



Evaluation of the UNHCR Shelter Assistance Programme

Final Draft

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACBAR	Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief
AFN	Afghanis
ANDMA	Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority
BSC	Beneficiary Selection Committee
CDC	Community Development Council
CDP	Community Driven Process
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DoRR	Department of Refugees and Repatriations
DRRD	Department of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
ECHO	European Commission
ES/NFI	Emergency Shelter/Non Food Items
EVI	Extremely Vulnerable Individual
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GoA	Government of Afghanistan
HLP	Housing, Land, Property
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IP	Implementing Partner
JIPS	Joint IDP Profiling Service
KII	Key Informant Interview
LAS	Land Allocation Scheme
MoE	Ministry of Economy
MoPH	Ministry of Public Health
MoRR	Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
MGSOG	Maastricht Graduate School of Governance
MUDH	Ministry of Urban Development Affairs and Housing
NNGO	National Non-Governmental Organisation
NSP	National Solidarity Programme
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
PSN	Persons with Specific Needs
PSU	Primary Sampling Unit
ROI	Regions of Origin Initiative
SAP	Shelter Assistance Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN-OCHA	United Nations – Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VRF	Voluntary Repatriation Form
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WB	World Bank

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With more than 2.7 million Afghan refugees in the region, and an estimated 3 million globally, Afghanistan has the largest refugee population in the world. Since the fall of the Taliban, the country has witnessed massive return, with 5.7 million refugees returning and 4.6 million assisted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Yet, Afghanistan in 2012 reflects drastically different trends from the year the repatriation process started, a decade ago, in 2002. One common and continuous trend, however, is the overwhelming need for shelter and land for displaced populations – whether returning refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPs).

UNHCR's Shelter Assistance Programme (SAP) has provided, since 2002, more than 220,000 units of shelter to vulnerable returnees and IDPs throughout Afghanistan. The programme's design and implementation procedures have been improved over the years. To date, only one internal assessment of the programme has been conducted by UNHCR – with a limited scope, in 2005. A 2012 evaluation of the Danish Regions of Origin support to Afghanistan also touched upon the shelter programme.¹ Several other studies have researched the needs and vulnerability of returnees and IDPs in the country², but the SAP's contribution to reintegration outcomes, defined as achieving sustainable return and parity between returnees and other members of the local community, has not been researched.

The present study conducted by researchers at the Maastricht Graduate School of Governance (MGSOG) and Samuel Hall Consulting aims at filling this important gap with the following objectives:

1. **Assess the shelter program contribution to reintegration outcomes** and in achieving parity between returnees and others;
2. **Evaluate the shelter program design in terms of performance** at the beneficiary level and its effectiveness according to UNHCR guidelines;
3. **Assess the relevance and sustainability of the shelter programme** in the broader context of humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan.

The study's scope covers UNHCR shelter beneficiaries and communities targeted between 2009 and 2011 only; but the relevance of its findings will inform future shelter strategies. The evaluation covers the socio-economic aspects of shelter assistance on four levels – (1) household level, (2) community level, (3) institutional level, and finally (4) the macro-level.

This executive summary presents the result of the evaluation – covering an overall positive assessment of the SAP's reintegration outcome for returnees, discussing key weaknesses and areas for future improvements in developing improved guiding principles and strategy for the shelter programme in 2013 and beyond. The summary is organized in four parts: (1) UNHCR'S SAP: An effective contribution to reintegration; (2) UNHCR'S position as a leader on shelter intervention-unmatched by other stakeholders; (3) weaknesses of the shelter programme; and (4) conclusions and recommendations.

¹ Cosgrave J, Bryld E, and Jacobsen, L (2012), Evaluation of the Danish Regions of Origin Support to Afghanistan. Copenhagen: Danida.

² See for example: CMI (2008); De BREE (2008); LUMP et al.(2004); BARAKAT et al. 2012); Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement - The Liaison Office (2010); MAJIDI (2011); Samuel Hall/NRC/IDMC/JIPS (2012).

1. UNHCR'S SAP: AN EFFECTIVE CONTRIBUTION TO REINTEGRATION

The socio-economic impact of the SAP has been assessed on a sample of 4,488 respondent households in 15 provinces and all regions of Afghanistan, including 2,035 UNHCR shelter beneficiaries, 1,990 non-beneficiaries and of 463 shelter beneficiaries from other shelter agencies in the East – the region representing the largest share of shelter activities.

Shelter beneficiaries fare better than non-beneficiaries

The results from multi-dimensional poverty and cross-sectional regression analyses show:

- **Highest rates of poverty among non-shelter beneficiaries:** 86 per cent of non-shelter beneficiaries are multi-dimensionally poor, as opposed to 71 per cent of UNHCR shelter beneficiaries and the lowest numbers, 68 per cent, among non-UNHCR shelter beneficiaries.
- **A lower probability of being poor and lower degrees of poverty for beneficiaries** compared to non-beneficiaries.

Using a difference in difference analysis across time – comparing two periods: after return from abroad and after receiving assistance – the research concludes that:

- The data collected provides solid evidence that **UNHCR's SAP has had a significant and positive impact on reducing household deprivation along indicators of interest** including access to a house, electricity, sanitation and access to a mobile.

IDPs fare worse than returning refugees in the reintegration process

However, these positive results should be weighed against two important findings:

- **First, over three quarters – 78 per cent – of the overall sample are multi-dimensionally poor.** Concerning the individual dimensions most households are deprived in education, followed by economic well-being, social capital, housing and health. In terms of reintegration, this means that returnees are reintegrating in deprived communities. They fare better than non-shelter beneficiaries, but the context weighs in negatively on all. The aim of reintegration being to achieve parity is therefore not systematically relevant – the end result is that beneficiaries surpass the conditions seen in other groups; however, they also remain multi-dimensionally poor.
- **Second, main differences across groups show that the positive reintegration impact is mainly true for returning refugees and not for IDPs.** IDPs are noticeable more deprived than any other group while refugee returnees are the least deprived.

Comparisons between shelter beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries show, across a range of models, that the probability of being multi-dimensionally poor is significant and positive for nearly all non-beneficiary sub-groups in relation to the reference group. This means that beneficiaries are less deprived on a range

of socio-economic indicators. However, IDPs remain a marginalized population whose reintegration has not materialized as they fare worse than all other sub-groups in the sample.

Positive impact on intra-community relations

Overall, most stakeholders expressed their satisfaction with – and even sometimes their gratitude for – the fact that the shelter programme had been implemented in their community. This positive assessment is linked to two major effects that the programme has on the community as a whole: i) supporting the development of villages, and ii) easing potential tensions within the community – as long as the selection process is seen as fair and transparent.

Among the surveyed households less than 1 per cent do not perceive the impact on the community of the programme as positive. Among the community leaders this number is higher at 10 per cent. Nevertheless, the subjective opinion of the impact on the communities is very positive.

2. UNHCR'S POSITION AS A LEADER ON SHELTER INTERVENTION – UNMATCHED BY OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

By looking at changes over time – a month before assistance and one month after assistance – differences between UNHCR beneficiaries and non-UNHCR beneficiaries arise. Looking at access to housing for example UNHCR beneficiary households are 36 per cent less deprived compared to before receiving the assistance, as opposed to 20 per cent of non-UNHCR beneficiary households. **Overall, a higher percentage of households which were assisted by UNHCR are less deprived on nearly every indicator, aside from “Heating” and “Flooring”, over the two periods in comparison to households assisted from other organizations that were not UNHCR.**

An important feature of shelter assistance conducted in the country is the very small number of actors involved in it. No other organisation active in Afghanistan is able to implement a shelter programme that is comparable in size and scope to UNHCR's. There have been considerable changes since 2008. A large shelter coordination system in 2002-2008 has decreased due to worsening security, funding cuts, lower interest and the dominance of NNGOs as implementing partners. The Government of Afghanistan has never had a housing policy for rural areas and has suffered from 7 ministerial changes since 2002, and failing communications lines between provincial directorates and the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation. Partners have come and gone – UNDP, UN Habitat, have implemented shelter without sufficient sustainability due to reductions in funding. UNHCR remains the only leader in the humanitarian stakeholder landscape that has provided shelter to all regions of Afghanistan.

This means that UNHCR holds a distinct leadership in shelter provision and that any reduction of the scope of UNHCR's SAP will hardly be covered by other partners. The potential impact of UNHCR's changes in strategy on the lives of vulnerable households is therefore significant – an important factor of consideration for donors, as well as for UNHCR's strategic review of its SAP.

Furthermore, most other stakeholders (IOM, OCHA, CARE, ZOA, InterSOS and ACTED for instance) focus on natural-disaster IDPs or on natural-disaster affected populations. Only NRC and UNHCR have a specific focus on shelter assistance for conflict-induced IDPs and returnees. Limiting the scope of the UNHCR shelter assistance programme would therefore have particularly negative impacts for conflict-induced IDPs. Taking into account the growing numbers of conflict-induced IDPs throughout the country, and the fact that IDPs were marginalized in the reintegration progress assessed in this sample, this is a group that should be the focus of increased attention– and shelter a cornerstone of durable solutions for IDPs.

Additionally, UNHCR is the organisation with the widest geographical coverage of its shelter programme, through all regions of Afghanistan and especially in the South. Southern regions are where most IDPs are located³, something that UNHCR acknowledged as the central level authorized a specific focus on IDPs for the shelter programme in the South. This means that even more than anywhere else in the country, the UNHCR shelter programme answered to specific local needs with the shelter programme. The gap left by a reduced shelter programme will therefore be particularly acute in the South.

Clearly, UNHCR has a crucial role in terms of shelter assistance, that is unmatched by any other actors in the country. Any evolution of the programme should take this central role and responsibility into account.

3. WEAKNESSES OF THE SHELTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

Stronger beneficiary selection and greater inclusion of the most vulnerable households are the two priorities for ensuring the programme is inclusive of all Extremely Vulnerable Individuals (EVIs).

Financial burden of SAP on beneficiaries

Both quantitative and qualitative data showed a high level of satisfaction of beneficiaries with the shelter package, which provides good quality material that most beneficiaries would otherwise not have been able to afford. The distribution process works efficiently with 93 per cent of beneficiaries having received all the necessary materials for their shelter. **Yet, the construction process is a difficult and costly process** for beneficiaries as:

- 972 of the beneficiary households (48%) ran into problems during construction.
- 89 per cent of the households with problems ran out of money during construction (this corresponds to 42% of all UNHCR beneficiaries) with
- Significant disparities in household contribution according to provinces/location.
- 47 per cent of households that ran into problems (22 per cent of the beneficiaries) reported a lack of sufficient access to water to build shelters and rely on costly solutions.

³ See for example, Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement - The Liaison Office, (2010), *Beyond the Blanket: Towards more effective protection for internally displaced persons in Southern Afghanistan*.

The lack of money was mentioned as by far the main challenge faced by beneficiaries when building their shelters. Almost all beneficiaries mentioned **that they had to take up loans to cover** labour costs and wall components. Additional costs were also necessary for buying stones for foundations and, depending on the availability of material in a given area, bricks, cement or clay.

Household contributions

Almost all beneficiaries, 93 per cent, had to contribute to the shelter construction as per SAP guidelines. However, the amount of funds contributed varies significantly with urban UNHCR beneficiaries spending significantly more out of their own pockets than rural beneficiaries. The data shows a 13,000 AFN (260 USD) gap between urban and rural households, and a smaller, yet sizeable gap of 6 810 AFN (136 USD) between urban and semi-rural households. This is due to the higher costs of materials and labour in urban areas – higher costs that will have to be taken into account in developing an urban strategy for the shelter programme, discussed in the recommendations chapter. Moreover, this is also due to the fact that urban households on average earn a higher income than those of rural or semi-rural areas. To speak in relative terms, the ratio of amount paid on the shelter to household monthly income of beneficiary households, providing evidence that while UNHCR beneficiary households located in an urban context spend more in absolute terms, semi-rural households spend slightly more in relative terms.

Indebtedness

When asked about the impact of the shelter assistance programme on household debt 47 per cent of all beneficiaries indicated that it increased. This appears to be a bigger problem for beneficiaries of other programmes (54.4%) than for the UNHCR beneficiaries (34.5%). However, no abandonment of shelters due to debts contracted because of the programme were noticed in the field, a potential sign that this is not a major threat to sustainability in the short term, but might become one if sufficient income opportunities are not secured.

Community support

UNHCR mainly relies on *ashar*, or community assistance, to support the most vulnerable households. However, this was not a practice noticed in the field, with community members mentioning *ashar* could not be an option, as most villagers were faced with difficulties in sustaining their own household. Community representatives, however, indicated that community members did assist the beneficiaries in building their shelters in 60 per cent of cases. Mainly this was assistance in the form of unskilled labour; in rare cases community members also provided skilled labour and materials.

It is important to stress the very high completion rates of the shelters; only 2 households out of a sample of 2,035 beneficiaries sampled had not completed their shelter – although qualitative fieldwork urges to be cautious as field observations reported a higher number of incomplete shelters, not covered in the quantitative sample. This was mainly due to the incapacity of the beneficiaries to finish building the shelter and earn a living at the same time.

Selection Process: Vulnerable groups sidelined

The selection process clearly appeared as the main weakness in the implementation of the shelter program as it failed to integrate the most vulnerable. Many flaws in the process were identified during qualitative fieldwork and confirmed by quantitative analysis. These include:

- Exclusion error: Insufficient focus on and inclusion of vulnerable groups as put forward in the UNHCR Shelter Guidelines.
- Inclusion error: More than half of non-refugee returnees receiving UNHCR assistance are not considered to be in the “extremely vulnerable” based on the EVI categories⁴, indicating a misallocation of assistance as this group does not present the migratory profile nor signs of vulnerability that would make them eligible.

The main factor explaining these failures is the significant gap between the SAP guidelines on paper and the reality of selection as it is conducted on the ground, where the Voluntary Repatriation Form (VRF) and land ownership take precedence over any other criteria of selection.

The overreliance on the VRF as the main basis for selection has in certain cases led to the under-representation of particularly vulnerable displaced households. The Multi-dimensional Poverty Index used in this study shows that the most vulnerable – “the vulnerable within the vulnerable” – are IDPs, landless households, female-headed households and those households showing illness or disability.

- i. **IDPs were underrepresented in the selection process, or only included in small proportions: just above 11 per cent of UNHCR beneficiaries in 2009-2011 were IDPs⁵.** In our own sample, just above 9 per cent of UNHCR beneficiaries were IDPs and 84 per cent of them are deprived on a range of socio-economic indicators compared to 77 per cent of non-IDP households. We find clear targeting of IDP households for shelter assistance in Takhar and Helmand, followed by Faryab, Hirat and Kandahar. However in all other provinces this clear targeting of IDPs did not take place.
- ii. **Landless vulnerable households** were underrepresented in the selection process. This is not surprising given land ownership is in most cases a requirement for receiving shelter assistance. As such, only a small percentage of UNHCR beneficiaries, 17 per cent, did not own their land before becoming a beneficiary. This is in contrast to other programs, where 27 per cent of households were landless before assistance. Community representatives mentioned that the proposed solutions for providing land to the landless were applied in a very limited number of cases. In 27 of the 60 communities vulnerable landless people applied to the shelter assistance

⁴ In 2012 the term ‘Extremely Vulnerable Individuals’ has been replaced by People with Specific Needs (PSN). According to the PSN guidelines PSN are defined as ‘persons who, due to their specific physical, psychological, mental and social situation are not able to cope with new circumstances or be integrated or reintegrated without external support’. These include women at risk, unaccompanied children, disabled persons... As UNHCR was still using the EVI terminology between 2009 and 2011, we will keep this term throughout this report.

⁵ UNHCR Assisted IDP families: 2009, 2010, 2011”, UNHCR Data Unit, Kabul.

programme. Less than half of the communities were able to provide shelter assistance to those without land ownership.

- iii. **Female-headed households:** The fact that women were not included in the beneficiary selection in several areas (only 13 out of 60 communities included women in their Beneficiary Selection Committees) raises concern about the effective access to female-headed households, but also about the assessment of the living conditions of potentially eligible families, since, as it was noticed in the field for our own staff, only women are allowed to enter private areas. Aside from including female IP staff in selection in some of the provinces, none of the procedures mentioned in the guidelines for inclusion of females in the selection process have been mentioned either by sub-offices, IPs or community members. When women were involved, it was often in marginal roles.
- iv. **Households with ill or Disabled members:** households with a member who is physically, mentally or chronically ill are also considered extremely vulnerable. Within our sample, we find that 35 per cent of households of this type are UNHCR beneficiaries compared to the 38 per cent from other organizations. While the representation of households with ill or disabled members is on par with the entire sample, they are more likely to be deprived than the average shown again by the Multi-dimensional Poverty Index.

Insufficient support to beneficiaries and EVIs

Almost one in three beneficiary households stated not having received any complementary training. When comparing training provided by UNHCR vs. other shelter agencies, findings show that UNHCR beneficiaries are worse off in terms of the support they receive. While one in three UNHCR shelter beneficiaries did not receive any training, this number drops to one in seven in other shelter programmes. Within the training sessions conducted, most concerning was the gap on hygiene promotion. While 54 per cent of beneficiaries receive complementary training on construction, less than 20 per cent of them receive hygiene promotion training. UNHCR shelter beneficiaries are significantly less likely than other shelter beneficiaries to receive any hygiene support.

The research team observed that **the link between protection and the shelter programme is insufficient at the sub-office level**, as the mechanism in place to identify and provide additional support to EVIs is inefficient. The programme guidelines and UNHCR's EVI programme plan for additional cash assistance for EVI beneficiaries, but the research team found very rare examples of this practice actually implemented in the field.

Overall, complementary support to beneficiaries, and particularly to EVIs, is insufficient. The research shows **inefficient mechanisms to provide additional assistance to EVIs** to build their shelter. There is therefore no conclusive finding that shows that additional support and complementary training are made available to EVIs more than the average beneficiary. This shows that the shelter programme can aim to focus more on EVIs not only in the selection process, but in the support trainings provided as well.

Beneficiary complaints / Urban dissatisfactions

The main complaints raised – by all shelter beneficiaries, UNHCR and non-UNHCR alike – are:

- **The quality of technical assistance** – the highest level of dissatisfaction raised by 14 per cent of UNHCR beneficiaries, and even more – 22 per cent – in other shelter programmes.
- **The quality of latrines** – raised by 12 per cent of UNHCR beneficiaries, less than the 18 per cent of other programme beneficiaries.
- **The size of the shelter** – complaints were greater among UNHCR beneficiaries (11.5%) than other shelter beneficiaries (5.8%).

Urban beneficiaries were more critical of the quality of technical assistance and the quality of latrines provided by the shelter programme. Specifically, their dissatisfaction ranked twice as high as their rural counterparts, and three times that of their semi-rural counterparts.

As such, the data underlines an expectations gap between what the shelter programme offers and urban households' needs. There is an added pressure in urban areas to have adequate housing – in terms of quality but also in terms of appearance, to blend in more effectively within the urban landscape. The UNHCR shelter model was seen as being too rudimentary for urban households. The latrines provided proved ill-adapted and will be considered in the recommendations section. An added focus will be needed in future shelter strategies on the ways the SAP can be adapted to an urban context that is increasingly home to internal displacement and refugee return.

Beyond the urban specificities, semi-rural households also raised concerns – above that of their counterparts – on the size of the shelter, the quality of windows and the design of the shelter.

Inadequate risk mitigation and prevention mechanisms

Risk mitigation measures are not properly integrated in the implementation of the shelter program, limiting sustainability of the SAP. Preventive measures imposed by the programme's guidelines are limited and only cover earthquake-mitigation measures.

In earthquake-prone areas, risk mitigation is solely taken into account through the inclusion of wood-bracing which were often removed by beneficiaries, due to a lack of awareness of their use. This emphasizes the need for proper awareness training about the importance of such elements.

Preventive measures against floods are also seriously lacking, including proper risk assessments and the possibility not to include a village in the SAP if it is located on flood-prone areas. This was notably the case in Nangarhar, Hirat and Jawzjan. In the latter, despite high risks in the province, the only measure recommended in practice by UNHCR was to build the shelters 60 cm above the ground, which was not systematically implemented across the province and is insufficient in case of serious flooding. In Kandahar, Hirat, Jawzjan, Parwan and Nangarhar inhabitants insisted on the need to build retaining walls to support the sustainability of the shelters.

4. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Security has deteriorated consistently in Afghanistan since 2005 making it more difficult – and costly – for UNHCR to undertake extensive project monitoring, visiting the field and beneficiaries directly. Related questions of access, costs, logistics and UNDSS restrictions are now part of the operational framework limiting UNHCR in its work in Afghanistan.

In addition, the partnership opportunities of the shelter programme have not increased, to the contrary – the Government of Afghanistan does not have a housing policy for rural areas and communications between provincial directors and Kabul-level representations of ministries remain a key challenge; coordination systems on shelter alone have been discontinued due to lower funding, interest and access of international humanitarian actors; and national NGOs now dominate the implementation field. UNHCR is the sole humanitarian actor with an uncontested leadership of shelter activities.

This study takes into consideration this changing humanitarian context, and the unchanged humanitarian needs of the displaced in Afghanistan – with land and shelter being the priority needs for returning refugees and IDPs. This study also takes into account decreasing funding available to UNHCR – and will therefore frame recommendations that are deemed to be ‘implementable’ for UNHCR as of 2013. UNHCR will have to focus on activities that are “on budget” and activities that have shown their success. In an environment of limited funds, access and time, **the overarching recommendation of this report is to continue the SAP, on a nationwide scale, investing resources on shelter (with better targeting)** rather than on new initiatives that are not ‘on budget’ that have not proven their success, and that reach lower numbers of beneficiaries, thereby potentially creating inter-community tensions.

The SAP focus on vulnerability in its guidelines has been to assist those that showed the greatest needs. A qualitative rather than quantitative approach, a needs-based rather than location-based approach is at the core of the objectives of the SAP – and should remain at its core in future strategies.

Given the key findings of this research and the evidence of SAP’s contribution to reintegration, the question can no longer be ‘*Should the shelter programme continue to be implemented in Afghanistan?*’ but rather ‘*How should the programme evolve to:*

1. Better adapt to the current migratory trends of the country;
2. Better fit the needs of the most vulnerable;
3. Be more inclusive of IDPs and other vulnerable segments of the population;
4. Be sustainable in an increasingly complex humanitarian context?’

The study’s main findings point to the need for a more protection-focused, needs and evidence-based approach to the shelter programme in Afghanistan. Current plans to limit the SAP to ‘reintegration sites’ across the country are unrealistic and counter-productive, as they tend to increase tensions between communities. The main recommendation of the research is to continue implementing the Shelter Assistance Programme as a cornerstone of UNHCR’s activities, as a humanitarian agency, with a necessary update of the existing UNHCR Shelter Programme Guiding Principles (2011).

REINFORCING SAP'S GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The recommendations of this research are based on the existing SAP Guiding Principles – elements highlighted in bold/orange are the recommended additions to the Guiding Principles for 2013 and beyond. From 8 main Guiding Principles, the research team proposes a set of 11 Guiding Principles. These include two types of recommendations are presented:

First, the addition of new Guiding Principles – such as the need to integrate Impact and Needs Assessments (item 1), IDPs' direct participation (item 4), a Partnership Strategy (item 10) and a Monitoring Framework (item 11). These additions are both the most relevant to the project planning cycle and to the changing humanitarian context of Afghanistan. Impact, Needs assessments and Monitoring frameworks are prerequisite for any accountable and transparent implementation process, while IDPs' direct participation and a solid Partnership Strategy are requirements imposed by a humanitarian context defined by increasing internal displacement and lack of access.

Second, the strengthening of already existing Guiding Principles – Our recommendations seek to improve, and often breakdown in more detail, principles such as the Community-based approach (item 2), Women's direct participation (item 3), Access to land (item 5), Focus on vulnerability (item 6), Environmental concerns (item 7), and the Preservation of cultural and regional preferences (item 8). These are principles that were found, in our research and fieldwork, to be weak in their implementation – and hence need to be strengthened by better adapting to the challenges at the field level.

The proposed set of 11 SAP Guiding Principles below – detailed in the core recommendations chapter of the report – is a “ready to use” revised set of guidelines for UNHCR's 2013 programmatic review.

2013 SAP GUIDELINES – 22 PRINCIPLES

1. Impact and Needs Assessments

- a. Baseline**
- b. Calendar and flexibility of construction process**
- c. Setting standard for household contribution**

2. Community-based approach

- a. Increasing the degree of transparency of the selection process**
- b. Impact on non-beneficiaries**
- c. Complementary assistance**

3. Women's direct participation

- a. Include women and gender criteria in the selection of beneficiaries**
- b. Include gender criteria in the selection process of IPs**

4. **IDPs' direct participation**
 - a. **Increasing the proportion of IDPs**
 - b. **Include IDPs in the selection of beneficiaries**

5. Access to land
 - a. Evidence of land ownership or NOC
 - b. **Legal assistance in cases of land dispute, inheritance, *mahr***

6. Focus on vulnerability
 - a. Beneficiary Selection Committee
 - b. No family overlooked
 - c. **No contribution requirements for EVIs**
 - d. **Training / sensitization workshops**

7. Environmental concerns
 - a. Alternative materials
 - b. Latrine per family
 - c. **Hygiene and Sanitation Training**
 - d. **Adopting a regional risk mitigation approach**

8. Preservation of cultural and regional preferences
 - a. Flexibility in design
 - b. **Adopting an urban approach**

9. Contribution to local economies
 - a. Reviving local economies
 - b. Local procurement of raw materials

- 10. Partnership Strategy**
 - a. **Involvement of local authorities**
 - b. **Involvement of CDCs**
 - c. **Linkages with civil society**
 - d. **Linkages with development actors**

- 11. Monitoring Framework**
 - a. **Internal monitoring - Increase involvement of UNHCR staff**
 - b. **Community-based monitoring**
 - c. **Guidelines on corruption and fraud**
 - d. **Monitoring framework and follow-up mechanisms**

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SHELTER FOR DISPLACED POPULATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN

With more than 2.7 million Afghan refugees in the region, and an estimated 3 million globally, Afghanistan has the largest refugee population in the world. Since the fall of the Taliban, the country has witnessed massive return, with 5.7 million refugees returning and 4.6 million assisted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Yet, in 2012 Afghanistan reflects drastically different trends from the year the repatriation process started, a decade ago, in 2002.

First, the number of refugee returns has dropped to less than 70,000 in 2011. “For the first time since 2002 (...) the country has a negative migration rate: more Afghans are leaving than returning”⁶. Internal displacement is now the growing humanitarian concern, with a population estimated at over half a million individuals⁷. Given the deterioration of security in Afghanistan and the withdrawal of international forces, the rise of internal displacement will continue to be a key trend in coming years – and a key priority for the humanitarian community, and for UNHCR, the lead aid agency on conflict-induced displacement. This context of increasing insecurity – especially since 2005 – is a reality with which UNHCR has had to work in order to develop its programme, and will hence frame our analysis.

Second, returnees’ preferences for urban settings and their inability, or unwillingness, to return to their province of origin have resulted in a massive influx of returnees and IDPs to urban areas. This raises concerns about the absorption capacities of rapidly growing urban areas and access to livelihood opportunities for newcomers⁸, and about the ability to provide durable solutions to displaced populations.

One common trend – in this changing context – is the need for shelter and land; the lack of which severely impacts the overall vulnerability, poverty levels and livelihood potential of the growing numbers of displaced populations. Not having access to land or shelter, and lacking security of tenure, prevents displaced populations from breaking an enduring cycle of poverty.

Under this premise, UNHCR, with the support of the Government of Afghanistan (GoA) and the international community, established a shelter assistance programme targeting refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). For ten years, the Shelter Assistance Programme (SAP) has been the cornerstone of UNHCR’s assistance to voluntary returnees in Afghanistan, with more than 220,000 constructed shelters since 2002. After a decade of shelter assistance, key questions remain:

- Has the programme effectively contributed to reintegration outcomes for displaced populations?
- Has the programme adequately targeted the most vulnerable within the displaced populations and has it been implemented according to its guiding principles?

⁶ Sean Carberry: “Afghans Begin New Exodus, Often At Great Cost”, *NPR*, December 2, 2012.

⁷ Samuel Hall/NRC/IDMC/JIPS (2012) *The challenges of IDP Protection – Research Study on the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons in Afghanistan*.

⁸ MAJIDI Nassim, « Urban Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in Afghanistan », Middle East Institute, Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique, January 25, 2011.

1.2 OBJECTIVES: ASSESSMENT OF THE SHELTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

UNHCR's Shelter Assistance Programme has provided, since 2002, more than 220,000 units of shelter to vulnerable returnees and IDPs throughout Afghanistan. The programme's design and implementation procedures have been improved over the years. To date, only one internal assessment of the programme has been conducted by UNHCR – with a limited scope, in 2005. A 2012 evaluation of the Danish Regions of Origin support to Afghanistan also touched upon the shelter programme.⁹ Several other studies have researched the needs and vulnerability of returnees and IDPs in the country¹⁰, but the SAP's contribution to reintegration outcomes, defined as achieving sustainable return and parity between returnees and other members of the local community, has not been researched.

The present study conducted by researchers at the Maastricht Graduate School of Governance (MGSoG) and Samuel Hall Consulting aims at filling this important gap and its objectives are:

1. **Assess the shelter program contribution to reintegration outcomes** and in achieving parity between returnees and others;
2. **Evaluate the shelter program design in terms of performance** at the beneficiary level and its effectiveness according to UNHCR guidelines;
3. **Assess the relevance and sustainability of the shelter programme** in the broader context of humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan.

The evaluation covers the socio-economic aspects of shelter assistance through a multi-dimensional poverty analysis to answer key research questions, at four levels:

- a) **At the household level:** A quantitative survey, direct field observation, focus group discussions and qualitative interviews, to assess if the programme is efficiently targeting the most vulnerable.
- b) **At the community level:** A comparison of the situation of beneficiaries vs. non-beneficiaries in communities, to assess the integration of returnees and IDPs and the socio-economic impact of the programme on communities at large.
- c) **At the organizational and institutional level:** An analysis of the responses of stakeholders, the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of existing shelter programs and partnerships in Afghanistan.
- d) **At the macro-level:** An evidence-based analysis of the context, incorporating information about the evolution of the humanitarian context in Afghanistan.

⁹ Cosgrave J, Bryld E, and Jacobsen, L (2012), Evaluation of the Danish Regions of Origin Support to Afghanistan. Copenhagen: Danida.

¹⁰ See for example: CMI (2008); De BREE (2008); LUMP et al.(2004); BARAKAT et al. 2012); Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement - The Liaison Office (2010); MAJIDI (2011); Samuel Hall/NRC/IDMC/JISP (2012).

1.3 KEY CONCEPTS

The key concept at the heart of the study is **sustainable reintegration**, as the conclusion of this research will be dedicated to analysing the impact of the shelter programme on the sustainable reintegration of returning refugees and IDPs.

The notion of “sustainable return” is a long-term, contextual understanding of return incorporating social and economic dimensions. It is possible to draw a distinction between:

1. Narrow indicators at the individual or household level, such as whether returnees subsequently re-migrate.
2. Broader definitions, which understand sustainability as involving both the reintegration of individual returnees in their home societies, and the wider impact of return. “The broader definition suggested also draws attention to the idea that continued mobility after an initial return – including circulation and the development of a “transnational” lifestyle – may be more “sustainable” than a single and definitive return to the refugee’s place of origin.”¹¹

Drawing from the definition according to which a livelihood is considered “sustainable” if it can be maintained without external inputs, Black and Gent suggest a benchmark for “sustainable return” both at the individual and aggregate (community, region) level according to the increased or reduced reliance on external inputs (humanitarian and development aid) and vulnerability of economic, social and political systems of the areas of return.¹² The assessment of a “sustainable return” should therefore not only prioritize outcomes for refugees, but, at a larger scale, take into consideration the impact on the entire community.

Sustainable reintegration is understood as a process achieving parity with other community members. The comparative measurement is between returnees and other community members, between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, using one group as a control group to assess levels of reintegration.

The concept of reintegration lacks a standard international definition. However, the guidelines of the UNHCR *Handbook for Repatriation and Reintegration Activities* provide elements constituting a starting point to grasp the implications behind the concept: “Reintegration is a process that should result in the disappearance of differences in legal rights and duties between returnees and their compatriots and the equal access of returnees to services, productive assets and opportunities” leading to a “sustainable return – in other words, the ability of returning refugees to secure political, economic (legal) and social conditions needed to maintain life, livelihoods and dignity”¹³. The concept of reintegration therefore places the emphasis on the disappearance of differences between the returnee and the host population, the access to the same legal rights, equal services, productive assets and opportunities.

On the operational level, this means:

¹¹ Richard BLACK, Saskia GENT, « Sustainable Return in Post-Conflict Context », Sussex Center for Migration Research, Brighton , UK, 2006.

¹² R. BLACK, S GENT, op. cit.

¹³ *Handbook for Repatriation and Reintegration Activities*, UNHCR, Geneva, 2004, p. 4-5.

1. Taking into account the general context of return, i.e. not merely focusing on returnees but taking into account the whole community in which the reintegration process is meant to take place, with a relative comparison of returnees and non-returnees within communities.
2. A broader coordination of actors involved in reintegration activities, with a clear understanding of the division of responsibilities to avoid gaps and overlaps.
3. Involvement of national authorities to mainstream reintegration as an institutional process.

1.4 SHELTER ASSISTANCE IN A CHANGING HUMANITARIAN CONTEXT: 2009-2011 AND BEYOND

This research is designed around these objectives and concepts to assist UNHCR in strategically assessing the future of its shelter programme, by looking at lessons learned from the past. The shape of UNHCR's shelter programme should be determined taking into account the results of this study.

Several other stakeholders, such as the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) or UN-Habitat, have built on their past experience to incrementally adapt their shelter assistance to fit with the new Afghan migration context and to meet the evolving needs of their populations of concern. The central point of this study is to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of UNHCR's shelter programme and to suggest ways to adapt and improve a programme, which has proven essential for migration-affected populations in Afghanistan. The stakes of the present evaluation are high as its findings will inform the strategic choices of UNHCR and, more importantly, may considerably impact the life and opportunities of Afghan returnees and IDPs.

1.4.1 Rationale of UNHCR's Shelter Assistance Programme

As part of UNHCR's initial reintegration assistance, the shelter assistance programme follows a self-build model, which supports beneficiaries to construct their own accommodations. The programme aims to have the widest geographic coverage possible with a focus on rural areas where return rates are high, while additional efforts are made to target areas of possible future return.

Official eligibility for assistance requires that the beneficiary be a returned refugee or IDP, with access to land on which to build a house. Nevertheless the programme is guided by a focus on vulnerability allowing beneficiary selection to be wider than just returnees with access to land. In fact, staff members are advised to ensure that no vulnerable families within the community are overlooked or rejected from receiving assistance. The vulnerability criterion follows that of the "extremely vulnerable individual"¹⁴ definition including people who may be in life threatening situations, unable to help themselves, lacking family and community support, or suffering from physical or mental trauma. Typically these include female-headed households, disabled or elderly heads of households without external support, and large families with insufficient income. Overall, special attention is paid to the relative situation of the

¹⁴ Extremely Vulnerable Individuals (EVI) are presently considered Persons with Specific Needs (PSN), however we utilize the EVI definition throughout corresponding to the period we are evaluating.

individual within the family and the community in order to identify vulnerable beneficiaries. Moreover, in the case of landless families in need of shelter, who meet the vulnerability criteria, there is the possibility of land allocation in order to allow them to benefit from the programme. In sum, while the programme explicitly targets vulnerable refugee and IDP returnees, the focus is on finding a shelter solution for any community member, which meets the vulnerability criteria.

1.4.2 Guiding Principles of SAP

On the whole, the UNHCR shelter programme adheres to the eight following main guiding principles – which will be tested and analysed throughout this report:

1. *Community based approach*

The UNHCR shelter programme is a community based, self-help programme. The community takes primary responsibility for identifying eligible beneficiaries to receive shelter assistance, while the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, authorities, implementing partners and UNHCR play an advisory role.

2. *Women's direct participation*

Recognizing the challenges of facilitating female participation, UNHCR and implementing partners involve women in selection, implementation, monitoring and management to the greatest extent possible within regionally and culturally appropriate contexts.

3. *Access to land*

Only families with evidence of land ownership will be eligible for shelter assistance. However, those who had a house on government owned land for a long time may also be eligible, provided that the land is not disputed and the local authorities issue a no-objection certificate (NOC) for them to construct a new house. In addition, a family who meets the vulnerability criteria and has a lease or right to use the land from a landowner may also be eligible for assistance. However, landless beneficiaries are not included in UNHCR's shelter programme; they fall under the responsibility of the Government of Afghanistan.

4. *Focus on vulnerability*

Beneficiary selection is based on the belief that vulnerable families would not be able to establish shelters without external assistance. UNHCR recognizes that vulnerability is a relative phenomenon in one targeted location or village as compared with another location. That is why the Beneficiary Selection Committee (BSC) is tasked to play an important role in identifying vulnerable beneficiaries. Extreme vulnerability can be identified during the beneficiary selection process or during programme implementation. For vulnerable categories such as female-headed, disabled or elderly heads of households without external support and large families with insufficient income, all involved staff should ensure that no vulnerable families are overlooked or rejected for assistance. If all the above efforts fail, as a last resort, an additional cash component

(\$25 for Standards A and B, \$50 for Standard C are recommended but flexible) can be allocated from a sub-office's respective budget to assist individual cases to build their shelter. This can be in the form of individual/family grants or through cash for work projects. The extent of the assistance is at the discretion of each sub-office. Regional staff and BSC members are responsible to ensure that all beneficiaries, especially the most vulnerable, are able to complete their shelters. Families who are unable to complete (or who are ineligible for the programme because they are too poor) should not be excluded, as these are the most vulnerable members of a community.

5. *Environmental concerns*

Afghanistan's forest is one of the most destroyed sectors of the environment. When implementing shelter projects, regional offices should consider this fact and use alternative materials in lieu of wood or, in cases where wood cannot be avoided, try to ensure that wood products are either imported or are from sustainably harvested local sources. The UNHCR shelter package therefore includes iron doors and windows for all shelters throughout Afghanistan. Similarly, iron roof beams or dome roofs made of brick are promoted wherever possible. The shelter package also includes one latrine for every family, increasing environmental hygiene in beneficiary communities.

6. *Preservation of cultural and regional preferences*

Recognizing the diversity of climatic conditions and cultural preferences in the design of houses in each region, the UNHCR shelter programme provides a model design against which the in-kind (material) and cash contribution are based. For instance, under the UNHCR shelter programme, the dome type ceiling can be seen in west and north Afghanistan and the flat roof with beams in central, east, southeast and south Afghanistan. The flexibility of the shelter programme should allow for these variations.

7. *Contribution to local economies*

The UNHCR shelter programme seeks to contribute to reviving local economies through its implementation wherever possible. This includes using skilled and unskilled labour, and local procurement of raw materials.

8. *Involvement of local authorities*

In 2003, MUDH, MORR and MRRD developed a national policy for shelter programme harmonization with the help of other key players. Throughout the process of shelter implementation, district officers should be encouraged to be actively involved. This is particularly important during beneficiary selection, the most sensitive step in the shelter programme. The BSC must include members of the Community Development Council (CDC) where present or the provincial, district, or village shura (committee of elders and trustees), local authorities (district authorities, provincial representatives of MORR), in addition to representatives from the

implementing partner (IP) and representatives from UNHCR (where field presence is possible). Joint monitoring is also important, especially concerning communication channels with beneficiaries, land disputes, ownership and other related issues.

These guiding principles can therefore be grouped under I) Selection process, II) Socio-economic impact, and III) Partnership strategies – which will be discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

1.4.3 Changes in the Programme

UNHCR has adapted and revised the guidelines through periodic review. Revisions in 2008 featured an expanded floor area, improved quality of shelter materials and enhanced sanitation components. Revisions in 2009 focused on cost reduction, earthquake mitigation, climate and technology adapted design and standardization of shelter kit components. Options were offered for beneficiaries to use the shelter kit for a modified and more “module based” shelter concept that would help to open the door for a phased implementation approach. This allowed for the possibility to build the shelter for expansion, e.g. the option to start with a one room module and expand by adding additional modules to a two or more room shelter, subject to need and availability of kits. The 2010 programme suggested to complement the module tailored shelter packages with a third package, namely the repair and upgrading kit. The tailoring gave the option of a more diversified range of shelter packages, which therefore helped to better respond to the shelter needs of individual vulnerable beneficiaries. In the end, the 2010 strategy aimed to open the door for a more self-help based intervention in order to gradually achieve better coverage of the needs in all locations of return and settlements. Finally, the 2011 shelter guideline followed that of the years prior and focused on improved quality of shelter materials for better results.

This evaluation aims at providing further input to improve the strategic orientation of the shelter programme – with specific recommendations provided in Chapter 8.

1.5 REPORT OUTLINE

- Chapters 1 and 2 introduce the background, objectives and methodology of this evaluation.
- Chapter 3 provides an overview of the physical aspects, support and monitoring of the SAP.
- Chapter 4 focuses on the selection process – reviewing beneficiary socio-economic profiles, levels of vulnerability, and location.
- Chapter 5 analyses the socio-economic impact of the SAP – on beneficiaries, their communities and on their access to services.
- Chapter 6 reviews the current state, strengths and weaknesses of SAP’s partnership strategy.
- Chapter 7 builds on the survey’s findings to draw conclusions on SAP’s potential to further sustainable reintegration among beneficiaries.
- Chapter 8 then concludes and provides a set of key recommendations for UNHCR in its future strategic orientations regarding SAP and assistance to its target population of concern.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

2.1.1 Household Survey

To draw conclusions about the efficiency of the selection process, the performance of the programme and its socio-economic impact on beneficiary households, a large-scale quantitative survey was conducted in 15 provinces of Afghanistan. An individual questionnaire of 113 closed questions, which lasted approximately one hour, was conducted with **a total of 4,488 individuals**¹⁵ who belonged to three categories:

- 2,035 UNHCR Beneficiaries
- 1,990 Non-Beneficiaries
- 463 Beneficiaries of Shelter programmes other than UNHCR's in the Eastern region only (Beneficiaries of UN-Habitat, NRC, IOM, IRC and CHF shelter programmes in Nangarhar).

Despite considerable efforts to find beneficiaries from other programmes in the East this proved very challenging for various reasons: a) most of them were scattered around the province, b) the short time-line further impeded efforts to receive support from relevant stakeholders (NRC, IRC and IOM), reach the areas of implementation and identify beneficiaries and c) the turn-over of shelter teams - for IRC and IOM for instance.

Moreover, the sample can also be viewed by the migratory status of the household surveyed including:

- 2,325 Refugee Returnees
- 1,200 Non-refugee Returnees
- 415 IDP
- 548 No Mobility households

Table 1 provides the overall breakdown both by beneficiary status and migratory status.

¹⁵ An additional 60 surveys were completed, however, respondents did not know which organization they received shelter assistance from. To prevent biasing the results, this group will be excluded from any further analysis in this evaluation.

Table 1: Household Survey by Beneficiary Status and Migratory Status

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non- Beneficiaries	Total
Refugee Returnees %	1 355 66.58	243 52.48	727 36.53	2 325 51.80
Non-Refugee Returnees %	390 19.16	134 28.94	676 33.97	1 200 26.74
IDPs %	187 9.19	9 1.94	219 11.01	415 9.25
No Mobility %	103 5.06	77 16.63	368 18.49	548 12.21
Total %	2 035 100.00	463 100.00	1 990 100.00	4 488 100.00

Table 2 provides an overview of the composition of the final sample. A more detailed list of each district sampled is provided in the annex (see Annex 1). In each province, the number of respondents mirrored the distribution of shelter activities, for a statistically representative survey sampling. Within each district, the research team adopted a cluster sampling scheme. Primary Sampling Units (PSUs) were randomly selected as much as possible, based on the lists of locations provided by UNHCR and its Implementing Partners (IPs). In some cases, a number of constraints (security, remoteness and necessity to have a minimum number of shelters per location) reduced our ability to randomly selection locations. In each PSU, both beneficiary and non-beneficiary respondents were randomly selected, when possible. All of the selected shelter beneficiaries received assistance between 2009 and 2011 – as per the terms of reference provided by UNHCR for this evaluation.

Table 2: Household Survey Sampling by Province

Region	Province	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-Beneficiaries	Total Province	Total Region
Central	Kabul	197	2	185	384	571
	Parwan	101	1	85	187	
Central Highland	Bamyan	32	-	29	61	61
East	Laghman	162	-	138	300	2 368
	Nangarhar	790	455	823	2 068	
North	Balkh	50	-	51	101	595
	Faryab	75	2	97	174	
	Jawzjan	118	2	100	220	
	Sari Pul	56	-	44	100	
Northeast	Kunduz	60	-	60	120	190
	Takhar	39	-	31	70	
South	Helmand	56	-	52	108	263
	Kandahar	75	1	79	155	
Southeast	Paktya	123	-	117	240	240
West	Hirat	101	-	99	200	200
Total		2 035	463	1 990	4 448	4 488

Table 3 on provides an overview of the final sample by district type, with the majority of respondents, 62.7 per cent, residing in rural areas.

Table 3: Household Survey Sampling by Type of Location

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-Beneficiaries	Total
Urban	334	87	413	834
%	16.41	18.79	20.76	18.59
Semi-rural	424	5	411	840
%	20.84	1.08	20.66	18.72
Rural	1 277	371	1 165	2 813
%	62.75	80.13	58.57	62.69
Total	2 035	463	1 989	4 487
%	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

2.1.2 Community Survey

The household survey was complemented by a community survey conducted in each PSU. The community survey aimed at collecting a mix of quantitative and qualitative data about the profile of the community and about the modalities of the shelter programme and the consequences of its implementation on the community.

A total of 60 community surveys were compiled as part of a second dataset. The provincial distribution of these communities is shown in

Table 4. The team conducted this survey with the *malik* or the head of the *shura* or of the CDC in the village¹⁶. In case either of these leaders was absent during the visit, the team interviewed their deputies or other informed authorities in the village.

Table 4: Community Survey Sampling

Region	Province	N	Total Region
Central	Kabul	5	6
	Parwan	1	
Central Highland	Bamyan	4	4
East	Laghman	5	24
	Nangarhar	19	
North	Balkh	2	11
	Faryab	3	
	Jawzjan	5	
	Sari Pul	1	
Northeast	Kunduz	2	3
	Takhar	1	
South	Helmand	2	4
	Kandahar	2	
Southeast	Paktya	4	4
West	Hirat	4	4
Total		60	60

¹⁶ A malik is 'the individual who represents community interests to formal government institutions. He is the village executive', while shuras are the traditional deliberative councils as defined by Brick (2008), *the political economy of customary village organizations in rural Afghanistan*. Community Development Councils (CDCs) have been introduced by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development as the main deliberative – and elected – council through which the funds of the National Solidarity Programme are channeled to the local communities.

2.1.3 Multi-Dimensional Poverty Analysis

This research aims at assessing 1) the socio-economic profiles of beneficiary households and their communities and 2) the reintegration outcome of the shelter programme, i.e. assessing the level of parity between returnees, IDPs and no-mobility households in SAP communities. Methodologically, this requires an indicator able to compare different dimensions of wellbeing upon which to rate the poverty of a household. The selected tool – a Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index (MPI) – reflects deprivations in different dimensions that have an impact on the poverty of a household.

For the purpose of this study, the multi-dimensional poverty analysis allows us to conduct a more comprehensive assessment of how deprivation relates to our sample than would be the case if using a single monetary indicator like income. The multi-dimensional poverty index (MPI) is based on the idea that the well-being of a person or a household is not only dependent on income or consumption, but also on multiple other dimensions like health, education, security and standard of living. Combining all the dimensions leads to the overall identification of poor households in the multi-dimensional sense. Our approach follows that which was pioneered in UNDPs widely-recognized *Human Poverty Index (HPI)* within their *Human Development Reports (HDRs)*, and has since been developed further in recent years by such authors like Alkire and Santos (2010)¹⁷ and Alkire and Foster (2007)¹⁸.

Methodologically we follow a step-by-step process, first analysing household deprivation by individual indicators before scaling to the dimensional level, and concluding with an overall multi-dimensional poverty rate. The first step in constructing the MPI is to assess household deprivation along individual indicators within pre-defined dimensions. We therefore identify a range of relevant indicators with specific thresholds in which an Afghan household can be considered deprived or not. While selection of indicators may be criticized as arbitrary, identification was made following an exhaustive review of related literature while also taking into account the contextual environment in question as well as data at hand. In particular, conversations with our in-country research team allowed for a greater understanding of which indicators and thresholds were appropriate.

The next step involves calculating poverty at the dimensional level. Here we apply a 30 per cent cut-off, meaning a household deprived in nearly a third of the individual indicators, weighted equally, within that dimension is characterized as dimensionally poor. The formal expression is:

$$DPI_d = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n D_{id}$$
$$D_{id} = 1 \text{ if } \sum_{x=1}^a w_x I_{ix} > x$$

¹⁷ ALKIRE Sabina, SANTOS Maria Emma, "The Multidimensional Poverty Index: Contradictions and Analysis", October 2011.

¹⁸ ALKIRE Sabina, FOSTER James, "Counting and Multidimensional Poverty Measurement", OPHI Working Paper No.7, University of Oxford, 2007.

where n represents the number of households; D_{id} is the binary variable for dimensional deprivation for house i on dimension d , taking a value of 1 if the aggregated and weighted indicators, $w_x I_{ix}$, is greater than the cut-off, x . As noted, each indicator within a dimension is weighted equally and sums up to 1.

Finally, we are able to repeat the exercise at the overall multi-dimensional level again using the cut-off of 30 per cent. While the procedure is the same, one notable difference is that dimensions are weighted equally causing individual indicators to have relative weights depending on the number of indicators making up each particular dimension. All told, a household deprived in 30 per cent of the individual indicators with varying relative weights across dimensions is characterized as multi-dimensionally poor. Formally:

$$MPI = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n P_i$$

$$P_i = 1 \text{ if } \sum_{d=1}^d w_d D_{id} > x$$

where n represents the number of households; P_i is a binary variable for overall deprivation taking a value of 1 if the aggregated and weighted dimensions, $w_d D_{id}$, is greater than the threshold, x . As stated prior, each dimension is weighted equally and sums up to 1 while each indicator is given a relative weight. Table 5 provides an overview of both indicators as well as dimensional and relative weights.

The four dimensions used in our analysis include:

Dimension 1: Economic

Dimension 2: Education

Dimension 3: Health and Nutrition

Dimension 4: Housing

Table 5 presents the individual indicators of deprivation within each dimension, a description of the thresholds used, as well as the dimensional and multi-dimensional weights applied for construction of the dimensional and multi-dimensional indices. Moreover, the level of deprivation along each individual indicator is shown in the last column as well as the dimensional and multi-dimensional poverty indices for our entire sample.

Table 5: Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index

Dimension	Variable	Household is deprived if...	Dimensional Weight	MPI Weight	% Deprived
Dimension 1: Economic	Expenditure per capita	Expenditure per capita is below the \$1.25/day, \$38.02/month, \$456.25/year poverty line	20.00%	4.00%	22.00%
	Number of income sources	Household has less than 2 sources of income (only working age adults)	20.00%	4.00%	77.00%
	Child labour	Household has at least one child working	20.00%	4.00%	4.00%
	Household Indebtedness	Household indebtedness is in top 20% of sample	20.00%	4.00%	15.00%
	Dependency ratio	Ratio of unemployed household members to employed household is below the sample mean (6.52)	20.00%	4.00%	53.00%
	Dimension 1			100.00%	20.00%
Dimension 2: Education	Literacy	Household respondent is illiterate	50.00%	10.00%	78.00%
	School attendance	At least one child does not attend school	50.00%	10.00%	50.00%
	Dimension 2		100.00%	20.00%	87.00%
Dimension 3: Health & Nutrition	Access to health	Household does not have access to a health facility	14.29%	2.86%	13.00%
	Food security	Household cannot satisfy food needs "sometimes" (3-6 times a week)	14.29%	2.86%	36.00%
	Food expenditure	Household expenditure per capita on food is below 690 AFS, monthly	14.29%	2.86%	52.00%
	Food variety	Household eats meat less than the sample median (1 time a week)	14.29%	2.86%	44.00%
	Illness/ Disability	Household reports a member who is ill, disabled, or a drug addict	14.29%	2.86%	35.00%
	Immunizations	Children are not immunized	14.29%	2.86%	2.00%
	Child mortality	At least one child has passed away due to health reasons	14.29%	2.86%	15.00%
	Dimension 3		100.00%	20.00%	33.00%
Dimension 4: Housing	Access to housing	Household lives with relatives, friends, or a temporary shelter (tent, shack, etc.)	9.09%	1.82%	8.00%

	Subjective relative quality of housing	Quality of housing is worse than other households	9.09%	1.82%	35.00%
	Electricity	Household has no electricity	9.09%	1.82%	48.00%
	Drinking water	Household has no access to safe drinking water	9.09%	1.82%	7.00%
	Sanitation	Household has no toilet or uses open field, bush, or area in the compound which is not a pit	9.09%	1.82%	8.00%
	Heating	Household has no heating	9.09%	1.82%	32.00%
	Flooring	Household has a floor which is dirt, sand or dung	9.09%	1.82%	0.00%
	Asset ownership	Household own less than 2 assets (radio, TV, telephone, bicycle, motorcycle, car or refrigerator)	9.09%	1.82%	31.00%
	Land	Household owns no land	9.09%	1.82%	57.00%
	Livestock	Household owns no livestock	9.09%	1.82%	81.00%
	Subjective economic well-being	Household economic well-being is worse than other households	9.09%	1.82%	24.00%
	Dimension 4		100.00%	20.00%	43.00%
Dimension 5: Social Capital & Inclusion	Mobile phone	Household does not own a mobile phone	25.00%	5.00%	20.00%
	Membership	Household has no membership in a community organization	25.00%	5.00%	91.00%
	Help network	Household has not received assistance since living in the area	25.00%	5.00%	41.00%
	Subjective security	Household does not feel secure	25.00%	5.00%	4.00%
	Dimension 5		100.00%	20.00%	50.00%
MPI			-	100.00%	78.00%

Following the MPI construction, we are able to compare groups based on this index. First, we provide a simple mean comparison suggestive of differences among categories, before a more complete cross-sectional regression analysis. The regression analysis uses a probit model in order to estimate the predicted probability of a household being multi-dimensionally deprived. Formally:

$$P (MPI_{i=1} | X_i) = \Phi \beta_i X_i$$

where MPI_i indicates the binary dependent variable of household i taking the value of 1 if the MPI analysis characterizes the household as multi-dimensionally deprived, and 0 otherwise; X_i is the binary independent variable indicating treatment based on which category the households falls under; β_i represents the regression parameter to be estimated; and Φ indicates the cumulative normal distribution function. Moreover, a set of control variables are used including which province the household lives in, whether the location is urban, semi-rural or rural, the size of the household, whether a household is identified as an EVI, whether a household member is a current migrant, and whether the household received remittances from abroad.

While the cross-sectional regression analysis gives us evidence of how groups differ, we are not able to say whether this difference is due to the shelter assistance program or not. In order to estimate the impact of the shelter assistance program we must go one step further, and perform a difference-in-difference (DiD) analysis. Again we utilize a probit model yet look at differences over time, allowing us to conclude how UNHCR-beneficiaries compare to a non-beneficiaries or non-UNHCR beneficiaries because of the program. The formal expression of our probit DiD model is:

$$P(D_{i,t}=1|X_i) = \alpha + \phi\beta X_i + \gamma T_t + \delta X_i * T_t + \varepsilon_{i,t}$$

where $D_{i,t}$ is the deprivation for household i in period t ; X_i is the binary independent variable indicating treatment taking a value of 1 if the household is a UNHCR Beneficiary, and 0 otherwise; T_t is the binary variable indicating time taking a value of 1 if the time period is when the respondent was surveyed, and 0 otherwise; and $X_i * T_t$ is the interaction term representing actual treatment. Moreover $\alpha, \beta, \gamma, P_t$ and δ are the regression parameters to be estimated while Φ is the cumulative standard normal distribution function and $\varepsilon_{i,t}$ represents the error term.

2.2 QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

In addition to the quantitative data, qualitative data was also collected for the purpose of the programme evaluation. This was necessary to get a richer picture of the programme, its conception and implementation.

2.2.1 Secondary Data

A thorough desk review of existing literature on the issues of return migration, internal displacement, shelter as well as broader related issues and conceptual humanitarian debates was conducted. The secondary research allowed for:

- A detailed overview of the different components and **evolutions** in the shelter assistance programme through a large review of project documentation since 2009, including the shelter guidelines and package details, aggregated data on shelter and lists of beneficiaries, in addition to general UNHCR policy documents.

- A thorough comprehension of the trends and dynamics behind the **concepts** of return migration and internal displacement, critical in understanding the issues at stake in the shelter programme. This was done both at the international level and in the Afghan context. Special attention was given to concepts of return and repatriation, reintegration, vulnerability and shelter.
- A review of existing literature on shelter and return migration, including past evaluations of shelter programmes, so as to identify past and present issues and **lessons learned**.
- Placement of the programme in **broader policy and humanitarian debates**, such as access and remote monitoring, partnership strategies and cash vs. non-cash assistance. This allowed us to compare and assess their relevance in the Afghan context and identify what dilemmas and strategic choices are appropriate and relevant for the programme.

2.2.2 Key Stakeholder Interviews

The research team conducted **a total of 79 key informant interviews (KIIs)** at the national and at the sub-national level. These interviews aimed at:

- Grasping the practical modalities of implementation of the programme.
- Evaluating the coordination mechanisms in place for shelter assistance.
- Assessing the quality of the partnership between UNHCR and national authorities.
- Getting the perspective of other stakeholders on the programme.
- Comparing the various shelter programmes in place in the country.

At the provincial level, these KIIs were conducted in provinces directly visited by international research staff - namely Kabul, Parwan, Kandahar, Nangarhar, Faryab, Jawzjan, Balkh and Hirat. A full list of the KIIs completed in Kabul and in the provinces is provided in Annex 2.

The following categories of key stakeholders were covered by these interviews:

- UNHCR staff
 - At the central and field level
 - Previous UNHCR Afghanistan staff involved in the 2009 – 2011 SAP including:
 - Management
 - Protection officers
 - Shelter programme officer
- Other UN agencies
- Donors
- Governmental authorities
- International NGOs
- National NGOs / Implementing Partners (IPs) working on shelter assistance in Afghanistan

Table 6: Breakdown of KILs per Province and Type of Respondent

Location	UNHCR	Other UN agencies	Donors	GoA	NNGOs/ IPs	INGOs	Total
Central	7	4	4	3	1	3	22
East	3	3	0	5	3	3	17
South	3	0	0	2	1	1	7
North	3	4	0	5	3	7	22
West	4	1	0	0	3	3	11
Total	20	12	4	15	11	17	79

2.2.3 Focus Group Discussions

In order to grasp more personal and substantiated opinions about the shelter programme, **58 focus group discussions (FGD)** were conducted. These focus groups were based on semi-directive focus group guides designed to foster the discussions and debates on a series of themes central to the programme and its evaluation.

The following are some of the discussed themes:

- The effective modalities of the selection process
- The shelter package and material
- Participation of women in the programme
- Identification of potential issues relative to the implementation
- Impact on the household
- Impact on the community
- Perception of UNHCR and its partners

FGDs were conducted with a) UNHCR beneficiaries, b) non-beneficiary returnees, c) non-beneficiary non-migrants and d) beneficiaries from other shelter programmes in the East. In order to guarantee a representation of women’s opinions about the programme, the field team was asked to conduct separate FGDs with women and with men. Yet, because of the difficulties in accessing women in certain provinces (for example in Kandahar, Helmand, Faryab and Kunduz) and due to the differences in the level of awareness of respondents, a large majority of FGDs were conducted with men. The following Table 7 shows the composition of the 58 focus group discussion.

Table 7: Composition of Focus Groups

Gender	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-Beneficiary Migrants	Non-Beneficiary Non-Migrants	Total
Female	3	0	2	0	5
Male	19	5	22	7	53
Total	21	5	24	7	58

2.2.4 Field Observations

A qualitative field report was provided for each PSU visited by the research team – a collection of provincial overviews is provided in Annex 3. These qualitative reports provided information about the specific context and the particularities of each surveyed location.

The field reports were implemented as a way to go deeper into the context, the modalities of implementation and into the analysis of the factors entering into play to explain the success or the failure of the programme in each sampled area. For this report they are used to contextualise the analysis of quantitative findings and provide UNHCR with a localized analysis.

2.3 LIMITATIONS AND CONSTRAINTS

Given the limitations imposed by security and other constraints on the sampling, a purely random sampling methodology could not be used.

The main constraints encountered in the field included:

- **Security:** Given the size of the teams (10 to 20 interviewers each) and the time necessary to conduct the survey in each location, the teams were very visible in the field and were therefore asked to take precautions. This impacted the sampling especially in Faryab, Nangarhar, Jawzjan, Kandahar, Helmand and Laghman provinces. In these provinces in particular, the team had to either substitute the initial district selected to a safer one or to cover two or three districts instead of one, so as to limit the risks.
- **Geographical repartition of shelters:** Villages with too small number of shelters had to be excluded from the sampling to guarantee that the teams would meet their targets. Locations with 20 and more shelters were privileged, restricting the randomness of the sampling.
- **Selection of respondents:** As much as possible, the teams relied on lists of beneficiaries and a snowball method to find respondents but given the cultural context of the country, field teams sometimes had to go through the community leader and/or the implementing partner to select respondents. In rural areas, it is almost impossible and sometimes even dangerous, to enter a

village without the full endorsement of the community leaders. The mediation of community leaders might have introduced a bias selection of respondents in some cases. In particular, this might have reduced a bit the presence of respondents who were not the initial beneficiaries in the selection, as community leaders sometimes feared that it would decrease their chances of getting shelter assistance in the future. Yet, this bias is limited as in rural areas, the survey team was often able to survey most or all of the beneficiaries listed by UNHCR, while in urban and semi-urban settings, the team was not forced to rely as much on community leaders for their sampling. In Southern and Eastern regions (Kandahar, Helmand and Nangarhar), the IPs sometimes joined the field team while they conducted the survey, which might have introduced some biases either in the selection of respondents or in the interviews with the community leaders, even though those were not conducted in their presence.

- **Awareness of respondents:** In a lot of cases, men and heads of households were working while our teams conducted the survey. Interviewers conducted the survey with the most informed adult available in each household. Female interviewers conducted their interviews with female members of the household. This should not have a major impact on the results of the survey. Yet, it could have an impact on the quantitative data, as the level of awareness of respondents could be lower than the one of the head of household. Women respondents in particular sometimes found it challenging to answer questions about income, expenses or the construction of their shelter. This is not an issue specific to this particular study but is a general constraint when conducting survey in Afghanistan.
- **Beneficiaries from other shelter programmes:** It proved more difficult than expected to survey beneficiaries from other programmes in the Eastern regions, mostly because, contrary to UNHCR beneficiaries, these respondents were often scattered around urban areas or numerous villages.

3. SAP: DESIGN, SUPPORT AND MONITORING & EVALUATION

UNHCR's SAP is a community-based, self-help programme whereby households build homes for themselves. UNHCR supports them by providing a shelter package that includes essential construction materials (tools, roofing beams, doors and windows), and by supervising in order to achieve minimum standards of quality in accordance with the Sphere Standards. The first step to evaluate this assistance is by looking at the design and physical aspects of the shelters, support towards and monitoring of the construction. Key findings from this section include:

1. Design and physical aspects of the shelter

- **High level of completion of shelters.** Yet the state of shelters varied significantly and depended on household economic profile and the level of investment they could dedicate to their shelter.
- **High level of satisfaction of beneficiaries with the shelter package,** with good quality material that most beneficiaries would not have been able to afford without the assistance of UNHCR. The **distribution process works efficiently** for 93 per cent of beneficiaries.
- **Main complaints raised:**
 - **Limited size of the shelter** given the large size of beneficiary households
 - **Low quality of latrines, and insufficient technical assistance**
 - The **quality of doors and windows** was too low to be sustainable
- **A difficult and costly construction process for beneficiaries, as:**
 - 972 of the beneficiary households (48%) ran into problems during construction.
 - 89 per cent of the households with problems ran out of money during construction (this corresponds to 42% of all UNHCR beneficiaries) with
 - Significant disparities in household contribution according to provinces/location.
 - 47 per cent of households that ran into problems (22 per cent of the beneficiaries) reported a lack of sufficient access to water to build shelters and rely on costly solutions.
- **UNHCR procedures for cash distribution are robust enough to avoid misallocation.** Yet the most vulnerable households use the cash for more immediate purposes than the construction of shelters, e.g. prioritizing food over the purchase of glass panes.
- **Risk-mitigation measures are not properly integrated in the implementation** of the shelter program, limiting sustainability of the SAP.

2. Support and additional assistance

- **Inefficient mechanisms to provide additional assistance to EVIs** to build their shelter
- **Limited complementary training:** 54 per cent of beneficiaries receive complementary training on construction, while less than 20 per cent of them receive hygiene promotion training.

3. Monitoring and evaluation

- Overall, IPs ensured a **satisfactory technical monitoring** through regular field visits, **yet monitoring procedures do not ensure that the most vulnerable are targeted.**

3.1 DESIGN AND PHYSICAL ASPECTS OF THE SHELTER

3.1.1 Shelter Design

The main type of shelter implemented across provinces was the standard two-room shelter, including a corridor and latrine. Annual variations in the design and material provided were introduced nationwide according to field observations and recommendations from IPs:

- The size of the rooms was progressively enlarged from 2009 to 2011.
- Wooden beams, reportedly subject to termite attacks, were replaced by iron beams in 2010 and fire bricks were introduced in the roofing components.
- The three small windows in the 2009 shelters were replaced by two larger windows as of 2010, following complaints about lack of light and ventilation.

Interiors of shelters: Wooden beams (Faryab Province; Andkhoy District); Iron beams (Jawzjan Province, Sheberghan district).



In addition, evolutions in the programme have included the addition of one-room interventions, which started out as a tool used by UNHCR in emergencies to support local communities to absorb displaced persons by building families an extra room. This allowed the organization to increase its responsiveness in the face of emergencies and allow for more flexibility.

Among the interviewed UNHCR beneficiaries the majority, 81.7 per cent, built two-room shelters, 17.9 per cent built a one-room shelter while less than 1 per cent built a completely different type of shelter.

The sizes of shelters built by beneficiaries of other programmes are similarly distributed, 82 per cent are two rooms and 18 per cent are one room.

In most cases, beneficiaries did not have a say in the choice of the model of shelters that they would build, as this was instead decided by UNHCR. Only 13 per cent of households that received shelter assistance from UNHCR choose themselves.

As per the guidelines, there were differences in the standards across regions, with dome shaped roofs in the West and flat roofs in the Central, Southern and Eastern regions. In the West and East, as well as in the South, the shelter programme also comprised a more systematic implementation of “one-room shelters for IDPs” (including a corridor and latrines), and “repair-kits” composed of one additional room for to an existing house, reportedly as a mean to adapt to the wide variety of profiles of beneficiaries.

Breaking down the type of shelter by location, Table 8 highlights the higher uptake of one-room shelters in urban areas, compared to semi-rural or rural areas that have the lowest proportion of one-room shelters. This further underlines the need for flexibility of models in urban areas. One-room shelters can be used as a tool to absorb displaced persons in their new environments by building families an extra room. This allows upgrading or expanding of shelters that already house displaced family members, who opt for living with host families. It also fits more realistically with the more limited space available in urban areas compared to returnee townships or rural areas. Flexibility in shelter models is therefore an asset for beneficiaries depending on their location.

Table 8: Type of Shelter by Location (UNHCR Beneficiaries)

	Urban	Semi-rural	Rural	Total
One room	121	98	144	363
%	36.34	23.11	11.29	17.86
Two room	212	323	1 126	1 661
%	63.66	76.18	88.31	81.74
Other	0	3	5	8
%	0.00	0.71	0.39	0.39
Total	333	424	1 275	2 032
%	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Table 9 shows an unequal spread of one-room shelters due to decisions made at the regional office level. In Bamyan (68.8%) and Helmand (87.5%), the majority of UNHCR beneficiaries was given one-room shelters. In Nangarhar, one in four households was given the one-room option, above the sample average. On the other hand, provinces such as Sari Pul, Kandahar, Takhar, Jawzjan, Kabul and Parwan had less than 10 per cent of one-room shelters. One-room shelters were mostly used to provide shelters for IDPs in an effort to quickly address the needs of IDPs without antagonizing governmental authorities. This was particularly the case in Nangarhar where UNHCR and NRC used one-room shelters to provide assistance to IDPs despite the strong reluctance of provincial authorities and in Helmand, where the UNHCR sub-office was able to adapt to the high movements of intra-provincial displacements.

UNHCR field staff and IPs do not always support the option of one-room shelters as the implementation is more complex when different models of shelters co-exist, and commonly goes against the will of beneficiaries who ask for bigger shelters. Still, specific attention should be paid to the added value of one-room shelters in urban contexts, in emergency contexts and their relevance to specific regions and provinces. Although there is a more systematic use of one-room shelters in certain provinces of the Central, East and South regions, these remain an exception and lessons learned should be shared to analyse the adaptability to other provinces as well.

Table 9: Type of Shelter by Province (UNHCR Beneficiaries)

	One room	Two room	Other	Total
Kabul	13	178	6	197
%	6.60	90.36	3.05	100.00
Parwan	9	92	0	101
%	8.91	91.09	0.00	100.00
Bamyan	22	10	0	32
%	68.75	31.25	0.00	100.00
Laghman	19	142	0	161
%	11.80	88.20	0.00	100.00
Nangarhar	202	586	1	789
%	25.60	74.27	0.13	100.00
Balkh	5	45	0	50
%	10.00	90.00	0.00	100.00
Faryab	10	65	0	75
%	13.33	86.67	0.00	100.00
Jawzjan	1	117	0	118
%	0.85	99.15	0.00	100.00
Sari Pul	1	55	0	56
%	1.79	98.21	0.00	100.00
Kunduz	7	53	0	60
%	11.67	88.33	0.00	100.00
Takhar	0	38	0	38
%	0.00	100.00	0.00	100.00
Helmand	49	7	0	56
%	87.50	12.50	0.00	100.00
Kandahar	2	72	1	75
%	2.67	96.00	1.33	100.00
Paktia	7	116	0	123
%	5.69	94.31	0.00	100.00
Hirat	16	85	0	101
%	15.84	84.16	0.00	100.00
Total	363	1 661	8	2 032
%	17.86	81.74	0.39	100.00

3.1.2 State of Shelters

Shelters were found in a good state, being completed according to the guidelines and presenting no major external signs of degradation. Many shelters had been improved by adding cooking spaces and terraces as well as decorated and furnished rooms. **Observations showed that the general state of the shelters and latrines could vary greatly and was related to several factors:**

i. **The economic situation of beneficiaries**

In cases where very vulnerable households were unable to provide higher investments to maintain the general state of their habitat or to upgrade their shelters, there were observations of degradation of the building. Vulnerable households were also more likely to have used the cash given by UNHCR for other – more urgent - purposes than the construction of their shelters, including food and water. The shelters of these households would generally be in a poorer state and lack glass windows, for example. In Kandahar province, and to a smaller extent in Nangarhar and Parwan, some shelters were poorly constructed, with walls of low quality and glass panes replaced by plastic sheets. The availability of appropriate material for building and upgrading shelters and the availability of sources of income was also a factor determining the capacity of the households to engage in further investments.

Disparities were observed related to the wellbeing of beneficiary households. The absence of window panes and poor construction of the walls emphasize the fact that the initial economic situation of beneficiaries has a substantial impact on their ability to build, maintain and rearrange their shelter.

Yet, it is important to stress that only in few cases, shelters were not completed (particularly in Qala-e Nasro), due to the incapacity of the beneficiary to finish building the shelter and earn a living at the same time. As detailed further below in Table 31, only 2 out of the 2,034 households surveyed had not completed their shelter. Yet, it must be noted that this does not give a representative picture of the level of completion of the programme as incomplete shelters would more likely be empty and are therefore underrepresented in the survey. Qualitative observations reported a higher number of incomplete shelters. Interestingly, the two households that reportedly quit the programmes were refugee returnees who received assistance in 2010 and 2011 in the provinces of Nangarhar (Bahesod, Akhonzada) and Laghman (Markaz Mehtarlam). They were located in rural and semi-rural locations. The fact that neither of these households were reported living in a remote location should therefore allow follow-up on their cases, and similar cases, to find out the reasons for their dissatisfaction or inability to cope with the programme.

One of the 2010 shelters visited was not completed and missed all material provided in the shelter package, which were lying in a neighbouring ground. The explanation given by the wife of the beneficiary and confirmed by neighbours was the beneficiary had gone to Kabul to find daily work, that he couldn't come back for construction and couldn't afford additional investment to complete the shelter. 10 people were living in the two unfinished rooms. – Qala e Nasro, Paghman Province.

'One of the 2011 shelter visited had no windows, no doors and the walls were unfinished. The beneficiary reported that he could not afford completing the construction of his shelter. The beneficiary family lived with relatives in the village. – Shobash Khorde Turkmenia, Jawzjan Province

Sometimes, exact replicas of UNHCR shelters had started to be built by non-beneficiaries, expecting to receive further assistance through the shelter package, as for example in Aab Dara in Paghman. This notably underlines the fact that despite complaints about the size of the rooms and quality of doors and windows, the current design of shelters was considered as appropriate in meeting immediate needs of beneficiaries and the population at large.

Appropriation of the shelter and its surrounding environment denoted a clear intention to stay, even in cases where threats were placed on the sustainability of the settlement due to insufficient infrastructure and lack of income opportunities. This was notably the case in homogeneous tribal environments, where related families were grouped on the same compound, inside surrounding walls, according to a traditional disposition of habitat around a common courtyard (in Parwan, Kabul and Hirat for instance), allowing sharing of common living facilities, such as a *tanur* for cooking.

Surrounding walls are notably a major requirement: in cases where they could not be constructed, especially in heterogeneous environments where neighbours were not related, absence of privacy and security could lead to abandonment of shelters. This was for example the case in Pitawa (Qarabagh district – Kabul Province) where the field team observed two shelters that lacked surrounding walls. Beneficiary households preferred living with relatives and had left the shelters unoccupied.

ii. The main usage of the shelter: living space or storage?

In multiple cases in Jawzjan and Parwan, and occasionally in Nangarhar, shelters were not used as living space *per se*, but had rather been turned into storage rooms, secondary or guesthouses and occasionally shops. As beneficiary households had concentrated their investments on their main living space, the general state of shelters used as storage space was relatively poor. Often they were missing doors and windows, which had been used for other purposes on the premises where the family lived. In cases where they were used as secondary or guesthouses, conversely, further investment had been made and they were considered a source of pride. **“Misuse” of shelters is disquieting as it stresses flaws in the selection process:** in such cases, shelters were not an immediate and essential need for beneficiary households, putting into question the cost effectiveness of the programme.

Similar conclusions were drawn from observations of the use of latrines. The state and use of latrines was highly related to the implementation of WASH programmes¹⁹. In cases where they were inexistent (Kabul district aside from the reintegration site of Kuchi Abad, Khanjar Khil in Parwan), latrines were not used, often constructed outside walled compounds or used for other purposes than hygiene, such as storage. Conversely, in Nangarhar where WASH components had been implemented conjointly with the shelter programme, latrines were not only used, but had been replicated and adopted by other members of the community, emphasizing the importance of complementary programmes and awareness about hygiene as an important component of sustainable reintegration. The importance of complementary assistance and training will be discussed further below in section 3.2 on Support.

¹⁹ The WASH programmes aim at saving lives and reducing illness through global access to safe water, adequate sanitation and improved hygiene. The WASH programme’s long-term prevention and control measures reduce the severe impact of WASH-related diseases by improving health, reducing poverty and increasing economic development.

3.1.3 Appropriateness of Shelter Design

Overall, beneficiaries were relatively satisfied with the shelter package they received, as they would not have been able to purchase most of the materials provided themselves. This was notably the case with I-beams, T-beams and ceiling bricks (since 2010), which are unavailable on the local market and/or are unaffordable for beneficiaries. **This suggests that the shelter package does answer the needs of beneficiaries quite accurately**, although complaints raised by respondents and community leaders are important indicators to take into account for improvements to the shelter programme.

i. Main complaints of the shelter package

As illustrated in

Table 10, the top 3 complaints raised – by all shelter beneficiaries, UNHCR and non-UNHCR alike – are:

- **The quality of technical assistance**
- **The quality of latrines**
- **The size of the shelter**

The importance of support and additional assistance will be discussed in the section on support. The analysis here focuses on the size of shelters – a recurrent complaint during the survey.

Table 10: Dissatisfaction with Elements of the Shelter Programme

	UNHCR Beneficiaries		Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	
	N	%	N	%
Quality of technical assistance	285	14.01	104	22.46
Quality of latrine	238	11.70	84	18.15
Size of the shelter	233	11.45	27	5.83
Thermal isolation	177	8.70	53	11.45
Quality of door	146	7.18	36	7.78
Quality of lintels	134	6.59	50	10.80
Quality of windows	128	6.29	27	5.83
Design of the shelter	94	4.62	15	3.24
Quality of roof	79	3.88	45	9.72

A recurrent complaint of beneficiaries about the design of shelters was the size of the rooms, repeatedly mentioned across all provinces, with the exception of Jawzjan, maybe due to the traditionally smaller size of households in the North (see

Table 11). The difference in the average household size across province is significant with for example Jawzjan counting on average 6.65 members per households as against Helmand where the average size of households is above 10 members. These types of provincial differences could be better integrated in future programming.

The level of dissatisfaction about the size of shelters was higher among UNHCR beneficiaries (11.5%) than among the beneficiaries of other programmes (5.8%). The opposite is true for the quality of latrines, where 18.2 per cent of other programme beneficiaries were not satisfied and 11.7 per cent of UNHCR beneficiaries. **For both groups the highest level of dissatisfaction concerns the quality of technical assistance.** 14.0 per cent of UNHCR beneficiaries were not satisfied in this aspect and even more than 22 per cent of the beneficiaries of other programmes (see section 3.2.1 for more on this issue).

Table 11: Average Household Size by Province

Region	Province	N	Mean	Min	Max
Central	Kabul	384	8.45	1	37
	Parwan	187	7.56	2	19
Central Highland	Bamyan	61	7.52	1	23
East	Laghman	300	8.89	1	25
	Nangarhar	2 067	10.10	1	55
North	Balkh	101	6.55	2	17
	Faryab	174	7.57	2	30
	Jawzjan	220	6.65	1	16
	Sari Pul	100	6.73	2	22
Northeast	Kunduz	120	6.78	2	16
	Takhar	70	6.41	2	15
South	Helmand	108	10.41	2	31
	Kandahar	155	9.72	2	41
Southeast	Paktya	240	10.75	2	63
West	Hirat	200	6.43	1	19
Total		4 487	9.04	1	63

Urban dissatisfactions

Urban beneficiaries were more critical of the quality of technical assistance and the quality of latrines provided by the shelter programme (Table 12). Their dissatisfaction ranked twice as high as their rural counterparts, and three times that of their semi-rural counterparts.

As such, the data underlines a clear expectations gap between what the shelter programme offers and urban household needs. There is an added pressure in urban areas to have adequate housing – in terms of quality but also in terms of appearance, to blend in more effectively within the urban landscape. The UNHCR shelter model was seen as being too rudimentary for urban households. The latrines provided proved ill-adapted and will be considered in the recommendations section. An added focus will be needed in future shelter strategies on the ways the SAP can be adapted to an urban context that is increasingly home to internal displacement and refugee return.

Table 12: Dissatisfaction with Elements of the Shelter Programme by Location (UNHCR Beneficiaries)

	Urban (N=334)	Semi-rural (N=424)	Rural (N=1277)	Total (N=2035)
Quality of technical assistance %	84 25.15	40 9.43	161 12.61	285 14.00
Quality of latrine %	69 20.66	27 6.37	142 11.12	238 11.70
Size of the shelter %	38 11.38	73 17.22	122 9.55	233 11.45
Thermal isolation %	54 16.17	25 5.90	98 7.67	177 8.70
Quality of door %	34 10.18	35 8.25	77 6.03	146 7.17
Quality of lintels %	46 13.77	21 4.95	67 5.25	134 6.58
Quality of windows %	25 7.49	36 8.49	67 5.25	128 6.29
Design of the shelter %	21 6.29	30 7.08	43 3.37	94 4.62
Quality of roof %	14 4.19	12 2.83	53 4.15	79 3.88

Beyond the urban specificities, semi-rural households also raised concerns – above that of their counterparts – on the size of the shelter, the quality of windows and the design of the shelter.

The data does not present any specific particularities for remote locations that did not indicate more or less satisfaction than non-remote areas on issues of the quality of the equipment or the provision of technical assistance.

Regional dissatisfactions

The main complaints raised differ across regions (Table 13). Respondents in the Central Highland and the Eastern regions mainly raised the quality of technical assistance as a key issue. However, the quality of latrines posed a problem mainly in the Eastern and Southern regions, which could indicate a certain cultural inadequacy of the latrine models in Pashtun communities. Lastly, the size of shelter was an obstacle more evenly shared by regions, with the Western region ranking highest, with almost one in five households interviewed dissatisfied with the size of the shelter. Qualitative observations also confirmed that it was a concern in the South and the East. This issue was the least problematic in the Central and Central Highland regions.

Table 13: Dissatisfaction with Elements of the Shelter Programme by Region (UNHCR Beneficiaries)

	Central (N=298)	Central Highland (N=32)	East (N=952)	North (N=299)	North-east (N=99)	South (N=131)	South-east (N=123)	West (N=101)	Total (N=2035)
Quality of technical assistance %	16 5.37	10 31.25	233 24.47	1 0.33	0 0.00	13 9.92	11 8.94	1 0.99	285 14.00
Quality of latrine %	20 6.71	3 9.38	181 19.01	2 0.67	2 2.02	23 17.56	4 3.25	3 2.97	238 11.70
Size of the shelter %	30 10.07	3 9.38	79 8.30	45 15.05	16 16.16	19 14.50	21 17.07	20 19.80	233 11.45
Thermal isolation %	9 3.02	3 9.38	145 15.23	2 0.67	2 2.02	8 6.11	7 5.69	1 0.99	177 8.70
Quality of door %	23 7.72	11 34.88	79 8.30	5 1.67	3 3.03	9 6.87	3 2.44	13 12.87	146 7.17
Quality of lintels %	7 2.35	8 25.00	93 9.77	1 0.33	0 0.00	23 17.56	1 0.81	1 0.99	124 6.58
Quality of windows %	34 11.41	11 34.38	52 5.46	12 4.01	0 0.00	8 6.11	4 3.25	7 6.93	128 6.29
Design of the shelter %	18 6.04	0 0.00	41 4.31	4 1.34	5 5.05	9 6.87	11 8.94	6 5.94	94 4.62
Quality of roof %	7 2.35	1 3.13	58 6.09	1 0.33	0 0.00	10 7.63	1 0.81	1 0.99	79 3.88

The dissatisfaction about the model of shelter that was built in the respective community is also confirmed by the community leaders, of which more than 58.6 per cent indicated that they were not satisfied with the type of shelter built in the community as shown in

Table 14. The most common reason for this was the size of the shelter, perceived as being too small.

Table 14: Satisfaction with the Model (Community Representatives)

	North	Northeast	South	East	West	Central	Total
Yes	5	0	3	12	0	4	24
%	8.62	0.00	5.17	20.69	0.00	6.90	41.38
No	6	3	4	11	4	6	34
%	10.34	5.17	6.90	18.97	6.90	10.34	58.62
Total	11	3	7	23	4	10	58
%	18.97	5.17	12.07	39.66	6.90	17.24	100.00

Complaints about the size of the rooms were particularly sensitive in Pashtun communities, with traditionally large households, where beneficiaries often mentioned living in one shelter with over eight and sometimes over ten people. Changes were introduced accordingly, through suppression of the separation walls with the corridor to create a single room for instance. This was often the case in Nangarhar and Kandahar. In such cases, the corridor in itself was deemed unnecessary, and at least one wall was removed to create additional space to allow the family to gather. These types of regional differences raise the question of the appropriateness of region-based approaches taking into account cultural norms and practices tailored to regional needs and cultural practices. In cases where other shelter programmes had been implemented and had provided larger rooms, such as UN-Habitat or CHF in Nangarhar, UNHCR beneficiaries compared their shelters with those of other beneficiaries and unanimously deemed the latter more appropriate considering cultural practices of gathering. There appears to be little awareness about the rationale behind the existence of two separate rooms in the shelter, both at the beneficiary and IP level. Education about the diffusion risks of propagation of infectious diseases among members of a single household is therefore necessary.

It is important to note that there are regional differences in the satisfaction levels of the model. The highest return area – the Eastern region – provides a balanced view of community satisfaction over the type of shelters built. This is also the case in the South. This is partly explained by the fact that the design of the shelters are better adapted to the warm climate conditions in the East and the South – and less adapted to the Northern and Western areas. Although UNHCR has tried to adapt its shelter design to the needs of the highest return areas, it should not be to the detriment of communities in the Northern, Northeast and Western regions. A proper assessment of the climate, natural disaster risks and issues of risk mitigation and prevention raised earlier, will need to be reinforced in future shelter programmes. This can be a good opportunity for UNHCR to link up its technical assessment with that of engineers of the Ministry of Refugee and Repatriation and the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, hence strengthening its partnership strategy.

Quality of doors and windows

Another recurrent complaint across all provinces, shared by beneficiaries, IPs and field engineers alike, was the poor quality of the iron doors and window frames. Both are inadaptable to the weather conditions (heat or cold) and subject to rust and deformation. Whenever their economic situation allowed it, beneficiaries removed iron frames to replace them with wooden ones. In several locations,

iron doors had not been fixed and were used for other purposes, such as covering shacks or cooking areas, or they were used as outside doors for compounds.

ii. **Consequences of dissatisfaction: changes in the design post-handover**

While most shelters were built according to UNHCR guidelines, some beneficiaries implemented changes after the official handover, according to the capacity of the beneficiary family. As mentioned above, the main change observed in the field was the removal of the corridor to increase the size of the two remaining rooms. This was especially the case in the South (Kandahar & Helmand) and the East (Nangarhar). In Hirat, the research team observed number of shelters significantly modified, with often two or three shelters being joined one to another through the addition of a large common space and a kitchen at the centre. In urban areas, beneficiary households often had to adapt the design of their shelters to the size and shape of the land plot they occupy.

Changes resulted from different types of motivations:

- Whenever the design was considered inappropriate: enlargement of rooms, windows enlarged for ventilation in Nangarhar and Kandahar, narrowed for protection from the cold in Hirat.
- Whenever the material provided in the package was deemed inappropriate: replacement of iron doors and windows.
- Improvements that are indications of appropriation of the shelter and are positive sign in terms of intention to settle.

A certain uniformity of changes was noted in specific areas, with entire communities adapting the design according to specific regional or traditional needs (open kitchens in Hirat, enlargement of rooms in Kandahar and Nangarhar). As long as they do not put extra economic pressure on beneficiaries or endanger the general stability of the building, changes are not in themselves negative signs, but they are rather an indication of an appropriation of the shelter according to the needs of beneficiaries, indicating an intention to stay and settle. These adaptations call for technical monitoring to ensure that the structure of shelters is preserved.

Changes in the design and poor use of risk-mitigation measures do call for stronger technical training and awareness-raising initiatives to be conducted prior to the implementation of the programme in order to contribute to its sustainability.

3.1.4 Construction Process

Receiving the material

Qualitative and quantitative observations showed that the provision of material to beneficiaries for the construction of their shelter worked efficiently and that beneficiaries were satisfied with the material they received.

UNHCR as well as other organizations provided all the necessary materials for building the shelters to their respective beneficiaries in the large majority of sampled households (93.4% and 91.8%). Among the UNHCR beneficiaries, differences are observed according to their location as shown in Table 15. Respondents in urban areas reported that they did not receive all necessary materials in 13.2 per cent of the cases, while this was the case significantly less in semi-rural (3.5%) and rural (5.9%) areas.

Table 15: Received Necessary Materials (UNHCR Beneficiaries)

	Urban (N=334)	Semi-rural (N=424)	Rural (N=1276)	Total (N=2034)
Yes	290	409	1 201	1 900
%	86.63	96.46	94.12	93.41
No	44	15	75	134
%	13.17	3.54	5.88	6.59
Total	334	424	1 276	2 034
%	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

More than 94 per cent of UNHCR beneficiaries and 92 per cent of other programme beneficiaries reported that the quality of the materials they received was good. Among the UNHCR beneficiaries the satisfaction with materials was a little lower in urban (88.6%) than in semi-rural (93.4%) and rural (96.1%) areas. The majority of beneficiaries also reported receiving the materials on time (UNHCR: 94.9%; other programmes: 97.6%). Again, the reported conditions in urban areas are less satisfactory with 8 per cent of respondents in this category indicating that they received their materials late. This percentage is lower in semi-rural (4.0%) and rural (4.8%) areas.

Provincial differences in the procurement of material to beneficiaries were noticed. Quantitative findings show that wood and wooden beams for example were distributed noticeably less in Laghman, Nangarhar, Helmand and Kandahar compared to other provinces. The qualitative fieldwork also showed indications for differences in the procurement of materials across regions. For instance, three iron doors were provided to beneficiaries of two-room shelters in the West, whereas in the South, East and Central regions, inside doors were wooden. Other variations included procurement of glass panes in the South and East, whereas additional cash assistance was provided in the West and Central regions.

Procurement of wood: a challenge in the East and South

The quantitative data confirmed these observations, most notably on the procurement of wood. As seen in

Table 16, over half of Laghman beneficiaries (59.9%) and almost half of Nangarhar beneficiaries (47.3%) noted they did not receive wood as a material of the shelter package. Given that the Eastern region is the highest area of return and of SAP interventions, the fact that procurement challenges were specifically raised there should be remedied in future SAP strategies. Overall, the Eastern and Southern region offices will need to improve their procurement of wood – as Southern provinces such as Helmand

(almost half of beneficiaries), Kandahar (one third of beneficiaries) and Paktya (one fifth of beneficiaries) recorded the highest rates of challenges faced in wood procurement process.

Table 16: Procurement of Wood by Province (UNHCR Beneficiaries)

	Yes	No	Total
Kabul	158	39	197
%	80.20	19.80	100.00
Parwan	76	25	101
%	74.25	24.75	100.00
Bamyan	30	2	32
%	93.75	6.25	100.00
Laghman	65	97	162
%	40.12	59.88	100.00
Nangarhar	416	374	790
%	52.66	47.34	100.00
Balkh	50	0	50
%	100.00	0.00	100.00
Faryab	69	6	77
%	92.00	8.00	100.00
Jawzjan	110	8	120
%	93.22	6.78	100.00
Sari Pul	56	0	56
%	100.00	0.00	100.00
Kunduz	59	1	60
%	98.33	1.67	100.00
Takhar	38	0	38
%	100.00	0.00	100.00
Helmand	29	27	56
%	51.79	48.21	100.00
Kandahar	50	25	75
%	66.67	33.33	100.00
Paktya	96	27	123
%	78.05	21.95	100.00
Hirat	91	10	101
%	90.1	9.9	100.00
Total	1 393	641	2 034
%	68.49	31.51	100.00

There were also disparities in the material used for the construction of walls, the main contribution of beneficiaries to construction, according to the availability of material in specific areas. In Hirat for

instance, cement was preferred over mud bricks, due to the absence of clay in the region. The choice in material therefore did not always result from the specific preference of beneficiaries or their economic situation, but was also directly impacted by the availability of material, with repercussions on their level of investment. This was taken into account in Hirat, with flexible cash grants, which was however not the case in any other province. Other shelter agencies – such as NRC – now have adopted different methods for the procurement of materials, meant to support local economies, decrease procurement hurdles and give beneficiaries the responsibility to purchase construction materials. These different options will be discussed at more length in the recommendations chapter.

Main problems encountered by beneficiaries during construction

The main problems encountered by beneficiaries during construction were:

- Lack of money
- Lack of water
- Lack of skilled labour

Construction of the shelters did not go smoothly in all cases. Slightly less than half (47.8%) of the UNHCR beneficiaries reported that they ran into problems during construction of their shelters – an issue related to the lack of technical assistance mentioned previously. A similar proportion of the beneficiaries of other programmes had problems during the construction (50.0%). Table 17 shows the different types of problems the beneficiaries encountered.

Table 17: Problems during Construction*

	UNHCR Beneficiaries		Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	
	N=972	%	N=236	%
Ran out of money	861	88.58	208	88.14
Insufficient access to water	457	47.02	121	51.27
Lack of skilled labour	287	29.53	65	27.54
Weather problems	278	28.60	70	29.66
Ran out of materials	203	20.88	54	22.88
Lack of unskilled labour	95	9.77	2	0.85
Materials of poor quality	74	7.61	20	8.47
Materials not delivered on time	55	5.66	8	3.39
Lack of technical knowledge	43	4.42	10	4.24

*Multiple answers per respondent were possible.

Looking specifically at the group of extremely vulnerable households, it shows that they encountered problems during construction more often (52.1%) than non-EVI households (44.1%). Table 18 shows that **EVI households had more problems in all areas except for the timely delivery of materials**. EVI households in particular are significantly different than non-EVI households in terms of problems with unskilled and skilled labour. While 21.7 per cent of non-EVI households experienced a lack of skilled labour, this is the case for 37.2 per cent of EVI households. This confirms the need to provide extra assistance to the most vulnerable during the construction process as they struggle more than others to build their shelters. This also shows that – at least between 2009 and 2011 – the link between Protection units and the implementation of the SAP was not strong enough to address this need efficiently.

Table 18: Problems during Construction by EVI Status (UNHCR Beneficiaries)*

	EVI		Not EVI	
	N	%	N	%
Overall	492	52.06	480	44.08
-Ran out of money	442	89.84	419	87.29
-Insufficient access to water	238	48.37	219	45.63
-Lack of skilled labour	183	37.20	104	21.67
-Weather problems	142	28.86	136	28.33
-Ran out of materials	104	21.14	99	20.63
-Lack of unskilled labour	58	11.79	37	7.71
-Materials of poor quality	42	8.54	32	6.67
-Materials not delivered on time	26	5.28	29	6.04
-Lack of technical knowledge	26	5.28	17	3.54

*Multiple answers per respondent were possible.

The main problems are faced by households regardless of their location, however, the degree of the problems vary between rural, semi-rural and urban households.

Quality of materials – low satisfaction in urban areas. Findings point to the inadequacy of the quality of materials delivered to urban areas as they often do not match the quality available on the local market. 17.3 per cent of households in urban areas complained about the poor quality of materials, as opposed to 6.7 per cent in semi-rural and 5.1 per cent in rural areas. Understandably, the more remote or rural the beneficiary households are, the less critical they are of the quality of the materials. As a result, this could inform future programming by considering vouchers or cash grants for households to buy their own equipment in urban areas.

Lack of technical knowledge in urban areas. Although unskilled and skilled labour is easier to come by in urban areas as compared to other locations, urban beneficiary households have insufficient technical knowledge when it comes to building or supervising the construction of their shelter. This is also due to the different landscape and requirements of urban shelter construction. **An emphasis on developing an urban approach to training and to support will therefore be necessary in future shelter programming.** Looking into how housing in Kabul and other urban areas can be improved, extended or expanded support will contribute to greater protection of beneficiaries in urban areas.

The main problems in rural areas are the overall lack of labour and lack of access to water – further developed in one of the sections below.

Table 19: Problems during Construction by Location (UNHCR Beneficiaries)*

	Urban		Semi-Rural		Rural	
	N=168	%	N=239	%	N=565	%
Ran out of money	143	85.12	223	93.31	495	87.61
Insufficient access to water	67	39.88	104	43.51	286	50.62
Weather problems	56	33.33	50	20.92	172	30.44
Lack of skilled labour	39	23.21	76	31.80	172	30.44
Ran out of materials	34	20.24	73	30.54	96	16.99
Materials of poor quality	29	17.26	16	6.69	29	5.13
Lack of technical knowledge	16	9.52	10	4.18	17	3.01
Lack of unskilled labour	12	7.14	19	7.59	64	11.33
Materials not delivered on time	12	7.14	8	3.35	35	6.19

*Multiple answers per respondent were possible.

- **Scarce financial resources**

The lack of money was mentioned as by far the main challenge faced by beneficiaries when building their shelters. Almost all beneficiaries mentioned **that they had to take up loans to cover** labour costs and wall components. Additional costs were also necessary for buying stones for foundations and, depending on the availability of material in a given area, bricks, cement or clay.

Household contributions: Higher expenditures in urban areas

Almost all beneficiaries, 93 per cent, had to contribute to the shelter construction as per SAP guidelines. However, the amount of funds contributed varies significantly with urban UNHCR beneficiaries spending significantly more out of their own pockets than rural beneficiaries as seen in Table 20. The data shows a

13,000 AFN (260 USD) gap between urban and rural households, and a smaller, yet sizeable gap of 6 810 AFN (136 USD) between urban and semi-rural households. This is due to the higher costs of materials and labour in urban areas – higher costs that will have to be taken into account in developing an urban strategy for the shelter programme, discussed in the recommendations chapter. Moreover, this is also due to the fact that urban households on average earn a higher income than those of rural or semi-rural areas. To speak in relative terms, Table 21 illustrates the amount beneficiary households paid on the shelter as a percentage of their monthly income, providing evidence that while UNHCR beneficiary households located in an urban context spend more in absolute terms, semi-rural households spend slightly more in relative terms.

Table 20: Amounts Paid by Beneficiaries in AFN by Location

	UNHCR Beneficiaries				Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries			
	N	Mean	Min	Max	N	Mean	Min	Max
Urban	319	46 088	900	700 000	78	28 244	5 000	100 000
Semi-rural	389	39 278	800	500 000	4	66 250	15 000	130 000
Rural	1 195	33 199	1 000	560 000	334	40 940	1 000	500 000
Total	1 903	36 602	800	700 000	416	38 803	1 000	500 000

Table 21: Percentage of Monthly Income Paid for Shelter by Beneficiaries by Location

Location	UNHCR Beneficiaries				Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries			
	N	Mean	Min	Max	N	Mean	Min	Max
Urban	319	5.91	0.08	100.00	78	3.86	0.58	20.00
Semi-rural	384	6.18	0.06	138.89	4	17.02	3.75	26.00
Rural	1177	5.29	0.11	100.00	333	6.56	8.41	0.06

In terms of provincial differences illustrated in

Table 22, shows that beneficiaries in Hirat display the highest amount of household contribution at 48,870 AFN (977 USD) with the lowest expenses recorded in Sari Pul with 14,260 AFN (285 USD).

Table 22: Amounts Paid in AFN by Province (UNHCR Beneficiaries)

Province	N	Mean	Min	Max
Hirat	92	48 870	3 000	500 000
Paktya	112	48 000	2 000	300 000
Nangarhar	752	45 256	1 800	700 000
Kabul	176	40 582	2 000	250 000
Bamyan	30	33 720	900	200 000
Kandahar	67	30 184	800	400 000
Laghman	156	28 542	3 000	150 000
Helmand	50	24 340	3 000	85 000
Parwan	93	24 151	1 000	100 000
Jawzjan	110	23 773	1 000	410 000
Faryab	72	23 278	1 000	95 000
Takhar	36	19 556	1 000	50 000
Balkh	49	18 402	3 000	95 000
Kunduz	58	18 057	1 300	100 000
Sari Pul	50	14 260	1 000	45 000
Total	1 903	36 602	800	700 000

This difference in contributions – with a range covering a 700 USD difference – is better understood when again looking at its relative burden when compared to household income. Shown in

Table 23, we see those households in Hirat spend by far the highest share of their monthly income on the shelter, with Helmand having the lowest contribution. It is important to note the sub-office of Hirat already reviews yearly the cash grant based on the costs of material and labour, a good practice that should be generalized to all sub-offices.

Table 23: Percentage of Monthly Income Paid For Shelter by Province (in %) (UNHCR Beneficiaries)

Province	N	Mean	Min	Max
Hirat	89	11.14	0.30	138.89
Paktya	111	6.40	0.22	33.33
Nangarhar	751	6.25	0.08	100.00
Bamyan	30	6.07	0.08	40.00
Kabul	171	5.94	0.20	68.18
Balkh	47	4.96	0.75	95.00
Takhar	35	4.79	0.25	11.67
Parwan	90	4.76	0.11	100.00
Faryab	71	4.37	0.06	20.00
Laghman	155	4.35	0.38	21.67
Kunduz	57	3.83	0.22	20.00
Jawzjan	109	3.34	0.33	22.53
Kandahar	67	3.29	0.07	25.00
Sari Pul	47	2.97	0.22	22.50
Helmand	50	2.84	0.33	9.44

There are other important disparities across provinces. Typically regions of high return and high rates of urbanisation, such as Hirat, Nangarhar and Kabul present significantly higher levels of household contribution. This is unsurprising given the higher level of local prices and labour costs in these regions. The material used for the construction of the shelter also enters into play, especially in Hirat province, where beneficiaries had to use cement and burned bricks in the absence of clay, which significantly increased the level of household contributions in this province.

The level of contribution expected from beneficiaries is not detailed in the SAP guidelines, which only mention the fact that beneficiaries are expected to cover the costs of labour and of the construction of walls. In general, stakeholders had a rough estimate of the level of contribution expected from beneficiaries. NRC in Nangarhar estimates that it covered about 50 per cent of the costs of the shelter by distributing a cash grant of \$1,100. CARE on the other hand decided to cover the entire costs of the one-room shelters that they built in the North, which is \$900 more than UNHCR two-room shelters. The level of household contribution should be more clearly defined by the organisation and should be included as an indicator for the monitoring and evaluation of the programme as it plays an important role in its impact and sustainability. Households' contribution is important to guarantee a certain level of

involvement and commitment of beneficiaries to the process, hence playing a role in the sustainability of the SAP. Yet, beneficiary households need to have a clearer idea of the costs and the total amount that they will have to cover **before starting the process** to better plan the construction and reduce the likelihood of unsustainable indebtedness. Data provided in table 22 can support this effort.

- **Lack of water**

Lack or limited access to water during the construction process is one of the main challenges during construction for 40 per cent of urban household, 44 per cent of semi-rural households and 51 per cent of rural households. This was notably the case in Chamtala and Sheikh Mesri in Nangarhar and in Northern provinces. Water being a major requirement for elaboration of mud bricks, this placed a major burden on beneficiary families especially in rural areas as it impacts half of the beneficiaries adversely.

Droughts during the summer were a major concern, as was the lack of fuel to allow water pumps to function. In cases where the bulk of construction takes place in the summer, beneficiaries asked for extensions of delays to wait for the rainy season. In some cases, beneficiaries were dependent on buying water from water tanks, which were provided by local private companies for 500 AFN per week (Kandahar) or paid for by UNHCR (Jawzjan). This type of differences calls for a more homogenized approach and clearer guidelines about the support provided to beneficiaries in specific contexts. **Starting construction earlier in the spring would help reduce the risks of incompleteness of shelters.**

BOX 1: Access to Water

Lack or limited access to water during the construction process was mentioned as one of the main challenges during construction. Water being a major requirement for elaboration of mud bricks, this placed a major burden on beneficiary families. Droughts during the summer were a major concern especially in Northern provinces which suffer regularly from acute drought, as were lack of fuel to allow water pumps to function. In some cases, beneficiaries were dependent on buying water from water tanks, an expensive resource provided by local private companies against 500 AFN per week (Kandahar) or paid for by UNHCR (Jawzjan). In Kunduz province (Sertak Sedarak), some beneficiaries took on loans at the First Micro Finance Bank (FMFB) to cover water costs while in another village of the province (Julgia Uzbekia) beneficiaries reported they had to pay 300 AFN per hour to pump water from the river.

The issue of water did not affect exclusively drought-prone areas. In Helmand province, focus groups highlighted similar issues and coping strategies: *'My main problem during the construction was the lack of water. I had to buy one water tanker and to pay 600 AFN. Overall I had to take on a loan of 15,000 AFN from my relatives to be able to complete my shelter.'* (Twakal, Focus Group Discussion with UNHCR Beneficiaries, Camp Mukhtar, Helmand).

The lack of water plays a role in the level of indebtedness of beneficiary households. These additional costs should be taken into account when calculating the level of contribution expected from beneficiaries.

- **Lack of unskilled and skilled labour**

Lack of unskilled labour was a specific concern for rural families (11.3%) while lack of skilled labour was a concern throughout all locations – affecting 23 per cent of urban, 32 per cent of semi-rural and 30 per cent of rural beneficiary households. As such almost one in four households in urban areas and one in three households in semi-rural and rural areas lacked skilled labour for the construction of their shelter. Not surprisingly, therefore, Table 24 shows the majority of UNHCR beneficiaries (68.4%) as well as beneficiaries of other programmes (68.0%) had to hire labourers during the construction process – a burden on beneficiary households but a positive repercussion on the local economy.

Most beneficiaries had to spend additional money when they did not have any skills in construction. The mean cost UNHCR beneficiaries paid for labourers was 24,337 AFN, while beneficiaries of the other programmes on average paid 18,369 AFN.

Table 24: Hiring Labourers during Construction

	UNHCR Beneficiaries		Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	
	N	%	N	%
Yes	1 392	68.44	315	68.03
No	642	31.56	148	31.97
Total	2 034	100.00	463	100.00

The hiring of additional labourers is a common trait throughout the sample, with limited geographic variations according to location (Table 25) but more substantial differences across provinces (Table 26). The households most dependent on external skilled labours were found in Bamyan, Laghman and Hirat, with the least dependent in Kandahar, Parwan and Paktya. Provinces of high return, such as Kabul, Nangarhar and Helmand, were close to average dependency rates.

Table 25: Hiring Labourers during Construction by Location (UNHCR Beneficiaries)

	Urban		Semi-Rural		Rural		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	249	74.55	285	67.22	858	67.24	1 392	68.44
No	85	25.45	139	32.78	418	32.76	642	31.56
Total	334	100.00	424	100.00	1 276	100.00	2 034	100.00

Table 26: Hiring Labourers during Construction by Province (in %) (UNHCR Beneficiaries)

	Yes	No	Total
Bamyan	93.75	6.25	100.00
Laghman	82.72	17.28	100.00
Hirat	79.21	20.79	100.00
Sari Pul	78.57	21.43	100.00
Balkh	76.00	24.00	100.00
Takhar	73.68	26.32	100.00
Jawzjan	72.50	27.50	100.00
Kunduz	71.67	28.33	100.00
Nangarhar	68.76	31.24	100.00
Kabul	63.82	36.18	100.00
Helmand	62.50	37.50	100.00
Faryab	57.14	42.86	100.00
Paktya	56.91	43.09	100.00
Parwan	56.86	43.14	100.00
Kandahar	43.42	56.58	100.00
Total	68.36	31.64	100.00

- Delays:** As per UNCHR shelter guidelines, beneficiaries are obligated to complete their shelters within three months of signing the letter of undertaking, unless special circumstances cause delays. While almost 70 per cent of UNHCR beneficiaries did complete construction within this time frame, there are still 30 per cent that took longer, in the majority between three and six months. Among the beneficiaries of other programmes, this number is slightly less (22.3%). Table 27 shows that construction by UNHCR beneficiaries in urban areas was more often completed within the three-months timeframe (81.1%) than that of the beneficiaries in semi-rural (66.0%) and rural areas (67.2%).

Table 27: Duration of Construction by Location (UNHCR Beneficiaries)

	Urban		Semi-Rural		Rural		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Less than 3 months	271	81.14	280	66.03	857	67.17	1408	69.22
3 to 6 months	54	16.17	114	26.89	351	27.51	519	25.52
More than 6 months	9	2.70	29	6.84	67	5.25	105	5.06
Not yet finished	0	0.00	1	0.24	1	0.08	2	0.10
Total	334	100.00	424	100.00	1 276	100.00	2 034	100.00

The delays in finishing the construction in three months were often caused by the problems previously detailed – the lack of resources, skills and water:

- **Lack of skills:** IPs sometimes mentioned that short delays put considerable pressure on monitoring of the construction process. In Saracha, site engineers emphasized that unequal construction skills of beneficiaries were a major challenge, as many did not have any prior experience in construction and therefore required additional technical assistance.
- The **need to sustain a living** during the time of construction: most beneficiaries cannot afford to focus on construction on a daily basis.
- **Lack or limited access to water:** In cases where the bulk of construction has to take place in the summer, beneficiaries asked for extensions to wait for the rainy season. Starting construction earlier in the spring would help reducing the risks of incompleteness of shelters before winter.

In addition, other problems were raised during qualitative interviews:

- **Lack of flexibility:** Beneficiaries mentioned not having been able to introduce changes in the design during construction, lest they should receive the final cash grant. Subsequently, changes in structure were often introduced after completion. The inclusion of additional wooden beams in order to enlarge habitable space can notably prove problematic, putting in danger the overall structure of the building by introducing dissymmetry in the design of the shelter. This calls for greater awareness behind the reasons for the design and additional technical advice on specific points regarding the structure of the building.

In some cases, the size of the land plot required adaptation of the design of the shelter, associated with an additional investment. In such cases (Saracha reintegration site, Kahdistan), IPs allowed minor changes in the design, but mentioned no additional assistance was given to beneficiaries, a problem given the necessity to extend surrounding walls.

- **Indebtedness**

The qualitative data collection showed that the level of indebtedness also depends on the material used (burnt or mud bricks). The amount of debt varied from 50,000 AFN to 100,000 AFN and was sometime even as high as 200,000 AFN. Interestingly, in Hirat province, **cash grants were adapted to fluctuations of labour costs year after year**, a practice that was not noticed in other areas.

More than 83 per cent of the surveyed households indicated that they had outstanding debt at the time of interview. The national average level of debt was 99,208 AFN. Broken down by the type of location, Table 28 shows that debt levels are highest in semi-rural and lowest in rural areas. UNHCR beneficiaries as well as Non-UNHCR beneficiaries have higher debt in total, while the average debt in urban areas is lower for UNHCR beneficiaries (111,905 AFN) than for Non-beneficiaries (112,702 AFN). This might be due to the fact that households have to invest more of their own resources into building a shelter when they do not receive the assistance by UNHCR.

Table 28: Average Level of Debt by Location and Beneficiary Status

	UNHCR Beneficiaries		Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries		Non-Beneficiaries		Total	
	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean
Urban	283	111 905	73	136 712	350	112 702	706	114 865
Semi-rural	346	122 689	5	89 900	330	119 529	681	120 917
Rural	1 045	90 897	343	94402	967	83 175	2355	88 237
Total	1 647	101 019	421	101 685	1 647	96 734	3742	99 208

As for household debt by province,

Table 29 shows that among UNHCR beneficiaries, those in Helmand, Paktya, Kandahar, Kabul and Nangarhar have the highest average levels. Compared with non-beneficiaries, we see in certain provinces like Kabul, Balkh, Faryab, Sari Pul, Kunduz and Paktya that UNHCR beneficiaries have noticeable lower overall debt. However the situation is just the opposite in other provinces like Bamyan, Nangarhar, Jawzjan, Takhar, Helmand and Kandahar where UNHCR beneficiaries have higher debt relative to non-beneficiary households.

Table 29: Level of Debt by Province and Beneficiary Status

	UNHCR Beneficiaries		Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries		Non-Beneficiaries		Total	
	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean
Kabul	165	113 079	1	50 000	153	122 039	319	117 179
Parwan	78	61 615	0	-	66	61 212	144	61 431
Bamyan	27	79 741	0	-	21	56 319	48	69 494
Laghman	146	86 062	0	-	119	82 899	265	84 642
Nangarhar	670	112 618	415	101 786	712	100 555	1797	105 337
Balkh	37	49 189	0	-	44	61 298	81	55 767
Faryab	56	60 946	2	170 250	80	79 863	138	73 496
Jawzjan	63	68 540	2	54 000	65	51 031	130	59 562
Sari Pul	43	37 698	0	-	29	50 931	72	43 028
Kunduz	49	45 776	0	-	52	51 596	101	48 772
Takhar	38	54 026	0	-	29	40 621	67	48 224
Helmand	49	169 020	0	-	45	157 756	94	163 628
Kandahar	67	144 582	1	70 000	65	124 766	133	134 337
Paktya	95	155 347	0	-	87	168 023	182	161 407
Hirat	91	79 951	0	-	80	79 975	171	79 962
Total	1 647	101 019	421	101 685	3 742	99 208	3 742	99 208

When asked about the impact of the shelter assistance programme on household debt 47.2 per cent of all beneficiaries indicated that it increased. This appears to be a bigger problem for beneficiaries of other programmes (54.4%) than for the UNHCR beneficiaries (34.5%).

Table 30: Impact of Shelter Programme on Household Debt (in %)

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	Total
Decreased	34.51	32.90	34.24
Increased	45.80	54.40	47.24
Remained the same	11.04	8.81	10.66
No debt	7.05	2.85	6.35
I don't know	1.61	1.04	1.51
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

However, no abandonment of shelters due to debts contracted because of the programme were noticed in the field, a potential sign that this is not a major threat to sustainability in the short term, but might become one later on if sufficient income opportunities are not secured. This was notably a major concern in Kandahar, where little job opportunities were available for beneficiaries.

3.1.5 Handover

Of the UNHCR beneficiaries interviewed for the purpose of this study, 2,026 indicated that they had completed the programme entirely. The large majority (96.4%) did receive their handover certificate. Yet, these figures are probably misleading, as beneficiaries who may have dropped out of the programme were a lot less likely to be included in the sampling. While six households are still in the process of completing the programme, two had dropped out along the way. A little over 3 per cent completed building their shelter, but did not receive a handover certificate. Differences across different types of locations or provinces were not noticed.

Table 31: Completion of Construction (UNHCR Beneficiaries)

	N	%
Yes, we have our handover certificate	1960	96.36
Yes, but we did not receive our handover certificate	66	3.24
No, the shelter is not yet finished	6	0.29
No, we dropped out of the program	2	0.10
Total	2 034	100.00

No particular problems were mentioned during handover, with beneficiaries noting they received the cash grants after control of the completion of the shelter. In most cases, shelters were effectively completed and no major issues were reported in this respect. The distribution of cash grants is often a delicate stage in the implementation of a programme in Afghanistan. The absence of reported problems and frauds at that stage of the shelter programme is therefore a positive finding in and of itself. A notable difference in the allocation of cash grants was observed in Hirat, however, with the Sub-Office allegedly adapting the final grant to yearly fluctuations of labour costs, a practice worth considering as beneficiaries repeatedly mentioned strains implied by the level of indebtedness due to purchase of material and costs for additional labour.

The involvement of DoRR representatives in handover varied according to the relationship of the UNHCR Sub-office with the Directorate. In Nangarhar and Kandahar, for instance, mistrust between the UNHCR and the DoRR lead to occasional absence of the later during handover. This issue will be raised again in Chapter 6 on Partnerships.

3.1.6 Risk Mitigation and Prevention

One of the weaknesses in the design of the programme identified in the field was the lack of an assessment of natural disaster risks conducted prior to construction. Preventive measures imposed by the programme's guidelines are limited and only cover earthquake-mitigation measures.

In earthquake-prone areas, risk mitigation is solely taken into account through the inclusion of wood-bracing in the design of the shelter. However, in the East, DoRR reported that wood-bracing was often removed by beneficiaries, due to a lack of awareness of their use. This emphasizes the need for proper awareness training about the importance of such elements.

Preventive measures against floods are also seriously lacking. This was notably the case in Nangarhar, Hirat and Jawzjan. In the latter ZOA issued practical recommendations to upgrade shelters and avoid degradation, which had happened in the province in 2012. Despite high risks in the province, the only measure recommended in practice by UNHCR was to build the shelters 60 cm above the ground, which was not systematically implemented across the province and is insufficient in case of serious flooding. In Kandahar, Hirat, Jawzjan, Parwan and Nangarhar inhabitants insisted on the need to build retaining walls to support the sustainability of the shelters.

KIIs with UNHCR's sub-offices, IPs and other stakeholders such as the ANDMA, confirmed that proper risk assessments in flood-prone and earthquake-prone areas were absent. Coordination efforts between ANDMA and UNHCR were scarce. Based on proper risk assessments, UNHCR could envisage adopting a firmer prevention policy, which would include the non-inclusion of flood-prone areas in the programme.

At the central level, the MoRR raised serious concerns about risk-mitigation in UNHCR design and site selection:

- Past large-scale destructions were not due to the strength of earthquakes, but to weak construction.
- The regional and environmental context needs to be taken into account because availability of material and poor weather conditions affect construction and building.
- Poor mapping capacity of ANDMA.
- No multilateral approbation committee for design.

Both in Hirat and Nangarhar, ANDMA insisted there had been no consultation about risks with UNHCR prior to the implementation of the programme in the respective province. Interestingly, ANDMA underlined being able to conduct such evaluations, but being only consulted in post-disaster situations, highlighting they had better coordination and cooperation with other UN agencies such as the WFP. The insufficient acknowledgement of these risks is highly problematic, as it threatens the sustainability of the programme in specific areas, with a direct impact on its cost-effectiveness in cases where batches of shelters are destroyed by natural disasters.

3.2 SUPPORT

3.2.1 Additional Assistance for Beneficiaries

UNHCR mainly relies on *ashar*, or community assistance, to support the most vulnerable households. However, this was not a practice noticed in the field. Community members mentioned *ashar* could not be an option, as most villagers were faced with difficulties in sustaining their own household. Community representatives, however, indicated that community members did assist the beneficiaries in building their shelters in 60 per cent of cases. Mainly this was assistance in the form of unskilled labour; in rare cases community members also provided skilled labour and materials.

The distribution of cash assistance prior to completion of the shelters was mentioned in Hirat, but seemed to be generally avoided in other provinces. Both IPs and UNHCR staff mentioned concerns about potential misuse of the money. This calls for more consideration about effective measures to support EVIs, notably through closely monitored cash assistance. The programme guidelines and UNHCR's EVI programme plan for additional cash assistance for EVI beneficiaries, but the research team found very rare examples of this practice actually implemented in the field.

This shows that **the link between protection and the shelter programme is still insufficient at the sub-office level**, as the mechanism in place to identify and provide additional support to EVIs is inefficient – a lost opportunity for the programme to fully take into account and address the specific needs of the most vulnerable among UNHCR's target population.

3.2.2 Complementary Training

Most beneficiaries did receive some form of training in conjunction with shelter assistance – however almost one in three beneficiary households indicated not having received any support or training.

As

Table 32 shows, 28.2 per cent of UNHCR beneficiaries did not receive any training, while fewer beneficiaries of other programmes did not receive training (13.4%). The most common form of training that was provided to beneficiaries was training on construction (UNHCR: 54.3%; other programmes: 65.2%), followed by maintenance training (UNHCR: 33.0%; other programmes: 41.0%) and training on procurement issues (UNHCR: 26.2%; other programmes: 38.2%).

Table 32: Training Received in Conjunction with Shelter Assistance

	UNHCR Beneficiaries		Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	
	N	%	N	%
No training	574	28.22	62	13.39
Training	1 460	71.78	401	86.61
- Training on construction	1 105	54.33	302	65.23
- Training on maintenance	672	33.04	190	41.04
- Training on procurement issues	533	26.20	177	38.23
- Hygiene promotion	404	19.86	159	34.34
- Other training	2	0.10	0	0.00

When comparing training provided by UNHCR vs. other shelter agencies, findings show that UNHCR beneficiaries fare worse off in terms of the support they receive. Other shelter beneficiaries systematically received more training than UNHCR shelter beneficiaries as shown in

Table 32. While one in three UNHCR shelter beneficiaries did not receive any training, this number drops down to one in seven in other shelter programmes.

Within the training sessions conducted, most concerning was the gap on hygiene promotion. UNHCR shelter beneficiaries are significantly less likely to receive any hygiene support. Hygiene promotion was indeed less common (UNHCR: 19.9%; other programmes: 34.3%) - a key finding of this study and a point, which will be discussed in the recommendations of this report. Hygiene training and WASH assistance should be improved since the research has shown that the state and use of latrines was highly related to the implementation of such training.

3.2.3 Complementary Training by Location

The breakdown by location shows that rural beneficiaries are the least likely to receive training – and urban beneficiaries the most likely. While almost 80 per cent of urban beneficiaries receive training, the percentage drops to 71 per cent for semi-rural beneficiaries and 70 per cent for rural beneficiaries (

Table 33).

The most significant difference between locations is seen for the training on procurement issues and hygiene promotion.

Table 33: Training by Location (UNHCR Beneficiaries)*

	Urban (N=334)	Semi-rural (N=424)	Rural (N=1276)	Total (N=2034)
No Training	69	122	383	574
%	20.66	28.77	30.02	28.22
Training	265	302	893	1 460
%	79.34	71.23	69.98	71.78
- Training on construction	186	251	668	1 105
%	55.69	59.20	52.35	54.33
- Training on maintenance	121	141	410	672
%	36.23	33.25	32.13	33.04
- Training on procurement issues	110	106	317	533
%	32.93	25.00	24.84	26.20
- Hygiene Promotion	97	46	261	404
%	29.04	10.85	20.45	19.86
- Other training	0	0	2	2
%	0.00	0.00	0.16	0.10

*Multiple answers per respondent were possible.

Furthermore, Table 34 shows that remote areas are the least likely to be covered by training programmes, with the notable exception of training on procurement issues which is slightly more prevalent in remote areas.

Table 34: Training by Remoteness of Location (UNHCR Beneficiaries)*

	Remote Area (N=522)	Non-remote Area (N=1512)	Total (N=2034)
No Training	165	409	574
%	31.61	27.05	28.22
Training	357	1 103	1 460
%	68.39	72.95	71.78

- Training on construction %	283 54.21	822 54.37	1 105 54.33
- Training on maintenance %	163 31.23	509 33.66	672 33.04
- Training on procurement issues %	140 26.82	393 25.99	533 26.20
- Hygiene Promotion %	89 17.05	315 20.83	404 19.86
- Other training %	0 0.00	2 0.13	2 0.10

*Multiple answers per respondent were possible.

3.2.4 Complementary Training for EVIs

When focusing on the differences in training of UNHCR beneficiaries in terms of whether the household is considered an EVI or not as presented in Table 35, we find that EVIs were slightly more likely to receive training than non-EVIs, 73.8 per cent compared to 70.1 per cent. Still this difference is minimal and supports the argument that the shelter programme is able to focus more on EVIs not only in the selection process, but also in support training provided– whether in construction, maintenance, procurement or hygiene promotion.

Table 35: Complementary assistance to EVIs (UNHCR Beneficiaries)*

	EVI (N=945)	No EVI (N=1089)	Total (N=2034)
No Training %	248 26.24	326 29.94	574 28.22
Training %	697 73.76	763 70.06	1 460 71.78
- Training on construction %	537 56.83	568 52.16	1 105 54.33
- Training on maintenance %	355 37.57	317 29.11	672 33.04
- Training on procurement issues %	267 28.25	266 24.43	533 26.20
- Hygiene Promotion %	180 19.05	224 20.57	404 19.86
- Other training %	0 0.00	2 0.18	2 0.10

*Multiple answers per respondent were possible.

When disaggregating by location, the survey shows that EVI beneficiaries in urban areas are much more likely to receive training than semi-rural or rural beneficiaries. Indeed, only 17.4 per cent of UNHCR

beneficiaries in urban areas had not received any training, compared to one in four beneficiaries in semi-rural areas and almost one in three in rural areas (29.0%).

However, it is important to note that hygiene promotion training for EVIs – which is across the board the least well-covered training type – is lacking the most in semi-rural areas where only one in ten beneficiary households have reported receiving hygiene promotion training, compared to one in five rural households and over one in four urban households.

These geographical discrepancies highlight the overall lack of support training but its specific lack in non-urban locations (

Table 36).

Table 36: Complementary assistance to EVIs by Location (UNHCR Beneficiaries)*

	Urban (N=167)	Semi-rural (N=209)	Rural (N=569)	Total (N=945)
No Training	29	54	165	248
%	17.37	25.84	29.00	26.24
Training	138	155	404	697
%	82.63	74.16	71.00	73.76
- Training on construction	103	127	307	537
%	61.68	60.77	53.95	56.83
- Training on maintenance	76	76	203	355
%	45.51	36.36	35.68	37.57
- Training on procurement issues	61	53	153	267
%	36.53	25.36	26.89	28.25
- Hygiene Promotion	46	22	112	180
%	27.54	10.53	19.68	19.05
- Other training	0	0	0	0
%	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

*Multiple answers per respondent were possible.

3.2.5 Complementary assistance at the community level

In areas where it was made available, complementary assistance worked as a strong condition for the sustainability of the program, providing communities with facilities and essential services or the creation of a sustainable environment (water, schools, clinics, and roads) and contributing to diffuse tensions by benefitting the entire community. Most villages had benefitted from NSP programmes through DRRD (drilling of wells, cleaning of *qarez*) and assistance from other organizations (shelter, WASH programmes).

The importance of complementary assistance is acknowledged by UNHCR in its guidelines and at the Kabul level. Empowering the community and providing help to develop water points, schools and

infrastructure is therefore considered by UNHCR as one of the components of the program to enhance its sustainability. However, outside of reintegration sites, additional assistance to communities seemed to be more of a coincidence than the result of any form of coordination, and the shelter programme was often a “stand alone” intervention. This was notably the case in areas where access was a problem, for instance in Kandahar province and in Kahdistan. The “integrated” approach upheld by UNHCR prior to 2012 does not seem to have been systematically implemented. In Hirat, there were no regular patterns for complementary assistance: WASH programs had not been implemented since 2008 and cash for work has only been done in parallel to shelter in some cases. In Jalalabad conversely, IPs mentioned WASH programmes were systematically included as part of the implementation of the shelter programme and non-beneficiaries insisted on the benefits of such initiatives. Systematic implementation complementary programmes (schools, clinics, WASH) appears as a good practice to be considered at the national level, including through partnerships with other agencies and organizations, as well as the involvement of provincial directorates. However, it should not be reduced to specific sites since needs are widely present – a needs-based, rather than location-based, approach should therefore be adopted to ensure that needs are covered.

3.3 MONITORING & EVALUATION

3.3.1 Systems of Monitoring and Evaluation

The majority of the community representatives reported that the technical advisers visited their communities on a regular basis, on average between three and five times during the construction process with a drop after the handover. This highlights that there is close to no follow-up of beneficiaries, which limits any internal assessment of sustainable reintegration or longer-term impact of the programme. This will be a key point to incorporate in internal field assessments to ensure a more continuous M&E process.

In most cases field visits were conducted once per week or once every two weeks. Most beneficiaries also mentioned receiving regular visits of IPs throughout the process. More than 99 per cent of the beneficiaries of other programmes indicated that there had been monitoring of their shelter during the construction process. This is an indication that the monitoring systems in place in other shelter programmes (in the East) are more comprehensive than those of UNHCR overall, where more than 5 per cent were not monitored at all.

Table 37: Monitoring of Shelter

	UNHCR Beneficiaries		Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	
	N	%	N	%
Yes	1927	94.74	459	99.14
No	107	5.26	4	0.86
Total	2034	100.00	463	100.00

There were no significant monitoring disparities between urban, semi-rural or rural locations. Surprisingly, some of the provinces that rated lowest on monitoring were Sari Pul (85.2%), Parwan (88.1%), Hirat (88.1%) and Kabul (89.9%) – the most secure provinces and where access is open, therefore not justifying a lack of M&E due to security or other restrictions.

Faryab rates among the least monitored provinces, understandable given the security and access conditions (see provincial overview for Faryab). Out of the list below (Table 38), a number of provinces are limited due to their difficult access but IPs could be tasked to reinforce monitoring and follow-up. Among these are, as mentioned above Kabul, Parwan, Sari Pul, and Hirat.

Table 38: Monitoring practices by province (UNHCR Beneficiaries)

	Yes	No	Total
Kabul	177	20	197
%	89.85	10.15	100.00
Parwan	89	12	101
%	88.12	11.88	100.00
Bamyan	31	1	32
%	96.88	3.13	100.00
Laghman	158	4	162
%	97.53	2.47	100.00
Nangarhar	781	9	790
%	98.86	1.14	100.00
Balkh	47	3	50
%	94.00	6.00	100.00
Faryab	65	10	75
%	86.67	13.33	100.00
Jawzjan	104	14	118
%	88.14	11.86	100.00
Sari Pul	48	8	56
%	85.71	14.29	100.00

Kunduz %	57 95.00	3 5.00	60 100.00
Takhar %	37 97.37	1 2.63	38 100.00
Helmand %	55 98.21	1 1.79	56 100.00
Kandahar %	72 96.00	3 4.00	75 100.00
Paktya %	117 95.12	6 4.88	123 100.00
Hirat %	89 88.12	12 11.88	101 100.00
Total %	1 927 94.74	107 5.26	2 034 100.00

This assessment is confirmed when looking at the broader regional reach of monitoring activities (

Table 39). The breakdown does not follow security or access points. The Western and Central regions rate lower than average. Achievements in monitoring in the East are highest, followed by the South.

Table 39: Monitoring of Shelter by Region (UNHCR Beneficiaries)

	Yes	No	Total
Central %	266 89.26	32 10.74	298 100.00
Central Highland %	31 96.88	1 3.13	32 100.00
East %	939 98.36	13 1.37	952 100.00
North %	264 88.29	35 11.71	299 100.00
Northeast %	94 95.92	4 4.08	98 100.00
South %	127 96.95	4 3.05	131 100.00
Southeast %	117 95.12	6 4.88	123 100.00
West %	89 88.12	12 11.88	101 100.00

Total	1 927	107	2 034
%	94.74	5.26	100.00

During implementation, close monitoring of construction seemed to be regularly carried out by the IP staff following the construction throughout the process, with rates varying according to the scope of the area visited and the level of access of areas (several times a week to two times a month). Both beneficiaries and IPs reported that IP engineers would regularly visit the shelters, often three to five times until handover. Beneficiaries mentioned that during the regular visits by IP staff throughout construction they received basic explanations about the plan. In Kandahar and some areas of Nangarhar a foreman was recruited in the community and hired by the IP to ensure monitoring and in some cases appeared to be the only one involved in day-to-day monitoring. Hiring short-term local staff was usually related to the difficulties of access, like in Kandahar for example. IPs in Nangarhar (Saracha) underlined the fact that additional assistance needed to be given whenever beneficiary households were unskilled and unable to hire skilled labour, placing a strain on the deadlines.

Overall, IPs seemed to have the required technical expertise to provide support, though flexibility in the assistance provided derived more from their own willingness than from general UNHCR guidelines.

The involvement of UNHCR staff in monitoring of implementation varied according to:

- The **degree of accessibility** of areas due to security restrictions: very limited access in Kandahar and Helmand. In Kunar and Laghman, all monitoring activities were sub-contracted to a specific monitoring IP.
- **Practices in sub-offices:** In Hirat, UNHCR staff was regularly in the field and directly monitored construction. Conversely, they were generally absent in Kabul and Parwan, despite the generally safe context and high accessibility of PSUs.

In some cases, UNHCR staff relied on their own networks to monitor the situation in the field and to triangulate information provided by the IP. It is mostly the cases in provinces where UNHCR has experienced national staff able to work through their own information networks, like in Faryab for example.

One major problem is the fact that there is no follow-up at all after handover. This causes a subsequent serious lack of data on the outcomes of the programme, which is problematic in terms of measuring its impact and assessing whether the envisaged objectives and outcomes have been met. It also reduces the opportunity to check whether the adaptations to the design made by beneficiaries do not endanger the soundness of the shelters.

3.3.2 Accountability of Programme Stakeholders

Complaint mechanisms appeared rather non-existent for beneficiaries, and mainly rely on the degree of availability of the IPs and their willingness to address problems faced by beneficiaries. However, yearly reviews of the programme done conjointly by UNHCR Sub-Offices and IPs to identify strengths and weaknesses in the implementation of the programme proved useful, with subsequent changes introduced in the design based on field observations. This was identified as a good practice, though the

UNHCR Sub-Office in Nangarhar expressed concern about the fact that recommendations were sometimes not sufficiently taken into account at the central level.

Identification of Potential Cases of Fraud and Misallocation of Assistance

In general, it was observed that in some cases beneficiaries did not use shelters as intended. When shelters are transformed into storage rather than living space, it is obvious that the selection process has its flaws. Shelters are, in this case, not an immediate and urgent need for beneficiary households.

Two cases of fraud were identified in Khanaqa, with one household receiving two shelters (husband and wife), and one other where the occupant had bought the VRF and the assistance “package” that goes with it from a wealthier community member. Another indicator for misallocation is the fact that respondents indicated that they currently own another shelter than the one they built through the shelter assistance programme.

Table 40 shows that 21.0 per cent of UNHCR beneficiary households say they have at least one other shelter. This is the case for an even higher percentage of beneficiaries of other programmes (33.5%). Further cases of fraud are mostly related to the selection process and will therefore be presented in the following section.

Table 40: Additional Shelter Owned by Household

	UNHCR Beneficiaries		Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	
	N	%	N	%
Yes	428	21.04	155	33.48
No	1 602	78.76	306	66.09
I don't know	4	0.20	2	0.43
Total	2034	100.00	463	100.00

4. BENEFICIARY SELECTION

Most stakeholders described the selection process as the most sensitive stage of implementation, with a high potential for tensions to be created inside the community, as well as between various stakeholders (local authorities, IPs and beneficiaries). It also has a strong impact on the sustainability of the programme. Yet, **the selection process clearly appeared as the main weakness in the implementation of the shelter program as it failed to integrate the most vulnerable.**

Many flaws in the process were identified during qualitative fieldwork and confirmed by quantitative analysis. These include:

- Irregular selection and participation of BSC members
- Misunderstanding of the selection criteria
- Insufficient focus on vulnerability as put forward in the UNHCR Shelter Guidelines
- Exclusion and under-representation of main vulnerable categories of displaced population:
 - IDPs, female heads of households and landless people were largely excluded from selection. Only 9 per cent of beneficiaries in our sample were IDPs, while only 2 per cent were female-headed households.
 - Households with health conditions and disabilities were under-represented in the selection of eligible EVI households, with preference given to socio-economic and demographic vulnerabilities, underlining a concern of exclusion of the ill and disabled in the SAP.
- Error of inclusion:
 - More than half of non-refugee returnees receiving UNHCR assistance are not considered to be in the “extremely vulnerable” based on the EVI categories, indicating a misallocation of assistance as this group does not present the migratory profile nor signs of vulnerability that would make them eligible.

The main factor explaining these failures is the significant gap between the SAP guidelines on paper and the reality of selection as it is conducted on the ground, where the Voluntary Repatriation Form (VRF) and land ownership take precedence over any other criteria of selection. As it is, the selection process does not allow the SAP to live up to some of its key guiding principles, such as women’s direct participation or the focus on vulnerability.

4.1 THE SELECTION PROCESS AND ACTORS INVOLVED

According to the UNHCR shelter guidelines, ensuring the smoothness of selection in a given community mainly lies in the hands of the Beneficiary Selection Committee (BSC), responsible for identifying vulnerable households and facilitating the selection process in a transparent way.

However important variations in the selection procedure were observed in the field. Firstly, the inclusion of the Beneficiary Selection Committee (BSC) was not always systematic or was not identified by the beneficiary communities. In Kandahar for instance, the BSC appeared non-existent. Selection and identification of beneficiaries were primarily conducted by community leaders, with only some involvement of the IPs. Little or no oversight from BSC members (UNHCR, IP, DoRR) in specific areas raises concerns about the capacity to effectively reach vulnerable people and leaves the door open for favouritism to interfere in selection. A variety of practices have been observed in different provinces according to the extent of involvement and interference of various stakeholders in the selection.

Irregular involvement of BSC members and lack of balance in the involvement of various actors in the selection process appeared to have a direct impact on the transparency and effectiveness of the process in reaching the most vulnerable.

The difference in practices observed resulted from the following, sometimes overlapping factors:

a) The degree of involvement of UNHCR staff

There is a strong correlation between the degree of involvement of UNHCR in the BSC and the accessibility of the area of implementation. This is however not a systematic pattern: UNHCR sometimes relies on its IPs for selection even in accessible areas, such as Parwan or Kabul - a highly problematic trend in terms of monitoring of the selection process and of ensuring that the guidelines and criteria are correctly implemented.

On the other hand, good practices were identified in Hirat, where UNHCR staff was present throughout the selection process. IPs reported that the presence of UNHCR was a strong component for the credibility of the committee in the eyes of the local authorities and that it ensured the correct implementation of the guidelines.

b) The degree of reliance on the implementing partners (IPs)

As mentioned previously, over-reliance on IPs often directly resulted from the inaccessibility of an area to UNHCR staff. In this case selection mainly rested in the hands of IPs and community leaders, as for example in Kandahar. Instances of “remote selection” emphasized the need for a strong monitoring procedure and follow-up. Lack of reliable monitoring posed a direct threat to the transparency of the selection process and the effectiveness of the process in targeting the most vulnerable.

In Nangarhar, a separate IP was specifically hired to monitor the selection procedure, but this was not the case in most provinces. In general, remote selection and monitoring requires further

attention and follow-up by UNHCR staff, all the more as there were several allegations of corruption at the IP level on behalf of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. The selection process is one of the stages, when instances of frauds and corruption are the most likely to occur. Despite the fact this is acknowledged as a problem at the central level, it does not seem to have repercussions in the field. Though allegations need to be taken cautiously, given the high sensitivity of the selection process and eventual resentments, they highlight the need for close and transparent monitoring specifically tailored for the selection process and direct involvement of UNHCR wherever access is not an issue.

c) The degree of reliance on community leaders (*maliks, shura*)

Inclusion of local authorities is a requirement for the smoothness of the process in a given community and their transparent involvement in the process a guarantee for the success of identification and selection of beneficiaries.

However, transparency often remained a serious issue: **one of the major problems mentioned in the field was the potential bias introduced in the selection process through direct interference of community leaders.** Favouritism was identified as a common practice, especially when maliks are both responsible for identifying eligible community members (almost exclusively VRF holders) and prioritizing the needs, with little or no oversight from UNHCR or other actors in selection²⁰. This was often the case in homogeneous single-tribe communities. A recurrent complaint on behalf of beneficiaries was the need for “relationships” and privileged contacts with community leaders to be included in the programme, which field visits sometimes confirmed. This was the case in Majbur Abad (Nangarhar) and Khanaqa (Parwan), for instance. In Shakalak e Islam (Jawzjan province), the deputy *qariador* (malik in uzbek areas) and his relatives had received seven shelters in one compound, four of which were used as storage rooms or guesthouses. In some areas of Jawzjan, UNHCR and its IPs lost access to implementation areas and relied on community leaders for selection (Dashte Laily), which made it difficult to assess the reliability and efficiency of the process.

In some cases, not all bodies of authorities in communities were taken into account and given a role in the selection process. In these cases, the IPs strongly relied on a single authority in locations where several were in charge of a given community, while others were left out (notably women shuras). This opens the door for complaints, resentment and a strong feeling of discrimination.

In other instances, due to an over-reliance on community leaders, the selection procedure described in the guidelines does not seem to have been followed at all. In Kandahar and Kabul provinces for instance, there were reports of the use of games of chance (Pitawa in Kabul province and Laghman), where the malik allocated assistance by picking names written on pieces of paper. This practice was also noticed in Kuchi Abad for the allocation of plots of land to beneficiaries, which is disquieting as the site is directly under the supervision of UNHCR. In any

²⁰ Practices of corruption and withholding of assistance by maliks are a regular complaint of villagers. This is an observation that has also been reported in Kantor (2009).

case, the transparency of the process is a major requirement to alleviate doubts on behalf of community members about the selection process, and special attention should be given to reaching all members of a given community.

d) The degree of involvement of the DoRR

The role of the DoRR in the selection process fluctuated according to provinces, the relationship of the sub-office with the directorate and the local influence of the DoRR.

In some cases involvement of the DoRR in the BSC is occasional and does not appear to be an active one. Though IPs and UNHCR insisted a representative of the DoRR was systematically present in selection, this was not always confirmed in the field and the degree of the influence of his representative in beneficiary selection varied. In Nangarhar for instance, the sub-office and DoRR cultivated a complex relationship. The director clearly expressed his frustration with not being able to voice his opinion, while UNHCR and IPs reported being reluctant to allow him to get too involved in selection due to suspicions of corruption and confessed making minimal efforts to include him in the selection process. Similar comments were made in Kandahar, where the DoRR openly expressed complaints about not being involved at all during selection, expressing the feeling that he was side-lined on purpose by UNHCR and its IP. In Jawzjan, a conflictive relation between UNHCR and the DoRR in 2009-2010 resulted in the exclusion of the representative when UNHCR took the lead in selection. Relations however have improved notably over the past year. In Balkh, Parwan and Kabul, the DoRR seemed to be only present as a governmental caution, but without a particular say in the actual selection process. In Hirat, interestingly, the presence of the DoRR was mentioned as essential to facilitate selection and curb too much interference of local authorities in the process.

e) Female participation

Notably, **women's participation in the selection process does not seem to have been implemented uniformly**, especially in highly patriarchal communities. Women's participation was non-existent in Kandahar, and any mention of women's participation in Parwan and Nangarhar were often received with surprise or sarcasm by community members, though IPs did mention having female employees for the WASH awareness programs. In Hirat, Jawzjan and Faryab, IPs mentioned employing female staff to reach female-headed households, which cannot be identified by male staff.

In the community survey, **13 out of the 60 community representatives indicated that women were participating in the selection process in their respective communities**. However, when asked more specifically for their role, it became clear **that local women were not involved in the process in any instance**. It was merely female staff from UNHCR and IPs that came to the villages, not to assist in beneficiary selection but to inform local women about VRF forms and to train them on hygiene and maintenance.

This lack of inclusion of women in the selection process had been previously highlighted by the Danida ROI Evaluation (2012), which stated "the evaluation was concerned about some gender

aspects of UNHCR’s shelter programme. (...) It is UNHCR policy to have women representatives in the shelter beneficiary selection committees. However, the impact of this is not documented, and basic issues like women’s land rights are not addressed in the UNHCR documents.”

This is a key issue that must be further addressed and developed, by integrating female representatives more uniformly in the selection process.

f) **Community based approach**

According to the UNHCR guidelines the selection process is meant to be implemented according to a community based approach: “the community takes primary responsibility for identifying eligible beneficiaries to receive shelter assistance, while the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, local authorities, implementing partners and UNHCR play advisory and coordination roles.”²¹ In practice however, **involvement of the community was seldom mentioned and was replaced by consultation of community leaders** (shuras, maliks). As mentioned earlier, the single focus on community leaders is not always effective in reaching all vulnerable members in a community, due to potential interference of nepotism and/or corruption. In Bez Akmalati, beneficiaries of a UN-Habitat shelter programme emphasized the importance of inclusion of elected community members, which can be held accountable for the selection of vulnerable beneficiaries, and praised this practice. Though the UN-Habitat process is time-consuming and might not be applicable in the context of the UNHCR programme, further attention is required in including representative members of the targeted community to ensure fair selection of beneficiaries.

4.2 SELECTION CRITERIA ON THE GROUND: VULNERABILITY SIDE-LINED

“Beneficiary selection will be based on vulnerability, the most important criterion of the selection process (...). Vulnerable groups are those without stable support from income earning family members or without sufficient income to meet household demands.”

2011 UNHCR Shelter Guidelines

According to the guidelines of the programme, vulnerability should be the cornerstone of the selection process. While the official eligibility for assistance requires that the beneficiary be a returned refugee or IDP, with access to land on which to build a house, the programme is guided by a focus on vulnerability allowing

beneficiary selection to be wider than just returnees with access to land. In fact, all involved staff members are advised to ensure that no vulnerable families within the community are overlooked or rejected for assistance. The vulnerability criterion follows that of the “extremely vulnerable individual”

²¹ UNHCR Shelter Guidelines 2008, p.8.

definition including people who may be in life threatening situations, unable to help themselves, lacking family and community support or suffering from physical or mental trauma. Typically these include female-headed households, disabled or elderly heads of households without external support and large families with insufficient income. Overall, special attention is paid to the relative situation of the individual within the family and the community in order to identify vulnerable beneficiaries. Moreover, in the case of landless families in need of shelter and who meet the vulnerability criteria, there is the possibility of land allocation in order to allow them to benefit from the programme. In sum, while the programme explicitly targets vulnerable refugee and IDP returnees, the focus is on finding a shelter solution for any community member which meets the vulnerability criteria. Yet the analysis of the profiles of beneficiaries surveyed in the frame of this study showed that this priority on vulnerability enunciated by the guidelines has yet to be operationalized in the field.

4.2.1 Migratory status

Among the UNHCR beneficiaries surveyed for this evaluation, and as indicated in Table 41, the majority, 66.6 per cent, were returning refugee households. Another 19.2 per cent were non-refugee returnees, while IDPs represent only 9.2 per cent of the sample. The remaining 5.1 per cent are households that never migrated.

This shows that UNHCR struggles to adapt the SAP to the changes in the migratory trends at play in the country and is still **overwhelmingly** focusing on returnees, leaving IDPs aside.

Table 41: UNHCR Beneficiary Categories by Migratory Status

	N	%
Refugee Returnees	1 355	66.58
Non-refugee Returnees	390	19.16
IDPs	187	9.19
No Mobility	103	5.06
Total	2 035	100.00

4.2.2 Vulnerability: the uneven integration of EVIs in the programme

The selection of extremely vulnerable individuals (EVI) varied according to provinces and IPs, and there seems to be no uniform national practice: in Hirat, the Protection Unit was reportedly systematically involved in selection in order to identify EVIs, which was not the case in Nangarhar and in Kandahar, for instance, where EVIs were referred to the Protection Unit but not included in the shelter programme. This involvement seemed productive in Hirat as IPs and the *arbab* in Kahdistan for instance, displayed a higher degree of awareness of the criteria for EVIs. Most of the time, the main criteria regarding EVIs mentioned by communities and IPs were “widow” and “disabled”, occasionally “very low income”, though no specific information was given as how to identify them. In some cases, there was recognition of the need to focus more on vulnerable households and IDPs in Parwan/Kabul (ABR). In such cases, recent documented voluntary returnees had the priority over more vulnerable households. In Jawzjan, EVIs were not considered a priority, and were only identified and considered for potential additional assistance *a posteriori*, whereas in Faryab, IPs did not appear to have been sensitized to EVIs. Clearer and more uniform instructions as well as more flexibility and overview by UNHCR staff might be a good way to ensure more fairness in selection.

Table 42 shows that among our sample, **more than half of the UNHCR beneficiaries are not EVI households**. Only 46.4 per cent can be considered as such, even though criteria to define EVIs are loose. This indicates a clear failure to target the most vulnerable.

Even more worrisome is the fact, that more than half of the non-refugee returnees that received UNHCR assistance are not considered to be an EVI. This represents a misallocation of assistance as this group is not addressed in the first place and does also not present the signs of vulnerability that would make them eligible. The same is true for the no mobility group that is not extremely vulnerable, but did receive UNHCR shelter assistance. While they represent only 2 per cent of all UNHCR beneficiaries surveyed for the evaluation, this is a clear indication that misallocation of assistance does occur.

Table 42: EVI Status of UNHCR Beneficiaries

	Not EVI	EVI	Total
Refugee Returnee	747	608	1 355
%	55.13	44.87	100.00
Non-Refugee Returnee	205	185	390
%	52.56	47.44	100.00
IDP	105	82	187
%	56.15	43.85	100.00
No Mobility	33	70	103
%	32.04	67.96	100.00
Total	1 090	945	2 035
%	53.56	46.44	100.00

Table 43 however shows differences in coverage of EVIs across provinces. Extremely vulnerable households in Bamyan, Kunduz and Kandahar for example are included more than non-vulnerable households, while just the opposite is the case in provinces like Parwan, Nangarhar, Balkh, Jawzjan, Takhar and Paktya.

Table 43: EVI Status by Province of UNHCR Beneficiaries

	No EVI	EVI	Total
Kabul	98	99	197
%	49.75	50.25	100.00
Parwan	60	41	101
%	59.41	40.59	100.00
Bamyan	11	21	32
%	34.38	65.63	100.00
Laghman	77	85	162
%	47.53	52.47	100.00
Nangarhar	446	344	790
%	56.46	43.54	100.00
Balkh	28	22	50
%	56.00	44.00	100.00
Faryab	38	37	75
%	50.67	49.33	100.00
Jawzjan	76	42	118
%	64.41	35.59	100.00
Sari Pul	29	27	56
%	51.79	48.21	100.00
Kunduz	27	33	60
%	45.00	55.00	100.00
Takhar	23	16	39
%	58.97	41.03	100.00
Helmand	27	29	56
%	48.21	51.79	100.00
Kandahar	28	47	75
%	37.33	62.67	100.00
Paktya	71	52	123
%	57.72	42.28	100.00
Hirat	51	50	101
%	50.50	49.50	100.00
Total	1 090	945	2 035
%	53.56	46.44	100.00

- **Excluding EVI households**

Consequently, there are also households that do fall into the EVI categories but did not receive shelter assistance.

Table 44 shows that significant shares of households defined as EVI were in fact not addressed by any shelter assistance program. For example, 43.3 per cent of households with a chronically ill member were not included in either UNHCR or other programs, while 45.4 per cent of households with very low income were excluded.

Table 44: Beneficiary Status of EVI Households

	UNHCR Beneficiary N=2 035	Non-UNHCR Beneficiary N=463	Non- Beneficiary N=1 990	Total N=4 488
Chronically ill	465	122	448	1 035
%	44.93	11.79	43.29	100.00
Very low income	319	44	302	665
%	47.97	6.62	45.41	100.00
Physically Disabled	274	86	271	631
%	43.42	13.63	42.95	100.00
Mentally disabled	134	31	118	283
%	47.35	10.95	41.70	100.00
Large family (5 or more children and no livelihoods)	141	10	119	270
%	52.22	3.70	44.07	100.00
Unaccompanied Elderly (over 60)	56	16	44	116
%	48.28	13.79	37.93	100.00
Elderly-Headed Household	72	8	70	150
%	48.00	5.33	46.67	100.00
Female Head of household	38	22	56	116
%	32.76	18.97	48.28	100.00
Unaccompanied minor (under 18)	19	4	18	41
%	46.34	9.76	43.90	100.00
Single Parent	11	1	15	27
%	40.74	3.70	55.56	100.00
Drug addict	6	1	12	19
%	31.58	5.26	63.16	100.00
Child-Headed Household	1	0	3	4
%	15.00	0.00	75.00	100.00

Gender-based violence survivor %	2 66.67	0 0.00	1 33.33	3 100.00
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Of these household defined as extremely vulnerable yet were excluded from any program, a substantial portion were also refugee returnees, as shown in Table 45, providing evidence of flaws in the selection process. For the most common EVI causes, like chronic illnesses, disability, low income and large families, around one third of non-beneficiary households were officially recognized refugee returnees.

Table 45: Migratory Status of Non-Beneficiary EVI Households

	Refugee Returnees N=727	Non-refugee Returnees N=676	IDPs N=219	No Mobility N=368	Total N=1990
Chronically ill %	143 31.92	142 31.70	61 13.62	102 22.77	448 100.00
Very low income %	91 30.13	110 36.42	40 13.25	61 20.20	302 100.00
Physically Disabled %	98 36.16	86 31.73	34 12.55	53 19.56	271 100.00
Large family (5 or more children and no livelihoods) %	43 36.13	32 26.89	12 10.08	32 26.89	119 100.00
Mentally disabled %	44 37.29	41 34.75	13 11.02	20 16.95	118 100.00
Mentally disabled %	44 37.29	41 34.75	13 11.02	20 16.95	118 100.00
Elderly-Headed Household %	23 32.86	15 21.43	10 14.29	22 31.43	70 100.00
Female Head of household %	10 17.86	21 36.50	7 12.50	18 32.14	56 100.00
Unaccompanied Elderly (over 60) %	10 22.73	21 47.73	4 9.09	9 20.45	44 100.00
Unaccompanied minor (under 18) %	6 33.33	4 22.22	1 5.56	7 38.89	18 100.00
Single Parent %	7 46.67	3 20.00	3 20.00	2 13.33	15 100.00
Drug addict %	3 25.00	4 33.33	1 8.33	4 33.33	12 100.00
Child-Headed Household %	2 66.67	1 33.33	0 0.00	0 0.00	3 100.00

Gender-based violence survivor %	0 0.00	1 100.00	0 0.00	0 0.00	1 100.00
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The exclusion of EVI households is particularly a problem in those cases where the household did in fact apply for shelter assistance, but was not chosen to receive it. Table 46 shows households categorized by EVI categories and migration status that did apply for shelter assistance but were not chosen. In the sample the largest vulnerable groups that were denied shelter assistance are physically disabled, chronically ill and very low-income households.

Added attention to health and disability – as two key protection concerns – would allow UNHCR to target vulnerable households that currently fall outside of the reach of the programme.

Of the 13 EVI categories used by UNHCR in its 2009-2011 programming:

- Vulnerabilities relating to **health and disability** (whether chronically ill households, physically disabled, and the mentally disabled) were 3 of the top 4 vulnerabilities most often disregarded in the selection process.
- Vulnerabilities relating to socio-economic household profiles – such as very low income and large households – ranked second in terms of numbers.
- Demographic characteristics (targeting children, the elderly and women) were given priority.

Table 46: Failed Applications for Shelter Assistance by EVI Category and Migratory Status

	Refugee Returnees	Non-refugee Returnees	IDPs	No Mobility	Total
Chronically ill	56	63	14	17	150
Physically disabled	42	40	15	11	108
Very low income	37	50	9	11	97
Mentally disabled	18	21	4	9	52
Large family	16	12	2	6	36
Unaccompanied elderly	7	10	2	3	22
Elderly household head	10	5	4	2	21
Female household head	1	7	3	4	15
Single parent	4	2	1	1	8
Unaccompanied minor	2	2	0	2	6

Drug addict	1	2	0	1	4
Child HH head	1	1	0	0	2
Gender-based violence survivor	0	1	0	0	1

All of the above shows that the selection process was not focused on the vulnerability of beneficiaries. In reality the **research showed that the main criteria of selection of beneficiaries used throughout the country was the presentation of a Voluntary Repatriation Form (VRF), to the extent that in some cases, holding a VRF was the only criterion mentioned by communities as effectively implemented in selection, alongside with the requirement of land ownership.** This was also indicated in the community survey, where the representatives of 60.0 per cent of the communities indicated that the VRF was a criterion for beneficiary selection. Findings presented in

Table 47 confirm observations from the field, which showed that awareness about the criteria to define vulnerability was very low, and that only the criteria ‘widow/female-headed households’ and ‘very low income’ were understood as signs of vulnerability, which were reported as criteria of selection by about 40 per cent of surveyed community representatives. Although these are clear categories of vulnerable households, they should not be given more weight or precedence over otherwise eligible EVI households.

Table 47: Used Selection Criteria (Community Representatives)

	N=60	%
VRF	36	60.00
Families with very low or unstable income	26	43.33
Female household head	25	41.67
Disabled individual	18	30.00
Other	9	15.00
Large families of eight or more members	4	6.67
Chronically ill individual	1	1.67
Elderly household head	0	0.00
Underage household head	0	0.00

Another indication of the focus on the VRF form in the selection process for the UNHCR programme is presented in

Table 48. It shows that of all returnees in the sample 74.4 per cent had a VRF form. The percentage of those receiving UNHCR assistance is significantly higher than this average with 86.8 per cent. In contrast, non-beneficiaries only have a VRF form in 58.3 per cent of the cases.

Table 48: VRF Form and Shelter Assistance

	UNHCR Beneficiaries		Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries		Non-Beneficiaries		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	1 509	86.77	286	75.86	817	58.27	2 654	74.38
No	214	12.31	90	23.87	561	40.01	873	24.47
I don't know	16	0.92	1	0.27	24	1.71	41	1.15
Total	1 739	100.00	463	100.00	1 402	100.00	3 568	100.00

UNHCR staff and IPs reported prioritizing recent returnees, based on the assumption that more ancient returnees had had the time to install coping mechanisms, especially in terms of shelter, and were therefore less vulnerable than the rest.

The date of return (written down on the VRF) was also mentioned as an additional means for selection, with recurrent complaints of non-beneficiaries not having been considered eligible because their VRF had “expired” (Nangarhar, Parwan, Jawzjan). There seems to be no particular pattern for selection in these cases as detailed in

Table 49²². Quantitative data shows that 43 per cent of refugee returnee beneficiaries had received shelter assistance within a year after their return. But a significant proportion of refugee returnee beneficiaries, 28 per cent, had received shelter assistance more than three years after their return. The assumption that the longer returned have had the time to find their own shelter was not always verified in the field, with older returnees mentioning living with relatives or getting increasingly indebted with rent with similar and sometimes greater needs than the actual beneficiaries.

Table 49: Time between Return/Arrival and Selection into Programme (UNHCR Beneficiaries)

	Refugee Returnees	Non-refugee Returnees	IDPs	Total
Less than a month	47	13	0	74
%	3.47	3.33	0.00	3.11
1 to 6 months	374	103	55	638
%	27.64	26.41	29.57	27.58
6 months to 1 year	167	39	22	228
%	12.34	10.00	11.83	11.82

²² This has also been reported in the DANIDA Report 2012.

1 to 3 years %	389 28.75	80 20.51	50 26.88	519 26.91
3 to 5 years %	172 12.71	50 12.82	19 10.22	241 12.49
More than five years %	204 15.08	105 26.92	40 21.51	349 18.09
Total %	1353 100.00	390 100.00	186 100.00	1929 100.00

UNHCR beneficiaries were more likely to have returned in more recent years, representing the largest group of returnees from the 2009-2011 timeframe. Although 22.2 per cent were selected from the 2002-2004 period, this is significantly less than in other programs, 33.2 per cent, or among non-beneficiaries, 33.7 per cent. In effect, it appears preference was given in UNHCR's programme to the reintegration of more recent returnees.

Table 50: Time of Return

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non- Beneficiaries	Total
Before 2002 %	0 0.00	0 0.00	2 0.14	2 0.06
2002-2004 %	387 22.19	125 33.16	473 33.71	985 27.95
2004-2008 %	710 40.71	216 57.29	521 37.13	1 447 41.06
2009-2011 %	647 37.10	36 9.55	407 29.01	1 090 30.93
Total %	1 744 100.00	377 100.00	1 403 100.00	3 524 100.00

The assumption among stakeholders is that protracted and new caseloads should be dissociated, with duration of displacement becoming a criterion of selection for interventions. However, data from this study shows that the **rates of EVIs do not decrease with the duration of displacement**. Among UNHCR beneficiaries indicated in Table 51, EVIs are systematically right below the 50 per cent mark regardless of whether they were displaced in 2002, 2004 or 2009. As a result, this data draws attention to the fact that **vulnerability, and not the timing of return, should be a key determinant in the selection process**.

Table 51: Time of Return by EVI Status (UNHCR Beneficiaries)

	Not EVI	EVI	Total
2002-2004	202	185	387
%	42.2	47.8	100.00
2004-2008	398	312	710
%	56.06	43.94	100.00
2009-2011	352	295	647
%	54.4	45.6	100.00
Total	952	792	1 744
%	54.59	45.41	100.00

The data on the timing of displacement matched with the timing of return highlights what has been shown before: a preference in the selection process for returned refugees displaced prior to 2001. More recent waves of conflict and displacement, specifically impacting IDPs, were only minimally captured in the sample.

The overwhelming majority, 91.0 per cent, of beneficiaries were those displaced prior to 2001, as illustrated in

Table 52.

Table 52: Time of Displacement and Time of Return (UNHCR Beneficiaries)

	Before 2001	2001-2004	2005-2009	After 2009	Total
2002-2004	369	17	1	0	387
%	21.23	0.98	0.06	0.00	22.27
2004-2008	641	51	14	2	708
%	36.88	2.93	0.81	0.12	40.74
2009-2011	572	36	34	1	643
%	32.91	2.07	1.96	0.06	37.00
Total	1 582	104	49	3	1 738
%	91.02	5.98	2.82	0.17	100.00

4.3 TARGETING OF THE MOST VULNERABLE: MAIN CATEGORIES LEFT OUT

The overreliance on the VRF as the main basis for selection has in certain cases led to the under-representation of particularly vulnerable displaced households. Past research has shown that “the vulnerable within the vulnerable” are IDPs, landless households, female-headed households and those households with ill or disabled members who represent a growing humanitarian concern in the country. We similarly find evidence that these groups are relatively more deprived using a Multi-dimensional Poverty Index which incorporates a range of socio-economic indicators and whose construction is explained further in Chapter 5. Each of these groups will be discussed in this section as main categories of vulnerable and eligible beneficiaries.

4.3.1 IDPs

A fact commonly acknowledged by all stakeholders was that IDPs were underrepresented in the selection process, or only included in small proportions: just above 11 per cent of UNHCR beneficiaries between 2009 and 2011 were IDPs²³. In our own sample, just above 9 per cent of UNHCR beneficiaries were IDPs, as presented in Table 53. It’s important to note however that the selection of IDPs is biased from the start, given locations for assistance were chosen for the presence of refugee returnees. This is evident by the fact that IDPs are only 11 per cent of all non-beneficiaries as indicated in the table below. As such, UNHCR may look to identify where IDPs have a high presence and include those locations in future assistance programs so as to better cover this increasingly important group.

Table 53: IDP within each category

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-Beneficiaries	Total
Non-IDP	1 848	454	1 771	4 073
%	90.81	98.06	88.99	90.75
IDP	187	9	219	415
%	9.19	1.94	11.01	9.25
Total	2 035	463	1 990	4 488
%	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

This is a serious cause for concern as IDPs have been identified as one of the most vulnerable segments of the population and are increasingly considered as a major humanitarian priority in Afghanistan today²⁴. Table 54 below supports this claim, showing that within our sample 83.6 per cent of IDP households are deprived on a range of socio-economic indicators compared to 77.2 per cent of non-IDP households.

²³ UNHCR Assisted IDP families: 2009, 2010, 2011”, UNHCR Data Unit, Kabul.

²⁴ UNHCR, The World Bank « Research on IDPs in Urban Settings », May 2011,,Kabul. NRC/JIPS/IDMC/Samuel Hall, *Challenges of IDP Protection*, 2012, Kabul.

Table 54: Multi-dimensional Poverty Index of IDPs

	Non-IDPs	IDPs	Total
Not Deprived	930	68	998
%	22.83	16.39	22.24
Deprived	3 143	347	3 490
%	77.17	83.61	77.76
Total	4 073	415	4 488
%	100.00	100.00	100.00

Across regions, the Southern provinces were a notable exception with a high number of inter-district conflict-induced IDP beneficiaries provided with one-room shelters as indicated in Table 55. This was the result of an active policy towards IDPs initiated by the sub-office and supported by the central office.

Table 55: UNHCR Assisted IDP Households by Region²⁵

	2009	2010	2011	Total
Central	20	44	26	90
Central Highlands	-	70	34	104
East	-	-	214	214
North	171	652	302	1 125
Northeast	48	194	100	342
South	-	623	950	1 573
Southeast	-	-	-	-
West	65	327	221	613
Total	304	1 910	1 847	4 061

²⁵ From UNHCR Data Unit, Kabul.

Table 56 shows that within our own sample, we find clear targeting of IDP households for shelter assistance in Takhar and Helmand, 92.3 per cent and 87.5 per cent respectively. Moreover, selection of IDPs was noticeable in Faryab, Hirat and Kandahar. However in all other provinces this clear targeting of IDPs did not take place.

Table 56: IDP UNHCR Beneficiaries by Province

	Non-IDPs	IDPs	Total
Kabul	197	0	197
%	100.00	0.00	100.00
Parwan	89	12	101
%	88.12	11.88	100.00
Bamyan	32	0	32
%	100.00	0.00	100.00
Laghman	161	1	162
%	99.38	0.62	100.00
Nangarhar	779	11	790
%	98.61	1.39	100.00
Balkh	45	5	50
%	90.00	10.00	100.00
Faryab	49	26	75
%	65.33	34.67	100.00
Jawzjan	113	5	118
%	95.76	4.24	100.00
Sari Pul	56	0	56
%	100.00	0.00	100.00
Kunduz	54	6	60
%	90.00	10.00	100.00
Takhar	3	36	39
%	7.69	92.31	100.00
Helmand	7	49	56
%	12.50	87.50	100.00
Kandahar	61	14	75
%	81.33	18.67	100.00
Paktya	122	1	123
%	99.19	0.81	100.00
Hirat	80	21	101
%	79.21	20.79	100.00
Total	1 848	187	2 035
%	90.81	9.19	100.00

In the case of IDPs, securing land tenure is highly problematic and was identified as one of the main problems in their inclusion in the program, alongside their difficult identification due to lack of proper documentation. In our sample, Table 57 shows that of UNHCR beneficiaries, IDP households were the least likely, in relation to other groups, to own the land which their shelter was built on prior to assistance.

Table 57: Land Ownership before Building Shelter (UNHCR Beneficiaries)

	Yes	No	Total
Refugee Returnees	1 165	190	1 355
%	85.98	14.02	100.00
Non-refugee Returnees	306	84	390
%	78.46	21.54	100.00
IDP Returnees	126	60	186
%	67.74	32.26	100.00
No Mobility	90	13	103
%	87.38	12.62	100.00
Total	1 687	347	2 034
%	82.94	17.06	100.00

In some cases where they were provided with camp documents (“IDP VRFs” in Kandahar and Hirat), IDPs were included in shelter assistance, though they remained a small proportion of beneficiaries as compared to returnees. Moreover, their **access to assistance in general is highly dependent on the provincial context**, and was mentioned as challenging given the high political nature of displacement. With the rising importance of internal displacement in the Afghan context, this under-representation is highly disquieting, putting into question the relevance of the programme.

The relatively **low inclusion of IDPs in the program compared to returnees is one of the main challenges of the shelter program**, requiring specific attention to identify potential solutions as internal displacement and the incapacity of most IDPs to return to their province of origin is an increasingly important reality in Afghanistan. Not sufficiently taking them into account leaves out substantive segments of populations in need of shelter. This was underlined as a serious concern by community members (e.g. in Kanaqa in Parwan), reporting those who were not able to migrate abroad in the first place were also those with fewer resources and that returnees from Iran and Pakistan returned with more skills and were more able to secure a livelihood than returning IDPs. What is perceived as a discriminating selection can turn into a potential driver of tension, with returning IDPs insisting they had stayed in their country during the war, fought and lost their assets, and not received any form of assistance, whereas better-off returnees were getting all the assistance.

Nonetheless, of those few IDP households which were assisted by the UNHCR programme there is little evidence of difficulties in integrating into the local community.

Table 58 shows the overwhelming majority of IDP households have been positively received by fellow households.

Table 58: IDP Integration (UNHCR Households)

Community Behaviour	N	%
Very welcoming – very supportive	70	37.63
Welcoming – supportive	113	60.75
Not welcoming – not supportive	3	1.61
Total	195	100.00

4.3.2 Landless Vulnerable Households

Similar to IDPs, those households who did not own land were underrepresented in the selection process. This is not surprising given land ownership is in most cases a requirement for receiving shelter assistance, notably in order to avoid later tensions around land tenure, a highly sensitive issue in Afghanistan. As such, **only a small percentage of UNHCR beneficiaries, 17.1 per cent, did not own their land before becoming a beneficiary.** This is in contrast to other programs, where 27.2 per cent of households were landless before assistance.

Table 59: Land Ownership prior to Shelter Assistance

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	Total
Yes	1 687	337	2 024
%	82.94	72.79	81.06
No	347	126	473
%	17.06	27.21	18.94
Total	2 034	463	2 497
%	100.00	100.00	100.00

Similar to IDPs, those households without land are on the whole more likely to be deprived across a range of socio-economic indicators.

Table 60 shows that 82.9 per cent landless households within our sample are deprived compared to 71.0 per cent of land owning households.

Table 60: Multi-dimensional Poverty Index for Landless Households

	Landless		Total
	No	Yes	
Not Deprived	561	437	998
%	28.98	17.12	22.24
Deprived	1,375	2,115	3 490
%	71.02	82.88	77.76
Total	1 936	2 552	4 488
%	100.00	100.00	100.00

The shelter guidelines identify four solutions for providing shelter to landless households: 1) allocation of community or village public land; 2) allocation of private land; 3) allocation of land through the LAS and 4) other land allocation identified as viable and applicable by the BSC²⁶. The fieldwork showed that none of these solutions seemed to have been applied much in the field, aside from LAS in LAS townships, which is also supported by Table 62. Neither UNHCR or IPs mentioned trying to resolve the issue of landlessness for vulnerable families through the suggested solutions which was particularly sensible in areas where such types of solutions had been implemented by other organizations (UN-Habitat in Bez Akmalati, Nangarhar for instance). Compensating the absence of land documents through confirmation of land ownership by the local shura was the only active procedure mentioned.

Community representative also only mentioned that the proposed solutions were applied in a very limited number of cases. In 27 of the 60 communities vulnerable landless households applied to the shelter assistance programme. Less than half of the communities were able to provide shelter assistance to those without land ownership as can be seen in Table 61.

Table 61: Land Allocation in Communities

	N	%
No means	14	53.85
Allocation of public land	4	15.38
Allocation of private land	3	11.54
Other means	3	11.54
Land Allocation Scheme	2	7.69
Total	26	100.00

²⁶ UNHC Shelter Guidelines, p. 8.

Beneficiary households had either inherited land or bought it, either collectively (land purchased by an entire tribe) or individually. In the case of the latter, there are doubts that these households represent the most vulnerable. However, there were a small percentage of landless households that received land in order to be able to build their shelter. As Table 62 shows the most commonly applied solution reported by beneficiaries in the field was the Land Allocation Scheme.

Table 62: Land Allocation Solutions

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	Total
Land Allocation Scheme	140	104	244
%	40.35	82.54	51.59
Other	112	9	121
%	32.28	7.14	25.58
Family/ land of relatives	50	10	60
%	14.41	7.94	12.68
Community or village	35	3	38
%	10.09	2.38	8.03
Rental land	10	0	10
%	2.88	0.00	2.11
Total	347	126	473
%	100.00	100.00	100.00

However, given the low level of prior explanation of criteria to community members, landless vulnerable families were not brought to the attention of the BSC and were in many cases de facto excluded from the programme. No occurrences of community assistance to landless people by providing private or communal land in order for them to receive shelter were observed on the field.

These findings show that, even more than other shelter programmes implemented in the country, UNHCR SAP is leaving out one of the most vulnerable segments of the displaced population and that no functioning mechanism is in place to try to integrate this population.

4.3.3 Female-headed households

The third group of interest is that of female-headed households. In the data collected for the purpose of this study, there were a total of 116 female headed households. Of this total, the majority, 79.3 per cent, are widows while 15.5 per cent are married, as shown in Table 63.

Table 63: Marital Status of Female-Headed Households

	N	%
Widow	92	79.31
Married	18	15.52
Single	4	3.45
Engaged	1	0.86
Divorced	1	0.86
Total	116	100.00

Moreover, Table 64 shows that **of all households assisted by UNHCR only 1.9 per cent are female-headed households** in comparison to the 4.8 per cent assisted by other organizations.

Table 64: Beneficiary Status of Female-Headed Households

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-Beneficiaries	Total
Yes	38	22	56	116
%	1.87	4.75	2.81	2.58
No	1 997	441	1 934	4 372
%	98.13	95.25	97.19	97.42
Total	2 035	463	1 990	4 488
%	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

The underrepresentation of female-headed households in the SAP is particularly worrisome when taking into consideration how vulnerable they are in comparison to male-headed households. Again using the Multi-dimensional Poverty Index, we see that 95.7 per cent of female-headed households within our sample are deprived across a range of socio-economic indicators compared to only 77.3 per cent of male-headed households.

Table 65: Multi-dimensional Poverty Index of Female-Headed Households

	Female-Headed Household		Total
	No	Yes	
Not Deprived	993	5	998
%	22.71	4.31	22.24
Deprived	3 379	111	3 490
%	77.29	95.69	77.76
Total	4 372	116	4 488
%	100.00	100.00	100.00

Moreover, our research shows that allocating assistance to widows was well understood in most communities. However, they were in most cases the only women to be clearly included in the programme as EVIs.

The fact that women were not included in the beneficiary selection in several areas raises concern about the effective access to female-headed households, but also about the assessment of the living conditions of potentially eligible families, since, as it was noticed in the field for our own staff, only women are allowed to enter private areas. Aside from including a female IP staff in the selection process in some of the provinces, none of the procedures mentioned in the guidelines for inclusion of females in selection have been mentioned either by sub-offices, IPs or community members.

4.3.4 Households with Ill or Disabled Members

Finally, households with a member who is physically, mentally or chronically ill are also considered extremely vulnerable. As indicated in Table 66 we find that within our sample **35.3 per cent of households of this type are UNHCR beneficiaries** compared to the 37.8 per cent from other organizations.

Table 66: Households with Ill or Disabled Members

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-Beneficiaries	Total
No	1 316	288	1 305	2 909
%	64.67	62.20	65.58	64.82
Yes	719	175	685	1 579
%	35.33	37.80	34.42	35.18
Total	2 035	463	1 990	4 488
%	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

While the representation of households with ill or disabled members is on par with the entire sample, they are more likely to be vulnerable than the average shown again by the Multi-dimensional Poverty Index in

Table 67. Here we find that 82.0 per cent of these households are deprived across a range of socio-economic indicators in comparison to the 75.5 per cent which do not have an ill or disabled member.

Table 67: Multi-dimensional Poverty Index for Households with Ill or Disables Members

	Ill or Disabled		Total
	No	Yes	
Not Deprived	713	285	998
%	24.51	18.05	22.24
Deprived	2 196	1 294	3 490
%	75.49	81.95	77.76
Total	2 909	1 579	4 488
%	100.00	100.00	100.00

4.4 FACTORS EXPLAINING THE WEAKNESSES OF THE SELECTION PROCESS

Qualitative research helped identify some of the key factors weakening the robustness of the SAP's selection process:

- 1. Lack of awareness about the criteria of selection:** There is a clear misunderstanding of the criteria for selection on behalf of communities, and worryingly, IPs also emphasized the importance of the VRF in selection. There is evidence that vulnerability was sometimes only considered as secondary criteria, behind other guidelines of the programme. Only in rare cases was vulnerability mentioned by both communities and IPs as playing a role in the selection process. UNHCR field staff themselves were only partially aware of the fact that vulnerability should be central in the selection process. A recurrent observation was that documented recent returnees were entitled to receive a shelter regardless of their degree of vulnerability. The high priority of the VRF can further be explained by the fact that it simplifies identification of returnees, with less subsequent effort put into assessing the effective needs of potential beneficiaries.

Moreover, the often weak and fragmented awareness about the criteria for selection may have potential repercussions for intra- or inter-community tensions (see Section 5). Misunderstanding of the criteria, and the feeling that the programme discriminates against vulnerable households was seen as sometimes leading to resentment on behalf of non-beneficiaries and is thus a potential driver of conflict. This indicates the lack of clear communication about the criteria utilized for assistance prior to the selection process.

2. **Supply-driven process of selection:** One of the main challenges to the effective selection of vulnerable households was the fact that selection of areas of implementation was more supply-driven rather than being based on a needs assessment. In cases where high return areas were identified and allocated a high number of shelters, all VRF holders in a tribe indiscriminately received assistance. This raises the issue of the quality of the preliminary assessment of needs done by UNHCR. There were recurrent problems observed in Kabul, Hirat and Nangarhar, with quotas of shelters having to be met whatsoever. This has a considerable impact on selection, as in such cases shelters are distributed to less vulnerable households based on the VRF criteria, whereas neighbouring communities are completely left out of the programme, fuelling potential tensions as the case of Kuchi Abad in Kabul province clearly shows.
3. **Quick selection process:** There were conflicting comments about the time-span of the selection process and no reliable information could be gathered about the effective duration of selection. In several cases, the short amount of time effectively spent in the village for selection of beneficiaries raised problems in targeting vulnerable households. In Nangarhar, cases were mentioned where potentially eligible people could not take off work during selection and were therefore excluded from the process. In areas where various programmes were implemented, beneficiaries compared the selection processes of different organizations and deemed the UN-Habitat process fairer as it was more focused on community participation.
4. **Weakness of UNHCR selection tool:** A possible explanation for the insufficient attention paid to vulnerability in selection is the fact that the “Beneficiary Social Verification Check List” provided by UNHCR to its IPs in order to identify eligible households uses broad and vague categories inappropriate to assess the effective degree of vulnerability of a household. Stronger guidelines about vulnerability and the inclusion of under-represented categories should come both from the central level and from the active involvement of the protection unit.
5. **Unclear connection between the SAP and UNHCR EVI project:** Discussions with IPs and field staff showed that there was confusion between the focus on vulnerability articulated in the guidelines of the SAP and the extra assistance received by extremely vulnerable beneficiaries in the frame of UNHCR’s EVI project in place since 2002 which gives small cash grants to EVIs. For example, Hirat and Nangarhar sub-offices underlined the fact that imposed quotas of assistance to EVIs (5-10%) were considered as a glass ceiling above which they could not provide further assistance. The overall understanding of EVI categories as a framework for selection is therefore lacking.

5. SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE SHELTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

This section presents the multi-dimensional poverty analysis used to assess the impact of SAP:

- **Over three quarters, 78 per cent, of the overall sample are multi-dimensionally poor** – in education, economic well-being, social capital, housing and health.
- **The highest rates of poverty are seen among non-shelter beneficiaries.** 86 per cent of non-shelter beneficiaries are multi-dimensionally poor, as opposed to 71 per cent of UNHCR shelter beneficiaries and 68 per cent of non-UNHCR shelter beneficiaries. Other shelter agencies have a lower poverty rate than UNHCR beneficiaries in the East.
- **IDPs are the most deprived group among beneficiaries.** Supporting the idea that IDPs are ‘the most vulnerable within the vulnerable’, within our sample they have the highest overall rate of poverty at 81 per cent of all UNHCR beneficiaries. Refugee returnees are the least deprived, receiving the core of the assistance.

Utilizing a cross-sectional regression analysis to measure differences in probability of deprivation across groups, our results find **a correlation between lower rates of poverty and inclusion in the UNHCR shelter programme.** Households are more likely to be poor if they are non-beneficiaries, as compared to the reference groups UNHCR beneficiary and other shelter beneficiary.

While the results of the cross-sectional regression analysis are suggestive, they do not indicate causation of deprivation since the most vulnerable beneficiaries were often left out of the beneficiary selection (see Chapter 4). Those households chosen to be UNHCR beneficiaries or non-UNHCR beneficiaries may have been selected precisely because they were less deprived.

However using a difference in difference analysis looking at differences across groups and across time – after return from abroad and after receiving assistance – we find **solid evidence that the UNHCR shelter assistance programme had a significant and positive impact on reducing household deprivation along certain indicators of interest including access to a house, electricity, sanitation and access to a mobile.**

5.1 IMPACT ON BENEFICIARY HOUSEHOLDS

5.1.1 Preliminary Observations

Beneficiaries by-and-large perceived the impact of the shelter assistance on their economic situation as positive. In the overwhelming majority of cases, beneficiaries were satisfied with their participation in the programme, first and foremost because it addressed a priority need in their lives and second, as they perceived it had significantly improved their living conditions and the socio-economic situation of their household. UNHCR and non-UNHCR shelter beneficiaries alike assessed a positive impact of the shelter programme on their well-being, highlighting that the type of aid offered – i.e. shelter assistance – was best adapted to their needs upon return.

As indicated in Table 68, half of UNHCR beneficiaries indicated that participation in the shelter programme improved their economic situation. About 6 per cent of the UNHCR beneficiaries indicated that it was far better than before. A quarter of the respondents did not notice any change in their economic situation, while around 18 per cent believed their economic situation to be worse or far worse following assistance. The perception of community leaders is even more positive, with 98 per cent indicating that the shelter assistance programme improved the situation of the beneficiaries. Only one respondent denied such a positive impact.

Table 68: Subjective Impact of Shelter Assistance on Economic Situation of the Household (in %)

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	Total
Far worse	3.52	2.85	3.41
Worse	14.72	15.28	14.81
Same	25.65	27.98	26.04
Better	50.00	50.26	50.04
Far better	6.11	3.63	5.70
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

In all the provinces visited, beneficiaries saw the programme as one of the most important support systems they could receive upon return or displacement and did not doubt that their participation in the programme had positively impacted their household, often significantly.

There are several aspects by which the programme improved the socio-economic situation of beneficiaries:

i. Improvement of housing conditions

The first obvious effect of the programme on households was the direct improvement of beneficiaries' living conditions thanks to the access to a durable building to reside in. This is far from a trivial impact, as their former housing conditions were often very precarious. Table 69 shows that UNHCR beneficiary households moved into single family houses either by themselves or with other families. This is the case for households in rural as well as urban households. SAP particularly provided households in semi-rural areas with the means to move out of temporary and shared housing arrangements and into their own single family house. Beneficiaries also share their new living space with other households.

Table 69: Percentage Change in Housing Arrangement Before and After Assistance by Location (UNHCR Beneficiaries)

	Urban (N=292)	Semi-rural (N=404)	Rural (N=1234)	Total (N=1930)
We own a single family house	24.22	126.16	89.23	81.22
We own a house that we share with other households	20.00	175.00	45.83	52.63
We own a single family apartment	0.00	-	100.00	50.00
We rent a house that we share with other households	-100.00	-100.00	-76.47	-90.70
We rent a single family house	-100.00	-95.92	-94.64	-95.87
We live with family	-100.00	-97.50	-97.38	-97.52
We live in a temporary shelter (shack; tent)	-91.67	-99.13	-97.40	-97.73
We live with friends	-87.50	-100.00	-100.00	-98.11
Other	-	-100.00	-100.00	-100.00
I don't know	-	-	-100.00	-100.00

Qualitative fieldwork showed without ambiguity the importance of getting a durable house in the life of beneficiaries. This is linked to the type of housing that the beneficiaries had prior to their participation in the programme. The qualitative fieldwork identified the following scenario:

- In a significant number of cases, the programme enabled a transition from tent and temporary shelters to durable shelters. Field observations showed that some specific segments of the returnee and IDP populations were more likely than others to be living in tents before receiving their shelters. This was often the case for:
 - a) Former nomadic tribes like Kuchi or Arab tribes as for example in Aâb Dara in Kabul province, in Saracha in Nangarhar or in Kandahar province;

- b) New settlements where no housing structures pre-existed to host new influx of populations like in Shogofan 1 in Hirat province;
 - c) In villages where the entire population had had to flee during the civil war or the Taliban regime and found their village destroyed upon return as for example in Shobash Khorde Turkmenia in Jawzjan or in Parwan province, which was a front line during the conflict. Houses had been destroyed directly by fighting or simply by prolonged period of absence.
 - d) IDP caseloads.
- Another typical situation observed in the field was returning households being hosted by relatives. In these cases, families had to share small and over-crowded living spaces in the original compound of their ancestors. Often, brothers would have got married while in Pakistan and would have to share the unique compound of their ancestors with their siblings and their families when they came back to their place of origin. This explains why a lot of the shelters visited were built within familial compounds, next to a pre-existing house or the instances where multiple shelters were built in one familial compound.
 - A third common situation was that of returnee or IDP families renting their house before getting shelter assistance. Perhaps contrarily to other contexts, renting a house is an issue in a country like Afghanistan characterised by a very strong under-employment and irregular incomes. Renting a house reinforces the risk of indebtedness and is in itself a form of socio-economic insecurity for rural households.

This means that the shelter programme plays an important role in the protection of displaced populations who avoid the multiple risks related to precarious housing conditions. The impact of the programme in terms of protection is multifaceted:

- Firstly, a durable shelter is a real improvement in terms of protection of returnee and IDP families in an environment where protection risks are numerous and reinforced by displacements²⁷. This came back in every focus group discussion with beneficiaries. Several threats to protection arise from the fact of living in temporary shelters. Those include an increased vulnerability towards the harsh weather conditions existing in the country. Temporary shelters leave children and pregnant women in very precarious situations. This is not a negligible protection risk as witnessed by the 2012 harsh winter which claimed the lives of at least 30 children in the IDP informal settlements of Kabul²⁸.
- The absence of permanent shelter during winter is a driver for secondary migrations from the North of the country to the East and the Southeast, as it was mentioned in Aad Dara. The programme therefore limits secondary displacements due to harsh living conditions.

²⁷ For IDPs, see for example Samuel Hall/NRC/IDMC/JISP, “Research Study on the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons in Afghanistan”, NRC, 2012.

²⁸ For more information, see: NYT article: Rod Nordland, Afghan Refugee Children Perish in Harsh Winter, 9 May 2012, *New York Times*.

- Several stakeholders also pointed out the various improvements that the shelters brought to the lives of beneficiaries in terms of hygiene and sanitation. For example, the use of two separate rooms reduces the risk of transmission of communicable diseases and improves the ventilation conditions within the shelters. The obligation to build separate latrines is also a real improvement for the hygiene of beneficiary households, even if these latrines were not always used in all the communities visited for this survey.
- Getting a shelter was also a way to reduce the protection risks related to overcrowded living conditions when several families were forced to share their living space. Several issues arose from the fact of sharing private houses: a lack of intimacy hardly compatible with the cultural norms at play in Afghan communities, and an increased risk of violence against women and children linked to the extra stress caused by displacement and stressful living conditions.

ii. Social position of beneficiary households

• Fresh Start

Getting a permanent shelter was also perceived by beneficiaries as the necessary basis on which to start re-building their lives upon return or following displacement. Beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries alike indicated that shelter was one of their very first needs upon return and/or displacement. It therefore appeared as the first asset that returnees and IDPs tried to secure once they reached their place of origin or their place of displacement. Beneficiaries confirmed without ambiguity that UNHCR assistance greatly helped them securing this, as a lot of beneficiary households would not have been able to buy the material or to pay for the necessary labour to build their shelters on their own financial means.

• Social Status

An important aspect related to the access to ownership and permanent housing was also the feeling of beneficiary families to have gained – or in most cases recovered – an ‘honourable’ social position in their community. Sharing houses with relatives gave to a lot of beneficiaries the feeling that they imposed an undue burden on their relatives. Living in tents or not owning one’s own house was perceived as a real loss of social status. A lot of people interviewed mentioned that living in a temporary shelter – especially in tents – was equivalent to a life of beggars, often object of despise in the Afghan

When guests come, now we can receive them. Before, we couldn't welcome them properly, now we can. This is good for the entire community and for our honour

Khord Agha, UNHCR Beneficiary – Beshood, Saracha

society²⁹, as summarized by a local Afghan saying: ‘ask for bread but don’t ask for a house’, meaning that begging for bread is acceptable, but not for a house³⁰.

Regaining a proper house was therefore a way for beneficiary household to re-establish a satisfying social position.

iii. Economic impacts of the programme

- **UNHCR Shelters, a Base for Economic Activities?**

The 2012 Danida Evaluation of ROI support to Afghanistan brought to light the interesting argument that the shelters had an important economic impact on the lives of beneficiary households, as they served as ‘home-based enterprises’ where beneficiaries – especially women – could set up their own economic activities³¹.

Yet this research only marginally supported this argument. The field team observed, only in the Northern region, that women were weaving carpets within their shelters. Moreover, the quantitative data does not provide strong evidence for such an impact. Table 70 compares the level of self-employment among beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries across the different phases of migration and after integration in the shelter programme. The data shows that for UNHCR beneficiaries, beneficiaries of other programmes and non-beneficiaries the level of self-employment decreased when they returned from migration. Comparing the levels of self-employment one month before receiving assistance and at the point of interview, it appears that while no change is observed for beneficiaries of other programmes, the self-employment rate for UNHCR beneficiaries increased by about 5 per cent. However, no causal relationship between participation in the shelter programme and this increase can be assumed. **This potential impact of the shelter programme therefore should not be overestimated**, particularly as the qualitative fieldwork showed that a) the proportion of shelters used for economic purposes among the shelters visited was very low and b) this economic function appeared to exist only in specific provinces (North/Northeast).

²⁹ See for example – Samuel Hall Consulting, (2011), Jogi and Chori Frosh communities: a Story of Marginalization. Commissioned by UNICEF.

³⁰ See FGD Bamyan UNHCR Beneficiaries Nawabad Sashpul: Mohammed Reza – ‘*Gadaygar- e naan bash, gadaygar- e khana nabash.*’ in Dari.

³¹ DANIDA ROI Evaluation (2012), p. 74.

Table 70: Self-Employment as Main Income-generating Activity

	Before migration		After return		1 Month prior assistance		Time of survey	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
UNHCR Beneficiaries	546	28.28	390	20.20	464	24.03	592	29.13
Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	132	34.29	103	26.68	103	26.68	124	26.78
Non-Beneficiaries	480	29.59	350	29.59	-	-	558	28.1

- **Assessing the risks of increased indebtedness**

For the most vulnerable, participating in the shelter programme was not an easy process as it would undoubtedly place the economic resources of beneficiary households under considerable pressure. The contribution required from beneficiaries included the material for the walls and paying for skilled and unskilled labour necessary for the construction of the shelter. Table 71 shows that Laghman (66.1%), Bamyan (62.5%), Helmand (51.8%), Nangarhar (51.5%) and Hirat (47.5%) are the provinces where the highest proportions of beneficiaries reporting increased level of indebtedness. Faryab, Sari Pul, Kabul or Jawzjan provinces on the other hand seemed relatively more immune to this issue. Various factors may explain the differences across provinces:

- Qualitative observations found that indebtedness appeared more of an issue in areas where beneficiaries had to procure burnt bricks, especially Kandahar, Nangarhar or Hirat. In areas where shelters were built with mud bricks, like in Jawzjan or Kabul provinces, procuring the building material was easier for beneficiaries. Beneficiaries reported heavily relying on informal credit, borrowing money from multiple sources in the community. In Hirat province as well, procuring for the burnt bricks was challenging for beneficiaries, who sometimes had to buy their bricks on credit from the surrounding brick kilns.
- The remoteness and insecurity of certain provinces may also enter into play as the prices of labour and material are higher in area. This would for example be the case in Laghman and in Bamyan provinces.

Table 71: UNHCR Beneficiaries Change in Indebtedness after Receiving Assistance (in %)

	Decreased	Increased	Remained	No debt	I don't know	Total
Kabul	32.99	37.06	21.83	5.58	2.54	100.00
Parwan	43.56	38.61	6.93	7.92	2.97	100.00
Bamyan	15.63	62.5	15.63	6.25	0.00	100.00
Laghman	23.46	66.05	4.94	4.94	0.62	100.00
Nangarhar	32.41	51.52	10.25	5.19	0.63	100.00
Balkh	40.00	38.00	6.00	12.00	4.00	100.00
Faryab	40.00	26.67	16.00	10.67	6.67	100.00
Jawzjan	40.68	36.44	6.78	15.25	0.85	100.00
Sari Pul	46.43	25.00	10.71	16.07	1.79	100.00
Kunduz	43.33	31.67	13.33	11.67	0.00	100.00
Takhar	21.05	39.47	21.05	13.16	5.26	100.00
Helmand	33.93	51.79	8.93	5.36	0.00	100.00
Kandahar	37.33	42.67	6.67	8.00	5.33	100.00
Paktya	34.96	40.65	11.38	10.57	2.44	100.00
Hirat	32.67	47.52	11.88	3.96	3.96	100.00
Total	33.87	45.97	11.06	7.33	1.77	100.00

- It must be added that distortions and flaws in the selection process significantly increases the risk of indebtedness of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. In Hirat province for example, IDP households sought to buy ‘fake’ VRF for the equivalent of between 140 and 200 USD to increase their chances to get selected. In some instances, it was also reported that beneficiaries had to pay additional amounts of money (reportedly 10,000 AFS or 200 USD) to the *malik* and the IP to access the programme. Such complaints were also reported in Nangarhar province, where returnees in LAS townships had to pay bribes to the DoRR in order to receive a plot. Unsurprisingly this increases significantly the total contribution required from beneficiary households. It also threatens non-beneficiary households who invest in these types of strategies with no guarantee of being ‘paid back’ by at least accessing a permanent shelter.

- **Debt and informal loans as a common coping strategy in Afghanistan**

If indebtedness did increase in absolute terms following the participation in the programme, the phenomenon cannot be assessed outside the very specific economic context of Afghanistan. Informal loans are a common practice for households, which do not have access to any other forms of outside funding, in the absence of a formal banking system or a redistributing welfare state. As summarized by AREU in their research on the subject: *‘on the question of how widespread the use of informal credit in rural livelihoods is, the answer is simple: all households both take and give informal credit.’*³² This was confirmed by most stakeholders who judged that the programme was a way of limiting the extent of indebtedness of beneficiary households rather than increasing it. In Bez Akmalati for instance, beneficiaries from other programmes and the community leader expressly mentioned that non-beneficiaries had to go through higher levels on indebtedness to build shelters. In several cases, non-beneficiaries mentioned they were not able to acquire the same quality of material as the one provided by UNHCR (especially iron beams).

Coping with high levels of indebtedness is highly dependent on the relative economic dynamism of the location, offering potential opportunities for beneficiaries to reimburse their debts. In an environment where every household incurs debts, beneficiary households are actually benefiting from a very unusual access to in-kind support for the construction of their shelter. Unsustainable indebtedness is therefore more likely for non-beneficiaries than for beneficiaries. The fact that a large majority of beneficiary respondents said that they did not regret participating in the programme despite the extra debt that they had to incur tends to suggest that the issue of indebtedness was not a major challenge for beneficiaries.

iv. **Access to Services**

Focusing on fundamental services households have access to, we find modest differences between UNHCR beneficiaries, non-UNHCR beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. Generally – whether looking at access to water, electricity, heating or health services – we see **at least some deprivation among UNHCR shelter beneficiaries, which leaves room for future areas of improvement in the programme. Stronger linkages will need to be made, in future programming, between housing and water, housing and electricity, housing and health, in order to see shelter not only as a physical attribute but as a ‘home’ meeting beneficiaries’ expectations.** Therefore, having stronger linkages with national priority programmes and service delivery institutions and organizations is a way to vastly improve the access to services for shelter beneficiaries.

³² AREU, (2007): ‘Finding the Money: Informal Credit Practices in Rural Afghanistan’ in *Synthesis Paper Series*. p. 19.

- **Safe Drinking Water**

In terms of safe drinking water, Table 72 shows a total of 7.5 per cent of those households surveyed have no access, while only 2.4 per cent of those are non-UNHCR beneficiaries compared to the 8.3 per cent of UNHCR beneficiaries.

Table 72: Access to Safe Drinking Water

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non- Beneficiaries	Total
Yes, we boil water	42	1	53	96
%	2.06	0.22	2.66	2.14
Yes, free potable water	1 725	413	1 652	3 790
%	84.77	89.2	83.02	84.45
Yes, we buy potable water	99	38	129	266
%	4.86	8.21	6.48	5.93
No	169	11	156	336
%	8.30	2.38	7.84	7.49
Total	2 035	463	1 990	4 488
%	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

- **Power Supply**

As for power supply, around the same percentage of households in each group, 48 per cent have no electricity. Still, non-UNHCR beneficiary households are much less likely to have access to public electricity and thus are more prone to use personal generators.

Table 73: Type of Electricity

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non- Beneficiaries	Total
Public electricity	350	36	352	738
%	17.20	7.78	17.69	16.44
Personal generator	55	32	47	134
%	2.70	6.91	2.36	2.99
Public and personal generator	217	81	259	557
%	10.66	17.49	13.02	12.41
Solar electricity	428	87	393	908
%	21.03	18.79	19.75	20.23
No electricity	985	227	939	2 151
%	48.4	49.03	47.19	47.93
Total	2 035	463	1 990	4 488
%	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

- **Heating**

In terms of heating, UNHCR beneficiary households are the least likely of the three groups to not have any form of heating at 28.7 per cent, in comparison with 54.9 per cent of non-UNHCR beneficiary households. Moreover, UNHCR beneficiaries are much more likely to use Sandali as a heating source, while non-UNHCR beneficiaries are more likely to use Bukhari.

Table 74: Type of Heating

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-Beneficiaries	Total
Central public heating	3	0	3	6
%	0.15	0.00	0.15	0.13
Bukhari	631	175	619	1 425
%	31.01	37.8	31.11	31.75
Electricity	10	2	13	25
%	0.49	0.43	0.65	0.56
Sandali	627	10	571	1 208
%	30.81	2.16	28.69	26.92
Tanur/ Tabakhana	132	3	96	231
%	6.49	0.65	4.82	5.15
Gas	46	19	63	128
%	2.26	4.10	3.17	2.85
None	584	254	618	1 456
%	28.70	54.86	31.06	32.44
Other	2	0	7	9
%	0.10	0.00	0.35	0.20
Total	2 035	463	1 990	4 488
%	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

- **Health Facility**

Lastly, UNHCR beneficiary households are much more likely to have no access to any health facility in comparison to non-UNHCR beneficiary households, 15.0 per cent compared to 1.7 per cent. Still, non-UNHCR beneficiaries are more likely to live one or more hours away from a health facility than UNHCR beneficiaries, and around the same percentage of households in each group live within one hour.

Table 75: Distance to nearest health facility

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non- Beneficiaries	Total
Less than one hour away %	1 019 50.07	241 52.05	1 045 52.51	2 305 51.36
One or more hours away %	708 34.79	213 46.00	667 33.52	1 588 35.38
None accessible %	306 15.04	8 1.73	275 13.82	589 13.12
I don't know %	2 0.10	1 0.22	3 0.15	6 0.13
Total %	2 035 100.00	463 100.00	1 990 100.00	4 488 100.00

5.1.2 Multi-dimensional Poverty Analysis

As stated in Section 2, the multi-dimensional poverty analysis allows us to conduct a more comprehensive assessment of how deprivation relates to our sample than would be the case if using a single monetary indicator like income. Our approach follows that which was pioneered in UNDPs widely-recognized *Human Poverty Index (HPI)* within their *Human Development Reports (HDRs)*, and has since been developed further in recent years by such authors like Alkire and Santos (2011)³³ and Alkire and Foster (2007)³⁴.

As **Error! Reference source not found.** shown in the Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index (Section 2 – table 5), 78 per cent of households within our sample are multi-dimensionally poor. In terms of poverty by dimension, we find that 66 per cent of households are deprived in *Dimension 1: Economic*, 87 per cent of households are deprived in *Dimension 2: Education*, 33 per cent of households are deprived in *Dimension 3: Health and Nutrition*, 43 per cent of households are deprived in *Dimension 4: Housing*, and 50 per cent of households are deprived in *Dimension 5: Social Capital and Inclusion*. In regards to poverty along individual indicators, some of the highest levels of deprivation occur in all dimensions. For example, 91 per cent of households have no membership in a community organization, 81 per cent own no livestock, 78 per cent of household respondents are illiterate, 77 per cent have less than 2 sources of income, and 52 per cent of households spend less than 690 AFS/month on food.

³³ ALKIRE Sabina, SANTOS Maria Emma, “The Multidimensional Poverty Index: Contradictions and Analysis”, October 2011.

³⁴ ALKIRE Sabina, FOSTER James, “Counting and Multidimensional Poverty Measurement”, OPHI Working Paper No.7, University of Oxford, 2007.

5.1.3 Mean Difference across Groups

By comparing the average multi-dimensional poverty rate across groups, we identify differences in deprivation. Table 76, we compare those households which were assisted by UNHCR with those household which were assisted by other organizations as well as with those which were not assisted at all. **The comparison shows that non-beneficiaries report the highest overall multi-dimensional poverty at 86 per cent.** What's more, UNHCR beneficiaries are slightly worse off overall than their non-UNHCR counterparts, 71 per cent against 68 per cent.

Table 76: Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index by Beneficiary Status

	Mean	SE	[95% Conf. Intervals]
UNHCR Beneficiaries	0.71	0.01	0.70 - 0.73
Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	0.68	0.02	0.64 - 0.73
Non-Beneficiaries	0.86	0.01	0.85 - 0.88
Prob > F = 0.0000	N=4 488		

Furthermore, a breakdown by whether the household has an official refugee returnee, a non-refugee returnee, an IDP or no members who have ever moved helps to identify how different groups within our sample fare. Here, IDPs are noticeable more deprived than any other group while refugee returnees are the least deprived.

Table 77: Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index by Migration Status

	Mean	SE	[95% Conf. Intervals]
Refugee Returnee	0.74	0.01	0.72 - 0.76
Non-Refugee Returnee	0.82	0.01	0.80 - 0.84
IDP	0.84	0.02	0.80 - 0.87
No Mobility	0.80	0.02	0.76 - 0.83
Prob > F = 0.0000	N=4 488		

Finally we are able to combine those two previous breakdowns to provide a more detailed comparison of overall multi-dimensional poverty by sub groups. **aries alike.**

Table 78 shows that among UNHCR beneficiaries, IDPs have the highest overall rate of poverty at 81 per cent. On the other hand, non-refugee returnees have the highest overall rate of poverty among non-UNHCR beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries alike.

Table 78: Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index by Beneficiary and Migration Status

		Mean	SE	[95% Conf. Intervals]
UNHCR Beneficiaries	Refugee Returnees	0.70	0.01	0.67 - 0.72
	Non-Refugee Returnees	0.72	0.02	0.67 - 0.76
	IDPs	0.81	0.03	0.75 - 0.86
	No Mobility	0.76	0.04	0.67 - 0.84
Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	Refugee Returnees	0.67	0.03	0.62 - 0.73
	Non-Refugee Returnees	0.74	0.04	0.66 - 0.81
	IDPs	0.67	0.17	0.34 - 0.99
	No Mobility	0.62	0.06	0.51 - 0.73
Non-Beneficiaries	Refugee Returnees	0.85	0.01	0.82 - 0.87
	Non-Refugee Returnees	0.89	0.01	0.87 - 0.91
	IDPs	0.87	0.02	0.82 - 0.91
	No Mobility	0.85	0.02	0.81 - 0.88
	Prob > F = 0.0000	N=4 488		

5.1.4 Cross-Sectional Regression Analysis

While these mean comparisons of overall multi-dimensional poverty are suggestive of differences among groups, we are able to perform a cross-sectional regression analysis, explained in Section 2, which more completely measures differences in deprivation between groups.

The results of the regression analysis based on a 3-group breakdown are presented in Table 79, with each separate model using a different reference group by which to compare the other two groups against. Because coefficients of a probit model with binary dependent variables are inherently problematic for interpretation, the marginal effect is presented.

Models 1 and 2 estimate that the probability of being multi-dimensionally poor is significant and increases by 15 per cent and 17 per cent simply by being a non-beneficiary in comparison to the reference beneficiary groups. Likewise, Model 3 predicts the probability of being multi-dimensionally poor decreases by 16 per cent and 21 per cent by being a UNHCR beneficiary and non-UNHCR beneficiary, respectively, in comparison to a non-beneficiary.

Table 79: Multi-dimensional Poverty Index by Beneficiary Status (Marginal Effects)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
UNHCR Beneficiaries		0.02	-0.16***
Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	-0.02		-0.21***
Non-Beneficiaries	0.15***	0.17***	
N	4 485	4 485	4 485

The results of the regression analysis based on the 4-group breakdown are presented in

Table 80, with again each separate model using a different reference group by which to compare the other three groups against. Here Model 1 estimates the probability of being multi-dimensionally poor is significant and increases by 7 per cent, 5 per cent and 5 per cent by being a non-refugee returnee, IDP and having no mobility in relation to the reference group, refugee returnee. Similarly,

Models 2-4 support this result indicating the probability of being multi-dimensionally poor is significant and decreases by 7 per cent, 6 per cent and 5 per cent by being a refugee returnee, in relation to the reference groups of non-refugee returnee, IDP and no mobility, respectively.

Table 80: Multi-dimensional Poverty Index by Migration Status (Marginal Effects)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Refugee Returnees		-0.07***	-0.06*	-0.05**
Non-Refugee Returnees	0.07***		0.02	0.02
IDPs	0.05*	-0.02		0.01
No Mobility	0.05**	-0.02	-0.01	
N	4 485	4 485	4 485	4 485

Finally, the results of the regression analysis based on the more detailed 12-group breakdown are presented in

Table 81 -

Table 83, with again each separate model using a different reference group by which to compare the other 11 groups against. In Models 1-4, the reference group is always a sub-group of UNHCR beneficiary. In each, the estimated probability of being multi-dimensionally poor is significant and positive for each of the non-beneficiary sub-groups in relation to the reference group. The marginal effect shows this

estimation is at its most extreme when comparing the non-beneficiary, non-refugee sub-group to each of the UNHCR beneficiary sub-groups.

Table 81: Multi-dimensional Poverty Index by Beneficiary and Migration Status (1) (Marginal Effects)

		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
UNHCR Beneficiaries	Refugee Returnees		-0.02	-0.05	-0.05
	Non-Refugee Returnees	0.02		-0.03	-0.02
	IDPs	0.04	0.02		0.00
	No Mobility	0.04	0.02	0.00	
Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	Refugee Returnees	-0.04	-0.06	-0.09	-0.09
	Non-Refugee Returnees	0.04	0.02	0.00	0.00
	IDPs	0.04	0.02	0.00	0.00
	No Mobility	-0.04	-0.07	-0.1	-0.09
Non-Beneficiaries	Refugee Returnees	0.14***	0.12***	0.10**	0.10**
	Non-Refugee Returnees	0.16***	0.15***	0.13***	0.13***
	IDPs	0.12***	0.11***	0.09*	0.09*
	No Mobility	0.11***	0.10***	0.08*	0.08*
	N	4 485	4 485	4 485	4 485

Likewise, Models 5-8 use each of the Non-UNHCR Beneficiary sub-groups as a reference group. **Again, the estimated probability of being multi-dimensionally poor is significant and positive for nearly all non-beneficiary sub-groups in relation to the reference group.** Only in Model 7 are the estimations not significant, most likely due to the low number of observations for the reference group non-UNHCR beneficiary, IDPs. Moreover, Model 6 shows that the estimated probability of being multi-dimensionally poor is significant and negative for non-UNHCR beneficiaries, refugee returnees in relation to the reference group non-UNHCR beneficiaries, non-refugee returnees.

Table 82: Multi-dimensional Poverty Index by Beneficiary and Migration Status (2) (Marginal Effects)

		Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
UNHCR Beneficiaries	Refugee Returnees	0.03	-0.04	-0.05	0.04
	Non-Refugee Returnees	0.05	-0.02	-0.03	0.06
	IDPs	0.07	0.00	0.00	0.08
	No Mobility	0.07	0.00	0.00	0.08
Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	Refugee Returnees		-0.09*	-0.09	0.01
	Non-Refugee Returnees	0.07*		0.00	0.07
	IDPs	0.07	0.00		0.08
	No Mobility	-0.01	-0.09	-0.09	
Non- Beneficiaries	Refugee Returnees	0.16***	0.10**	0.10	0.16***
	Non-Refugee Returnees	0.18***	0.13***	0.13	0.18***
	IDPs	0.14***	0.09*	0.09	0.15***
	No Mobility	0.14***	0.08*	0.08	0.14***
N		4 485	4 485	4 485	4 485

Finally, Models 9-12 use each of the non-beneficiary sub-groups as a reference group. Supporting those earlier results, the estimated probability of being multi-dimensionally poor for nearly all sub-groups of both UNHCR and non-UNHCR beneficiaries is significant and negative in relation to the reference group in each model.

Model 9 for example shows that for refugee returnees exclusively, the probability of being multi-dimensionally poor is significant and decreases by 17 per cent and 23 per cent, respectively, by being a UNHCR beneficiary and non-UNHCR beneficiary in relation to a non-beneficiary.

Likewise, Model 10 shows that **for non-refugee returnees in particular, the probability of being multi-dimensionally poor is significant and decreases by 20 per cent and 18 per cent, respectively, by being a UNHCR beneficiary and non-UNHCR beneficiary in relation to a non-beneficiary.**

Focusing solely on IDPs, Model 11 shows that the probability of being multi-dimensionally poor is significant and decreases by 12 per cent by being a UNHCR beneficiary in relation to a non-beneficiary. And lastly,

Model 12 shows that for those households who have never moved the probability of being multi-dimensionally poor is significant and decreases by 10 per cent and 21 per cent, respectively, by being a UNHCR beneficiary and non-UNHCR beneficiary in relation to a non-beneficiary.

Table 83: Multi-dimensional Poverty Index by Beneficiary and Migration Status (3) (Marginal Effects)

		Model 9	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12
UNHCR Beneficiaries	Refugee Returnees	-0.17***	-0.21***	-0.16***	-0.14***
	Non-Refugee Returnees	-0.16***	-0.20***	-0.15***	-0.13***
	IDPs	-0.13**	-0.17***	-0.12*	-0.10*
	No Mobility	-0.13**	-0.18***	-0.12*	-0.10*
Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	Refugee Returnees	-0.23***	-0.28***	-0.22***	-0.20***
	Non-Refugee Returnees	-0.13**	-0.18***	-0.12*	-0.10*
	IDPs	-0.13	-0.18	-0.12	-0.10
	No Mobility	-0.24***	-0.29***	-0.23***	-0.21***
Non-Beneficiaries	Refugee Returnees		-0.04	0.01	0.02
	Non-Refugee Returnees	0.04		0.04	0.06*
	IDPs	-0.01	-0.05		0.01
	No Mobility	-0.02	-0.06*	-0.01	
	N	4 485	4 485	4 485	4 485

While the results of the cross-sectional regression analysis just presented are suggestive, they do not indicate causation of deprivation due to a problem with selection – as reviewed in chapter 4 which detailed how most vulnerable beneficiaries were often left out of the beneficiary selection. As a result, those households chosen to be UNHCR beneficiaries or non-UNHCR beneficiaries may have been selected even if they were less deprived. In fact, the principle criteria for selection into the UNHCR shelter assistance programme are formally that an individual has a Voluntary Repatriation Form (VRF) and has land in which to build a shelter on. Therefore there is good reason to believe that those selected were originally less deprived than those not selected, hence not surprisingly, they are also less deprived after receiving shelter assistance. While other criteria were also incorporated into the programme in certain cases including vulnerability-related characteristics like if the household is female-headed, landless, or internally displaced, those criteria were not followed uniformly across all locations. As such, **we should be careful not to conclude based on these results that the shelter assistance programme has led to less deprivation, only that those benefiting from assistance, by UNHCR or other organizations, are by-and-large less deprived than those not benefiting.**

5.1.5 Changes over Time

While the cross-sectional analysis does not allow for any firm conclusions regarding the impact of the shelter assistance programme, we are able to assess changes over time for an individual household given that the questionnaire asked specific questions for multiple periods, including both before and after assistance (time of survey). Even though an analysis based on an overall MPI is not possible, gauging deprivation on a select choice of individual indicators is still indicative to whether households are better off or not following participation in the programme.

Table 84 compares the simple difference in household deprivation of UNHCR beneficiaries and non-UNHCR beneficiaries, along individual indicators similar to those used in the MPI analysis. The results vary across indicators, however certain changes are noticeable. Looking at access to housing for example, UNHCR beneficiary households are 35.5 per cent less deprived compared to before receiving the assistance, as opposed to 20.0 per cent of non-UNHCR beneficiary households. **Overall, a higher percentage of households which were assisted by UNHCR are less deprived on nearly every indicator, aside from “Heating” and “Flooring”, over the two periods in comparison to households assisted from organizations that were not UNHCR.**

Table 84: One Month before Assistance vs. After Assistance (Time of Survey)

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	Total
Access to House (%)			
Less Deprived	35.47	19.95	32.73
No Change	64.01	79.79	66.77
More Deprived	0.52	0.26	0.51
Avg. Monthly Income (%)			
Less Deprived	14.15	10.58	24.35
No Change	81.57	80.78	68.76
More Deprived	4.28	8.64	6.89
School Attendance (%)			
Less Deprived	7.87	5.44	5.38
No Change	88.92	90.41	73.43
More Deprived	3.21	4.15	21.19
Child Labour (%)			
Less Deprived	2.92	2.87	3.37
No Change	95.63	96.08	95.19

More Deprived	1.46	1.04	1.43
Assets (%)			
Less Deprived	11.50	9.72	6.55
No Change	74.84	77.97	71.88
More Deprived	13.66	12.31	21.57
Access to Land (%)			
Less Deprived	4.37	3.89	17.05
No Change	85.16	82.07	72.08
More Deprived	10.47	14.04	10.87
Access to Livestock (%)			
Less Deprived	7.81	8.21	10.23
No Change	84.18	75.81	77.63
More Deprived	8.01	15.98	12.14
Access to Mobile (%)			
Less Deprived	15.82	9.29	36.16
No Change	79.31	87.04	59.63
More Deprived	4.86	3.67	4.21
Safe Drinking Water (%)			
Less Deprived	1.28	0.43	0.89
No Change	97.99	98.70	95.28
More Deprived	0.74	0.86	3.83
Electricity (%)			
Less Deprived	13.07	6.70	6.84
No Change	83.88	86.61	70.50
More Deprived	3.05	6.70	22.66
Heating (%)			
Less Deprived	2.51	4.97	1.78
No Change	92.78	82.51	81.22

More Deprived	4.72	12.53	17.00
Sanitation (%)			
Less Deprived	17.10	10.80	9.02
No Change	81.97	87.90	84.27
More Deprived	0.93	1.30	6.71
Flooring (%)			
Less Deprived	1.13	3.46	0.89
No Change	98.82	96.54	99.04
More Deprived	0.05	0.00	0.07
Security (%)			
Less Deprived	2.31	1.30	1.29
No Change	95.38	97.62	95.66
More Deprived	2.31	1.08	3.05

The above table is interesting in that it provides evidence of how individual households' level of deprivation along certain indicators changed following participation in the shelter assistance programme, both UNHCR's and others. However once again, we are not able confidently say whether assistance from UNHCR is what caused the change due to the fact that these households may have changed over time even without it. For this, we need to measure the differences between groups across time using a difference-in-difference approach.

5.1.6 Difference-in-Difference Analysis

As explained in Section 2, because we have information across time we are able to measure the impact of being a UNHCR-beneficiary compared to a non-beneficiary or non-UNHCR beneficiary by looking at the difference of the groups both before and after assistance. In this way, the difference-in-difference approach allows for an explicit conclusion regarding the effect of shelter assistance program.

The results of the probit DiD regression analysis, comparing UNHCR beneficiaries to non-beneficiaries (those households which did not receive assistance) between when they *first returned from abroad* and *after being surveyed* is presented in

Table 85. The results show that the UNHCR shelter assistance programme unsurprisingly led to less deprivation in terms of access to a house. More specifically, UNHCR beneficiaries are 31 per cent less likely to be deprived on this indicator in comparison to non-beneficiaries because of receiving assistance.

Similarly, UNHCR beneficiaries are 7 per cent less likely to be below the poverty line (\$1.25/day), with the estimate significant at the 5 per cent level. The only other indicators in which the effect is significant are electricity, sanitation and access to a mobile (significant at 10 per cent level), all of which show beneficiary households are less deprived following assistance and compared to when first returned from abroad.

Table 85: UNHCR Beneficiaries vs. Non-Beneficiaries, First Returned vs. Time of Survey (Marginal Effects)

	Access House	Avg. Monthly Income	School Attendance
Time	-0.19***	-0.20***	-0.14***
UNHCR Beneficiaries	0.04***	0.07***	0.02
Interaction	-0.31***	-0.07**	-0.03
N	7 084	7 084	7 084
	Child Labour	Assets	Access Land
Time	-0.03***	-0.10***	-0.08***
UNHCR Beneficiaries	-0.02*	-0.05**	-0.09***
Interaction	0.02	0.01	0.03
N	7 059	7 084	7 084
	Access Livestock	Access Mobile	Water
Time	-0.07***	-0.35***	-0.02*
UNHCR Beneficiaries	-0.04**	0.05***	0.01
Interaction	0.00	-0.05*	0.00
N	7 084	7 084	7 084
	Electricity	Heating	Sanitation
Time	-0.23***	0.00	-0.08***
UNHCR Beneficiaries	0.09***	-0.02	0.06***
Interaction	-0.09***	-0.02	-0.17***
N	7 084	7 084	7 084
	Flooring	Security	
Time	-0.01**	-0.06***	
UNHCR Beneficiaries	0.00	0.00	
Interaction	-0.01	-0.02	
N	7 084	7 084	

The results of the probit DiD regression analysis, comparing UNHCR beneficiaries to non-beneficiaries (those households which did not receive assistance) between *before migrated* and *after being surveyed* is presented in Table 86. Once again, the results show that the UNHCR shelter assistance programme led to less deprivation in terms of access to a house with UNHCR Beneficiaries 16 per cent less likely to be deprived on this indicator in comparison to non-beneficiaries because of receiving assistance. **The only other indicators in which the effect is significant are sanitation and security (significant at the 5 per cent level) all of which show beneficiary households are less deprived following assistance and compared to before migration.**

Table 86: UNHCR Beneficiaries vs. Non-Beneficiaries, Before vs. Time of Survey (Marginal Effects)

	Access House	Avg. Monthly Income	School Attendance
Time	0.00	-0.32***	-0.32***
UNHCR Beneficiaries	-0.01	0.01	-0.02
Interaction	-0.16***	0.00	0.01
N	6 440	6 440	6 283
	Child Labour	Assets	Access Land
Time	0.00	0.03	-0.02
UNHCR Beneficiaries	0.00	-0.04**	-0.04*
Interaction	0.00	0.01	-0.02
N	6 307	6 440	6 440
	Access Livestock	Access Mobile	Water
Time	0.19***	-0.77***	-0.01
UNHCR Beneficiaries	-0.03	0.00	0.07
Interaction	-0.02	0.00	-0.06
N	6 440	6 440	4 998
	Electricity	Heating	Sanitation
Time	-0.43***	0.07	-0.20***
UNHCR Beneficiaries	0.05	-0.04	0.02
Interaction	-0.05	0.00	-0.16***
N	4 959	4 960	6 437
	Flooring	Security	
Time	-0.01*	-0.57***	
UNHCR Beneficiaries	-0.01	0.10**	

Interaction	0.00	-0.14**
N	4 973	4 936

Overall, we find solid evidence that the UNHCR shelter assistance programme had a significant and positive impact on reducing household deprivation, of varying degree and depending on differences between particular periods in time, along certain indicators of interest including access to a house, electricity, sanitation, access to a mobile and subjective security.

5.2 IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES

5.2.1 Impact on Intra-community Relations

Overall, most stakeholders expressed their satisfaction with – and even sometimes their gratitude for – the fact that the shelter programme had been implemented in their community. Among the surveyed households less than 1 per cent does not perceive the impact on the community of the programme as positive. Among the community leaders this number is a bit higher with 10 per cent. Nevertheless, the subjective opinion of the impact on the communities is very positive. This is linked to a series of effects that the programme has on the community as a whole as described in this section.

Table 87: Impacts of Shelter Programme on the Community

	Households		Community leaders	
	N	%	N	%
Very negative	0	0.00	0	0.00
Negative	5	0.11	1	1.67
Neutral	28	0.62	5	8.33
Positive	1 798	40.06	38	63.33
Very positive	2 654	59.14	16	26.67
I don't know	3	0.07	0	0.00
Total	4 548	100.00	60	100.00

- **Supporting the development of villages**

Community representatives noted that the shelter programme improved the availability of housing in their area. In some cases, like in Aâb Dara in Kabul or in Shogofan in Hirat province, the settlements of returnees and IDPs were recent and the village lacked the proper housing

structures and services to receive important influxes of population. In these cases, the programme was seen as a welcome assistance to the development of the village. In Jawzjan province, one community leader noted that the programme was useful ‘for the beauty of the village’, because permanent shelters replaced tents and destroyed houses. This may seem trivial but it does mean that the programme played a role in the ‘normalisation process’ of the life of these returnee and displaced communities, who often found their villages entirely destroyed upon return.

Furthermore, it was mentioned that in some cases the programme had a sort of ‘domino effect’ on the living condition of the rest of the community by raising the standards in housing or in hygiene. In Hirat province for example, it was noted that the demand for higher quality I-beams like the ones distributed by UNHCR increased following the implementation of the programme in Kahdistan. This was a phenomenon observed regularly in the field.

The programme also impacted the awareness of the whole community about hygiene and sanitation issues. In Nangarhar, for example, it was observed that some non-beneficiaries had copied hygiene facilities and practices of beneficiaries. This positive impact is yet a lot stronger when WASH training complements the shelter programme, as it was the case in some parts of Nangarhar province.

This impression of a shelter programme benefitting the entire community was reinforced by the fact that some communities felt that the returns of refugees brought the attention of international and national stakeholders to their villages and that ‘help called help’ to the community. Yet, this was not always the case as in many villages the shelter programme was implemented on its own, without any other sort of complementary programme coming along.

- **Internal Tensions**

Asked about tensions in the community caused by the shelter assistance programme, the majority of community representatives, 73 per cent, denied such developments. Qualitative fieldwork further indicated that in many instances the shelter programme played a role in easing the potential tensions raised by the arrival of returnees, linked to the fact that new comers are seen as exerting additional pressure on scarce resources, especially water, electricity or housing. By reducing the number of families depending on the resources of other households and reducing the pressure to share their living space, the shelter programme helped diffusing these potential tensions by mitigating the negative impact of returns on the overall community, especially in terms of housing.

In rare instances, the shelter programme appeared to be stirring up some internal tensions and divisions in the community. Among the sample of the community survey this was the case in 27 per cent of the 60 communities. Interestingly, this only happened when the selection process was really perceived as unfair or corrupted like for example in Mazra in Kandahar.

The **potential impact of the programme on tensions between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries varies according to the profile of communities** though. Homogeneous tribal

communities developed specific coping mechanisms through solidarity networks, which were non-existent in heterogeneous communities. Despite the fact that communities often welcomed the assistance provided with the arrival of returnees, which represented the majority of beneficiaries, tensions aroused whenever assistance was too concentrated. The assumption that host communities will support the settlement of beneficiaries is based on the assumption that they are either less vulnerable or have better coping mechanisms, which did not appear to be the case in most locations.

Appropriateness of selection in terms of vulnerability therefore appears essential, as well as the inclusion of a percentage of members of the host community in order to diffuse tensions. This was noticed as an effective practice in Jawzjan.

In some cases, the host community felt that it did not have the capacity to support the return of migrants. Need for further assistance or support was therefore highly emphasized, repeatedly mentioned in Jalalabad, but also in Aab Dara, where further arrivals from other members of the tribe were expected.

There were more significant tensions in areas where the selection process was problem-ridden. In Kandahar, for example, where most of the selection process had to rely on community leaders, tensions surrounding the programme were more acute. In areas of Hirat province where the frauds or corruption were reported non-beneficiaries expressed their anger and disappointment at the way the programme was implemented. In Jawzjan on the other hand, where no corruption cases were reported, tensions surrounding the programme were non-existent. This shows that:

- a) The programme in itself is not divisive but rather much appreciated by communities as a whole,
- b) Yet, the selection process is a very sensitive issue, which may lead to conflicts if not handled properly.

5.2.2 Impact on the Local Economy

The impact of the shelter programme on the local economy of beneficiary communities was rarely very significant and most of the time it was only short term. As presented in Table 88 the community survey did show that 60 per cent of community leaders felt that the programme had impacted the labour market.

Table 88: Economic Impacts of Shelter Programme

	N =60	%
Local prices	29	48.33
Labour market	36	60.00

Access to natural resources	20	33.33
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The programme entailed a short-term employment boost, with beneficiary households typically hiring two to three extra workers for one month to build their shelters. In Jawzjan for example, community leaders indicated that each beneficiary household would employ three workers for the construction of walls and for the roofing. They would typically be paid between 150 and 200 AFS per day of work.

About half of community leaders acknowledged that the programme had had an impact on local prices. Yet, qualitative fieldwork showed that the impact was limited. In many implementation sites, the availability of material is sufficient to meet the increase in demands triggered by the programme. This is especially the case in areas like Deh Sabz or in the surrounding of Hirat province, where the volume of production of the numerous brick kilns largely outweighs the rise in demand caused by the programme. In remote rural areas, it was noted that the programme could impact prices of construction material.

The shelter programme was sometimes pointed at as playing a role in the rise of land prices that characterised a lot of the implementing sites visited, especially in Kabul or Nangarhar provinces, where the pressure on available land is important. But the rise in land prices is a very complex issue in Afghanistan, linked to multiple structural factors, including the prevalence of land grabbing and the low availability of land. The shelter programme represent a marginal element in a much larger phenomenon.

5.2.3 Impact on Inter-community Relations

While tensions caused by the implementation of the programme within communities were only observed in a few cases, it happened that **the programme often caused tensions between various neighbouring communities**. This was especially the case in contexts, where communities from various ethnic backgrounds would co-exist, as it was for example the case in Faryab or in Kabul province. The field observations did not show that the shelter programme in itself would stir a lot of tensions. Yet, when the programme was part of one of the reintegration sites, where several other assistance programmes were provided, then neighbouring communities clearly failed to understand the logic of such a concentration of assistance in one sole location. This was the case in Kochi Abad, Kabul province.

The issues in these cases are that a) other communities will not be able to understand the rationale behind the solutions and reintegration strategy and b) it might reinforce existing ethnic tensions as in Kochi Abad, where only Kuchi populations received assistance, while neighbouring Hazara communities did not. In this case, assistance can become a factor of instability, with frequent rivalries and violent fighting between Hazara and Kuchi communities in the Central region. Keeping in mind “Do No Harm”, this potential impact should be given more consideration.

BOX 2: Best Practices: Inter-community Relations

In Faryab Province, UNHCR had instructed the Implementing Partners to use the flexibility offered by the guidelines of the shelter programme as an instrument to diffuse potential ethnic and inter-community tensions. The programme allows the selection committee to select 5 to 10 per cent of beneficiaries among the ‘host community’. In Faryab these shelters were in some cases allocated to neighbouring communities of different ethnic background, in order to mitigate the inter-community tensions born out of the selection. This is an interesting practice in areas characterised by a complex ethnic context.

6. PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

UNHCR requested that the research team look into issues of partnership and the role of stakeholders in the shelter assistance programme. UNHCR also specifically asked one question – is a handover of the SAP possible to the Government of Afghanistan?

Before delving into the findings of the team’s fieldwork, it is necessary to take a step back and review evolutions that have considerably impacted the partnership opportunities open to UNHCR on shelter intervention and coordination. First, considerable changes have occurred, with a transition from a large shelter coordination mechanism from 2002-2008, to a lack thereof in the following years. Coordination and interest in shelter interventions gradually diminished due to insecurity, lowered interest among larger NGOs, decreasing funding, and the dominance of national NGOs as implementing partners. Second, the Government of Afghanistan has worked on urban housing policies but has not to date developed a housing policy for urban areas. Third, shelter agencies have come and gone in Afghanistan, with UNDP and UN Habitat reducing their activities due to lack of sustainability, cost effectiveness and funding. UNHCR, by the scope of its intervention nationwide, has found itself to be in a position of leadership on shelter assistance, especially given that in many parts of Afghanistan UNHCR was often the only service provider. Moreover in recent years other changes have occurred. For one, there is the increasing involvement of international organizations and national NGOs – however, many parts of rural Afghanistan, especially in the conflict-ridden South, have only been consistently covered by a few humanitarian agencies – including UNHCR and WFP just to name some of the major actors.

As a result, this evaluation’s aim is to assess the efficiency of current partnerships and mechanisms of coordination upon which the shelter programme is based and to analyse the impact of these partnerships on the implementation of the programme and its sustainability in the future. Partnership strategies are a key debate in context of transition and limited humanitarian access, given that with increasing insecurity and conflict and the related decrease in access, how are international agencies like UNHCR going to continue doing their work and how can they do it effectively? Who should be and who can be the reliable partners in this context of constraints? Given the history of changes with partnerships, and the increasing insecurity since 2005 in Afghanistan, this section will seek to review some of the gaps in partnerships over shelter that prevent any possible handover strategy at this stage.

This analysis is based on key informant interviews conducted at the central and provincial levels with a range of stakeholders involved in shelter assistance and/or working on return and reintegration of refugees and IDPs.

6.1 SHELTER ASSISTANCE IN AFGHANISTAN

6.1.1 Actors in Shelter Assistance

An important feature characterising shelter assistance conducted in the country is the very small number of actors involved.

Table 89 gives an overview of the main recent programmes of shelter assistance in the country based on the information that was acquired for the purpose of this evaluation. As this table shows, no other organisation active in Afghanistan is able to implement a shelter programme that is comparable in size and scope to UNHCR's.

This means that UNHCR holds distinct leadership in this specific area of intervention and that any reduction in the scope of the UNHCR programme will hardly be covered by other partners. The potential impact of UNHCR's changes in strategy on the lives of vulnerable households is therefore significant.

Table 89: Shelter Assistance Programmes in Afghanistan

Organisation	Size of Programme	Regions of Operations	Dates	Unit Cost	Remarks
UNHCR	220,000	▪ All	2002-2012	\$1,800 to \$2000	
IOM	1538	▪ Northern ▪ Western ▪ Northwest	2009 to 2011	\$1,900	Stopped Only provides emergency shelter
UN-HABITAT	400 Central 200 Eastern	▪ Central ▪ Eastern	2011 to 2014	\$1,100	Community-based approach
UNDP		▪ Central (Aliceghan)		\$9,000	Stopped due to unsustainability
UN-OCHA		▪ Northern			Emergency Humanitarian Fund
ACTED		▪ Northwest			
CARE	1025 shelters (2009-2011), incl. 200 shelters in Jawzjan. 30,000 shelters since 1999	▪ Central (Alice Ghan) ▪ Northern (Jawzjan)	2009 to 2011	\$2,700	Flood-affected populations IP of UNDP in Alice Ghan
CHF	1,700 shelters 1,500 shelter kits	▪ Eastern (Jalalabad)	2009 to 2011	\$5,300	Urban focus Funded by USAID
IRC	715 shelters	▪ Eastern (Jalalabad)	2009 to 2011 Stopped		Programme stopped due to interruption of funding

InterSOS		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Northwest (Faryab) ▪ Central 	2012		ERF Flood affected populations
Islamic Relief	175 shelters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Northern (Balkh) 	2012	\$1,200	Natural-disaster affected population New Programme
NRC	14,000 shelters since 2002; 2012 2,075 shelters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Central ▪ Eastern ▪ Western ▪ Northern 	2012	\$1,200	Community-based Programme
Shelter Now	30,000 shelters in eleven years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Central ▪ Northeast ▪ Western 	1998-2009		Stopped
ZOA	363 shelters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ North (Sari Pul) 	2012	\$1,900	Flood-affected populations

Furthermore, most other stakeholders (IOM, OCHA, CARE, ZOA, InterSOS and ACTED for instance) focus on natural disaster-affected populations including IDPs. Only NRC and UNHCR have a specific focus on shelter assistance for conflict-induced IDPs and returnees. Limiting the scope of the UNHCR shelter assistance programme would therefore have particularly negative impacts for conflict-induced IDPs. Taking into account the growing numbers of conflict-induced IDPs throughout the country, this is a group that should be the focus of increased attention and intervention – and shelter is a cornerstone of any durable solution.

Additionally, UNHCR has the widest geographical coverage of its shelter programme, with presence in all regions of Afghanistan and especially in the South. NRC might extend its activities in the South in 2013 but as of yet that has not been the case. Because the Southern regions are where most IDPs are located³⁵, UNHCR authorized a specific focus on IDPs for the shelter programme in the South. This means that even more than anywhere else in the country, the UNHCR shelter programme has answered adequately to specific local needs with the shelter programme. The gap left by a reduced shelter programme will therefore be particularly acute in the South.

All this is evidence that UNHCR has a crucial role in terms of shelter assistance, one that is unmatched by other actors in the country. Any reform of the programme should take this central role and responsibility into account.

³⁵ See for example, Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement - The Liaison Office, (2010), *Beyond the Blanket: Towards more effective protection for internally displaced persons in Southern Afghanistan*.

6.1.2 Coordination mechanisms

Although the years 2002-2008 witnessed a large shelter coordination mechanism, this gradually diminished due to security, the development and frequent meetings of the cluster system, lowered interest among larger NGOs, the dominance of national NGOs as IPs, and very importantly, reduced funding from donors. In 2012/2013, at the time of this field research, coordination mechanisms for permanent shelter assistance are almost non-existent, as there is no proper forum dedicated to this question. There are, however, three main forums where the issue of permanent shelter could be – and sometimes are – discussed:

- 1) The Emergency Shelter and NFI cluster (ES/NFI)
- 2) The IDP task force
- 3) The Housing, Land and Property (HLP) task force

Yet, permanent shelter is a very secondary question in each of these, which only indirectly address permanent shelter-related questions. This has several explanations:

- The cluster system established by UN-OCHA was set up specifically for humanitarian and emergency concerns. It was designed as an ad-hoc coordination structure to be called upon in case emergency matters. Permanent shelter does not particularly fit into this framework. Both the ES/NFI and the IDP Task force are therefore humanitarian and emergency oriented. Some stakeholders at times use the ES/NFI cluster to discuss issues related to permanent shelter assistance on an ad-hoc basis but it is not systematic and chairing organisations do not see the cluster as an appropriate forum to cover these issues, which are not purely humanitarian.
- The HLP task force could seem as a relevant forum as it is less inherently linked to emergency interventions and its main focus is on structural issues. But the HLP task force is still at its initial stage and was conceived as an advocacy tool to tackle in particular the question of land. The IDP task force, on the other hand, has showed that it could support interesting processes, including the articulation of an IDP national policy. Linking up the HLP task force and the IDP task force could help addressing in a coordinated manner the connected issues of lack of access to land and absence of shelters, as both are major protection issues for IDPs.
- Given the small number of actors involved in shelter assistance, most stakeholders feel more comfortable addressing these issues through bilateral and ad-hoc relations, especially between UNHCR and NRC.
- There is a clear reluctance on the UNHCR side to ‘clusterize refugees’³⁶, that is to subject the main populations of concern under the mandate of the organisation to a cluster system, which would de facto lead to a division of responsibilities with other actors, including OCHA.

The consequence of these various factors is that permanent shelter and shelter assistance are issues that are rarely addressed collectively by humanitarian actors. UNHCR has the complete lead on shelter assistance in the country but works rather in isolation from other organisations and actors on this issue.

³⁶ See declaration of UNHCR Dep. Rep. in KII- Kabul Programme Unit.

6.2 ASSESSING PARTNERSHIPS

6.2.1 Government of Afghanistan

- **National Level**

Given its mandate and that returnees and IDPs are ultimately a national responsibility, UNHCR's first partner in the country should be its line ministry, the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR). This is particularly the case since one of the responsibilities of UNHCR is to build the capacities of national authorities so as to develop favourable conditions for a potential handover in the mid-term. This requires a satisfactory working relationship between the ministry and UNHCR both at the central and at the provincial level, and proper capacity building initiatives as they relate to shelter activities. Unfortunately, at the moment, the conditions for a sustainable partnership are not in place.

This is linked to several issues weakening the relationship between the two institutions:

- **Lack of a national housing policy for rural areas:** The Government of Afghanistan has never had a housing policy for rural areas, even though for urban areas a number of ministries are involved. It remains, however, complicated to know who has authority, whether the Municipality, or the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, with provincial differences to be noted.
- **Low capacity of MoRR:** Initially, MoRR was designed as a temporary ministry, with a limited budget and operational role. UNHCR supported advisors in MoRR for almost ten years (they were removed at the request of MoRR in early 2011). In 2008, UNHCR partnered with the Civil Service Reform Commission for a six-month investment in the Ministry's reform. A key question then became whether funding advisers actually helped in terms of building capacity. UNHCR's efforts to build the capacities of the ministry and to set up a solid partnership with the ministry were limited to the provincial levels, on practical issues and delivery of services, such as with the selection of beneficiaries for the shelter assistance programme. However, the capacity building component – whether technical, financial or material – remained limited as compared with other types of partnerships built between international institutions and their line governmental institutions in the country, such as IOM's capacity building programmes for MoRR and ANDMA, or the World Bank's for MRRD.

In part due to this low investment in the national structures of assistance for returnees, and in part due to limited funding and the lack of a mandate for implementation as well as high staff turnover and poor overall management, MoRR has not developed enough capacities to address the colossal issues that fall under its mandate, seriously weakening the prospects of any sort of handover to be operationalized soon. Furthermore, MoRR's budget has historically been among the lowest in the government, not reaching the minimum of 40 per cent of budget expenditures in 2012 for example. Nonetheless, UNHCR has effectively maintained an on-going dialogue and cooperation with MoRR, on policy matters and strategy but not on funding or capacity building. Direct relations on implementation with

provincial departments were stronger in some provinces than others, but missing at the national level.

It must be added that the high turnover of ministers – 7 since 2002 – meant that with every ministerial change at MoRR, came a change of advisers and technocrats, making continuity and institutional knowledge hard to achieve. This is partly why the feeling of ‘being left in the dark’ is a consequence of systemic weaknesses. The situation is even more extreme in the provinces where there is high turnover, continuity only at low ranking civil service positions and rampant corruption, not the least with the Land Allocation Scheme where MoRR and DoRR officials are reported to have allocated land plots to themselves.

- **MoRR does not represent a reliable partner to take over or continue UNHCR’s shelter programme** as instances of corruption, inefficiency and mishandling of funds are numerous. Unsurprisingly, the level of distrust of UNHCR towards MoRR is also very high, further complicating any sustainable partnership between the two institutions. On top of this, the lack of human resources and capacity at the ministry is also apparent with very few counterparts able to showcase technical or thematic knowledge on the populations falling under their responsibility.

The overall political economy, systemic weaknesses and levels of mistrust challenge the efficiency of a strong partnership between MoRR and UNHCR. The tensions surrounding the authorisation to conduct the present study were striking evidence of the tense relationship in 2012, and the power dynamics established between UNHCR and the MoRR. If it seems anecdotal, the episode was symptomatic of the type of interactions in place between the two institutions and showed the blatant lack of communication and information sharing that characterise them. UNHCR made the choice to increasingly focus its effort on sub-national levels by bypassing the central level when possible – for understandable reasons as reviewed in our discussion of UNHCR’s relationship with DoRRs. However understandable, this has added to the tense relationship of UNHCR and MoRR.

- **Shelter programme: is MoRR in the dark or is there disconnect with provincial departments?** During conversations at MoRR in Kabul, the level of awareness about the shelter programme appeared extremely low. It was difficult to judge whether this low-level of knowledge was the result of a lack of interest, engagement or the lack of initiative by UNHCR. To some extent, all of these factors come into play - however, it seems that the biggest obstacle was the lack of coordination or disconnect between MoRR and its provincial counterparts, DoRRs. There were no effective transmission systems from Kabul to the provinces or vice versa – whether for policy information, for documents, for data or other strategic developments at the national level. Heads of DoRRs were often in the dark with regards to developments in Kabul, while MoRR was in the dark regarding actual implementation of programs for the displaced at the provincial level. MoRR staff only very rarely travel to the field – an exception rather than a rule. Either funding is lacking, or the interest to visit field sites is low if not accompanied by an extra compensation for leaving Kabul.

Various interviews with staff at the central level proved that the MoRR did not even have basic information on the nature and implementation of the programme, such as design, locations of implementation or programme planning. However, it should be underlined that UNHCR also made the choice to short-cut the central level for the implementation of the programme – due to issues of corruption, mismanagement, lack of structure at MoRR – which, although understandable, may endanger the sustainability of the programme. MoRR staff complained about a *‘complete disconnection of the information cycle between the two organisations’*³⁷. The research team did not find, in 2012, any pre-planning coordination or information-sharing mechanisms on shelter between the two institutions at the Kabul-level. MoRR staff was resentful to be left in the dark and denied their status of responsible authority on these issues – at the national and sub-national levels.

- **Reintegration Strategy – a new bone of contention?** Finally, the recent attempt of UNHCR to shift its strategy in the country and the implementation of the Solutions Strategy focusing on 48 sites (12 were actually implemented in 2012) raised new concerns within the MoRR. Its representatives did not appreciate the fact that the amount of money (\$1 billion) which was supposed to be allocated to the assistance of one million Afghan returnees finally ended up covering only 48 sites throughout the whole country. It is not surprising that this new strategy is at odds with the interest of the ministry, which builds part of its credibility and influence by being associated with UNHCR programmes in the field. A significant reduction of the number of beneficiaries of UNHCR’s assistance programme has an important impact on the visibility of the MoRR and its potential constituencies. Furthermore, MoRR representatives do not fully agree with the deeper objectives that this strategy is supposed to fulfil in the frame of the regional ‘Solution Strategy’³⁸. As summarized by a senior MoRR representative: *‘We don’t believe that UNHCR should focus on reintegration. We believe that its expertise is on movements, not on stabilization’*³⁹.

These various factors explain why the partnership currently in place between UNHCR and MoRR is inefficient. The choice made by UNHCR to bypass the central institution and work almost exclusively with the sub-national levels, and MoRR’s inability and unwillingness to be involved on the shelter assistance portfolio, prevent any possible handover strategy. MoRR does not have the capacity to take on a greater role in the control over and coordination of shelter assistance at the moment. At the same time, the levels of corruption and mismanagement of resources of MoRR at the central level – as highlighted on the management of the Land Allocation Scheme (LAS) for example – and the lack of financial resources of the ministry make it an unreliable and uncertain partner.

³⁷ KII – MoRR Kabul/GMU.

³⁸ UNHCR Afghanistan (2012): *Afghans Solution Strategy*. <http://www.unhcr.org/afghanistan/solutions-strategy.pdf>

³⁹ KII – MoRR Kabul/GMU.

- **Sub-national Level**

Directorates of Refugees and Repatriation (DoRRs)

In general, UNHCR has stronger relationships with DoRRs at the provincial level than it has with the ministry at the central level. In recent years, following the closure of camps in Pakistan and engineered return from Iran, UNHCR and DoRRs have increased their cooperation on humanitarian responses – which included large shelter components. In these emergency settings, the need to work more closely with DoRRs was acute because of the need for rapid service delivery for returning refugees. This is also one of the key humanitarian reasons why engaging with MoRR’s bureaucracy at the central level provided more disadvantages than solutions, contrary to direct cooperation between sub-offices and DoRRs. In other terms, beneficiaries could not wait for capacity building of MoRR, especially with such hurdles as financial management being difficult to solve.

The level of interaction between the two institutions is higher as the DoRRs are meant to play a direct role in the selection of beneficiaries and in the monitoring of the programme. Yet, despite the guidelines requiring a strong involvement of the DoRRs, it appeared that its actual level of involvement and the quality of its relationship with UNHCR varied greatly across provinces:

- In provinces like Hirat or Balkh for example, DoRR was present in the field along with UNHCR or the staff of implementing partners and actively took part in the selection process. UNHCR field staff noted that this inclusion of a governmental body was a great support to the legitimacy of the selection process.
- In other provinces, like Nangarhar or Kandahar, there were several issues poisoning the relationship between the two actors. DoRRs repeatedly accused UNHCR of its lack of communication and transparency, while UNHCR resented DoRRs for its lack of capacities, its questionable reliability and the constant demands for further incentives and stipend.
- Understaffing and lack of competence of DoRR staff were mentioned as a problem in building reliable partnerships with UNHCR in the field. Turnover of directorate staff according to nominations of Directors, nepotism and insufficient expertise were emphasized as central problems impeding the efforts for capacity building.

According to the provincial context, UNHCR has been more or less able to develop strong relationships with or to exert real leverage on governmental authorities. In Nangarhar for example, where the weight of UNHCR programmes is considerable, UNHCR has gained an important political leverage over the governor office and the DoRR. In Hirat on the other hand, the DoRR has the support of important political leaders, which gives more independence towards UNHCR. In both of these cases, and in other provinces, the relationship between DoRRs and UNHCR is very political and sensitive. In Nangarhar for example, the accusations of corruption on both sides showed a very tense relationship, through which the shelter programme becomes more an opportunity to raise tensions and to gain bargaining power than a necessity to work together for a greater objective.

Other sectoral ministries

Linkages with other governmental departments are most often non-existent. This is not due to a lack of efforts throughout the past ten years – UNHCR staff was seconded to MoRR, MRRD and MUDH in the past. UNHCR also had strong contacts with NSP and MISFA on micro-finance during the years of focus of this evaluation (2009-2011). However, since then, UNHCR's main interactions with other line ministries occurred through coordination mechanisms dealing with issues other than permanent shelters, such as the Provincial Development Committees or other working groups. At the provincial level, there is an absence of interaction with some authorities that could benefit the sustainability of the programme, including:

- **No formal coordination between DRRD, involved in NSP programmes in rural areas, and UNHCR.** Both operate on parallel levels, with programmes sometimes coincidentally implemented in the same locations. DRRD representatives met in Nangarhar for instance underlined the fact they had no particular contact with UNHCR. Given the relative experience and competence of DRRD in the implementation of assistance programmes in rural area, this is a surprising gap in the design of the programme.
- **No contacts between the municipality or DUDH with UNHCR in urban and semi-urban areas** where urban planning falls under their responsibility. In Nangarhar for instance, both UN-Habitat and CHF operating in the same locations relied strongly on cooperation with the Municipality. This could be considered a) to solve issues linked to access to land and b) in the perspective of inscribing the shelter programme in an urban upgrading scheme to ensure its sustainability.
- **No interaction with ANDMA at the provincial level.** The fieldwork showed that the prevention of natural disaster is at the moment poorly integrated in the design and the implementation of the shelter assistance programme. To prevent the risk of flooding, systematically discussing the locations of implementation with ANDMA could be an option that would benefit both organisations.
- **No consultation in the selection and evaluation of implementing partners.** In Nangarhar, the Directorate of Economy complained about not being consulted or followed in the selection and evaluation of implementing partners, even though the core of its mandate is the evaluation of NNGOs. This was a notable source of tension with UNHCR giving rise to potential allegations of corruption.

6.2.2 Partnerships with Implementing Partners

UNHCR has remained the foremost actor on shelter assistance. Since then, many agencies have come and gone. Others have stayed but stopped shelter interventions. For example, actors such as UNDP had such high unit costs that they were not sustainable, or in the case of UN Habitat were unable to sustain funding for large-scale shelter programmes. In addition, few actors, except UN humanitarian agencies, have the geographic coverage that UNHCR has throughout Afghanistan. Hence handover possibilities have not only been scarce with the government, but also with other stakeholders.

▪ **INGOs**

While some INGOs had been IPs for UNHCR in the first years of the programme (e.g. ACTED), INGOs were mostly out of the implementation of the programme between 2009 and 2011. There are a few reasons for this: a) the overhead costs of any INGOs operating in the country, in a context of budgetary restrictions, b) a lowered interest in shelter activities among larger NGOs, and c) a strategic direction of UN agencies to partner with national NGOs in order to build their capacities in the long run and to allow for future handover strategies.

In the frame of the 2012 reintegration strategy, a few INGOs were selected for the implementation. The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) was selected to take over the logistics of the shelter and winterization programmes. DRC has the responsibility to receive, store and release the material sent by the central level for the shelter programme. Yet, in 2012 as well, most INGOs could not be selected to implement some of the projects of the reintegration sites because of their costs. The RFP stipulated that one proposal had to be submitted for each different component, forcing INGOs to factor in their overhead costs in each proposal rather than levelling them in a general proposal.

▪ **NNGOs and local NGOs**

The shelter programme has increasingly relied on national and local NGOs both for the implementation of the programme and for its monitoring. Partnering with NNGOs has several advantages for UNHCR:

- It greatly increases the reach of the programme, as NNGOs are not subject to the security restrictions of UN-agencies. Relying on NNGOs guarantees a greater acceptance of the programme in the field, as these organisations are able to establish direct links to the communities.
- NNGOs are usually able to adopt an implementation strategy that is a lot closer to the field and beneficiaries. In a lot of cases, NNGOs establish a temporary office directly in the implementation site, like in Faryab or Kabul province. This guarantees a closer monitoring of the progress of the construction of the shelters.

- NNGOs have cheaper operational costs than INGOs and therefore ensure a greater cost-efficiency to the programme, enabling higher numbers of shelters to be built.
- The reliance of the programme on NNGOs has helped developing their expertise in shelter assistance. Some NNGOs, like CHA or DHSA for example in the North or APA in Kandahar, now have more than ten years of experience working with UNHCR and have reached a satisfactory level of capacities, especially in terms of technical monitoring of the construction of shelters.

Yet, **the tendency of UN agencies to rely on NNGOs is increasingly questioned in the Afghan context, as there are numerous shortcomings that put the sustainability of the programme at risk:**

- Despite the efforts to build the capacities of NNGOs, the inherent issue is that only rarely these organisations have developed a not-for-profit mentality and function rather as small construction companies. These organisations have no long-term plan to deliver assistance to a province according to the needs, but rather a ‘business logic’ aiming at getting the ‘contracts’ of UN programmes. This was for example the case in Hirat, where the sub-office had chosen to change IPs every year to mitigate the risks of fraud. UNHCR staff mentioned that all the NNGOs there (i.e. SSOAR; CRDSA; ERSA) also had for-profit activities, typically in the construction sector.
- Given this mind-set, numerous cases of corruption of IPs were reported in the field, seriously undermining UNHCR’s credibility and the sustainability of the programme in the field.
- If the technical expertise of the NNGOs is overall satisfying, the level of awareness about the specific requirements of the programme in terms of beneficiary selection and, most importantly, of protection issues is still concerning and low. Field staff was notably unaware about the criteria of vulnerability to be used in the selection process, or of protection principles, as shown for example in discussions with the field staff of the DHSA in Faryab or WESTA in Jalalabad.
- Yearly rotation of IPs for implementation of the programme (notably in Nangarhar and Hirat) does not allow follow-up and building of expertise in the shelter programme. The rationale behind this system appeared rather unclear, underlines gaps and insufficient focus on expertise in the selection process of IPs.
- Given these difficulties, the question remains, how NNGOs can, at this time, deliver larger-scale programmes that would include other interventions such as livelihoods. This is a central question in the context of the current Solutions Strategy. Other interventions are more complex than shelter – yet this shelter evaluation concerns facts about the UNHCR-NNGO relationship. Instead, the more successful local interventions have been community-level development projects, which UNHCR funded for several years (such as micro-hydropower in the East).

The main issue with an over-reliance on NNGOs to implement the programme is that it should come with a very strong monitoring system to avoid the pitfalls detailed above. Yet, UNHCR is increasingly relying on other NNGOs for monitoring activities as well. Even in provinces where access is satisfactory, UNHCR staff tends to entirely hand over monitoring to these NNGOs. It was for example the case in the Northern region (NPO), in Kabul province or in Nangarhar, where the monitoring IP for remote areas was

also used to monitor implementation sites accessible to UNHCR. Furthermore, some of the NNGOs contracted to conduct monitoring activities are also contracted by sub-offices for the implementation of other programmes in the province, leading to conflicts of interest. For example:

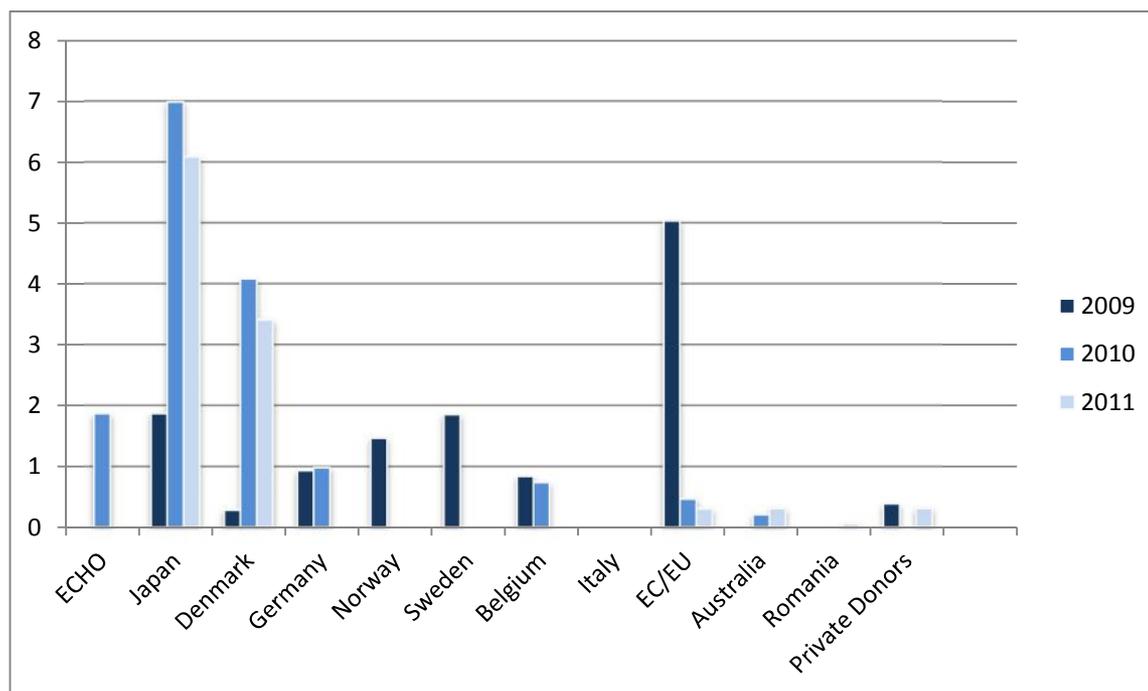
- APA, the IP used for monitoring in Nangarhar, was also the implementing IP for several projects in the reintegration site of Kuchi Abad in Kabul province.
- NPO, monitoring IP for all Northern regions (8 provinces) had also been contracted for several UNHCR projects in the North, including the construction of a school in Sholgara district (Balkh), some road rehabilitation projects and several projects in the reintegration site of Mohjer Qeslaq.

A good M&E system is based on an efficient triangulation of information from the field, including external and independent oversight over the programme. The present system does not guarantee this triangulation as most of the information is gathered by under-staffed NNGOs depending on UNHCR contracts for their existence.

6.2.3 Donors

The following figure summarizes the earmarked contributions of donors to the shelter programme between 2009 and 2011. The SAP is also funded through the considerable unmarked contributions of donors like USAID (BPRM) and CIDA.

Figure 1: Donors Earmarked Contributions 2009-1011 (Million USD) ⁴⁰



⁴⁰ Based on figures communicated by UNHCR Data Unit Kabul.

Most donors acknowledged having very little information on the shelter programme itself, including objectives and levels of success. This is caused in part by a lack of transparency or information sharing, but also because of a lower level of interest and funding from donors. Because of the security restrictions that they are subjected to in the country, donors rely exclusively on UNHCR documentation and reports to monitor the allocation of their funds. Donors themselves have very little access to the field to conduct their own evaluation of UNHCR programmes. Thus this system is less conducive to a proper oversight of UNHCR's activities in the country.

More importantly for donors, this evaluation should provide sufficient support as to the impact of the shelter programme on the lives of returnees and IDPs. With such information at hand, donors can now judge of the necessity to disburse funds to support shelter activities, whether with UNHCR or with other shelter agencies given the positive results revealed by the data collected from beneficiaries of both groups. To be able to operationalize the recommendations from this study, UNHCR will require the support of donors to ensure that shelter programmes remain 'on budget' nationwide.

The introduction of the recent Regional Solutions strategy changed the approach of some donors, who increasingly ask for more accountability and transparency in the choices of UNHCR for the country. ECHO and CIDA were particularly defiant about the new reintegration approach. If donors still lack a proper mechanism to oversight UNHCR programmes, their requests for accountability have increased. The present evaluation has already raised interest among donors, who are keen on having more research-based knowledge about UNHCR activities in the country.

6.2.4 Humanitarian and Development Actors

The shelter programme occupies an odd position on the humanitarian-development spectrum, which does not help in defining efficient partnerships and coherent interventions. The whole concept of reintegration is in itself at the crossroad of humanitarian, early recovery and development approaches. As underlined prior, if shelter assistance is a response to one of the primary needs of returnee and displaced populations, the sustainability of shelter intervention is strongly determined by two main factors: availability of basic services in the area on the one hand and access to livelihoods on the other. Linkages with other types of interventions are therefore an important factor in the success of the shelter programme on the ground.

Linkages with other humanitarian/early recovery programmes

Discussions at the central level with UNHCR showed that there is currently no systematic mechanism to guarantee the existence of linkages with other humanitarian programmes covering basic needs. UNHCR used to support an 'integrated approach'. This meant that several different programmes could be implemented in the same area, especially WASH programmes. Yet, this was not formally articulated at the central level, which meant that it did not percolate easily to sub-national levels, where very varied levels of integration between programmes were observed.

Furthermore, the implementation of humanitarian programmes provided by other actors than UNHCR as complements to the shelter programme appeared to be more the result of chance than of a systematic policy fostering linkages with other actors. The programme was largely designed as a stand-alone operation, which would not particularly necessitate linkages with other interventions. This is further reinforced by the absence of a proper forum, where the issues related to permanent shelter could be properly addressed.

Linkages with development programmes

This gap is more blatant when it comes to early recovery/development programmes, which fall out of the mandate of UNHCR. The missing link between humanitarian and development actions is a recurrent problem and a broader weakness of the international intervention in Afghanistan. This shortcoming is explained by a) the weakness of the main actors in charge of development in the country, especially UNDP and b) the focus of development funds on governance and state building rather than on sub-national economic development.

Importantly, the Regional Solutions strategy, initially designed to bring other actors on board to support UNHCR's effort concerning reintegration, ends up being as isolated a strategy as the shelter programme. Because of UNHCR reluctance to share its responsibilities in terms of reintegration and its specific populations of concern, and of the scarcity of early recovery/development actors ready to intervene side by side with UNHCR on reintegration, reintegration – including its shelter component – remains out of any efficient coordination mechanism. *'There is no strong forum to discuss reintegration; everything we do, we do it in isolation. (...) We should also coordinate issues that are not emergencies. Reintegration is not about emergency, it is about opening opportunities for development.'*⁴¹ This illustrates how the reintegration strategy is weakened by its own contradictions that is building hastily a strategy based on partnerships without any strong partnerships or linkages in place.

Humanitarian and development actors in the field

At the provincial level, UNHCR relies on bilateral relationships with relevant humanitarian actors to coordinate on shelter assistance because of the absence of appropriate coordination forum and the small number of actors involved. The most important point of this coordination is to reduce the risk of duplication of shelter assistance. Overall, the risk of duplication appeared to have been properly mitigated. Only in rare instances had UNHCR implemented a shelter programme in the same area than other actors (e.g. IOM or UN-Habitat) and this did not lead to overlap in the selection of beneficiaries. This issue of duplication therefore did not appear as a major challenge for the implementation of the shelter programme and it was properly addressed through bilateral coordination.

As mentioned above, the coordination with other humanitarian and development actors in the field is very limited. Both the shelter programme and the 2012 reintegration pilot sites were implemented in relative isolation from other actors. This leads to two main shortcomings:

⁴¹ KII – UNHCR HIRAT – Associate Reintegration Officer.

- 1) There is no specific forum to discuss about the relevance and adequacy of shelter guidelines and design at the provincial level and to share lessons learned about shelter assistance. This only happens on an ad-hoc basis when another actor takes the responsibility to share its conclusions on the shelter package with UNHCR. Even in the specific case of Nangarhar province, where monthly multilateral shelter meetings are held between stakeholders under the supervision of UNHCR, these are not used for information sharing and exchange about practices, but merely to share figures and avoid duplication.
- 2) Secondly, as mentioned previously, opportunities to link the shelter programme with other programmes of assistance are often missed, especially for the provision of basic services (clean water, schools or health facilities) or for the implementation of livelihood programmes. Coexistence of other assistance programmes in PSUs were often the result of coincidence linked to the accessibility of the area, or its identification by several actors as an area in need of assistance due to intensive destruction (Parwan), or massive influx of migrants (Nangarhar).

6.2.5 Military Actors

In the field, the shelter programme is sometimes implemented in areas where various military and insurgent actors are active. In some instances, the programme was implemented in areas where PRT had their own distribution programmes. In Nangarhar, UNHCR has an informal relationship with ISAF in the frame of a reinforced civil-military partnership by which humanitarian actors are informed of upcoming military operations to be ready to respond to the consequent needs. If this approach can be beneficial in terms of humanitarian action, there are implications to such interactions: risks of jeopardizing their neutrality through interactions with actors engaged in the conflict - including the military or the insurgency - is something humanitarian actors need to keep in mind. In the mid- and long-run, the question of neutrality of humanitarian actors is likely to grow in importance in a transition context where balances between AOGs and governmental forces may shift swiftly. In order to avoid putting at stake their neutrality, humanitarian actors in Afghanistan today must be in discussions with all parties to the conflict - including insurgents - in order to safeguard their image of neutrality.

7. CONCLUSION: WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF UNHCR'S SHELTER ASSISTANCE ON THE SUSTAINABLE REINTEGRATION OF RETURNING REFUGEES AND IDPS?

In this question, and in this report, sustainable reintegration is defined as achieving parity with other community members, in terms of socio-economic security. The Shelter Assistance Programme was reviewed on its socio-economic potential, not on purely technical aspects. The comparative measurement used by the research team allows for a multi-dimensional poverty analysis and a comparison between shelter beneficiaries, community members, and returning refugees and IDPs who did not receive shelter assistance.

7.1 OVERALL CONCLUSION

7.1.1 Assessing the shelter programme's reintegration impact

The multi-dimensional poverty index used in this research showed that **non-beneficiaries report the highest overall multi-dimensional poverty** at 86 per cent, compared to 71 per cent for UNHCR shelter beneficiaries and 68 per cent for beneficiaries of other programmes. Moreover, through regression analysis we find that **being a non-beneficiary increases the probability of being multi-dimensionally poor** – by an additional 15 to 17 per cent – a significant figure.

These two findings put together show that **UNHCR shelter beneficiaries fare better than non-beneficiaries or other community members**. In terms of reintegration, it means they have not only achieved, but in most cases exceeded the objective of parity. Section 7.2 of this chapter will review the elements contributing to or limiting reintegration in more detail. The overall context matters and both factors contributing to, and potential obstacles to, sustainability and reintegration should be highlighted.

Extending the analysis further, comparisons over time, from the moment of exile, to return, and before/after assistance provide **solid evidence that the UNHCR shelter programme has had a significant and positive impact on reducing household deprivation**. This is true on a set of indicators – housing, electricity, sanitation, use of mobile phones, subjective security.

Furthermore, there are **only rare traces of any intra-community tensions caused by the shelter programme**. The norm is one of acceptance and appreciation, except in cases where beneficiary selection was seen as problematic by the communities. There were observations however of tensions across communities, especially where neighbouring communities were made up of various ethnic backgrounds. Specifically when the programme was part of a reintegration site, where several other assistance programmes were provided, it was common that **neighbouring communities did not understand why assistance was concentrated in one sole location**.

Given the findings that shelter assistance is an important element to support sustainable reintegration, Chapter 8 will recommend alternative beneficiary selection or distribution modalities that would be more appropriate in order to diminish some of the weaknesses of the programme. These aspects of the programme – beneficiary selection and targeting the most vulnerable – are reviewed next and are crucial to a positive reform of the shelter programme that needs to adapt to a changing humanitarian context. Most importantly the programme needs to focus on the inclusion of IDPs, who are so far mostly marginalized.

7.1.2 Targeting the most vulnerable?

This study shows that the main weakness of the shelter programme is beneficiary selection and targeting of the most vulnerable – since our findings shows that the most vulnerable are often also those marginalized from the programme - whether IDPs, female headed households, the landless, or the ill and disabled.

Data collected from our sample shows that, overall, more than half of the UNHCR beneficiaries did not qualify as EVI households. Only 46 per cent can be considered as such, even though criteria to define EVIs are loose. This indicates a failure to target the most vulnerable. More worrisome is the fact that more than half of the non-refugee returnees that received UNHCR assistance are not considered to be an EVI.

Problems of beneficiary selection are due partly to the irregular selection and participation of Beneficiary Selection Committee members, misunderstanding of the selection criteria and of vulnerability criteria, and misallocation of assistance to households that did not qualify as the most vulnerable in their communities.

As will be reviewed in the recommendations, an **over-reliance on IPs for selection and monitoring, even in non-remote areas, has meant that UNHCR staff has not been as present as they could have been in the field, thereby limiting the effectiveness of the process.** In addition, interference of community leaders, the uneven participation of DoRRs and the weak inclusion of female participants can all be areas of further improvement to strengthen the outcomes of the programme.

Most notably, considerations for the situation of IDPs, female-headed households, landless households and households with ill and disabled members can be significantly improved. Although the evaluation is based on households who received assistance in 2009-2011, and that improvements have to date been achieved to better integrate these vulnerable populations in the programming, the shelter programme still has to evolve from a refugee returnee-focused programme, to one that is equally – if not more – needed for internally displaced persons. **The development of a National IDP Policy and the increasing trends in conflict-induced displacement should constitute major push factors for UNHCR to more closely collaborate with the Government of Afghanistan to use shelter as a means to achieving durable solutions** – especially when findings on its contribution to reintegration are positive, as shown in this evaluation. This mention takes us to the next conclusion on a viable partnership strategy for the SAP.

7.1.3 Partnership – is a handover of the Shelter Assistance Programme possible?

One of the main questions set forth by UNHCR at the start of this study asked to know which ministry of the Government of Afghanistan could have the mandate and capacity to address shelter issues for the most vulnerable returning refugees. The research team's findings showed that there are – **at the moment – no government entities or any other organization active in Afghanistan able to implement a shelter programme of the same size and scope as UNHCR**, and with the same target population in mind.

Looking specifically at the Government of Afghanistan, the line ministry with the mandate over such a programme would be the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation – however, the ministry lacks the capacity, and is weakened by other factors (lack of resources, corruption, lack of leadership) that would prevent it from stepping up to this task. Furthermore, other ministries, such as the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, focus only on rural areas whereas the evaluation of the shelter programme – and an element recommended for its future strategy – highlights specific urban and semi-rural (or semi-urban) needs.

A stronger partnership strategy will need to be carefully developed to further support the shelter programme, with funding support from donors, requiring additional advocacy efforts. At this stage, and based on this evaluation, it is clear that interactions with the Government of Afghanistan on the shelter programme are mainly taking place at the sub-national level. National-level relationships of coordination of the shelter activities are often non-existent. This is partly due to the limited space given to shelter assistance in the cluster and task force systems – resulting in a weak coordination system over shelter. Furthermore, since international organizations have been gradually diminishing their involvement on shelter and stepping out of the implementation framework of UNHCR's SAP, the only implementing partners remain national NGOs, with their strengths (access, flexibility, low costs) but the weakness of not being able to take on the role of leadership on questions of shelter. Instances of misallocation and fraud at the local level have highlighted the need to be cautious of the relationship of IPs with communities, and the over-reliance on IPs for implementation and monitoring, sometimes leading to conflicts of interests. These factors limit any handover of the shelter programme in the near future.

Furthermore, the geographic coverage provided by UNHCR's shelter programme remains to this date one of its key strengths – with all regions of Afghanistan and 26 provinces covered in total in 2009-2011. This level of breadth and depth is a unique asset that UNHCR should hold on to – especially given the overall positive results of its programme on the reintegration process of its beneficiaries.

7.1.4 Strategic direction of the shelter programme: How to do shelter in the future?

UNHCR holds a distinct leadership position over a well-functioning (in terms of reintegration impact) yet improvable shelter assistance programme. **Any reduction of the size or scope of the programme will not be covered by other actors and would result in a negative impact on vulnerable populations.** This is specifically true of conflict-induced IDPs.

Access to land and shelter has been documented as the top priority need of displaced populations in Afghanistan. The achievements of the shelter programme have now been documented in this evaluation. Based on needs and achievements, the research team therefore recommends holding on to the Shelter Assistance Programme as the cornerstone of UNHCR interventions in Afghanistan. Potential improvements will be detailed in Chapter 8 – Recommendations.

However, although UNHCR is currently framing the importance of shelter activities in light of its reintegration potential, it is important to remember that shelter is not in and of itself the key to a sustainable reintegration, shelter being just one of many components that can contribute to reintegration. The rest of this chapter will therefore reflect on the factors and indicators contributing or threatening reintegration and sustainability, before concluding on the relevance of the current shelter guidelines.

7.2 REFLECTIONS ON REINTEGRATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

The concept of reintegration lacks a standard international definition. The guidelines of the UNHCR *Handbook for Repatriation and Reintegration Activities* provide elements constituting a starting point to grasp the implications behind the concept. **“Reintegration is a process that should result in the disappearance of differences in legal rights and duties between returnees and their compatriots and the equal access of returnees to services, productive assets and opportunities”** leading to a **“sustainable return – in other words, the ability of returning refugees to secure political, economic (legal) and social conditions needed to maintain life, livelihoods and dignity”**⁴². “Sustainable reintegration” is therefore understood as a process **achieving parity with other community members** in terms of socio-economic security and ensuring they have access to decent living conditions. The emphasis is placed on the disappearance of differences between the returnee and the host population, the access to the same legal rights, equal services, productive assets and opportunities.

In the Afghan context, the existing standards for reintegration can be traced back to the *National Return, Displacement and integration strategy of 1382* (2003), which mainstreamed reintegration in government and development programmes and identifies UNHCR as the main agency in charge of strengthening the capacity of MoRR. However, the concept of “sustainable re-integration” of returnees in Afghanistan appears ill-conceived and highly questionable: high levels of instability and dire economic conditions set

⁴² UNHCR (2004), *Handbook for Repatriation and Reintegration Activities*, Geneva, p. 4-5.

a low level for the conditions and context of return, incompatible with the idea of a sustainable environment. Rather than on reintegration, sustainability is therefore what should be focused on: ensuring long-term livelihood opportunities, maintained without external inputs, for all members of the community, so as to draw the vulnerable out of misery.

Furthermore, as stated prior it is important to remember that shelter is not in and of itself the key to a sustainable reintegration, but just one of many components that can contribute to reintegration. If the survey results show that reintegration levels are low, this does not mean that the shelter program would have failed, but instead that there could be other explanations, e.g. that the planning of SAP was weak and could be strengthened.

This section reviews the determinants of reintegration and of sustainability, as two separate processes to underline the fact that **reintegration can happen today, without being necessarily sustainable given the evolving Afghan context and the dynamic migratory trends**. This section also underlines the steps that can be taken – with specific examples from the qualitative and quantitative data – to shed light on what can be done to ease reintegration and sustainability.

7.2.1 Determinants of Reintegration

- **Intra/Inter community factors**

Reintegration is a process that needs to be understood as a relative indicator – comparing the situation of the target population (here beneficiaries) with that of local residents or non-beneficiaries. By creating new groups within the community, by excluding some and including others, it is important to ensure that the programme does not create tensions within the community.

In this study, the implementation of the programme sometimes – albeit only rarely – raised intra- and inter-community tensions, seen as threats to reintegration. The perception of the degree of relevance of the selection process by the communities at large has strong implications in the mitigation/exacerbation of tensions between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. For example, neighbouring villages which had been completely neglected in the design of the assistance programme for the reintegration site of Kuchi Abad, non-beneficiaries left out of selection in Majbur Abad and IDPs not targeted in Khanaqa strongly resented the shelter programme. This reinforces unstable environments, and places strain on programme's success.

In terms of feeling part of the community, the quantitative data suggests that UNHCR beneficiaries and those of other programmes feel welcome in their respective host communities. Table 90 shows that between 2 and 2.5 per cent of different beneficiaries did not feel welcome and supported, but only very small proportions encountered aggressive or violent behaviour by other community members. As a result inter/intra community tensions remained the exception, positively impacting reintegration processes.

Table 90: Attitude of Community towards Beneficiaries (in %)

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	Total
Very welcoming – very supportive	42.23	42.49	42.27
Welcoming – supportive	55.18	53.89	54.97
Not welcoming – not supportive	2.23	2.59	2.29
Aggressive	0.26	0.52	0.30
Violent	0.10	0.52	0.17
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

- **Natural disasters**

One determinant of reintegration is the **adequacy of the environment for a sustainable living** – for long-term settlement. In this regard, the occurrence of natural disasters can jeopardize both reintegration and sustainability. In a number of locations, the sustainability of the reintegration entailed by the programme was threatened by potential occurrence of natural disasters in the area of implementation of the shelters:

- In Jawzjan, at least five shelters were noticed to have been destroyed by a flood in 2012.
- In Jebrail, Hirat, inhabitants expressed serious concern about the fact that an entire section of the town, including shelters, had been constructed on a flood prone area, while in Shogofan villagers feared the risk of floods related to the recent construction of a canal, which construction was part of a ‘reintegration package.’
- In Nhia 1 (Jalalabad, Nangarhar) and Khanaqa (Parwan), urgent need for retaining walls was mentioned where shelters had allegedly been destroyed by floods in 2010.

The **lack of acknowledgement of risks of natural disaster is a weakness in the design of the programme**. Risks are solely taken into account for the design of the shelter itself, through inclusion of wood bracing in earthquake prone areas. Preliminary assessments were largely overlooked by most stakeholders, UNHCR staff and IPs mentioning relying on sight-checks by engineers, common sense and village knowledge. In all of the locations visited and despite specific examples mentioned above, there seems to be **no culture of prevention of risks in implementing areas**. There is no technical expertise in this field and there appears to be no awareness of IPs about such risks and no form of coordination or consultancy with other stakeholders on this issue: ANDMA for risk assessment and municipalities or Directorates of Urban Development and Housing in urban areas. **Other organisations (e.g. ZOA or NRC) had developed stronger procedures to mitigate natural risks in their areas of implementation.**

- **Secondary displacement as a last resort**

Respondents interviewed considered secondary displacement as a last resort, as migration is perceived as a painful, tiresome and costly process. Overall, beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries alike insisted on their intention to stay, provided they had access to services in the following years. Even in extremely remote areas, like in Khoje Sabz Posh in Faryab province, characterised by no access to basic services and by very scarce sources of livelihoods, beneficiaries confirmed that they had no intention to move again. In the trade-off between livelihood/migration on the one hand and land and shelter ownership/stability on the other, beneficiaries often chose to keep their shelter. Still, information collected here was at the household level and individual responses may vary, so we must be cautious of over-interpreting this finding.

- **Resilience and coping mechanisms**

Resilience is an important factor of reintegration – seen through coping mechanisms adopted by beneficiary households. Interestingly, even in cases where the conditions for sustainability were low, **beneficiaries had developed coping mechanisms against the absence of livelihood through temporary migration**, indicating shelters are perceived as a central component of family life and considered as an essential need and hub from which to plan other activities and develop coping mechanisms:

- Seasonal work migration for herding and seasonal crop picking (Aab Dara in Deh Sabz, Kabul, and Kuchi Abad in Kabul). In such cases, shelters were closed down and secured for the time of migration, with yearly patterns of return of the beneficiary household. This was further corroborated by comments from members of the local community.
- Migration of the head of household while the rest of the family remained in the shelter (Jawzjan, Nangarhar, Hirat), either in the place of exile or to larger cities with better employment opportunities, for example Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif, Deh Sabz brick kilns, Pakistan or Iran. In some cases, men commuted back and forth on a weekly basis to a city or area with higher employment opportunities (mentioned in Kandahar, Nangarhar, Parwan).

These observations tend to confirm that **shelter is a cornerstone in the reintegration of returnees and IDPs**. It also shows that **returnees develop more complex responses to the challenge of livelihood than definitive secondary displacements**. It further shows that returnees and IDPs develop appropriate coping strategies when they do not have to invest their resources in land and housing – their priority need – to instead focus on their next protection needs – livelihood and food.

7.2.3 Determinants of Sustainability

Focusing on the programme itself, assessing how it contributes to the sustainability of reintegration of beneficiaries in a given environment implies taking into account three different sets of indicators:

- 1) Household-level indicators, such as occupancy rates and rates of secondary displacement.
- 2) Community-level indicators taking into account the reintegration of beneficiary households at the aggregate level (community at large, including neighbouring communities), according to factor such as economic and social environment in the area of return/settlement, the ethnic and economic homogeneity/heterogeneity.
- 3) Environmental indicators.

This section will challenge some of the assumptions on the sustainability of return. Although not exhaustive, these findings are important to draw attention to in the conclusions as they were seen as key findings based on field visits.

High occupancy and low secondary displacement rates

The occupancy of the shelters was high or very high, with few trends of secondary displacement. Beneficiaries explicitly expressed a desire to settle and stay in the area of implementation of the shelter programme. **In specific cases, such as the land allocation sites of Sheikh Mesri and Chamtala (Nangarhar), or reportedly insecure areas which could not be accessed (in Jawzjan for instance), occupancy rates were lower, with secondary displacement and abandonment of shelters due to lack of livelihood opportunities and lack of access to services.**

BOX 3: OCCUPANCY RATE – METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Assessing the occupancy rate in each location is a complex process and the figures found cannot lead to any generalisation of results as a systematic check of all beneficiary households could not be undertaken in each location. No assessment could be done in inaccessible areas, where rates were sometimes reported to be lower. Remarks about the occupancy rate in this field report are based on:

- Systematic checks in villages with a small concentration of shelters.
- Direct observation by the team on a proportion of shelters in areas where thorough checks could not be conducted due to dissemination of habitat.
- Assessment based on secondary sources: community leaders, inhabitants' observations (both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries).

Even a systematic check of all the shelters built in an area is not as straightforward as it seems as some shelters seem to be unoccupied but show signs of life. As reported by neighbours, this could be a sign of a) short-term visits to relatives, b) temporary migration of the family to other regions of Afghanistan or c) migrations to Pakistan or Iran. In these cases, it is difficult to draw conclusions, as it is impossible to know whether these migrations will only last a few months or longer.

In most areas, empty shelters were the exception and remaining community members had a clear perception of the reasons why the shelters had been abandoned. Being compelled to leave a shelter allocated by UNHCR was allegedly considered as a failure. In Kahdistan (Hirat) for instance, inhabitants insisted on the fact that reasons for abandonment of a shelter by one of their community member were not linked to the program in itself, but to personal difficulties. Of the surveyed population, Table 91 shows that only a very minimal proportion had plans to move from their current place of residence, 0.17 per cent. The number is slightly higher for non-beneficiaries of which 2 per cent indicated that they plan to migrate (again) internally.

Table 91: Plans to Stay in Current Place of Residence (in %)

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-Beneficiaries	Total
Yes	99.84	100.00	97.78	99.83
No, I have plans to move again internally	0.1	0.00	2.22	0.13
No, I have plans to migrate internationally	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.04
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Plans to settle

A strong sign indicating an intention of durable settlement was **shelters were often appropriated by beneficiaries, and sometimes improved**, depending on the economic situation of the family. In several cases, beneficiaries had made substantive investment to improve their shelters to turn them into proper houses, decorating the inside of the rooms, upgrading the immediate environment by adding terraces and plants for instance, and introducing minor changes after construction to adapt the shelter to their needs (e.g. opening kitchens in Hirat or adding annexes). Whenever possible, additional investment had been made to dig wells inside compounds. As mentioned earlier, in the majority of locations visited, beneficiaries expressed no intention to migrate again and the **investments made in the upgrading of shelters is a clear indicator shelters are perceived a durable component of family life**.

Despite strong aspirations to settle permanently in locations with high occupancy rates, **communities expressed considerable concern about the availability of jobs and facilities, a potential factor for later secondary displacement if these issues are not addressed**. Lack of livelihood opportunities on the long-term places a substantive threat on the sustainability of the program for beneficiary families. Unemployment was repeatedly mentioned as one of the main problems faced by most communities, with beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries alike relying on daily work and unstable incomes. Coping mechanisms such as temporary work migration are mostly viable on the short-term and households expressed high concern about the long-lasting consequences of lack of income-generating opportunities in the neighbourhood.

BOX 4: SHELTER – AN INCENTIVE FOR RETURN AND SETTLEMENT?

In some communities, the shelter programme was expressly mentioned as an incentive for return, sometimes triggering further arrivals. This was the case in Aab Dara, where a part of the tribe that had remained in Pakistan came after shelter implementation in the hope to receive a shelter and more were mentioned to arrive in case the shelter programme was pursued. These types of comments were recurrent in tribal communities where strong links were kept with other members of the tribe which had remained in displacement (Parwan, Kabul).

In both Aab Dara and Kahdistan, interestingly, shelter worked as an incentive despite low livelihood opportunities and lack of services. The case of Kahdistan is significant in the sense that returnees were mainly IDP returnees unable to return to their place of origin (Maimana in Faryab in the case of the Moghol beneficiaries interviewed). Both the availability of land, which they had purchased, and the implementation of the shelter programme were perceived as an opportunity to start a new life and were met with great expectations, but also increasing concern about the future and the improvement in terms of access to public health and education facilities. Housing, and therefore the shelter programme, were clearly seen as a first step to (re-)integrate in a new environment. The male members of beneficiary households were ready to cope with difficulties linked to employment opportunities and expecting further development of the area in the following years. However, women beneficiaries insisted on the importance of bazaar, health and schooling facilities to address daily needs of the household.

7.2.4 Immediate Threats to Sustainability

In the minority of cases where shelters were abandoned, main reasons mentioned for secondary displacement were the lack of privacy in the design of the shelters, land disputes and access to basic services.

- At the household level, the incapacity to build surrounding walls, which is considered as a major component for protection and privacy of families in Afghan society. This was noticed in Pitawa (Kabul) and was reportedly the case in Kunar (KII APA, Nangarhar). Lack of surrounding walls were mentioned as a critical problem in heterogeneous tribal environment, where privacy of the family is considered all the more essential as neighbours are not related to the household members. **Surrounding walls are therefore necessary in the LAS where various communities are mixed.** The all too famous failure of Alice Ghan settlement illustrated this⁴³.

⁴³ See for example MAJIDI Nassim, « Home Sweet Home! Repatriation, Reintegration and Land Allocation in Afghanistan », paper for REMMM, forthcoming December 2012.

- Land disputes were a factor for secondary displacement observed in LAS in Nangarhar. This was reportedly due to misallocation and inappropriate distribution of land, a phenomenon that is common in LAS.
- Lack of access to basic services was also identified as a factor contributing to secondary displacement. Transportation and water having the highest impact in the short-term, with a direct correlation to the ability to sustain a decent livelihood, like in the LAS of Andkhoy in Faryab province.

7.2.5 Long-Term Threats to Sustainability

The main factors determining the sustainability of reintegration (location; access to basic services and access to livelihood) are closely interlinked. Our study showed that the poor selection of locations for the shelter programme prevented, from the start, a sustainable return and reintegration process.

- **Location and accessibility: a structural factor**

The location of the shelter implementation sites was one of the main factors driving the success or potential failure of a settlement in a particular area, with direct consequences on sustainability deriving from:

- The availability of basic services addressing human needs (water, electricity, health facilities).
- Accessibility to employment opportunities and basic health and schooling facilities.

PSUs visited therefore faced unequal conditions for sustainability based on their accessibility, availability of transport infrastructure and economic environment *prior to implementation*. In cases where returnees come back to a village they had left for several years, often decades, in areas affected by war or degradation due to long absence, basic infrastructure including water and transport or a favourable environment for employment was most of the time non-existent. This is also the case in areas where access to land was made possible by low prices, which directly derived from the absence of basic facilities and the lack of accessibility of the area (Aab Dara, Kahdistan). In such cases, inhabitants mentioned relying on the potential development of the area in the coming years and the need for support from the government or assistance programmes in the meantime.

- **Lack of transportation infrastructure**

This was notably a primary concern for all communities as it has a direct impact on the access to urban centres with livelihood opportunities, bazaars, health and schooling facilities. Considerable differences were noticed between locations according to the degree of accessibility of the village. “Roads” were therefore repeatedly mentioned as a major need by community leaders and members. The proximity of a main circulation axis or proper roads facilitates mobility of active members of the community to find

income opportunities, which could be further enhanced by the dynamism of the economic environment. That was notably the case in Bakhtyaran, semi-urban areas around Jalalabad and, to a lower extent, Saracha. In locations with a higher connectivity (Jalalabad, Bakhtiyaran in Deh Sabz), as in areas where shelters were implemented inside or in the immediate vicinity of the agglomeration, immediate access to the city/ dynamic economic environment meant higher employment opportunities (as rickshaw drivers for example), but also the ability to reach health and banking facilities in town.

Conversely, in more remote areas, lack of access and transport infrastructure implies a substantive investment for beneficiaries both in money and time. This was reportedly one of the major reasons for temporary labour migration, with inhabitants not being able to afford commuting daily to places for work. High concern about this was expressed in Kahdistan and Aab Dara for instance. Under harsh weather conditions keeping inhabitants from using deficient roads or streets, lack of proper road infrastructure had very practical negative consequences: not reaching local bazaars for job opportunities and purchase of basic goods, impossible transportation of injured and sick people to health facilities in the winter, and the inaccessibility of schooling facilities for children (Allah Abad, Aab Dara, Majbur Abad). The proximity of an urban centre does not automatically imply access to school and hospitals and enhances the need for proper roads and streets. This was notably a major issue in Allah Abad, neighbouring the reintegration site of Kochi Abad, and in Majbur Abad.

BOX 5: IMPLEMENTING SAP IN INSECURE AREAS

Despite the difficulty to assess on site the occupancy of shelters in insecure areas, which could not be accessed by the field team, two elements advocate the unsustainability of programme implementation:

1. No proper monitoring can be conducted, therefore considerably reducing the visibility over the programme. Kabul central office confirmed that monitoring remote areas was a major issue.
2. Secondary displacements are more likely to occur due to the instability of the situation in the area, as was mentioned in Qaysar district.

Directly deriving from the availability of transport infrastructures is the accessibility of basic services. Despite the strong expression of intentions to settle permanently in the shelters, very serious concerns were expressed on numerous occasions about the availability of health and schooling facilities. The fact that returnees had had access to schooling and health facilities abroad (Iran and Pakistan) made them more aware of their necessity.

Increasing demographic pressure in areas of high return placed strains on public schooling, health facilities and access to water even whenever those were previously available. In Jalalabad return rates are high and in areas where the programme was implemented the need for additional assistance programs was emphasized in order to fight against degradation of roads and guarantee access to water and availability of health facilities. Not taking into account these elements puts at stake the programme as, in the long term, this might lead to secondary displacement of beneficiaries, and non-beneficiaries develop an acute feeling of being neglected.

- **Absence of Livelihood and Unemployment**

Absence of livelihood opportunities is the issue of highest concern for beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries alike. In areas of high return, the arrival of new comers has a direct impact on the availability of jobs, which needs to be supported by a dynamic economic environment. This was mentioned as a **factor of tension between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries when demographic pressure was combined with the feeling non-beneficiaries had been neglected**. This was allegedly the case in Khanaqa (Parwan), where beneficiaries were mainly returnees from Iran and Pakistan who arrived with higher skills compared to returning IDPs who had not been selected for the programme. This was also the case in Bagram, with returnees from Iran could secure skilled jobs in the neighbouring Air Base. The combination of two disadvantages, not taken into account in the selection process, triggered resentment putting at stake the success of the programme in the village.

The previous occupation in the area of displacement therefore has a significant impact on the economic reintegration of returning migrants. Beneficiaries who either returned to their area of origin or settled in new settlements after long periods of displacement had acquired specific skills in exile/ displacement. Most returnees, who were the bulk of beneficiaries, stuck to the daily urban occupation as workers or street vendors they had practiced in Pakistan or Iran. Only in a very few cases was agriculture mentioned as a means for livelihood and was usually a complementary strategy to cope with lack of income through raising of livestock and extensive agriculture, even in areas such as Parwan where land is available and agriculture a developing sector. The importance of incomes deriving from urban occupations further emphasize the need for connectivity to a neighbouring bazaar or urban centre and the importance of linking urban and rural development.

7.3 ASSESSING THE SAP GUIDING PRINCIPLES

As seen in the introduction, on the whole, the UNHCR shelter programme adheres to eight main guiding principles – this conclusion returns to these to assess their relevance.

1. Community based approach

“The UNHCR shelter programme is a community based, self-help programme. The community takes primary responsibility for identifying eligible beneficiaries to receive shelter assistance, while the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, authorities, implementing partners and UNHCR play an advisory role. In effect this approach has proven to set limits on an effective beneficiary selection process, on support during the construction process and on monitoring and follow-up.”

One of the findings of this study is the insufficient supporting activities or training activities provided by UNHCR to its beneficiaries. The construction process is difficult and costly for beneficiaries – with 89 per cent of households running out of money during the construction process, significant disparities in household contribution and lack of access to water in almost half of the sample surveyed. While UNHCR emphasizes community help, in practice relying on

the community to support beneficiaries during construction is not a sustainable option given most community members face difficulty in sustaining their own household.

Mechanisms to provide additional assistance to EVIs to build their shelter are inefficient – and hence need to go beyond the community-based support. In addition, limited complementary training – notably on hygiene promotion – is an obstacle to more positive results of the programme. These require a more direct intervention by UNHCR and its IPs, during the construction process for support and following the construction process for monitoring.

2. Women’s direct participation

“Recognizing the challenges of facilitating female participation, UNHCR and implementing partners involve women in selection, implementation, monitoring and management to the greatest extent possible within regionally and culturally appropriate contexts.”

This target was met in less than one third of the communities surveyed – with only 13 out of 60 communities surveyed showing a female presence during the beneficiary selection process, and this participation came from UNHCR itself, not the local community. In addition, the survey shows that female-headed households are not sufficiently integrated in the programme, and their results, based on the MPI analysis, are lower than those of other beneficiaries. Women are included but their direct participation is still limited and where they were involved it was in no meaningful way.

3. Access to land

“Only families with evidence of land ownership will be eligible for shelter assistance. However, those who for a long time had a house on government owned land may also be eligible, provided that the land is not disputed and the local authorities issue a no-objection certificate (NOC) for them to construct a new house. In addition, a family who meets the vulnerability criteria and has a lease or right to use the land from a landowner may also be eligible for assistance. However, landless beneficiaries are not included in UNHCR’s shelter programme; they fall under the responsibility of the Government of Afghanistan.”

It is acknowledged that the shelter programme is designed for the most vulnerable “landowners” whilst **the most vulnerable returning refugees are those with no access to land** (or insufficient access to land to accommodate the increased family size during years of exile). However, given the seemingly contradiction in terms, i.e. targeting landowners yet aiming to target the most vulnerable, **UNHCR will need to find ways to target the most vulnerable returnees to secure access to land and shelter**. This will be addressed in the recommendations section of the report.

4. Focus on vulnerability

“Beneficiary selection is based on the belief that vulnerable families would not be able to establish shelters without external assistance. UNHCR recognizes that vulnerability is a relative phenomenon in one targeted location or village as compared with another location. That is why

the Beneficiary Selection Committee (BSC) is tasked to play an important role in identifying vulnerable beneficiaries. Extreme vulnerability can be identified during the beneficiary selection process or during programme implementation. For vulnerable categories such as female-headed, disabled or elderly heads of households without external support and large families with insufficient income, all involved staff should ensure that no vulnerable families are overlooked or rejected for assistance.”

This research finds that some categories are included, but still to some extent overlooked, namely IDPs, female-headed households, the landless and the ill and the disabled. The latter category is often times more difficult to research on and target, in part due to the tendency of families to hide the disabled from public view. This study shows that proper vulnerability targeting will require more sensitized and specific training – of UNHCR local staff, IPs, community leaders and other BSC members to ensure that they are included before other non-EVI community members. This will constitute a priority for UNHCR’s future programmatic changes.

5. Environmental concerns

“Afghanistan’s forest is one of the most destroyed sectors of the environment. When implementing shelter projects, regional offices should consider this fact and use alternative materials in lieu of wood or, in cases where wood cannot be avoided, try to ensure that wood products are either imported or are from sustainably harvested local sources. The UNHCR shelter package therefore includes iron doors and windows for all shelters throughout Afghanistan. Similarly, iron roof beams or dome roofs made of brick are promoted wherever possible. The shelter package also includes one latrine for every family, increasing environmental hygiene in beneficiary communities.”

The study finds that in effect, wood beams have been set aside for the preferred iron beams although provincial differences in the procurement of wood, when needed, still remain and can be addressed. However, environmental considerations have trickled down to the regional offices. Regarding the use of latrines, this study finds that the level of hygiene and sanitation can drastically be improved with beneficiaries not showing positive impact rates of the shelter assistance on their level of hygiene. Providing a latrine alone per family does not suffice – qualitative observations showed latrines were the last piece of the construction process, sometimes uninstalled, or used for other purposes. The provision of training and support will prove crucial on this aspect.

6. Preservation of cultural and regional preferences

“Recognizing the diversity of climatic conditions and cultural preferences in the design of houses in each region, the UNHCR shelter programme provides a model design against which the in-kind (material) and cash contribution are based. For instance, under the UNHCR shelter programme, the dome type ceiling can be seen in west and north Afghanistan and the flat roof with beams in central, east, southeast and south Afghanistan. The flexibility of the shelter programme should allow for these variations.”

Shelter design remains flexible but the level of household contribution remains unequal, with important geographic disparities. 93 per cent of households had to contribute to their shelter, however gaps remained between rural, semi-rural and urban locations. This is due to the higher costs of materials and labour in urban areas – higher costs that will have to be taken into account in developing an urban strategy for the shelter programme, discussed in the recommendations chapter. However, evidence shows that while UNHCR beneficiary households located in an urban context spend more in absolute terms, semi-rural households spend slightly more in relative terms. There are other important disparities across provinces. Typically regions of high return and high rates of urbanisation, such as Hirat, Nangarhar and Kabul present significantly higher levels of household contribution.

7. Contribution to local economies

“The UNHCR shelter programme seeks to contribute to reviving local economies through its implementation wherever possible. This includes using skilled and unskilled labour, and local procurement of raw materials.”

The requirement for skilled and unskilled labour, although a burden on beneficiary households, has a positive repercussion on the local economy. However, the impact of the programme on the local economy of beneficiary communities was rarely very significant and most of the time only short term. The community survey showed that 60 per cent of community leaders felt that the programme had impacted the labour market but in most cases, this was a short-term employment boost, with beneficiary households hiring two to three extra workers for one month. The impact on local prices was similarly limited. Finally, the shelter programme was sometimes pointed at as playing a role in the rise of land prices, especially in Kabul and Nangarhar. However, this is related to a much larger phenomenon than reintegration assistance.

8. Involvement of local authorities

“In 2003, MUDH, MORR and MRRD developed a national policy for shelter programme harmonization with the help of other key players. Throughout the process of shelter implementation, district officers should be encouraged to be actively involved. This is particularly important during beneficiary selection, the most sensitive step in the shelter programme. The BSC must include members of the Community Development Council (CDC) where present or the provincial, district, or village shura (committee of elders and trustees), local authorities (district authorities, provincial representatives of MORR), in addition to representatives from the implementing partner (IP) and representatives from UNHCR (where field presence is possible). Joint monitoring is also important, especially concerning communication channels with beneficiaries, land disputes, ownership and other related issues.”

This remains one of the weak points of the process with MoRR being “kept in the dark”, or being incapable of linking up with the SAP at the national or sub-national level. The harmonization policy has not led to greater coordination between sectoral ministries, MoRR and UNHCR, or with IPs, each working on their own due to structural, systemic, financial and staffing constraints.

7.4 STRATEGIC EVOLUTIONS OF THE SAP

Given the key findings of this research and the evidence of SAP's contribution to reintegration, the question can no longer be *'Should the shelter programme continue to be implemented in Afghanistan?'* but rather *'How should the programme evolve to:*

- a. Better adapt to the current migratory trends of the country;
- b. Better fit the needs of the most vulnerable;
- c. Be more inclusive of IDPs and other vulnerable segments of the population, and of potential partners of the programme; and
- d. Be sustainable in an increasingly complex humanitarian context?'

These questions will be addressed in the final chapter of this report.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS: REINFORCING SAP GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The recommendations of this research are based on the existing SAP Guiding Principles – elements highlighted in bold/orange are the recommended additions to the Guiding Principles for 2013 and beyond. From 8 main Guiding Principles, the research team proposes a set of 11 Guiding Principles. These include two types of recommendations are presented:

First, the addition of new Guiding Principles – such as the need to integrate Impact and Needs Assessments (item 1), IDPs’ direct participation (item 4), a Partnership Strategy (item 10) and a Monitoring Framework (item 11). These additions are both the most relevant to the project planning cycle and to the changing humanitarian context of Afghanistan. Impact, Needs assessments and Monitoring frameworks are prerequisite for any accountable and transparent implementation process, while IDPs’ direct participation and a solid Partnership Strategy are requirements imposed by a humanitarian context defined by increasing internal displacement and lack of access.

Second, the strengthening of already existing Guiding Principles – Our recommendations seek to improve, and often breakdown in more detail, principles such as the Community-based approach (item 2), Women’s direct participation (item 3), Access to land (item 5), Focus on vulnerability (item 6), Environmental concerns (item 7), and the Preservation of cultural and regional preferences (item 8). These are principles that were found, in our research and fieldwork, to be weak in their implementation – and hence need to be strengthened by better adapting to the challenges at the field level.

The proposed set of 11 SAP Guiding Principles below is a “ready to use” revised set of guidelines for UNHCR’s 2013 programmatic review.

2013 SAP GUIDELINES – 22 PRINCIPLES

- 1. Impact and Needs Assessments**
 - a. Baseline**
 - b. Calendar and flexibility of construction process**
 - c. Setting standard for household contribution**

2. Community-based approach
 - a. Increasing the degree of transparency of the selection process**
 - b. Impact on non-beneficiaries**
 - c. Complementary assistance**

3. Women’s direct participation
 - a. Include women and gender criteria in the selection of beneficiaries**

1. IMPACT AND NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

a. Baseline

Introducing systematic baselines to build program specificities

Measuring the impact of the programme is not possible without a proper baseline of needs identifying what the initial economic and social conditions in the area of implementation were. Baselines can also help in providing a clear perception of community relations to avoid creating tensions through the programme.

Improving needs assessments

One of the main weaknesses identified in the programme was the absence of needs assessments prior to implementation. This could be improved through data collection and inclusion of complaint mechanisms at the start of the process. The NRC model, with involvement of the M&E team at the very beginning of implementation, can be taken into consideration to develop stronger needs assessments.

Baselines to drive the selection process

One of the main challenges to the effective selection of vulnerable households was the fact that selection of areas of implementation was **more supply-driven than based on the needs of the community**. In cases where high return areas were identified and allocated a high number of shelters, all VRF holders received assistance. This raises the issue of the quality of the preliminary assessment of needs. There were recurrent problems observed in Kabul, Hirat and Nangarhar, with quotas of shelters having to be met. This has a considerable impact on selection, as in such cases shelters are distributed to less vulnerable households based on the VRF criteria, whereas neighbouring communities are left out of the programme, fuelling potential tensions.

b. Calendar and flexibility of construction process

Defining a set calendar for selection and construction

In most cases, the timing of the construction can increase the challenges of the process. This study shows that if the programme starts late and the bulk of the construction work takes place during summer, at a time when water is not available, this increases household debt, poverty and increases the chances of an unsustainable outcome.

Based on field evidence, in cases where the bulk of construction had to take place in the summer, beneficiaries asked for extensions and waited for the rainy season. Furthermore, the lack of water plays a role in the level of indebtedness of beneficiary households.

Starting construction earlier in the spring – setting specific calendars for selection, then construction – would help reduce the risks of incompleteness of shelters before winter, and would help reduce levels of indebtedness. It would also increase coordination within UNHCR to know that:

- i. Fall months = selection of shelter beneficiaries
- ii. Winter months = training / sensitization of beneficiaries, communities, IPs
- iii. Spring months = construction
- iv. Summer months = follow-up and monitoring

Allowing flexibility during the construction process

The one-type-fits-all approach of the shelter design does not meet the needs of the beneficiaries. Additionally, flexibility in construction with the approval of IP and/or UNHCR staff would prove more efficient and cost-effective, as beneficiaries otherwise tend to change the original design after handover.

The inclusion of additional wooden beams in order to enlarge habitable space can notably prove problematic, putting in danger the overall structure of the building by introducing dissymmetry in the design of the shelter. Beneficiaries tend to change the design of their shelters after the handover to avoid losing their cash grant, putting at risk the sustainability of their shelters. More flexibility during the construction process would allow UNHCR to monitor these changes, decreasing the risks for beneficiaries.

More involvement of UNHCR staff – Required presence in accessible areas

Solutions requiring additional effort or involvement were often overlooked due to insufficient implication of UNHCR staff or weak remote monitoring processes. The fact that even in accessible areas, UNHCR staff did not participate in all beneficiary selection is a major area of concern.

c. Setting a standard for household contribution

The level of contribution expected from beneficiaries is not detailed in the SAP guidelines, which only mention the fact that beneficiaries are expected to cover the costs of labour and of the construction of walls. It is recommended that future guidelines incorporate a standard for contributions. The level of household contribution should be more clearly defined by the organisation and to be included as an indicator for the monitoring and evaluation of the programme as it plays an important role in the impact and sustainability of the programme.

The differences in assistance allocated to beneficiaries in the construction process across provinces calls for a more homogenized approach and clearer guidelines about the support provided to beneficiaries in specific contexts. The study showed great disparities according to location (urban, semi-rural and rural) and provinces, with at times a difference in contributions covering a range of 700 USD difference. The relative burden – rather than the absolute amount – of contribution should be studied, relative burden when compared to household income. The study finds that those households in Hirat have the highest contribution to monthly income ration, with Helmand having the lowest. It is important to note **the sub-office of Hirat already reviews yearly the cash grant based on the costs of material and labour**, a good practice that should be generalized to all sub-offices.

Typically regions of high return and high rates of urbanisation, such as Hirat, Nangarhar and Kabul present significantly higher levels of household contribution. This is unsurprising given the higher level of local prices and labour costs in these regions. The material used for the construction of the shelter also enters into play, especially in Hirat province, where beneficiaries had to use cement and burned bricks in the absence of clay, which significantly increased the level of household contributions in this province.

To increase the level of control over the construction process and its outcomes, UNHCR could develop a standard for contributions to the shelter construction. This standard will have to be based on other agencies' work, on economic assessments of the cost of shelter in Afghanistan, and as a factor of income. This would help raise awareness among families of the costs involved in the shelter process. In the case of the most vulnerable households, the same process as adopted by NRC – i.e. of “no contribution for EVIs” – could be considered at this stage by UNHCR to avoid doing more harm than good. However, these will have to be the focus of a separate study looking at cost-effectiveness issues and budgetary constraints facing the organization.

2. COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH

The recommendations below are all based on factors that contributed, in the locations surveyed, to creating tensions within and between communities. Implementing these guidelines will therefore serve to ease community tensions and to avoid potentially adverse effects of the shelter programme.

a. Increasing the degree of transparency of the selection process

Increasing the **degree of transparency of the selection process** and paying specific attention to **communicating about the criteria and refining them prior to and during selection** are essential to ensure all members of a given community are reached, to avoid allegations of misallocation of assistance and misunderstanding of the selection criteria. Publicity campaigns about the selection were mentioned by ABR in Parwan, but seemed to have had little impact in the communities visited. These type of initiatives need to be strengthened and standard and clear **complaint mechanisms need to be introduced**.

b. Impact on non-beneficiaries

The “Shelter +” model has had negative socio-economic impacts on the area of implementation. Based on observations in reintegration sites, the “shelter +” model as part of the new Regional Solutions strategy contributes to increasing tensions that arise if shelter and complementary assistance are limited to specific sites, enhancing feelings of discrimination and differences with neighbouring communities.

Further taking into account non-beneficiaries in the planning of the programme is important to avoid fuelling tensions. It is crucial for the SAP not to have negative secondary effects on non-beneficiary communities, which endangered sustainability of reintegration in Kochi Abad for instance. A strong factor of sustainability is to make sure a) the programme does not put back-to-back beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries and b) the programme benefits the entire community, including neighbouring villages/blocks.

c. Complementary assistance

In areas where it was made available, complementary assistance worked as a strong condition for the sustainability of the program. The “integrated” approach upheld by UNHCR prior to 2012 does not seem to have been systematically implemented. In Hirat, there were no regular patterns for complementary assistance: WASH programs had not been implemented since 2008 and cash for work has only been done in parallel to shelter in some cases. In Jalalabad conversely, IPs mentioned WASH programmes were systematically included as part of the implementation of the shelter programme and non-beneficiaries insisted on the benefits of such initiatives. Systematic implementation complementary programmes (schools, clinics, WASH) appears as a good practice to be considered at the national level, including through partnerships with other agencies and organizations, as well as the involvement of provincial directorates.

However, it should not be reduced to specific sites since needs are widely present – a needs-based, rather than location-based, approach should therefore be adopted to ensure that needs are covered.

3. WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION

a. Include women and gender criteria in the selection process

Though cultural considerations in terms of gender inclusion in selection cannot be overlooked, systematic efforts should be carried out to **include women in selection**, through women’s shuras for instance. This study found that the level of participation of women at every stage of the implementation was low. Awareness needs to be raised about gender considerations in terms of vulnerability so that IPs can go beyond the “widow” criterion to determining gender-sensitive vulnerabilities.

Based on field evidence, a ‘gender criteria list’ should be developed by UNHCR and handed to its IPs. This list could include – but not limited to – the following criteria:

- i. Female-headed households due to the absence of the head of household (migration dynamics),
- ii. Women living in households where the head of household is unable to work due to disability or illness,
- iii. Women who are mothers to newborns / infants,
- iv. Legal disputes over land due to inheritance or *mahr* cases involving displaced women – the resolution of which would help displaced women and their families to be entitled to possessing land and being eligible for shelter assistance.

b. Include gender criteria in the selection process of IPs

This study showed that the staffing of IPs, i.e. the presence of women in their field staff, had an impact on the inclusion of women in the SAP. The number of women in the staff of IP candidates should be taken into account as a criterion to select IPs by UNHCR sub-offices.

4. IDPS' DIRECT PARTICIPATION

a. Increasing the proportion of IDPs

Given the current humanitarian trends in the country, conflict-induced displacement is and will remain on the rise. A focus on IDPs can be argued on purely humanitarian grounds in Afghanistan. The research team advises for a greater inclusion of IDPs in the shelter programme since conflict-induced IDPs are a key population of concern for UNHCR – as only they and NRC cover this population in their targeted IDP programming. Although the research team is aware that, under international mandate, UNHCR's primarily responsibility is for refugees, and while it has no formal mandate for IDPs, the understanding in Afghanistan at least is that conflict-induced IDPs fall under the responsibility of UNHCR. Although a focus on IDPs may arouse negative comments from refugee-hosting countries, given the lower rates of return and the humanitarian concerns for IDPs, this emphasis should be taken on by UNHCR – regardless of political and constitutional arguments to the contrary, with the need to give precedence to UNHCR's humanitarian role.

The shelter programme should be targeted to these IDPs by introducing a new guiding principle of IDP participation and inclusion.

- I. Adjust the programme guidelines to make the objective of IDP participation and inclusion clear to all stakeholders, IPs and communities,
- II. Raise awareness of field staff on the necessity to increase the number of IDPs selected in the programme, in regions where it is relevant (e.g. Hirat),
- III. Integrate IDPs in displacement *and* IDPs in their areas of return, further supporting different forms of durable solutions, and
- IV. Use one-room shelters for the specific purpose of integrating IDPs and landless people in the programme.

b. Include IDPs in the selection of beneficiaries

Similar to efforts to include women in the selection process – whether through beneficiary selection committees or through local shuras – IDPs can also be further represented in communities where their voices are often more marginal to that of returning refugees or no-mobility households. Without creating tensions between groups, the requirement to have IDP representative in selection committees should be reinforced.

5. ACCESS TO LAND

b. Legal assistance in case of land disputes

Building on NRC's expertise, it is important to frame the shelter programme within a broader operational priority to resolving land disputes involving displaced populations. As seen with the inclusion of women's right to land through inheritance and *mahr*, additional legal assistance in case of land disputes plays an important role in the reintegration process, especially for women, as land disputes are a very common challenge for families displaced due to exile, conflict or natural disasters. UNHCR's cooperation and partnership with NRC needs to be sustained to assist in the resolution of land disputes, and its cooperation with AIHRC in identifying the cases of land dispute.

Increasing the proportion of landless beneficiaries

The majority of returnees and IDPs do not own land. Solutions suggested in the guidelines for allowing access to land to vulnerable households need to be implemented in the field. Despite the high sensitivity of this issue at the government level, collaborating with governmental authorities on this issue is a requirement. Raise awareness of the field staff on the guidelines.

6. FOCUS ON VULNERABILITY

c. No contribution requirement for EVIs

Increase the involvement of the Protection Unit to systematically identify beneficiaries facing difficulties to contribute to the construction of their shelter.

- Activate the EVI extra assistance mechanism in a more systematic manner.
- **Identify a community representative** to be made responsible for the identification and the support to specifically vulnerable beneficiaries.

Additional support for the most vulnerable needs to be further taken into account during the construction process through:

- i. Tailored cash-assistance through involvement of the BSC / Protection Unit,
- ii. By including a shelter model with no contribution for EVIs.

Heighten involvement of the Protection Unit in the selection process to identify EVIs and suggest complementary assistance procedures.

d. Training / sensitization workshops

Explaining the criteria for vulnerability through community-based workshops to communities (beneficiaries, non-beneficiaries and community leaders alike), so that IPs, DoRR representatives and community members are sufficiently sensitized about the issue. The "Beneficiary Social Verification

Check List” for instance, insufficiently addresses the issue and does not provide IPs with any clear means to identify vulnerable households.

- Post-selection, during the winter, specific community-level sensitization to vulnerability should be carried out as a precursor to the construction process. This will also ensure greater community involvement and contribution to the shelter construction of the most vulnerable households.
- It will also allow communities to understand the benefits to all – even non-beneficiaries – of the introduction of a shelter programme in their location.

Introducing staff and training IPs to the developments of the PSN approach and its practical ramifications. The survey showed that staff was still entrenched in the EVI categorizations and less knowledgeable, if at all, on the new PSN guidelines. What is the purpose of these new guidelines? Why were they developed and which gaps do they address? How can they improve the work of UNHCR staff and of its IPs?

- This should also be done through workshops during the winter months, through each regional office.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

c. Hygiene and sanitation training

The current guidelines highlight the importance of 1 latrine per family as part of the environmental concerns. The guidelines can be improved by **adding a qualitative priority component: through increased hygiene and WASH training for beneficiaries**, with specific sessions for women, men and children.

A key finding of this study is the gap on hygiene promotion. UNHCR shelter beneficiaries are significantly less likely to receive any hygiene support. Hygiene promotion was indeed less common (UNHCR: 20%; other programmes 34%). Hygiene training and WASH assistance should be improved since the research has shown that the state and use of latrines was highly related to the implementation of such training.

It is important to note that hygiene promotion training for EVIs – which is across the board the least well-covered training type – is lacking the most in semi-rural areas where only 1 in 10 beneficiary households have reported receiving hygiene promotion training, compared to 1 in 5 rural households, and over 1 in 4 urban households.

d. Adopting a regional risk mitigation approach

One of the weaknesses in the design of the programme identified in the field was **the lack of assessment of natural disaster risks conducted prior to construction**. Preventive measures imposed by the programme’s guidelines are limited and only cover earthquake-mitigation measures.

Regional differences in preferences also calls for a region-based approach leaving more room in designing the program to specific provincial contexts and to specific risks of natural disasters – whether floods or earthquakes, for example.

- i. **A proper assessment of the climate, natural disaster risks, and issues of risk mitigation and prevention** raised earlier, will need to be reinforced in future shelter programmes. This can be a good opportunity for UNHCR to link up its technical assessment with that of engineers of the Ministry of Refugee and Repatriation, and the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, hence strengthening its partnership strategy.
- ii. In earthquake-prone areas, risk mitigation is solely taken into account through the inclusion of wood-bracing in the design of the shelter. However, in the East, DoRR reported that wood-bracing was often removed by beneficiaries, due to a lack of awareness of their use. This emphasizes the need for **proper awareness training about the importance of wood-bracing and other risk mitigation measures**.
- iii. **Preventive measures against floods are lacking**. This was notably the case in Nangarhar, Hirat and Jawzjan. In the latter ZOA issued practical recommendations to upgrade shelters and avoid degradation, which had happened in the province in 2012. Despite high risks in the province, the only measure recommended in practice by UNHCR was to build the shelters 60 cm above the ground, which was not systematically implemented across the province and is insufficient in case of serious flooding. In Kandahar, Hirat, Jawzjan, Parwan and Nangarhar inhabitants insisted on the need to build retaining walls to support the sustainability of the shelters.
- iv. Proper risk assessments in flood- prone and earthquake-prone areas were absent. Coordination efforts between ANDMA and UNHCR were scarce – and could be significantly improved in future guidelines.

8. PRESERVATION OF CULTURAL AND REGIONAL PREFERENCES

b. Adopting an urban approach

This is the result of strategic evolutions introduced by UNHCR management in 2009-2011, and which should be further strengthened and continued in 2013 and beyond.

- i. Breaking down the type of shelter by location highlights the higher uptake of **one-room shelters in urban areas**, compared to semi-rural or rural areas that have the lowest proportion of one-room shelters. This further underlines the need for flexibility of models in urban areas – and the way one-room shelters can be used as a tool to absorb displaced persons in their new environments by building families an extra room. This allows upgrading or expanding of shelters that already house displaced family members, who opt for living with host families. It also fits more realistically with the more limited

space available in urban areas compared to returnee townships or rural areas. Flexibility in shelter models is therefore an asset for beneficiaries depending on their location.

- ii. **Further adapting to the current migratory context**, taking into account trends of urban migration. Fighting against the flow and insisting on implementing settlements in remote areas, which lack of access and livelihood opportunities and basic services is counter-productive. This is even more sensitive as most returnees come back with urban skills and are incapable of sustaining a livelihood in rural areas. Inability to access centres of employment, reach health and education facilities were high areas of concern for communities and potential drivers of secondary displacement. In cases where these opportunities are insufficient, complementary programmes needs to be considered.

9. CONTRIBUTION TO LOCAL ECONOMIES

Generally, we do find evidence for short-term impacts on the local economies due mainly to the demand for skilled and unskilled labour, however this is a short-lived effect. Another key area where gains could be made in the local economy is through the procurement of materials at the local level. While doing procurement at a local level may not have an economies of scale effect, it would do more to aid the local economy. Currently, there seems to be a trend away from local procurement of materials, which is indicated in the guidelines. However, in order to contribute to the local economies this should be considered again.

Development of the local economy should not be a main priority of SAP. However, some modifications could be considered to help have a more positive effect in this respect. Additionally, linkages with other organizations could also be strengthened to provide livelihood opportunities that can lead to employment opportunities and establishment of businesses, which will have positive aspects on the economy in the long-term.

10. PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY

a. Involvement of local authorities

UNHCR can improve the quality of its relationship with the MoRR at the central level by setting up systematic mechanisms of information-sharing and regular lines of communication on shelter activities between the two institutions at the national level.

Also holding a **coordination meeting with ANDMA prior to planning and implementation** to help mitigate the natural risks in areas of implementation and develop a necessary culture of prevention within both organisations.

Involvement of DoRRs

UNHCR does not systematically cultivate a close relationship with DoRRs in all provinces. This is a reflection partly of the varying capacity and openness of the heads of these offices. However, if UNHCR seeks to have a coherent program, it needs a coherent approach to selection that involves local authorities in an open manner. If not, these authorities could eventually make the process more difficult for UNHCR by intervening indirectly with communities, exerting pressure on potential beneficiaries and their community leaders, such incidents having been uncovered in the field.

Increase involvement of sectoral ministries to link up the shelter activities with other on-going rural and urban programmes, and to enhance the provision of basic services and community-based programming. The provision of such services is not responsibility of UNHCR – but it is the responsibility of UNHCR to advocate and coordinate by involving sectoral line ministries to inform them of the locations, baseline studies and needs assessments in shelter programme locations.

b. Involvement of Community Development Councils (CDCs)

Partnership with CDCs

CDCs have been effective entities through which to deliver MRRD's NSP programme and are now being used by other counterparts as well. They can play a key role in linking the shelter programme with access to basic services. In this case, UNHCR does not need to fund these CDCs for implementation of activities but instead focus on capacity building to make sure that these CDCs understand the shelter programme, its selection and objectives, and why proper linkages to services is a crucial determinant of the sustainability of the programme. To achieve this, NNGOs can be tasked with meetings and trainings of CDCs, and organizing meetings between CDCs and BSCs to better integrate the shelter programme within broader initiatives and NPPs at the community level.

c. Linkages with civil society

Partnerships with NNGOs

Rather than on technical capacity building, UNHCR can work on raising the awareness of its national partners in several fields:

- **On baseline studies and needs assessments**
- **On vulnerability:** The ability of national IPs to identify vulnerable households and on communicating about vulnerability criteria with communities should be drastically improved.
- **On humanitarian values and objectives:** UNHCR should work closely with its IPs at the provincial level to progressively change 'business like' organisations into proper NGOs serving longer term humanitarian objectives

These partnerships should exclude one organization from being both implementer, and monitoring agent, even if these responsibilities are split in different provinces.

Partnership with INGOs

In case UNHCR decides to wind down its role in the implementation of shelter assistance, it should start by fostering the involvement of INGOs in this type of activities. Double partnerships, whereby a NNGO and an INGO work together on the implementation and the monitoring of the shelter programme, could be envisaged to prepare for the progressive reduction of UNHCR direct role.

d. Linkages with development actors

UNHCR should focus on its mandate as a humanitarian agency and on addressing the issue of vulnerability instead of engaging in development programmes it does not have the structural framework to implement.

- Here shelter plays a pivotal role on the humanitarian-early recovery – development spectrum, a transitional role that can allow UNHCR to build the basis on which other actors can then provide livelihoods, services etc.

Also **strengthen partnership mechanisms and cooperation with development organizations and agencies to effectively link assistance and development.**

- **As pointed above, shelter can be seen as a “transitional activity”** that will allow UNHCR, as a humanitarian actor, to effectively link up its work with those of national authorities and development actors.

11. MONITORING FRAMEWORK

a. Internal monitoring - Increased involvement of UNHCR staff

Especially in less risky areas as a key factor in the monitoring and evaluation of the SAP. The over-reliance on IPs and local partners presents advantages but can also be detrimental in cases where they are not supervised by UNHCR in the field. The presence of IPs should not replace UNHCR’s direct involvement in the field – especially in accessible areas like the Central region. Instead, the greater access can be used as a means to pilot new monitoring systems to constantly evolve. Monitoring is an organic and interactive process that needs constant revision and adapting to the context. Rules are curbed and avoided in implementation – one way to avoid that is to strengthen the rules continuously.

b. Community-based monitoring

Community-based monitoring systems have been tested in Afghanistan and proven their efficiency on humanitarian and development programs, including on large-scale infrastructure programs as seen with the work done by the NGO Integrity Watch Afghanistan.

Community based monitoring is not exclusive – it should be seen as a complementary tool to other types of monitoring such as internal monitoring by UNHCR and external monitoring and evaluations, such as the present evaluation, undertaken by independent and objective observers and experts. Community-based monitoring relies on focal points within each community that can liaise directly with UNHCR staff

to report problems – whether directly over the phone, through meetings or through the availability of complaints boxes in each community. The latter has been used as a tool by organizations such as NRC in Afghanistan as part of their improvements in M&E standards.

Community-based monitoring provides a sense of ownership to communities who have an interest and stake in making sure that programmes are well implemented – whether looking at proper selection processes, proper implementation or proper delivery of construction materials in this case. Communities can be provided with kits or checklists so that they know which elements of the process are important: are the most vulnerable being targeted? Are shelters compliant with quality standards? Are there proper risk mitigation procedures in place in case of floods? A full checklist or quality control kit – to be handed to communities with an initial training – will not only raise their capacity but also their ability to build better shelters.

Such community-based monitoring mechanisms are particularly useful to ensure that communities have a voice – especially the most vulnerable within each communities, those whose voices are often the least heard when going through more routine monitoring procedures.

These mechanisms should be replicated by UNHCR as they provide several advantages: i) strengthening the link and relationship between UNHCR and the communities it serves, ii) avoiding an over-reliance on implementing and local partners, as well as local authorities for information, iii) giving a voice to the more vulnerable in M&E procedures and iv) increasing UNHCR’s capacity to triangulate and cross-check information, especially in less accessible areas.

These mechanisms will allow UNHCR to identify the difficulties faced during construction and elaborate adapted responses in a more interactive manner – making UNHCR also more accountable to communities.

c. Guidelines on corruption and fraud

Stricter guidelines should be applied to limit the risks of corruption and fraud. The proximity between UNHCR provincial staff and implementing IPs should be counter-balanced by external and independent monitoring partners. Monitoring should be properly budgeted so as to a) avoid under-staffing and b) increase the scope of monitoring to include qualitative analysis about the programme and responsibility to identify potential frauds.

As recent investigations have shown, corruption and fraud are a risk for agencies like UNHCR in the field. A recent MEC report has requested that UNHCR undertakes a “vulnerability to corruption” analysis. This type of analysis can be extended to the SAP – a large nationwide program that involves a range of actors, from the national to the local level. Given lessons learned in the Afghan context and the importance of land and shelter, guidelines on corruption and fraud should be reinforced.

d. Monitoring framework and follow-up mechanisms

Follow up on the beneficiaries after handover with a checklist of M&E indicators

The lack of such a monitoring mechanism causes a subsequent serious lack of data on the outcomes of the programme. This is problematic in terms of measuring its impact and assessing whether the envisaged objectives and outcomes have been met. This should be done longitudinally with a set calendar of field visits every 3 months during the 1st year following the shelter construction.

Deriving from the previous point is the necessity to have **strong needs-assessment and follow-up mechanisms** to make sure the needs and expectations of beneficiaries are addressed. The case of Aab Dara in Kabul province is a strong indication that an opportunity has been missed.



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ANNEX 1: HOUSEHOLD SAMPLING BY DISTRICTS AND CATEGORIES OF RESPONDENTS

Region	Province	District	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non - Beneficiaries	Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	Total Number of Respondents
Central	Kabul	Dih Sabz	117	130	-	384
		Paghman	48	34	-	
		Qarabagh	32	21	2	
	Parwan	Baghram	101	85	1	187
Central Highland	Bamyan	Bamyan District	32	29	-	61
East	Laghman	Mihtarlam	68	72	-	300
		Qarghayi	94	66	-	
	Nangarhar	Jalalabad	248	313	90	2 068
		Behsud	377	190	20	
		Surkh Rod	120	233	164	
		Mohmandara	13	25	43	
		Khewa	14	30	67	
		Kama	18	32	71	

North	Balkh	Sholgara	21	23	-	101
		Dawalatabad	21	14	-	
		Nahree Shahee	8	14	-	
	Faryab	Qaysar	28	25	2	174
		Khoje Sabz Posh	24	35	-	
		Andkhoy	23	37	-	
	Jawzjan	Shibirghan	24	34	2	220
Khawja du Khow		94	66	-		
Sari Pul	Sozma Qala	56	44	-	100	
Northeast	Kunduz	Kunduz District	60	60	-	120
	Takhar	Taloqan	39	31	-	70
South	Helmand	Lashkar Gah	56	52	-	108
	Kandahar	Kandahar	26	21	1	155
		Arghandab	49	58	-	
Southeast	Paktya	Gardez	123	117	-	240
West	Hirat	Injil	101	99	-	200
Total			2 035	1 990	463	4 448

ANNEX 2: LIST OF KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Province	Level	Name	Organisation	Position
CENTRAL REGIONS				
Kabul	UN-Agency /IO	Tomislav Babic & Ivan Ceko	IOM	
Kabul	NGO	Haqman Munib & Eng. Khawani	CARE	Provincial Programme Officer
Kabul	Donor	Jacques Dailoux	ECHO	Technical Adviser
Kabul	NGO	Subhash Jadhav	NRC	Shelter Programme Manager
Kabul	UNHCR – Central	Iljia Todorovic & Stijn	UNHCR	Deputy Representative for Afghanistan
Kabul	UNHCR – Sub Office Kabul	Gulham Sediqqi	UNHCR	Associate Reintegration Officer
Kabul	UN Agencies/IO	Eng. Rahman	UN-Habitat	Project Manager
Kabul	Donor	Gul Joya Jafri	CIDA	First Secretary (Development)
Kabul	Donor	Ted Jasik & Zmaryalai Farahi	USAID/BPRM	Refugee Coordinator
Kabul	UNHCR – Central	Saradarwali	UNHCR	Associate Data Manager
Kabul	Donor	David Stewart	Australian Embassy	First Secretary
Kabul	NGO	Jolien Veldwijk	ZOA	Programme Advisor
Kabul	UNHCR-Central	Jasmine Ketabchi	UNHCR	Protection Officer
Kabul	UN-Agency/IO	Jan Turkstra	UN-Habitat	Advisort Urban Development
Kabul	UNHCR – Central	Robin Ellis & Malang Ibrahimi	UNHCR	Head of Programme Reintegration Unit
Kabul	UNHCR – Central	Migena Tane	UNHCR	Associate Programme Officer
Kabul	UNHCR – Kabul Sub	Douglas DiSalvo	UNHCR	Protection Officer
Kabul	UN Agency	Sara Otuku	OCHA	Humanitarian Assistance Officer
Kabul	UNHCR-Central	Nematullah	UNHCR	Programme Unit
Kabul	GoA	Abdul Rahman Shams	DoRR	Director of DoRR Kabul
EASTERN REGIONS				
Parwan	IP	Ibrahim Haydari	ABR	Director
Parwan	GoA	Aghai Shirin	DoRR	Director
Nangarhar	UNHCR Sub Office	Eng. Shirzai Mohammad Eamal Salamat Alieva	UNHCR	Shelter Unit Officer Liaison Officer Associate Programme

				officer
Nangarhar	UN Agency	Dr. Rahimi	UN-Habitat	Senior Provincial Manager
Nangarhar	GoA	AlHaj Ghulam Haidar Faqirzai	DoRR	Director
Nangarhar	GoA	Harzat Bilal Nurestani	DoRR	Director
Nangarhar	UN Agency/IO	Sadrudin Hasma Safi	IOM	Officer in Charge
Nangarhar	IP	Eng. Mahboob	AGHCO	
Nangarhar	NGO	Abdur Rauf	IRC	Humanitarian Programme Assistance
Nangarhar	IP	Eng. Hafiz	APWO	Director
Nangarhar	NGO	Mr. Granagah	CHF	Former Programme Manager
Nangarhar	GoA	Sayeed Qias Saeedi	Directorate of Economy	Director
Nangarhar	GoA	Amir Mohammad Zabid	Provincial Council	Member of PDC
Nangarhar	IP	Eng. Shafiq Abdul Wali Naqibullah	APA	Programme Manager Field Officer Admin. Officer
Nangarhar	NGO	Mark Nagle Nader Surgand Sabawoon Saba	NRC	Area Coordinator Shelter Programme Manager Field Engineer
Nangarhar	UNHCR Sub-Office	Minako Kakuma	UNHCR	Protection Unit
Nangarhar	UNHCR Sub-Office	Eng. Shirzai Mohammad Eamal	UNHCR	Shelter Unit Liaison Officer
Nangarhar	UNOPS Regional Office	Sayeed Khaksar Padshah	UNOPS	Senior Regional Manager
Nangarhar	GoA	Eng. Mohammad Zakhi	DoUDH	Director
NORTHERN REGIONS				
Balkh	NGO	Fardeen Hafizi	NRC	Shelter PC NRC Sari Pul
Balkh	IP	Eng. Mirwais	NOP	Programme Officer
Balkh	IP	Dr. Shahab Fatma	DHSA	Director Jawzjan Field Supervisor
Balkh	UN Agency	Ms Evelyn Viedbock Mr. Njedkounkosse Mr. Hemmat	OCHA	Head of Sub-Office HAO
Balkh	GoA	Mr. Sabor	DoRR	Director
Balkh	NGO	Sayeed Mansoor	Islamic Relief	Programme Officer
Balkh	UNHCR Sub-office	Martin Bucumi	UNHCR	Head of Sub-officer
Faryab	UNHCR	Abdul Basir Sediktyar	UNHCR	Provincial Focal Point
Faryab	UN Agency	Hajj Azziz	OCHA	Focal Point

Faryab	NGO	Sean Mc Glrk	ACTED	Project Development Advisor
Faryab	GoA	Mohammad Rahim	DoRR	Head of DoRR
Faryab	IP	Ilhaya	DHSA	Field Officer
Faryab	UN Agency	Mohammad Sakhi	UNAMA	National Deputy Head of Office
Faryab	NGO	Anna Cervi	NRC	Area Coordinator
Jawzjan	GoA	Eng. Karim	DoRR	Director
Jawzjan	GoA	Eng. Mohammad Yusuf	MRRD	Head of MRRD
Jawzjan	NGO	Ali Ahmadi	ZOA	Shelter Project Manager
Jawzjan	NGO	Zarmina	ACTION AID	Project Manager
Jawzjan	GoA		ANDMA	Assistant to the director
Jawzjan	UN Agency/IO	Azizullah Hashim	UN-Habitat	PUR
Jawzjan	NGO	Eng. Munir	CARE	Field Office Supervisor
SOUTHERN REGIONS				
Kandahar	IP	Pashtun Zarak Haji Mohammad	HAPA	Programme Manager Director
Kandahar	UNHCR Sub-Office	Mr. Jelew	UNHCR	Head of Sub-Office
Kandahar	UNHCR Sub-Office	Ahmad Dost	UNHCR	Programme Associate Protection Unit
Kandahar	GoA	Mohammad Azim Nawabi Abdul Hamid Abdul Farooq	DoRR	Director Head of Reintegration General Manager
Kandahar	GoA	Timor Sha Ayubi Zarmina Farid	NSP	Snr. Provincial Manager Data Entry Monitoring Officer
Kandahar	NGO	Ezatullah	Save the Children	Programme Manager
Kandahar	UNHCR Sub-Office	Abdul Jalil	UNHCR	Programme Associate
WESTERN REGIONS				
Hirat	NGO	Azim	DRC	Protection Officer
Hirat	UNHCR Sub-Office	Wakil Ahmad Habibi Zahar	UNHCR	Senior Field Associate Field Associate
Hirat	UNHCR Sub-Office	Inge Collijn	UNHCR	Head of Sub-office
Hirat	UNHCR Sub-Office	Abdul Karim	UNHCR Programme Unit	Programme Associate Officer
Hirat	UNHCR Sub-Office	Pascal Dhieu	UNHCR	Associate Reintegration Officer
Hirat	IP	Eng. Naeem Karim	SSOAR	Director

Hirat	IP	Dr. Aziz	CRDSA	Director
Hirat	IP	Eng. Abdul Rahman Sahabee	ERSA	Director
Hirat	NGO	KHadeem Hussein Rahimi	NRC	Shelter Team Leader
Hirat	NGO	Naseer	HELP	Reintegration Officer
Hirat	UN-Agency/IO	Nematullah Merrikhi	IOM	Senior Programme Assistant

ANNEX 3: PROVINCIAL OVERVIEWS

KABUL – PROVINCIAL OVERVIEW

CONTEXT

Kabul is the province with most assisted return, as UNHCR registered 1,217,624 assisted returnees to Kabul between 2002 and 2012. 2818 shelters were completed by UNHCR in the entire Kabul province between 2009 and 2011, with a strong focus on Deh Sabz and Paghman districts. Districts visited by the research team were Deh Sabz, Paghman, and Qara Bagh.

As Table A.1 shows, our provincial sample of Kabul comprises 384 households, of which more than half, 197 are UNHCR beneficiaries. One household received shelter assistance from the Norwegian Refugee Council. Moreover, 58 per cent of our sample are official refugee returnees, while 32 per cent are non-refugee returnees, 4 per cent are IDPs and 6 per cent never migrated. Among the UNHCR beneficiaries refugee returnees are the largest group with 78 per cent.

Table A.1: Provincial Sample, Kabul

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non- Beneficiaries	Total
Refugee Returnee	153	0	71	224
%	77.66	0.00	38.38	58.33
Non-Refugee Returnee	42	0	81	123
%	21.32	0.00	43.78	32.03
IDP	0	0	14	14
%	0	0.00	7.57	3.65
No Mobility	2	2	19	23
%	1.02	100.00	10.27	5.99
Total	197	2	185	384
%	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Given its important political weight, Kabul province is unsurprisingly a very specific case in the Afghan humanitarian context. There are several features of the province, which impact or should impact favourably the implementation of the shelter programme and the sustainability of the reintegration of returnees in the province:

- Kabul province receives by far the biggest amount of humanitarian and development assistance. The level of investments in infrastructure development is unmatched in the rest of the country. One of the implementation sites (Bakhtyaran) for example is located in the premises of the

project of 'new Kabul city' and beneficiaries should benefit from the fallout of this project. The high number of actors present in the province opens up numerous possibilities for partnerships.

- Most of Kabul province is accessible and secure, facilitating greatly the implementation process, as recourse to remote management and monitoring is not necessary. It is therefore surprising to see that despite this favourable security context, the sub-office still relies on remote management in the province.
- Kabul has benefited from the important economic fallouts related to the presence of the international community, both humanitarian and military. The labour market and the economic context are more dynamic in Kabul than anywhere else in Afghanistan, offering large opportunities of skilled and unskilled employment. The sustainability of this economic dynamism is yet highly questionable given the planned withdrawal of large parts of the international community.

Yet, these general comments on the profile of the province only give part of the story as a range of specific local factors vastly determines the sustainability of the reintegration of returnees. As every other province, Kabul province is characterised by important intra-provincial disparities in terms of wealth and development. As will be developed below, the success or failure of shelter programme is highly dependent on the local context in which it is implemented.

DESIGN

Among the 197 beneficiaries interviewed, the majority, 90 per cent, had built a two-room shelter, while 7 per cent built a one-room shelter and 3 per cent built a different type. Compared to other provinces, it appears that a large share of respondents, 22 per cent, got to choose the size of their shelter compared to the national average of 13 per cent.

In most cases, shelters were in a relatively good state, with disparities according to the well-being of beneficiaries and that of the community as a whole. In Kuchi Abad (Paghman), a reintegration site, rooms were painted, decorated and well furnished, whereas in poorer and more remote communities like Aab Dara, rooms only had basic furniture, though the outside appearance of shelters was good. Despite complaints about the small size of the rooms and the iron door and window frames, which were described as not adapted to the environment and were enlarged whenever possible, there was **an overall satisfaction with the design of shelters** (cf. the case of Aab Dara, where exact replicas of shelters had been constructed by non-beneficiaries).

Shelters were constructed **inside surrounding walls** according to a traditional housing disposition with several related households living around a courtyard on the same premises: a sign that shelter is considered as permanent housing and integrated in a broader living environment (shared oven (*tanur*), common courtyard). In two cases where surrounding walls could not be constructed (Pitawa in Qara Bagh district), the shelters were not occupied and beneficiaries were living with relatives.

The quality of material was praised by beneficiaries as well as non-beneficiaries, which often mentioned roofing components (iron beams and roofing tiles) could not have been purchased without assistance. Among the surveyed beneficiaries there was an overall satisfaction with the quality of the material, 91 per cent, and materials were received on time in most cases, 94 per cent.

Problems during construction: Less than half of the beneficiaries, 44 per cent, indicated that they encountered some kind of problem during the construction of their shelter. Table A.2 shows the different types of problems the beneficiaries encountered, the main problems being not having enough financial capital and insufficient access to water.

Table A.2: Problems during Construction, in Kabul

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	
	N=87	%
Ran out of money	74	85.06
Insufficient access to water	36	41.38
Ran out of materials	28	32.18
Lack of skilled labour	27	31.03
Weather problems	19	21.84
Lack of unskilled labour	9	10.34
Lack of technical knowledge	8	9.20
Materials of poor quality	5	5.75
Materials not delivered on time	5	5.75

More specifically, the observations showed that challenges during the building process depended on environmental and economic conditions: lack of water in dry areas, lack of fuel for the functioning of water pumps, lack of skills. Beneficiaries did not mention receiving particular support during the construction process, **which was sometimes a cause for indebtedness, as it required hiring additional skilled labour.** There was one mention of bribe to receive material from the IP in Ghazi Abad.

In many cases, **latrines were not used.** In Aab Dara, they had been constructed outside the walled compounds, off housing premises, a sign they were not intended for regular use. Conversely, in Kuchi Abad, where WASH programs were implemented and hygiene classes provided, latrines were used and in good state, which emphasizes the need for complementary assistance programs.

SELECTION OF BENEFICIARIES

The main criteria mentioned for beneficiary selection were land ownership and VRF. Vulnerability as such seemed not to be properly taken into account as only half of the beneficiaries can be classified as extremely vulnerable. A remarkable 44 EVI households did apply for assistance but were rejected.

However, the selection process was not homogeneous in various locations visited, and BSCs were only mentioned in one case:

- In a **heterogeneous community** like Bakhtyaran (Deh Sabz), the local Malik was not included in beneficiary selection, allegedly because of risks of factionalism and corruption. The IP played the major part in the selection process, though BSCs and inclusion of UNHCR representatives was not mentioned.
- Conversely, in **homogenous tribal communities** (Aab Dara, Kuchi Abad), the Malik was responsible for gathering community members and participated actively in the BSC for identification of eligible people according to their needs and the quota of shelters allocated by UNHCR (Aab Dara).
- In one case (Pitawa), the Malik was entirely responsible for selection of beneficiaries and proceeded through a game of chance to choose beneficiaries, which raises concern about the reason why neither UNHCR nor the IP were involved in the process and illustrates some of the pitfalls of remote management of the shelter programme. This is especially preoccupying in a province like Kabul where access is not an issue. It also shows that the rationale behind the selection criteria of beneficiaries is not properly explained to communities, which sometimes come up with their own selection arrangement, as it is the case in Pitawa.

In Kuchi Abad, returnees prior to 2007 were not selected for the programme. As illustrated in Table A.3, this is a claim that is recurrent on behalf of non-beneficiaries, and has been explained elsewhere (e.g. Nangarhar) by the limited amount of shelters allocated and the decision to focus on recent returnees based on the assumption that ancient returnees have developed coping mechanisms in the meantime.

Table A.3: Date of Return by Beneficiary Status, in Kabul

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-Beneficiaries	Total
2002-2004	17	37	54
%	8.72	24.34	15.56
2004-2008	65	46	111
%	33.33	30.26	31.99
2009-2011	113	69	182
%	57.95	45.39	52.45
Total	195	152	347
%	100.00	100.00	100.00

This assumption is not always verified in the field, as returnees can live several years with relatives and/or migrate regularly without being able to settle. Furthermore, the choice of the year (in this case 2007) seems to be random as there are no specific guidelines in this respect.

UNHCR raised expectations through provision of shelter and winterization assistance, and **there is a general misunderstanding of why the programme was interrupted in 2012, despite on-going return from abroad**. This is a recurrent observation, a sign of a breach in the communication plan of UNHCR towards communities. This is also a problem in cases where neighbouring villages have not received any assistance, despite the needs of their inhabitants (Sayed Abad and Sar Allah, neighbouring Kuchi Abad), creating a feeling of favouritism which can be a potential driver of tensions, especially as assistance was provided to a Pashtun tribe who had recently settled, while the neighbouring population of returnees and conflict-driven IDPs, Hazara and Tajik, were left out.

There were no mentions of a complaint mechanism and no follow-up after implementation.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT

The primary impact of the programme mentioned was that it provided beneficiaries with a roof, which is particularly sensitive for recent migrants previously living in tents, which were forced to migrate during the winter due to harsh weather conditions. Overall, 34 per cent of the beneficiaries indicated that they lived in a temporary shelter prior to receiving assistance. A shelter therefore appears as a permanent and safe living facility-allowing people to settle, which seems to be one of the strongest aspirations of the communities visited. Moreover, beneficiaries reported that due to the shelter assistance their economic situation was better or far better off in 64 per cent of the cases, indicating a subjective positive impact on the households.

Compared to non-beneficiaries, our multi-dimensional poverty index (MPI) presented in Table A.4 shows that those households which received shelter from UNHCR are much less deprived.

Table A.4: Multi-dimensional Poverty Index by Beneficiary Status, in Kabul

	Not Deprived	Deprived	Total
UNHCR Beneficiaries	51	146	197
%	25.89	74.11	100.00
Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	0	2	2
%	0.00	100.00	100.00
Non-Beneficiaries	29	156	185
%	15.68	84.32	100.00
Total	80	304	384
%	20.83	79.17	100.00

The comparative impact between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries varies according to the profile of the community. In the case of Kuchi Abad, it appeared crucial to survey neighbouring communities. Indeed, though the overall impact of the programme on the Kuchi community targeted appeared very positive thanks to provision of housing, WASH components, a road, school and clinic, the neighbouring villages had not only been completely left out of the reintegration programme, but suffered from negative side-effects of construction, had a feeling assistance had been taken away from them, and that they had been cheated. These considerations in turn affect the sustainability of the programme in the area.

More generally, at the community level, one of the major effects of shelter assistance was the rise of land prices due to increasing settlements in areas of implementation of the programme. This was especially the case in Deh Sabz where the relatively low price of land compared to Kabul attracted settlement.

SUSTAINABILITY

In most locations visited, there were **high rates of occupancy**. The beneficiaries interviewed indicated that they were living in the shelter in all but three cases. A systematic check could not be undertaken in all location, mainly due to their dispersion amongst existing habitat. In single tribe villages where habitat was mainly composed of shelters, a more systematic check could be undertaken:

- In Aab Dara, 20 households had allegedly temporarily left their shelters for seasonal labour migration, according to one of the inhabitants.
- In Kuchi Abad, some beneficiaries had temporarily left for herding.

In both these cases, shelters were in good state, with sealed doors and windows, a sign of an intention to return rather than abandonment.

- In Pitawa, Qara Bagh, 3 unoccupied shelters were identified, because of the inability of the beneficiary to construct surrounding walls and the case of a widow unable to complete shelter, which raises the question of provision of additional assistance to EVIs.

Beneficiaries expressed an **overall satisfaction with the programme**, which allowed them to **access property and housing, a strong incentive for settlement**. Even in cases with low accessibility and lack of services, shelter was described as an essential need. Seasonal migration was mentioned as a compulsory mechanism to cope with cold weather conditions in cases where solid housing is not available, and lack of income opportunities in the vicinity. In such cases however, shelter remained a base for the household and a point of return for the rest of the year. When interviewed, non-beneficiaries expressed the same type of opinion. Accordingly, almost all respondents do not have plans to move again from the current community.

In Aab Dara, the shelter programme had played an important role in the decision of this community to return from Pakistan. The return of the community was based on a highly organised strategy of re-settlement, with some representatives sent beforehand to buy the land.

Complementary assistance works as a strong condition for the sustainability of the programme, as villages, which received assistance from various organizations, appeared better off. A more coordinated approach between various organizations could work as a strong factor for sustainability (avoiding potential tensions around access to water for instance, providing communities with a school, a clinic, etc.).

The sustainability of the shelter programme varied according different sets of factors:

- **Economic environment:** connectivity of the village, facilities, employment opportunities, access to relatively cheaper land plots, and assistance received. **Complementary assistance seems to have a significant impact on the sustainability of the shelter programme** as it provides communities with facilities and services essential for the creation of a sustainable environment (water, schools, clinics, roads).
- **Social environment:** relationship to neighbouring villages. This was an area of concern noticed in Kuchi Abad: despite the apparent success of the shelter programme for the community, the fact that neighbouring villages had received no assistance and had been side-lined in the reintegration activities was a potential driver of tension communities, which is an important challenge to the apparent success of the programme. This is especially concerning knowing the history of tensions existing between Kuchi and host communities in the province. The divisive impact of such assistance strategies must not be underestimated.

According to these sets of factors, three types of profiles were identified:

- In Bakhtyaran, shelters were implemented inside an existing habitat, in a well-connected area with access to services and a potential labour market. The village was also covered by several complementary assistance programs from various organisations (ZOA, DACCAR, CARE). The combination of these different factors contributed **to the apparent success of the shelter programme:** beneficiaries were well integrated in the socio-economic environment of the town, with shelters hardly differentiable from the rest of the habitat and the expression of an intention to settle on land which was either inherited, or bought given the relatively lower price of land compared to Kabul.
- In Aab Dara, a tribe representative sent from Pakistan 10 years prior to assistance had acquired land. Community members expressed a strong will to settle and **presented the shelter programme as a strong incentive for return.** Non-beneficiary families looked forward to potential assistance in order to settle permanently and avoid seasonal migration in the winter due to harsh weather conditions. This indicates the strong 'stabilizing effect' that the shelter programme can have on communities who traditionally use temporary migrations as a key coping mechanism. Kuchi tribes are a case in point. However, the lack of connectivity of the village, off the main axis, in an area offering little job opportunities exerted pressure on the inhabitants, especially as more families were planning to return from Pakistan. Access to water was a major concern, as well as insecure job opportunities, with brick kilns closing in the winter and daily work in agriculture depending on weather conditions.

In Aab Dara, shelter assistance was explicitly mentioned as a driver for return. Interestingly, new returnees had started building their houses according to UNHCR design, and were expecting to receive the shelter package in order to complete it despite the fact they had not been identified as beneficiaries. Without UNHCR assistance, community members reported not being able to purchase the remaining elements to complete their house, especially the roofing material (iron beams and ceiling bricks). This also shows that the need for shelter assistance is real, as households were not able to complete their shelters without the support of UNHCR. In areas of high return, especially in similar cases where shelter assistance is described as an incentive for return of other tribe members, lack of follow-up after completion might endanger the sustainability of the programme, as increasing pressure is exerted on natural resources. Assessment of needs and follow-up after completion of the programme would prevent risks of secondary displacement.

- The **reintegration site** of Kuchi Abad is a homogenous Pashtun community which received substantial assistance as part of the reintegration programme, but is located in a heterogeneous environment with neighbouring communities receiving no assistance. The latter's impression of having been side-lined is a potential driver of tensions:

"We didn't receive anything. In our village, we are deprived of everything: no road, no clinic, and no school. They have influence (i.e. The Kuchi), through their Kuchi networks in Parliament and at the district level. They included us in their statistics to get help, said there were 5000 poor people in the area. That's us. Our names were included in a list, but we didn't get help. For example, there is a mobile clinic, but it goes only to Koch Abad, we don't benefit from it. It doesn't come here." (FGD non-beneficiaries, Sayed Abad).

Disparities in allocation of assistance therefore introduce a major breach in the "reintegration" scheme. In the case of Kuchi Abad, inhabitants from neighbouring Sayed Abad mentioned the construction work as part of the reintegration scheme had negative effects on their village, corrupting water for instance. Sayed Abad inhabitants who had no direct access to it deemed the road to Kuchi Abad, presented as a programme meant to benefit all neighbouring communities, unusable. This strongly emphasizes the risks when communities are taken individually into account for assistance: **taking into account the insertion of a community in a general environment in order to contribute to the well-being of the entire area is a requirement. The sustainability born out of the comprehensiveness of the assistance received by returnees through the reintegration strategy must be weighed against the risks of inter-community tensions that it fuels.**

PARTNERSHIPS

Apart from a contribution of InterSOS on WASH programs in Kuchi Abad, there seem to be no particular links between UNHCR and other NGOs/agencies in the field in Kabul.

In Aab Dara, ZOA for WASH and German Cooperation (temporarily) for a school had been present, but there seems to be no cooperation with UNHCR.

Kabul DoRR complained about the lack of coordination and relationship with UNHCR, claiming that the DoRR had very little involvement either in the selection of beneficiaries or in the monitoring of the programme.

CONTEXT

Parwan province is located on the North of Kabul province and is easily accessible through the Salang Road, the main trading route to the North of the country. The area has been affected by heavy fighting during the war and was consequently depopulated. Though the security context is degrading in Sheikh Ali, Shiwari and Ghorband districts since the handover of the security by ISAF to the Afghan government in December 2011, the visited Bagram and Charikar districts are generally secure. The province has witnessed significant return of refugees⁴⁴ since the fall of the Taliban, as well as an influx of IDPs from other provinces escaping insecurity (Bamyan, Laghman, Kapisa and Nuristan). The central valley is occupied by farmlands with a diverse agricultural production, which is traded in Kabul or Charikar, the provincial capital. There is however a significant difference in access and employment opportunities in the Central Highland Range in the north of the province, which presents a dry steppe-like landscape with scarce accessibility to water due to the permeability of its soil, and which is off the main axis of circulation.

Both the accessibility of the area and its strategic location can explain for the high concentration of assistance provided to the villages visited, both from INGOs, international donors, and MRRD. The province had previously benefitted from a land allocation scheme of 1100 plots directed at returnees (2005). However, some communities complained about not having received specific forms of assistance due to lack of networks and tribal favouritism (e.g. Qala-e Nasro and Khanaqa).

The proximity of Bagram Air Base has an economic impact on the area as it offers highly remunerated job opportunities to qualified inhabitants, and provides others with unqualified jobs which are highly valued and are subject to high competition. There is however considerable concern about the sustainability of these jobs after the retreat of foreign troops. Another consequence of the proximity of Bagram Air Base was the provision of assistance to some villages by Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs).

In total, 1,315 shelters were completed by UNHCR over the entire province in 2009-2011. As Table A.5 shows, our provincial sample of Parwan comprises 187 households, of which more than half, 101, are UNHCR beneficiaries. One household received shelter assistance from IOM. Moreover, some 49 per cent of our sample are official refugee returnees, while 37 per cent are non-refugee returnees, 10 per cent are IDPs and 4 per cent never migrated.

⁴⁴ 163,581 assisted returns between 2002-2012, according to UNHCR data from encashment Center.

Table A.5: Provincial Sample, Parwan

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non- Beneficiaries	Total
Refugee Returnee	67	0	25	92
%	66.34	0.00	29.41	49.20
Non-Refugee Returnee	20	0	49	69
%	19.8	0.00	57.65	36.90
IDP	12	1	6	19
%	11.88	100.00	7.06	10.16
No Mobility	2	0	5	7
%	1.98	0.00	5.88	3.74
Total	101	1	85	187
%	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

DESIGN

Most beneficiaries, 90 per cent did not personally choose the size of their shelter. The main design implemented was the standard two-room shelter, 91 per cent, while a minority build one-room shelters, 9 per cent. In one case, a beneficiary mentioned having received “half a shelter” as she did not have a VRF and had been selected as a woman head of household, which raises questions about the criteria used for allocation of a specific design of shelter. The main complaints about the design were the size of the rooms, considered too small for a traditional family, and the size of windows.

Materials were received on time in most cases, 95 per cent, and there was an **overall satisfaction with the quality of the material, 93 per cent**. The roofing components were especially appreciated, as beneficiaries mentioned they would not have been able to purchase iron beams and roof tiles themselves. This was mentioned as a great advantage for beneficiaries, as non-beneficiaries either had to get more indebted to have the same material, or to use lower quality items. Shelter assistance therefore has a positive impact on the economic situation of beneficiary households, and further attention is probably worth being paid to debt practices as a coping mechanism in Afghanistan. Wooden doors and glass panes for windows were said not to have been provided with the package.

There is a **disparity in the state of shelters according to the well-being of the households**: the better off had furnished and painted rooms, whereas the most vulnerable had not been able to buy glass window panes preferring using the cash grant to address more immediate needs, including food and water, and covered the iron frames with plastic sheets. This can be understood, as **a side effect of the fact vulnerability is not mainstreamed as a criterion in selection, with the initial situation of the beneficiary (more or less vulnerable) having a consequent impact on their capacity to build, maintain, and rearrange the shelter**. In one case (Qala-e Nasro), the beneficiary had not been able to complete the construction of his shelter, as he was busy supporting his household, which raises the question of possibility of additional assistance for the most vulnerable – especially since *ashar* is seldom considered as an option.

A significant proportion of shelters were used for purposes other than living space: storage of crops and farming tools, and in one case, the shelter had been turned into a shop in addition to an existing house. This is a sign beneficiaries selected were not necessarily the ones in urgent need of shelter. Overall, however, shelters were **clearly an essential component of the household’s living environment, and were upgraded whenever the economic situation of the beneficiary allowed him/her to do so, displaying an intention of long-term settlement.**

Changes in the design: Whenever possible, iron frames were replaced by wooden frames and rooms were enlarged. In Khanaqa, there were two cases where the shelters had entirely been dismantled to use the package material for building another larger house. The original purpose of components of the shelter package had been changed in some cases: latrines, for instance, were in many cases transformed into tanur-houses (for cooking) or storage space for agricultural products or combustibles. In one case, they had been constructed outside the compound and exclusively used for storage.

Problems with the construction: More than one third of the beneficiaries (34.7%) indicated that they encountered some kind of problem during the construction of their shelter. Table A.6 shows the different types of problems the beneficiaries encountered, the main problems being having enough financial capital and a lack of skilled labour.

Table A.6: Problems during Construction, in Parwan

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	
	N=35	%
Ran out of money	31	88.57
Lack of skilled labour	12	34.29
Ran out of materials	10	28.57
Insufficient access to water	9	25.71
Lack of unskilled labour	8	22.86
Weather problems	3	8.57
Lack of technical knowledge	2	5.71
Materials of poor quality	1	2.86
Materials not delivered on time	0	0.00

Monitoring is done throughout the construction process and until handover (five times according to the DoRR) by the IP in partnership with DoRR representatives. The survey data shows that 12 per cent of the UNHCR beneficiaries in Parwan indicated that there was no monitoring of their shelter by the organization that assisted them. There seems to be no follow-up after completion.

SELECTION OF BENEFICIARIES

- Selection Process

The selection on the field seems to have been mainly conducted by ABR, the implementing partner, in partnership with DoRR. This is an area of concern since Parwan is a secure and accessible area, which does not require remote management or remote monitoring. The Kabul sub-office in charge of administering the province, which mentions UNHCR staff rarely attends BSCs due to “security restrictions”, confirms this. This is problematic, since, as mentioned earlier, the security situation was good in the districts visited during evaluation. This calls for a better understanding of the conditions under which UNHCR conducts remote management.

Non-beneficiaries repeatedly mentioned networks and influence as a requirement for selection, apparently because of a **heavy reliance on maliks** for gathering of eligible inhabitants and beneficiary selection. In Khanjar Khil, where habitat is scattered, some mentioned not having been warned of the existence of the programme and not having been able to apply for selection on time. This is revealing of **a breach in the selection process as remote areas are not sufficiently taken into account and insufficient attention is paid to communication about the shelter programme**. This contributes to a great **confusion about the criteria of eligibility and the selection process**.

In **homogenous communities**, reliance on the Malik for selection was not perceived as a driver of conflict, thanks to solidarity mechanisms. In Khanaqa however, the fact that only one of the Malik out of the two tribes in the community had been consulted created tensions as one part of the village received substantial assistance – indiscriminately- and the other didn’t receive any, despite the fact, according to local authorities and community members, that some would have been eligible for assistance.

Mention of women participation in the selection process was met with incomprehension/ regarded as unnecessary by community members. However, ABR did specify a female member of their staff participated in selection and conducted hygiene classes as part of the shelter programme.

Two cases of fraud have been noticed in Khanaqa, with one household receiving two shelters (husband and wife), and one other where the occupant had bought the VRF and the assistance “package” that goes with it from a wealthier community member.

- Criteria of Selection

The main criterion used for selection was ownership of a **VRF**, on a “first come first serve” basis. More than 80 per cent of the beneficiaries indicated having a VRF form and 66 per cent were recognized refugee returnees. Furthermore, there was no explicit mention of a beneficiary selection committee in the field, and most of those who were warned and had a VRF received a shelter, regardless of their economic situation, in all villages visited. The vulnerability criterion was seldom mentioned - which can be an explanation for the fact that some shelters are used for purposes other than living. The quantitative data shows that 74 households or 40 per cent of the sample fulfil one of the EVI criteria.

More than half of these (41 households) are beneficiaries of the shelter assistance programme. 15 EVI households applied for assistance, but were not chosen as beneficiaries.

The fact that **returning IDPs were not included in shelter assistance**, as they did not have a VRF raised concern in the communities, as those who were not able to migrate abroad were also those with fewer resources. In Khanaqa for instance, though land did not seem to be an issue, as both returnees and IDPs were returning to their village of origin, no shelter was allocated to returning IDPs. There is therefore no clear understanding of why they were not considered as eligible in the programme. Failure to effectively select IDPs weakens the ability of the programme to reach the most vulnerable. IDPs from other provinces are excluded from the programme, allegedly since they do not own land and are seen by authorities as temporary migrants.

- Complaint Mechanism

There was **no complaint mechanisms** mentioned. Several non-beneficiaries mentioned having gone to the IP's office but not having been given any clear information. ABR reports having conducted campaigns prior to the selection process, warning the population of distribution of assistance and information about the selection criteria. However, the fact that community members continue to believe that VRF is the main requirement for receiving assistance shows the message has not been understood. More attention needs to be paid to the publicity of the selection process and communication plan of UNHCR before, during and after selection.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT

The socio-economic impact of the shelter programme in the different locations visited depends on the profile of beneficiaries, which appears to come across a wide range of situations, as the main criteria is less vulnerability than holding a VRF.

Overall, the economic situation of beneficiaries did not differ much from that of non-beneficiaries, and was as diverse. The sole focus on VRF therefore raises concern about the efficiency and cost effectiveness of the programme, which leaves out other vulnerable members of the community in need of shelter (IDPs, non migrants, undocumented returnees), but integrates people who either have the capacity to build their own house and use the shelter for purposes other than living (guesthouse, storage room). In one case in Khanaqa, a beneficiary had previously benefitted from shelter assistance and was using his shelter for storage. Now he was building an additional two-room house opposite the UNHCR shelter, indicating flaws in the selection process. **There is therefore a direct link between the impact of the programme and the fairness of the selection process.**

In our surveyed sample, 72 per cent of households noted their economic situation had been better or far better following receiving shelter assistance. **Shelter was explicitly mentioned as an essential need** as housing had been destroyed during the war or deteriorated due to long periods of absence, and as there is an explicit will to settle all the more since the security situation is stable. Shelter assistance therefore upgraded the living conditions of returnees who previously lived in tents (35.35% of UNHCR beneficiaries

in our survey sample), and in some cases (Qala-e Nasro) was explicitly mentioned as an incentive for return for members of the tribe who arrived from Pakistan later.

Compared to non-beneficiaries, our multi-dimensional poverty index (MPI) presented in Table A.7 shows that those households which received shelter from UNHCR are less deprived.

Table A.7: Multi-dimensional Poverty Index by Beneficiary Status, in Parwan

	Not Deprived	Deprived	Total
UNHCR Beneficiaries	18	83	101
%	17.82	82.18	100.00
Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	0	1	1
%	0.00	100.00	100.00
Non-Beneficiaries	6	79	85
%	7.06	92.94	100.00
Total	24	163	187
%	12.83	87.17	100.00

As mentioned earlier, the fact that in some cases (Khanaqa, Khanjar Khil) one specific area of the village received assistance whereas the other did not is perceived as a form of discrimination by non-beneficiaries, a sign of the negative social impact of the programme.

SUSTAINABILITY

o Occupancy

A thorough assessment of the occupancy of all shelters could not be conducted in Khanjar Khil and Qala-e Nasro. However, all respondents in the province indicated that they plan to stay in the current community permanently. Of the 101 UNHCR beneficiaries only one indicated that they were not currently living in a UNHCR shelter. This was confirmed by the community leaders and by field visits, which showed that a high rate of occupancy, though, as mentioned earlier, some were used for purposes other than living. In Khanaqa, one shelter was unoccupied as the beneficiary had returned to Iran to make a living, and three other shelters were used for storage, and two had been dismantled to recycle the package components in the construction of another house. **Most shelters were therefore used, but not all were occupied for the purpose they had been designed for.** This can be interpreted as a sign of flaws in the selection process and misallocation of assistance, which the IP recognized, though they mentioned trying to avoid such situations as much as possible. ABR further mentioned a small proportion of shelters were allocated to the most vulnerable, including those who did not have VRF forms, but that identifying vulnerable individuals in the community was sometimes problematic.

o Economic Opportunities as the main factor determining the sustainability of the programme

The access to job opportunities and sources of income is one of the main issues for communities: whether by accessing a plot of land, seeds, material and fertilizer for agriculture, or finding opportunities as daily labourers in neighbouring towns. This was especially the case in the valley, where agriculture is

one of the main income-generating activities for inhabitants. In the Highlands, inhabitants had subsistence agricultural activities but mainly depended on other sources of income (daily wages in town). However, the fact that some shelters are used to house family members while the head of household spends the week in Kabul for work is a sign that shelter assistance contributes to the economic well-being of the household.

There is a disparity between the needs and situation of communities depending on their location (valley/ highlands). In the valley, the accessibility of the area explains for the relatively good provision of services (schools, pharmacies, proximity of a market), but also a better access to job opportunities. In the Highlands, inhabitants mentioned struggling to make a living and considering going to Kabul for work, and coming back on weekends, as several members of the community were already doing.

- **The proximity of the Bagram Air Case: a risk for sustainability?**

In Khanjar Khil, a significant portion of inhabitants were mentioned to work directly (20 households) or indirectly (80 households) for the Bagram Air Case, raising serious concern about the retreat of the troops and the horizon of 2014 in terms of settlement of skilled workers, which are expected to move out of the village. However, recent returnees have fewer opportunities to access these jobs, as they either do not have the relevant skills, or the necessary network. In Khanjar Khil, villagers had received direct assistance from the base, including winterization assistance, water pumps, and tractors for agriculture. Aside from the impact on the population, the important question for UNHCR is the impact on the sustainability of the programme and on UNHCR assistance in the area, as there is a risk of confusion between humanitarian and military assistance, which may jeopardize the neutrality of UNHCR. Parwan is a fragile area, where security balances may change rapidly, and where neutrality will be crucial for organisations to maintain their presence

- **Natural Risks**

There was no mention of risk assessment prior to the construction of shelters, despite the fact that in at least one location (Khanaqa), the inhabitants insisted they were subject to yearly floods.

PARTNERSHIPS

DoRR Parwan mentioned having received capacity building for its staff from UNHCR Central Office, which is also their main donor for funds and furniture. The proximity of Kabul allows direct communication with both the line ministry and UNHCR central office. However, the relationship described by the DoRR was more paternalistic on behalf of UNHCR than truly cooperative. The DoRR deplored the change of focus of UNHCR to reintegration sites, as well as the site chosen to implement the reintegration strategy (Khanjar Khil). With the arrival of returnees from abroad in an area where most of the previous housing has been destroyed, a focus on specific sites for shelter assistance is perceived as not tailored to the effective needs in the province: “Returnees are dispersed; if you create a heaven for one village and what do you with other people? And we told them this and we continue saying this to them: the distribution of any aid should be fair, even if it is limited it should be for everyone”.

All villages visited had benefitted from several types of assistance:

- There was notably a high presence of MRRD as part of NSP: wells, improvement/fixing of irrigation systems.
- UN Habitat provided assistance for rehabilitation of roads, and provided electric generators in Khanaqa – though those were said not to be useful since the population didn't have the means to purchase fuel.
- NPO (Norwegian Project Office) had previously provided shelters in two villages (Qala-e Nasro and Khanaqa)
- The Dutch Committee constructed a veterinary clinic and conducted a vocational training for a member of the village in Khanaqa.
- EAU funded installation of water pumps in Qala-e Nasro.
- Several mentions were made of "Americans" providing assistance, without further specification.

Both, the fact that the area suffered from intensive destruction during the war and remains highly strategic explain the high concentration of humanitarian assistance. However, apart from partnerships between UN Habitat and MRRD, there seemed to be little coordination between different types of intervention. More linkages between humanitarian actors would probably have a positive effect on the sustainability of the programme.

CONTEXT

Bamyan is part of the Central Highlands region, characterized by its remoteness from Afghan main urban centres given its altitude and severe weather conditions. The province is the heartland of the Hazara community and has recently enjoyed a relative peaceful environment. Still Bamyan’s security situation is deteriorating as the road linking the province to Kabul is getting more dangerous. Overall the province is under-developed, with residents mainly sustaining themselves with agriculture activities, in particular the production of potatoes. Some modest efforts have been made to develop tourism in the province.

Bamyan is neither a province of high returns nor an important destination of internal displacement. Most of the returns occurred between 2002 and 2007, when about 22,000 voluntary returnees were registered. UNHCR estimates the number of IDPs present in the province to be near zero.

The scope of the UNHCR shelter programme was therefore limited in Bamyan with a total of **285 shelters built between 2009 and 2011**. Our research team surveyed 61 households in Bamyan, of which 52 per cent were UNHCR beneficiaries. Moreover, 84 per cent of those households surveyed were official refugee returnees, 7 per cent were non-refugee returnees as well as IDPs and 3 per cent never migrated.

Table A.8: Provincial Sample, Bamyan

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non- Beneficiaries	Total
Refugee Returnees	32	19	51
%	100.00	65.52	83.61
Non-refugee Returnees	0	4	4
%	0.00	13.79	6.56
IDPs	0	4	4
%	0.00	13.79	6.56
No Mobility	0	2	2
%	0.00	6.90	3.28
Total	32	29	61
%	100.00	100.00	100.00

DESIGN

While beneficiaries and communities expressed their overall satisfaction with UNHCR shelter assistance, they pointed out at a few problems with the design of shelters. Beneficiaries complained that the design of the shelters and material were not adapted to Bamyan’s very harsh winter. Specifically, the number of beams included in the package was insufficient and caused the roofs to collapse during important snowfalls as the distance between beams was too important to support important quantity of snow.

Many beneficiaries had added some wooden beams to reinforce the structure of their shelters, increasing the overall costs of the shelters.

Beneficiaries also complained about the low quality of the metal frames of doors and windows provided by UNHCR. These were considered to be particularly ill adapted to the weather conditions of the province, as they froze and leaked during the winter. This explains a lower rate of satisfaction of beneficiaries with the quality of the materials received compared to other provinces, with 81 per cent of our sample satisfied. Overall, problems beneficiaries had during construction are outlined in Table A.9.

Table A.9: Problems during Construction, in Bamyan

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	
	N=35	%
Ran out of money	26	92.86
Lack of skilled labour	19	67.86
Insufficient access to water	13	28.57
Lack of technical knowledge	9	25.71
Ran out of materials	5	17.86
Materials were of poor quality	5	17.86
Weather problems	4	14.29
Materials were not delivered on time	3	5.71
Lack of unskilled labour	1	3.57

Most beneficiaries and community leaders noted that the size of the shelters and the numbers of rooms were insufficient to accommodate beneficiary families. This is linked with the fact that in several villages visited by the research team, beneficiaries received one-room shelters only (Kata Sang; Shash Pul; Quli Tubchi). Within our sample of households surveyed, 31 per cent of beneficiaries received one-room shelters, a proportion that is significantly higher than in other provinces.

Overall beneficiaries and community leaders noted that they were appreciative of the support provided by UNHCR staff. Monitoring visits took place during the construction phase every week or every two weeks when the villages were too remote, with 97 per cent of our sample receiving monitoring visits during construction.

SELECTION OF BENEFICIARIES

While community leaders did not report particular problems with the selection process, acknowledging that the poorest had been selected, further discussions with members of communities suggested otherwise. They reported that only a few beneficiaries were legitimately selected following the criteria,

while most were relatives of local CDC members and of UNHCR staff. This would require further investigation from UNHCR.

As for those households surveyed, 80 per cent of UNHCR beneficiaries were official refugees with a VRF in hand, and 84 per cent owned the land their shelter was built on before. Moreover some 41 per cent of UNHCR beneficiaries were extremely vulnerable while none were IDPs.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT

All communities expressed their satisfaction about the programme and noted that it greatly helped returnee households by reducing significantly the level of expenses that they would have had to put into their housing. It was also noted that the programme prevented returnee families to migrate again. Of those households surveyed, 43 per cent considered their current economic situation as better, while 31 per cent thought they were worse.

Compared to non-beneficiaries, our multi-dimensional poverty index (MPI) presented in Table A.10 shows that those households which received shelter from UNHCR are less deprived.

Table A.10: Multi-dimensional Poverty Index by Beneficiary Status, in Bamyan

	Not Deprived	Deprived	Total
UNHCR Beneficiaries	20	12	32
%	62.50	37.50	100.00
Non-Beneficiaries	15	14	29
%	51.72	48.28	100.00
Total	35	26	61
%	57.38	42.62	100.00

Still it appears that the positive impact of the programme remained mostly at the household level. Community leaders noted that the programme had little impact at the community level, where the economic fallout was only short-term and limited. Nonetheless, when asked how the programme had impacted the community as a whole, all households surveyed responded positively or very positively.

SUSTAINABILITY

The occupation rate of UNHCR shelters in Bamyan was very high and all the shelters visited by the research team were occupied. The sustainability of the programme was supported by interesting complementary projects of assistance aiming at developing Bamyan's basic services and infrastructures, including:

- Micro hydropower stations had been built in several villages (e.g. Meana qad and Shash pul villages).
- UNHCR distributed solar panels in various villages.

- UNHCR helped building a proper canalization and water pipe systems in the communities, which received shelter assistance.

In fact, of those households surveyed all planned to permanently remain in their current community.

Three main threats for the sustainability of the programme in the province were identified:

- a) A high level of unemployment, especially among young people.
- b) Lack of drinkable water, which was noted as a major issue by every community leader.
- c) A deteriorating security context, reducing the relations between Bamyan and Kabul, hence rendering trade more difficult for the province.

CONTEXT

Laghman remains a rural province, with poor infrastructure and a volatile security context. A large part of the rural areas are out of bound for the international assistance. Within Laghman, the research team visited the districts of Mehterlam, and Qarghayi.

The two main regions of return in Afghanistan – Nangarhar and Kabul – border Laghman province. Due to its remoteness and insecurity, the province saw fewer returnees than neighbouring provinces, with a total of about 128,000 voluntary returnees registered in the province. Given the proximity of the border with Pakistan and of two of the main urban centres in the country, the province is still characterized by the high mobility of its inhabitants who still travel back and forth between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The number of IDPs present in the province is limited, due to the attraction of nearby Kabul and Jalalabad.

The scope of the UNHCR shelter programme was extensive in Laghman with a total of **2,187 shelter built between 2009 and 2011**. Our research team surveyed 300 households in Laghman, of which 54 per cent were UNHCR beneficiaries. Moreover, 59 per cent of those households surveyed were official refugee returnees while 19 per cent were non-refugee returnees, 2 per cent were IDPs and 20 per cent never migrated.

Table A.11: Provincial Sample, Laghman

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-Beneficiaries	Total
Refugee Returnee %	128 79.01	50 36.23	178 59.33
Non-Refugee Returnee %	20 12.35	37 26.81	57 19.00
IDPs %	1 0.62	4 2.90	5 1.67
No Mobility %	13 8.02	47 34.06	60 20.00
Total %	162 100.00	138 100.00	300 100.00

DESIGN

Nearly all, 88 per cent, shelters visited were two-room shelters. Beneficiaries complained about the size of rooms, saying that the rooms were very small, which is problematic in a Pashtun area like Laghman, where the size of households is relatively higher. Often beneficiaries altered the design of their shelters

and removed the corridor to make one bigger room. The research team noted that often the interior of the shelters was properly painted and decorated.

In most cases, beneficiaries had built some surrounding walls for their shelters. Only in Chardeh (Shahid Baba), there was no surrounding wall and the design of the shelters had not been changed because the community could not afford such investments.

The quality of material was praised by beneficiaries, who often mentioned roofing components (iron beams and roofing tiles) as particularly useful. The beneficiaries did complain about the poor quality of the metal doors however. In some villages instead of iron beams and roofing tiles, wooden beams and wooden ceiling boards had been distributed, and beneficiaries were not happy about the quality of these components, saying that wooden beams and wooden ceiling boards were not good.

During the building process, beneficiaries noted that they did not receive any particular support even though they encountered a number of challenges including:

- lack of water in dry areas (49% of households surveyed)
- lack of petrol for water pumps,
- lack of skilled labours (22% of households surveyed),
- lack of soil to make mud bricks and
- lack of money (87% households surveyed).

SELECTION OF BENEFICIARIES

In most cases, the selection of beneficiaries was based on land ownership and the presentation of a VRF, with 90 per cent of households surveyed owning the land the shelter was built on before assistance, and 74 per cent having a VRF. In some villages the selection of beneficiaries lied in the hands of the Maliks who were responsible of gathering community members and identifying eligible participants. UNHCR and IPs employees were not always involved in the process. In some villages though, poverty and vulnerability entered into play in the selection, with 52 per cent of those households selected being characterized as extremely vulnerable

There was also a problem in those cases where neighbouring villages had not received any assistance, despite their needs for shelters (e.g. Qala e Mollayan in chahardeh village) creating a feeling of favouritism among non-beneficiary communities.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT

The original beneficiaries occupied all shelters visited because shelter was perceived as an essential need by beneficiaries who had no alternative. Moreover the majority of beneficiary households surveyed, 67 per cent, considered their current economic situation better or far better compared to before assistance, while 23 per cent considered it the same. Compared to non-beneficiaries, our multi-dimensional poverty

index (MPI) presented in Table A.11 shows that those households which received shelter from UNHCR are less deprived.

Table A.12: Multi-dimensional Poverty Index by Beneficiary Status, in Laghman

	Not Deprived	Deprived	Total
UNHCR Beneficiaries	39	123	162
%	24.07	75.93	100.00
Non- Beneficiaries	14	124	138
%	10.14	89.86	100.00
Total	53	247	300
%	17.67	82.33	100.00

All households surveyed believed the programme had been positive for the community as a whole. The primary impact of the programme was to increase work opportunities. Communities also had the feeling that the programme increased the level of assistance received by the village as it attracted population, and therefore the attention of governmental institutions and aid organisations. As the programme fuelled a growth in the local population, basic services were brought to the area, including schools, clinics and roads.

In terms of housing, the programme made a huge difference as many beneficiaries were previously living in tents. In fact 1 month before receiving assistance, 46 per cent of beneficiaries did not own a house.

SUSTAINABILITY

The field team reported a high level of occupancy of the shelters they visited, with almost all shelters being occupied. Only two shelters had been temporarily left vacant as the owners had gone to Pakistan and to Jalalabad for work, confirming the important mobility characterizing the province.

Insecurity is one of the main risks threatening the sustainability of the programme in Laghman. Given the high mobility of Lagman’s population, further deterioration in the security context might lead to secondary displacement. Still, all beneficiary households surveyed planned to stay in their current community permanently.

CONTEXT

The province of Nangarhar holds a specific position in the shelter assistance programme as it is the province with the second highest number of returnees after Kabul with 910,076 assisted returnees screened at Momandara Encashment Center between March 2002 and August 2012⁴⁵. Between 2009 and 2011, a total of 12,433 shelters were completed by UNHCR in the entire province.

Due to the high number of returnees and the increasing number of internally displaced people migrating to the province from the neighbouring Kunar, Laghman and Nuristan, Nangarhar is facing increasing demographic pressure and there are subsequent highly political issues at stake when dealing with returnees, secondary displacement and IDPs. According to a UNHCR Internal Displacement Country Profile, Nangarhar is the province with the highest number of conflict-induced IDPs with 63,603 people living in displacement as of May 2012⁴⁶. A substantial number of returnees originally from other provinces (returnee-IDPs) choose to stay in Nangarhar due both to their incapacity to resettle in their province of origin because of insecurity, and the attractiveness of Jalalabad agglomeration, which offers livelihood opportunities and services unavailable in neighbouring provinces, according to governmental authorities and various stakeholders. The growing number of IDPs, the settlement of returnees from other provinces, and the increasing demographic pressure are growing concerns for government authorities and the municipality of Jalalabad who view informal settlements as highly problematic.

A correlative to the high number of returnees/ IDPs in the province is the high **concentration of humanitarian assistance and funding**, with an important presence of international organizations providing both relief and development assistance. Shelter assistance has been implemented by a wide range of organizations in the past years, with a variety of practices: UN Habitat in urban areas, mainly in Jalalabad, UNHCR, NRC, IOM until 2008, and IRC until 2011. This was reflected on the field with locations visited receiving assistance from different types of organizations. As table A.13 shows, our provincial sample of Nangarhar comprises 2,068 households, of which 38 per cent are UNHCR beneficiaries, 22 per cent are beneficiaries of other shelter assistance programmes and 40 per cent are non-beneficiaries. Moreover, 53 per cent of our sample are official refugee returnees, while 33 per cent are non-refugee returnees, 2 per cent are IDPs and 13 per cent never migrated. Among the UNHCR beneficiaries refugee returnees are the largest group with 63 per cent. The share of no mobility households is smaller among UNHCR beneficiaries than those of other programmes.

⁴⁵ UNHCR “Assisted Voluntary Repatriation to Afghanistan – Return by Province of Destination 02 March 2002 – 31 August 2012”.

⁴⁶ UNHCR, “Conflict-Induced Internally Displaced Persons in Afghanistan. Interpretation of Data as of 31 May 2012”, July 2012.

Table A.13: Provincial Sample, Nangarhar

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non- Beneficiaries	Total
Refugee returnees	495	241	349	1 085
%	62.66	52.97	42.41	52.47
Non-refugee returnees	223	134	332	689
%	28.23	29.45	40.34	33.32
IDPs	11	6	18	35
%	1.39	1.32	2.19	1.69
No Mobility	61	74	124	259
%	7.72	16.26	15.07	12.52
Total	790	455	823	2 068
%	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

The issue of **IDPs** was reported as critical by most stakeholders, and strongly linked to the accessibility of land and the problem of housing. There seems to be a strong belief among governmental authorities, but also IPs, that development assistance should not be directed at IDPs and returnees from other provinces, as their migration is considered as temporary. This analysis is challenged by NRC, which emphasizes the need for long lasting solutions for IDPs incapable to return to their province of origin due to high concerns about insecurity⁴⁷. There is however a wide agreement on the fact that the issue of IDPs is critical and is increasingly acknowledged as one of the main challenges for development organizations. Both UNHCR and NRC stated having tried to get around the argument of land and informal settlement brought up by authorities when dealing with IDPs by implementing one-room shelters presented as “an improvement for a temporary shelter” or transitional temporary shelters. However, a very limited number of IDPs seem to have effectively been reached by the programme, as showed by Table A.13, as IPs seemed to consider IDPs as not eligible.

Insecurity is gaining ground in some districts (Surkh Rod and Beh Sud) as Taliban elements from neighbouring provinces are penetrating rural areas. There is therefore an increasing reliance on remote management on behalf of UNHCR, and some areas of high shelter implementation falling out of their reach (Khales Family, the area with the highest concentration of shelters in Jalalabad district is currently not accessible to UNHCR after the assassination of a member of their staff and increasing influence from Taliban elements).

Issues related to returnees and IDPs are highly political in the region, with considerable economic stakes due to funding of assistance directed at these populations. Allegations of corruption of stakeholders have been reported. These need to be taken very cautiously, but were nonetheless present throughout fieldwork and KIs.

⁴⁷ Cf. “IDP Protection Study”, Samuel Hall, NRC, IDMC, 2012.

DESIGN

UNHCR beneficiaries surveyed in Nangarhar mainly built two-room shelters, 74 per cent, while the rest, 26 per cent, built one-room shelters. The majority, 83 per cent, of the beneficiaries did not choose the size of shelter themselves. More specifically, three different types of shelter were implemented, which seem to be specific to Nangarhar:

- A “regular” two-room shelter + latrines + \$100, for returnees with land and property.
- A one-room shelter + corridor + latrines + \$50, originally designed as a solution for provision of assistance to IDPs. This was however not reflected either in the field or through conversations with implementing partners, which unanimously insisted that the UNHCR shelter programme was primarily directed at returnees. The criterion for allocating one-room shelter in the field was mainly the number of members of the household (less than 8 members).
- A “repair-kit”: one room with no corridor as an extension to an existing house. Repair kits are allocated to large households with insufficient room for housing, sometimes in addition to a shelter.

There were **reforms in the design of shelters over the years**, based on UNHCR team observations and IP recommendations: while in 2009 two-room shelters included wooden beams and three small windows, two larger windows were included in the package in 2010 following field observations and complaints about lack of light and ventilation. Additionally iron beams replaced wooden poplar beams affected by termites. **IPs and the UNHCR sub-office reported that yearly evaluations and recommendations to the sub-office based on their field observations and complaints received from beneficiaries were at the root of these changes in design.** The UNHCR sub-office shelter team emphasized they had brought up issues at the central level, though communication problems with the head office slowed down changes. Changes introduced in Nangarhar were later reflected in the design at country level, according to them. Table A.14 illustrates the main problems beneficiaries of both UNHCR and other programmes had during participation.

Table A.14: Dissatisfaction with Elements of the Shelter Programme, in Nangarhar

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries
Quality of technical assistance %	175 22.15	104 22.86
Quality of latrine %	132 16.71	83 18.24
Thermal isolation %	117 14.81	53 11.65
Quality of lintels %	77 9.75	49 10.76
Quality of door %	71 8.99	36 7.91
Size of the shelter %	66 8.32	26 5.72
Quality of roof %	49 6.20	55 9.89
Quality of windows %	44 5.57	27 5.94
Design of the shelter %	31 3.92	15 3.40

The main **complaint** of beneficiaries, relayed by IPs and field engineers, was the small size of the rooms. In many cases, the wall between the corridor and one of the rooms was removed to enlarge one of the rooms. Other complaints included the iron window frames and doors, which required additional treatment for rust. As a result, many UNHCR beneficiaries changed the design of the shelter after handover by removing the corridor to enlarge the rooms. In such cases, a large one-room shelter (UN Habitat, CHF) was unanimously considered as more appropriate considering cultural practices of gathering and high number of family members. Yet, this solution might not be the most appropriate, especially when considering health and hygiene issues.

Beneficiaries mentioned not having been able to introduce changes in the design prior to completion, as they were not authorized to do so and would not receive the final cash grant if they did anyway. This **lack of flexibility** sometimes proved problematic as some rooms were enlarged by adding wooden beams, introducing dissymmetry in the design with a potential impact on the solidity of the overall structure. In one case (Angur Bagh, case 1) the beneficiary waited to be able to purchase adequate material for his house before starting to build it according to his own will, with IP approval. The fact that the most vulnerable beneficiaries are unable to undertake changes after completion because of a lack of funds advocates for more flexibility during the construction process.

Problems during construction: Almost half, 47 per cent, of the beneficiaries indicated that they encountered some kind of problem during the construction of their shelter. This was the case for people

across urban and rural areas alike. Table A.15 shows the different types of problems the beneficiaries encountered by the type of location they built the shelter in. It shows that the main problems were having enough financial capital and insufficient access to water. **The lack of water or limited access to water** during the construction phase was mentioned as a major burden on the beneficiaries especially in Sheikh Mesri and Chamtala.

Table A.15: Problems during Construction by Location, in Nangarhar

	Urban		Semi-Rural		Rural		Total	
	N=119	%	N=2	%	N=246	%	N=367	%
Ran out of money	100	84.03	1	50.00	215	87.40	316	86.10
Insufficient access to water	38	31.93	0	0.00	120	48.78	158	43.05
Weather problems	42	35.29	2	100.00	92	37.40	136	37.06
Ran out of materials	32	26.89	0	0.00	62	25.20	94	25.61
Lack of skilled labour	27	22.69	1	50.00	62	25.20	90	24.52
Materials of poor quality	27	22.69	0	0.00	14	5.69	41	11.17
Lack of unskilled labour	10	8.40	0	0.00	13	5.28	23	6.27
Materials not delivered on time	10	8.40	0	0.00	13	5.28	23	6.27
Lack of technical knowledge	7	5.88	0	0.00	4	1.63	11	3.00

Another problem noticed was the inadaptability of the design to the size/shape of the land plot, forcing the beneficiary to arrange the design. In such cases, witnessed in Saracha reintegration site, UNHCR engineers and IPs allowed the beneficiary to introduce small changes in the design, though no additional support was provided for additional costs.

Extremely vulnerable individuals who do not have the skills or capacity to build a shelter (elderly, widows, women heads of households or disabled) are not provided with additional assistance as part of the shelter programme. In Chamtala for instance, non-beneficiaries stated that they did not apply for shelter assistance because they knew beforehand that they would not be able bear the additional costs associated with building the shelter. While knowing that they could receive some assistance through the shelter package, they still however decided not to apply and rather continued to stay with their relatives or neighbours. In such cases, returnees are theoretically supposed to receive help from the UNHCR protection branch under the EVI programme, though this was never witnessed nor mentioned in the locations visited, and very vulnerable individuals had to rely either on community assistance (scarce), get increasingly indebted, or let their shelter deteriorate (case 7, Majbur Abad). The UNHCR Protection unit stated having only a minor involvement in the shelter programme and selection of beneficiaries, and emphasized the current lack of inter-unit approach. The Protection officer notably underlined that most EVIs are not reached through the shelter programme as they cannot access land and are therefore not eligible for shelter.

Materials were received on time in most cases, 95 per cent, and there was an **overall satisfaction with the quality of the material, 93 per cent. Procurement of material** for shelter construction was done on a partly decentralized model until 2012: the central office would procure the high beam, T-beam, door, windows, and the IP be responsible for local procurement of lintels and ceiling bricks. In 2012, central procurement was introduced, with all material being centrally procured by Kabul. There are concerns about the quality of material provided, the additional costs (as material transits through Nangarhar and is sent back from Kabul with additional transportation costs) and on-time delivery. The model introduced by NRC in 2011 through its community driven process, relying mainly on direct procurement by beneficiaries, is in this regard interesting, though it requires a strong monitoring and technical support, which might not be applicable on a large scale basis – such as the model implemented by UNHCR until 2012.

Earthquake mitigation measures and flood assessments were largely overlooked by most stakeholders (whether UNHCR, NGOs involved in shelter, government authorities or IPs). UNHCR staff and IPs solely rely on a sight-check by engineers (who do not seem to have any qualification in risk assessment), pointing to the fact that previously inhabited areas are not prone to floods – which is highly questionable, as large scale floods in 2009 and 2010 in Jalalabad had a considerable impact on housing, as proved by the visit in Nahiya 1. There is no form of coordination or consultancy with municipality or Directorate of Urban Development and Housing in urban areas, or ANDMA for risk assessment.

There is no regular assessment of occupancy of shelters, allegedly because of the one-year budget cycle of UNHCR.

SELECTION OF BENEFICIARIES

- **Profile of communities targeted by the shelter programme:**

Areas of implementation are decided by UNHCR according to the screening at the border and the area mentioned by returnees as their place of return. The first criterion for selection is therefore “high return areas”, both in rural areas and inside the boundaries of the rapidly expanding Jalalabad agglomeration. Profiles of beneficiary communities varied according to the location (urban/ rural) and the profile of the community (homogeneous/ heterogeneous/ rate and stages of return). Some of the consequences of high return rates are an increasing pressure on housing, but also on job opportunities, access to water, and whenever services and health facilities were available, on the capacity of these facilities to support the increasing demographic pressure.

- **Selection Process**

UNHCR said the selection process for beneficiaries systematically went through a **Beneficiary Selection Committee (BSC)**, composed of a UNHCR member, a DoRR representative, the IP, and local authorities in accessible areas. In non- accessible areas, the BSC is composed of the same members, without UNHCR staff. **There is no female participation in the selection process.** However, the **DoRR insisted that they were often side-lined** for beneficiary selection because they were not informed nor included in some cases. UNHCR and IPs argued that there was a lack of good will on behalf of DoRR representatives, either

not available for selection or asking for additional support (cars), which neither UNHCR nor the IP were willing or prepared to provide.

Reliance on the Malik was mentioned to introduce a major bias in selection with strong allegations of nepotism on behalf of non-beneficiaries in various locations. In homogenous communities with a large number of shelters allocated, the reliance on the Malik seemed to work and there were no complaints. Selection was done primarily through VRF and most VRF holders were selected (Sediq Abad). Interestingly, in those cases, selection was considered as fair even by non-beneficiaries, since the VRF criterion was considered as transparent. In more heterogeneous contexts, there were widespread allegations of favouritism. IPs also acknowledged the issue, while they mentioned not having relied on the Malik for selection. In many cases however, the Malik is the one who gathers VRF holders for selection and appears to have influence in the selection process.

The **short time-span for selection** of beneficiaries raises problems in targeting the most vulnerable. Cases were mentioned where potentially eligible people were out of the village for work during selection and were therefore left aside. In areas where other types of selection were carried out (UN Habitat in Bez Akmalati) there was an emphasis on the relative effectiveness of the UN Habitat programme, which takes several months but is more community-driven. In areas where different programmes were implemented beneficiaries compared the selection processes of both organizations and deemed the UN Habitat process, for instance, “fairer” than that of UNHCR, which had been quick but discriminating.

There appears to be issues in **preliminary assessment of needs** in targeted areas, with areas of high return targeted with no consideration of the effective needs of the people. In such cases, the quota of shelters allocated having to be constructed whatsoever; less vulnerable VRF holders were included, whereas vulnerable individuals deprived of VRF were left out. Accordingly, 57 per cent of the surveyed households cannot be classified as extremely vulnerable, while 43 per cent can. Additionally, the quantitative data shows 139 EVI households applied for shelter assistance, but were not chosen. In Sheikh Mesri, both AGHCO and WSTA mentioned having had issues for finding eligible individuals and implementing the number of shelters allocated. WSTA also reported many incidents of forged VRF cards and doubts about the legality of their land ownership.

- **Criteria of Selection**

Moreover, there was a discrepancy between UNHCR discourse and the reality on the field, where there seemed to be a **widespread misunderstanding of the criteria by communities**. Despite the assurance by UNHCR that all criteria for selection were taken into account, fieldwork showed shelters were **primarily given to VRF holders**, as a way to distinguish eligible beneficiaries from others. The majority, 83 per cent, of the beneficiaries did report that they did have a VRF, even though only 63 per cent are recognized refugee returnees). There is a deep-rooted belief both among communities and IPs that UNHCR is to bring assistance to VRF holders, and that other NGOs and organizations will provide assistance to others (UN Habitat, CHF, NRC), though this is not the case. As a result, **IDPs were not reflected at all in the selection**. Only 1 per cent of the UNHCR beneficiaries in our survey sample were in fact IDPs. Though UNHCR mentioned having developed the one-room shelter model specifically for targeting IDPs, this was not reflected in the field.

Consequentially, one of the side effects of the high focus on VRF mentioned by community members were fraud and trafficking of forms, with undocumented returnees buying VRF from others. In some cases, community members mentioned having been opposed the “expiration” of their VRF for not receiving assistance. However, according to UNHCR there are no guidelines about duration of return for assistance. According to them, UNHCR’s assistance may have been limited only because of UNHCR budget limitations. They further mentioned that, due to those budget restrictions, recent returnees were primarily targeted as they are considered to be more in need of shelter assistance than those who have settled many years ago and had been able to establish coping mechanisms. Accordingly the quantitative data shows that 71 per cent of the UNHCR beneficiaries had returned within the past five years. However, field observations showed that in some cases, ancient returnees were as much, and sometimes more in need than some recent returnees, and had been living with relatives for a long period of time, which is considered as a great burden by the host community. Though UNHCR insisted it made its selection criteria clear through posts and distribution of leaflets, this was not reflected on the field, with no one mentioning having received notifications other than those of the Malik and the visits of “engineers”.

The **issue of land** seems to be discriminating in the selection process as well as highly political. Land ownership is a requirement for shelter in the UNHCR programme, though in most cases people do not own proper documentation and the BSC has to rely on testimony of local authorities. In the survey, 82 per cent of the beneficiaries indicated that they did own the land the shelter was built on already before. Among those that did not almost have received it through the LAS (48.3%), while others built on their relatives’ land (15.4%) or on community/public land (9.8%).

Inside the boundaries of Jalalabad agglomeration, many shelter beneficiaries had benefitted from a land allocation, when land was made available by municipality at lower prices (20 000 AFS). A high number of returnees also benefited from the LAS in Sheikh Mesri, a formal LAS township, and Chamtala, which used to be an informal settlement. In other cases (Bez Akmalati), access to land for the most vulnerable was secured by UN Habitat through negotiation with the municipality. Conversely, **beneficiaries from the UNHCR programme, which does not include these sorts of mechanisms, were all landowners, raising complaints about the selection in reaching the most vulnerable.** In Bez Akmalati, which used to be an informal settlement, a fix number of shelters was allocated by UNHCR, but many were not eligible due to lack of access to land, and shelters were therefore not necessarily allocated to those who were most in need. Securing land tenure is highly problematic, especially for returnees outside their province of origin: those who can purchase land are therefore not the most vulnerable. In such cases, other programs, such as those of UN Habitat, which rely on collaboration with relevant government authorities (municipality, MUDH for urban areas) to provide eligible people with land, was perceived by the communities as more effective in reaching the most vulnerable.

However, in LAS sites (Chamtala) Malik and beneficiaries were very critical about the involvement of the government, especially the MUDH that they accused of bribery and nepotism. According to the Malik and the community members, the DoRR and the MUDH asked for bribes for land allocation, holding returnee’s VRFs and asking for 10.000 AFS upon request for a plot. The municipality and MUDH were also accused of misallocation and mismanagement of plots, which were originally destined to be public spaces -plots for schools, parks or clinics. This led to many tensions within the community as in certain

areas, clinics or schools could not be built or used because people had established their own houses on the plots of land they were meant to be constructed on.

- **Complaint Mechanism**

There are no direct complaint mechanisms for UNHCR beneficiaries and targeted communities. Issues are reported through field engineers and IPs. Conversely, NRC complaint mechanisms were the main driver of an evolution to a community driven process and introducing more flexibility in the construction process.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT

- **At the Household Level**

Shelter is unanimously seen by all stakeholders as a major need for returnees and a way to allow them to focus on other important issues. Most beneficiaries underlined the fact that they planned to stay, as they had “nowhere else to go” and insisted on ownership as a strong component of a durable settlement. In one case (Saracha focus group), a beneficiary mentioned planning to leave in order to find better job opportunities, though he emphasized the shelter would remain within his family as a base for return.

The quantitative data shows that 49 per cent of the beneficiaries considered the impact of the shelter assistance on their economic situation as positive, while 29 per cent did not see any change and 22 per cent considered it worse than before. Beneficiaries interviewed in focus groups unanimously underlined that shelter had had a very positive impact on their households by providing them with a roof (for those previously living in tents) or allowing them to have a space of their own instead of having to live with relatives, **especially since they wouldn’t have been able to find the funds for purchasing the material for building a house themselves, and needed technical assistance.** The fact that the programme alleviated pressure on relatives and other community members who previously had to host incoming migrants was stated as one of the major positive effects of the programme.

Compared to non-beneficiaries, our multi-dimensional poverty index (MPI) presented in Table A.16 shows that those households which received shelter from UNHCR are less deprived.

Table A.16: Multi-dimensional Poverty Index by Beneficiary Status, in Nangarhar

	Not Deprived	Deprived	Total
UNHCR Beneficiaries	254	536	790
%	32.15	67.85	100.00
Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	145	310	455
%	31.87	68.13	100.00
Non-Beneficiaries	118	705	823
%	14.34	85.66	100.00
Total	517	1 551	2 068
%	25.00	75.00	100.00

As in other provinces, **indebtedness** was repeatedly mentioned as one of the major issues faced by beneficiaries who had to pay for labour work (as most do not have construction skills), bricks and stones for foundations. Of the surveyed beneficiaries more than half indicated that their household debt increased due to the participation in the shelter programme. At the same time 32 per cent indicated that their debt level decreased. There were discrepancies in the amount of debt according to the material used: 50.000 AFS-70.000 AFS for sun-dried bricks, over 100.000 AFS for cooked bricks. In this case, technical support could have proved useful, as cooked bricks, though they are considered as a sign of modernity, are less isolating and shock-resistant than traditional sun-dried bricks. Despite debts contracted, there was a general agreement on behalf of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries that shelter assistance allowed beneficiaries to construct a house with less expenditure. It was mentioned that once provided with housing, beneficiaries could work to reimburse their debt, and focus on other important issues in family life, which they would not have been able to take into consideration without shelter assistance.

- **At the community level**

However, shelter assistance is generally perceived as positive by the community, non-beneficiaries insisting that “help calls help”. Returnees are often seen as a good thing in a village, as they draw the help to them, which in return benefits the entire community (alleviation of pressure on host families, roads, WASH programmes). In particular, one point that was underlined several times was the introduction of latrines and hygiene classes, which changed the practices of the entire community, with non-beneficiaries reproducing the same kind of facilities and adapting the same practices as beneficiaries (Nahiya 1, Bez Akmalati). This emphasizes the importance of multiple assistance programmes and greater coordination between agencies/NGOs involved in assistance. The programme was all the more perceived as positive when digging of wells, draining of canals, construction of schools and clinics had been implemented alongside shelter in the neighbourhood.

Side effects of the high concentration of assistance on areas of high return include the increase of the price of land with a consequence on job opportunities (as shop keepers) and accessibility of housing for other community members.

SUSTAINABILITY

- **Occupancy**

A minor group of those beneficiaries interviewed, 1 per cent, indicated that they are currently not living in the UNHCR shelter. Also, there was a high rate of occupancy in most locations visited. In some cases where the beneficiary himself had returned to Pakistan or gone to Kabul for work, his family (mother, wife, children) were living in the shelter (cf. case 2 Angur Bagh): shelters are therefore considered as a strong component of family life, even in cases when the lack of job opportunities to not allow the member of the household responsible for bringing income to stay. This is underlined by the fact, that while 11 non-beneficiary households currently plan to move from their current community, no UNHCR beneficiary households have such plans.

However, in the LAS township of Sheikh Mesri, many unoccupied shelters were spotted. Though a thorough assessment of occupancy rates could not be conducted due to the large size of the township, in the area visited, 10 completely abandoned UNHCR shelters were spotted in a small perimeter were 16 shelters in total were visited. This leads to the assumption the rates of occupancy are low in the township. This is corroborated by the fact that many allocate plots of land seemed abandoned. Beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries mentioned people had left to live somewhere else because of lack of employment opportunities and limited access to services. Moreover, misallocation of land plots led to disputes over land, which discouraged people to settle on these plots. Access to safe water was reportedly another important issue.

- **Technical support**

Technical support appears as a strong component in the sustainability of the shelter model, as it provides beneficiaries but also their relatives and other members of the community, with lacking basic construction skills. However, technical assistance mainly relied on the IP and its willingness to provide additional help. A regular model for technical support as part of the UNHCR programme in Nangarhar was the provision of plans, visiting several times a week during construction to check the progression of the work and the quality of material used, and conducting a final check for handover. One IP (APWO) mentioned they did provide additional help to unskilled beneficiaries, but did so on a voluntary basis, as they had received no specific instructions about these cases. The same IP emphasized that deadlines for completion of shelters (2 months), were particularly difficult to meet in cases where beneficiaries had no skills at all and had to be explained the basics of construction. **Ashar, or traditional community solidarity, which UNHCR relies upon for construction, seems in most cases not to be a reality:** other members of the community being on daily wages, could not afford to take days off to assist others while they have difficulties making ends meet for their own households. The issue of technical support as a strong component of the programme deserves being looked into, as proper capacity building during construction not only ensures the good quality of the shelter, but provides beneficiaries with skills that they will later be able to use and share with other community members (NRC identified this as a major aspect of its “community driven programme” as a mean to empower communities through beneficiaries).

The case of latrine construction in the UNHCR shelter programme provides a good example of dissemination of learning, as in several locations the introduction of latrines as part of the shelter programme triggered the construction of latrines in the community through sharing of the construction plan. **Additional technical support and flexibility** could also prevent post-construction changes weakening the structure of the shelter (cf. above).

- **Major threats to sustainability**

Major concerns for sustainability were the lack of accessibility of jobs due to increasing demographic pressure, access to safe water, roads, and availability of clinics (due to widespread diseases, specifically in urban areas because of poor living conditions and pollution). UNHCR insisted a WASH component (water and hygiene) was systematically included in the programme. Though in several areas, beneficiaries denied having received hygiene trainings, in communities where either UNHCR or another

organization had provided WASH assistance, it benefitted the community in addition to beneficiaries of the shelter programme.

- **Access** (roads) is a primary concern as it allowed inhabitants to work in Jalalabad as daily workers. The case of Jalalabad is specific as shelters were implemented by UNHCR inside the agglomeration, with the opportunity to go in town for daily work (construction, rickshaw drivers), though there was considerable insistence on the difficulty to secure a livelihood due to high demographic pressure.
- There are **potential tensions in the relationship between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries** due to the lack of transparency of beneficiary selection – especially in communities where some areas were targeted and not others – cf. Majbur Abad. This is illustrated by the fact that some non-beneficiaries first refused to talk to us until they understood we were not coming to provide assistance but to get their opinion on the programme.

REINTEGRATION SITES

The reintegration sites and concentration on some specific areas of high return is unanimously considered (aside from APA) as a negative trend and discriminating development in the selection of beneficiaries, leaving out the greatest bulk of vulnerable people which are settled outside targeted areas (cf. UNHCR, AGHCO, APWO, WSTA, NRC, IRC, governmental authorities KIIs).

- Moreover, the UNHCR sub-office underlined intra-agency coordination remained strictly theoretical and was not a reality in the field. UNHCR's one-year budget cycle being framed for assistance, the danger is therefore to side-line any comprehensive development strategy. In the absence of any long-term development projects, reintegration remains a lure (SHEIKH MESRI and FATIH ABAD).
- The Protection Unit underlined high risks of exclusion, as reintegration sites are **selected according to their accessibility, and not to the vulnerability criterion**. The UNHCR Field unit and maliks further mentioned proximity to the district centre and prior presence of development organizations working in that area as criteria for selection. AGHCO and WSTA explained not having been able to identify the right number of eligible people in Sheikh Mesri, having referred it to UNHCR and having been instructed to target neighbouring villages, which highlights problems in preliminary assessments.
- There is no formal coordination mechanism for reintegration sites.

PARTNERSHIPS

- **Remote Management and Overreliance on IPs**

UNHCR solely relies on one NGO, APA, to monitor non-accessible areas. Given the widespread allegations of corruption in the province, this is a serious area of concern. All the more as APA is the NGO involved in well-funded project in Kuchi Abad (Kabul), one of the most mediatised and a highly funded

reintegration site, which is a very clear conflict of interest and raises serious questions about the actual functioning of the monitoring mechanism. Another major issue is that APA was also asked to monitor accessible areas, where no need for remote management is theoretically needed, increasing the scope of inaccessible areas. There is a serious concern with the fact that the area with most implemented shelters is Khaled Family, which is considered as non-accessible.

Due to high return and migration rates and increasing pressure on land and housing, Nangarhar is the province, which received the highest concentration of shelter assistance in the country in the past years, with consecutive high political and financial stakes. There are currently three on-going shelter programmes: **UNHCR**, **UN Habitat** (as part of their urban upgrading programme) in urban areas, and **NRC** in rural areas. **IRC** interrupted its shelter programme for returnees in 2011, after their main donor rejected their proposal ECHO (no further explanation was given on this point: “political” and “economical” problems were mentioned). **IOM** had a programme on going until 2009, interrupted due to lack of funding, but is expected to restart a similar programme in the perspective of evictions from Pakistan. **CHF**, a USAID funded organisation, had a programme in 2009-2011.

UNHCR heads a monthly shelter meeting held in its office, which is a specificity of Nangarhar as in other provinces, the only information-sharing platform is the ES/NFI cluster. These are the main information-sharing platform about shelter, the main objective reportedly being to avoid duplication. However UN Habitat reported there was no actual information sharing about practices, and that the meeting consisted of a “routine exchange of figures”. All three on-going programs are implemented in a distinct way, and there seem to be disagreements on how shelters should be implemented and to whom they should be directed.

Interestingly, though UNHCR and UN Habitat denied any overlap between their programs, their shelters were often found in the same areas, and though the selection processes are sensibly different, criteria for selection are theoretically similar (IDPs, returnees, vulnerable), with the notable difference that the UN Habitat urban upgrading programme includes a process for solving land ownership issues in recent settlements, a good practice of which UNHCR could get inspiration. In the field, beneficiaries from these two organisations were effectively not the same, as UN Habitat put less focus on VRF, and land ownership was not a prior requirement.

There was an insistence on behalf of the Protection unit for **more intra –sectorial coordination, coordination between UN agencies, and various stakeholders**. KIIs with different UNHCR, UN Habitat and UNOPS stakeholders showed there was lack coordination. The main focus for coordination is emergency. Shelter coordination is done through a monthly meeting between various stakeholders, though there seems to be longstanding disagreements on the way to implement shelter between NRC, UN Habitat and UNHCR.

Governmental participation: One of the main complaints of all governmental authorities was the lack of communication on behalf of UNHCR and its reluctance to include governmental partners in its programmes. The main UNHCR partner in the shelter programme is the DoRR of Nangarhar, which is the most staffed in Afghanistan and receives most of its funds from UNHCR. The current director was mentioned to have considerable political influence as the brother in law of the speaker in Parliament.

There are strong tensions between UNHCR and DoRR however, with DoRR accusing UNHCR of pushing them aside, and UNHCR recognizing being highly suspicious of the good will of the DoRR to implement the programme according to UNHCR regulations. High levels of tension are reflected in allegations of corruption on both sides. Miscommunication and suspicion are therefore considerable obstacles to cooperation. Moreover there is reluctance on behalf of UNHCR to include governmental authorities in the selection process. Despite a wide network of staff, the problem of incompetence of DoRR staff was raised by several interviewees (i.e. representatives of IPs, IOM, UNHCR), due to widespread nepotism.

DRRD is a partner in development programs in rural areas and seen as more independent as it receives funds from various donors.

The Directorate of Economy deplored being left out of UNHCR selection of IPs. With the DoE being responsible for assessment and evaluation of NGOs, this is perceived as a major issue and a bypassing of rules and regulations, especially in avoiding selection of “black-listed” NGOs.

The ANDMA is not included in the UNHCR shelter programme, and is not considered by any organization involved in shelter as a potential partner for shelter. As underlined above, there is little to no risk assessment of construction land when building shelters other than an in-sight check by engineers, and reliance on popular experience. ANDMA is contacted in case of wide scale disasters in emergency programs. AGHCO insisted it was the most under-funded and under-staffed government agency and had little influence, let alone capacity to conduct prevention activities. The ANDMA itself, however, considered they were very capable and had identified areas of high risks. They further stated all other UN-agencies excluding UNHCR coordinate with them. They mentioned being a part of the emergency coordination committee with other UN agencies and having coordinated emergency responses in the past.

All governmental authorities insisted on the need for capacity building.

One of the main issues in Nangarhar was the apparent poor relationship between UNHCR, IPs and governmental authorities and subsequent mutual allegations of corruption. The DoRR explicitly accused UNHCR of being corrupted and of misallocating shelters, whereas UNHCR and IPs conjointly reported not trusting governmental authorities and intentionally side-lining them because of their repeated attempts to allocate assistance to their relatives and draw extra funds. On his side, the Directorate of Economy deplored the fact UNHCR did not follow the “rules and regulations” by not asking for his approval for the selection of IPs, which had previously been blacklisted by the Ministry of Economy due to identification of corruption practices. There is therefore an apparent lack of trust between the various stakeholders involved in shelter in the province.

CONTEXT

Balkh province has seen the return of about 120,000 returnees over the past ten years. The number of conflict-induced IDPs in Balkh is limited (below 5,000) but, as other provinces in the North, the province is prone to various natural disasters, including drought, flooding and bank erosion alongside the Amu River.

The scope of the UNHCR shelter programme was limited in Balkh with a total of **470 shelters built between 2009 and 2011**. Shelter assistance was concentrated in the district of Sholgara with 331 shelters distributed there alone. Our research team surveyed 101 households in Balkh, of which nearly 50 per cent were UNHCR beneficiaries. Moreover, 56 per cent of those households surveyed were official refugee returnees while 9 per cent were non-refugee returnees, 13 per cent were IDPs and 22 per cent never migrated.

Table A.17: Provincial Sample, Balkh

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non- Beneficiaries	Total
Refugee Returnees	41	16	57
%	82	31.37	56.44
Non-refugee Returnees	2	7	9
%	4	13.73	8.91
IDPs	5	8	13
%	10	15.69	12.87
No Mobility	2	20	22
%	4	39.22	21.78
Total	50	51	101
%	100.00	100.00	100.00

DESIGN

Nearly all shelters visited in Balkh, 90 per cent, were two-room shelters. Most beneficiaries, 96 per cent, did not personally choose the size of the shelter and did not make particular changes to the design during construction. The field team noticed that shelters in Balkh were in a better state than those visited in other provinces. All shelters had proper glass windows. Beneficiaries expressed overall satisfaction with the shelters received, and no particular complaints were raised. The size of shelters was mentioned, with some 14 per cent of those households surveyed expressing dissatisfaction about size, but it did not appear to be as much of an issue as in other provinces.

The main challenge for the construction of shelters was the lack of water as some of the areas of implementation are very dry (cf. Sholgara for instance). In fact, 75 per cent of households surveyed noted the lack of water as a problem during construction, a proportion that is significantly higher than in other provinces. In this regard, UNHCR intervened and paid for the supply of water during construction of shelters. Also, beneficiaries mentioned the difficulties they had to hire extra workers because of their poor financial capacities, with some 90 per cent of households surveyed noting that they ran out of money during construction. Overall, it appears beneficiaries relied on each other's help to finish the construction of shelters.

SELECTION OF BENEFICIARIES

- **Selection Process**

Contrary to some other provinces, the selection process in place in Balkh seems to have complied with the programme's guidelines, with a BSC composed of employees from the DoRR, as well as heads of shuras, and representatives from UNHCR and the IP, all present for the selection of beneficiaries.

- **Criteria of selection**

The VRF and land ownership were the main criteria of selection used in the field, with 98 per cent of beneficiaries having a VRF and 94 per cent owning the land their shelter was built on before assistance. Discussions with the sub-office also showed that vulnerability had not been mainstreamed as one of the priority criterion for selection of beneficiaries, yet still some 44 per cent of beneficiary households surveyed are characterized as extremely vulnerable. Moreover, IDP and landless families were not particularly included in the programme with only 10 per cent and 6 per cent of each, respectively, in the sample.

The team observed that in some areas the selection had been made following ethnic lines, with beneficiaries being selected exclusively from one ethnic group. A more balanced selection approach might be necessary to avoid fuelling ethnic tensions within villages. In some areas, a few large families shared all the shelters that had been distributed. Moreover, the selection process was not immune to pressure from local powers. Some local commanders for example had received shelters, which they had turned into big houses.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT

As in other contexts shelter assistance was perceived as responding to a major need in helping households access proper forms of housing for which they would not have been able to pay for on their own. Numerous households, 90 per cent of those surveyed, had been living in tents upon return. The programme therefore greatly improved the living conditions of those beneficiaries. Moreover some 76 per cent of households surveyed noted their economic situation had been better or far better following receiving shelter assistance. Compared to non-beneficiaries, our multi-dimensional poverty index (MPI) presented in Table A.18 shows that those households which received shelter from UNHCR are less deprived.

Table A.18: Multi-dimensional Poverty Index by Beneficiary Status, in Balkh

	Not Deprived	Deprived	Total
UNHCR Beneficiaries	15	35	50
%	30.00	70.00	100.00
Non- Beneficiaries	4	47	51
%	7.84	92.16	100.00
Total	19	82	101
%	18.81	81.19	100.00

Overall, the shelter programme was perceived as a good first basis on which returnees could build their life and start focusing on other problems of their daily life. In Sholgara, the programme helped building an important settlement on governmental land, which had been distributed to members of one community. It is difficult to measure the impact of the shelter programme in itself as the site was selected as a 'reintegration site' in 2012 and benefitted from a number of initiatives supported by UNHCR.

SUSTAINABILITY

In those locations visited by the survey team in Balkh, the sustainability of the shelters built with the support of UNHCR did not seem under particular threat. In fact, of those households surveyed all plan to permanently remain in their current community. Moreover occupancy rates were high in all locations and the areas chosen for implementation of the programme benefitted from a relatively good access to services and often from a relatively satisfying access to employment.

PARTNERSHIPS

As far as IPs are concerned, UNHCR relies on its long-term partnership with DHSA for the whole Northern and North western regions. DHSA appeared to be a reliable partner for UNHCR. The organization includes women staff involved in the management of the programme in the field.

DHSA is monitored through UNHCR and through another IP called NPO (Norwegian Project Office). There are some issues with this type of monitoring as: a) NPO monitored the implementation of the shelter programme in all the North, including areas where UNHCR staff should have access; b) NPO was understaffed and could only have one staff member covering the monitoring for several UNHCR programmes at a time in 3 provinces; c) there is a conflict of interest as NPO is also an implementing partner for UNHCR in the 2012 reintegration site (Sholgara).

The DoRR noted that the relationship with UNHCR sub-office had significantly improved recently. The DoRR reported being consulted at different stages of the implementation of the programme. The only criticisms related to the absence of coordination with UNHCR regarding the selection of their IPs, upon which they feel they have no say.

Regarding UNHCR's relations with other partners, Mazar is the regional centre for most organisations and UN-agencies working in the Northern region. There is a certain complementarity between organisations providing shelter assistance in the North, as UNHCR got the lead on returnee and conflict-induced IDPs, while OCHA coordinated the response for the shelter assistance of flood-affected populations. Most of the organisations present in the region (ZOA, Islamic Relief, NRC) focus on flood-affected population, leaving to UNHCR all other cases, except for NRC's presence in Sari Pul. Given the high presence of UN-agencies, INGOs and NNGOs in Mazar-e-Sharif, the province would be a good place to pilot some partnerships with organisations in order to link shelter assistance with early recovery and development activities.

The Emergency and NFI cluster served as a venue to discuss non-emergency sheltering among stakeholders. In particular, discussions took place regarding the design of UNHCR shelters and its adequacy with the regional context, taking into account the specific natural risks characterizing the North. The cluster, as well as good bilateral relations between organisations, allowed UNHCR and others to avoid duplication. While the cluster system has not been designed to address non-emergency issues, having this sort of ad-hoc coordinating meetings – especially in areas prone to natural risks – is a good practice that may be replicated in other regions.

CONTEXT

Faryab is not a province of very high return. UNHCR registered 73,458 individual assisted returns to Faryab between March 2002 and August 2012⁴⁸. On the other hand, Faryab belongs to the top 10 provinces of internal displacement, with 13,819 conflict-induced IDPs reportedly living in displacement in Faryab as of end of June 2012⁴⁹. Between 2009 and 2011, 1,568 shelters were built by UNHCR in the province.

The high percentage of IDPs is reflected in the sample drawn for this study as there are relatively more IDPs included than in most other provinces. As table A.19 shows, our provincial sample of Faryab comprises 174 households, of which 41 per cent are official refugee returnees and 35 per cent are IDPs, while 13 per cent are non-refugee returnees and 12 per cent never migrated. 43 per cent (75 households) of the surveyed households are UNHCR beneficiaries. Two surveyed households received shelter assistance from IOM. The higher degree of inclusion of IDPs in Faryab province shows a welcome adaptation of the programme to the migratory profile of the province. Yet, discussions with UNHCR staff in Faryab showed that the IDPs included were mostly returnee-IDPs, as IDPs themselves were still rarely included in the programme.

Table A.19: Provincial Sample, Faryab

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non- Beneficiaries	Total
Refugee Returnees	48	0	24	72
%	64.00	0.00	24.74	41.38
Non-refugee Returnees	1	0	21	22
%	1.33	0.00	21.65	12.64
IDPs	26	2	32	60
%	34.67	100.00	32.99	34.48
No Mobility	0	0	20	20
%	0.00	0.00	20.62	11.49
Total	75	2	97	174
%	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

The security context in Faryab is rapidly deteriorating. The Norwegian PRT was shut down last spring and Afghan national security forces struggle to take over and guarantee security in the whole province. Most stakeholders agreed that they had lost direct access to large parts of the province. Insurgent activities, IEDs, assassinations and kidnapping are now very common in the province.

⁴⁸ UNHCR Afghanistan.

⁴⁹ UNHCR Afghanistan, 06.2012, *Statistical Summary of Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement*. As of 30 June 2012.

Insecurity and loss of access have various consequences on the shelter programme:

- **Due to insecurity, the province has an important number of intra-provincial IDPs.**
- In terms of monitoring, numerous locations where the shelter programme was implemented in the past are now out of reach.
- In terms of sustainability, **further displacements – especially intra-provincial displacements - are likely to take place** in the coming years and some of the beneficiaries of the shelter programme might be forced to leave their shelters due to insecurity. This has already occurred in some districts.
- The presence of UN agencies in Maimana might be called into question if the context further deteriorates.

Despite the insecure context, UNHCR maintains its presence in the province through an experienced national staff. This is not the case for all UN-agencies, as the WFP has already closed down its own office in Maimana.

For 2012, UNHCR has selected **one reintegration site in the province** in the village of **Baimoghly** located in Khoje Sabz Posh district. The site is directly accessible to UNHCR staff. There, UNHCR concentrated its activities and developed several different components including WASH, school, road construction, public latrines, shelter and 'protection training'. Protection training included: hygiene promotion, environment protection, and peaceful coexistence.

DESIGN

The beneficiaries and the various stakeholders interviewed in Maimana were satisfied with the design of UNHCR shelter. Most beneficiaries surveyed, 91 per cent, did not personally choose the size of their shelter. The main design implemented was the standard two-room shelter, 87 per cent, while a minority built one-room shelters, 13 per cent.

Materials were received on time in most cases, 96 per cent, and there was an **overall satisfaction with the quality of the material, 97 per cent.**

Some points are worth noticing:

- ACTED made the remark that beneficiaries were asking for a **kitchen** to be included in the design of the shelters.
- In several cases, people **had used the cash allocated for glass windows to buy water and food items.** A lot of shelters had only plastic sheets put directly on the window frames provided by UNHCR.
- In the North (Andkhoy district) of the province beneficiaries complained about the size of the shelters. There several **communities are specialized in carpet weaving**, usually within Uzbek or Turkmen communities. Beneficiaries claimed that it was impossible for them to put the frame necessary to weave carpets inside their shelter. In most cases,

they were forced to use smaller weaving frames to adapt to the size of the room. **This specificity of carpet weaving communities is also important from a gender perspective**, as women are in charge of weaving carpets and might have difficulties weaving outside their homes. *(This issue was also mentioned in Jawzjan province).*

Only 28 per cent of the surveyed beneficiaries indicated that they encountered some kind of **problem during the construction** of their shelter, a figure that is remarkably low compared to other provinces. The main problem UNHCR beneficiaries in Faryab mentioned was running out of money during construction (26.7%). Additional encountered problems were a lack of skilled labour (12.0%) and unskilled labour (9.3%) and insufficient access to water (12.0%). The monitoring of the construction process seemed to have been less tight than in other provinces, especially in remote areas. In Aaq Dar for example, beneficiaries were only rarely visited during the implementation, and the community leader noted that he was in charge of monitoring the process at the end.

Strangely earthquake mitigation measures, as well as flood prevention measures, did not seem to mean anything to most stakeholders in Faryab province, including UNHCR staff. Faryab province has a low risk of earthquake according to OCHA's map, but an earthquake took place in 2009 and destroyed numerous houses, requiring the assistance of ACTED at the time. UNHCR staff also acknowledged that its shelters would not resist flooding as traditional shelters built in the province would. Yet they did not seem to consider taking preventing measures.

Stakeholders considered that implementing a cash-based shelter programme would be very tricky in Faryab province. Because of the level of dire poverty of most households, the cash would necessarily be used for other purposes as it was for example observed in Aq Mazar village (Khoje Sabz Posh district) where most beneficiaries had used the cash provided by UNHCR to buy food and water instead of purchasing glass windows. Cash-based programmes require very close monitoring mechanisms, which would be very difficult to implement in a context like Faryab, where UNHCR has no access to numerous implementation sites.

SELECTION OF BENEFICIARIES

UNHCR speaks of '**remote selection**' when it comes to selecting beneficiaries in Faryab province. From what we have seen, the selection process lies mainly in the hand of the IPs, sometimes without prior discussions with the community leaders (as it has been reported in Nisai Khona, Andkhoy district). **The criteria of vulnerability were not really mainstreamed in the process.** Discussions with the IPs showed that the IP staff was not particularly sensitized to EVI guidelines or other vulnerability criteria. UNHCR mentioned that 3 to 4 per cent of beneficiaries are widows or female-headed households.

This also shows in the quantitative data collected for this study. While 40 per cent of UNHCR beneficiaries did not have a VRF form, the majority of 60 per cent did. This proportion is yet significantly lower than in other provinces, confirming a more flexible selection process. At the same time 78 households or 45 per cent of the Faryab sample fulfil one of the EVI criteria. Around half of these (37 households) are beneficiaries of the shelter assistance programme. Nine EVI households applied for assistance, but were not chosen as beneficiaries.

The fact that vulnerability is not properly taken into account in the selection of beneficiaries leads to **some 'misuse' of the shelters**. For example in Nisai Khona (Andkhoy district), in 7 or 8 shelters out of the 23 that could be directly visited, beneficiaries did not use their shelters as living spaces. Instead, the shelters were part of larger compounds (with often 3 or 4 houses) and used as storage rooms or for other various purposes.

NOTE for UNHCR: *in Nisai Khona (Andkhoy district), the team could only find 23 of the 30 shelters listed by UNHCR. Neither inhabitants of the village nor the Malik recognised the names of the 7 missing beneficiaries.*

As mentioned above, a lot of the inhabitants of Faryab province are former IDPs who came back to their place of origin, where their houses had been destroyed. Faryab has an important caseload of conflict-induced IDPs. Of the 60 IDP households interviewed, 43 per cent were shelter assistance beneficiaries. Among those IDPs not included in the programme, half have an extremely vulnerable individual within the household. **Yet, the field team observed that in most cases, only returnees had been selected despite the fact that IDPs had land and were living in their place of origin.** All of the IDPs from Faryab included in the quantitative data collection did in fact also designate this as their province of origin. UNHCR confirmed the fact **that IDPs were not included in the programme**, despite their numerical importance in the province. UNHCR's main explanation was their lack of land but the team in the field did not find land ownership to be an issue for IDPs in Faryab. In fact, all of the IDPs that did receive shelter assistance reported that they did own the land prior to receiving assistance. Among the 32 non-beneficiary IDPs, more than 81 per cent also did have access to land at the time of the survey. The issue might be more related to a low level of awareness of IDPs regarding specific IDP protection concerns and the possibility to include them in the programme.

The ethnic context of Faryab is very complex with frequent tensions between neighbouring communities of different ethnic background. In this context **UNHCR staff smartly used the 10 per cent of shelters allocated to the host community to diffuse tensions when necessary.** One mean to do so was to allocate these 10 per cent of the shelters to the neighbouring village of a different ethnicity. This is an interesting practice that could be replicated in other contexts, where ethnic tensions are high and the allocation of shelters might turn divisive.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT

Numerous beneficiary households, 43 per cent, had been living in tents upon return. The programme therefore greatly improved their living conditions. In our surveyed sample, some 63 per cent of households noted their economic situation had been better or far better following receiving shelter assistance. The programme also helped conflict-induced IDPs to re-settle rapidly after being forced to suddenly leave their village, as it was the case in Qaysar district, where families from the host communities had had to host newly arrived IDP families.

Compared to non-beneficiaries, our multi-dimensional poverty index (MPI) presented in Table A.20 shows that those households which received shelter from UNHCR are less deprived.

Table A.20: Multi-dimensional Poverty Index by Beneficiary Status, in Faryab

	Not Deprived	Deprived	Total
UNHCR Beneficiaries	16	59	75
%	21.33	78.67	100.00
Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	1	1	2
%	50.00	50.00	100.00
Non-Beneficiaries	13	84	97
%	13.40	86.60	100.00
Total	30	144	174
%	17.24	82.76	100.00

At the community level, the main impact of the programme was an increased pressure on water resources, which are particularly scarce in the province. Yet, community leaders did not report any particular tensions born out of this issue of water.

SUSTAINABILITY

A big concern for the sustainability of the shelter programme in Faryab province is the very poor **access to water of many beneficiary communities**. The province is very dry and a provincial water distribution system is yet to come. Of the surveyed 174 households, 32 per cent indicated that they do currently not have access to safe drinking water as can be seen in Table A.21. Several villages visited by the team did not have any water point accessible. In Aq Mazar and Mursha ghal (Khoje Sabz Posh district), people had to walk 2.5 hours to reach the district centre in order to get water. The government pays for a water tanker to supply the villages with water. But when it rains or during winter, the village is completely inaccessible and cannot receive this water supply and the sustainability of governmental services in Faryab province is not guaranteed given the deterioration of the security context. In the LAS located in Northern Faryab (Andkhoy district), the absence of water has left the site mostly unoccupied.

Table A.21: Access to Drinking Water across Districts, in Faryab

	Andkhoy	Khoje Sabz Posh	Qaysar	Total
Boil water	0	7	8	15
%	0.00	11.86	14.55	8.62
Free potable water	13	6	29	48
%	21.67	10.17	52.73	27.59
Buy potable water	47	9	0	56
%	78.33	15.25	0.00	32.18
No safe drinking water	0	37	18	55
%	0.00	62.71	32.73	31.61
Total	60	59	55	174
%	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

The absence of water sources caused some specific challenges to the construction process as it:

- Slows down the building process, as beneficiaries have to find solutions to bring water in order to make mud bricks. Some beneficiaries delayed the construction of their shelters to wait for some rain falls (Khoje Sabz Posh district). UNHCR approved this delay in the construction of shelters,
- Increases the costs of shelter building for beneficiary households. In Aq Mazar, beneficiaries had gathered in groups of 4 or 5 families to be able to buy water and pay for the transportation costs collectively, and
- Creates additional stress on a very rare resource for the community.

Perhaps surprisingly though, communities insisted to say that they had no intention to move anywhere else as they owned their land and had shelters, stressing the stabilizing effect that the programme has on certain communities.

The second main obstacle to the sustainability of the programme is the increasing insecurity. While **occupancy rates directly observed by our field team were satisfying, various stakeholders reported some dynamics of secondary displacements due to insecurity**. For example, the team observed this in Qaysar district, one of the most insecure of the province, in the village of Bazardjay where one member of a beneficiary household had been killed, triggering the departure of the whole family. Of the surveyed households however all respondents in the province indicated that they plan to stay in the current community permanently. Of the UNHCR beneficiaries two indicated that they were not currently living in a UNHCR shelter.

PARTNERSHIPS

The coordination of stakeholders in Faryab province is made easier by the small number of actors present in the province and by their proximity to one another. UNHCR has clearly endorsed a leading role in the province due to the experience of its national staff there and to the relative weakness of other organisations. For example, it appeared that UNHCR is supporting IOM in its efforts to assist natural-disaster affected populations, despite them being out of its mandate. Moreover IOM supported UNHCR in assessing and assisting conflict induced IDPs in 2010-2011.

The shelter programme – and other UNHCR Programmes in Faryab – is based on the work of reliable implementing partners. Beneficiaries and other humanitarian actors praised the work of UNHCR IPs in the province (DHSA; ORD; CHA). The satisfaction of beneficiaries in the field with the programme also suggests that these IPs are satisfying partners, especially DHSA which had been in charge of implementation for years. **The IPs have several characteristics, which explain this reported reliability:**

- Multiyear experience of programme implementation (more than 3 years for DHSA for example).
- Multiple projects and various funding agencies. Contrary to what was observed in the Central region where the IPs were dependent on the UNHCR shelter programme, which was

their unique programme and source of funding, IPs in the North/Northeast work for several different donors and have multiple expertise. They also work across the region in various provinces. DHSA for example works in Faryab, Jawzjan, Balkh and Sari Pul. CHA also has a multi-provincial coverage in Afghanistan and counts CIDA, USAID and WFP among its donors.

- Their running costs are a lot cheaper than INGOs, which have to factor in every proposal important fixed costs, including salaries for international staff and security measures.
- These IPs work with a pool of experienced engineers and field officers, who are re-hired every year for the implementation of the shelter programme.

The flip side of this partnership system is that the IPs have learned how to work within the UNHCR system and to maintain themselves in the structure. When the Central level introduced new procedures to increase the transparency of the selection of IPs, the organisation selected changed (from DHSA to ORD) but the staff operating in the field did not change. The same field officers are currently implementing the shelter programme in the reintegration site of Faryab. It is probably a good thing that experienced partners remain in place, but whether it is in line with the objectives of transparency that drove the change in the selection procedure needs to be verified. The selection committee is based in Mazar, and UNHCR staff in Faryab was perfectly aware of this practice.

There seemed to be quite a strong grip of the IPs on the programme in Faryab province. Two other types of actors complained about their low involvement in the programme:

- Community leaders in Andkhoy district, who claimed that they had not been involved in the selection of beneficiaries.
- The district governor of Andkhoy who claimed that he had requested the lists of beneficiaries of the shelter programme but never received this information.

As the programme is largely based on remote management and monitoring in the province, it would be better to multiply the checks on the implementation of the programme. Involving other stakeholders, such as governmental authorities or community leaders, more fully would help monitoring the programme.

UNHCR staff expressed a clear preference for NNGOs over INGOs arguing that NNGOs' staff is a) more experienced, b) more present in the field and c) cheaper. That might explain why no INGOs were selected to implement UNHCR programmes on the 2012 reintegration site. According to INGOs, the bidding requirements made it difficult for INGOs to compete, as organisations had to submit one proposal for each component of the reintegration site. **Therefore INGOs had to integrate their fixed costs in each of their proposals, whereas they could have levelled these costs in a global proposal covering several projects** of the reintegration site.

CONTEXT

Jawzjan is a rural province of Northern Afghanistan bordering Turkmenistan. UNHCR registered 126,536 individual assisted returns in Jawzjan between 2003 and August 2012⁵⁰. Among the Northern provinces, Jawzjan is an important destination for return. According to UNHCR statistics, the caseloads of conflict-induced Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are limited in the North compared to other regions of Afghanistan. Yet, in 2012 with over 8,000 IDPs, Jawzjan province counted one of the most important caseloads of IDPs in the North-Northeast regions along with Faryab⁵¹.

Jawzjan is less of a priority for national and international stakeholders than other key provinces in the country. **The province therefore presents a low number of stakeholders** and depends quite extensively on Mazar-e-Sharif (Balkh province) for decision-making, where most organisations' sub-offices are located. For the shelter programme, this means:

- a) That there are a limited number of actors on which to rely or with which to partner in the province.
- b) That a diminution in shelter assistance or in assistance to returnees has potentially more impact than in other provinces more extensively covered by international and national actors⁵².

In terms of security, Jawzjan presents the same kind of profile than other Northern provinces, where the security landscape is complex and fluid. Yet, contrarily to Faryab province, a majority of Jawzjan districts are rather quiet and accessible to humanitarian actors. Even if the security situation is deteriorating, it is easier to implement assistance programmes in Jawzjan than in other neighbouring provinces in the North. A few areas are now out of access, even for non-UN staff: for example Mangajik district or the desert of Dashte Laily, near the provincial capital Sheberghan.

UNHCR distributed a bit more than 1,800 shelters in Jawzjan between 2009 and 2011. As table A.22 shows, our provincial sample of Jawzjan comprises 220 households, of which more than half, 118, are UNHCR beneficiaries. Two households received shelter assistance from IOM. Moreover, 66 per cent of our sample are official refugee returnees, while 16 per cent are non-refugee returnees, 2 per cent are IDPs and 16 per cent never migrated. **Among the UNHCR beneficiaries refugee returnees are the largest group with 85 per cent.**

⁵⁰ UNHCR Afghanistan, Voluntary Assisted Returns – 03.2003 to 08.2012.

⁵¹ UNHCR, Afghanistan estimated IDP Population by district of displacement – 30.04.12 .

⁵² This is also true of neighbouring Sari Pul province.

Table A.22: Provincial Sample, Jawzjan

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non- Beneficiaries	Total
Refugee Returnee	100	2	43	145
%	84.75	100.00	43.00	65.91
Non-Refugee Returnee	12	0	24	36
%	10.17	0.00	24.00	16.36
IDP	5	0	0	5
%	4.24	0.00	0.00	2.27
No Mobility	1	0	33	34
%	0.85	0.00	33.00	15.45
Total	118	2	100	220
%	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

DESIGN

All the shelters visited by our team in Jawzjan province were 2-room shelters, with one-corridor and iron beams. Among the 118 beneficiaries interviewed one had built a one-room shelter, while the rest was all two-room shelters. Three respondents indicated that they got to choose the size of their shelter, while for 98 per cent this was not the case. In numerous cases, these shelters were built next to other UNHCR shelters or to normal houses within the family compound, surrounded by a protecting wall that pre-existed the construction of UNHCR shelters.

Most of the shelters visited were in a satisfactory state. **In a lot of cases, the shelters had clearly been progressively turned into proper houses.** The state of the shelters depended on a) the wealth of the beneficiary household; b) on the main usage of the shelter. In multiple cases, the shelters served as a secondary house or guesthouse. **In these cases, the shelters were in a rather poor state, as most of the investments of the households had focused on their main living space.** These kinds of shelters were often divided in two parts: one ‘reception’ room properly carpeted and furnished and one ‘storage’ room with no floor or proper glass window. **Glass windows were sometimes missing on the shelters; about a bit more than a half of the shelters visited had their glass windows installed. In most cases, the beneficiaries had preferred spending the money on food and water.**

Shelters in Jawzjan were often used for carpet weaving. Carpet weaving is one of the only economic activities women have access to in the North. In these cases, the frame used to weave carpets occupied most of one of the two rooms, while the other room was typically used as the main living space.

Beneficiaries in Jawzjan had mostly respected the UNHCR design. A few families made some arrangements to their shelters, including adding a bathroom in the corridor or extending the size of the rooms either by getting rid of the corridor or by adding beams to the initial package. Interestingly though, complaints about the size of the shelters were not as prevalent as in other regions. Several shelters were occupied families with less than 6 members. This is probably linked to the size of

households in the North, smaller than in Pashtun areas. The average household size for the whole sample is 9.0, with large differences between households in the Northern region (6.9) compared to the South (10). In Jawzjan an average household has 6.6 members. This sort of regional differences calls for a region-based approach to shelters rather than a 'one size fits all' package. The OCHA sub-office insisted on the importance of designing programmes tailored to the specific context of each province.

Overall, the visit of shelters in Jawzjan showed that the design of the shelters suited the needs of the beneficiaries.

Problems during construction: More than one third, 38 per cent, of the surveyed beneficiaries indicated that they encountered some kind of problem during the construction of their shelter. Table A.23 shows the different types of problems the beneficiaries encountered, the main problems being not having enough financial capital and insufficient access to water.

Table A.23: Problems during Construction, Jawzjan

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	
	N=45	%
Ran out of money	38	84.44
Insufficient access to water	22	48.89
Lack of skilled labour	18	40.00
Lack of unskilled labour	12	26.67
Weather problems	10	22.22
Lack of technical knowledge	1	2.22
Materials not delivered on time	0	0.00
Materials of poor quality	0	0.00
Ran out of materials	0	0.00

In the entire province, **a main problem encountered by beneficiaries to build their shelters was the difficult access to water (48.9%)**. As water is necessary to make mud bricks, beneficiaries struggled to get the building material they were required to provide. This is especially true as the programme often started during summer, making it impossible for beneficiaries to find water. Two solutions were found:

- Either the beneficiaries or the IPs asked for some time extensions so as to wait for rainfalls. UNHCR usually agreed on these delays.
- Or the water was brought to the village by rented tankers, paid by UNHCR or by the community. One litre of water in the region costs between 7 and 10 AFS.

Two points are worth noticing regarding the issue of water:

- a. Both the IP and the beneficiaries were able to find solutions and to overcome the difficulty without too much trouble, showing a welcome flexibility and adaptability in the implementation of the programme.
- b. The timing of construction is important. It appears that in most cases, the programme started late and that the bulk of the construction work took place during summer when water is not available. Starting earlier during spring could make more sense for water-deprived regions like Northern Afghanistan. It would also help reducing the risk of entering winter with incomplete shelters.

A major challenge for the shelter programme in Jawzjan is the high risk of floods affecting the province. The 2012 floods destroyed some shelters built in 2011 in the district of Khawaja du Khoh. The mud used to build both traditional houses and UNHCR shelters is not resistant at all against flooding, leaving beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries very vulnerable to this type of natural disasters. **Despite these high risks, preventive measures are very scarcely taken into account in the programme. The only measure that was implemented is to recommend beneficiaries to build their shelters higher up, onto 60cm high foundations.** Yet, this was not systematically implemented in the province. This measure would reduce the risks in case of limited flooding but, as the foundations in Jawzjan are also in mud and cannot be built with stones due to the shortage of stones in the area, this measure will only have a limited impact in case of major floods. **ANDMA** confirmed that there had not been any consultations on risks with UNHCR prior to the implementation of the programme in the province and that ANDMA and UNHCR had very little relations.

Discussions with the management of UNHCR in Mazar showed that the 2012 flood served as a wakeup call for stakeholders in the North. Mazar programme staff intended to discuss the introduction of some preventive measures in the shelter programme during the Shelter working group discussions in January 2013 in Kabul.

ZOA's TECHNICAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO UPGRADE UNHCR SHELTER PACKAGE

Acc. to ZOA's Shelter PM

1. Include a sidewalk minimum 60cm wide to properly evacuate water and avoid damaging foundations in case of heavy rain and snowfall.
2. Include gutters in the package for water evacuation.
3. Include anti-rust painting for the beams for greater sustainability.
4. Factor in the costs of the painting of doors and windows for greater sustainability.
5. Be more specific in the guidelines about the construction of walls. Specifically strengthen anti-earthquake measures: include wall bracing and anti-earthquake square bricks (35x35x7cm).
6. Factor in all the costs in the shelter package including costs for the 'thatch mat' or for 'karnes'.

Price per unit of shelters including these improvements: \$2400. (According to ZOA's estimation).

The communities confirmed that they had received a close technical assistance from the IP during the construction process. All the shelters were visited once a week in the province by the IP project manager (DHSA permanent staff) and by the engineers that DHSA had hired for the project. The quantitative fieldwork shows 12 per cent of beneficiaries that had not experienced any monitoring of their shelter.

SELECTION OF BENEFICIARIES

- **Selection Process**

According to all actors, the selection of beneficiaries was conducted by a **beneficiary selection committee**, which included the community leaders, representatives from DHSA (including one woman), representatives of UNHCR (in safe areas) and representatives of DoRR in most cases. The SAP guidelines seem to have been respected more systematically in the province. Yet, there were conflicting reports on the involvement of DoRR in the selection process in Jawzjan. While the head of DoRR complained about his department being side lined and excluded from the selection process by UNHCR, beneficiaries confirmed the presence of some representatives of DoRR when the selection was conducted in their village. The IP declared that DoRR was always involved when they were in charge of the selection of beneficiaries, but that it was not always the case when UNHCR had the lead on the selection. UNHCR and the DoRR of Jawzjan had conflictive relations in 2009 and 2010, which explain this exclusion. The relationship has improved greatly since 2011 according to both parties.

In a few areas of the province, **UNHCR and its IP recently lost access and had to rely on community leaders** for the implementation of the programme. This is notably the case for Dashte Laily. In these cases, it is very difficult to assess the efficiency and the reliability of the selection process. **The head of DoRR complained heavily about these 'grey areas', where the programme was implemented without any overview, and reported some cases of corruption occurring in these areas.** These accusations could not be crosschecked, as our team could not visit these areas either. Yet, this type of situation raises the question of the appropriateness of remote monitoring for the shelter assistance programme, as the selection of beneficiaries often proves controversial and conflict-ridden.

- **Selection Criteria**

The selection criteria were not clear to most members of the beneficiary communities. Beneficiaries, non-beneficiaries and community leaders alike considered that the VRF and the date of return were the main criteria to be selected in the programme. More than 85 per cent of the beneficiaries in Jawzjan are recognized refugee returnees. Discussions with non-beneficiaries showed that the criterion of recent return was one of the prime criteria used by the IP to make the selection on the ground. Yet, other factors, such as vulnerability were not perceived by communities to play a role at all. Around 38 per cent of our sample in Jawzjan can be classified as extremely vulnerable and slightly less than half of these did receive shelter assistance. At the same time six EVI households that applied were rejected assistance. This fuels the impression that any recent returnee would be entitled to receiving a shelter rather than those most in need.

The selection of beneficiaries appeared to be one of the weakest points of the programme in Jawzjan.

This was evidenced by the following observations:

- In Shobash Khorde Turkmenia, **a majority of households visited did not present any signs of particular vulnerability.** On the contrary, the number of assets, the presence of livestock, the size of properties and the fact that a lot of them included cultivated land plots suggested that a significant proportion of people selected by the programme might have been able to build their shelters without external assistance. This is might be linked to the practice of UNHCR to allocate a certain number of shelters to an area prior to any local need assessment.
- **A high proportion of the shelters visited were used for other purposes than living.** Slightly more than 20 per cent of the shelters visited in Jawzjan for the purpose of this study (13 out of 64) were not used as a living space by beneficiary households. Typically, these shelters would be used as a) storage rooms, b) barns for livestock and harvest and c) a guesthouse next to the family house. In one case, the shelter was even used as a private mosque for one family. In these cases, it is legitimate to wonder whether shelter assistance was really needed. It also suggests that there is room for reducing the scope of the programme, hence its cost, by tightening the selection process.
- The level of awareness of actors in charge of the selection of beneficiaries about the necessity to prioritize the most vulnerable households was strikingly low in the North. Even for the management of UNHCR there, it appeared that the fact of being a returnee was the determining factor and that vulnerability was very secondary. *'All returnees who come back to the North are in great need of shelter; they all need shelter'*. The three most important criteria used to select beneficiaries were **a) the presentation of the VRF, b) the date of return and c) access to land.** Interviews with community leaders and with the IP (DHSA) showed that the integration of EVIs in the selection process was not considered a priority. If they happened to have been selected, EVIs were identified later on in the process and considered for potential extra-assistance. UNHCR's lists showed that another criterion used to select beneficiaries is the type of sheltering that potential beneficiaries had at the time of selection (tents, rented house, living with relatives). If it is undoubtedly an interesting criterion to take into account in the selection, the main criteria should be the ability of the household to build a shelter by its own means rather than the pre-existence of house.
- **The programme targeted almost exclusively returnees.** IDPs and members of the host community were very rarely integrated in the programme, as confirmed by the quantitative survey (cf. Table A.22). Some 'returnee-IDPs' were also included based on the fact that they had a VRF. Yet, as the protection of IDPs does not represent as a major challenge in Jawzjan as they do in other provinces, the focus on returnees may be more justified there. The DoRR just began distributing land plots to IDPs in recently opened LAS, which might be worth considering for the future inclusion of IDPs in the shelter programme.

The fact that beneficiary families did not use the shelters as their main living space suggests that shelter assistance did not respond to a compelling humanitarian need for these families. A lot of evidence indicated that selecting the most vulnerable was not properly mainstreamed in the implementation of the programme in the field and that a tighter selection process could lead to a reduction of the scope of the programme without endangering its positive humanitarian impact on the reintegration of returnees and IDPs.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT

At the household level, the shelter programme helped protecting returnee families from the protection risks related to over-crowded houses and to temporary sheltering. Most beneficiaries surveyed, 35 per cent, used to live in tents or to share houses with their relatives, 46 per cent before starting the construction of their own shelters. Several protection issues, especially for children and women, have been linked to the fact of living in over-crowded houses and to the stress related to migration. The shelter programme helps reducing these risks.

Beneficiaries also perceived the impact of the shelter assistance programme on their economic situation as positive. While 73 per cent said they were now better or far better off, only 9 per cent considered themselves worse off than before. These figures are significantly higher than in other provinces.

Compared to non-beneficiaries, our multi-dimensional poverty index (MPI) presented in Table A.24 shows that those households which received shelter from UNHCR are much less deprived.

Table A.24: Multi-dimensional Poverty Index by Beneficiary Status, in Jawzjan

	Not Deprived	Deprived	Total
UNHCR Beneficiaries	39	79	118
%	33.05	66.95	100.00
Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	0	2	2
%	0.00	100.00	100.00
Non-Beneficiaries	8	92	100
%	8.00	92.00	100.00
Total	47	173	100
%	21.36	78.64	100.00

Interestingly, the issue of indebtedness was not central for beneficiaries in Jawzjan. Community leaders noted that these people would have got indebted anyway and that the programme was rather decreasing the risk of indebtedness for these households than it was increasing it. Observations from the field tend to suggest that participating in the shelter programme tends to reduce the risks of unsustainable indebtedness. Indebtedness has to be analysed comparatively and to be considered in the wider social context of rural Afghanistan, where informal credit and recourse to informal loans are

prevalent and a basis of social relations⁵³. This means that households would take out loans to build their shelters – or for other purposes – regardless of their participation in the programme, as it is a common practice in rural Afghanistan. The quantitative data shows that 36 per cent of beneficiaries indicated that participating in the shelter assistance programme increased their household debt. However, 41 per cent reported that it actually decreased their debt level and 7 per cent said that there was no change. 15 per cent indicated not having any household debt. This therefore suggests that the programme does not necessarily increase debt, but might also be able to limit indebtedness in a context where loans are common for the purpose of building a shelter.

Overall, field observations suggested that beneficiaries ended up being better off than the rest of the communities in the North because a) they were not always particularly worst-off in the first place given the loose selection process and b) in communities almost exclusively formed of returnees and migrants, they did not have to get as indebted as others to build their shelters.

At the community level, the programme sustained a **short-term boost in employment**, which was confirmed by community leaders. Typically, each shelter would require hiring 2 to 3 unskilled labourers for a period of one month.

Finally, the programme seemed to play a role in the reintegration process of returnees in their host communities. Even if members of the community are usually reluctant to report internal tensions within the communities, there were reports of the additional pressure that the arrival of returnees posed on the host community. This was especially the case for housing – with a lot of families having to share their houses or their compounds with relatives coming back from abroad – and for access to key resources, especially water in the context of Jawzjan. The shelter programme helped release this pressure and diffuse the potential tensions that could have arisen from important influx of returnees in the communities.

SUSTAINABILITY

Based on our field observations, the shelter programme had supported a sustainable reintegration of returnees in Jawzjan, at least in the PSUs directly visited by our team. There, the occupancy rate was high or very high. Of the 118 beneficiaries interviewed all indicated that they were currently living in the UNHCR shelter. Out of the 64 shelters directly visited by the programme manager, only 2 shelters were completely empty and showed no sign of life at all. The shelters had clearly been appropriated and quite a lot of investments had often been made to turn them into proper houses. According to community leaders, if temporary work migration is a common strategy for the heads of households, secondary displacements involving entire families are very marginal in these areas of Jawzjan. Our field observations and the high level of occupancy that we observed confirmed this. The fact that some shelters were not used as the main living spaces of beneficiary household is not a relevant indicator of the sustainability of the reintegration supported by the programme; rather it is an indicator of some flaws in the selection process. Additionally, almost all respondents in the province indicated that they

⁵³ See for example AREU (2007), *Finding the Money: Informal Credit Practices in rural Afghanistan*, AREU (2009), *From Access to Impact: Microcredit and rural livelihoods in Afghanistan*.

plan to stay in the current community permanently. Only one household reported having plans to move again due to a lack of work opportunities.

Yet, it must be noted that this observation does not apply to the entire province of Jawzjan, as our team was not able to access some insecure areas, where the occupancy rates were likely and reported to be lower. This is especially the case for Dashte Laily and for the Pashtun villages surrounding Shri Abad Charpical in Sheberghan district. We had reports of low occupancy rates in these areas, but this information could not be directly verified and might have been biased by the poor relationship existing in the past between the head of DoRR and UNHCR in Jawzjan. Yet, this tends to confirm that implementing the shelter programme in insecure areas is unsustainable because a) secondary displacements are more likely to occur and b) no proper monitoring can be conducted reducing the visibility of the programme to almost nothing.

Despite this satisfying assessment of the sustainability of the reintegration entailed by the programme in Jawzjan, **natural disaster – flooding in particular – represents an important threat to the sustainability of the shelter programme** - a threat that UNHCR should take more into account in the design of its programme. Our team could observe at least 5 shelters, which had been partially or entirely destroyed by 2012 floods. Without factoring in the overhead costs, this represents a net loss of between \$6000 and \$10,000 of UNHCR investments. Despite all stakeholders admitting that the risk of flood is important every year in the province, the culture of prevention is surprisingly low among the relevant stakeholders, especially ANDMA or DHSAs (IP). Other organisations working in similar contexts, such as ZOA or NRC, have made the choice of simply forbidding the construction of shelter in areas subject to flooding. UNHCR should consider this kind of measures and greatly enhance the level of awareness of its IPs about this sort of risk.

PARTNERSHIPS

UNHCR relied on the same IP – DHSAs – for the five Northern provinces of Afghanistan. This partner has a long experience in the implementation of UNHCR's programmes, as it has been working with the organisation since 2002. DHSAs have a good pool of experienced staff, especially engineers, who are hired on a project-basis. We received no complaints about the practices of DHSAs in the North, which was widely praised by beneficiaries and community leaders for its frequent visits to the field and for the technical assistance it provided to beneficiaries. It must be noted that, following the change in the procedure of selection of IPs, DHSAs are no longer the IP of UNHCR for the shelter programme in the North. ORD was preferred to DHSAs for 2012. DHSAs were told that the costs they calculated for the procurement of material were too high. If opening the process of selection of IPs has the advantage of a more transparent and fair procedure, it also implies weakening some long-term relationships with local NGOs, which had progressively been capacitated. DHSAs are a case in point.

Since 2011, the Northern sub-office relies on a monitoring IP. The introduction of this new system raises some questions. UNHCR relied on a local NGO called NPO to monitor 8 provinces of the North and Northeast. The system has several shortcomings, which endangers the quality and the sustainability of the programme:

- The monitoring is exclusively based on ‘quantitative’ monitoring, by which the monitoring officer must fill in a ‘checklist’ focusing mainly on the progress of the construction process. They are neither required to gather some qualitative data in the field nor to produce any sort of analysis on the way the programme is implemented in the field. When asked to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the programme, the IP proved unable to provide any analytical observations, showing the need for some serious capacity building with monitoring IPs. **Overall, this leads to a very poor monitoring system when not conducted directly by UNHCR staff**, through which a share of crucial information is never reported to UNHCR.
- There is a conflict of interest as NPO is also an implementing partner for UNHCR on some of its most expensive projects, including 4 projects in the reintegration site of Mohjer Qeshlaq in 2012.
- The budget received by the monitoring IP covers only for one monitoring officer per province. This officer is often in charge of monitoring several different programmes of UNHCR at a time and the monitoring IP is required to monitor **not only insecure areas inaccessible to UNHCR staff but all the shelter implementation sites**. UNHCR has taken the habit of outsourcing monitoring even when it is not out of necessity and this despite the obvious shortfalls that come with such a system.
- Finally, this monitoring system is not complete as some areas remain out of reach even for the monitoring IP, as it is the case in Dashte Laily and Mangajik (according to the IPs; check with UNHCR). In these areas, the programme relies only on remote monitoring.

UNHCR had a poor relationship with the DoRR in Jawzjan in the past. Both parties declared that the relationship had improved a lot with more involvement from the DoRR and more constant communication from UNHCR. Yet, the plans of the DoRR and of UNHCR do not match as DoRR is expecting UNHCR to help in the new LAS that it develops in Jawzjan, while UNHCR chose a different site for its 2013 reintegration site. There are some linkages possible in Jawzjan province that could prove interesting for the future of the shelter programme:

- Due to the disastrous nature of 2012 flooding, some actors have decided to tackle the issue and have started developing Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) programmes in Jawzjan. **Save the Children and Action Aid** are particularly involved in these activities. It would be particularly relevant to extend this type of activities to the beneficiaries of the shelter programme. **Despite its low capacities, coordinating with ANDMA**, as the relevant governmental body in charge of risk mitigation and response, before implementing the shelter programme should be necessary for UNHCR. Some programmes of cash-for-work could also focus on strengthening collective preventive measures against floods (construction of dykes, cleaning of canals, digging of canals...).
- In this highly rural province, agriculture-enhancement activities are also particularly relevant. Welthungerhilfe and Action Aid, both active in the province, would be interesting partners to link up with to support the livelihoods of shelter beneficiaries. Distribution of selected seeds,

of appropriate fertilizers and basic processing and/or business skills could support the economic development of beneficiary communities.

SARI PUL – PROVINCIAL OVERVIEW

Areas visited: Zeri Chaghat; Sabzi Kalan (Suzma Qala district)

CONTEXT

Sari Pul received fewer than 40,000 returnees over the past ten years. The Northern districts of Sari Pul (Sari Pul and Sayyad) also registered the arrival of significant numbers of IDPs. The total population of IDPs in the province amounts to more than 10,000 individuals. As other in provinces in the North there is a high risk of flooding in the province, meaning specific preventive measures must be taken into account for the implementation of any shelter programme.

UNHCR built **804 shelters between 2009 and 2011 in Sari Pul**. Our research team surveyed 100 households in the province, of which 56 per cent were UNHCR beneficiaries. Moreover 66 per cent of those households were official refugee returnees, 17 per cent were non-official refugee returnees, 1 per cent was IDPs and 16 per cent never migrated.

Table A.25: Provincial Sample, Sari Pul

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non- Beneficiaries	Total
Refugee Returnee %	49 87.5	17 38.64	66 66.00
Non-Refugee Returnee %	6 10.71	11 25	17 17.00
IDPs %	0 0	1 2.27	1 1.00
No Mobility %	1 1.79	15 34.09	16 16.00
Total %	56 100.00	44 100.00	100 100.00

DESIGN

Nearly all of those shelters visited, 98 per cent were two-room shelters, and all had surrounding walls. Moreover, the state of shelters was satisfactory. Beneficiaries were satisfied with the quality of the material they received to build their shelters, especially the iron beams. In Zeri Chaghat village, NRC had also constructed some shelters but their package had wooden door and windows. Beneficiaries noted that they preferred UNHCR shelter package.

The lack of water was a problem for the construction of the shelters, with 67 per cent of those households surveyed mentioning insufficient access to water for construction. Many of these households therefore had to rent water tankers.

Beneficiaries received a visit of engineers one month after starting to build their shelter suggesting that the level of monitoring of the shelter programme in Sari Pul was low. However of those households surveyed 86 per cent said monitoring from UNHCR had taken place.

SELECTION OF BENEFICIARIES

Community leaders played an important role in the selection of beneficiaries. In both villages, IDPs were totally left out of the selection, which was almost exclusively based on the presentation of a VRF and on land ownership. This is confirmed by the quantitative data which show that there were no IDPs included in the selection for the SAP. In fact, all beneficiary households surveyed had a VRF while nearly all, 98 per cent, owned the land their shelter was built on beforehand. Singling out returnee households created tensions within some of the villages. The inclusion of the host community in the programme is indeed quite low, as we found only one non-migrant beneficiary despite the fact that this group represented 16 per cent of the overall sample.

Non-beneficiaries did not really understand the rationale and the criteria behind the selection of beneficiaries and were sometimes resentful to see that only returnees had been included in the programme. This calls for a more fine-tuned approach to selection, which would adapt to the profile of each location. Moreover, some non-beneficiaries complained about the selection process, arguing that the members of the CDCs selected their relatives in priority.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT

Beneficiaries noted that without the assistance of UNHCR, it would have been impossible for them to build their shelters because of their limited financial capacities. The programme improved the living conditions of beneficiaries. In fact, 73 per cent of beneficiary households noted that their economic situation was better or far better compared to before assistance. Compared to non-beneficiaries, our multi-dimensional poverty index (MPI) presented in Table A.26 shows that those households which received shelter from UNHCR are less deprived.

Table A.26: Multi-dimensional Poverty Index by Beneficiary Status, in Sari Pul

	Not Deprived	Deprived	Total
UNHCR Beneficiary	11	45	56
%	19.64	80.36	100.00
Non-Beneficiary	5	39	44
%	11.36	88.64	100.00
Total	16	84	100
%	16.00	84.00	100.00

The programme did not guarantee the parity between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, as the initial vulnerability of households was not taken into account in the selection. EVIs were left out of the

selection, leading to an economic gap between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries after completion of the programme.

At the community level, all households surveyed considered the programme had a positive impact on the community.

SUSTAINABILITY

The sustainability of the shelter programme implemented in Sari Pul depended on the location of the settlements. While in Sabzi Qala beneficiaries were satisfied and enjoyed proper access to basic services, the situation in Zeri Chaghat was different. There, the absence of drinking water, employment and basic services clearly endangers the sustainability of the programme. About half of the shelters were either empty or destroyed, as people had left to the nearest urban centres (Mazar-e-Sharif or Sari Pul). The lack of water was a major threat as it continues to trigger secondary displacement in the province. Moreover, Sari Pul is a flood-prone province where prior risk assessment and specific preventive measures should be in place. Overall however, all households surveyed planned to stay in their current community permanently.

KUNDUZ – PROVINCIAL OVERVIEW

Note: The research team only spent a few days in Kunduz province. The surveyed locations were close to Kunduz city. The following remarks are therefore indicative and specific to the implementation areas close to the provincial centre.

CONTEXT

Kunduz is one of the most volatile provinces of the North with a significant presence of insurgent groups, which increasingly constrains the access of aid organisations. In terms of migration, Kunduz is one of the more important regions of return in the North, with about 278,000 voluntary returnees registered over the past ten years. The province however only counts a limited number of IDPs.

The scope of the UNHCR shelter programme was quite important in Kunduz with a total of **1,045 shelters built between 2009 and 2011**. Our research team surveyed 120 households in Kunduz, of which exactly 50 per cent were UNHCR beneficiaries. Moreover, 60 per cent of those households surveyed were official refugee returnees while 13 per cent were non-refugee returnees, 15 per cent were IDPs and 12 per cent never migrated.

Table A.27: Provincial Sample, Kunduz

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-Beneficiaries	Total
Refugee Returnee	49	23	72
%	81.67	38.33	60.00
Non-Refugee Returnee	1	15	16
%	1.67	25	13.33
IDPs	6	12	18
%	10.00	20	15.00
No Mobility	4	10	14
%	6.67	16.67	11.67
Total	60	60	120
%	100.00	100.00	100.00

DESIGN

Nearly all, 88 per cent, shelters visited by the research team were two-rooms and were usually in a good state. Beneficiaries were by-and-large satisfied with the quality of the materials they received including iron beams, doors and windows. What's more, most shelters had surrounding walls.

The main complaint related to the size of the rooms of the shelters, which beneficiaries found too small for their needs. Some beneficiaries wanted to change the design of their shelters during the construction but could not because the IP required them to respect UNHCR's guidelines. Some changed the design after the handover and removed the corridor to get more space.

Beneficiaries encountered several challenges during the construction of their shelters. The lack of water in particular rendered construction particularly challenging, with 43 per cent of those households surveyed noting it as a problem. Beneficiaries had to thus invest significant amount of their own money to get water. In Julga Uzbekia, beneficiaries reported that they had had 300Afs per hour to pump water from the river, while other people took on a loan from the FMFB to pay for the water and build their shelter. In fact 32 per cent of households surveyed said debt had increased following participation in the programme.

Beneficiaries also did not have the financial means to hire skilled and unskilled labour to build their shelters. The majority, 90 per cent, noted the lack of money necessary to build their shelters. In some cases, the women participated in the construction by bringing the water from the river and preparing the clay for the bricks. Children also had to give a hand. Another issue was the lack of straw to make clay, which some households also had to pay for. Overall, many households had to spend their own money to pay to build the shelter, including 97 per cent of those surveyed.

SELECTION OF BENEFICIARIES

Some reported that the maliks and community leaders mostly conducted the selection of beneficiaries. In Chartaq Sedarak a few people complained about the selection process claiming that community leaders had chosen relatives.

The main criteria of selection were a) the VRF and b) land ownership. Of those assisted households surveyed, 96 per cent had a VRF while 87 per cent owned the land their shelter was built on beforehand. Non-beneficiaries noted that people who do not have land were not selected for the programme. Yet, as threats of evictions and land conflicts were reported in the area (Chartaq Sedarak), it made sense for UNHCR to prioritize the sustainability of the shelters in these areas of implementation by making sure that beneficiary households would not be under the threat of eviction.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT

At the household level, the programme adequately responded to an urgent need as a part of beneficiaries had reportedly been living in tents for years before receiving UNHCR assistance. In fact, some 32 per cent of households surveyed did not have access to a home 1-month before receiving assistance. Beneficiaries also noted that the programme greatly improved their living conditions and the protection of their children against harsh summers. Economically, 60 per cent of households surveyed said they were better off following assistance, while 18 per cent reported being the same. Compared to non-beneficiaries, our multi-dimensional poverty index (MPI) presented in Table A.28 shows that those households which received shelter from UNHCR are less deprived.

Table A.28: Multi-dimensional Poverty Index by Beneficiary Status, in Kunduz

	Not Deprived	Deprived	Total
UNHCR Beneficiary	20	40	60
%	33.33	66.67	100.00
Non-Beneficiary	9	51	60
%	15.00	85.00	100.00
Total	29	91	120
%	24.17	75.83	100.00

At the community level, the programme helped developing the settlement into a proper village as the shelter assistance triggered further assistance, including the provision of electricity by the government. The DRRD also provided assistance through the NSP, which helped digging wells and paving the roads in these villages. Overall, all respondents thought the programme had a positive or very positive impact on the community as a whole.

SUSTAINABILITY

The sustainability of the shelters built by UNHCR in the areas surveyed by the research team is not under threat thanks to their good location. Because these areas are near Kunduz city, beneficiaries were able to commute and find daily work in the city. All the shelters were occupied, and all households surveyed planned on staying in their current community permanently. Even though, there were worrying reports of threats of eviction and violence in the area, all beneficiaries had bought their land and were not directly concerned by these threats.

TAKHAR – PROVINCIAL OVERVIEW

Note: the research team only spent a short time in Takhar. The following remarks are therefore only indicative and refer mostly to the area of Qulbarsi Tojarbashi.

CONTEXT

Located in the Northeast of the country, Takhar is a very rural province, characterized by a high reliance on subsistence agriculture and livestock, with an established tradition of meat and milk production. While the province is well connected to Kunduz and to Badakhshan thanks to a good road, accessing the rest of the province requires off-road driving and villages are very easily cut-off during winter. One of the major issues in Takhar is the risk of natural disasters as numerous villages are under the threat of landslides and flooding.

Takhar has not experienced significant movements of internal displacement and received a total of approximately 75,000 returnees over the past ten years. It is therefore not a region of high return, especially when compared with the neighbouring provinces of Kunduz and Baghlan.

The scope of the UNHCR shelter programme was limited in Takhar, with **641 shelters being built between 2009 and 2011**. Our research team surveyed 70 households in Takhar, of which 56 per cent were UNHCR beneficiaries. Moreover, 80 per cent of those surveyed were IDPs while only 7 per cent were official refugee returnees, 3 per cent were non-refugee returnees and 10 per cent never migrated.

Table A.29: Provincial Sample, Takhar

	UNHCR Beneficiary	Non-Beneficiary	Total
Refugee Returnees	3	2	5
%	7.69	6.45	7.14
Non-refugee Returnees	0	2	2
%	0.00	6.45	2.86
IDPs	36	20	56
%	92.31	64.52	80.00
No Mobility	0	7	7
%	0.00	22.58	10.00
Total	39	31	70
%	100.00	100.00	100.00

DESIGN

All shelters visited in Takhar were standard two-room shelters. The research team observed that shelters there were not in a good state, with many shelters lacking windows or glass panels. Beneficiaries praised the quality of the iron beams received but complained about the quality of wooden doors and windows, which deteriorated rapidly due to the high temperature changes they were subjected to. Beneficiaries noted that building the shelters proved difficult because most did not have the financial means to hire

skilled worker (masons) or unskilled workers. In fact, 94 per cent of households surveyed noted they ran out of money during the construction process. Thus, male members of beneficiary households had to build the shelters themselves, and could not work and earn money during construction putting some households in a precarious financial situation. Most beneficiaries had to borrow money to cover the living costs of their household during the construction of their shelter, with 40 per cent mentioning their debt had increased following participation in the programme.

SELECTION PROCESS

The selection process uncovered some land conflicts and local ethnic tensions between the Tajik and the Gujur communities, which cohabit with difficulty in the area. According to local leaders, there was no real selection process; rather all the members of a single community (Gujur community) received shelter assistance. This specific tribe is originally from Farkhar district, where they owned land and livestock. As they fought with the Taliban against the Jamia't forces during the civil war, the community fled to Pakistan and its property were grabbed by the Tajik community. Upon return, this community could not get its land back and finally decided to buy land around Qulbarasi Tojarbashi, where UNHCR helped them building their shelters. Surrounding Tajik villages did not receive assistance, as their economic situation was relatively better. The specific profile of this beneficiary community explains why of those selected, 92 per cent were IDPs. Moreover, 74 per cent owned the land the shelter was built on beforehand, while 41 per cent were characterized as extremely vulnerable.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT

The programme considerably facilitated the return of the Gujur community and helped them re-adapt in a difficult environment, where their land and property had been taken. Thus, the programme possibly diffused some potential inter-ethnic land conflicts by offering an alternative to this community. Yet singling out one specific community in a multi-ethnic context might fuel further pre-existing inter-ethnic tensions.

Only 33 per cent of beneficiaries considered their current economic situation better compared to before assistance, however all households were of the opinion that the programme was positive for the community as a whole. Compared to non-beneficiaries, our multi-dimensional poverty index (MPI) presented in Table A.30 shows that those households which received shelter from UNHCR are less deprived.

Table A.30: Multi-dimensional Poverty Index by Beneficiary Status, in Takhar

	Not Deprived	Deprived	Total
UNHCR Beneficiaries	1	38	39
%	2.56	97.44	100.00
Non-Beneficiaries	1	30	31
%	3.23	96.77	100.00
Total	2	68	70
%	2.86	97.14	100.00

SUSTAINABILITY

The sustainability of the shelter programme in this specific area is questionable. The occupancy rate in this area of Takhar was quite poor, with a number of shelters left empty and unoccupied. This is due to the poor location of the village, far from the cities of Taloqan and Kunduz where most of the men go to find daily work. The village suffers from a lack of livelihood and employment, which threatens the sustainability of this shelter programme. The community regrets having bought the land in this specific area and has seen a lot of departures. The community leader noted that it is likely that this drain will continue because of the absence of work in the area. Still, of those households surveyed, all planned to stay in their current community permanently.

CONTEXT

Helmand province has been characterized by large intra-provincial displacement, due to the intense fighting in the province especially since the beginning of the military surge in 2009. Helmand is therefore one of the top three provinces in Afghanistan in terms of a) number of people currently living in displacement (about 63,000) and b) province of origin of IDPs (about 47,000). One of the locations surveyed was Mukhtar Camp, where about 7,000 IDPs live after being forced to leave their place of origin, either in Helmand or in the surrounding provinces including Badghis, Ghor and Uruzgan.

The scope of the UNHCR shelter programme was relatively important in Helmand with a total of **812 shelters built between 2009 and 2011**. 364 families received assistance in the Mukhtar Camp alone. Our research team surveyed 108 households in Helmand, of which 52 per cent were UNHCR beneficiaries. Moreover, 77 per cent of those households surveyed were IDPs, 10 per cent were non-refugee returnees, 9 per cent never migrated and 4 per cent were official refugee returnees.

Table A.31: Provincial Sample, Helmand

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non- Beneficiaries	Total
Refugee Returnee	1	3	4
%	1.79	5.77	3.70
Non-Refugee Returnee	3	8	11
%	5.36	15.38	10.19
IDPs	49	34	83
%	87.50	65.38	76.85
No Mobility	3	7	10
%	5.36	13.46	9.26
Total	56	52	108
%	100.00	100.00	100.00

DESIGN

Because nearly all beneficiaries surveyed in Helmand were IDPs, 88 per cent of those shelters in the province were one-room shelters. The research team noticed that all shelters visited were in a good state, with most having been decorated and painted indicating that the appropriation process was well under way. Moreover, all shelters had a surrounding wall, which they had constructed themselves.

The majority of beneficiaries, 96 per cent of those surveyed, were satisfied with the quality of the material they received for their shelters. All the shelters had iron beams, iron doors and iron windows. The only complaint by beneficiaries was related to the size of the room. In a Pashtun context like Helmand, one-room shelters are insufficient to accommodate very large families. Indeed the average

size of households in Helmand was greater than 10 members, the most of the 15 provinces sampled. Some beneficiaries wanted to adapt the design of the shelters and to remove the corridor however the IP did not give permission to do so.

Some beneficiaries also noted a few problems encountered during the construction such as the lack of water, with 51 per cent of households surveyed mentioning insufficient access to water for construction as a problem. Where water was an issue, beneficiaries had to pay for the costs of a water tanker and some were obliged to take loans to do so. Overall, beneficiaries noted that building a one-room shelter did not represent a lot of work, and women were not involved in the construction of the shelters except to bring water from the well.

SELECTION OF BENEFICIARIES

UNHCR's sub-office in the South adapted to the particular migratory profile of the province by prioritizing conflict-induced IDPs in the selection of beneficiaries and providing them one-room shelters. In fact, 88 per cent of the UNHCR beneficiaries surveyed were IDPs. This is a welcome adaptation to the specific needs of a province where intra-provincial displacement increased suddenly.

The VRF was therefore discarded as a relevant criterion of selection. Instead, the selection was reported to be based on vulnerability, taking into account poverty, lack of housing and the absence of a male head of household. With that said, only 18 per cent of beneficiary households surveyed were characterized as extremely vulnerable due to very low income, while none were female-headed households and 43 per cent lacked housing 1-month before being assisted. If the flexibility introduced in the process is a good thing, procedures to select beneficiaries without the VRF should be strengthened to ensure that the most vulnerable IDPs are selected.

In the case of Camp Mukhtar, beneficiaries obtained an official permission letter from the DoRR to occupy the land and build their shelter. In fact within our own sample throughout the province, 84 per cent of beneficiaries did not own the land their shelter was built on.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT

At the household level, beneficiaries noted that the shelter programme greatly improved their living conditions. Some beneficiaries were living under tents before receiving assistance and noted that they would not have had the financial capacities to build the shelters on their own. In fact of those households surveyed, 43 per cent did not have access to a home 1-month before participating in the shelter programme. What's more, just above 50 per cent of those households surveyed considered their economic situation as better or much better after receiving assistance, while 39 per cent noted no change. Compared to non-beneficiaries, our multi-dimensional poverty index (MPI) presented in Table A.32 shows that those households which received shelter from UNHCR are less deprived.

Table A.32: Multi-dimensional Poverty Index by Beneficiary Status, in Helmand

	Not Deprived	Deprived	Total
UNHCR Beneficiaries	15	41	56
%	26.79	73.21	100.00
Non-Beneficiaries	5	47	52
%	9.62	90.38	100.00
Total	20	88	108
%	18.52	81.48	100.00

The construction of shelters was also an opportunity for these families to live in a way that was more in line with their cultural norms. It meant notably that women could live in proper houses, within surrounding walls, as opposed to tents where they were a lot more visible to the rest of the community.

Interestingly, beneficiaries also suggested that the implementation of the shelter programme helped facilitate relations with the DoRR and governmental representatives, which accepted the presence of the IDPs and stopped trying to evict them. The shelter programme seemed to have legitimized their presence.

At the community level, non-beneficiaries noted that the implementation of the shelter programme attracted more people to come and settle in the area, increasing the pressure on services and natural resources, especially as there is an overall shortage of drinkable water in the area. Yet, they also noted that it increased the attention of aid organisations, counterbalancing the additional pressure on natural resources.

SUSTAINABILITY

All shelters visited were occupied and the team observed clear signs of appropriation of shelters by their occupants. Most people clearly expressed their desire to stay and live in their shelters. In fact all respondents to our survey planned to stay in the current location permanently.

One of the main factors that will affect the sustainability of the shelter programme in Helmand will be the evolution of the security context, whilst the international military forces complete their withdrawal.

PARTNERSHIPS

The IDP camp of Mukhtar received the combined efforts of several organisations, with INTERSOS and WFP also intervening in the area. INTERSOS and DRC built some wells in the camp, while WFP distributed food.

CONTEXT

Located in the southern region, Kandahar borders the provinces Zabul, Uruzgan and Helmand, as well as a large border crossing to Pakistan. Most of its districts are contested areas challenged by the government and Taliban, which has led to a great number of heavy military operations and insurgent attacks in recent years. Due to the general decrease of the security in the southern region since 2008, Kandahar who has a relatively better security situation, has received many IDPs from neighbouring provinces such as Uruzgan and Helmand. According to UNHCR data, the top ten provinces of displacement are currently led by the South with **Kandahar having the largest protracted caseload of IDPs in the country- with an estimated 7.021 families and 48.886 individuals⁵⁴, and 171,089 assisted individual returns⁵⁵.**

The recent military operations⁵⁶ and the continuing attacks by the Taliban have also resulted in a large number of **intra-provincial conflict-induced IDPs**, who only move to a different district or even to a nearby village⁵⁷. These military operations and the increase of the insecurity have reduced the accessibility of government officials and international agencies in the province. Kandahar sub-office for example does not have direct access to its sites and has implemented its shelter programme primarily through its IP HAPA in Kandahar city, and three other districts namely Panjwayhi, Zhari and Arghandab. In 2009 and 2010 these districts became temporarily inaccessible even for HAPA due to military operations carried out by the ANA and foreign forces. As UNHCR is not able to have direct access, it primarily relies on remote management through the establishment of so-called '**liaison officers**'. There are two types of liaison officers: one which is on a UN contract (with UN insurance and security restrictions) and acts on behalf of the UN and participates in the beneficiary selection process and shelter implementation, while the other one is on a so-called 'service contract' which is contracted by an Afghan NGO and responsible for shelter implementation in insecure areas where UNHCR cannot have access through its IPs. However, our field research showed that this appears to be more theoretical as it is primarily the IP and the community leader (Malik) who are involved in the selection process of the beneficiaries.

The security situation in Kandahar remains therefore a critical issue as it not only affects the situation of IDPs and returnees, but also very significantly influences whether the government, UN agencies and NGOs are able to provide assistance. If the armed conflict spreads in Kandahar, it is expected that the number of IDPs in Kandahar will increase in the coming year, further leading into exacerbation of their already vulnerable situation.

UNHCR's sub-office response to IDPs in Kandahar: UNHCR's sub-office Kandahar has only been able to operate in certain areas primarily through its IP HAPA, and started working recently with two other IPs; OHW and HRDA, in the reintegration site Baba Wali village, in Arghandab district. When in 2010

⁵⁴ Followed by Helmand, Uruzgan and Zabul, source UNHCR IDP Data Report – May 2012.

⁵⁵ Assisted Voluntary Repatriation to Afghanistan Return by Province of Destination - 02 March 2002 - 31 August 2012, UNHCR Branch Office Kabul.

⁵⁶ Operation Hamkari.

⁵⁷ Also called 'battle- affected' IDP's.

thousands of people got displaced in Panjwayhi, Arghandab and Zhari, the sub-office decided to provide shelter assistance to 600 IDPs, after conducting an assessment which showed that from the 2300 who got displaced, 600 people were willing to move back to their previous locations if they were supported by the UNHCR. In 2011, the sub-office allocated 600 two-room shelters in the districts of Panjwayhi, Zhari and Arghandabad⁵⁸. The implementation of 200 shelters was completed on 31 December 2011, leaving 400 to be implemented throughout 2012. Yet despite this achievement, the overall attention to IDPs has been limited as UNHCR only assisted those who were able to move back to their original places, while a large number of IDPs still remain in displacement.

In total, UNHCR built **1,213 shelters between 2009 and 2011**. As Table A.33 shows, our provincial sample of Kandahar is comprised of 155 households, of which slightly less than half, 75, are UNHCR beneficiaries. Moreover, 22 per cent of our sample are official refugee returnees, while 34 per cent are non-refugee returnees, 25 per cent are IDPs and 19 per cent never migrated. Among the UNHCR beneficiaries refugee returnees are the largest group with 40 per cent, closely followed by non-refugee returnees with 39 per cent.

Table A.33: Provincial Sample, Kandahar

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-Beneficiaries	Total
Refugee Returnee	30	0	4	34
%	40.00	0.00	5.06	21.94
Non-Refugee Returnee	29	0	24	53
%	38.67	0.00	30.38	34.19
IDP	14	0	25	39
%	18.67	0.00	31.65	25.16
No Mobility	2	1	26	29
%	2.67	100.00	32.91	18.71
Total	75	1	79	155
%	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

DESIGN

Most beneficiaries (82.7%) in Kandahar did not personally choose the size of their shelter. The main design implemented was the standard two-room shelter (96.0%), while a minority build one-room shelters (2.7%) or another type of shelter (1.3%). Materials were received on time in most cases, 89 per cent, and the level of **overall satisfaction with the quality of the material was lower at 84 per cent than the national average, 94 per cent**.

The beneficiaries interviewed in Kandahar seemed to be generally satisfied with the design of UNHCR shelter. The most common complaints reported by beneficiaries included the small size of the rooms and

⁵⁸ 226 families were selected in Arghandab, 200 families in Panjwayhi and 174 families in Zhari, HAPA phase 2 weekly report shelters 2011.

window frames, causing a lack of daylight during the day. Beneficiaries therefore combined the two windows they received together to have more daylight. As in other provinces, beneficiaries also criticized the shelter package because of the low quality of the iron doors and window lintels. Beneficiaries complained that the iron doors were not durable as they only lasted for a couple of months or were quickly damaged after the first rain falls as the doors did not contain anti-rust painting. Suggestions for improvements for future programming mentioned by beneficiaries, community leaders and IP's included enlarging the rooms of the shelters. In few cases beneficiaries also complained about the lack of a cooking space.

Since beneficiaries are not allowed any flexibility in the shelter design, IPs prescribed the beneficiaries to adhere to the original shelter design. However, **in most cases, beneficiaries tended to improve and change their shelters after the official handover**, sometimes with the approval and acknowledgement of the IP. Main adaption techniques used *after the official handover* included the removal of the corridor to create additional space, as most beneficiaries thought that the two-room shelter did not provide them with enough space for their families, as well as they thought the corridor to be useless. However, our field observations also showed that these beneficiaries had not received further technical assistance or guidance from the IPs on how to maintain sufficient seismic resistance measures that offer adequate protection from risks. As IPs only monitor during the construction process, it is recommended that follow ups are conducted also after the final handover to monitor whether such shelters will resist shocks and earthquakes.

Furthermore, in most cases, beneficiary's latrines lacked doors. While most of the beneficiaries our team visited had completed their shelters, in two cases (Naqilian and Munara) several shelters lacked latrines while they already had received the 100 USD cash grants during the final handover. This leads to questions on how the final verification and handover have been conducted, as per UNHCR guidelines shelters are only qualified for handover after the latrines have been completed.

Compared to other provinces, shelters in Kandahar seemed to be less sophisticated and in some cases in very bad conditions. Most shelters were 2-room shelters with mud walls, some lacking the mud plaster. The walls from the inside and the outside were very roughly done and most of the shelters visited lacked glass windowpanes. Beneficiaries reported that they had not received the windowpanes. Instead plastic sheets or big pieces of cloths were used. Beneficiaries reported that they could not afford to buy glass, and used the 100 USD mostly to pay off their incurred debts.

Overall, most beneficiaries had built surrounding walls. Only in a few cases, beneficiaries complained about not being able to build surroundings walls that provided them with privacy and allowed females to move freely within their yard. In these cases, they used big pieces of cloths to create a makeshift surrounding wall.

Overall, **44 per cent of the beneficiaries indicated that they encountered some kind of problem during the construction of their shelter.** Table A.34 shows that common problems faced by beneficiaries during the building process included: the limited access to water and insufficient money to cover the additional costs for skilled labour. In one instance the lack of available earth to make mud appeared to be problematic, as most of the plots in the village were privately owned.

Table A.34: Problems during Construction, in Kandahar

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	
	N=33	%
Ran out of money	30	90.91
Insufficient access to water	22	66.67
Lack of skilled labour	10	30.30
Materials of poor quality	6	18.18
Weather problems	5	15.15
Ran out of materials	4	12.12
Lack of unskilled labour	3	9.09
Materials not delivered on time	3	9.09
Lack of technical knowledge	0	0.00

The lack of female staff in the shelter programme, as well as the lack of female participation in the community, was confirmed in KII with UNHCR staff, DoRR as well as with beneficiaries to be a chronic problem. However, from our field observations it showed that UNHCR had done little to promote the participation of women in the implementation of the shelter programme. Women in the community have a passive role and seem to be primarily involved in the construction process of their own shelter. Women's activities included cooking meals for daily labourers, carrying water and in a few cases preparing the mud for the walls. They were not included in the decision-making process or implementation process of the shelter assistance programme in their community.

Furthermore, while UNHCR relies upon the Afghan tradition of *Ashar* for extra-assistance to be provided to the neediest beneficiaries, based on our field visits and discussion with beneficiaries, we found that that in all cases the principle of *Ashar* was rather non-existent and beneficiaries were primarily on their own. The absence of any support mechanism is problematic especially for the EVIs, who because of their vulnerable situation may face greater risks (such as indebtedness) than others. This calls into question the appropriateness and relevance of the idea of relying on the *Ashar*.

Since UNHCR's shelter assistance does not have any complaint mechanism, both beneficiaries as well as non-beneficiaries often have nowhere to go. Especially returnees with VRFs, who were left out of shelter assistance because they were not present during the day of the selection of beneficiaries, seemed to be confused about the selection procedure.

SELECTION OF BENEFICIARIES

- **Selection Process**

The BSC appeared to be non-existent; beneficiary selection and identification was carried out primarily through the Malik. Both beneficiaries as well as the Malik noted that it was primarily the Malik and the IP who were involved in the selection process. Though the UNHCR sub-office staff explained that the beneficiary selection process included a representative of the DoRR, UNHCR employee and a representative from the community, our team found out that almost in all cases the beneficiary selection and identification of 'eligible' households were primarily chosen by the Malik, without the direct presence of the UNHCR or even the IP. Furthermore, in two cases (Munara and Baba Wali village) it is doubtful whether the most vulnerable have been targeted, as shelters were allocated based on the number of existing mosques in the village. In Munara, the total number of shelters was allocated by the IP among 52 mosques, while in Baba Wali village each selected village (in total 7) received 40 shelters, which were subsequently distributed by the Malik.

Such procedures of beneficiary selection are problematic because a) it means that the selection is conducted with little oversight and coordination by the UNHCR, its IPs, or the DoRR and b) it is doubtful that the criteria of vulnerability were properly taken into account given that a specific set of shelters was allocated to each mosque rather than based on direct needs assessment conducted by UNHCR or its IP. Furthermore, **the over reliance on the Malik for the beneficiary selection without any checks and balances by third parties, strengthens people's negative perception of the Malik as implying nepotism and favouritism in the distribution of aid in the community.** Clearly, without a clear mechanism of oversight and accountability, this over reliance also opens more opportunities for favouritism, nepotism and sometimes corruption.

- **Selection Criteria**

The **selection of beneficiaries has been primarily based on the VRF, the ownership of land and whether households were 'eligible', defined by the Maliks as households with low income.** In many cases, the provision of shelter assistance to only a small number of VRF holders resulted in selecting only a small number of beneficiaries among a big group of returnees (those with and without VRF), leading to feelings of discrimination among the non-beneficiaries. In several cases, non-beneficiaries expressed their frustration and anger about the discriminatory selection process. Beneficiaries felt the Malik was corrupted and gave the priority to those who were closely linked to himself, believing the shelter selection process to be unfair and not benefitting the poor but rather those who are already rich and well connected. The survey found that 19 per cent of UNHCR beneficiaries were IDPs, a proportion which seems too low to properly take into account the profile of Kandahar as the first province of displacement of conflict-induced IDPs in the country.

Most shelter beneficiaries interviewed owned the land, either individually or collectively with other relatives (brothers, brother-in-law or uncle). While 58 per cent owned the land their shelter was built on already before receiving assistance, 25 per cent received their land through LAS. Only in few cases, such

as in Naqilian village, some community members had received plots from the Mullah Omar during the Taliban regime, and in Mazra from a wealthy ruling Malik Haji Din Mohammad.

The **vulnerability criteria seemed not to be properly taken into account** in the selection of beneficiaries. While 64 per cent of the beneficiaries can be classified as extremely vulnerable, the remaining 37 per cent cannot. At the same time, 41 EVI households are not beneficiaries. Nineteen of these even applied for assistance but were not chosen.

The fact that vulnerability was not used as a selection criterion was also particularly observed in Mazra village and in the reintegration site Baba Wali village. Here, all visited newly built shelters were not used as living space, but were rather used as storage rooms or to keep livestock such as cows or chickens. Furthermore, in both villages beneficiaries seemed to have received the shelters additional to their already existing houses which were in good state. Furthermore, all visited shelters in Mazra included more than one shelter, as there were several beneficiaries relatives living in the same compound. In several cases the shelter rooms were nicely furnished, but locked at the time of visit, showing that it was primarily used as a guesthouse (mehman khana) instead of an actual living space.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT

At the household level, our research found that all beneficiaries were unable to raise money to cover the additional cost of construction of their shelters and to hire daily labourers. Most beneficiaries therefore resorted to a variety of ways to pay for the costs, including asking loans from multiple relatives and shopkeepers they knew well. Incurred debts varied considerably; beneficiaries reported to be indebted for between 70.000 AFS- and 100.000 (1.400 USD- 2.000 USD). Beneficiaries reported that this placed a big burden on their household as most of the heads of households were unemployed or did not earn enough to pay off their debts in the short term. In the long term this could prevent the household's ability to establish a secure livelihood, and based on the interviews conducted, it appeared rather unclear whether and how these households would be able to pay off their debts. Accordingly, compared to other provinces a rather small share of beneficiaries, 54 per cent, indicated that due to the assistance their economic situation was better or far better.

Compared to non-beneficiaries, our multi-dimensional poverty index (MPI) presented in Table A.35 shows that those households which received shelter from UNHCR are much less deprived.

Table A.35: Multi-dimensional Poverty Index by Beneficiary Status, in Kandahar

	Not Deprived	Deprived	Total
UNHCR Beneficiaries	18	57	75
%	24.00	76.00	100.00
Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	0	1	1
%	0.00	100.00	100.00
Non- Beneficiaries	10	69	79
%	12.66	87.34	100.00
Total	28	127	155
%	18.06	81.94	100.00

At the community level, beneficiaries themselves emphasized that due to the increasing number of returnees coming back, the population in their village had increased, further leading to an increase of the price of local goods such as oil and wheat. Others suggested that the prizes of burnt bricks had also increased due the implementation of the shelter programme in their village.

In all villages visited, the community consisted primarily of returnees, meaning that all community members had either experienced international or national migration once in their lives. In all cases the resettlements of the returnees were not seen as a source of conflict in itself and returnees were thought not to have caused problems in the community. However, our field team observed that the unsystematic procedure for the distribution of shelters and primarily the lack of transparency caused much discontent and sometimes conflicts between the Maliks and the community members.

SUSTAINABILITY

Beneficiaries' ability to improve their socio-economic condition is highly dependent on the accessibility of water, electricity, health services, employment and the debt incurred during the shelter construction. Interestingly, despite the hardship people faced in their daily lives, all beneficiaries were keen to stay and had no regrets about their decision to return back to Afghanistan. This was primarily because they were satisfied about the fact that they now owned a house and did not have to live with other relatives anymore. All but one of the respondents in the province indicated that they plan to stay in the current community permanently. The one that has plans to move again is a UNHCR beneficiary and reported not being happy in the current community (Mazra).

A big concern for the sustainability of the shelter programme in terms of sustainable reintegration in Kandahar province is the **lack of access to water for many beneficiary communities**. Beneficiary families in almost all villages visited complained about the lack of safe drinking water. Many water points were too far and in several cases the limited access to water slowed down the construction process. Access to electricity and basic health services were also absent in most villages visited.

All of the 75 beneficiaries indicated that they were currently living in the UNHCR shelter. While the **occupancy rates directly observed by our team were satisfying, interviews with the Malik and**

beneficiaries showed that secondary displacements were primarily caused because of the lack of employment, as well as the lack of basic services such as water, electricity and health. In several cases the owner of the shelter and their entire household had moved back to Pakistan to find employment there. Whenever male household heads are able to find employment in the village, they tend to continue to be engaged in the same low-paid job they had in Pakistan. These jobs included mostly masonry and construction, and in few instances farming. In the absence of employment in the village, most men tended to find work elsewhere, primarily in Kandahar city. While some men commuted back and forth, others were forced to live in the city, leaving their families in the village, because of the high transportation costs and low income, and only coming back once in three or four weeks.

PARTNERSHIPS

- **Inter-units and inter-agencies Coordination**

One particular challenge experienced by the sub-office has been the lack of coordination and alignment between the protection unit and programme unit. Staff at the sub-office noted that the recent change in the head of office as well as change in higher management at the central level has led to a substantial shift towards more attention for coordination between the protection and programme unit. One potential critical problem arising from the lack of coordination between the units is that there will be insufficient or a lack of attention to vulnerability and to the identification and integration of EVIs in the selection process.

The sub-office staff found that the central office did not pay too much attention to the southern office, and this presented certain challenges for the sub-office in responding to the needs of the IDPs in the southern areas. The sub-office in Kandahar welcomed the shift from humanitarian to development programming in shelter assistance, as it believed that returnees need more than shelters to reintegrate.

In terms of coordination with other stakeholder, most coordination mechanisms are based on monthly or ad-hoc working groups.

- **UNHCR IPs**

UNHCR has been working solely with the Afghan NGO Humanitarian Action for the People of Afghanistan (HAPA) in the southern region since 2003, and has always had a good relationship with them. HAPA works for different UN-agencies such as the WFP and IOM, as well as other donors such as CIDA and JICA. Whilst the sub-office praised HAPA for its reliability and professionalism, it decided in 2012 to work with two new IPs, OHW and HRDA. Although we did not receive any complaints about HAPA, it must be noted that in several cases the behaviour of the HAPA employees seemed sometimes suspicious as in some cases they were hesitating in showing us more shelters and stated that the shelters were too far for the research team to visit.

As already mentioned, UNHCR's monitoring in the southern- area, and implementation in areas which are not accessible to the IPs, are all dependent on the so-called '**liaison officers**'. These liaison officers are young men recruited locally who have received a short training and salary from UNHCR and are able to travel to insecure areas because of their local knowledge, established social network and access to the

areas. Liaison officers' tasks include both implementation and monitoring, such as monitoring the distribution of assistance and monitoring beneficiaries' construction process. While the sub-office in Kandahar seemed to be satisfied with this approach, it should be acknowledged that relying on remote management without direct supervision also brings a number of important risks and disadvantages, and could weaken the quality and efficiency of the shelter programme in the long run.

- **Relationship with National Authorities**

The DoRR representatives in Kandahar were highly critical about the lack of coordination, communication and information exchange with the UNHCR. The DoRR argued that they are completely sidelined by the UNHCR during the beneficiary selection, implementation and distribution of materials. The DoRR argued that they had offered help and advice in several instances to select certain beneficiaries, but that UNHCR appeared to be non-responsive and acted separately with only informing the DoRR after the selection and implementation of the shelters. Not involving the DoRR in the selection and implementation programme, was confirmed by the sub-office, which argued that the DoRR were only side-lined because of their incapacity and incapability to do anything. This general discontent with the government and their lack of capacity was also felt by the returnees interviewed, who expressed their frustration with the government and political leaders for failing to provide assistance both to the returnees themselves, and to the community as a whole.

CONTEXT

Located in the Southeast, Paktya is highly volatile and insecure, especially in its rural and mountainous districts where governmental forces have little access. Paktya received more than 97,000 returnees over the past ten years, while the province saw only a very small number of internal displacements. Given the proximity with Nangarhar and Pakistan, the province is characterized by large movements of temporary migration, especially during the winter.

The scope of the UNHCR shelter programme was important in Paktya, with a total of **1,372 shelters built between 2009 and 2011**. Our research team surveyed 240 households in Paktya, of which 51 per cent were UNHCR beneficiaries. Moreover, 60 per cent of those households surveyed were official refugee returnees while 26 per cent were non-official returnees, 2 per cent were IDPs and 12 per cent never migrated.

Table A.36: Provincial Sample, Paktya

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non-Beneficiaries	Total
Refugee Returnee	91	52	143
%	73.98	44.44	59.58
Non-Refugee Returnee	23	40	63
%	18.70	34.19	26.25
IDPs	1	4	5
%	0.81	3.42	2.08
No Mobility	8	21	29
%	6.50	17.95	12.08
Total	123	117	240
%	100.00	100.00	100.00

DESIGN

Nearly all shelters visited in Paktya, 94 per cent, were standard two-room shelters with iron beams, windows and doors. Beneficiaries for the most part had no complaints about the material received, with 97 per cent noting the materials were of good quality. All beneficiary households had built their own surrounding walls.

Most beneficiaries noted that the design and the size of the shelters were not adapted to the needs of their families. A lot of beneficiaries changed the design, removed the corridor and enlarged the rooms with the permission of the IP who monitored the process. Some households added extra rooms with their own money.

The main problem that beneficiaries encountered during the construction was the lack of water, with 53 per cent of those surveyed mentioning the issue. Most had to have the water brought by a tanker, which cost a significant amount of money.

Women helped during the construction of the shelter. Their main task was to bring the water and to make the clay for the mud bricks.

SELECTION OF BENEFICIARIES

Representatives of the IP and community leaders conducted the selection of beneficiaries. The main criteria of selection were a) VRF, b) land ownership, and c) vulnerability. Of those beneficiary households surveyed 96 per cent had a VRF, 94 per cent owned the land their shelter was built on beforehand, and 42 per cent were characterized as extremely vulnerable. Non-beneficiaries perceived the selection process as fair and confirmed that it had targeted the most vulnerable in the community. There were no reports of fraud or misallocation in the province.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT

At the household level, the shelter programme significantly improved the living conditions of beneficiary households as many lived under tents or had to share a house with their relatives before receiving shelter assistance. Of those households surveyed, 30 per cent did not own a house 1 month before receiving assistance.

Many beneficiaries noted that they had to take on significant loans to build their shelters with 41 per cent of those surveyed stating debt had increased following participation. What's more, only 37 per cent of beneficiaries considered their economic situation better after participation, while 38 per cent thought it was the same and 20 per cent believed it to be worse. This suggests that the economic impact of the programme on households was less positive in Paktya than in other surveyed provinces. Compared to non-beneficiaries, our multi-dimensional poverty index (MPI) presented in Table A.37 shows that those households which received shelter from UNHCR are less deprived.

Table A.37: Multi-dimensional Poverty Index by Beneficiary Status, in Paktya

	Not Deprived	Deprived	Total
UNHCR Beneficiaries	18	57	75
%	24.00	76.00	100.00
Non-UNHCR Beneficiaries	0	1	1
%	0.00	100.00	100.00
Non-Beneficiaries	10	69	79
%	12.66	87.34	100.00
Total	28	127	155
%	18.06	81.94	100.00

At the community level, community leaders and members of communities mentioned that the programme had had a positive effect on intra-community relationships, as people were no longer forced to share houses. Moreover, nearly all, 97 per cent, believed the programme had a positive or very positive impact on the community as a whole. Some however complained about the pressure that the programme exerted over natural resources and services, especially water.

SUSTAINABILITY

The research team noted a certain number of empty shelters, especially in the village of Levan, where half were empty. However these shelters were visited at the beginning of December and it is possible that their tenants had already left to Jalalabad for their seasonal winter migration.

Most community leaders noted that their villages suffered from a lack of basic services, including the absence of clinics, the lack of paved road and the lack of water for consumption and agricultural purposes. The general economic situation of these villages and this absence of basic services represent a threat for the sustainability of the programme in the area.

All of the beneficiary households noted that they had no intention to move from their place of origin. Still the sustainability of the programme in Paktya will depend heavily on the evolution of the security context in the province in the coming years.

PARTNERSHIP

Only a few organizations (including IRC) are active in Paktya, as large parts of the province are too insecure. The main institution complementing UNHCR activities has been the DRRD through CDCs. UNHCR provided hygiene training for women in areas where the shelter programme was implemented.

CONTEXT

The migratory context in Hirat is a quite specific one for Afghanistan, with a wide variety of migratory profiles including voluntary returnees from neighbouring Iran, undocumented returnees, deportees, but also returnee-IDPs from Iran and Pakistan unable to return to their province of origin (Faryab, Ghor, Baghdis), conflict-induced and economic IDPs. This very mixed and complex migratory context poses a direct challenge for identification of eligible people for the shelter programme in the field and allocation of assistance, especially since the rate of return from Iran is steadily decreasing, whereas the number of IDPs coming to the province is increasing. The usual categories for identification of beneficiaries (returnee, VRF holder, a small but usually minimal proportion of IDPs) therefore do not seem to be relevant in this type of context, which directly implies serious considerations about how to reach vulnerable households in need of shelter.

The volume of IDP presence in the province gives the issue of IDPs considerable political weight. Settlements inside Hirat city and in surrounding IDP camps of Maslaq, Minaret and Shahidayee, as well as informal settlements are a ground for political tensions, with a clear reluctance of authorities to address the issue⁵⁹.

One of the issues in the West was the strong focus of humanitarian assistance on Hirat province, with a small proportion of programmes implemented in Farah province and only a few in Baghdis or Ghor. The majority of the provinces in the Western region are therefore left out of most assistance and reintegration programmes for migrants (this is the case both for UNHCR and NRC).

UNHCR supported the construction of **1,298 shelters in the province between 2009 and 2011**. As Table A.38 shows, our provincial sample of Hirat comprises 200 households, of which more than half (101) are UNHCR beneficiaries. Moreover, some 49 per cent of our sample are official refugee returnees, while 15 per cent are non-refugee returnees, 29 per cent are IDPs and 8 per cent never migrated. Considering the large amount of IDPs in the province, it appears that our sample is not representative. They represent 21 per cent of surveyed UNHCR beneficiaries.

⁵⁹ The governor of Hirat issued a letter stating there were officially no registered IDPs in Hirat province, and they were therefore not entitled to any form of assistance.

Table A.38: Provincial Sample, Hirat

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	Non- Beneficiaries	Total
Refugee Returnee	68	29	97
%	67.33	29.29	48.50
Non-Refugee Returnee	8	21	29
%	7.92	21.21	14.50
IDP	21	37	58
%	20.79	37.37	29.00
No Mobility	4	12	16
%	3.96	12.12	8.00
Total	101	99	200
%	100.00	100.00	100.00

DESIGN

Until 2012, there was a high degree of variations in the shelter package, both in the types of models used, the standards and the material provided, the latter varying on a yearly basis based on field observations and recommendations from the IPs, with wooden planks for roofing replaced by fire brick for instance. In 2009 two-room, one-room (for IDPs and returnee households with less family members) and repair-kits were implemented. Throughout 2009-2011, two types of two-room shelters were constructed: type C (including a dome roof, adapted to the local cultural norms) and type A (flat roof). In 2012 the package was uniform with a standard type C shelter. Among the surveyed beneficiaries 84 per cent built a two-room shelter and the rest, 16 per cent, one room. Nobody got to choose the size of their shelter.

Differences with other provinces were also noticed in the material provided: two-room shelters were handed out three iron doors (as opposed to one iron door and two inside wooden doors in other provinces), and the latrines were provided with ceramic toilets, which had not been observed yet in any other province.

Both the UNHCR Field Associate and IPs mentioned that the previous flexibility in the standard of shelter (one-room, two-rooms, repair kit) provided was a challenge in the field, in cases where decisions had to be made in terms of allocation of a specific type of shelter to the beneficiaries, creating misunderstanding as to the reasons why which type of shelter was allocated to whom. This was a driver of conflict inside the communities as well as between beneficiaries and IPs.

Flexibility in the design was noticed in the field. Some changes had been validated by field engineers during construction. Main changes included opening the corridor, used as an open space between two rooms (systematically implemented in Kahdistan), or using it as a kitchen (Shogofan), adaptation to the land plots (Shogofan and Kahdistan), and enlargements, the latter being done after handover. In itself, this is a positive sign of the way beneficiaries consider their shelters as a living space and adapt it to their needs. Flexibility was also allowed in adapting the shelter to the size and shape of the land plots, with

doors installed on the side of the shelters as an extra entrance. Surrounding walls were also systematically constructed around plots where one to several shelters was built for related families.

The overall state of shelters was relatively good. In most shelters visited, the latrines were built and used. There was general satisfaction about them, which can also be explained by the good quality of the material used (ceramic for standing toilets).

A recurrent complaint on behalf of all stakeholders (beneficiaries, IPs and UNHCR) was **the low quality of the iron doors and window frames provided with the shelter**, subject to rust and deformation. More generally though, the interviewed beneficiaries in contrast indicated that they received their materials on time and that they were of good quality in 94 per cent and 96 per cent of the cases respectively.

Problems during construction: Almost two thirds, 64 per cent, of the surveyed beneficiaries indicated that they encountered some kind of problem during the construction of their shelter. Table A.39 shows the different types of problems the beneficiaries encountered, the main problems being having enough financial capital and insufficient access to water.

Table A.39: Problems during Construction, in Hirat

	UNHCR Beneficiaries	
	N=65	%
Ran out of money	63	96.92
Insufficient access to water	34	52.31
Lack of skilled labour	19	29.23
Weather problems	14	21.54
Ran out of materials	12	18.46
Lack of unskilled labour	10	15.38
Materials not delivered on time	7	10.77
Materials of poor quality	2	3.08
Lack of technical knowledge	0	0.00

Flexibility of the cash grant: There was a relatively high degree of variability as well in the amount of cash grant provided to the beneficiaries during handover, which varied every year according to fluctuations in the market prices for labour. The cash grants were sensibly higher than those provided in other provinces (between 100-300), which can be explained both by the high cost of labour, and the unavailability of clay in the area which requires the use of cement and burned bricks in most cases. UNHCR staff reported that assessments of labour costs were conducted every year by UNHCR, though no

specific figure was provided for the annual cash grants handed out to the beneficiaries. The figures mentioned in the field and by the IPs were between \$110 for a two-room shelter to \$250.

Risk assessment: As in other provinces, there appears to be no prior assessment of flood risks. In two locations, inhabitants mentioned this as a major concern. In Shogofan, beneficiaries were worried because the canal they built through the cash-for-work programme of UNHCR was not paved, which increased the risks of over-flooding. In Jebraïl, inhabitants and shura leaders mentioned an entire neighbourhood, which included shelters (2008 and one 2009 shelter visited) and was built on a flood prone area, due to land speculation and influence of the land mafia. This calls for a better assessment beforehand.

Monitoring: The UNHCR sub-office in Hirat has no monitoring IP and conducts the monitoring of construction themselves, with regular visits to the field in all accessible areas. There have been some recent security issues in Gozarah, but access in general does not seem to be an issue. This is a good sign that monitoring by UNHCR staff is possible in secure areas, which raises question about the regularity of the recourse to external monitoring IPs across provinces (especially in Kabul and Parwan where monitoring by UNHCR staff appeared elusive). The survey data shows that 12 per cent of the UNHCR beneficiaries in Hirat indicated that there was no monitoring of their shelter by the organization that assisted them.

SELECTION OF BENEFICIARIES

The wide variety of migratory profiles in the province has a strong impact on beneficiary selection, complicating identification of eligible people. Furthermore, this puts into question both the **relevance of the proportion of returnees included and the focus on the VRF criteria for selection**, given the comparatively high number of IDPs in the province. The majority of the beneficiaries in our sample, 67 per cent, were recognized refugee returnees. Comparing the percentage of EVI households of this group to IDPs shows that 45 per cent of refugee returnees can be classified as extremely vulnerable compared to 50 per cent of IDPs. Yet, IDPs are much less chosen for assistance. While three quarters of the vulnerable refugee returnee households did receive assistance, only 38 per cent of the IDPs did.

The assistance therefore targeted people, who were not necessarily the most vulnerable, and left aside a wide range of people in need of shelters who are under the mandate of UNHCR (conflict-induced IDPs). However, the difficulty to identify IDPs and the high political stakes behind the assistance they are allocated places considerable strains on their selection (high reluctance of local authorities to deal with IDPs) and the proportion of IDPs selected in Hirat is higher than in most of the rest of the country.

This calls into questions the existing categories and creates several challenges on the field with:

- **High complexity in identification of beneficiaries**, with repercussions in the tensions inside the community and complication of the work of IPs potentially accused of corruption or favouritism.
- **High rates of fraud and VRF trafficking** in the province.

A side effect of the high focus on VRFs is the **high rates of fraud and VRF trafficking** in order to receive assistance observed on the field. In both locations visited in Shogofan 'cluster' (Shogofan 1 and Esaq Abad), **it was confirmed that beneficiaries were not the original holders of the VRFs, which they reportedly had purchased in Jebrail**. Prices of VRF on this black market oscillated between 7,000 and 10,000 AFS (135 to 200 USD). In other cases (Shogofan), the beneficiaries rented out their shelters to other families and continued living in some of the other IDP settlements surrounding Hirat. The existence of this type of parallel "shelter-market" is a worrying dynamic. The problem has been acknowledged by UNHCR, which decided in 2012 to place a higher focus on vulnerability for the selection in a welcome move to tackle this issue. Recognizing the importance of the phenomena, NRC also changed its approach by prioritizing vulnerability over documentation and accepting any kind of proof of existence abroad.

More than in other provinces, the discussions with IPs, local representative and UNHCR **mentioned the regular inclusion of 5 to 10 per cent of local community members as EVI, through the involvement of the Protection unit**. This was deemed as necessary to ease tensions inside the community, notably given the problems raised in the identification of beneficiaries. The quantitative data does however show that of the four beneficiary households without a migration experience only one can actually be classified as extremely vulnerable. This assistance therefore also does not seem to target those most in need.

It appeared that the degree of involvement of local authorities (maliks, arbab, shura) in the selection process evolved over time. In 2009-2010, it was allegedly reduced in order to avoid preferential selection. Though their presence in the BSC was mandatory in order to avoid tensions in the community, their decisional role was minimal to non-existent at that time. In one case (Jebrail), the shura was not aware of the existence of the programme in 2009, though the IP (CRDSA) denied not having involved them. The IP emphasized the fact that they tried to rely more on community members, including women, than the official authorities, in order to access more eligible people and avoid nepotism. This seems to have changed recently, especially in the reintegration sites, where local shuras play a significant role throughout the implementation process. **There were strong allegations of corruption on behalf of communities and beneficiaries in the reintegration site of Shogofan**, with shelters reportedly bought from the Malik/IP. Several non-beneficiaries denounced this practice and one beneficiary confirmed that he had paid 10,000 to the Malik and the IP to be selected in the programme. If corruption is effectively widespread, cash-based assistance might be tricky to implement.

There appears to be a strong involvement of both, UNHCR field team as well as DoRR, in the selection process. IPs mentioned the systematic presence of both of them in the BSC was particularly positive for strengthening the BSC in the eyes of local authorities and facilitating the selection process. **The DoRR in particular was seen as a necessary governmental caution**.

Another issue mentioned in selection was the focus on specific villages identified by UNHCR beforehand. This was repeatedly mentioned by all three IPs as a concern, as neighbouring villages included eligible people, which could not be reached. The method of selection of areas for shelter assistance, putting the stress on numbers rather than vulnerability is therefore problematic, with less vulnerable people being selected to complete the quota of shelters allocated, whereas vulnerable households in neighbouring areas are completely left out.

NRC 's Selection Process

Recognizing the difficulty in identifying eligible beneficiaries in Hirat province, NRC decided to tighten its selection process significantly for the 2012 selection. The following measures were introduced:

- NRC is not restricted to some implementation locations beforehand.
- The focus of the selection was put on **vulnerability rather than migratory status**.
- While in the past the programme focused on returnees, this year 80 per cent of the beneficiaries were IDPs, while 20 per cent were returnees.
- Rather than the VRF only, NRC accepts any sort of documents showing that the individual/family has lived abroad.
- In case a fake VRF is identified, the household is immediately excluded from the selection.
- When people declare renting a house, necessity to present appropriate documentation to be selected.
- Multiplication of cross-checks of information through:
 - Closer house to house visits
 - Double checking
 - Inclusion of NRC's M&E staff in the selection process
 - Multiple visits
 - Delayed decision in case of doubts
 - Early morning visits to the field (7am).

Overall this selection process led to the exclusion of approximately 75 per cent of potential beneficiaries. The process was also time-consuming and took several months. At the end, NRC was satisfied with this process, which conducted to a much higher occupancy rate at the handover period than previous years.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT

• At the household level

The socio-economic impact of the programme was reportedly positive, as 64 per cent of the beneficiaries indicated that their economic situation after receiving the assistance was better or far better than before. Beneficiaries explicitly mentioned the improvement in housing (solid housing versus tents, cf. FGD women beneficiaries Kahdistan) as a major positive effect on their standard of living as a mean to protect them from the natural environment. Around 40 per cent of the beneficiaries lived in tents or other temporary shelter before they received the assistance. Therefore, as in other provinces, access to property and housing was widely praised – a notable improvement for returnee-IDPs who mentioned having lost their property in their region of origin. Interestingly, nomad tribes mentioned the change of social status housing provided them with: “when we arrived, we had nothing, of course our life became better. At the time our husbands were begging for work, we were just people living in tents. People said “you don’t have anything, not even a house!” so now it’s better.” (Sibid, FGD women beneficiaries, Kahdistan). In line with this positive reception of the programme is the fact that no beneficiary currently has plans to move from the community.

However, though the extent of the phenomena could not be assessed, flaws in selection leading to frauds and the existence of a VRF black market represented a considerable additional investment to get a shelter, which could have been avoided and is another indicator of a need to question existing categories (cf. above). This is also a sign that shelters are a response to a genuine need as people are willing to invest substantive sums of money in order to access housing.

Compared to non-beneficiaries, our multi-dimensional poverty index (MPI) presented in Table A.40 shows that those households which received shelter from UNHCR are much less deprived.

Table A.40: Multi-dimensional Poverty Index by Beneficiary Status, in Hirat

	Not Deprived	Deprived	Total
UNHCR Beneficiary	26	75	101
%	25.74	74.26	100.00
Non-Beneficiary	11	88	99
%	11.11	88.89	100.00
Total	37	163	200
%	18.50	81.50	100.00

- **At the community level**

It appears that the implementation of the shelter programme – especially when combined to other programmes of assistance like in Shogofan – in specific areas triggers further displacement with migration to the areas targeted for assistance. In new settlements, the programme supports the general development of the village and increases the availability of housing in areas, which received large influx of population in short periods of time.

Short-term effects:

- Short term employment boost, though this depends on the level of wealth of the community and the capacity of beneficiaries to hire labour: this was the case in Shogofan, but was not in Kahdistan, for instance, where beneficiaries constructed their shelters themselves or with the assistance of relatives.
- Impediment to work and income: very-low income beneficiaries mentioned not being able to hire extra labour, and that construction takes time on their work hours and has a negative impact on their income. This further explains delays in construction (5-6 months for construction of a 2-room shelter).

Impact on local prices:

- Rise in the price of land, with speculation on land strongly linked to allocation of assistance in a specific area.
- Differentiated effects on local prices:
 - Price of material drops because of an influx of free material (Shogofan).

- In Kahdistan, the arbab mentioned that the price of beams had increased because of a rise in demand for similar beams to the ones distributed by UNHCR. This is also a sign that the quality of the material provided by UNHCR has repercussions on the standards required by the community. One of the effects of the shelter programme is therefore an overall potential improvement in the quality of housing in the community.

SUSTAINABILITY

The rates of occupancy were high in all locations visited. Of the 101 beneficiaries four indicated that they were not currently living in the UNHCR shelter. In some cases, the lack of livelihood had led to the abandonment or selling of the shelter (Esaq Abad). A more widespread way to cope with the issue of livelihood was the migration of the head of household in order to find better employment opportunities, while the rest of the family lived inside the shelter. This indicates that shelter remains a strong component of family life. There was therefore little secondary displacement, and beneficiaries insisted they had no intention to migrate again, as migration was described as a costly and tiresome process: *“with a house that has been built now, why would we go anywhere? It’s so much effort and so difficult to move! We don’t want to do that again.”* (Said Bibi, FGD women beneficiaries Kahdistan).

Threats to sustainability: In the long run, the absence of access to safe water, the lack of livelihood and the absence of basic services, especially governmental schools and health facilities, which were lacking in most of the sites visited, might be an impediment to the sustainability of the programme. The case of Saadat, the LAS where shelters had been implemented in 2007 and that is now mostly empty, is a sign of the negative consequences of not taking into account basic needs in parallel to shelter. In reintegration sites, the short-term nature of efforts implemented by UNHCR keeps assistance from addressing the problems of beneficiaries in the long term. In Shogofan for example, most of the complementary income-generating programmes implemented by UNHCR were short-term initiatives and could not address the deeper issue of absence of employment and livelihood. Most of these initiatives were cash-for-work programmes (road rehabilitation, canal), which will stop at the end of 2012.

There was no regular pattern for complementary assistance: no WASH programme has been implemented by UNHCR since 2008, and cash for work has only been done in parallel to shelter in a few cases.

PARTNERSHIPS

As noticed in other provinces, the partnership strategy of UNHCR is strongly lacking linkages with other organisations, which could provide basic services (clinics and schools which are recurrently mentioned as a great need by community members), WASH components or employment programmes. In Hirat, the UNHCR has no partnerships with NGOs or other agencies.

The Hirat sub-office privileged one-year partnerships with the IPs implementing the shelter programme. The method of IP selection with a regular rotation every year is problematic in terms of capacity building and follow-up. A UNHCR Field Assistant provided no clear explanation about the selection process and

the reason for rotation, casting doubts about the reliability of the IP given contradictory information gathered on the field. UNHCR staff suggested though that the rotation of IPs was a method to limit the risk of corruption of IPs. As mentioned above, the fact that the Hirat sub-office has no monitoring IP and is able to conduct monitoring itself raises the question of why a sub-office like Kabul needs to rely on monitoring IPs.

However, **the Hirat sub-office seems to cultivate strong links with governmental authorities (as opposed to Nangarhar for instance), particularly with DoRR representatives reportedly present throughout the implementation process, from selection to monitoring, as per the guidelines.** The Directorate of Economy was also responsible and present for monitoring of all development projects. It must be underlined that governmental authorities could not be met in Hirat due to the presence of an Iranian BIAFA delegation during our stay in the province and conflicting schedules. Despite these observations, HELP mentioned the difficulty to work with the current DoRR as well as the strong political stakes behind the issue of IDPs and the reluctance of local authorities to allow them to receive assistance.