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Afghanistan

Country profile



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Summary indicators

Indicator	Value	Year
Population number (estimates)	29,825,000	2012
Population number (projection)	32,000,000	2015
Population growth rate	2.4%	2013
Population density	45.7 people/km ²	2012
Urban composition	26%	2013
Average household size	7.3	2011
Net migration rate	-1.83/1,000 population	2014
People with disabilities %	2.7%	2005
Age distribution	46.6% under 15	2013
Life expectancy at birth	61 years	2013
Under-five mortality	97/1,000 live births	2013
Maternal mortality	400/100,000 live births	2013
Malnutrition prevalence (GAM)	18%	2012
HDI ranking (value)	171 (0.465)	2015
Corruption Perceptions Index ranking (value)	172 (12)	2014
People below the poverty line		
National Poverty Line in Afghanistan (2005): USD 1.24 per day	35.8%	2011
Hunger Index ranking (value)	-	-
World Risk Index ranking (value)	40 (9.55)	2015
Gender Inequality Index ranking (value)	149 (0.705)	2013
Literacy rate	38.2%	2015

Sources: UN Data, World Population Review 2015, UNFPA 2012, World Bank 2013, UNDP 2013, UNDP 2015, UNICEF, UNOCHA 2012, USAID 2015, WHO, WHO 2005 Transparency international 2014, CIA Factbook, UNU-EHS 2015, IFPRI, Concern Worldwide, Welthungerhilfe, Asian Development Bank 2014.

Afghanistan is located in southern Asia and has a total area of 652,230 km², more than twice the size of Italy (CIA Factbook; MapFight). The country borders Iran, China, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Pakistan (Encyclopaedia Britannica 29/09/2015). Afghanistan is mostly mountainous and Mount Nushaq, its highest peak, reaches 7,492m (IDMC 16/07/2015; CIA Factbook). Dry summers last from June to September, and cold winters from December to the end of February. Precipitation varies significantly across the country (Blood 2001). Afghanistan is divided into 34 provinces (*welayat*) and 398 districts, known locally as *wolaswalei* (CIA Factbook; Globalex, 12/2014; Afghanistan's Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock 30/11/2011).

Topographical map



Source: Understanding War 17/01/2012

Hazard profile

Afghanistan is the country third most at risk of humanitarian crisis, after Somalia and Central African Republic, according to the Index for Risk Management (INFORM). INFORM takes into account natural and man-made hazards, internal vulnerabilities, and coping capacity (INFORM 2015). Afghanistan's dry climate and mountainous landscape make it prone to several natural hazards, with more than half of the population in 30 out of the 34 provinces exposed to flood, drought, and earthquake (ANDMA 02/05/2015). Over 500,000 people live in urban areas at high risk of earthquakes (mostly in the northeast – Aybak, Pul-i-Khumri, Taluqan, and Faiz Abad), and over 5.6 million live in urban areas at medium risk (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan 22/09/2015).

The extensive presence of snow-fed and glacial water sources make Afghanistan particularly vulnerable to global warming. High poverty levels exacerbate vulnerabilities: many households use solid fuel for cooking and heating, which creates high compound emissions, contributing to increased chronic and fatal health conditions and global warming. (World Bank & GFDRR 12/2012; World Bank 2011; Afghanistan Central Statistics Organization (CSO) & European Union 2011-2012; UNEP 27/05/2015). According to the Fragile State Index for 2015, Afghanistan was the 8th most fragile state in the world (Global Humanitarian Assistance, 24/12/2014; Fund For Peace 2015).

Society and communities

Ethnic or tribal groups (see map page 14): The Pashtun (40%) are Afghanistan's largest ethnic group, and mostly concentrated in the south. Mostly Sunni Muslims, they are divided into groups, socially structured according to the *pashtunwali* ethical code. They follow a mix of local Islamic law and the tribal codes. The Pashtun have held power in the country since the 18th century, but have recently been reportedly underrepresented in administrative bodies (Norwegian Afghanistan Committee 2012; Minority Rights Group 07/2012; Afghan Network Foundation 2002). Tajiks (30%) are the second largest ethnic group. They speak Dari, and are mostly Sunni Muslims. Tajikas have been urbanised for longer than other groups, even if the majority still live scattered in the highest mountains in the north and northeast, in particular Badakhshan and parts of Herat. Tajiks tend to identify more with their locality or family, than their ethnic group (Norwegian Afghanistan Committee 2012; Minority Rights Group, 07/2012). The Hazaras make up 15% of the population. Most belong to the Twelvers, a branch of Shi'a Islam, and farm in the central highlands. Uzbeks and Turkmen (10%) are mainly Sunni Muslim and

live in the northwest of the Hindu Kush mountains close to the borders with Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, and Aimaqs (5%) live west of the Hindu Kush. Other very small minorities include Baloch, Nuristani, Pamiri, Arab, Gujar, Brahui, Qizilbash, Pashai, and Kyrgyz (Norwegian Afghanistan Committee 2012; Minority Rights Group, 07/2012). Deep ethnic and linguistic differences are one of the drivers of longstanding ethnic violence and repression (Col. Hanley, R. 2011).

Languages: The official languages are Dari, also known as Afghan Persian (50%) which is spoken mainly by Tajiks and Hazaras, and Pashto (30%), mostly spoken by the Pashtun. Turkic languages (11%) as well as other minor languages, primarily Balochi and Pashai, are also spoken (CIA Factbook 2015; AlphaOmega Translations 21/09/2015).

Religion: Islam is the official religion, practised by 99% of the population, 80% Sunni and 20% Shia (Norwegian Peacebuilding Center 03/2010). Religion is a driver of civil conflict: Shi'ite Muslim minorities, like the Hazaras, have faced persecution and repression for centuries (Minority Rights Group 19/11/2013).

Gender equality: As of 2008, more than 87% of women were reported to have experienced at least one form of physical, sexual or psychological violence, or forced marriage (including child marriage) (Global Rights 03/2008). In 2014, these numbers had not decreased, and Afghanistan was placed 152 out of 155 in the Gender Inequality Index (The Diplomat 14/01/2014; WHO 16/11/2014; UNDP 2015). Women face severe challenges in terms of access to health, education, economic opportunities, and participation in public life and decision-making (UNDP 04/2014). Women experience increased levels of poverty, and restrictions on their freedom of movement. There have been a reported increase in rape and other forms of violence against women (UNOCHA, 11/2014).

Migration and displacement: Movements of Pashtun between Pakistan and Afghanistan have been going on since the border was established in 1893 under the British Empire. Poverty and war have maintained high emigration flows in recent decades. By 1990, over 6.3 million Afghan emigrants were living outside of the country (United Nations 2015). Between 2002 and 2010, the country experienced the highest return-migration wave in its history, with over 20% of emigrants returning. This large number posed significant problems to a government, lacking the economic capacity and legitimacy (Mehlman, I. 2011; Kuschminder, K. & Dora, M. 2009).

Emigration is again increasing, with around 150,600 Afghans reaching Europe in 2015. In addition, in December 2015, there were approximately 2.5 million registered Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan – almost all were protracted refugees; an estimated 3 million more refugees are unregistered (ECHO 03/12/2015; VOA 24/09/2015; UNHCR 2015).

As of December 2015, there were approximately 1,116,540 IDPs in Afghanistan, due to increased insecurity and new clashes between the government and insurgent factions. Over 270,000 of these left their homes in 2015. Disasters triggered by natural hazards caused an additional displacement of about 13,300 people in 2014 (IDMC 07/2015; ECHO 03/12/2015).

Historical background

Origins of the state and Afghan emirate: The modern state of Afghanistan was founded in 1747 by Ahmad Shah Durrani, over undefined territory that had previously been controlled by several different groups (Encyclopaedia Britannica 03/09/2015; Encyclopaedia 2015). The capital of the first state was Kandahar. Between 1838 and the early 1900s Afghanistan was the subject of foreign powers trying to expand their influence in the region, in particular the British and the Russian empires. Three wars were fought for the control of Afghan territory. The first, 1838–1842, ended with a defeat for the British army, while the British managed to secure their main political objectives by the end of the second, 1878–1879 (ABC 15/11/2012). The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 then divided the territory of Afghanistan into areas of British and Russian influence (Iranica Online 05/08/2011).

The month-long “Third Anglo-Afghan” war took place in May 1919, after Amanullah Khan declared total independence from Great Britain. A very limited Afghan army fought a British army exhausted by the First World War. The Treaty of Rawalpindi (or Anglo-Afghan Treaty) put an end to the conflict and recognised the Emirate of Afghanistan as an official state (Encyclopaedia Britannica 03/09/2015; Library of Congress 2004; United Nations; UCA 2012; Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in Switzerland 2015).

Afghan kingdom: In 1926 Afghanistan changed its form of government from an “Emirate” to a “Kingdom”, in which the monarch has almost total power (Global Security 10/08/2015; United Nations 03/07/2006). In 1973, King Zahir Shah was overthrown by his son Daoud, with help from the Soviet Union. Daoud proclaimed Afghanistan a Republic and named himself president, crushing the growing Jamiat-i-Islami (Islamic Society) movement, led by Burhanuddin Rabbani, that advocated for an Islamic state (Ritscher, Adam 2002; History Commons 2015; BBC 21/11/2008).

Soviet ties and invasion: In April 1978, Mohammad Daoud Khan and his family were killed during a communist coup d'état, also known as the April Revolution. However, the two communist leaders to take control of the country were both assassinated due to divisions within the party, (the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan) (BBC 21/11/2008). The Mujahedeen, a Sunni Muslim group, led several uprisings and severely destabilised the communist regime, pushing the USSR to invade

Afghanistan (Encyclopaedia Britannica 06/03/2015). On 25 December 1979 the Red Army entered Afghanistan, and within a day it had taken control of Kabul (The Washington Review 09/2011). The Mujahedeen, began to receive weapons and assistance from the United States and its allies, through Pakistan, and increasing numbers of sympathising Muslims joined its ranks (Reuveny et al. 1999; Encyclopaedia Britannica 06/03/2015). Around 1.5 million Afghans were killed in the ten-year conflict, and around 5 million fled to Pakistan and Iran (ICRC 12/2010; Brookings 20/05/2010). On 15 February 1989, the Soviet Union, having signed an agreement with the US and its allies, withdrew from the country. It had failed to install a USSR-friendly regime in Afghanistan (Encyclopaedia Britannica 06/03/2015).

Civil war and the Taliban regime: Civil war continued from 1989 to 1992, when the Mujahedeen took control of Kabul and Burhanuddin Rabbani became President. The end of war did not bring stability, as the Mujahedeen had fought internally for power (Afghan Web 03/02/2005; BBC 21/11/2008). In 1994, the ultraconservative Taliban Islamist movement emerged, offering stability and social order, and rapidly obtained popular support (Council on Foreign Relations 04/07/2015). In 1994, with over 15,000 students from Pakistan, the Taliban took control of Kandahar region (Stanford 02/07/2013). In September 1996 they took control of the capital, Kabul, and overthrew President Rabbani (Council on Foreign Relations 04/07/2015). The Taliban imposed a conservative version of Shari'a law and offered support and shelter to Islamist militant organisations, in particular to Al Qaeda, the group headed by Usama Bin Laden (Townsend 31/03/2011). Revenues from the production and trafficking of opiates, of which the country is the world's main exporter, allowed the Taliban to provide financial support for Al Qaeda's activities (UNODC 12/2014).

International intervention: After the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the US, the UN Security Council authorised the constitution of an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) for six months, with the purpose of liberating and securing Kabul and surrounding areas from the Taliban (United Nations Security Council 20/12/2001). Kandahar fell on 6 December, marking the end of Taliban rule. An interim government was set up, chaired by Hamid Karzai, with international forces remaining in the country to hunt Taliban and Al Qaeda leaders, train Afghan security forces, and facilitate reconstruction and nation-building (Encyclopaedia Britannica 02/06/2015). In August 2003, at the request of the UN and the Afghan government, NATO took the lead of ISAF. The Taliban has shown significant resilience since its removal from power, and within three months, the NATO force was appointed by the UN to expand its operations to cover all of Afghanistan (Global Research 25/04/2010; NATO 13/01/2015; United Nations Security Council 13/10/2003). At its peak, in 2011, ISAF consisted of approximately 132,000 soldiers (NATO 27/02/2015). Since 2001, 26,270 civilians have died and over 29,900 have been injured due to war-related causes. The total number

of casualties in Afghanistan stands at 92,000 people since 2001 (Watson Institute for International Studies 22/05/2015). In December 2014, the ISAF mandate came to an end, and the UN appointed NATO forces to lead a 13,000-strong mission to advise, assist and train Afghan security institutions and armed forces, named Resolute Support. Concerns were raised about the economic sustainability of shaping Afghan's Armed Forces with structures, equipment, and a strategy that resemble western security forces, without taking into account the country's social context and economic resources (NATO 27/02/2015; Afghanistan Analysts 12/01/2015). The security situation in the country has deteriorated in the year since the end of ISAF, with violence spiralling in more than 10 provinces. The Taliban has gained control of an increasing number of districts, and attacked major cities, trying to take control of provincial capitals. After taking Kunduz city for a number of days in October, the Taliban unsuccessfully tried to seize the provincial capitals of Maimana (Faryab), Ghazni (Ghazni), and Lashkar Gah (Helmand) (Long War Journal 16/10/2015; Reuters 29/09/2015; International Business Times 05/10/2015; The Guardian 13/10/2015; The Independent 21/10/2015). This change in strategy pushed the US to decide to maintain a force of 5,500 soldiers in the country until the end of 2017. Prior to this, the US had planned to withdraw almost completely by the end of 2016 (BBC 15/10/2015).

Governance

According to its constitution, Afghanistan is a democratic Islamic state, ruled by a President, (UNDESA 2006). Strong centralisation and a lack of adequate representation of all ethnic groups has resulted in an increase in corruption and violence since 2001 (OSCE 2015; RAND 2011).

Legal system: The constitution was formally ratified by President Hamid Karzai on 26 January 2004 (UNDESA 01/2006; The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in Warsaw 26/01/2004). The legal system is a mix of customary, civil, and Islamic law (CIA Factbook 2015). Sometimes, the different legal systems contradict each other. The lack of a solid overarching legal system and enforcement capacity, especially in terms of land rights and security, is a cause of Afghanistan's high levels of corruption (Asia Foundation 15/07/2012).

Political institutions: The executive is led by a president who is directly elected by absolute majority for a maximum of two five-year terms. The President appoints key roles in the government. The legislature is a bicameral National Assembly: the Meshrano Jirga (House of Elders), and the Wolesi Jirga (House of the People). The members of the House of the People must be at least 25 years old, are directly elected in proportion to the population of every province, and serve for five years. According

to the constitution, two delegates from every province have to be women. For the House of the Elders, the candidates must be at least 35 years old. One-third of the "elders", or senators, are appointed by the president, and serve a five-year mandate, one-third are selected by the provincial councils and serve for four years, and the final third are elected from local district councils, and their mandate lasts three years. 50% of presidential appointees must be women Afghanistan's Judiciary is composed of the Stera Mahkama, which is the Supreme Court, appeal courts and the primary courts. The President appoints, with the approval of the House of the Elders, the nine members of the Supreme Court on a ten-year mandate (UNDESA 2006; Globalex 12/2014).

Provinces of Afghanistan



Source: United Nations, Afghanistan, Map No. 3958 Rev.7, 06/2011

Local government: Local government is structured in provinces, municipalities, districts and villages. Power is centralised and national ministries assign budgets and functions to the provincial governments, who are more accountable to the central government than to local populations (Habib 2013; RAND 2011). The *walis*, or provincial

governors, are directly appointed by the President. *Walis* have large coordination, security, and development powers, and represent the President. Governors have some freedom in interpreting the responsibilities of their position, which has led to variation in administrative structures. *Walis* supervise the *woluswals*, the district governors, and District Community Councils, belonging to the Afghanistan Social Outreach Program (ASOP), where existing (AREU 06/2011). ASOP was developed by USAID and the Afghan government, to provide a system of democratic governance at district level that operates according to culturally acceptable practices (USAID 01/2012). The ASOP councils are formed and trained to meet daily and solve local disputes and conflicts, according to the habit and culture of the local population. They improve outreach and communication, and monitor development projects. At a local level, several villages and communities have parallel governance bodies, and this coexistence makes the decision-making structure unclear (CSIS 04/2012).

Elections: Electoral practices in Afghanistan are often still unfair and not transparent. In the 2009 presidential elections, European Union observers reported that 1.5 million of 2.66 million votes were questionable. In the parliamentary elections of September 2010, voter turnout was low and widespread fraud was reported. In the run-up to the presidential elections in 2014, several episodes of violence were reported, in particular involving the Taliban. The results of the 2014 elections were disputed: Abdullah Abdullah, one of the two main candidates, accused Ashraf Ghani of having manipulated over one million votes. A power-sharing agreement was ultimately signed, and Ghani became President and Abdullah Chief Executive Officer, a new role, instituted role by decree, and with functions resembling a Prime Minister role (Freedom House 2015; Carter Center 11/2009; The Economist 22/09/2014; 28/08/2014; New York Times 08/09/2014).

Security forces: The control of the country's security was gradually handed over to Afghan forces at the end of 2014 (NATO 07/05/2015). The Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF), includes the Afghan National Army, the Afghan National Police, the Afghan Uniform Police, the Afghan Border Police and the Afghan Highway Police. It has approximately 173,000 personnel, including civilians working for the Ministry of Defence (British Army 2013). This includes only around 860 women (UN Tribune 03/03/2015). An additional 154,000 police and other personnel work for the Ministry of Interior, and over 28,000 people are enrolled in the Afghan local police (ALP) (NATO RS 28/02/2015). Afghan security forces suffered a 59% increase in battlefield casualties in the first six months of 2015 compared to the period of the previous year. Several reports indicate that the ALP has killed civilians, and carried out rape, kidnapping, and other crimes (Washington Times 30/06/2015). NATO allies and partners have pledged around USD 450 million per year, until the end of 2017, to the NATO-Afghan Army Trust Fund to train and equip national security forces (NATO 07/05/2015; NATO 02/2015).

In 2011, the military expenditure of Afghanistan was estimated at 4.74% of GDP compared to the 3.2% of Pakistan and 2.6% of India in the same year (CIA Factbook Afghanistan 2015; CIA Factbook Pakistan 2015; CIA Factbook India 2015).

Corruption: Corruption affects key sectors of Afghanistan's governance, causing the country to rank 172 out of 174 in the 2014 Transparency International world corruption perceptions ranking (Transparency International 16/07/2015). Corruption is reportedly accepted as part of daily life, and bribery is common to speed up procedures in public offices or in the legal system. Large amounts of foreign aid have been lost, governance has been damaged and investment deterred by corruption. Many Afghans have turned to militant groups that pledge to put a stop to it (DW 26/04/2014). The opium economy is one of the main sources of corruption (UNODC 16/02/2007).

Freedom of expression: Freedom of expression is very poor. In 2007 the state promulgated a media law to define clear boundaries for freedom of press. While in Kabul media sources are much freer and more diversified, in rural areas low level of tolerance towards media independence and freedom are reported 64 attacks on journalists were recorded in 2012, 73 in 2013, 80 in 2014, and 63 in 2015 (Carter Center 11/2009; Internews 2015; Freedom House 2015).

Political stakeholders

Political parties: Since 2001, the political parties of Afghanistan have been able to register as legal entities. Before 2001, parties were small and unrecognised. In 2009 a Parties Law was introduced, to regulate the management and registration of political parties and to reduce their number (USIP 03/2015). By 2010, the five most important armed factions in the country had become some of the strongest political parties, while maintaining ties with armed factions in and outside of the country (Global Security 22/06/2015; Gutenberg 2015).

Taliban: Taliban is Pashto for "Students". It is an Islamic ultraconservative faction, which emerged after the collapse of the country's communist regime. The movement emerged from among Afghan refugee students in Islamic religious schools (Madrasas) in northern Pakistan, in the 1980s and was led by Mullah Mohammad Omar until his death in 2013. The schools' teaching was based on Wahhabism, Saudi Arabia's strict and austere form of Islam (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2015; PBS). Armed groups that fought against the Soviets also joined the Taliban (Council on Foreign Relations 04/07/2015). Despite their overthrow in 2001, the Taliban has remained an active and strong insurgent group, frequently leading attacks on national and international forces, and civilians (Council on Foreign Relations 16/01/2015). Mullah Akhtar Mansour is

now leader, and by 2015 the Taliban had regained control of several districts and, in the last few months of 2015, attempted to seize a number of provincial capitals (New York Times 30/07/2015; Long War Journal 14/11/2015).

Islamic State: Islamic State (IS) is a militant movement spawned from Al Qaeda in Iraq in early 2000s. In 2014, it proclaimed itself a caliphate with authority over all Muslims (Council on Foreign Relations 18/05/2015; Stanford University 15/05/2015). In January 2015, IS announced that it would expand in Khorasan, a territory that includes Afghanistan, Pakistan, and surrounding areas. Hafez Saeed Khan, former commander of the Taliban in Pakistan, was appointed as IS's Governor of the area (Long War Journal 27/01/2015). Support for IS is growing in Afghanistan. This has created tension between IS and the Taliban, considering the longstanding alliance between Al Qaeda and the Taliban. In the first half of 2015, clashes between the Taliban and IS took place across the country (Vice News 16/06/2015). In September, IS launched its first attack on Afghan forces, targeting a checkpoint in the Achin district of Nangarhar province (VOA 27/09/2015).

Foreign relations

Neighbouring states: Afghanistan has held a strategic position at the crossroads of trade routes for centuries. More recently, this position has been compounded as its neighbours Iran and Turkmenistan have the world's second and third largest reservoirs of natural gas, respectively. Afghanistan is also between China, India, Pakistan, and middle-eastern states with large oil and gas capacities (Outlook Afghanistan 12/09/2012; Khalid I 12/2011). International diplomats have indicated that permanent neutrality is the best strategy to ensure stability in Afghanistan, and mitigate the fears of the major stakeholders in the area. However, a history of invasion and international interference has made the government apprehensive of adopting a neutral approach (USIP 03/2015).

Pakistan: Relations with Pakistan have been strained for a long time, with the two countries accusing each other of supporting militant and insurgent groups operating in the other's territory. Pakistan may fear that a growing and stable Afghanistan may align with India. Increasing Chinese interests in Afghanistan, however, mean the Chinese government is pressuring Pakistan to increase its support for a more stable Afghanistan (Brookings 14/05/2015; Reuters 05/08/2012; DAWN 10/08/2015). In July 2015, a first round of peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban took place in Islamabad, with the mediation of Pakistan. The United States and China were observers (DAWN 08/07/2015). The talks then stalled because of the turmoil generated by the change in the Taliban leadership. Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, and the US met

again in Islamabad in January 2016, aiming to revive the peace process (BBC 11/01/2016).

Global: Afghanistan became a member of the United Nations in 1946 and has ratified the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations 03/07/2006; Islamic Republic of Afghanistan 26/01/2004). In more recent years, the United States has had significant political and security presence in Afghanistan since 2001: on 2 May 2012, the two countries signed a ten-year strategic agreement for the promotion and development of economic opportunities in Afghanistan, as well as for the countering of terrorist activities (US Government 29/10/2015). After the deterioration of the security situation, in part due to the withdrawal of NATO troops in the end of 2014, Afghanistan asked Russia for weaponry and military support (Wall Street Journal 25/10/2015).

Humanitarian and development stakeholders

On 16 July 2015, Afghanistan still ranked as the most dangerous country for aid workers. In 2015, 39 national aid workers were killed, 21 were injured and 9 were kidnapped, and four international aid workers were kidnapped (Aid Workers Security 2015). In 2014 there were 54 attacks on aid workers (Reuters 16/07/2015; Aid Workers Security 2015)

ANDMA: ANDMA is the main government entity mandated to coordinate disaster mitigation, preparedness, and response. It consists of 469 people. The capacity of each provincial directorate depends on the security situation, geography, the availability of resources and staff. It was founded in the early 1970s (ANDMA 2015).

United Nations (UN): The UN has been in Afghanistan since the end of 1980s, mainly to coordinate humanitarian assistance and aid actors (PRISM 07/08/2015). In 1989, at the end of Soviet domination, UNICEF, UNDP, UNHCR, and WFP founded the UN Emergency Relief Programme for Afghanistan. In 1993, during the civil war, the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA) was created to work with a large number of Afghan leaders towards reconciliation (United Nations 2002; Peterson Institute for International Economics 2002). In 2002, upon request of the Afghan transitional government, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) was launched, a political mission operating alongside the military International Security Assistance Force mission, to support peacebuilding and development processes (UNAMA; Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue 2008).

NGOs: NGOs have been present in Afghanistan since 1979, providing humanitarian assistance and support to Afghan refugees (Chr. Michelsen Institute 2015). In 2015, 1,947 NGOs were registered with the Afghan Ministry of Economy, of which 273 were foreign (Wadsam 24/06/2015). NGOs are coordinated by four bodies, namely the Afghan NGOs Coordination Bureau (ANCB), the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief

(ACBAR), the Islamic Coordination Council (ICC), and the South West Afghanistan and Baluchistan Association for Coordination (SWABAC). Most NGOs are national, but the largest programmes are usually implemented by international NGOs (Chr. Michelsen Institute; ANCB 2015; ACBAR 2015; ICVA 2015; UNTERM 2015). Transparency issues involving NGOs reportedly include bribery and influencing of ministries to obtain contracts (Tolo News 23/06/2015). In January 2012, an Afghan government official reported that hundreds of NGOs, both international and national, were being closed for reasons including waste of resources and ineffectiveness (Reuters 05/07/2012; Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty 19/01/2012). The 2005 Law on Non-Governmental Organizations was under review in 2014 (Council on Foundations 06/2014). In June 2015, the Minister of Economy, Abdul Satar Murad, announced plans to further increase government oversight of the work of NGOs, to increase transparency and accountability (Tolo News 23/06/2015).

Economy

Afghanistan is rich in natural resources, including precious metals, minerals, gemstones, oil and gas. However, as of 2014, it was still one of the poorest countries in the world, ranked 171 out of 188 in the 2015 Human Development Index (UNDP 2015; USIP 10/10/2014). In 2011, more than one-third of the population (36%) was living below the national poverty line (World Bank 2013). Economic growth averaged 9% between 2002 and 2012, but declined to 3.7% in 2013 and 2% in 2014. This is mostly due to the withdrawal of international organisations and armed forces, protracted political transition, slow reforms and decreased investor and consumer confidence (World Bank 02/05/2015; Washington Times 26/01/2015).

Gross national income per capita: USD 1,980 in 2014, based on purchasing power parity (World Bank 2014).

GDP per capita: USD 666.3 in 2014. Average GDP per capita peaked in 2012, reaching 688.6, after continuous growth since 2005. (World Bank 2014).

GDP composition by sector of origin: 53% services, 25% agriculture, 22% industry (CIA Factbook 2012).

Currency: The afghani (AFN) had an exchange rate of AFN 66.91 to USD 1 in December 2015 (DAB 10/12/2015). The value of the Afghani has been dropping since 2014 (USIP 15/05/2015; World Bank 02/05/2015).

Inflation: Following a peak of +14% in 2011, inflation gradually decreased until 2014, and more acutely in the first five months of 2015. As of May 2015, inflation value was at -2.56% (Trading Economics 2015).

Budget: In 2014, the government deficit reached a new record, peaking at 37% of GDP, compared to Pakistan's deficit of 5% national GDP, and India's of 4.5% in the same year (Trading Economics 2014; Trading Economics, Afghanistan, 2016; Trading Economics, Iran, 2016; Trading Economics, Pakistan, 2016; Trading Economics, India, 2016).

Banking: Afghanistan's banking system is fragile (SIGAR 01/2014). As of 2014, Afghanistan has a rate of only 185 deposit accounts per 1,000 adults, compared to 295 in Pakistan (World Bank 2016). In 2010, a hundreds undocumented loans and corruption at high levels nearly caused the collapse of Kabul Bank, and highlighted the limited capacity of Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB) to deliver effective guidance and control (Afghanistan Analysts 09/03/2013; SIGAR 01/2014; The Guardian 16/06/2011). In April 2015 the World Bank completed the implementation of its Financial Sector Strengthening Project for Afghanistan, but the final report indicates that results were unsatisfactory (World Bank 30/04/2015).

Unemployment: Unemployment data is controversial, and according to the International Labour Organisation, the 7.1% unemployment rate reported to the National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment for 2007–08 was unreliable, and did not account for the very large market of precarious and casual employment (ILO 2012, European Union & Islamic Republic of Afghanistan 2008). More recent data indicated the 2013 unemployment rate as 8% (World Bank 2013). However, as of 2012, 60% of the officially employed workforce was working in low-productivity and subsistence agriculture or farming, while many jobs in the services, including those generated as a result of international assistance, were mostly temporary and unsustainable (ILO 2012).

Labour force per occupation: According to 2008–09 estimates, the main occupations were agriculture 79%, services 16%, industry 6% (CIA Factbook 2008/2009).

Main export products: Agricultural products such as dried fruit, cereals, raw materials like cotton, iron and copper, and crafted artisanal products like carpets and gemstones (US Government 18/04/2014; Santander 2015; International Trade Center).

Main export partners: China, India, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Russia, and Turkey (Trading Economics 2015; World Bank 2014).

Main import products: Oil, machinery and equipment are the main import goods. Afghanistan also imports food items, base metals and related products (Trading Economics 2015; Santander 2015).

Main import partners: China, Iran, Japan, Pakistan, Russia, and Uzbekistan (Trading Economics 2015; World Bank 2014).

Services: The main services in the country are transport and communications, heavily fuelled by the influx of international aid. However, when international financial aid subsidies, these are expected to shrink (ILO 2012).

Agriculture: In 2012, 58.1% of Afghanistan's land was agricultural, including land under permanent crop like cocoa, coffee and rubber, and land for the cultivation of fruit, nuts, and vines (World Bank 2012; Trading Economics 2012).

Key industries: Small-scale textile and shoe production, furniture and brick production, food products, non-alcoholic beverages, and carpets. The extraction of raw materials is also very important to the national economy (Index Mundi 30/06/2015; Nations Encyclopaedia 2015).

Extractive and informal sectors: Corruption and conflict are discouraging investors from financing the extractive sector, which is estimated to be worth over USD 1 trillion, due to large deposits of minerals, precious metals, gemstones and other resources almost in every province of the country. As of 2015, the majority of extractive operations are small-scale and artisanal activities that represent part of the fundraising activities of insurgent groups. Illegal mining is reported to mean USD 300 million of lost government revenue every year (USIP 10/10/2014; SIGAR 04/2015; SIGAR 11/01/2016). Afghanistan remains the world's leading opium supplier, and one of the main global cannabis exporters (Vice News 21/05/2014). The areas with the highest levels of opium production are in the southeast, especially Helmand and Farah (UNODC 2014). Despite international efforts to end poppy production, it reached a record level of 224,000 hectares in 2014, and 6,400 metric tons. This represents a 17% growth from the previous year, compared to an average of 7% annual growth in the years before 2013. Opium makes up an estimated 4% of the total GDP of Afghanistan (The Guardian 12/11/2014).

Remittances: As of 2014, Afghanistan received an estimated USD 268 million in personal remittances (World Bank 2013).

Infrastructure

Airports: Afghanistan has around 53 airports or airfields, which include about 16 domestic airports serving the most remote areas of the country. The main airport is Kabul. Other important airports are Kandahar, Mazar-i-Sharif, and Herat (LogCluster 09/04/2014).

Roads: The road network is composed of 8,100km of highways, and 26,600km of local roads. Over 12,800km are paved. Significant maintenance problems are reported. The potential presence of landmines poses a serious danger. Kidnappings,

robberies, and crime are also a risk on several highways, especially outside the capital (LogCluster 21/05/2014; CS Monitor 02/02/2015).

Rail: The railway network is mainly linked to Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan in the north. However, as of 2014, the construction of a new railway link connecting Herat to Khawaaf (Iran), was reported ongoing (LogCluster 09/04/2014).

Ports: Afghanistan relies on neighbouring countries for sea port services, mainly Karachi and Port Qasim in Pakistan (LogCluster 09/04/2014).

Electricity and fuel: In 2012, only 43% of Afghanistan's population had access to electricity (World Bank 2012). In 2014, 73% of the power supply was imported. The imported supply comes from Uzbekistan (57%), Iran (22%), Turkmenistan (17%), and Tajikistan (4%). The exploitation of national natural gas reservoirs is considered crucial for Afghanistan to reduce its dependence on imports (Asian Development Bank 19/11/2014). In 2014, fuel was 19% of total merchandise imports, representing a significant decrease from the peak of 35% reached in 2011 (World Bank 2014).

Media and communications

Afghanistan has a large number of radio and television channels and stations, as well as several press agencies. However, freedom of expression is very limited (BBC 03/03/2015).

Radio: Radio only recently lost primacy in media audience to television. The main radio station in the country is Radio Afghanistan, which also operates other stations in cities, such as Kabul Radio FM 93. Many national and foreign radio stations also exist in Kabul, including the BBC and Radio France (BBC 03/03/2015).

TV: There are over 20 national-run channels, and around 70 private stations (BBC 03/03/2015). TV usage nearly doubled between 2008 and 2015 to reach 64% of the population in one week. TV audiences are more likely to be urban and non-Pashtun, and TV viewing also increases with education level (BBG 15/01/2015).

Press: Newspaper readership has risen continuously since the fall of the Taliban regime. Among the most important publications are *The Daily Afghanistan*, *Afghanistan Times*, and the *Daily Outlook* (BBC 03/03/2015).

Internet: The use of internet is growing rapidly, but access is still very limited, with only 6% of the Afghan population using the internet as of 2014 (Freedom House 2015; BBC 03/03/2015).

Mobile network: As of 2014, Afghanistan recorded 75 mobile phone subscriptions for every 100 inhabitants, compared to 73.3 in Pakistan, 87.8 in Iran, and 74.5 in India

(World Bank 2016). Frequent infrastructure attacks by insurgent groups severely hinder functionality (Freedom House 2015).

Food security and livelihoods

At the end of 2015, 5.9% of the population were reported suffering from severe food insecurity, representing an increase of over 300,000 people compared to 2014. Over 1.7 million people are considered in need of food assistance (OCHA 05/01/2016).

Food security: The food-security situation has generally remained stable during the 2012–2014 period (GIEWS 03/07/2015). However, increased displacement caused by the intensification of the conflict and other shocks has resulted in increased food insecurity. By the end of 2015, 1.57 million people were reported to be in Crisis and Emergency levels (IPC Phase 3 and 4) of food insecurity (GIEWS 03/07/2015; WFP 06/2014; OCHA 05/01/2016).

Livelihoods: The most common form of employment is self-employment, both in rural (43%) and urban (49%) areas. Households are responsible for 77% of total employment, including informal and unpaid family work. The largest employment sector is agriculture, which represents 60% of the country's total labour. Formal labour is more common in urban areas, where the public sector is the main employer (Afghanistan's Ministry of Economy 2014).

Social protection systems/coping mechanisms: The population of Afghanistan has long relied on solidarity for social support. Despite the establishment of the 2008-2013 National Social Protection Strategy, social protection in Afghanistan is almost non-existent (UNICEF & Samuel Hall 2014; Global Giving Resource 19/01/2013; Global Humanitarian Assistance 03/2015).

Health

Afghanistan's health system is long underfunded, and has suffered from institutional fragmentation for decades (WHO Afghanistan). As of 2012, the average life expectancy was 60 years, compared to 68 for the region. The main reported causes of mortality are lower respiratory infections (11.6%), ischaemic heart disease (8.1%), and diarrhoeal disease (6.4%) (WHO 01/2015). Afghanistan has the highest prevalence of cutaneous leishmaniasis in the world – a disease transmitted by infected sandflies, which causes lesions that can result in severe disability. At the national level, the estimated average incidence is 200,000 cases per year, with over 13 million people considered at risk (WHO 2015; WHO Afghanistan 15/06/2015).

Health system: In 2012, government health expenditure was 7.1%. There were 2.9 physicians per 10,000 people, 3.6 nurses and midwives, and 0.3 pharmacists. There was one primary health care facility per 10,000, and 5.3 inpatient beds (WHO 2014). Between 2005 and 2015, the coverage of primary healthcare services increased, bringing the coverage of the basic package of health services to 82% of the population (WHO 15/06/2015). However, the number of healthcare facilities is still insufficient, and only 54% of the rural population live within one hour of the nearest health facility (WHO 15/06/2015). According to an MSF survey in 2013, 19% of the population had experienced the death of at least one family member due to lack of access to healthcare in the previous year. The main barriers to access were high costs and lack of money (32%), excessive distance (22%), and access issues caused by violence and conflict (18%) (MSF 02/2014).

Traditional sector: Private traditional health practitioners are present in almost all provinces and, in remote areas, traditional medicine is still the most used form of treatment (IWPR 22/12/2010). Rituals like “dam” (blowing a prayer on an afflicted in order to heal him/her) are common, and usually performed by Mullahs (Penn Museum 2002). The government has recently developed a National Medicines Policy, in which traditional medicine will be monitored and controlled, and only accepted where it would prove absolutely not detrimental to people's health (Afghanistan's Ministry of Public Health 09/07/2014).

Maternal health: As of 2015, 15% of pregnant women had access to antenatal care, compared to 39% average for the region. Additionally, 36% of births were attended by skilled health personnel, compared to the WHO-region average of 58% (WHO 2015). In 2013, there were 4,200 maternal deaths (WHO 2013). In 2015, the maternal mortality ratio was as high as in 2013, with over 400 deaths per 100,000 live births (WHO 28/08/2015; WHO 2013).

Mental health: As of 2010, over 60% of Afghans were reported to suffer from some kind of stress disorder or mental health problem, generated by decades of war, high levels of poverty and social problems (Global Research 10/10/2010). Despite being upgraded to one of five government priorities after the 2003-05 national mental health survey, lack of funding has not allowed for a full implementation of response plans (WHO 15/06/2015).

Vaccination: As of 2012, the coverage of tetanus vaccination for newborns was 60%, while the coverage of the vaccine against tuberculosis was 86% for DPT1, and 71% for DPT3. Vaccination coverage for hepatitis B was 71%, and for haemophilus influenza type B 71%. In 2013, measles immunisation coverage was 82%, compared to 68% in 2012 (WHO 2014; UNICEF 2012). As of August 2015, polio vaccination coverage reached 90% (WHO 2015; WHO 24/08/2015; GPEI).

HIV/AIDS: Due to underreporting, data on the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Afghanistan is not fully reliable. The disease is common among people using injectable drugs and people accessing unsafe paid sex. As of 2012 the number of reported HIV cases was 1,250 (World Bank 10/07/2012). As of 2014, estimates indicate that the number of people actually living with HIV in Afghanistan could be between 4,100 and 13,000 (UNAIDS 2014). Deaths due to HIV/AIDS increased from 0.4/100,000 in 2000 to 0.8/100,000 in 2012 (WHO 01/2015).

Tuberculosis (TB): Afghanistan has a significant burden of tuberculosis (TB), and around 53,000 cases occur in the country every year (WHO Afghanistan). As of 2012 the prevalence of the disease was very high, affecting 337 people per 100,000. The disease is reported to mostly affect females, which on average account for 64% of the caseload (TB Care I 2012). As of 2014, the mortality rate due to TB among HIV-negative, was reported to be 44/100,000, compared to 26 in Pakistan, 17 in India and 3.5 in Iran (Henri J. Kaiser Family Foundation 2015). In 2010, 6.1% of new TB cases were multi-drug resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB), and MDR-TB made up 8.3% of previously treated cases, compared to 3.4% and 20.6% in Pakistan, and 5% and 38.3% of Iran (WHO 2015). About 13,000 Afghans are reported to die of TB every year, and in 2014, an estimated 58,000 new cases occurred, of which 56% were provided with a six-month treatment course upon diagnosis (WHO 24/03/2015). In 2014, many new cases were missed due to the lack of close monitoring (Afghanistan's Ministry of Public Health 24/03/2015).

Polio: As of 2015, Afghanistan is one of two countries in the world where the polio is still endemic (WHO 24/11/2015). In 2015, 19 cases were recorded, compared to 28 in 2014 and 14 in 2013. Polio is still prevalent due to operational and security constraints and vaccination refusal (Global Polio Eradication Initiative 20/04/2015, 25/11/2015; Reuters 18/08/2015; The Guardian 08/07/2015). 85% of cases occur in the recognised transmission zone of Farah province and in the southern areas, where cases are often imported from Pakistan (WHO 2015). At the beginning of 2016, Afghanistan and Pakistan agreed to synchronise their polio vaccination campaigns (DAWN 08/01/2016).

Crimean-Congo Haemorrhagic Fever (CCHF): Between 1 January and 10 October 2015, 121 cases of CCHF, including 20 deaths, were reported in Afghanistan. 23 cases were confirmed (Ministry of Public Health 10/2015). In 2013, 17 confirmed CCHF cases were recorded by the Ministry of Public Health, compared to six in 2014 (Ministry of Public Health 2014; Ministry of Public Health 2013). The global average case fatality rate of a CCHF outbreak is between 10% and 40%. The virus is primarily transmitted to humans from ticks and livestock, and human-to-human transmission can only occur through close contact with blood, or other bodily fluids (Pajhwok Afghan News, 05/07/2015; About Health 11/08/2015; WHO 01/2013).

Malaria: Afghanistan hosts two forms of malaria: *plasmodium vivax* and the more deadly *plasmodium falciparum* (Malaria Atlas Project 2013). Deaths from malaria dropped from 1.1/100,000 in 2000, to 0.1/100,000 in 2012 (WHO 01/2015). In 2014 the number of reported confirmed cases was 39,263, including 24 deaths (WHO 2014). The most common form of vector control for malaria is the use of insecticide-treated nets (ITNs). Between 2010 and 2012, over 4.3 million ITNs were distributed in Afghanistan (WHO 2013). In 2011, coverage reached close to 100% of the high-risk population. It fell to around 80% in 2013, but returned to almost 100% in 2014 (WHO 2015).

Nutrition

Nutrition issues in Afghanistan have been present for a long time, but often neglected, with most investments going into governance and security (IRIN 11/11/2014). In 2015, the number of children under five suffering from severe acute malnutrition (SAM) was estimated to be over 500,000, compared to 360,000 in 2014 (UNICEF 12/09/2015; IASC 17/09/2014). Challenges in combating nutrition issues include a breakdown in the logistical supply chains, and problems with community screening and referral for nutrition programmes (Nutrition Cluster 03/2015). In all the areas most affected by the conflict, and in particular in Helmand province, malnutrition remains one of the main causes for child mortality (MSF 14/12/2015; WFP USA 24/08/2015).

WASH

The contamination of water sources because of inadequate waste management and disposal, unsafe excreta disposal practices, and other issues, is still causing major concerns, especially in rural areas (UNDP 03/10/2015; DACAAR 12/10/2015; MedAir 02/04/2015).

Water: In 2011, Afghanistan reached the target 2015 Millennium Development Goal target for water supply, achieving 53% coverage for urban areas and 51% for rural areas. However, 39% of the population (47% rural and 15% urban) is still without access to any improved water supplies or sources (House 2013). Poor irrigation techniques and inequitable sharing of water supplies add to the strain (Center for Policy and Human Development 2011).

Sanitation: Sanitation has not improved at the same rate as water supply. Coverage with improved sanitation is at 63% in urban areas, and 60% in rural zones. In 2012, the coverage was 47% in urban areas, and 23% in rural areas (House, Sarah 2013; World Bank 2012; World Bank 2012). In 2015, Afghanistan still had one of the highest rates of open defecation in South Asia (OPHI 22/06/2015).

Hygiene: Hygiene practices in Afghanistan are still poor, mainly due to lack of adequate water supplies. Women often lack adequate space for taking care of menstrual hygiene, increasing the risk of infections (WSSCC 13/01/2016).

Waste management: Reports indicate that open-air waste burning remains one of the most common forms of waste disposal, including among international actors and private contractors (SIGAR 02/2015). Severe public health issues have been registered in Kabul, due to lack of infrastructure and equipment for the management and disposal of urban waste. An estimated 3,000 people die every year of diseases such as diarrhoea, tuberculosis, and other respiratory infections due to poor waste management (Afghanistan Today 03/11/2014). One study has highlighted how asthma in Afghanistan is more common than in neighbouring countries, likely as a result of the widespread use of open-air burning pits for waste disposal (Bemanin, M.H., Fallahpur, M., et al. 2015).

Shelter and NFIs

Traditional housing in the Kabul area is mainly built from mud, with flat roofs that allow for the production of dried fruit. Most buildings in residential areas share walls in order to reduce exposure to cold winds (Archinomy 2015). Modern buildings are made of concrete and mortar (USGS 2014).

A large proportion of the displaced stay in makeshift shelters and tents (REACH 04/2015; The Kabul Times 28/01/2015). Considering the extremely low temperatures that can characterise Afghanistan's climate, simple tents and plastic sheets are not sufficient to ensure adequate shelter to displaced populations, and winterised solutions are necessary (OCHA 23/11/2015; 08/11/2015).

As of 2011, 97% of households used solid fuel for internal heating, and 80% used it for cooking (Afghanistan Central Statistics Organization (CSO) & European Union 2011-2012).

Education

Education in Afghanistan is compulsory for children aged 6–14. There has been the significant increase in the number of children attending schools in the last 10–15 years, yet less than 10% of the pupils complete secondary education up to 12th grade (equivalent to a Baccalaureate degree) (EP Nuffic 01/2015).

In 2013, the gross primary school enrolment ratio (which can exceed 100% as a result of enrolment of people older than the official primary education age) had grown to 106%, from 95.7% in 2009. However, an estimated 400,000 children drop out of

school every year (UNESCO 2013; Embassy of Finland in Kabul 08/06/2015). In 2015, over 8.7 million children were attending school, compared to 8.2 million in 2014, and 8 million in 2013 (NORAD 29/08/2014; World Bank 20/10/2015; UNFPA 14/10/2013).

Literacy: In 2015, the total literacy rate for people aged 15–24 was 58.2%: 69.6% for men, and 46.3% women. The rate among all people over 15 was 38.2% (52.0% for men and 24.2% for women). The rate for people over 65 was 20.3% (20.7% for men and 19.7% for women) (UNESCO 2015).

Gender inequality: The belief that women and girls do not need education is widespread, and are the motivation for frequent violent attacks on women's education. Women and girls' access to education varies enormously according to location, with those living in urban settings having more opportunities than those in remote rural areas (UN Women 09/07/2013; OHCHR 09/02/2015). The lack of adequate sanitation facilities for girls, and an absence of community-based schools near the most rural areas, are additional challenges (UNICEF 2013). In the period 2008-2012, primary school attendance was 62.9% for boys and 46.4% for girls. The secondary school attendance rate was 42.8% for boys and 21.1% for girls (UNICEF 2008-2012).

Protection

Protection issues include child labour, people trafficking, sexual violence against children, gender-based violence (GBV) and discrimination, extrajudicial and arbitrary killings and abuses, restrictions on religious freedom and on freedom of movement. Lack of accountability leaves many families without access to justice (U.S. Department of State 08/04/2011; Amnesty International 2015).

Civilians are increasingly being targeted by insurgents. As of 7 August 2015, UNAMA reported 1,523 civilian casualties due to complex or suicide attacks launched by anti-government elements, including 282 deaths and 1,241 injuries. This is close to double the number of civilian deaths and injuries that occurred in the same period of 2014 (UNAMA 08/08/2015).

Prison conditions in the country are poor, with severe overcrowding, inadequate food and water, and unequipped infirmaries (US Department of State 08/04/2011; Amnesty International 2015).

Children: Between September 2010 and December 2014, 2,302 children were killed, and 5,047 injured, of a total of at least 12,000 dead and around 22,000 injured. In 2014 the number of child casualties increased by 47% compared to 2013, and 110% compared to 2012 (UNAMA, UNICEF, OCHA 31/07/2015; UNAMA 02/2015).

Reports indicate that between September 2010 and December 2014 around 560 children were recruited for support and combat functions, with 20 boys killed while performing suicide attacks (UNAMA, UNICEF, OCHA 31/07/2015).

Under Shari'a law, corporal punishment of children is allowed at home, in prison or in other care settings. It is prohibited in school, but violent punishment is still used in education settings (OHCHR 09/2012). The minimum age of marriage for girls is 15, compared to the internationally recommended minimum age for marriage of 18. However, the practice of child marriage, even below the legal age of 15, is still very common, particularly in rural areas. In Afghanistan, 39% of married women were married before the age of 18. Poor families often sell their daughters for marriage to wealthy families, and the husbands are usually much older men (UNFPA 19/02/2015; UNFPA 18/08/2015).

In 2008 the UN special representative for children raised the issue of *bacha bazi*, a practice that sees rich patrons using boys as sex slaves. However, little has been done by the government to address this severe protection issue (Save the Children 05/03/2015).

Gender: Sexual harassment and GBV are widespread (Carter Center 11/2009). In 2011, a survey conducted by TrustLaw, belonging to Thomson Reuters foundation, ranked Afghanistan as the world's most dangerous country for women (Al Jazeera 15/06/2011). In 2013, at least 80% of women had suffered at least one form of domestic violence, and over 60% had experienced multiple forms of violence, including sexual violence and rape, "honour killings", and selling of women (WHO 16/11/2014). In 2014, the New Afghanistan Women Association (NAWA) published research conducted in the provinces of Herat, Balkh, Kunduz, Sar-i-Pul, Takhar, and Jowzjan, which showed a 30% increase in rape cases compared to the previous year. The study also highlighted how, despite the high number of gang rapes performed by armed groups and criminals, 40% of reported cases occur inside families. Legal consequences are rare (ToloNews 24/09/2014; The Killid Group 08/10/2014). Female genital mutilation (FGM) is still common, including Afghanistan, for cultural and religious reasons (Safeguarding in Schools 02/11/2014; The Examiner 07/02/2015).

Minorities: Conditions for specific minority groups is still considered very poor. These include Shi'a Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Baha'is, and groups of Sunni Muslims who do not belong to the majority Hanafi doctrine (Huffington Post 25/07/2015). The Hazara ethnic group has long suffered abuse and violence – including mass kidnapping and persecution – including most recently by IS. Hazaras were systematically persecuted throughout the five-year Taliban regime (CBS 24/02/2015; Washington Post 09/04/2015; DAWN 17/03/2015). In 1992, the Mujahideen government ordered attacks on the Hizb-e-Wahdat opposition party led by Hazaras, including civilian killings, and rape of Hazara

women. In February 1993, hundreds of Hazaras were killed by government forces in Ashfar district, west of Kabul (Minority Rights, 07/2012).

Documentation: As of 2012, the percentage of men with an identity card, known as "tazkera", was 83.4%, compared to only 18.2% for women. Women need consent from their husband or father to obtain such a document. However, research conducted by the Joint IDP Profiling Services (JIPS), found that most IDPs without a tazkera reported that this had little or no consequences on their lives. (JIPS 2012; *The Guardian* 05/05/2015).

Mines and ERW: As of June 2015, the national mine action database listed around 4,321 hazardous sites, covering a total area of 558.9km² (UNMAS & MAPA 30/06/2015). Between April 2014 and March 2015, 1,175 mine/IED/ERW casualties were recorded, representing a sharp increase compared to 451 reported in the previous year, and 397 reported in the year before that (MACCA 15/09/2015; 08/09/2014; 22/10/2013). This is likely due to the surge of attacks following the withdrawal of ISAF, with insurgents regularly using pressure-plate improvised explosive devices (PPIEDs) to target military personnel and convoys (OSAC 21/04/2015; Afghanistan Analysts Network 18/02/2015; MACCA 15/09/2015).

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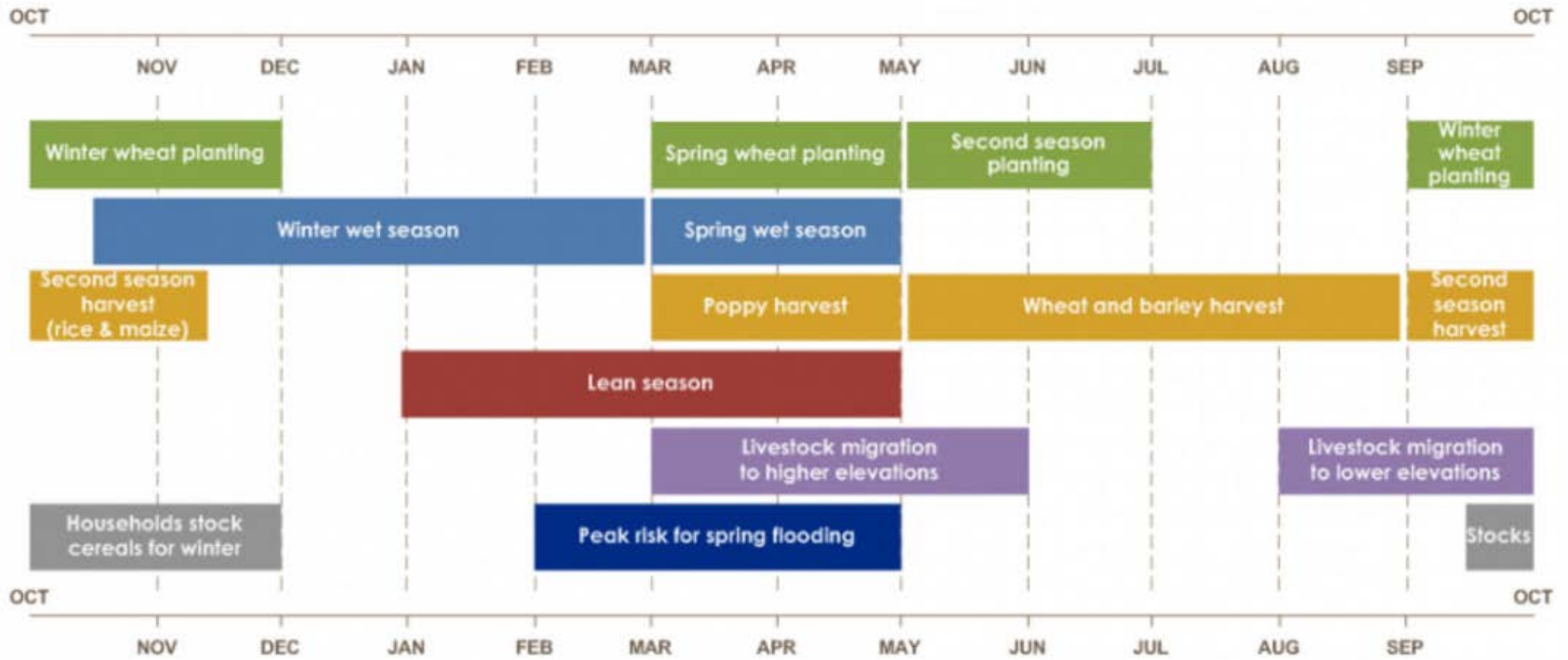
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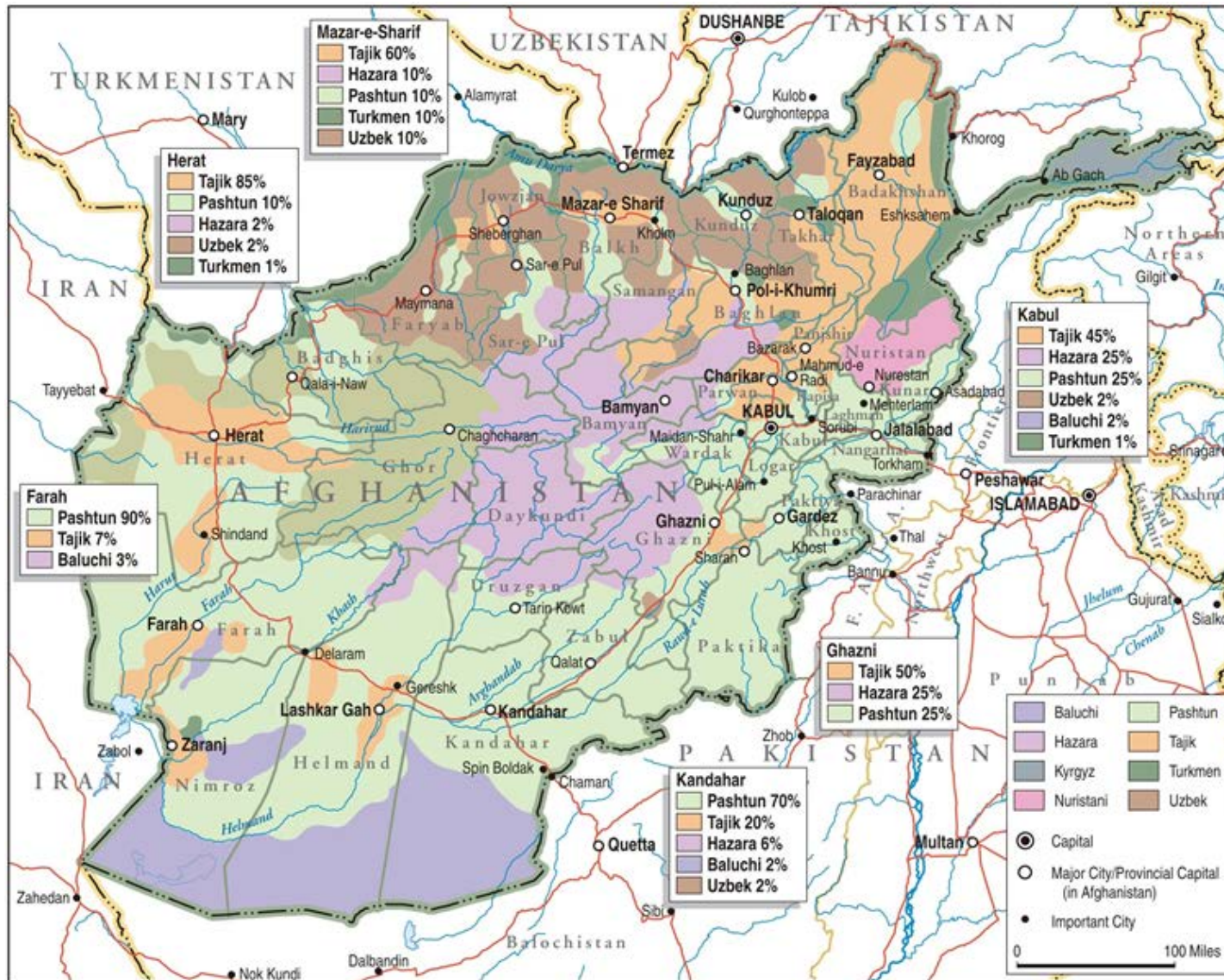
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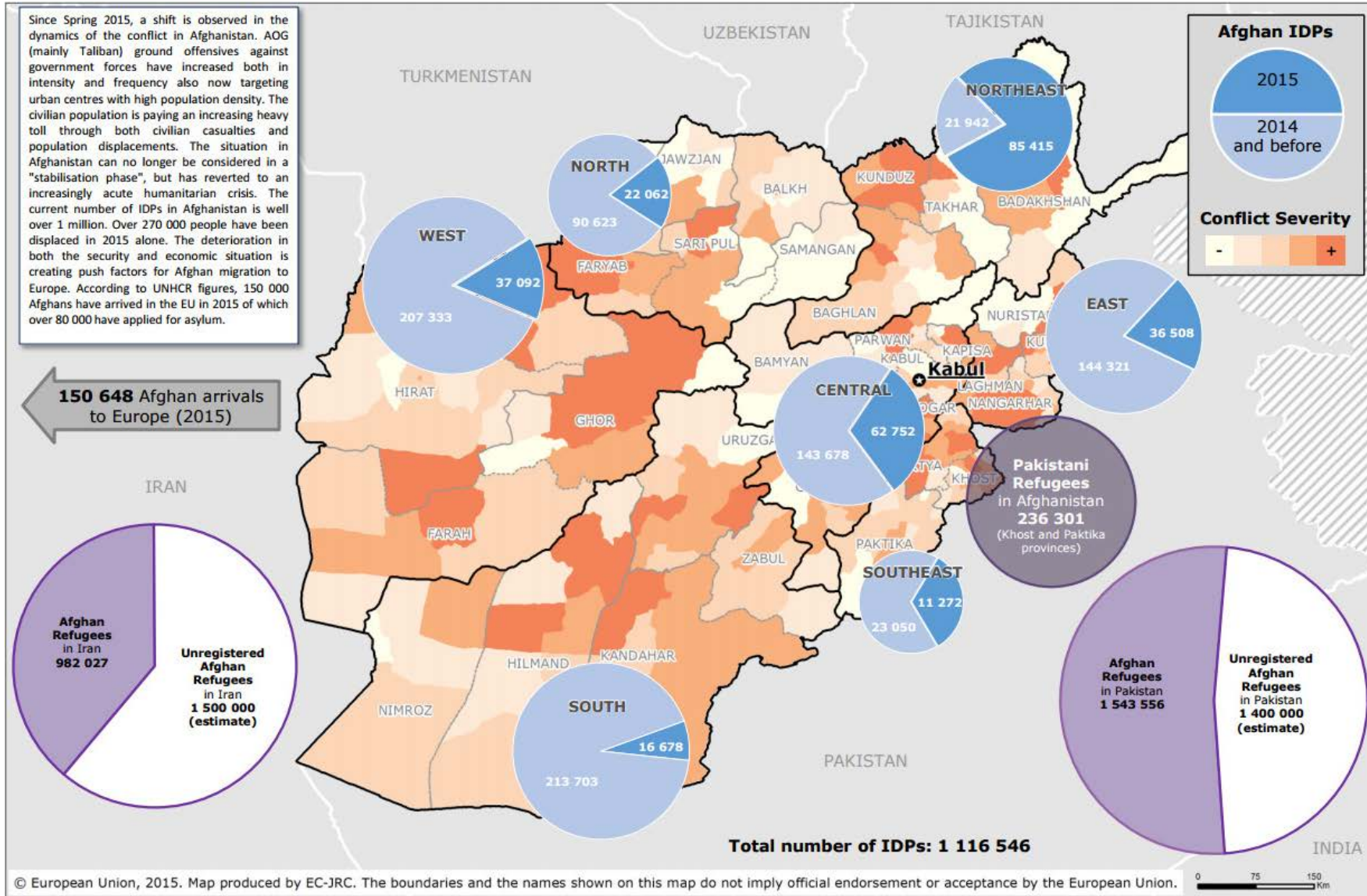
Source: FEWSNET 01/2015

Distribution of ethnic groups in Afghanistan



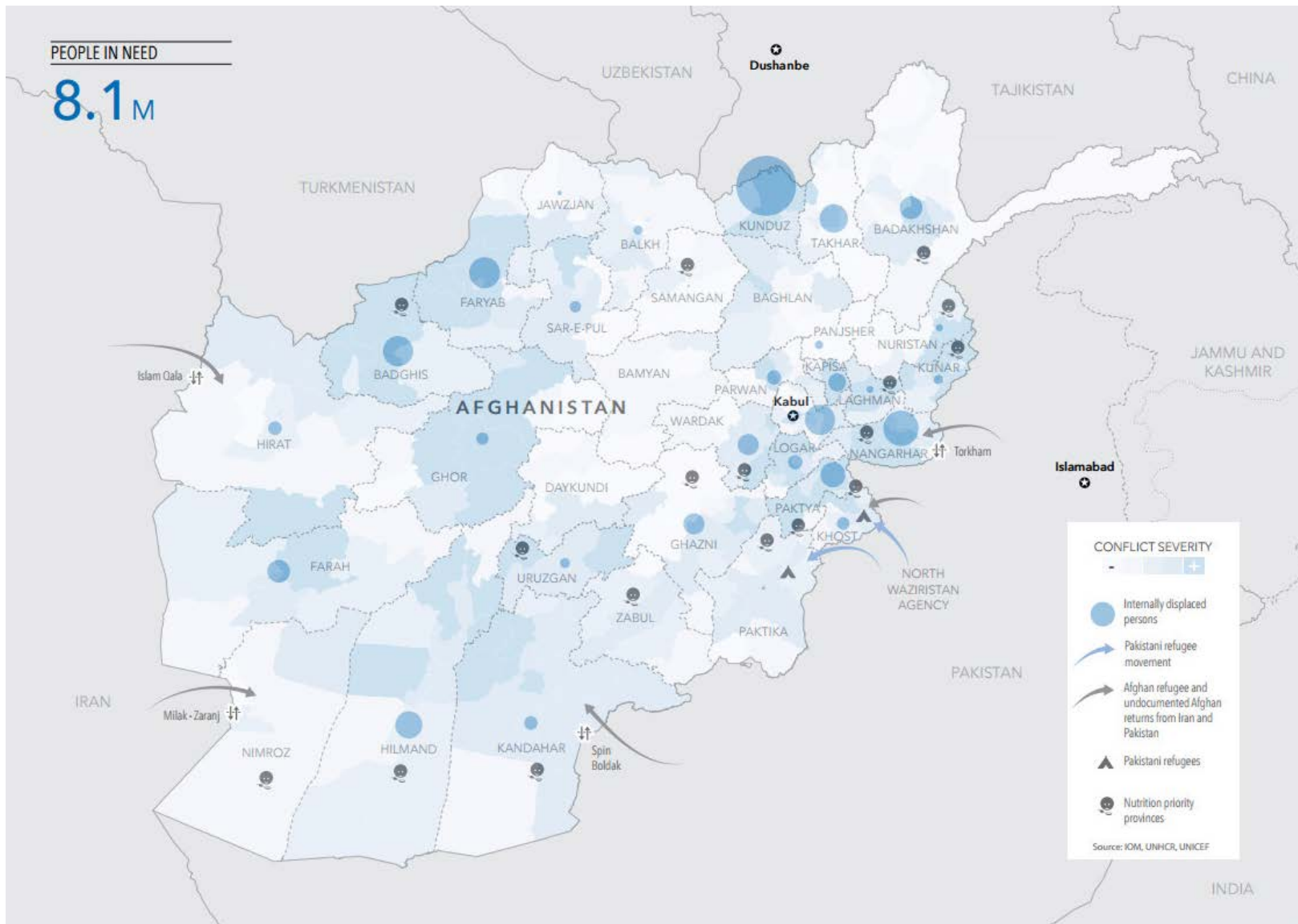
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Displaced, refugees, and migrants (December 2015)



Source: ECHO 03/12/2015

Conflict severity and areas of recent displacement (December 2015)



Source: OCHA 05/01/2016