positively correlated to time spent abroad, possibly reflecting resilience attributes gradually acquired over time, those in Herat display the opposite trend.
- Vulnerable households in Jalalabad exhibit significantly lower integration scores than non-vulnerable ones. The pilot in Takhar and Baghlan illustrates that female-headed households suffer an important penalty in terms of social integration.

4.1. Overall results

The following tables present the MDI results by pilot and location.

Table 3MDI score summary

	Pilot 1 (SH)		Pilot 2 (NRC)			Pilot 3 (DRC)		
	Kabul		Herat	Jalalabad	Kandahar	Herat		
	Rural	Urban				Abade	Babali	Monarar
Number of displaced	150	165	286	279	286	153	289	143
Number of hosts	52	51	111	104	104	87	95	68
MDI economic mean	0.681	0.836	0.911	0.890	0.906	0.836	0.884	0.733
MDI social mean	0.771	0.779	0.842	0.826	0.904	0.835	0.816	0.765
MDI security mean	0.868	0.827	0.860	0.886	0.879	0.901	0.685	0.774
MDI average mean	0.773	0.814	0.871	0.867	0.897	0.857	0.795	0.758

	Pilot 4 (AKF)					Pilot 5 (NRC)			
	Baghlan		Takhar			Jalalabad			
	Doshi	Puli Khumri	Dasti-e-Qala		Taloqan	Urban		Peri-Urban	
	Returnee	Returnee	Returnee	IDP	Returnee	Returnee	IDP	Returnee	IDP
Number of displaced	206	279	102	152	280	314	197	393	173
Number of hosts	92	79	88		95	144		237	
MDI economic mean	0.899	0.829	0.859	0.807	0.928	0.833	0.872	0.860	0.878
MDI social mean	0.912	0.787	0.914	0.923	0.912	0.891	0.92	0.895	0.916
MDI security mean	0.902	0.799	0.910	0.909	0.919	0.915	0.926	0.916	0.917
MDI average Mean	0.904	0.805	0.890	0.880	0.920	0.879	0.906	0.890	0.903

The analysis of MDI scores is designed to be conducted in light of explanatory, or profiling, variables of interest within a given location. Yet a glance of overall scores in different provinces reveals identifiable differences of populations with respect to their progress along the path to integration. Keeping in mind that a difference of about three percentage points (i.e. 0.03) translates into a significant result,

- ✓ Pilot 1, in Kabul, identified that returnees in urban and in rural settings fare similarly in terms of social integration, but those in the rural outskirts are at a considerable disadvantage in terms of security and, especially, economic well-being compared to their local host cohort.

- ✓ If in the case of pilot 2 in Herat, Jalalabad and Kandahar, overall integration states among returnees do not appear to differ very much, a glance at the social integration scores reveals that the displaced in Kandahar have a considerably easier time adapting to their new environment than those in Herat and, especially, Jalalabad.

- ✓ Pilot 3 in Herat was the first to illustrate that integration need not be compared across the entire country – local differences can be very important. Although closer to their hosts in terms of economic well-being, returnees interviewed in the Babali neighborhood for instance displayed much lower security integration outcomes than their peers in nearby Abade. An actor aiming to improve integration outcomes in Herat may thus want to focus on different factors in different parts of the city.

- ✓ Pilot 4 allowed the research team to explore a more rural environment: the Northern provinces of Baghlan and Takhar. It revealed that in Baghlan, the displaced were much closer to achieving social and security integration in remote Doshi than in the provincial capital of Puli Khumri.

While this is doubtlessly due to the fact that the *local* standards of social and security well-being are higher in the capital, and the differences thus larger, it means that it makes sense to target the entire population of Doshi with measures designed to improve social factors and security, while in Puli Khumri there remains room for further measures aimed at returnees only.

- ✓ As seen in pilot 5, recent returnees in Jalalabad are at a considerable disadvantage in terms of integration compared to their IDP peers. This difference exists both in urban and in peri-urban environments, but is particularly pronounced in the economic realm in the city itself. As is often the case with integration assessments, the *absence* of differences can be as telling as the presence thereof. For instance, in Jalalabad, the research finds much fewer observable differences between returnees and IDPs in terms of integration in peri-urban environments. For better or worse. all groups of displaced appear to be at a comparable level with respect to their hosts.

4.2. Drivers of integration

A set of prioritization criteria needs to be agreed upon during the workshop and subsequently applied to identify the sequence of activities. Currently the proposed prioritization criteria are:

1) *Beneficiary categories (refugee returnees, undocumented returnees, group returns, host communities);*
2) *Vulnerability criteria, re-integration levels;*
3) *Geographic location (high-return area, urban versus rural, areas with high vulnerability, areas of high out-migration);*
4) *Years in exile, year of return.*

> Draft Afghanistan Unified Action Plan (2015 – 2020) - Solution Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) and Comprehensive Voluntary Repatriation and Reintegration Strategy (CVRRS), 12 July 2016

This section looks at a number of factors which influence integration outcomes in the locations of interest. Care was taken to include many of the prioritization criteria mentioned in Draft Unified Action Plan cited above. The MDI is a useful tool in determining whether these factors do indeed appear to impact integration as defined in the same document ("*differences that may exist*") and to which extent, in different locations.

I. Beneficiary Categories: The example of Herat, Kandahar and Jalalabad

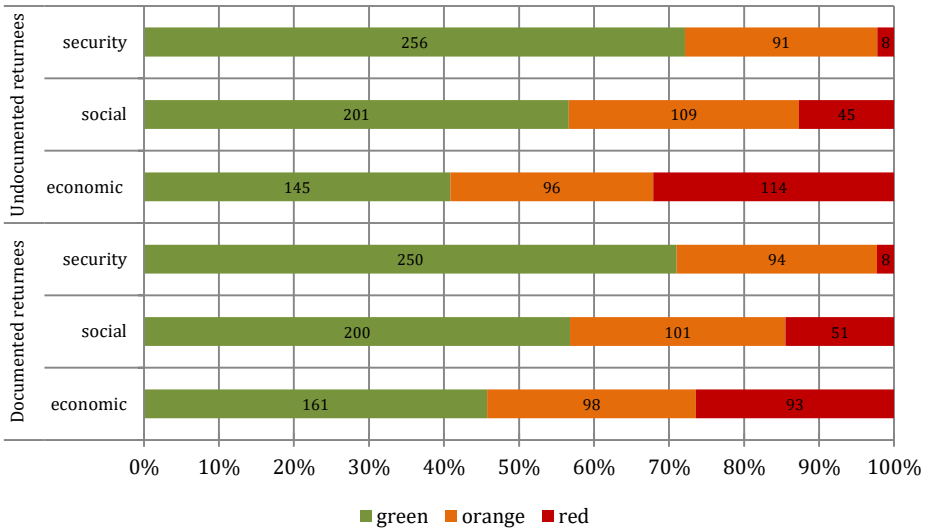
In pilot 2, voluntary return packages appeared to have had a significant positive impact on integration in Herat and Kandahar. The impact of assisted return is most notable in the social and security dimensions, while the impact of deportation has its greatest negative impact on the social aspect of integration. Mode of return appears to have little if any impact on economic integration, suggesting that any assistance received was quickly converted to gains in the social and security arenas.

Table 4 MDI scores for different return modalities in Herat and Kandahar, Pilot 2

		MDI economic mean	MDI social mean	MDI security mean	MDI average mean
Herat	Deportees	0.910	0.801	0.844	0.851
	Spontaneous returnees	0.909	0.849	0.857	0.872
	Assisted returnees	0.921	0.889	0.898	0.903
Kandahar	Deportees	0.928	0.888	0.892	0.903
	Spontaneous returnees	0.890	0.901	0.859	0.883
	Assisted returnees	0.926	0.947	0.924	0.932

While for pilot 2, the numbers were too small to ascertain the impact of return packages in Jalalabad, pilot 5 allowed the research team to revisit the question with a larger sample.

Figure 19 Recent returnees' integration vs return modality in Jalalabad (pilot 5)



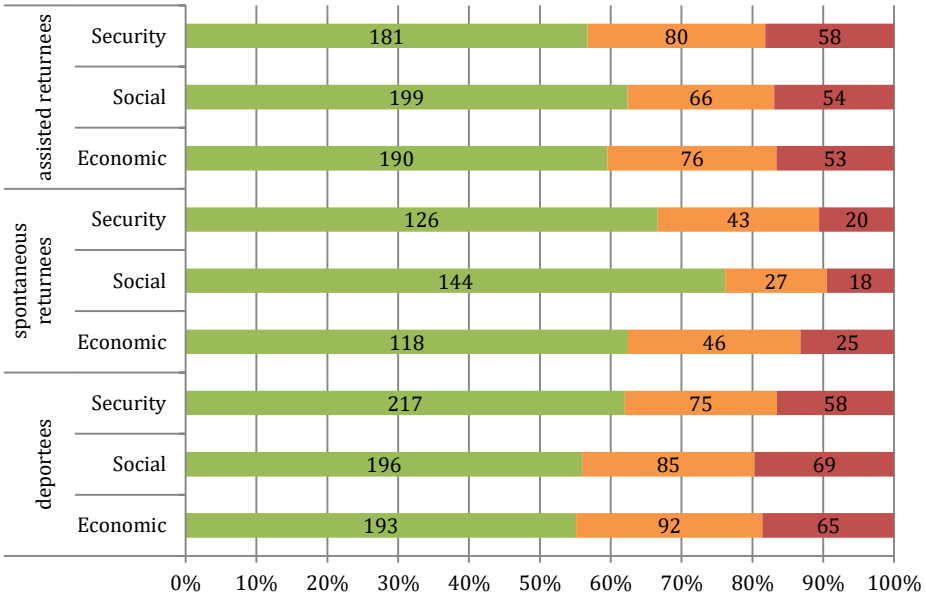
Nota bene: As laid out in the methodological note, displaced scores above 0.9 indicate full integration (green), while those who fall within the range of 0.8 to 0.9 are distinguishable from hosts (orange) and could benefit from further integration programming . Displaced households scoring below 0.8 are distinguishable from their local host cohort across a range of indicators and are thus in definite need of improved integration.

Focusing on recent returnees (arrived, for the most part, in 2016), that research found that documented and undocumented returnees in Jalalabad performed similarly poorly in terms of economic integration, middling in terms of social integration and rather better in terms of security integration. The fact that the differences between recent documented and undocumented returnees in terms of integration are marginal means that the cash grants (approximately $3,000) given to returnee families do not appear to contribute to integration in the short term.[12] One possible explanation is that the doubling of cash grants (as well as rumors of said grant being on "offer" only temporarily) may indeed have been an incentive to return for households which would otherwise have remained in Pakistan, and that the vulnerability of that particular cohort might mask the benefits of assistance.

[12] Yet it is in the short term that one would expect to find an impact - as a large part of these funds is spent on transport and the remainder often exhausted within three months to meet immediate humanitarian needs, it is unlikely that the grants would have a stronger impact on integration in the longer-term.

The results regarding return packages are even more striking in the North: Unlike in Kabul, Herat and Kandahar, returnees who enjoyed UNHCR assistance returning do not appear to be as well integrated as those who returned spontaneously. Spontaneous returnees fare better than their assisted returnee peers in all dimension of integration, but differences are particularly stark in the social realm.

Figure 20 Recent returnees' integration vs return modality in Baghlan and Takhar (pilot 4)



As is visible in table 3 above, the negative impact of deportation is clearly evident in Herat, particularly in the social realm. It can be less clearly ascertained in Kandahar, Jalalabad and the Northern provinces. These results suggest programming targeted at deportees would have the greatest impact in Herat but not necessarily elsewhere. Such programming would best target issues related to social inclusion.

While the differences between spontaneous and assisted returnees in Baghlan and Takhar might well be the consequence of self-selection (returnees who have returned spontaneously may have been better off in the first place, thus choosing not to avail themselves of UNHCR assistance), the fact that assisted returnees do not even fare much better than deportees would seem to imply that return assistance currently has little to no effect on integration in Baghlan and Takhar.

More generally, a negative correlation between aid and integration outcomes in the North?

Findings from pilot 4 in the North suggest that displaced households who have received assistance from the government or an international organisation are in fact less integrated than those who have not.[13] Prima facie, this might seem counterintuitive. But the very fact of being an aid recipient may indicate prior need, which in this case would be a stronger indicator of posterior need than the

[13] Note that this is mainly based on Baghlan respondents, as only a very small number of Takhar respondents confirmed having been recipients of aid in the past.

impact of the aid itself. In other words, the selection—external or self—of aid recipients means that having received aid just means the household *needed* aid (and often still does). The differences between the economic front than the social and security dimensions only serve to underscore the economic nature of aid targeting and intervention.

II. Geographic location

○ Urban, rural, peri-urban

The data of the first three pilots shows that in urbanized provinces, location matters to integration. But it does not matter to the same extent in different dimensions. While displaced households in urban settings tend to fare better in terms of economic integration than their peers in rural and peri-urban zones, differences are marginal where social integration is concerned. In a way, the choice of an urban environment, while advisable in terms of economic integration, requires a trade-off in terms of security. The cities are deemed less safe than the outskirts, except for one: Only in Kandahar do returnees' and hosts' perceptions of security align more in the urban areas than the rural ones.

Table 5 Integration and the type of environment (Pilots 1-3)

		Economic integration	Social integration	Security / safety integration	Average integration
Kabul	Urban	0.836	0.779	0.827	0.824
	Rural	0.681	0.771	0.868	0.774
Herat	Urban	0.921	0.839	0.830	0.863
	Peri-urban	0.903	0.845	0.885	0.878
Jalalabad	Urban	0.925	0.836	0.873	0.878
	Peri-urban	0.869	0.820	0.894	0.861
Kandahar	Urban	0.911	0.917	0.898	0.909
	Peri-urban	0.903	0.895	0.866	0.888

Source: Kabul and NRC pilots

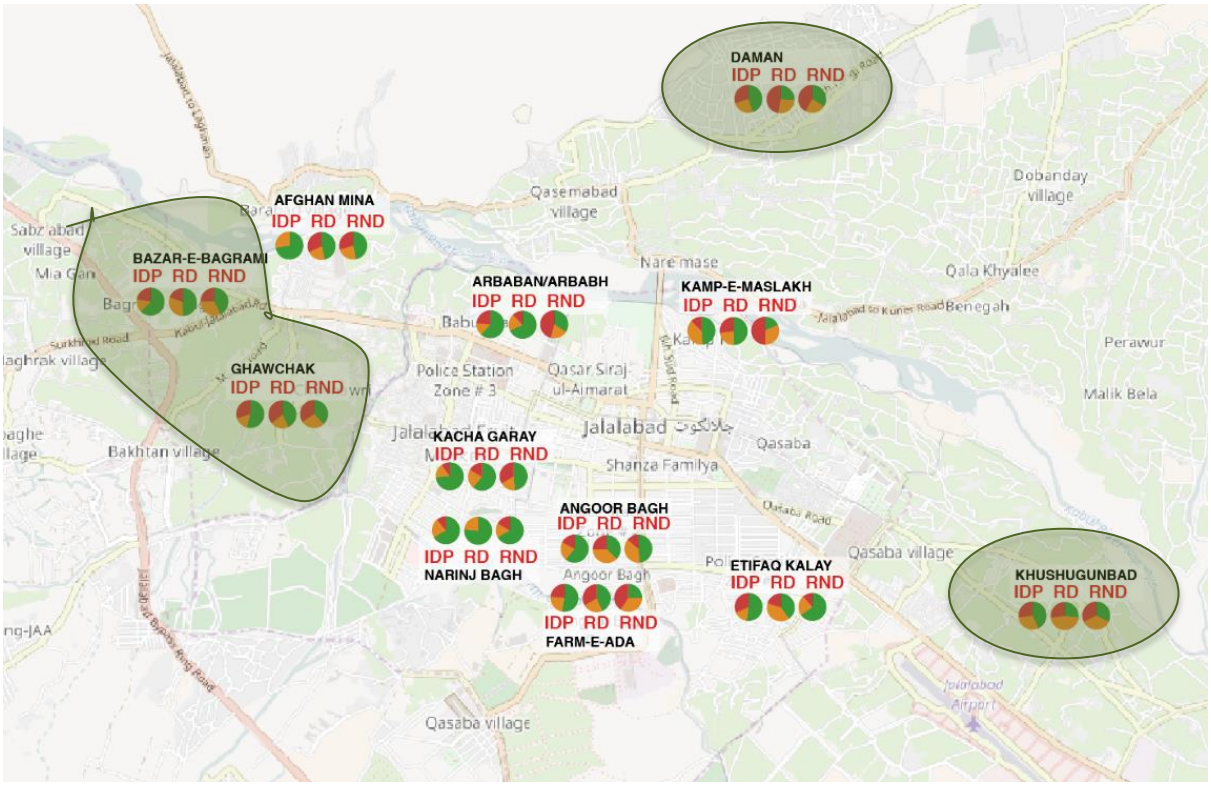
Based on a revised sampling strategy, pilots 4 and 5 went further in the exploration of the possible impact of more or less rural environments on the integration of recent arrivals.

Pilot number 5 took the MDI analysis to a new level in terms of local focus, thus allowing to assess integration in different neighborhoods.[14] Overall, integration scores for recent returnees in Jalalabad are higher for the displaced in urban than in peri-urban environments in the economic realm, but comparable in the social and the safety dimension.

This aggregated figure hides differences however. If integration scores look very positive for all categories of displaced in central Narinj Bagh, they are considerably more alarming in the nearby Farm-e-Ada neighborhood. If the far outskirts of Daman and Khushugunbad confirm the suspicion that integration outcomes worsen with increased proximity from the center, the displaced residing in peri-urban Bazar-e-Bagrami are not less integrated overall than those of Kamp-e-Maslak.

[14] These numbers are indicative and anecdotal only, the critical mass of statistical significant sampling not having been reached.

Figure 21 Average integration scores in Jalalabad by neighborhood (Pilot 5)

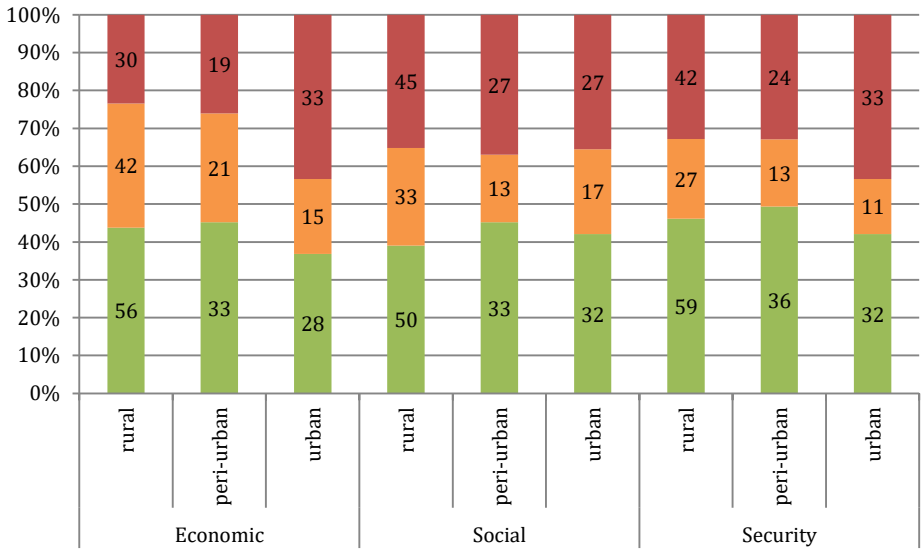


The fifth pilot thus both confirms and nuances the observation that in cities, integration tends to improve with proximity to the center.

But does this finding hold true for less urban provinces? The findings of pilot 4 suggest otherwise.

In Pilot 4, the only one of the four districts where a relatively large number of respondent households was found in urban, peri-urban and rural areas was Puli Khumri district in Baghlan. The following figure illustrates returnees' integration scores in Puli Khumri district.

Figure 22 Integration and the type of environment in the North : Focus on Puli Khumri (pilot 4)



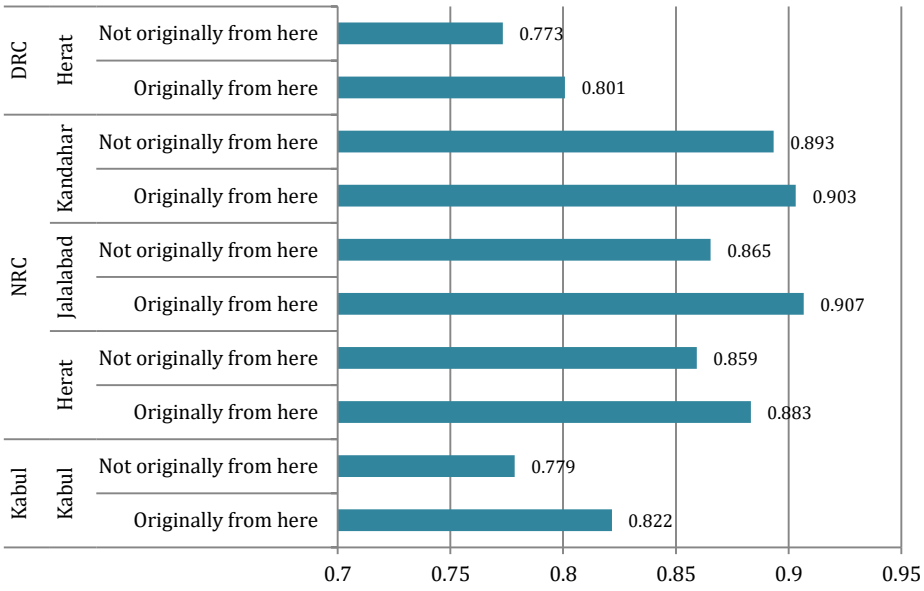
The data show that unlike in cities as the ones referred to above, returnees moving to the town tend to suffer in terms of economic integration, and also feel less safe than their counterparts in more rural settings. The level of overall integration is highest in peri-urban and rural areas, not in urban areas.

The findings imply that overall, in urbanized provinces, the displaced in the outskirts are likely more in need of economic integration assistance than their peers in the city. In more remote areas it may well be the opposite – those wishing to further economic integration should focus their efforts in the agglomerations first and foremost. Findings in Jalalabad during pilot 5 also illustrate the need to make the approach as localized as possible.

- **Location of origin**

Another factor analysed in this research is the impact of whether a household is returning to its place of origin or migrating to somewhere new. The results show that returning to one's place of origin has a significantly positive impact.

Figure 23 Average integration scores and location of origin



The impact of being native to the current place of residence is most evident in the social and security dimensions, and varies significantly by city.

Thus, in Kabul, locals are significantly more integrated on the security front than migrants hailing from elsewhere in the country. Non-locals in Herat suffered slightly lower social integration scores in the NRC study, while security was a slightly bigger challenge there in the DRC study. Jalalabad seems particularly inhospitable to non-locals with a scores nearly ten points lower on the social dimension and a more modest but significant disadvantage on the security dimension.

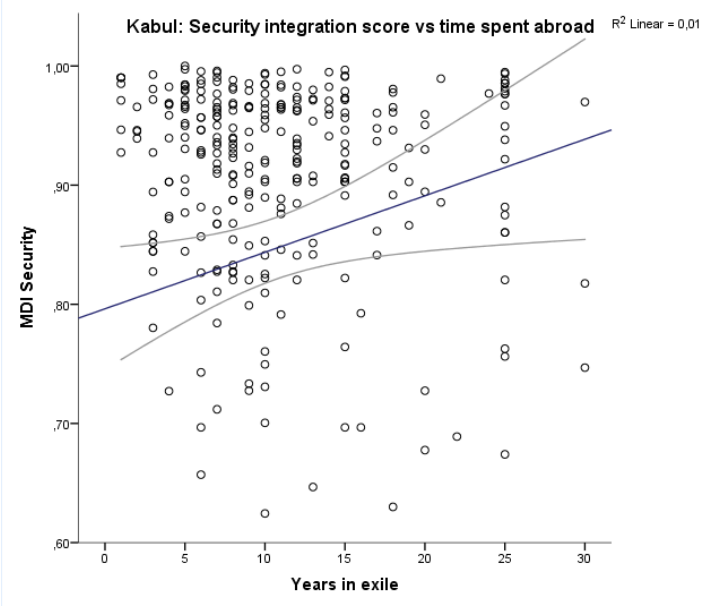
Table 6 Home sweet home?

			Economic integration	Social integration	Security / safety integration	Average integration
Kabul	**Kabul**	Originally from here	0.788	0.794	0.883	0.822
		Not originally from here	0.746	0.765	0.825	0.779
NRC	**Herat**	Originally from here	0.917	0.868	0.864	0.883
		Not originally from here	0.905	0.816	0.857	0.859
	Jalalabad	Originally from here	0.872	0.919	0.929	0.907
		Not originally from here	0.891	0.821	0.884	0.865
	Kandahar	Originally from here	0.905	0.912	0.893	0.903
		Not originally from here	0.907	0.901	0.873	0.893
DRC	**Herat**	Originally from here	0.847	0.782	0.774	0.801
		Not originally from here	0.814	0.773	0.732	0.773

These results suggest an opportunity to improve integration by helping migrants return to their place of origin, at least in some settings.

III. Years in exile, years since return

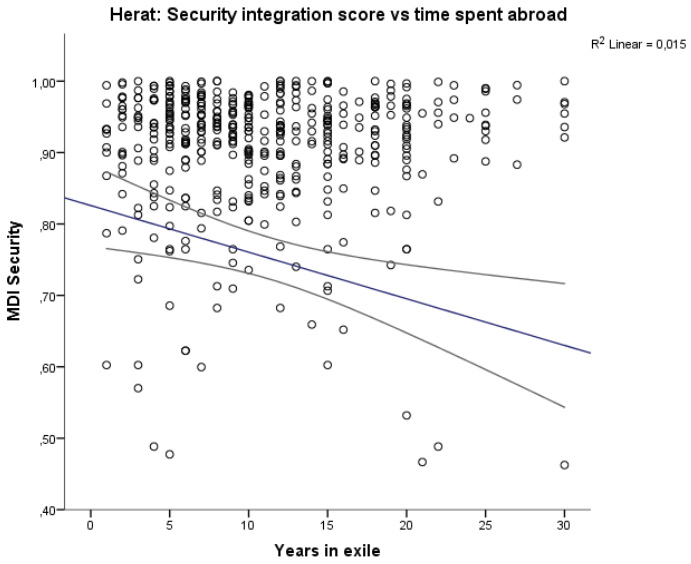
Figure 24 Kabul: The longer the time spent abroad, the higher security integration



Security scores in Kabul tend to rise with the duration of exile, at an average rate of about half a percentage point per year. This may reflect resilience attributes gradually acquired over time while abroad. Alternatively, it may reflect increasing vulnerability of migrants over time, since duration abroad is likely correlated to date of departure. A comparative longitudinal study could shed light on this possibility.

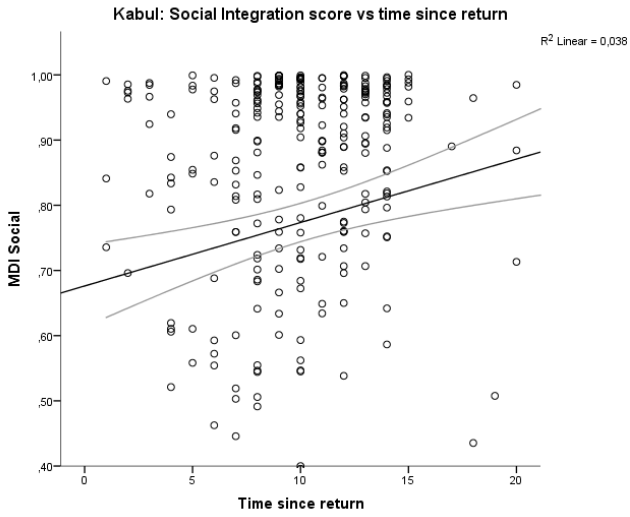
Figure 25 Herat: The longer the time spent abroad, the lower security integration

In contrast, security scores for migrants currently residing in Herat tend to decline with the duration of exile. The longer a household was abroad, the lower its perceived and real level of safety and economic security today.



Time since return displays a significant correlation with the overall, social and the security dimensions of the MDI in Kabul.

Figure 26 Kabul: The longer ago a household returned, the higher its social integration score



To take the example of social integration, it can thus be assumed that returnees who arrived in Kabul ten years ago fare better in terms of social integration than those who arrived three years ago, supposedly because they have had time to develop a support network, enjoy an improved likelihood of political participation, and have gained access to infrastructure.

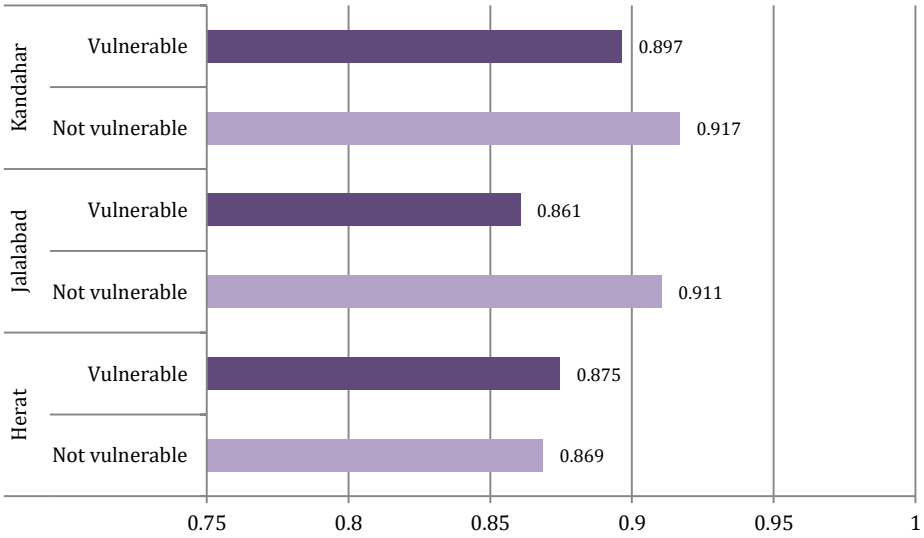
Somewhat counterintuitively however, it is quite the opposite in Kandahar, where economic, security and (as a result) overall MDI are slightly *negatively correlated* with time since return. While the reasons for this warrant further examination, it might imply that the cohort which returned to Kandahar recently differs from that which returned fifteen to twenty years ago and still finds itself in a protracted state of need, quite apart from the host community in many respects.

IV. Vulnerability criteria

For the second pilot (NRC), respondents were asked to report the presence of one or more of the following vulnerability criteria:

- Pregnant or lactating women;
- Physically or mentally disabled household members;
- Chronically ill household members;
- Drug addicts;
- Victims of gender-based violence;
- More than three children under the age of five in the household.

Figure 27 Integration and vulnerability



While the numbers do not justify drawing conclusions about vulnerable households in Herat or Kandahar, **vulnerable migrant households in Jalalabad exhibit significantly lower integration scores than households with none of the listed vulnerabilities.** This difference is most pronounced in the social and especially the security domain, suggesting that while vulnerable families in Jalalabad enjoy a relatively high degree of economic parity, they suffer on the whole a less included and more precarious existence. Further inspection reveals that the presence of a pregnant woman has a deleterious effect on both domains, while chronic illness impacted mostly the social aspect, and numerous children mostly the security aspect. These findings are almost certainly the result of the inclusion of a number of subjective indicators into the MDI model. Indeed, it stands to reason that households with pregnant women and/or young children will subjectively assess their safety situation more conservatively, while those with chronically ill household member may well feel less included in the social life of their communities than their healthy peers.

The impact of other vulnerabilities was too rare to draw conclusions.[15]

[15] It should be noted that a number of factors cannot be assessed due to insufficient or unreliable data. The total absence of reported gender-based violence is certainly suspect.

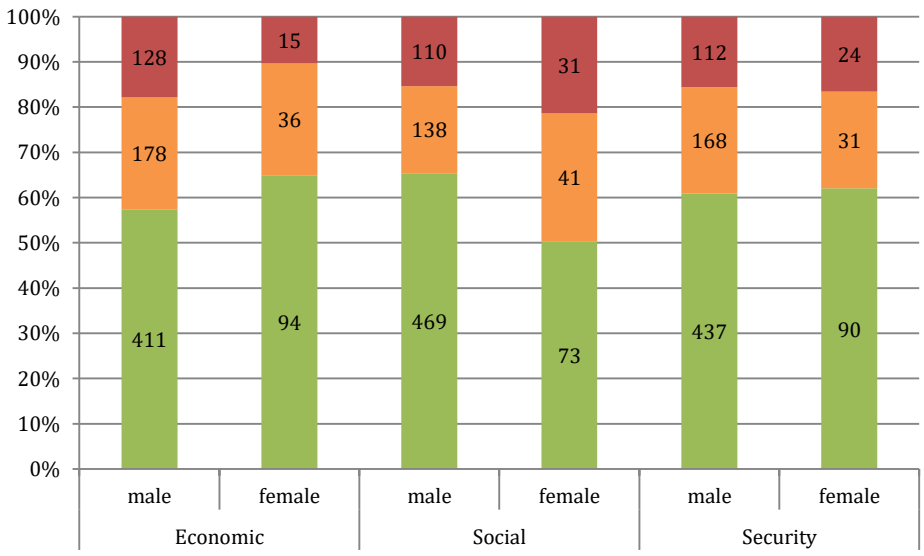
Table 7 Vulnerabilities and Integration - the example of Jalalabad

	Economic integration	Social integration	Security / safety integration	Average integration
Pregnant women	0.892	0.760	0.840	0.830
No pregnant women	0.889	0.844	0.898	0.877
Chronically ill	0.885	0.756	0.868	0.836
No chronically ill	0.892	0.853	0.893	0.879
Numerous young children	0.890	0.794	0.847	0.844
< Three young children	0.890	0.839	0.901	0.877

Source: Pilot 2

Pilot 4 in the North allowed to shed further light on a variable of interest but often difficult to analyze for lack of overall numbers: female head of households. The following graph represents the relation between displaced households' integration and the gender of the head of the household, disaggregated by economic, social and safety integration components. It is of note that, overall, female-headed households appear to be slightly better integrated in terms of economic integration, while suffering a significant penalty in terms of social integration.

Figure 28 Integration and gender of the Head of Household in Baghlan and Takhar (pilot 4)



This aggregated figure hides important differences however. The gap is particularly stark in Puli Khumri district, where female-headed households suffer significant penalties in all dimensions.

Inconclusive results on other potential variables of interest

The researchers attempted to use the NRC results to shed light on possible links between integration and the following factors: primary vs. secondary displacement, previous NGO assistance received and registration with a government or non-governmental agency upon return. The results proved inconclusive at this stage and warrant further investigation, possibly with a targeted approach towards populations of interest for rare groups such as disabled or child-headed household, once the baseline in each location has been firmly established.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

KEY FINDINGS & IMPLICATIONS

The Multi-Dimensional Integration Index attributes scores to displaced households in order to shed light on gaps in integration while controlling for external factors such as a general absence of infrastructure or employment opportunities. It is a measure of displacement-related vulnerability only.

- ✓ Linking the MDI with tailored geographic interventions

It should be used to determine whether programming should target the displaced in a given location (where integration levels are already high, agencies may wish to focus not on the displaced but on the general population). This is the case in Kandahar for instance.

- ✓ Using the MDI to inform programming

If gaps in terms of integration are identified, the MDI scores can be analysed with respect to profiling questions of interest. It could thus be determined, for instance, that integration could be furthered by encouraging households to return to their place of origin. An intervention might improve integration outcomes by targeting peri-urban returnees with livelihood programmes in the urbanized provinces but not in the more rural Northern province of Baghlan.

- ✓ The MDI as evidence to monitor progress towards integration

If a programme in a given location is designed to improve integration, it should be possible to monitor outcomes in this regard. Once a baseline has been established, agencies can use routine data collection among the displaced only to verify to which degree integration has evolved in the areas of interest to them.

- ✓ The MDI as an evidence-base to inform policy

Finally, the index provides an important opportunity to enhance coordination and information sharing among stakeholders, including the Government. It can be used to confirm what were only assumptions until now, supporting advocacy and drawing critical attention on the needs of the displaced.

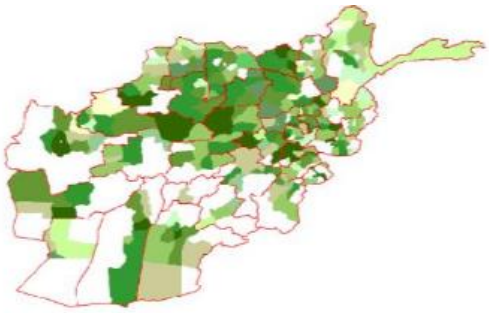
Phase II. The next step in MDI evolution, phase 2 will involve a staggered roll-out of data collection across Afghanistan to be able to have baselines on the state of integration for different cohorts of displaced in different areas. Partners will share the collected data with others on a dedicated online platform, which will incrementally allow to assess integration in different areas over time, measure the impact of programming on integration of displaced populations and target efforts designed to improve integration outcomes more carefully.

A. Use cases for the Multi-Dimensional Integration Index

Interpreting Integration scores

Traditional vulnerability scoring techniques examine the state of potentially underserved populations, but do not serve to determine whether they are more at-risk than a control group in a context where these differences may vary across locations. The added value of the MDI is that it focuses *exclusively* on displacement-related vulnerabilities. It is thus a scale which allows to shed light on the gaps in terms of integration, while controlling for external factors such as location, *general* absence of economic opportunities, security, etc. The MDI scores should be interpreted in the same way as a standard index such as the household hunger score, the asset index or the resilience index: To determine which categories of displaced display higher degrees of integration, and what this difference is due to. These results should be used to inform future interventions, and assess the results of ongoing interventions in terms of integration outcomes.

Linking the MDI with tailored geographic interventions



The baseline analysis for a given location provides information about the current state of affairs in that particular place. By examining MDI scores in each dimension at each location, agencies and policy-makers can identify opportunities for further integration of displaced populations. Adding the MDI component to standard M&E assessments will allow to track progress in this indicator of interest which is (re)integration in different locations.

When planning geographic interventions, MDI results should be kept in mind to decide on resource allocation. Lower integration scores, as were found in Kabul for instance, point to the fact that migrant-specific resources should be allocated to the returnee population. In Kandahar, higher integration scores would point to the need to spend resources not on returnees specifically but on the overall population. In any event, funds spent on improving the lot of returnees would currently risk not contributing to the integration process.

Beyond resource allocation, the MDI allows to see a sense of urgency alongside key dimensions – economic, social, safety and security – to better contribute to a division of responsibilities between humanitarian and development actors, and better linkages of "who does what where" (3Ws) to address integration needs.

Caveat : Context matters. Just as the MDI is just one component of a sum of privations, the degree of the MDI should address only the question of to what extent to disperse migrant-specific resources. Thus, a higher integration score in one location does not mean that returnees in that location are better off, but only that they are more similar to the local host populations.

Linking the MDI with programming interventions

The MDI should be used to inform programming with the stated goal of improved integration outcomes. Examples of practical applications include the following:

- **Encourage returns to a household's place of origin:** Results as described in the previous section would suggest that returns to a household's place of origin should be facilitated by stakeholders given the measurable impact on integration outcomes.

- **Urban and rural contexts matter, but their impact differs depending on location.** Integration outcomes in urban agglomerations are clearly correlated with the type of environment (read: migrants in urban zones score higher than those in peri-urban zones), a result in line with the finding that those scoring lowest on the integration scale tend to judge that their access to city services is "restricted". This calls for efforts to improve access to said services to the newly arrived in the outskirts of Jalalabad. On the other hand, those returning to smaller towns such as Puli Khumri find themselves at a disadvantage compared to their rural peers involved in agricultural activities, meaning that programming designed to improve integration in Baghlan should focus on providing economic assistance to returnees in the towns rather than those in the outskirts.

- **In Herat, focus on security integration of those who were abroad for a long time.** Since in Herat security integration scores are negatively correlated with time spent in exile, programming aiming to improve (re)integration in Herat should focus on households which have spent more than a decade abroad. The first obvious angle of attack here concerns the factors which make up the security dimension (for instance, improving the tenure security of households which spent more than 10 years abroad), but other factors may well contribute to achieving the desired security integration outcome and should be determined by partners based on their experience in the field.

- **See where return packages have measurable impact and where they do not, adjust accordingly.** As results in the North and in Jalalabad seem to suggest that assistance provided to recently arrived returnees has not (yet?) benefited them in terms of integration into their host communities, there may be reason to review the effectiveness of the existing aid packages in this regard.

- **Improved targeting of vulnerably households**: If female headed returnee households in the North suffer more in terms of social than economic integration, assistance aiming at improved reintegration may want to focus on this aspect rather than livelihoods per se. The Jalalabad pilot revealed that the presence of a pregnant woman in the household tended to have a deleterious effect on social and security integration. Programming efforts aiming to improve integration results in Jalalabad would thus do well to focus resources on households with pregnant women (as well as those containing members with chronic illnesses or those which count numerous children).

- **Examining the relative importance of indicators on integration**: The relative importance of indicators composing the MDI can be assessed through their coefficients, to create a hierarchy of relevant activities needed to boost integration. Partners themselves will decide on the type of programming needed to address the needs of these households, but the MDI can assist in determining the most appropriate activities by analysing the relative weight of individual MDI components on the integration score.

    - ✓ For instance, examining the effects of "having a bank account" and "carrying more debt than the household earns in one month" on overall MDI scores reveals that while both are relevant differentiators, the effect of debt is comparatively larger. An agency wishing to improve integration and trying to determine the best angle of attack would thus be more likely to be successful in ameliorating (re)integration outcomes if it concerned itself with debt reduction rather than access to formal finance.
    - ✓ Literacy appears to have a significant impact on the integration score, particularly in Kabul, Herat and Jalalabad as well as the Northern provinces, while civil documentation does not. Thus one might consider a potential literacy program targeting migrants might have a greater impact on integration in these locations than might a civil documentation program of a similar cost.
    - ✓ The impact of local credit on MDI economic and security scores is much more pronounced in Kabul than in the other three cities surveyed. Thus, targeting Kabul migrant communities through a microcredit scheme could be postulated to have a high impact on integration in the Kabul context but less so in Jalalabad, Herat and Kandahar.
    - ✓ Access to food has a significant effect on integration scores, illustrating the continuing need to address basic needs of returnees and IDPs. This is a key area of humanitarian and immediate programmatic intervention for displaced families.
    - ✓ Employment access appears to be a strong differentiator across all locations and all dimensions. This suggests that employment programs targeted at migrant communities might help to close the integration gap at all levels.

Using the MDI to monitor progress towards integration

Once a baseline has been established, agencies can use routine data collection among the displaced only to verify to which degree integration has evolved in the areas of interest to them.

- **Test the impact of *any* programming on (re)integration through longitudinal studies.** Most crucially, the MDI will allow the evaluation of the impact of specific programming on (re)integration in a given location. Once the MDI has been parameterized at a given location, the weight of each indicator is established, and no further baseline calculations are required. Returnees and displaced households can continue to be scored using the MDI and changes will reflect the ongoing process of integration.

It is important to note that once a solid baseline has been concluded in the zone of interest, this location-specific MDI can be used to track the progress with respect to any hypothetical driver of interest. The impact of a cash transfer programme targeting returnees in Balkh province on (re)integration could thus be tracked by administering MDI add-on questions in over the course of that programme's follow-up studies with its beneficiaries. The establishment of a new MDI-specific baseline would not be needed.

The results of pilots 1 (Kabul), 4 (Baghlan and Takhar) and 5 (Jalalabad) constitute a baseline of integration for these communities. Henceforth, further rounds of inquiry among returnees and IDPs in these locations can be used to assess their evolving degree of integration without the need for further interviews of the local host community.

- **Test for integration outcomes of interventions through controlled experiments.** The index can continue to be used to track progress over time, or to track differences in the ongoing integration between control and beneficiary groups. If for instance an agency were interested in finding out the impact of a demining programme on (re)integration, a baseline should be conducted in the location(s) of interest. Once the de-mining operations concluded, an assessment will be able to speak to whether returnees in areas which benefited from de-mining are better integrated than a control group of returnees which didn't. This result would firmly prove the programme's success at driving integration outcomes.

Using the MDI as much-needed comparative evidence to inform policy and improve coordination

The idea of a multi-dimensional understanding of integration, including through subjective indicators, has gained traction among policy-makers, in Afghanistan and abroad (cf annex to the Methodological Note). The Multi-dimensional integration index is an initiative well aligned with existing Government priorities. The MoRR five-year policy released in August 2015 speaks of the importance of all three durable solutions – return, resettlement and (re-)integration.

Progress on the National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons has stalled, partly due to a lack of agreement and harmonized information on definitions and drivers of displacement and integration. For years, stakeholders have been looking for ways to achieve these objectives jointly but did not have adequate tools to align and coordinate their efforts. Access to sound and reliable data was always at the centre of programming issues. The Government has voiced its intentions to share reliable and evidence-based data with its partners in order to provide them with sound information on conditions of return to Afghanistan. Based on the question set developed in collaboration with a group of stakeholders and offering a comparative methodology, the Multi-dimensional Integration Index can be the opportunity to enhance coordination and information sharing.

B. Transitioning to Phase II

The accompanying note lays out the methodological questions posed over the course of the three pilots, and suggests ways forward in light of recent findings. Going forward, we propose that a platform be created that will include an interface for uploading data both baseline and incremental iterations of the MDI. Baseline data uploaded to the platform will be used to compute a context specific MDI model, and subsequent incremental iterations will produce MDI scores for displaced households in different locations on demand. Data marked for sharing will be visualized both geographically and statistically for review by partner agencies. This will allow agencies to use the results of other actors' baseline studies in particular locations when performing incremental evaluations of their own.

Making Phase II a reality

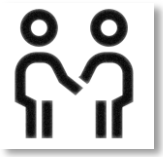
A training should precede data collection as it is crucial that data collection be consistent, both in terms of sampling of locations and respondents and in terms of understanding of the questionnaire.

A staggered rollout of data collection will be carried out by partners in collaboration with GIRoA / selected DoRRs, with the goal of establishing comparable baselines in a number of locations.

Data will be uploaded to the centralized database and shared with the partners. Analysis and computation of MDI scores will take place without the need for the intervention of a statistical analyst between the baselining and successive scoring phases.

The results of the MDI framework will be published on a dedicated website. The platform will include private and public domains in order to contribute to public awareness while keeping confidential information and results solely in the hands of the contributors and those with whom they wish to share.

The visuals will map how different migrant/displaced groups fare across the country using the data available through the MDI. By zooming on locations, viewers will see graphs of the index against drivers of interest at each location.



Far from duplicating existing initiatives, this roll-out of data collection will seek **synergies** with other approaches currently used to assess returnees' and IDPs' well-being and progress in integration efforts.

FAQ

WHAT IS A MULTI-DIMENSIONAL INTEGRATION INDEX?

The MDI is a standardized framework used by government agencies and key partners in the field to understand and map integration processes of displaced and returnee populations in Afghanistan and assess the impact of their programmes.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

A reintegration score ranging from 0 to 1 is attributed to each surveyed respondent (be it a documented or undocumented returnee, an IDP, etc.). 1 means the person is fully integrated, i.e. cannot be distinguished from the local cohort. Disaggregated scores provide indications on:

- degree of economic integration
- degree of social integration
- degree of safety and security integration
- overall degree of integration

Why a Multi-Dimensional Integration Index in Afghanistan today?

The MDI is a cost effective inter-agency initiative aimed at providing a baseline on the integration of displaced and returnee groups. It is based on global frameworks (IASC), academic standards, and practitioner assessment tools in Afghanistan. It is the first attempt at a consolidated data collection system.

IMPLEMENTATION

How will the data collection process work?

The MDI is based on a simple questionnaire complementing any type of quantitative surveys and assessments carried out in the field. During the baseline, questions will be asked to both displaced populations and local communities (to contextualise the MDI); in the future, they will only apply to the displaced populations.

The MDI is not to yet another survey but offers the possibility of using a dynamic tool, seamlessly integrated into current data collection efforts, showing evolutions across time and regions.

It is an "add-on" tool to be used in routine data collection efforts of implementing agencies.

How will the data be made available?

The results of the reintegration framework will be published on an online platform with tailor-made visuals accessible by all for a direct access to data (beyond databases, integration data at a click).

Will donors be willing to endorse the use of the MDI?

The MDI does not aim to replace existing tools but complement them. This tool responds to donors' requirement for scientific, evidence-based data to inform policies and programmes. The MDI can be built into in sub-agreements with partners and used consistently across programmes.

How will it help target assistance?

The MDI will be used to identify geographic areas, and populations, in need of targeted assistance by humanitarians and development programs. Beyond tailoring programs, agencies targeting displaced populations can use the MDI for monitoring purposes, assess programme impact (such as targeted vocational trainings, community-based empowerment, etc.). Lastly, the MDI is seen as a tool to facilitate collaboration with local partners and NGOs, ensuring all actors speak the same language and use the same tools to have comparable data.

Why is it relevant to development actors?

MDI bridges the humanitarian-development gap by looking beyond immediate needs to a holistic approach of wellbeing for the displaced populations, and a dynamic method of assessment that is sensitive to changes across time in the wellbeing of returnees. Regular analysis of the MDI will allow adjustments in programs: it helps identify the needs of the displaced populations after the first years of displacement, when humanitarian actors become less involved.

How does it support the GiROA's objectives?

The MDI will provide the Government of Afghanistan with baseline information on the provinces of return and displacement in urban settings and assess what happens to returnees (and other displaced groups). This will inform policy design, programming and strategies across ministries with an openly shared data gathered by the various partners in the field.

METHODOLOGY

How scientific is the MDI?

The MDI is based on academic research and findings from field-based research carried out in Afghanistan. With a set of preliminary indicators identified, the research team developed a pilot questionnaire to test them in the field (surveying 300 returnees and 100 'hosts' in two locations). The indicators and questions were then fine-tuned based on the findings made during the pilot test. The MDI is:

- A context-dependent index: the well-being of local host communities is a starting point
- An index built on objectives indicators that are complemented with subjective indicators to provide a more dynamic image of integration
- A tool that can be recalibrated on a regular basis to adjust to societal evolutions over time.

How consultative was the process of building the MDI?

The MDI is an inter-agency process. A specific Technical Working Group (stemming from the existing Reintegration Working Group) was created in 2015 for the purpose of this exercise and consulted regularly throughout the entire process. It included stakeholders with experience in field data collection in Afghanistan, such as government entities, UN agencies, IOM, and NGOs such as Mercy Corps, DRC, NRC, UNHCR, IOM, DACAAR, ACBAR, etc.

Additionally, one-on-one interviews were carried out with each of these actors as well as academics to gain a better understanding of existing data collection methods, commonly used frameworks as well as expectations for the MDI.

To ensure a bottom-up approach, Afghan returnees were included via focus groups discussions (adult and youth / male and female). The focus group discussions carried out with documented and undocumented returnees were specifically focussed on one of the main research gaps identified by partners - social integration.

FUNDRAISING FOR PHASE 2

The funding needs during Phase 2 are related to the development of a database, the development of the online platform with tech experts, trainings for field enumerators and research and analysis for the refining of the MDI. Funding will be covered via:

- A fundraising strategy with donors
- Allocating existing funds from partner organisations

INCLUSION

IOM and MoRR are currently working on improving government data management and data collection systems. In the framework of these on-going initiatives, they plan to establish Reintegration Information Centres for returnees at a regional level, in high return areas. The Information centres will be there to provide returnees with information on on-going programmes in the region but also carry out cross sectorial post-return assessments. The project will start with nine selected DoRR offices the MDI questionnaire could easily be used as a basis for this monitoring exercise from the very start of the implementation.

The development of the MDI also responds to on-going calls from donors for more scientific data.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The successful implementation of the reintegration framework will rely on the following elements:

- An adequate and agreed-upon sampling framework
- Sustainability (i.e. agencies join at a routine level)
- Harmonised data collection methodologies
- Accessibility (donor support, online interface)
- Collaborative approach coordinated by a core group of government, humanitarian and development actors under strong leadership of a leading agency
- Reliability (collecting data routinely and sound analysis by the research team)
- Constant communication

Phase 2 (implementation of the MDI) will be composed of the following elements:

- An inception phase which entails the setup of a Steering committee, the development of a precise action plan for a staggered roll out, trainings
- A baseline survey for the largest number of regions possible to allow for the creation of location-specific MDIs.
- The development of online tools (for hosting and publishing the data)

From then on, the routine data collection will only focus on displaced populations and returnees to measure change and allow for longitudinal analyses.

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