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Afghan Displaced Persons: Resettlement, Reintegration and Repatriation

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Abstract

At the commencement of the 21st century, a visible change is occurring in human relationship, but several areas still demand initiation of new developments, ideas, concepts along with practices for a discernible shift in global society. The idea of belonging is one of those concepts, which needs redefinition on the basis of existing positions and experiences of asylum seekers, refugees, displaced persons and migrants. The 'battlefield' for ending the cold war rivalry of superpowers, once again has become an arena for the war on terror, bringing massive destruction to the population at the hands of warring parties. Millions of lives perish due to fratricidal fighting and a huge number of persons are displaced and forced to live in camps. The statistics of the Afghan government and the UNHCR indicate that half a million people are still internally displaced due to continued conflict, violence and prevalent human rights' violation. Majority of such persons are living in camps or camp-like settings for decades and it is an alarming fact that displaced persons are 'more vulnerable and worse-off than the urban poor' who face insufficient housing or shortage of livelihood due to unemployment while displaced persons are facing numerous issues like insecurity, forced eviction, unemployment, poverty and repatriation due to ongoing conflicts. The paper analyzes all these aspects.

Key Words: Displaced Persons, Insecurity, War, Conflict, Reintegration, Natural Disaster.

Introduction

Afghanistan, a reference to the disintegration of the Soviet Union, faced massive sufferings after the Soviet withdrawal. It was caught up in the post-war fighting among the different warring groups because they could not agree on a political set up, throwing the country into a civil war. Decades of internal conflict forced millions of the Afghans to take refuge in neighboring countries. In changing global priorities, refugees lost their strategic worth and were encouraged to repatriate as anti-communist theater was not more alive to exploit their presence. Conversely, they were considered to be a scourge, a burden for the economy of the host

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country. Unfortunately, after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, Afghanistan once again became the battlefield in the war on terror which inflicted enormous devastations and sufferings for the unfortunate inhabitants of ill-fated country. The repatriation of refugees led to the displacement of approximately 1,500,000 persons (IOM, 2014; HRW, 2017). These persons preferred during their settlement in big cities for better livelihood. Their arrival led to the competition in job markets, straining the fragile economy and weak existing infrastructure of the host country. It has created a tinderbox that recurrently ignites disputes for occupation of resources. The paper examines the phenomenon of displacement and repatriation and attempts to answer the obvious question, why the refugees are not being settled in their original places after their repatriation, becoming displaced persons whereas other inhabitants are also passing through this experience. Reviewing the existing literature, it is observed, security and protection are endemic factors to the displacement. Scholars and analysts like Roberta Cohen & Francis M. Deng (1998), Cathrine Brune (2003), Kouser (2007) and Donald Steinberg (2009) agree that the reasons for fleeing from homes are similar whether they are refugees or IDPs. Hulme (2005) and NRC/IDMC (2015) say that IDPs suffer more during armed conflicts and internal fighting, which damage civilians intentionally. Marguerite Hickel (2001) noted that human rights' violation is more in case of IDPs but less of the UN concern. Geissler (1999) has discussed the limitations on the role of the UNHCR as it cannot deal alone due to the increasing number of IDPs. Nasreen Ghufran (2004) has exclusively discussed the case of Afghan refugees and IDPs in her PhD dissertation, using qualitative methodologies, assessing the multifaceted impact on displaced and host communities.

She has elaborated the post-Soviet withdrawal period and its impact on the people, generating refugee crises. She pointed out that the UN organizations focused on funding for refugees, whereas DPs were considered little or too late. It is noteworthy that refugees became a global concern after the World War II and the UN established the UNHCR in 1951 and no separate UN agency was working for the protection of IDPs. Alam (2012) is of the opinion that despite having a stay of thirty years in Pakistan; a large number of the refugees were not settled properly, becoming displaced persons within their own country. He has explored that a wide majority of refugees is not willingly repatriated. Jabeen & Pulla (2014) claim that internal displacement in South Asian countries is a big human rights' issue because the governments are already in a trouble to deal with the challenges of border security. The article elaborates that UNHCR's response was limited as it was for refugees and later in 1980s, it began working for DPs. Samuel Hall (2014) and COAR (2015) focused on food, security and resilience, which are not available to displaced persons. These studies have calculated the impacts of displacement on different areas of Afghanistan. Majidi (2011), UNHCR (2011 &2017) pointed out that a large number of refugees were forced to return as the host countries were not ready to keep them anymore. After entering in Afghanistan, they did not settle in

the places of their origin. These studies confirmed that 40 percent refugee-returnees found it difficult to assimilate into Afghan society, facing problems in getting access to shelter, agricultural land, livelihoods and social services as the prevailing security situation was unsupportive. Victoria Metcalfe et al (2012) highlighted the impact of displacement on children and women. Women are in a disadvantageous position due to the tribal setup of the society. The study also claimed that internal displacement in Afghanistan is high as 76 percent of the population is forced to displace at least once in their lives. It has mentioned six major periods of huge displacement since the Soviet intervention of 1970s to current period – all directly related to armed conflict and political instability. The detailed surveys of UNHCR (2012, 2013, 2014 and 2016) have worked on diverse displaced communities, viewing impacts on both host communities and displaced persons. Another study of UNHCR & Human Rights Watch (2016) warned that the huge number of returnees from host country Pakistan could "develop into a major humanitarian crisis." However, these studies have covered the displacement problems partially.

Viewing the previous studies and looking at existing empirical conditions, this study hypothesizes, unless the armed conflict is not stopped, peace is difficult and returnees are likely to flee from their places. Keeping in view, the plight of the displaced person, the research was undertaken with the objective to bring out the problems of displacement, exploring the causes of displacement, particularly the wars, which are the prime cause, not letting the majority of returnees to settle in their ancestral places. It is also aimed to point out the effects of displacement on the lives of IDPs and offering a few policy options to improve their living conditions. For this purpose, the study adopted both descriptive and interpretive approaches, using primary and secondary data. Several refugee camps were toured to procure personal observations as many displaced persons returned to refugee camps. Interviews from policy-makers, NGOs staff and displaced persons were conducted to explore the gravity of the issue. Published data on the topic was extensively consulted. The structure of the study is designed to explain definitions, causes and effects of displacement, dividing the study into eight headings and subheading as Introduction briefly provides objectives, methodology and literature review with particular reference to displacement in Afghanistan. The second part provides the definitions of displaced persons and the third is about the phenomena and patterns of displacement, providing worldwide statistics. The fourth describes the causes of displacement and Afghan displaced persons. The fifth is about the different phases of wars and scenarios of displacement across Afghanistan. How conflicts force the displaced persons to secondary displacement rather than their integration and repatriation, is briefly described in sixth part. Seventh is about the effects of displacement as the IDPs have to face huge problems and suffer a lot due to certain reasons. Eighth part provides findings and policy recommendations. Last

but not least, the paper is not just an academic debate, but it may have an enormous impact on the lives of millions of IDPs for their betterment.

Concepts of Displaced Persons

The phenomenon of displaced persons is as old as the human existence on this planet. It is observed that human atrocities and natural catastrophes have been forcing people to flee from their places since the ancient periods, making them asylum seeker, refugees, migrants and displaced persons with one common act of leaving their residential areas. In the past, all these types were amalgamated having the same meanings, but growth of civilization and modern culture has not only changed the meanings of these concepts, but also the patterns of global movements dividing them into different categories, making it further complex. No doubt, migrants' movements lead the people to leave their ancestors' places, yet they are fundamentally different in nature and purpose from each other due to certain reasons. They are being treated separately by the governments, international organizations/institutions, donor agencies and states who patronize them through International Law and conventions.

A displaced person is one who has been forced to flee from his place of origin as the result of a war, internal disorder, natural disaster, political upheaval or terrorism. Mostly the cause of displacement is the hostile environment, insufficient livelihood, unjust decision and biased policies of a regime towards a specific group of people, compelling them to leave their habitats. Such persons do not cross the borders, but leave their original places, moving to other parts of their country, becoming internally displaced persons (IDPs).

> *"Internally Displaced Persons are persons or groups who have been forced or obliged to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or human-made disasters, whenever the responsible state or de facto authority fails, for reasons that violate fundamental human rights, to protect or assist those victims and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border" (UN Guiding Principles, 1998).*

In comparison to a displaced person, a refugee is the person who has been forced to flee from his country and cross the border of another country due to unavoidable circumstances like wars, natural calamities, ethnic purging, military occupation and fear of political persecution. If one fails in quest of protection and the authority of the other state does not allow his entry or denies any assistance, then one may be convicted to death or forced to live an intolerable life in the shadows, without sustenance and rights. Historically, refugees had been regarded

as a humanitarian issue over the years, and the international community used to treat them exclusively through humanitarian agencies, rather dealing them politically, demonstrating their coordinated response from conflict resolution mechanisms (Cohen & Deng 1998). The Protocol of 1967 defines, "Refugee is a person who is outside her/his country of nationality or habitual residence and unable or unwilling to return to that country because of a well-founded fear that she/he will be persecuted because of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group" (UNHCR, 2011).

In comparison to a refugee, an asylum seeker leaves his/her country owing to life-threat, but has not yet been offered the rights of refugee. Generally, the question of such person's status is left to certain agencies of the host country that decide whether he is a refugee or not. Asylum seekers are mainly political victims in their native country; however, they can be expelled by the authorities of the host country on the bases of any alleged or unlawful activity. The concept of migrant is also different from above mentioned definitions as poor economic conditions or poverty let them move from one place to another in order to find livelihood or better economic prospects. A comprehensive and properly maintained statistics of migrants are not easy to get as thousands of them move on daily bases either legally or illegally, within or beyond borders in search of better job options, quality education, better living conditions and modern health care facilities, which are, otherwise not available in their original home places.

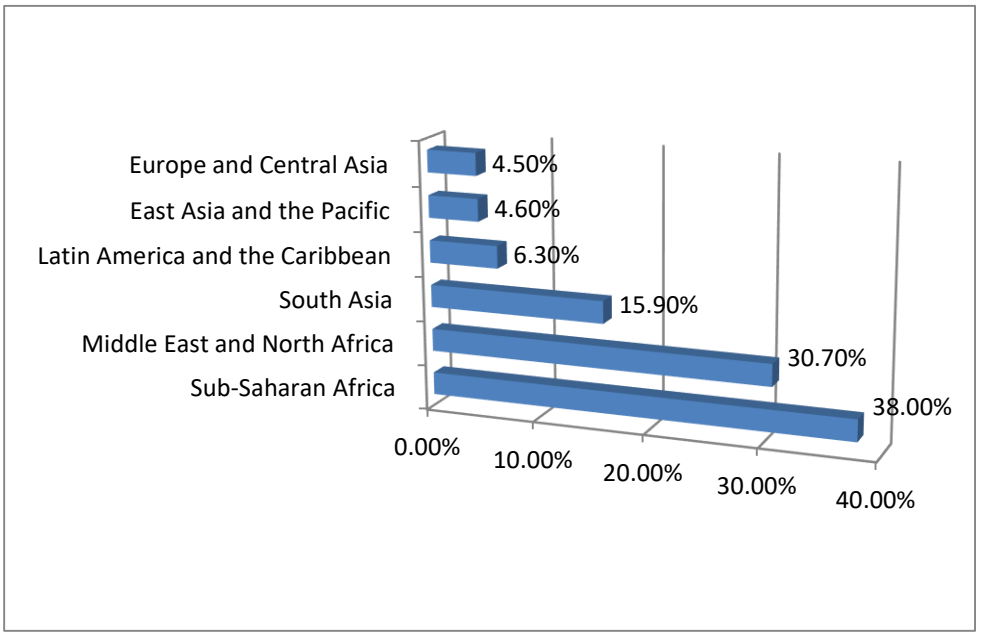
In this study, displaced persons (IDPs) are those persons who have been returned to Afghanistan from Iran or Pakistan. They are referred as returnees or refugee returnees as well. There is no difference between forced withdrawal and managed evacuation of these persons from neighboring countries. On returning, they fail to settle in places of their origin due to multiple factors, including armed conflict, widespread destitution and a near-total absence of social services. A small number consists of those persons who flee from their homes due to natural calamities, but not cross an internationally recognized border.

Displaced Persons and Patterns of Displacement

The gravity and enormity of displaced persons require to be viewed from a human perspective as their number is increasing day by day and even double the number of refugees in current scenario. They are more vulnerable than refugees. According to a UN report, the number of displaced persons has been raised to 65.6 million in 2016. Among these people, 40.3 million are internally displaced persons, 22.5 million are refugees, and number of asylum seekers is 2.8 million (World Economic Forum, 2017). The main cause of increasing number is the uprising in the Middle East, particularly eruption of conflict in Syria, which started seven years ago in 2010, forcing 6,326,000 people to flee from their homes, while

4,873,000 had to cross the borders of neighboring countries like Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. According to IDMC (2017), Syria has the highest number since 1998, when the Centre began reporting about displacement. In 2016, this number fell slightly. Its cause was relative stability in the region with two brief cease-fires in Syria, which slower the migrants' movements and translated into a less dynamic population. In 2016, Sub-Saharan African country Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) became the major source of displacement due to violence and conflict, which forced the people to move to other places after failure in peace efforts. About 739,900 persons crossed the borders. Later more persons were forced to flee and the number climbed to1.87 million, hitting a high record (World Economic Forum, 2017). There were more than 920,000 new displaced persons, the highest number, but it received little attention of global media (IDMC, 2017). Following is the percentage given by IMDC/NRC.

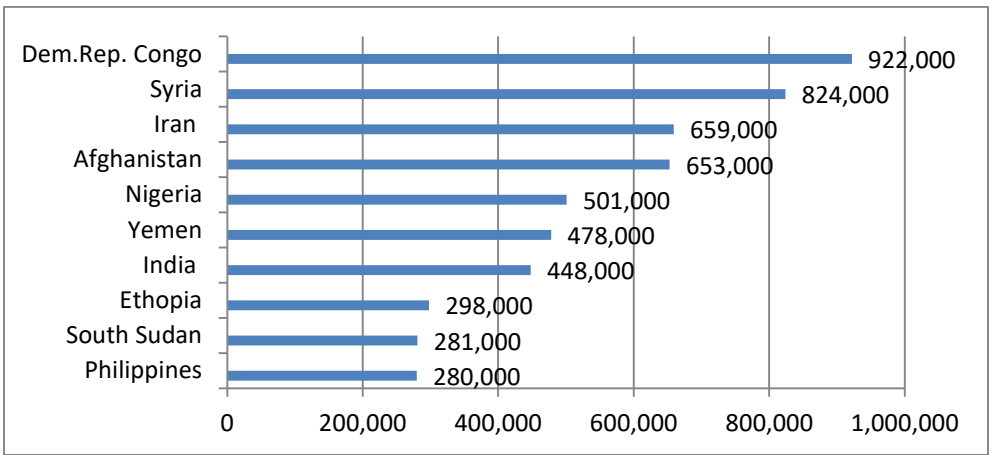
Table 01: Global Report on IDPs (2017)



According to these statistics, Sub-Saharan Africa is at the top, having 2.6 million, next is the Middle East & North Africa with 2.1 million while South Asia has 1.1 million. Last three regions have less than one million as Latin America & Caribbean have 0.4 million, while East Asia & Pacific and Europe & Central Asia, both regions have 0.3 million displaced persons respectively.

The number of IDPs in Colombia is still high as 7,246,000 persons are internally displaced while 340,000 are living as refugees in neighboring countries of Ecuador and Venezuela (IDMC, 2017). For decades, Afghanistan has been the main source of refugees and displaced persons along with Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. It is observed that governments are accountable for miserable plight of their people, pursuing such strategies and policies, which change their ethnic ratio or occupy the economic resources, forcing the people to leave the area, cases of several Latin American and African countries are such examples. However, a positive change occurred in 2016 as the following statistics showed that 6.5 million people were able to return to their homes, whereas half a million refugees managed to repatriate in their countries (IDMC, 2017).

Table 02 Number of DPs by conflict and violence in 2016 (IDMC, 2017)



The overall situation is still depressing and thousands of asylum seekers are waiting for a settlement of their cases. Above it, the conflicts are increasing the sexual violence, forced recruitment, disappearances, restriction of movements along with insufficient basic needs. In Pakistan, during the recent past, the military launched 'Operation Rah-e-Rast' in Swat district and 'Operation Zarb-e- Hazb' in Waziristan Agency against terrorism, forcing millions of people to leave their homes, becoming internally displaced. It was estimated that 1.8 million people were displaced due to insurgency, counterinsurgency and violence in Pakistan (IDMC, 2015, August).

Afghan Displaced Persons

It is an established reality that forced and voluntary displacement is indiscernible in Afghan society. Its reason is continued conflicts and security threats, which have been forcing the people to flee from their places to other cities or countries in quest of refuge. Since the Soviet invasion of 1979, the country has been facing this phenomenon. Other reasons are movements from rural to urban areas in search of better earning opportunities, which are common as the rural livelihoods are being depleted. The flexible frontiers between Afghanistan and Pakistan also attract the people of adjacent areas to cross the border. The population living on either side belongs to same tribes and communities. Additionally, people living on one side of border, have jobs and relatives on the other side. Durand Line was demarcated in 1893 as a boundary line, but was never treated as the strict border. It was poorly demarcated or vaguely delineated, which facilitated the huge number of the Afghans who were forced to flee from their country due to continued war and took shelter in Pakistan. Realizing this fact, the two governments never demanded the entry permits from local population at the formal border crossing before the events of 9/11 (Gufran, 2004). According to a study, there are four types of displaced persons in Afghanistan.

First are those IDPs who left their places due to armed conflict. Second are the refugee-returnees who could not settle in their ancestral places. On arriving in their native areas, they found a difficult life and moved to other developed or urban areas. The third are the victims of natural disasters like earthquake, extreme weather conditions, drought, etc. The internal tribal fighting, localized disputes and unemployment force people to flee from their homes and they are also included in this type. The four is the migratory groups like Jogis and Kuchis. These ethnic minorities are nomadic groups, scattered across Afghanistan and are generally unrecognized citizens, who moved to safe areas, particularly cities because conflict has disrupted their movements, destroying earning sources, increasing impoverishment. They earn their livelihood by raising animals. The Jogis do not enjoy political representation like Kuchis who got mandated representation in the parliament after the fall of Taliban regime in 2001. This representation empowered them politically, granting some share in services (Metcalfe et al., 2012).

Causes of Displacement in Afghanistan

The statistics reveal that during the last three decades, the wars remained the prime cause of huge dislocation and displacement either it was Afghan war or the war on terror, which is still continued. These wars increased internal displacement, which occurred during the different periods with varying durations, phases and intensity. The parties to war on terror include the international troops, Afghan security forces and fragmented forces of Non State Actors Groups (NSAGs) like the Taliban, al-Qaeda and their allies for example Islamic movements of Uzbekistan. The Haqqani network and local warlords like Wilayat Khorasan associated with armed criminal

groups are also a party to different warring factions (Havgaard, 2015). All these warring parties are threatening the security of the country, compelling the people to remain in phase of fear. Apart from the wars, a combination of several other factors is forcing the Afghans to leave their homes. These factors include violence, natural disasters, kidnapping, aerial attacks, land disputes, development projects, targeted killing, intimidation, landlessness, night raids, illegal checkpoints, forced recruitment, inter-tribal disputes and absence of basic services. The number of IDPs has now increased from 631,000 to 2,666.000 (IDMC, 2017). However, the concerns about protection remain the key cause of displacement for conflict-induced people.

Phases of War in Afghanistan and Displacement

The presence of Soviet troops on the Afghan soil was the first major reason of displacement, causing huge destruction, forcing more than 7.5 million people to leave their homes. About 3,200,000 persons took refuge in Pakistan while Iran hosted 2.350,000 refugees and two million persons became IDPs (Knowles, 1992; ECHO Factsheet, 2015). The Geneva Accords (1988) facilitated the withdrawal of the Soviet troops, paving the path for voluntary return of five million refugees and displaced persons. From 1992 to 1997, four million refugees returned from Pakistan and Iran (Gufran, 2004; ECHO Factsheet, 2015). However, this marathon progression of repatriation was sabotaged by the civil war, which broke out between the different factions of the Mujahideen along ethnic lines. In the mid-1990s, about 400,000 IDPs were living in camps near Jalalabad Mazar-i-Sharif and Herat (Banerjee et al, 2005, p. 38).

The control of Afghanistan by the Taliban in 1996 and three-year drought caused a second wave of displacement as one million people had to leave their homes. Central and northern areas of the country were the worst affected due to fighting between the Taliban forces (Pashtun) and the Northern Alliance (a coalition of the former Mujahideen, having the Tajik, Uzbek and other non-Pashtun ethnic identities). The process of repatriation remained slow. This flip-flop type of movements continued with displacement as well as repatriation along with new influxes. The war on terror once again forced the people to leave their homes.

War on Terror and Displacement

At the time of the terrorist arracks of 9/11, approximately 1.2 million IDPs were living in Afghanistan and five million refugees were residing in other countries (UNHCR Global Trends, 2013). The attacks brought the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan to take

revenge on this event and these forces launched the war on terror against the Taliban regime. After the fall of the Taliban regime, a massive repatriation began, but inter-ethnic conflict and a combination of other factors disturbed the process of repatriation, increasing the number of displaced persons. Conflict between the Northern Alliance and the remnants of the Taliban was the major cause of this displacement. It was at the peak in 2002 and 1.2 million became IDPs, while several millions fled from the country (Gufran, 2004). Simultaneously, the new influxes of displaced persons and refugees had been transpiring over the years, disturbing the effectiveness of the repatriation process.

NATO Drawdown and the New Displacement

In December 2014, the security challenges increased in the wake of the drawdown of international forces from Afghanistan. It also led to internal displacement as transferring of security responsibilities to the Afghan security forces were not accompanied by a transitional mechanism. In Southern Afghanistan, military operations launched by ISAF and the Afghan National Security Forces against the remnants of Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, forced the people to flee from their places (Guardian, December 28, 2014). After withdrawal, the NSAGs increased their operations, coercing the Afghan forces to launch counterinsurgency operations using rockets, grenades and mortars in populated areas, which also forced the people to move to other places. Mostly such type of displacement was visible in the central provinces in late 2014, while in the first half of 2015, the pressure increased in the northeast region, including Kunduz province where more than 36,600 people had to leave their places due to attacks and counterinsurgency operations. Qalaizal, ImamSahib, Dashte Archi and Chahar Dara were also included in war-affected areas (IDMC/NRC, July 2015). In mid-December 2016, it was estimated that 580,000 people were forced to live in other areas due to conflict and violence. Among these people, half were newly displaced persons coming from Kunduz, Uruzgan, Farah and Helmand provinces.

The continued conflict and chaos in Helmand province and central areas further added miseries to IDPs, which had been suffering since the terrorist attacks of 2001 (Bjelica, 2016).To take the control of the country, NSAGs increased target killings, kidnappings and use of explosive devices, which further increased the number of IDPs, particularly in rural parts of eastern and southern Afghanistan, worsening the mandate of the ISAF. In the first half of 2015, new displacement started in the central and northeastern regions, which were relatively better and safer while the western and southern areas were already victimized (UNHCR, 2015, July, p.1). Apart from displacement, this situation increased the number of civilian casualties. It was reported that 10,500 persons were killed in 2014, which

was 22 per cent higher than 2013.The NSAGs were responsible for huge casualties, nevertheless, death toll by the Afghan security forces and ISAF was not less and no change occurred in 2015 (IDMC, July 2015).

Protracted Displacement

Protracted displacement is significant in Afghanistan as it is a matter of decades. According to a report, in May 2015, about 60 per cent of displaced persons had been living in other areas since 2012 or earlier (UNHCR, Monthly IDP Update: July 2015). In the mid-2012, it was calculated that 74,000 people left their places before 2003 (UNHCR, 2012, p. 8). Several IDPs move for a relatively short time, but they have to live for longer periods. Since the eruption of conflicts, protracted displacement has been increased, raising concern for donor agencies as options for the returnees are limited due to continuous conflict. The long period in displacement makes these persons more vulnerable. According to a survey report of 2012, 50 per cent had been displaced since 2009. During the last 16 years, more than 5.8 million Afghan refugees returned to the different parts of the country. Among these people, about 4.6 million were supported by the UNHCR (HRW, 2017). Protracted displacement is increasing vulnerabilities, demanding better coordinate humanitarian responses. A comprehensive policy and action plan about IDPs is required to be implemented on the priority basis.

Land Mines and Explosive Devices laid by Soviet Forces

Since the Soviet invasion, Afghanistan has more landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) than any other country of the world. A large number of human lives are at risk as more than 541 square kilometer area is still contaminated (MACCA, June 2015, p.3). Due to these mines, booby traps and other deadly contraptions, a large number of people were deprived of their limbs and lives. The purpose of these explosive devices was to reduce the mobility of foot soldiers in the area. But helpless civilians and innocent children were the main victims. Currently, NSAGs is using victim-activated and other improvised explosive devices (Dawn, 2015, February 12). In 2013, it was reported that more than 20 per cent of all civilians' casualties or injuries were due to landmines (ICBL, 2015). In 2016, 11,000 persons were killed or injured and total number of such persons was 75,000 from 2009-16, as the statistics' maintenance began in 2009 (HRW, 2017).

Natural Disasters and Displacement

In Afghanistan, the migration has become a "coerced strategy." Apart from the wars, certain other factors also force the inhabitants to move from one place to another. Displacement triggered by natural disasters is separated from the wars.

Afghanistan is a country with dry terrain and mountains. Its half of the territory is located at altitudes of more than 2,000 meters, and its mountain tops are as high as 7,000 meters (ADKN, 2009). In the south of Afghanistan, about 129,000 people were displaced by drought and insecurity. They have been living in camps for a long time (Kouser, 2007).

Floods, torrents of rainfall and landslides often affect northern and north-eastern regions, destroying the housing and infrastructure, forcing people to leave the areas (Coordination of Afghan Relief, 2015). In 2014, landslides, floods and avalanches forced 13,300 persons to leave their homes and main victim were the people of Bamyan, northern Badakhshan, Baghlan and Takhar provinces (IDMC, July 2015). The high temperature, rain-fed agriculture and rugged terrain make several areas prone to drought (Banerjee et al, 2005). Each year, almost 200,000 people are severely affected by drought, floods, earthquakes and landslides. The development projects are also forcing the people to change their residences. Disasters sometimes worsen the situation in those areas, which are already victim to conflict.

Expansion of Conflict and Secondary Displacement

Expansion of conflict and its influx to other areas have increased displacement. The returnee groups of refugees from neighboring countries are also included in this crowd, moving from one place to another. These persons have to pass through the secondary displacement due to continue insecurity in their native places and above it unavailability of basic services. A huge number of IDPs preferred urban centers for better options of livelihood. In 2015, internal fighting brought new displacement in central and northeast regions as these areas had less burden in previous years. From 2012 to 2015, the pressure was concentrated in the western and southern areas along with the central regions (IDMC/NRC, 2015, July).

Increased civilian casualties also caused secondary displacement, which were the result of air strikes, night raids, suicide bomb attacks, and terrorist attacks. Apart from killing people, these attacks destroyed houses and agricultural land as well. The persons who moved from rural to urban areas were relatively safe, having better facilities (IDMC/NRC, 2014, February, p.5). It is also observed, that new trend is letting these persons to settle in semi-urban areas (IDMC, 2015, July).

Difficulty in Statistics' Collection of Secondary Displacement

In Kabul, about 40,000 persons are living in slum-like settlements. The majority is former refugees who have returned from neighboring countries. They could not find a livelihood in their ancestors' places while others were disasters-ridden, economic migrants and groups of ethnic minorities (KIS Task Force, 2015, p.2). Disappointing from their native areas, refugees are often forced to flee several

times, becoming IDPs. They flee to urban areas without any official record or permission, and this situation creates difficulty in counting the number of such persons and maintenance of statistics. It is assessed that 40 per cent of the IDPs have become part of the urban poor in Mazar-e-Sharif, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar and Jalalabad (Samuel Hall, 2014, November).To these persons, urban areas are relatively safe with access to livelihood and infrastructure. Furthermore, IDPs are difficult to discern from economic migrants, making huge portion of the population of the urban areas. The accurate data of this type of migration are difficult to collect (Jabeen & Pulla, 2014).

Many families used to leave their elderly members to harvest the crops and look after the livestock. Later these persons joined their families after completing these tasks (Task Force on IDPs, 2015). In this way, multiple factors are causing secondary or short-term displacement. In 2013, different surveys in Herat and Helmand provinces showed that previously DPs fled to Pakistan or Iran or became IDPs several times (IOM/Samuel Hall, 2014, March, pp.11, 16). Short-periods displacement is not an area to be ignored as it is equally problematic and many displaced persons are not counted in several cases because their displacement is temporary and matter of a few days. However, it is observed that in changing scenario, such movements have become less common as compared to the past.

In December 2014, the forced and voluntary return of the Afghan refugees from Pakistan increased after the crackdown of the government of Pakistan in response to a heinous attack on the Army Public School of Peshawar (Pakistan). Such incidents also lead to secondary displacement as 30,000 refugees were forced to leave Pakistan and the majority of them were unregistered, living without papers for the past 20 to 25 years. The authorities viewed them with deep suspicion, accusing them of harbouring the militants, involved in the attack (Dawn, 2015, February8). According to some sources, the documented number of returnees was more than 33,500 while 77,000 had no documents (Aljazeera 2015). In February 2014, the Afghan government's national policy on IDPs restricted the provincial task force to collect full information about displacement within their jurisdiction. Its purpose was to collect information of all IDPs by age, sex, ethnic identity, home-place, and shelter, duration of displacement, cause for fleeing, settlement preferences, vocational skills, education and livelihoods (NRC/TLO, 2015, May, p. 53).

Effects and Problems of Displacement

Displacement is becoming increasingly prolonged and problematic in Afghanistan due to continued conflict, which is often entrenched in positions of the warring parties. Apart from wars, shortage of water, shelter, cultivated land and meadows are also letting the people to evacuate their native places in search of the better options. The absence of basic infrastructure and increasing needs for critical

services in places of refuge are enhancing the problems for IDPs. These people are extremely vulnerable as displacement further corrodes resilience and ability to renew their lives. Following are the effects of displacement, creating an array of problems, leaving IDPs in lurch to cope with them.

Insufficient Response of National and International Agencies

The response of national and international humanitarian agencies is insufficient to fulfill the needs of displaced persons. Its obvious reasons are insurgency and crisis in other parts of the world and funding has been dwarfed to those emergencies, diverting the resources from chronic to acute needs. The volume of funds has been already shrinking. National policies for IDPs are not being fully implemented and dependency on donor agencies is not in itself a solution to the problem. Above it, the needs of the IDPs require more response from humanitarian agencies and other stakeholders. After the NATO drawdown, a reduction in the humanitarian aid is occurring and in future its quantity may be further shrunk.

Horrible Unemployment

Horrible unemployment is a big issue, which is threatening the survival of the DPs, throwing them to starvation. Above it, poor infrastructure of war-ridden country is making the situation thwarted; strengthening the belief of these persons that returning back to homes is unfortunate and miserable. They think that going back to original places is unwise and survival is hidden in migration either to neighboring countries or within Afghanistan (Personal Interview, June 25, 2015). On returning, the occupation of their ancestral property is also an uphill task, having no documents at their disposal (Jabeen & Pulla, 2014; UNHCR, July 2012). In such conditions, it becomes difficult to meet both ends without jobs, which are not easily available and unemployment is widespread, throwing the displaced persons into debt (Personal Interview, December 23, 2015).

Threats to Physical Security

The security situation in Afghanistan is the most critical due to continued conflict. Above it, returning of two million refugees in the last three decades has increased security concerns. The continued attacks of the Pashtun warlords at minority ethnic groups and aid workers in remote areas have worsened the situation. Kabul and other major cities have become arenas of mutual rivalries between warlords and lower-ranking commanders, creating tension in the area. In the rural areas, warlords and local chiefs often harass the poor population with erecting checkpoints, which levy so called tolls and disrupt or slow down movements of displaced persons while robbery and theft cases are common, creating additional

complications (Personal Interview, July 16, 2015). Several higher ranking officials of the UNHCR reported the threatening conditions of the country in the wake of deadly security incidents, calling it the biggest challenge to returnees and displaced persons. This situation is not only hampering the repatriation, but also causing new displacement.

Risks of Mobilization

The mobilization of displaced persons from one area to another is not free of risk due to combination of security threats and police abuses. It is due to the deteriorating situation of security, which discourages movements. Above it, registered and unregistered refugees are being pushed by Pakistan. These persons are reluctant to move to native places due to the prevailing situation and preferred safe location, but their mobility is equally hazardous. In the last months of 2016, approximately 365,000 refugees out of 1.5 million registered refugees returned to Afghanistan (HRW, 2017). Occasionally, security threats increased to extent even emergency medical assistance was denied in several cases, which took the lives of many persons. One reason of such incidents is remote areas' residences of IDPs, which are adopted to avoid investigating agencies, who alleged them of involving in wrong practices. These locations make them inaccessible to the donor agencies, depriving them of economic benefits and health care. They remain helpless for days at a stretch (Personal Interview, March 24, 2015).

Poor Rural Development

In the beginning, increasing security concerns brought a large number of DPs to the urban areas instead of rural localities. Another reason was delivery of aid as donor agencies and key actors like NGOs preferred to reside in Kabul or other major cities. Therefore, most of the returnees were attracted to these cities. Consequently, the underdeveloped areas, the villages and the small towns were neglected. There is an acute need to pay attention to all these areas, making people to move there, diverting their attention from cities to rural areas. However, the slander of life away from the major cities is pathetic and the chances of rehabilitation in these areas are highly uncertain.

Unsupportive Infrastructure

The overall infrastructure of the country is presenting a desolate picture, not less than the ruins. Schools, hospitals and health centers need to be rebuilt. The water supply system has become completely out of order while road links and transport facilities are in poor condition due to ongoing conflict. The communication installations and sanitation system are also devastated by continuous wars. The

UNHCR itself has admitted that Afghanistan does not possess the capacity to accommodate its citizens on such a large scale and several UN reports exposed this situation. The volatile security situation, massive refugee returnees and lack of socioeconomic absorption capacity of the country have been pushing the people to move and change their places.

Problem of Reintegration

The war-ridden country is not offering better options for reintegration, making the returnees and displaced persons to search safer and more prosperous areas. However, these attempts are not bringing any result. Simultaneously, local authorities are discouraging them and the same practices are being applied by funding agencies. Above it, repatriation is not welcomed by the local authorities because they have meager resources and areas are already over-populated. Deputy Minister of the MoRR Abdul Samad Hami stated, "We've spoken with mayors and municipal leaders and no-one wants to integrate IDPs. They say they are spoiling the community or the land and need to go. We are trying to change the discourse on internal displacement because the numbers will only increase in the coming years" (IRIN, 2013). During the past several years, the government had insufficient funds at its disposal for development of infrastructure. That is the reason, which has made it difficult to change the camps or camp-like settings of the asylum-seekers in urban areas. In such a situation, it was also assumed that DPs would be discouraged to move to urban areas in the absence of appropriate livelihood. The government views them illegal residents and a hurdle to development of these locations. No doubt, integration is linked with acceptance while temporary strategies are not solution to problem. Provision of basic facilities, employment opportunities and housing schemes on the permanent basis is possible through long-term planning and policies.

Economic Challenges

The economy of war-torn Afghanistan has been bitterly suffering due to unremitting foreign aggressions and civil wars for the last three decades. Returning of refugees has asserted unbearable pressure on a very fragile economy and services of a devastated country. A small number of refugee-returnees have succeeded in bringing assets like clothes, beds and appliances while the majority of them lost all their possessions in the process of repatriation, either being stolen or snatched. There were other returnees who left their assets behind due to conflict or the expense of transporting or fleeing in haste, when the host countries pushed them forcefully (Personal Interviews, July 20, 2016).

The impact of continued conflict on displacement is difficult to repel. The business centers and markets were ruthlessly bombed first by the Soviet troops and

later by the warlords during the civil war. Prior to the wars, mostly rural inhabitants were dependent on agriculture, which suffered a lot and agro-based businesses were desperately damaged due to incessant insurgencies and the worst drought. In 2002, the international community pledged around US$ 4.5 billion of aid at a conference on Afghan reconstruction in Tokyo, but the donor countries remained reluctant to yield the money because of the persistent instability in the country. In 2012, Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework was introduced to improve economy for sustainable development, but no change occurred. The withdrawal of foreign troops has also led to a reduction in assistance. Currently, the country is receiving only seven per cent of the international humanitarian aid (Ruder, 2015). In July 2015, Afghanistan received 44 per cent of the funds of humanitarian strategic response, which were inadequate (FTS, 2015). It is not easy to resurrect the economy of the war-ridden country with meager resources, but generous aid from humanitarian agencies can improve the position. Corruption and misuse of available funding is also a common practice. Afghanistan's poverty level is already placing it at 171 out of 187 countries on the Human Development Index of UN Development Program, showing the worst economy. One third population of the country is living below the poverty line (UNDP, 2015). In January 2017, the UN itself estimated that one third of the Afghanistan' people required humanitarian assistance (UNOCHA, 2017, p.5).

Ongoing conflict is impeding economic growth of the country as well. There is no manufacturing sector and poppy cultivation with the illicit opium trade has become the major source of GDP (gross domestic product), providing employment (Doherty and Geraghty, 2011). Apart from it, political patronage with widespread corruption, bribery and nepotism are equally perishing the economy. Afghanistan is currently ranked as fourth most corrupt nation of the world. In 2014, the Financial Action Task Force was to blacklist Afghanistan, but it narrowly escaped at the last moment by passing an anti-money laundering law (Reuters, 2014, June 11).

A survey conducted by the Danish Refugees Council (2014) showed that urban households have been almost discarded to earn their livelihoods from rural farms. About 93 percent forms have stopped any type of agriculture production while 87 percent does not possess any livestock. In Jalalabad and Kandahar, 21 and 23 percent forms occupy livestock respectively. Jalalabad has the highest ratio of households, producing variety of products. Resilience upon livestock in these two Pashtun cities can be linked with Kuchi families, who traditionally raise animals taking them helpful for moving from one place to the other (Samuel Hall, 2014, November).

Although, the UNHCR had provided tents and other equipment to fulfill the needs of the returning families, but quantity of this material was insufficient. The security situation was comparatively better in and around Kabul than the other far off areas. So, there was an enormous pressure on the housing capacities of

Kabul and the same was the case of other major cities, where the situation was peaceful to some extent. It is noteworthy that in the beginning, one third of the repatriated population chose Kabul and its outskirts as their first choice for settlement when they were traveling back to their country. Others include those persons who fled from their areas, selling out their household belongings to avoid transportation charges. These IDPs had to face problems at their new destination. Resultantly, after facing several challenges in Afghanistan, a large number of repatriated refugees crossed borders. Housing, land and property are not easily available for all returnees. Above it, increasing urban population is equally problematic, which has been doubled during the last one and half decades, and in existing position, it makes up thirty per cent of the total Afghan population (Samuel, November, 2014, pp. 15-17).

It is calculated that Kabul is the world's fifth fastest-growing city. Many displaced persons feel insecurity in refuge areas and try to move to urban settlements. In case of inadequate housing, they occupy public and private land alternatively without permission of the concerned authorities. Furthermore, they remain at risk of forced eviction due to ongoing construction and developmental projects (Samuel, November, 2014; FMR, May, 2014, p. 16). In 2015, 1,430 people of such locations of Kabul received verbal notice to evict these places either those were private or public property (IDMC, July, 2015).

The Afghan government has yet to cover several miles to ensure rights of displaced persons, providing appropriate housing facilities and making arrangement for occupation of ancestral properties. They are more vulnerable in comparison to urban poor, who face poverty only (Jabeen & Pulla, 2014). The available land for settlement requires infrastructure with basic services and, which are being envisaged to displaced persons through national policy (FMR, 2014, May, p. 15; Samuel Hall, 2014, November). A comprehensive land distribution policy is also required. The schemes introduced in 2005 had many drawbacks with less access to basic services and livelihoods, therefore, new policies and measures are required for improvement of the situation, particularly identifying public land for housing of the IDPs and returnees (UNAMA, March 2015, p. 30). The Afghan Ministry of Refugees and Returnees (MoRR) is working for annual drafting and implementation of policies while provincial authorities have their own action plans (Samuel/National IDP Policy Working Group, 2015, pp. 6, 9).

Women and Children

Women and children are vulnerable to threatening environment of the country and their physical security and safety is at continuous risk and this situation is more alarming for displaced women and children. Women are comparatively in disadvantageous position due to the traditional setup of the society and are exposed to other threats like poverty and restricted mobility. In urban areas, they face

protection threats, particularly in getting access to education, health and livelihoods' facilities (NRC/TLO, 2015). In many cases, female students had to face threats of sexual harassment while walking to school and attempts to kidnap the children were also made when they were moving alone. Several studies have highlighted that Afghan women are less independent economically as compared to men and their social exposure is limited to close relatives only and they were not allowed to leave their homes without male relatives. Being DPs, they become victim of additional heinous exploitations including bonded labour and forced marriages to local lords. The problem with single female headed families is severe as they have been denied access to social services as well as jobs. The tradition of *hijaab* or the veil is also a hurdle in contacting field workers of donor agencies whose majority is generally males. As far as the legal provisions are concerned, they protect women in theory only (ICRC, 2015). Early marriage is also a big issue and 57 percent is 'child marriages' as one or couple is under the legal age of 16 years, fixed by the Afghan government. It is also estimated that 70 to 80 percent of marriages are forced or arranged marriages (HRW, 2017). The early marriage is a tribal tradition.

Children compose the half of the overall population of Afghanistan and account for a disproportionate 57 to 61 percent of all internally displaced persons (Task Force on IDPs, 2015, p. 2). The displaced children are equally victim to insecure environment, exposing to child labour and forced recruitment. Apart from it, they are prey to other abusive practices like trafficking and sexual violence. Educational facilities for the children of displaced families are not much concern of families and donor agencies as well. Their families are reluctant to send them schools owing to economic constraints and expenditures, which are not affordable for them (Samuel Hall/NRC/IDMC/ JIPS, November 2012). No doubt, donor agencies work for rehabilitation on a priority basis and education is not ignored by them, whereas NGOs are also working for it, but with a disappointing response from the IDPs. Ashraf Ghani, the Afghan president, admitted the need to resettle the IDPs, but implementation of the policy faced a setback due to the presidential election in April 2014 and an unending conflict. There is also a lack of the political will for taking proper measures. Only making headings of newspaper like, "our children are dying due to severe cold" and several others are ridiculous without any practical effort. The government is liable to take effective measures for filling the gaps in the provision of protection and economic assistance, tracking a durable solution for the persons trapped in protracted displacement.

Conclusion

The continued conflict and wars caused a huge displacement in Afghanistan and forced people either to cross the borders or became displaced within the country. Protection and security are the main concerns of the Afghans, which are difficult

to address due to unending fighting among the warlords, security forces and remnants of the Taliban regime, forcing the people to wander from one place to another. There are complaints of the unwillingness of the refugees to return to their places of origin. In fact, it is due to thorny situation with numerous hurdles like jumping out of the fire into the frying pan. To bring them back to mainstream, options of repatriation, integration and resettlement exist, but replete with risks. Impoverish economy of the country is putting the worst effects on DPs. Above it, on arriving in new areas, IDPs are not welcomed or profiled properly because the humanitarian responders have limited resources to accommodate them or calculate their number. Furthermore, prevailing insecurity prevents access to remote and dangerous areas and humanitarian agencies contact them within a couple of months after their displacement. Meanwhile, they have to suffer before getting access to the donor agencies. Despite it, all the new displacement is difficult to cover and no agency is able to capture the data of new arrivals single-handedly, making arrangement for their rehabilitation. Here the government requires a proper mechanism of data collection, designing and implementing social action plans on urgent basis to remove such discrepancies, taking viable measures in addressing IDPs' needs. All these measures may bring betterment in a number of informal urban communities where local integration is strong and a preferred option for settlement. The population victim to natural calamities and hostile environment, are commonly counted as "disaster-affected" population rather than displaced persons. The data of International Organisation of Migration (IOM) on displacement and disasters do not cover all these persons.

A comprehensive strategy and proper system for data collection and rehabilitation of displaced persons is required to minimize their miseries. A reliable and instrumented system can collect detailed information, maintaining the accepted standards. Such data is useful for donor agencies and institutions to prepare appropriate action plans. However, policies often remained on papers for lack of international funding and national capacity for their implementation. The continued conflict is not letting to implement the rehabilitation programs, showing nominal benefits for displaced persons. This situation is making people insecure both economically and socially, and it becomes difficult to think about options of going back. The government, international humanitarian partners, donor agencies and NGOs are working to respond to new displacements while much-needed aid is equally require for long-term IDPs, who are getting insufficient funding. Furthermore, beyond ISAF's withdrawal, the response of the international community is uncertain, whereas displacement crisis is to increase in coming times. The worldwide emergencies are becoming a cause of reduced funding as sources are being diverted to other crisis. The Afghan government itself needs to find the solution to the problem and just expect helping hand from others. It is the obligation of the international community to work in collaboration with the Afghan government rather than going alone in the field to get direct access to displaced

persons. Collective attempts of both will helpful for effective measures for rehabilitation and integration of these persons.

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