

# Migration in Afghanistan: History, Current Trends and Future Prospects

Paper Series: Migration and Development Country Profiles

Katie Kuschminder  
[Katie.kuschminder@maastrichtuniversity.nl](mailto:Katie.kuschminder@maastrichtuniversity.nl)

Manoj Dora  
[Manoj.dora@maastrichtuniversity.nl](mailto:Manoj.dora@maastrichtuniversity.nl)

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## Table of Contents

<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>2. GENERAL COUNTRY PROFILE</b> .....	<b>5</b>
2.1 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW .....	5
2.1.1 <i>Pre 1978</i> .....	5
2.1.2 <i>1978-1992 – Soviet Invasion</i> .....	5
2.1.3 <i>1992-2001 – Taliban Rule</i> .....	5
2.1.4 <i>Post 2001</i> .....	6
2.2 DEMOGRAPHICS .....	6
2.3 ECONOMIC AND POVERTY OVERVIEW .....	7
2.4 POLITICAL SITUATION .....	7
2.5 CULTURE/ ETHNIC GROUPS.....	8
2.6 STATUS OF WOMEN .....	8
<b>3. HISTORIC OVERVIEW OF MIGRATION</b> .....	<b>10</b>
3.1 MIGRATION PATTERNS FROM AFGHANISTAN TO PAKISTAN AND IRAN PRIOR TO 1978 .....	10
3.2 INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION POST 1978 .....	10
3.2.1 <i>Return Migration</i> .....	12
3.3 INTERNAL MIGRATION.....	12
3.3.1 <i>Internally Displaced Persons</i> .....	12
<b>4. CURRENT MIGRATION PATTERNS- 2001- PRESENT</b> .....	<b>14</b>
4.1 INTERNAL MIGRATION.....	14
4.1.1 <i>Internally Displaced Persons</i> .....	14
4.1.2 <i>Rural to Urban Migration</i> .....	15
4.1.3 <i>National Trafficking</i> .....	16
4.2 INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION .....	16
4.2.1 <i>Refugees</i> .....	16
4.2.2 <i>Circular Migration</i> .....	20
<b>5. THE DIASPORA</b> .....	<b>22</b>
5.1 SIZES OF THE AFGHAN DIASPORA.....	22
5.2 INVOLVEMENT OF THE AFGHAN DIASPORA IN THE RECONSTRUCTION EFFORT .....	24
<b>6. MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT</b> .....	<b>25</b>
6.1 BRAIN DRAIN/ SKILL FLOW .....	25
6.2 REMITTANCES AND DEVELOPMENT .....	26
<b>7. MIGRATION POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES</b> .....	<b>28</b>
7.1 THE MINISTRY OF REFUGEES AND REPATRIATION.....	28
7.2 INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION .....	28
7.3 UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES.....	29
<b>8. MIGRATION RELATIONSHIP WITH THE NETHERLANDS</b> .....	<b>31</b>
8.1 THE NETHERLANDS AND AFGHANISTAN: BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL RELATIONSHIP .....	31
8.2 MIGRATION FLOWS BETWEEN THE NETHERLANDS AND AFGHANISTAN .....	31
8.3 THE AFGHAN COMMUNITY IN THE NETHERLANDS .....	33
<b>9. FUTURE PERSPECTIVES OF MIGRATION</b> .....	<b>36</b>
<b>10. CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>37</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	<b>38</b>

## List of Tables and Figures

TABLE 1: KEY INDICATORS .....	7
TABLE 2: ETHNIC GROUPS IN AFGHANISTAN .....	8
TABLE 3: IDPs TOTAL AND RETURNS: 2001-2008.....	15
TABLE 4: REASON FOR DISPLACEMENT OF CURRENT IDPs (2008).....	15
TABLE 5: ESTIMATED REFUGEE RETURNS.....	17
TABLE 6: REMITTANCES RECEIVED .....	26
FIGURE 1: NUMBER OF AFGHAN REFUGEES: 1979-2001 .....	11
FIGURE 2: NUMBER OF AFGHAN RETURNEES, 1990-2001 .....	12
FIGURE 3: NUMBER OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN AFGHANISTAN, 1985-2001 .....	13
FIGURE 4: NUMBER OF AFGHAN REFUGEES, 2001-2008 .....	17
FIGURE 5: AFGHAN REFUGEES PRIMARY REASON FOR NOT RETURNING TO AFGHANISTAN .....	19
FIGURE 6: REASON CITED FOR TRAVEL TO/ FROM PAKISTAN .....	20
FIGURE 7: AFGHAN IMMIGRATION FLOWS TO THE OECD STATES, 1990-2007 .....	22
FIGURE 8: STOCK OF AFGHAN BORN IN TOP RECEIVING COUNTRIES 2005 (EXCLUDING PAKISTAN AND IRAN).....	23
FIGURE 9: NUMBER OF ASYLUM APPLICATIONS FROM AFGHANISTAN CITIZENS .....	32
FIGURE 11: AFGHAN EMIGRATION FROM THE NETHERLANDS .....	33
FIGURE 12: AFGHAN POPULATION IN THE NETHERLANDS BY AGE AND GENDER, 2008 .....	34
FIGURE 13: AFGHAN POPULATION BY PROVINCE, 2008 .....	34

# 1. Introduction

Afghanistan is home to the largest refugee crises experienced since the inception of the UNHCR. Decades of war have led millions to flee their homes and seek refuge in the neighboring countries of Pakistan and Iran and, for those who were able, in countries further abroad. The number of refugees spiked in 1990 at 6.2 million. The number began to decrease in 1992 with the fall of the government but began to increase again in 1996 with the rise of the Taliban. In 2002, with the fall of the Taliban and the US-led invasion, record numbers of Afghan refugees returned to Afghanistan. An international reconstruction and development initiative began to aid Afghans in rebuilding their country from decades of war.

Reports indicate that change is occurring in Afghanistan, but the progress is slow. The Taliban have regained strength in the second half of this decade, and insurgency and instability are rising. Afghanistan continues to be challenged by underdevelopment, lack of infrastructure, few employment opportunities, and widespread poverty. The slow pace of change has led Afghans to continue migrating in order to meet the needs of their families.

Today refugee movements no longer characterize the primary source of Afghan migration. Migration in search of livelihoods is currently the primary reason for migration, and this occurs through rural-urban migration in Afghanistan or circular migration patterns as Afghans cross into Pakistan and/or Iran. Afghans utilize their social networks to find low-skilled work in the cities or neighboring countries. The highly skilled in Afghanistan often seek to migrate to Western countries as the opportunities in Afghanistan are limited.

Afghans' transnational movements have led to the development of the Afghan Diaspora, which has been essential in providing remittances to families in Afghanistan to meet their daily needs. The Afghan Diaspora has been involved in the reconstruction effort and is a key contributor to development in Afghanistan. The continued engagement of the Diaspora is important to the building of Afghanistan's future.

This paper provides an overview of migration and development in Afghanistan. It will begin with a country profile on Afghanistan (Section 2), followed by a review of historical migration patterns in Afghanistan (Section 3) and a synthesis of current migration patterns in Afghanistan (Section 4). The paper will then move to discuss migration and development in Afghanistan (Section 5), the Afghan Diaspora (Section 6), policies regarding migration in Afghanistan (Section 7), and the migration relationship between the Netherlands and Afghanistan (Section 8). The paper will conclude with an examination of future migration prospects for Afghanistan (Section 9) and a conclusion (Section 10).

## 2. General Country Profile

Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world and has been challenged by decades of war, civil strife, and poverty. Today Afghanistan is central in media attention due to the US-led invasion following the 11 September terrorist attacks, but the country has been in turmoil for much longer. This section will provide a brief overview of the recent history of Afghanistan, the current economic situation, the current political situation, a cultural overview, and the current status of women in the country.

### 2.1 Historical Overview

The modern history of Afghanistan can be divided into four essential periods: pre-1978, 1978-1992, 1992-2001, and post 2001.

#### 2.1.1 Pre 1978

Afghanistan was founded in 1774 by Ahmad Shah Durrani, who unified the Pashtun tribes in the region and created the state (CIA, 2009). The country was ruled by a monarchy and acted as a buffer between the British and Russian empires until it received independence from conjectural British control in 1919 (CIA, 2009). The last King, Zahir Shah, reigned from 1933 to 1973, when he was overthrown by a coup d'état led by his cousin and ex-premier President Mohammed Daoud (Jazayery, 2002). Opposition to Daoud's Government led to a coup in 1978 by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) (Jazayery, 2002).

#### 2.1.2 1978-1992 – Soviet Invasion

The PDPA was a Marxist regime and from 1989 was supported by the Soviet Union. The occupation by the Soviets was viewed in the west as an escalation of the Cold War. The West began to fund millions of dollars--which became billions of dollars--to the resistance forces known as the *Mujahideen* (Jazayery, 2002). The resistance forces operated primarily from Pakistan. In 1986 when Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in the Soviet Union, the Soviets began the process of extricating themselves from Afghanistan, and by 1989 the Soviets had left Afghanistan.

#### 2.1.3 1992-2001 – Taliban Rule

In 1992 the Mujahideen forces overthrew the government of Najibullah. A failure of consensus of the new government led to a civil war from 1992-1996 (Jazayery, 2002). Afghanistan became divided into tribal fiefdoms controlled by armed commanders and warlords (Poppelwell, 2007). The country was in a state of anarchy, and Afghans lived in a state of constant fear of physical and sexual assault (Poppelwell, 2007).

During this time the Taliban emerged, claiming that Afghanistan should be ruled by *Shari'a* law (Islamic law) (Jazayery, 2002). The Taliban received support and funding from Saudi Arabia and Arab individuals in the quest to establish a pure Islamic model state (Poppelwell, 2007). The Taliban swept through Afghanistan, encountering no resistance by the Mujahideen, and were welcomed in many areas as they established relative security in the areas they controlled (Jazayery, 2002). By 1998 the Taliban had captured the majority of the country and established the "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan" (Jazayery, 2002). A Northern Alliance that arose in opposition to the Taliban maintained a government of the "Islamic State of Afghanistan" with Burhanuddin Rabbini as president (Jazayery, 2002). The Taliban Government was only recognized by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia,

and the United Arab Emirates, while the Government of Rabbini maintained an officially-represented seat at the UN (Jazayery, 2002).

After the bombings of the US Embassy in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, the Taliban were asked to stop harboring Osama bin Laden, the alleged leader behind the bombings (Poppelwell, 2007). At their refusal the UN imposed sanctions against the Taliban and Afghanistan in 1999 (Poppelwell, 2007). By this time the Taliban were known for disregarding international law and human rights (Poppelwell, 2007). During this time, killing, pillaging, raping, and ethnic cleansing of individuals occurred across Afghanistan by the Taliban regime (Jazayery, 2002).

#### **2.1.4 Post 2001**

The events of 11 September 2001, led the US to lead Coalition Forces to invade Afghanistan on 7 October, 2001. Within months the military forces had taken control of Afghanistan and declared the fall of the Taliban. The International Security and Assistance Forces (ISAF) in Afghanistan began with 5,000 troops. In 2003 NATO took over the ISAF, which now, due to increased security concerns, is comprised of approximately 50,000 troops coming from all 28 NATO members (NATO, 2009).

In December 2001 an UN-led interim administration was established in Afghanistan under the Bonn Agreement. The Bonn Agreement established a new constitution and the first democratic elections in 2004 (Poppelwell, 2007). Hamid-Karzai became the leader of a broad-based, thirty-member ethnic council that aimed to be multi-ethnic and representative of Afghan society (Poppelwell, 2007). The new administration faced many challenges, and in 2005 the Taliban began to regain strength in Afghanistan.

The increased security challenges led to the London Conference in January 2006 to address the end of the Bonn agreement and the current challenges in Afghanistan. The result of the London Conference was the Afghanistan Compact, which identified a five-year plan for Afghanistan. The Afghanistan Compact is based on three key pillars: "security, governance, the rule of law and human rights; economic and social development; and the cross-cutting issue of counter-narcotics" (Poppelwell, 2007, p. 8). Western Governments have taken on specific areas as a country leads for areas in which they will focus.

The reconstruction process in Afghanistan has been extensive. A total of \$14,775,000,000 US dollars has been contributed to the reconstruction process since 2001 (Livingston, Messera, and Shapiro, 2009). Despite the development efforts, insecurity has increased since 2005, with the Taliban regaining strength. The overall situation in Afghanistan continues to be characterized by conflict and poverty.

## **2.2 Demographics**

A census has not been conducted in Afghanistan since prior to the Soviet invasion in 1978. Thus all demographic information on Afghanistan is based on estimates. In 2009 the CIA World Factbook estimated the population of Afghanistan to be 28.3 million, which was a significant decrease from the previous estimate of 33.6 million. The median age is 17.6 years, and 44.5 percent of the population is between 0-14 years of age (CIA World Factbook, 2009). Fifty-three percent of the population is between 15-64 years of age, and only 2.4 percent is 65 years of age and over (CIA World Factbook, 2009). It is evident that Afghanistan has a young population and high birth rate. The population growth rate for the time period of 2005-2010 was estimated by the United Nations to be 3.9 percent (UN Data, 2009). A country-wide census is scheduled for 2010.

### ***2.3 Economic and Poverty Overview***

Economic progress in Afghanistan is occurring through the reconstruction effort, but the country continues to be one of the least developed and poorest countries in the world. Table 1 provides an overview of key economic and poverty indicators for Afghanistan in 2007. Real GDP growth for 2008-09 decelerated to 2.3 percent from 16.2 percent in 2007-08 (World Bank, 2009). This has been the lowest GDP growth recorded in the post-Taliban period and was due to poor agricultural production (World Bank, 2009). In 2009, however, growth is expected to increase due to a good agricultural harvest (World Bank, 2009).

**Table 1: Key Indicators**

GDP Per Capita (PPP US \$)	1,054
Life Expectancy	43.6
Adult Literacy Rate (% aged 15 and above)	28.0
Combined Gross Enrolment Ratio in Education	50.1
Human Poverty Index Rank	135.0
Probability at birth of not surviving to age 40 (% of cohort)	40.7
Population not using an improved water Source (%)	78.0
Children underweight for age (% under age 5)	39.0
Overseas Development Assistance per Capita (US\$)	146.0

Source: UNDP, 2009

The latest poverty assessment in Afghanistan was conducted in 2005 through the National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA). The findings indicate that the poverty rate was 42 percent, which corresponds to 12 million people living below the poverty line (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2009, p. 14). In addition, 20 percent of the population was slightly above the poverty line, suggesting that a small economic shock could place them below the poverty line (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2009, p. 14). It is evident that widespread poverty continues to be a challenge in Afghanistan.

### ***2.4 Political Situation***

In August 2009, Afghanistan held its second democratic elections (World Bank, 2009). The incumbent President Hamid Karzai was re-elected with 50 percent of the necessary votes; since the election, however, there have been over 2,000 fraud allegations lodged with the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC). The Independent Election Commission announced in October 2009 that its final results indicated less than 50 percent of the votes for Karzai. Thus, a run-off election was scheduled for November between Karzai and the lead opponent. Before the election, however, the opponent withdrew from the race, leaving Karzai as President (World Bank, 2009).

The United Nations Mission to Afghanistan has continued to coordinate international assistance and support the Afghan government in developing good governance. The key aspects of the UN Mission's political mandate include: "preventing and resolving conflicts; building confidence, and promoting national reconciliation; monitoring and advising on the political and human rights situation; investigating and making recommendations relating to human rights violations; maintaining a dialogue with Afghan leaders, political parties, civil society

groups, institutions, and representatives of central, regional and provincial authorities; recommending corrective actions; and undertaking good offices when necessary to further the peace process” (UNAMA, 2009).

The political situation in Afghanistan continues to be complex. In 2009 Transparency International rated Afghanistan 1.3 on the Global Corruption Perceptions Index (Transparency International, 2009). This was the second lowest ranking, with only Somalia receiving a lower score. This suggests a high lack of trust in the government of Afghanistan.

## **2.5 Culture/ Ethnic Groups**

Afghanistan is a traditional and conservative society with large ethnic divisions. Table 2 shows the percentage of the population that belongs to the different ethnic groups.

**Table 2: Ethnic Groups in Afghanistan**

	1970's	2006
<b>Pashtun</b>	39.4	40.9
<b>Tajik</b>	33.7	37.1
<b>Uzbek</b>	8	9.2
<b>Hazara</b>	8	9.2
<b>Turkmen</b>	3.3	1.7
<b>Aimak</b>	4.1	0.1
<b>Baloch</b>	1.6	0.5
<b>Other</b>	1.9	1.4

Source: The Asia Foundation, 2006; Encyclopedia Iranica, 2009

The Pashtuns have generally been the historical majority in Afghanistan. They occupy land in the South and the East and are divided among tribal lines. The Tajiks are primarily Sunni Muslims who are of Persian origin and occupy the Northeast and West of Afghanistan. The Tajiks are often well educated and landowners. The Uzbeks are descendents from the Turks and are primarily involved in agriculture. The Hazaras are primarily Shi'ite Muslims who occupy the infertile highlands in central Afghanistan. The Hazaras are subsistence farmers that have used migration routes for survival for centuries (Robinson and Lipson, 2002).

The vast majority of the population in Afghanistan is Sunni Muslim (87.9 percent). Shi'ia Muslims account for 10.4 percent of the population, and the remaining religious groups are negligible in numbers. Shi'ia Muslims are thus a minority and have faced persecution in Afghanistan.

## **2.6 Status of Women**

Afghanistan's GDI (Gender Development Index) value is 0.310, which is very low (UNDP, 2009). The Human Development Index (HDI) does not account for gender inequality, and the GDI adds this component to the HDI. Afghanistan ranks 155 out of 155 countries measured in the world for its GDI. Indicators such as literacy illustrate this: 43.1 percent of adult males are literate compared to 12.6 percent of adult females (UNDP, 2009).

The culture of Afghanistan is based on traditional gender roles. Traditionally women are seen as embodying the honour of the family (World Bank, 2005). As such, women are given as brides to create peace or to honour a relationship. The role of a wife is to maintain the household and support the husband, which includes

domestic and sexual services. In general a wife meets the husband's needs, and if the wife does not she has dishonoured her family and community (World Bank, 2005).

The legal rights of women in Afghanistan have changed with the political structure. Prior to Taliban rule, the Constitution of Afghanistan guaranteed women equal rights under the law, although local tribes may have had different customs. Under Taliban rule women's rights were severely hindered as they were not permitted to leave their homes unless accompanied by a close male relative, were generally barred from receiving education, and had restricted access to health care and employment. Women were frequently raped and abused during this time. With the fall of the Taliban the situation has improved for women, but there are great differences between the rural and urban situation (World Bank, 2005).

The Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) was established in the Bonn Agreement to promote the advancement of women in Afghanistan. MOWA works in an advocacy role to ensure that policies are implemented for both men and women. In addition MOWA works with NGOs to ensure programs for women are implemented.

Women's rights remain a primary concern in Afghanistan. At present, approximately 60 percent of women are married before the age of 16 (IRIN, 2005). At 44, women in Afghanistan have one of the lowest life expectancies in the world (UNDP, 2009). Women who are widowed are ostracized in rural communities but are often able to make a living in the cities to support themselves and their families. However, female-headed households tend to be primarily represented in the poorest quintiles of Afghan society (World Bank, 2005). The situation for women in the urban centres such as Kabul is becoming more liberal. Education rates of girls in the urban centres are higher than rural areas, and these indicators suggest changes are occurring for women in urban areas. Women's rights are high on the international policy agenda for Afghanistan and a key goal of development aid.

### **3. Historic Overview of Migration**

Migration in Afghanistan has had a long history and has significantly shaped the country's social and cultural landscape (Monsutti, 2007). Historically Afghanistan was a country of trade between the east and the west and a key location on the Silk Road trade route. Migration is thus an integral part of the historical identity of the country. The following chapter presents an overview of the complex migration patterns with a historical perspective.

#### ***3.1 Migration Patterns from Afghanistan to Pakistan and Iran Prior to 1978***

Migration between Afghanistan and Pakistan and Iran has a long history. The migration relationships are rooted in the ethnic ties that span the borders between the countries. For instance, Pashtuns make up 20 percent of the population in Pakistan and 30 percent in Afghanistan. The Pashtuns are separated by the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, which is referred to as the Durand Line. The Durand Line was established during British colonialism to demarcate British India from Afghanistan, and has been acknowledged to be an arbitrary divide of Pashtun land (Monsutti, 2005). Cross-border migration of the Pashtuns between Afghanistan and Pakistan has thus been a way of life. Similarly, the Hazara' of Afghanistan are Shi'ia Muslims, which is the majority religion in Iran (Monsutti, 2005). Hazaras regularly engaged in migration to and from Iran via religious ties. These ethnic and cultural ties led to cross-border migration for decades prior to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

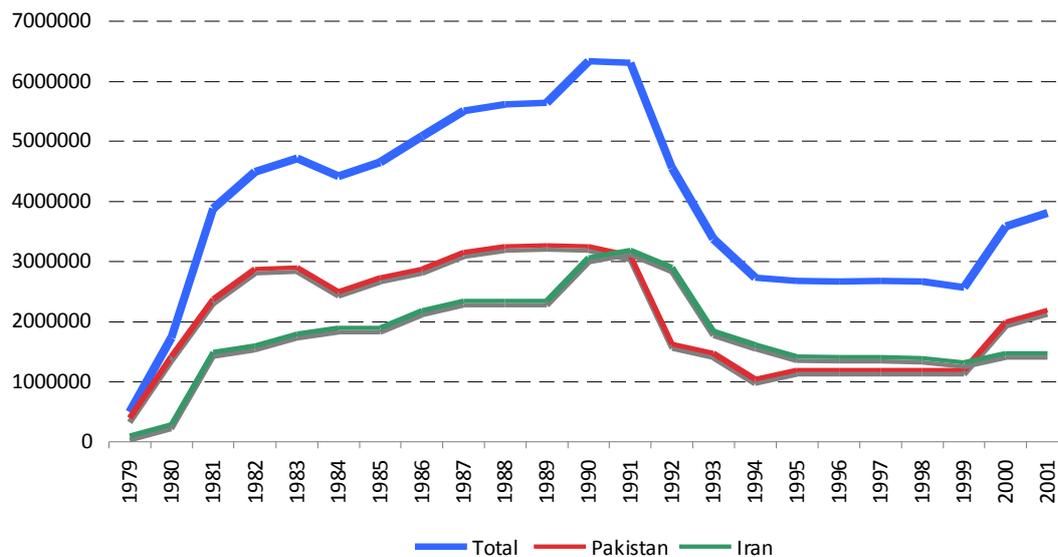
The poor economic position of Afghanistan prior to 1978 led to further economic migration to the better-off states of Pakistan and Iran. Stigter states: "The economic differences between Afghanistan and Pakistan and Iran have long led Afghans to migrate to these countries to find employment and, for Iran, enjoy the benefits of a higher income" (2006, p. 117). In the 1960s and 1970s, industrialization in Afghanistan was minimal, and there were limited opportunities for the newly-educated and growing urban population (Stigter, 2006). A widespread drought in the 1970s led to large-scale crop failure and further migration of many Afghans from north and north-western Afghanistan into Iran (Monsutti, 2006). In addition the oil boom of 1973 caused further increasing numbers of Afghans to cross into Iran and other Middle Eastern countries to capitalize on the labour opportunities (Stigter, 2006). Studies have also confirmed that prior to the Soviet occupation migrants from Northern Afghanistan travelled to Pakistan during the winter, illustrating that seasonal migration occurred between the two countries (Stigter, 2006 from CSSR, 2005).

These pre-established migration movements reveal that social networks were established between Afghanistan and Pakistan and Iran prior to the Soviet Invasion and proceeding wars. Monsutti states that "Channels of pre-established transnational networks exist between Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran- the movement of individuals to seek work, to escape drought or to flee war has been a common experience in Afghanistan" (Monsutti, 2006, p. 6-7). It can thus be deduced that migration to Pakistan and Iran was a natural option for many Afghans.

#### ***3.2 International Migration Post 1978***

International migration movements from Afghanistan since 1978 have primarily been comprised of refugee flows. The vast majority of refugees fled to Pakistan and Iran in the largest refugee crises of the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Figure 1 shows the number of Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran from 1979-2001.

**Figure 1: Number of Afghan Refugees: 1979-2001**



Source: UNHCR, 2009

Figure 1 illustrates that refugee outflows from Afghanistan began in 1979 with the Soviet invasion. The outflows continued to increase during the Soviet occupation, when civil war broke out between the US-funded Mujahideen and the Soviet-backed Najibullah. Flows during this time spanned social classes and ethnic groups as the initial reason for migration was primarily protection-led. Reasons such as a lack of economic opportunities, devastation of infrastructure and trade networks, limited access to social services such as healthcare and education, and political and social reasons also contributed to migration flows (Stigter, 2006). Migration was thus not only a means of escaping conflict but also a response to limited livelihood opportunities (Stigter, 2006).

The peak of the refugee flows occurred in 1990 with 6.2 million Afghan refugees. This occurred after the Soviet withdrawal and when the Najibullah still remained in power (Jazayery, 2002, p. 240). In the 1990s drought contributed to continuing refugee flows from Afghanistan (Stigter, 2006). The fall of the Najibullah in 1992 led to large-scale repatriation. With the Taliban gaining power in 1996, however, the number of refugees began to increase again to approximately 3.8 million refugees in 2001.

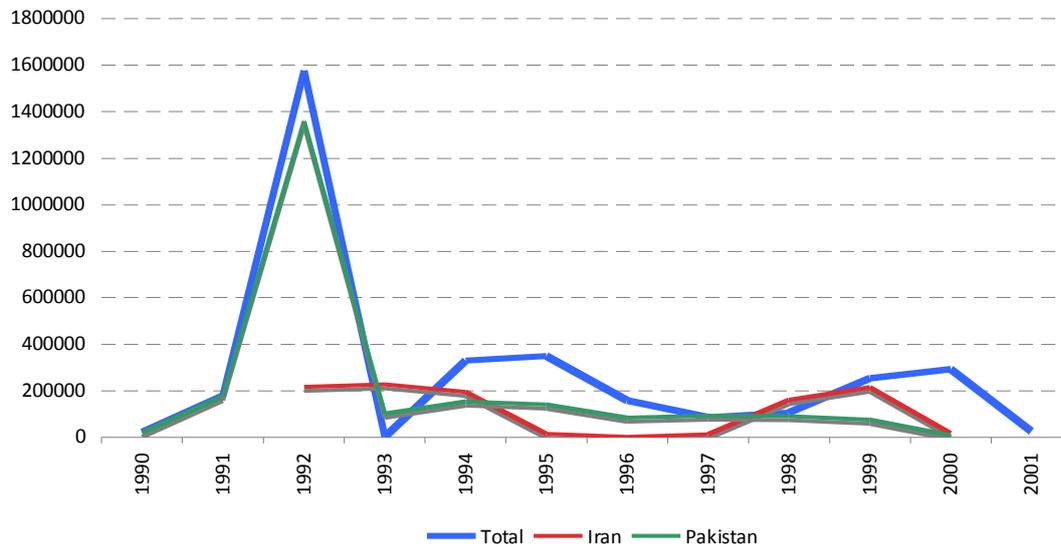
During the initial refugee outflows in 1979, both Pakistan and Iran warmly welcomed the refugees under a banner of Muslim solidarity (Monsutti, 2006). While Iran is a signatory and Pakistan is not to the 1951 Convention of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, both countries welcomed the refugees. In Iran the refugees were given identification cards, allowed access to work, health care, food, free primary and secondary education, and were free to settle where they chose (Monsutti, 2006). Pakistan created an agreement with the United Nations to provide services to the Afghan refugees and received financial support from the international community to do so (Monsutti, 2006).

The era of welcoming Afghan refugees began to change in 1989. In Pakistan refugees were still welcomed from 1989-2001 but were not provided with the same level of services and facilitation (Monsutti, 2006). In Iran support also decreased, and by the 1990s refugees no longer received identity cards and assistance (Monsutti, 2006). The position of the host countries became increasingly unfriendly post-2001, which will be discussed in the next section of this paper.

### 3.2.1 Return Migration

Prior to 1990 the number of Afghans returning to their home country was trivial. Figure 2 shows the number of Afghan returnees from 1990-2001.

**Figure 2: Number of Afghan Returnees, 1990-2001**



Source: UNHCR, 2009

The Mujahideen took over the government in 1992, and as a result nearly 2 million refugees returned to Afghanistan. By 1997 an estimated 4 million refugees had returned from Pakistan and Iran (Stigter, 2006). Simultaneously, however, conflicts between rival Mujahideen groups dissuaded many refugees from returning and created new refugees and IDPs.

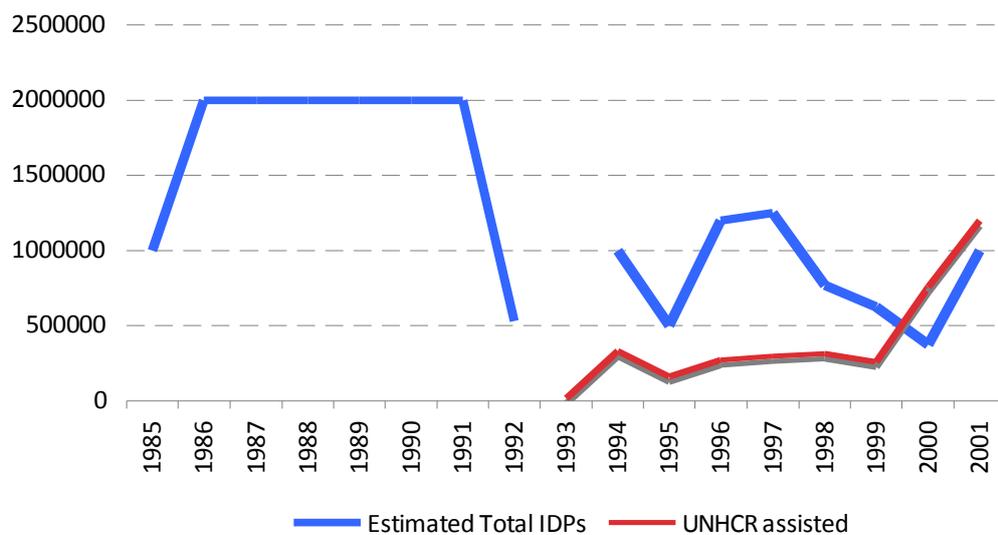
### 3.3 Internal Migration

The primary source of internal migration in Afghanistan was internally displaced persons (IDPs).

#### 3.3.1 Internally Displaced Persons

Internal displacement flows have followed a similar trajectory as refugee flows. The exact number of IDPs is not known, and Figure 3 shows the estimated number of IDPs in Afghanistan from 1985-2001. Generally those who are internally displaced do not have the means to cross an international border. IDPs in Afghanistan had access to very few services during this period. The UNHCR's capacity in Afghanistan began to increase after 1992, as is illustrated in Figure 3 by the red line. From 1995 onward the two lines start to converge as the number of IDPs assisted by UNHCR increases and the total number of IDPs decreases.

**Figure 3: Number of Internally Displaced Persons in Afghanistan, 1985-2001**



Source: UNHCR, 2009

By 2001 the number of IDPs had significantly increased to 1.2 million. The number of IDPs in Afghanistan will be further examined in the next chapter.

## 4. Current Migration Patterns- 2001- Present

Current migration patterns in Afghanistan are complex and multifaceted. Since 2001 Afghanistan has witnessed the largest movement of refugee return in UNHCR's history (Monsutti, 2008). These flows have been a mixture of voluntary and forced return of refugees who had been outside of Afghanistan for varying periods. The majority of returnees are from Pakistan. Afghan refugees have maintained ties with Pakistan, and now cross-border labour migration between Afghanistan and Pakistan is increasing. In addition to international flows, the numbers of IDPs have decreased in Afghanistan since 2001 as IDPs return to their regions of origin. Finally, within this picture there are large flows of rural-urban migration as returnees and non-returnees find limited opportunities in rural areas and move to the cities in search of work. All of these flows are occurring simultaneously and present a complex picture of current migration patterns and flows. Each of these areas will be addressed in the following section.

### ***4.1 Internal Migration***

Internal migration flows in Afghanistan have been increasing in the post-Taliban period. As refugees and migrants return to Afghanistan, they do not necessarily end their migration cycle. Returnees may continue to migrate internally in search of livelihoods and opportunities. The internal migration flows in Afghanistan are comprised of IDPs, rural to urban migration, and trafficking.

#### **4.1.1 Internally Displaced Persons**

Internal displacement in Afghanistan has been understudied, and information is limited to that available from the UNHCR. In 2004 the UNHCR conducted a data profiling of IDPs in UNHCR-assisted camps, and in 2008 the UNHCR created a national profile of IDPs in Afghanistan. Statistics regarding IDPs are estimates<sup>1</sup>.

Table 3 shows the number of IDPs and IDP returnees from 2001 to 2008. At the fall of the Taliban in 2001, there were approximately 1.2 million IDPs in Afghanistan, a significant number of which returned to their places of origin spontaneously in 2002 (UNHCR, 2008, p. 6). In 2008 IDP returns were negligible due to continued insecurity, inter-tribal and personal conflict, landlessness and drought, and lack of job opportunities and basic services in rural areas (UNHCR, 2008).

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<sup>1</sup> The UNHCR identifies an inconsistency in the statistics as some statistics measure the number of families and individuals and some only measure the number of families. In the latter case, the number of families was multiplied by six to get the number of individuals, although it is known that many families are much larger than six (2008, p.6)

**Table 3: IDPs Total and Returns: 2001-2008**

Year	IDPs		IDP Returnees	
	Total	Assisted	Total	Assisted
2001	1,200,000			
2002	665,200		753,300	
2003	184,300			
2004	159,500		27,400	
2005	143,000		17,000	8,600
2006	129,300	129,300	10,400	10,400
2007	153,700	153,700	8,000	8,000
2008	230,700	230,700	6,500	4,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,865,700</b>	<b>513,700</b>	<b>822,600</b>	<b>31,000</b>

Source: UNHCR Global Reports, 2001-2008

Of the current IDPs (235,000) the UNHCR identifies 132,000 as in situations of protracted displacement (2008). Table 4 shows the reasons for displacement of the current IDP population. These numbers do not include those who are invisible IDPs or urban, unidentified IDPs. UNHCR estimates that the actual number of IDPs in Afghanistan is substantially larger than the numbers suggest (2008, p. 18).

**Table 4: Reason for Displacement of Current IDPs (2008)**

Reason for Displacement	No. of Families	No. of Individuals
Protracted	31,501	166,153
New Drought affected	1,083	6,598
New Conflict Affected	1,749	9,901
Returnees in Displacement	8,737	52,422
Battle-affected	127	759
<b>Total</b>	<b>43,197</b>	<b>235,833</b>

Source: UNHCR, 2008

Since 2007 the return of IDPs has continued to decrease due to increased instability in the country, drought, landlessness, and the spread of conflict and insurgency areas (IDMC, 2008). Disputes are arising between IDPs and locals, as in Afghan culture if you are not born in the region you do not belong there (IDMC, 2008). Options for IDPs appear to be limited as they are often not welcomed in the regions where they are seeking protection.

#### 4.1.2 Rural to Urban Migration

Urbanization is rapidly occurring in Afghanistan as returnees settle in the cities and people migrate from rural communities to urban centres. Approximately 30 percent of returnees settle in Kabul (Stigter, 2006). The population of Kabul in 2001 was roughly 500,000, and it had grown to over 3 million by 2007 (IRIN, 2007). The urban centres do not have the infrastructure or resources to meet the needs of the large inflows of migrants, but research suggests that the difficult situations in the cities are better than rural areas.

In 2005 the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit conducted a study on rural to urban migration (Opel, 2005). A total of 500 migrants were interviewed in the cities of Kabul, Herat, and Jalalabad. The majority of migrants were male (89 percent) and the average age of migrants was 31 years (p. 4). Males tend to migrate to support their families, and females migrate when they have lost their husbands or have been ostracized by their community and have no means of supporting themselves in rural areas. The majority did not own productive

assets in their village (71.2 percent), although 43 percent owned a house in their village (p. 8). The primary reasons for migration were the lack of work in the village and better opportunities in town (42%), followed by lack of work in the village (38.2%), and insecurity (16.3%) (p. 11). The majority of migrants made the journey on their own (70.7%) and paid for the journey from their savings (p.14). Migration to urban areas is expensive, and the poorest of the poor cannot afford the journey.

Once in the cities, the majority of respondents were employed in low-skilled day labour work, and respondents reported working 16 out of the past 30 days on average (p. 20). Social networks were essential to people finding work, as 89 percent of skilled workers and 60 percent of unskilled workers reported receiving assistance from a relative, friend, or neighbour (p. 20). Incomes in the cities were low but were higher than what individuals could earn in the rural areas. The majority of urban migrants remitted money to their family in rural areas, which they carried with them when they returned or sent through family or friends. None of the urban migrants used the *Hawala* (see Section 6) system, which was reported to be too expensive for them. The majority of migrants reported planning to settle in the city (55%) (p. 26). Overall, the majority did improve their economic situation through migration (61.9% for males and 80.9% for females) (p. 27).

The large-scale migration to urban centers appears to be a trend that will continue. It is estimated that urban centers are now accounting for 30 percent of the population in Afghanistan (Opel, 2005). The rapid urbanization has shifted rural poverty to urban poverty (Stigter, 2006), and many challenges remain for the cities in managing the rapid growth.

### **4.1.3 National Trafficking**

In 2003 the IOM in Afghanistan conducted a study on trafficking of Afghan women and children. Research on trafficking in Afghanistan is difficult due to the lack of data available in all areas of Afghanistan, but data is increasingly difficult to collect due to the fear of reporting trafficking-related crimes and the shame associated with such crimes. The IOM reports that trafficking occurs in four ways in Afghanistan. The first is through prostitution, which is believed to be occurring in Kabul but is not reported because prostitution is strictly prohibited in an Islamic state. The second is forced labour services, which occurs in the form of forced marriages of women and girls. The third is servitude, which is either sexual or domestic, and occurs with both boys and girls as young as 4 years old who are taken and sexually abused. Finally, trafficking for the purpose of organ removal has been reported, but there is no evidence to substantiate these claims. It can thus be inferred that trafficking of persons is occurring in Afghanistan, but the degree and forms of trafficking are unknown (IOM, 2003).

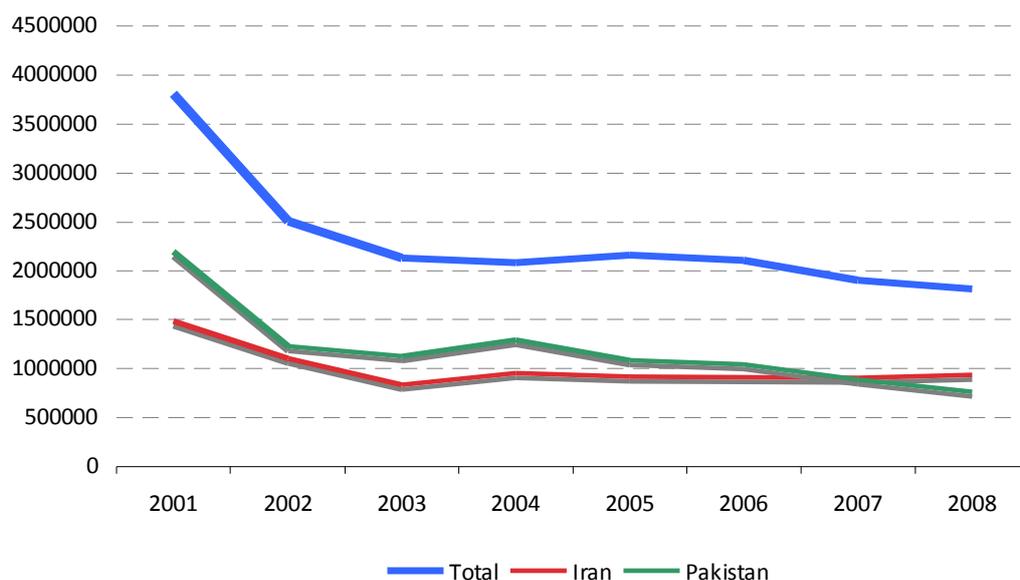
## **4.2 International Migration**

Afghanistan has had large international migration flows since the fall of the Taliban, primarily from refugee returns. This section will discuss refugee return since 2001 and the emergence of circular migration systems between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

### **4.2.1 Refugees**

The number of Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran has continually decreased since 2001. Figure 4 shows the number of Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran from 2001-2008.

**Figure 4: Number of Afghan Refugees, 2001-2008**



Source: UNHCR, 2009

Migration flows in Afghanistan since 2001 have been comprised primarily of refugee return flows. Statistics regarding return flows vary by source. Table 5 shows estimated return flows from the UNHCR. Kronenfeld estimates that in 2002 there were 2,153,382 refugee returns, which presents a substantial difference from the table (2008, p. 48). It is widely recognized, however, that capturing flows of people at such high volumes presents logistical challenges.

**Table 5: Estimated Refugee Returns**

Year	Pakistan		Iran		Various		Total	
	Total	Assisted	Total	Assisted	Total	Assisted	Total Returnees	Total Assisted
2001	8,000		18,000				<b>26,000</b>	
2002	1,539,600		252,800		9,060		<b>1,801,460</b>	
2003	375,500	343,100	269,400	142,300			<b>644,900</b>	485,400
2004	424,500	383,300	515,200	377,600			<b>939,700</b>	760,900
2005	461,100	449,400	289,600	63,600			<b>750,700</b>	513,000
2006	14,300	133,300	243,600	5,300	700	700	<b>258,600</b>	139,300
2007	365,700	357,600	7,500	7,500	700	700	<b>373,900</b>	365,800
2008	274,200	274,200	3,700	3,700	600	600	<b>278,500</b>	278,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,462,900</b>	<b>1,940,900</b>	<b>1,599,800</b>	<b>600,000</b>	<b>11,060</b>	<b>2,000</b>	<b>5,073,760</b>	<b>2,542,900</b>

Source: UNHCR Global Reports, 2001-2008

The number of refugee returns from 2002 indicates that a higher number of individuals returned than were thought to be residing in Afghanistan and Iran. Turton and Marsden (2002) state:

“In January 2002, UNHCR issues a draft planning document for the “Return and Reintegration of Afghan Refugees and Internally Displaced People” over a three-year period, in which it estimated that there were 2.2 million Afghan refugees living in Pakistan and 1.5 million in Iran. It was envisaged that, during the course of 2002 and with the assistance of UNHCR, 400,000 refugees would return from Pakistan, and the same number would return from Iran. Approximately the same numbers were expected to return in 2003 and 2004” (p. 19).

It is evident from Table 5 that the number of returnees in 2002 alone (1.8 million) was more than double the initial UNHCR estimates.

One reason cited for the large numbers of returnees was the issue of ‘recyclers’ from Pakistan. A ‘recycler’ is a refugee that registers with the Voluntary Repatriation Centre in Pakistan, crosses the border to Afghanistan to receive their cash grant, food, and other items, then returns via an alternative route to Pakistan and engages in the process again (Turton and Marsden, 2002, p. 20). In Iran recyclers were not very present as the distance it takes to return to Iran is much greater, the cash grant and return package was far less substantial, and in Iran it took on average of one month to get a Voluntary Repatriation form, whereas in Pakistan the form was issued the same day (Turton and Marsden, 2002). The issue of ‘recyclers’ was virtually resolved by the fall of 2002, as UNHCR received iris-scanning technology that made recyclers identifiable (Kronenfeld, 2008). The issue of recyclers could thus be a contributor to the high statistics but is not the only source.

Kronenfeld states that one reason for the discrepancy is that there appears to have been a gross underestimation of the refugee population in Pakistan.

“UNHCR estimated in the middle of 2001 that there were two million Afghans living in Pakistan (and one million in Iran). But three years later, after the return of nearly three million Afghans, the census shows that over three million still remain in Pakistan- well over the initial 2001 estimate” (Kronenfeld, 2008, p. 49-50).

It appears that the growth rate of the refugee population that fled in the late 1970s had not been factored into the statistics. The growth rate of the Afghan refugee population in 2005 was estimated at 3 percent. Furthermore, 19.4 percent of the refugee population was under the age of five, and 55 percent was under the age of 18 (p. 49). Half of the population of Afghan refugees in Pakistan was thus born in exile.

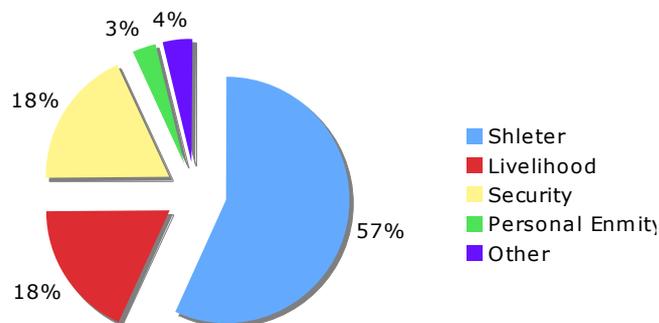
The individuals who did return were not from the UNHCR camps. Returnees from Pakistan were those living in urban areas, not the camps, and thus not necessarily included in the general refugee statistics (Kronenfeld, 2008). Turton and Marsden (2002) hypothesize that the majority of returnees in 2002 were those who were having difficulty making ends meet, “from urban areas of Pakistan, where they had been surviving on low and erratic incomes from daily labour” (p. 2). Returnees from Iran had been there for less than five years (Stigter, 2006) and thus were less socially integrated than refugees who had been there for longer. It is generally recognized that refugees who have been outside their country of origin for longer periods of time have more economic and social ties in the host country and weaker economic and social ties to their country of origin, making return more difficult (Stigter, 2006).

Return after 2002 from Pakistan and Iran was influenced by “asylum-fatigue” in the host countries. Both host countries had at that time been dealing with a protracted refugee situation and were hosting approximately 20 percent of the world refugee population. The political climate for refugees in the host countries after the fall of the Taliban became increasingly difficult. Both Iran and Pakistan, albeit Iran more aggressively, began to forcibly deport refugees: “From 2002 to the end of December, 2005, a total of 271, 508 individuals were deported from

Iran in comparison to 5,347 individuals from Pakistan” (Stigter, 2006, p. 113 from UNHCR, 2006). People without papers in Iran were taken by the police and forcibly deported, and in 2001 Iran passed legislation imposing heavy fines on employers employing illegal residents. In 2008 the Government of Pakistan began to officially close refugee camps and deport refugees. The camps were destroyed for urban land use. These measures are expected to contribute to the continued flow of returnees.

Since 2005, however, the flow of returnees has tapered off despite the fact that millions of refugees still reside in Pakistan and Iran. According to the 2005 census of Afghan Refugees in Pakistan, 51 percent of refugees remaining were long-stayers who had arrived in Pakistan before 1981 (Government of Pakistan, 2005, p. 19 in Kronenfeld, 2008, p 51-52). Figure 5 illustrates the primary reasons cited by refugees for not returning to Afghanistan.

**Figure 5: Afghan Refugees Primary Reason for Not Returning to Afghanistan**



Source: Kronenfeld, 2008, p. 55

In addition to the reasons cited above, the political situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated since 2005, which deters people from returning.

Return to Afghanistan has been geographically uneven. Approximately 30 percent of returnees have settled in Kabul (Stigter, 2006, p. 114). There has been minimal return to the south and southeast due to insecurity in those areas (Stigter, 2006). In 2008 returnees accounted for 16 percent of the total population, which is as high as 32 percent in the east and 20 percent in the central region (UNCHR, 2008).

The issue of refugee return in Afghanistan still presents many challenges. The underdevelopment of the country, especially in rural areas, has led to a severe lack of basic infrastructure. High levels of poverty are abundant across the country. In retrospect, analysts have suggested that the high levels of return were too fast for Afghanistan’s absorption rate and that further return should not be the priority at this time (Stigter and Monsutti, 2005). The country needs to be able to meet the needs of the current population before it can absorb further returnees. On the other hand, refugees are increasingly less welcome in Pakistan and Iran despite the fact that they

fill low-level jobs and contribute to the economies in both countries. The protracted refugee situation is thus continuing in an environment of competing geo-political interests.

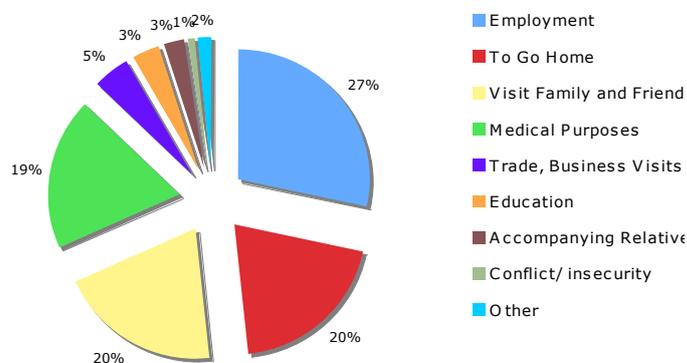
#### 4.2.2 Circular Migration

Circular migration is arguably the primary form of migration presently occurring between Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is important to note from the previous section that return migration of refugees does not necessarily mean the end of the migration cycle (Monsutti, 2008). Furthermore, in Mosutti’s research with refugees in Pakistan and Iran, it became evident that the majority of refugees had returned to Afghanistan to see the conditions for themselves before making the decision not to return (2004). This suggests the occurrence of informal circular migration processes.

In 2008 the UNHCR commissioned a study on cross-border movements between Pakistan and Afghanistan (Altai Consulting, 2009). The study revealed that cross-border migration is occurring at substantially higher levels than anticipated in movements of circular migration based on employment, social relations, and receiving essential services such as health care and education. The study was based on interviews with 1,007 migrants crossing to Pakistan, 1,016 migrants crossing to Afghanistan, and a counting exercise of people crossing the border. The counting exercises revealed that in an average week in one morning or afternoon, 11,297 people entered and 16,257 people exited Afghanistan. On a given day official numbers would show 138 exits, and the counting would show 23,934 exits, illustrating that official records substantially under-represent cross-border flows (Altai Consulting, 2009).

The survey portion of the study provided a clear picture of the types and reasons for cross-border migration. The vast majority of the migrants were males traveling alone (75.3 percent) (p. 35). The results indicate that 81.3 percent of interviewees traveled back and forth on a regular basis (p. 30); 85.9 percent have lived in Pakistan for over a year (p. 31); 89.5 percent were planning to spend less than one year in Pakistan, and 19.7 percent had permanent residence in Pakistan (p. 33). Figure 6 shows the primary reason cited for their travel to or from Pakistan. The majority of migrants (64.7 percent) were planning to work in low-skilled professions (construction and retail) in Pakistan. A lack of employment opportunities in Afghanistan was driving them to find temporary work in Pakistan that would allow them to meet the basic needs of themselves and their families.

**Figure 6: Reason cited for travel to/ from Pakistan**



Source: Altai Consulting, 2009, p. 33

This study supports the research of Monsutti by confirming that Afghans are currently migrating to Pakistan on a temporary basis as a livelihood strategy or to maintain social networks. Monsutti states that, "After many years the migratory movements are highly organized, and the transnational networks become a major, even constitutive, element in the social, cultural, and economic life of Afghans" (Monsutti, 2008, p. 62). It also supports Monsutti's argument that return migration does not mean the end of the migration cycle, as the results indicate that a large number of these migrants were returnees. The current migration processes occurring between Pakistan and Afghanistan are a way of life for Afghans as their social network and economic opportunities span the border.

## 5. The Diaspora

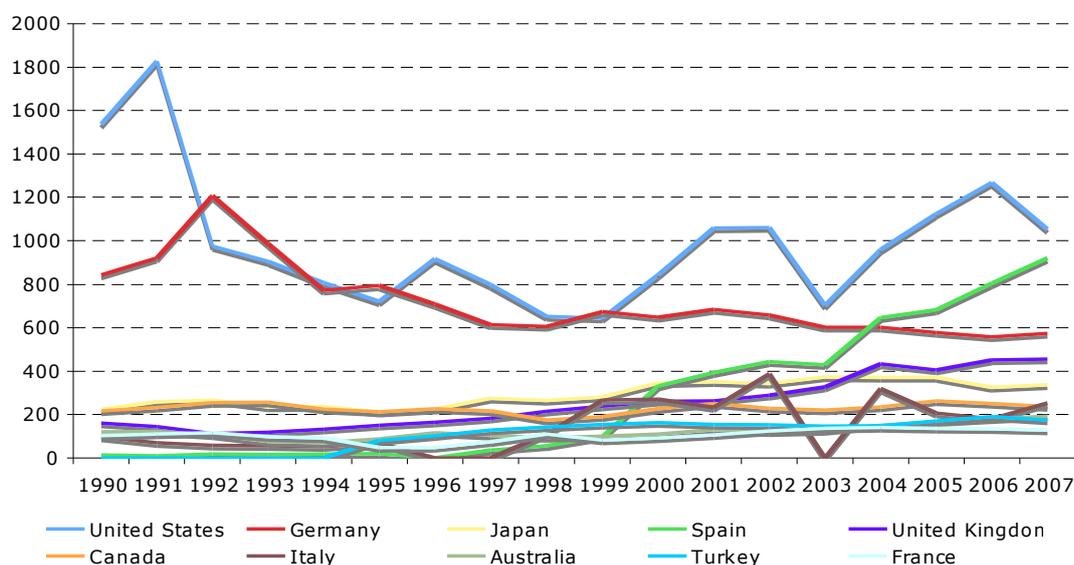
Three decades of conflict and displacement have led to the emergence of the Afghan Diaspora. The Afghan Diaspora grew out of two waves of emigration. The first wave was from 1980-1996 (Wescott, 1996). This wave was primarily comprised of the upper classes and individuals opposed to the communist regime (Wescott, 1996). The second wave occurred from 1996-2001 with the rise of the Taliban (Wescott, 1996). This wave was primarily comprised of minority groups, such as Shi'ia Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus, and with a large representation of women and children (Wescott, 1996). Today the Afghan Diaspora is a highly transnational group with money, goods, information, and people circulating between and among members in different continents around the world (Braakman, 2005).

### 5.1 Sizes of the Afghan Diaspora

It is important to distinguish between the “near Diaspora” and the “wider Diaspora” in the case of Afghanistan. Many Afghan refugees are located in the neighbouring countries of Iran and Pakistan while others have moved further abroad. The former are termed the “near Diaspora” and the latter the “wider Diaspora” (Koser and Van Hear, 2003). This section will refer to the Wider Diaspora.

Figure 7 illustrates Afghan immigration flows to the top ten receiving OECD countries from 1990-2007.

**Figure 7: Afghan Immigration flows to the OECD states, 1990-2007**

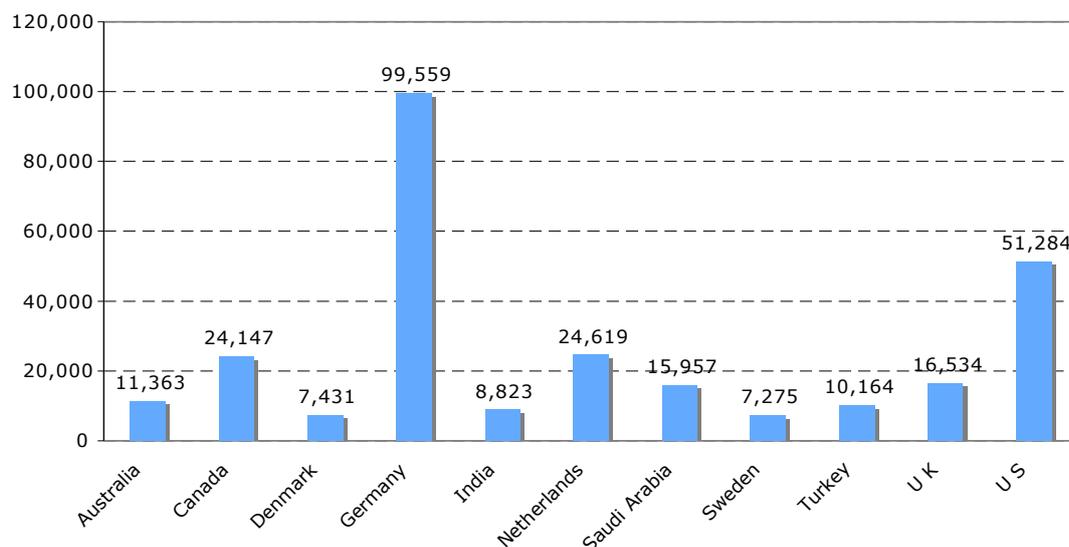


Source: OECD, 2009.

It is evident from Figure 7 that the United States and Germany have been the primary destinations for Afghan migrants.

The total estimated size of the Afghan Diaspora is 2,031,678 (including near and wide Diaspora's) (World Bank, 2007). Figure 8 shows the stock of the Afghan-born migrants in the top ten receiving countries of the wider Diaspora.

**Figure 8: Stock of Afghan Born in top Receiving Countries 2005 (excluding Pakistan and Iran)**



Source: World Bank, 2007

It is evident that the largest concentration of Afghans is in Germany, followed by the United States. In the 1970s Germany had the most liberal asylum policies, which attracted large numbers of refugees. Germany continues to be a country of preference, as it has a large Afghan population (Braakman, 2005).

Within the Afghan community in Germany, Hamburg is home to 22,000 Afghans and is known as ‘The Kabul of Europe’ (Braakman, 2005). The Afghan Diaspora in Germany is well organized and has a number of associations (Zunzer, 2004). A key means of exchange for the Afghan community is through the online website of “Afghan German Online” (<http://www.afghan-german.de/>) (Zunzer, 2004). Furthermore, the German Afghan community was highly engaged in the Bonn process in 2002.

According to the 2006 US Census there were 65,972 Afghans who were born in Afghanistan in the US. The Afghan Embassy in the US, however, estimates that there are 300,000 Afghans in the US (The Embassy of Afghanistan, 2009). The reason for the large disparity between these numbers is unknown. According to the US Census, 53 percent of the Afghan population entered before 1990, 28.3 percent entered between 1990-2000, and 18.5 percent entered since 2000 (US Census Bureau, 2006). The majority of Afghans in the US are thus from the first wave of Afghan migrants. The median Afghan household wage is US\$34,973, which is \$9,423 below the national average, and 27.7 percent of Afghan households are at the national poverty rate, compared to the national average of 9.8 percent (US Census Bureau, 2006). The reasons for the high rates of poverty are unknown. The Afghan population in the US is heavily concentrated in the San Francisco area, Northern Virginia, and Los Angeles (Robson and Lipson, 2002).

The Afghan population in the US is diverse, reflecting the various ethnic backgrounds of Afghanistan. The majority of Afghans in the US are of Pashtun and Tajik origin, with a community of Uzbek minority in New York and small Hazara communities scattered around the country (Robson and Lipson, 2002). As such, there are Sunni Muslims, Shi’ia Muslims, and Ismailis in the United States (Robson and Lipson, 2002).

## ***5.2 Involvement of the Afghan Diaspora in the Reconstruction Effort***

The Afghan Diaspora has been highly involved in the reconstruction effort. Zunzer (2004) states:

“The diaspora played a significant political role in organizing a peaceful transition after the NATO military intervention in 2001/2002. Diaspora members played an important role during the Petersberg Talks, in the ongoing Bonn process of political transition, and as connectors between the international community, the national administrations, international civil society and the private sector” (p. 40).

Members of the Diaspora received Ministerial positions in the interim government established from the Bonn Agreement, and President Hamid Karzai himself had spent significant time in Pakistan and the US (Van Hear, 2002).

At the end of the Bonn Agreement however, the Diaspora was split into four main groups according to differing political agendas and alliances (Van Hear, 2002). The first was the Northern Alliance, or United Front, which represented Kabul (Van Hear, 2002). The second was the Rome-based delegation representing the former King, Zahir Shah (Van Hear, 2002). The third was a group from Cyprus of intellectuals that were supported by Iran and had met in Cyprus for the past four years to discuss future options of Afghanistan (Van Hear, 2002). The final group was Peshawar, which was primarily comprised of Pashtun refugees (Van Hear, 2002). These factions illustrate that divisions continued to exist among the Diaspora.

Despite the factions in the Diaspora, Afghans have come together to assist in the reconstruction effort. There are four key programmes that were established to engage the Afghan Diaspora. First, the World Bank allocated US \$1.5 million for a fund to hire qualified Afghans to return to Afghanistan and assist in the reconstruction efforts. Secondly, the World Bank established the *World Bank Afghanistan Directory of Expertise*, which is a database of skilled Afghans and non-Afghans with experience in Afghanistan. This database has served to connect many qualified individuals with projects in Afghanistan. Third, the IOM established a *Temporary Return of Qualified Nationals* programme to engage the Afghan Diaspora in returning temporarily to work on training and capacity-building projects. Finally, the Swiss Peace Foundation has established an Internet forum to create dialogue between civil society, the Diaspora, and government regarding peace in Afghanistan (Zunzer, 2004).

In addition to these programmes, Afghan Diaspora groups are uniting on their own to build networks among themselves in an effort to get involved in the reconstruction effort. The Afghan Diaspora in the US, for instance, has made significant contributions to the educational sector in Afghanistan; “With investments in school construction and teaching, 6 million Afghan children were able to register for school, 34% of them being female” (The Embassy of Afghanistan, 2009). Both the financial and intellectual investments of the Diaspora in Afghanistan appear to be an integral piece in the reconstruction effort.

## 6. Migration and Development

Transnational migration networks provide an essential contribution to development in Afghanistan. Skill flow out of Afghanistan has occurred for decades, but with the fall of the Taliban it appears that small amounts of skill flow are being attracted to return to the country. The Diaspora in the west provides essential remittances that provide families with the funds needed to meet daily needs. Migration has been employed as a livelihood strategy in Afghanistan for decades, and through transnational networks Afghanistan is receiving needed support for development and reconstruction.

### *6.1 Brain Drain/ Skill Flow*

The skill flow out of Afghanistan presents a challenge in the reconstruction process. In the 1980s and 1990s the majority of Afghans who migrated to Europe, North America, or Australia were the country's elite from the upper and middle urban classes (Monsutti, 2008, p. 68). This group had the skills to seek better opportunities in the west, and this resulted in a brain drain from Afghanistan. In 2000 the World Bank cited the skilled emigration rate to be 13.2 percent and the emigration rate of physicians to be 9.1 percent (2009). This data, however, tells little of the current situation. In 2005 the World Health Organization stated that there were a total of 5,970 physicians and 14,930 nurses and midwives in Afghanistan (2009). That is roughly one physician per 5,000 people in Afghanistan. An opinion piece in the New York Times in 2006 stated that physicians in Afghanistan made roughly \$100 per month and university professors earned less than \$2 per month (Younossi, 9 Feb 2006). The same piece stated, "When I asked university students whether they want to stay in Afghanistan or go to another country, an overwhelming majority said they want to emigrate". The underdevelopment of Afghanistan is resulting in a continued skill flow from the country.

Simultaneously, however, Afghans are returning to the country to assist in the reconstruction process. One example is as follows:

"In Afghanistan, the transitional government identified a number of qualified persons in the justice sector, because under the Taliban rule the country had lost most of its judges. IOM was called by the transitional government to rebuild the educational and justice sectors. Some 4,000 qualified nationals enrolled in the database, giving their availability, and 400 persons went to Afghanistan. Thus, there was a need to develop modalities that would use these skills in the best possible way and through projects that made sure they do not lose the possibility to return in the host country" (Dall'Oglio in Roison, 2004).

Data does not exist on the number of skills flowing in and out of the country, but anecdotal information suggests the flow is occurring in both directions. Due to the large deficit of skills created over the last two decades, however, it appears that without a significant inflow of skills that counteracts both historical and contemporary emigration, there will continue to be a skill deficit. A lack of skilled personnel contributes to continued underdevelopment, particularly in key areas such as the health and education sectors.

## 6.2 Remittances and Development

Remittances provide a key livelihood for migrants' families remaining in Afghanistan. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)<sup>2</sup> estimated in 2006 that the annual remittance flows to Afghanistan were valued at US \$2,485 million or 29.6 percent of GDP. This includes both formal and informal remittance flows. Alessandro Monsutti (2004) concludes from his research with Afghan migrants that an estimate of annual remittances to Afghanistan in 1995 would have been \$50 million dollars (p. 220). Even if this not correct, Monsutti argues that the overall amount remitted would certainly exceed that of international humanitarian assistance (2004).

In 2003 the World Bank conducted a National Risk and Vulnerability assessment of 11,200 households in Afghanistan. Table 6 shows the percentage of households receiving remittances, and for remittance-receiving households the source country of the flows and the average per capita value of the households are presented. The data is divided into quintiles based on the economic status of the household, with Q1 representing the poorest households and Q5 the richest households. Table 6 highlights that the majority of remittances are received from family members outside of Pakistan and Iran, which aligns with previous data in this report stating that individuals in Pakistan and Iran often cannot afford to send remittances. Table 6 also highlights a large discrepancy in the per capita value of remittances between the richest and poorest households, with the richest households receiving 247 percent more.

**Table 6: Remittances Received**

	Q1 (poorest)	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5 (richest)	Average
Percentage of Households Receiving Remittances	10.5	10.1	12.8	18.3	23.2	<b>15.2</b>
From Pakistan/ Iran (%)	35	32	32	28	27	<b>31</b>
From Other (%)	65	68	68	72	73	<b>69</b>
Amount of Remittances per capita (receiving households, US \$)	19	28	33	38	47	<b>34</b>

Source: World Bank, 2005 (p. 174)

Of the families receiving remittances, the remittances account for 20 percent of their expenditure on average, but for the lowest quintile those remittances account for 30 percent of expenditure (World Bank, 2005, p. 25).

Remittances are a vital source of livelihoods for families receiving them. In the majority of cases, remittances are used to meet basic needs such as food, clothing, and medicine (Monsutti, 2006). The benefits of the remittances are generally short-term, creating a dependency cycle (Monsutti, 2006). Few remittance receivers are able to accumulate assets such as constructing a house, purchasing land, and saving for the mahr and weddings (Stigter, 2006), and very few are able to purchase luxury goods such as a car, camera, or televisions (Monsutti, 2006). Remittances for the most part are essential to maintaining livelihoods for those who have returned or have not migrated. Remittances in Afghanistan do not only have a crucial economic component but also have a significant social component.

<sup>2</sup> The methodology for this estimate was based on tabulations from numerous surveys previously conducted by other organizations. For details on the methodology see: <http://www.ifad.org/remittances/maps/index.htm>

The primary remittance sending mechanism in Afghanistan is the *Hawala* system, which is based on social networks. A *hawaladar* is a half-merchant, half-banker whose expertise is in the transfer of money and goods (Monsutti, 2008). If an individual, a *kargar*, knows a *hawaladar* (they must belong to the same lineage or come from the same valley), then the *kargar* can go directly to the *hawaladar* and if not he/she must go through a middleman. Once the *hawaladar* has a request to transfer money, a letter is sent to his partners stating the details of the transaction, and a letter is sent to the *kargar's* family stating the details. The *hawaladar* would either send the money directly, making a profit off the currency exchange, or use the money to purchase goods that are sent. The goods would be sold by a partner on the other end, who would use the profits to pay the *kargar's* family. This process can often have several partners and steps to get the money to the final partner near the family (Monsutti, 2008; Monsutti, 2006; Monsutti, 2004).

An integral part of the process is that the money is rarely moved. Money is delivered on the receiving side from the money stocks kept by that *hawaladar*. *Hawaladars* thus maintain large money stocks so that the money does not actually travel. This mechanism is what allows the process to function quickly and at low cost. Records on clients for each transfer are minimal however, thus the system is fairly anonymous and can be used for legitimate and illegitimate purposes alike. To settle accounts between *hawaladars*, the *hawaladars* will often use formal mechanisms such as cheques and wire transfers, as well as informal mechanisms of settlement. For remittance senders this informal channel presents the most efficient transfer of funds (Siegel et al, 2009).

The important aspect of the *hawala* system is that it is based on social relationships and trust. The *hawala* system operates around the world and provides a functioning remittance system in the absence of formal banking institutions in Afghanistan. Within the *hawala* system there is tremendous trust that has been sustained through regular interactions occurring over long periods of time. The *hawala* system has established a transnational network and cooperation system among Afghans around the world. The remittance-sending structure of the *hawala* has been essential to maintaining livelihoods in Afghanistan. It continues to be the primary remittance mechanism in Afghanistan today (Monsutti, 2008; Monsutti, 2006; Monsutti, 2004).

Migration and remittances are essential to the development of Afghanistan. Remittances account for greater flows than humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan and are critical to sustain families and prevent further poverty. As the humanitarian assistance continues to decrease to Afghanistan, remittances will gain further importance for development.

## 7. Migration Policies and Programmes

Migration policies in Afghanistan are organized and implemented through partnerships between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and international organizations. The key policy unit is The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR). The key international organizations involved in migration in Afghanistan are the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

### ***7.1 The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation***

The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) is responsible for implementing migration policies and programmes in Afghanistan. The MoRR exists under the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, which serves as the country's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2008). The MoRR has initiated a number of migration management projects with cooperation from international organizations such as the UNHCR and IOM. The primary objectives of the MoRR are to provide integration and resettlement support, safe livelihoods, employment opportunities, vocational trainings, and legal support during repatriation for the returnees. The MoRR national policy priorities are based on the following five principles:

- “• Voluntary, gradual, safe and dignified return of refugees and their reintegration in their places of origin.
- Ensuring reintegration and resettlement
- Protecting their rights and privileges
- Building the capacity of the households
- Ensuring employment opportunities” (MoRR, 2007, p.7)

These principles guide the programme planning of the MoRR (MoRR, 2007). The MoRR has 34 branches in different provinces in Afghanistan and additional special branches out of the country to implement the strategy related to solving the problems of refugees and returnees (MoRR, 2007). MoRR has established permanent residential facilities in 50 townships located in 29 provinces to provide legal assistance, employment, and educational opportunities (MoRR, 2007).

### ***7.2 International Organization for Migration***

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Afghanistan is based in Kabul and provides technical cooperation and capacity building to Afghan government institutions in managing migration (IOM, 2009). The IOM provides emergency relief to vulnerable displaced families, facilitates long-term return and reintegration to and within Afghanistan, and stabilizes migrant communities. The IOM facilitates several programmes to provide emergency and post-conflict migration management services in Afghanistan. These programmes include (IOM, 2009):

- Rapid Response Humanitarian Assistance – Assists refugees and migrants returning to Afghanistan in recent years; “many of them vulnerable without adequate shelter, food, water or mean to travel to their final destinations.”

- Afghan Civilian Assistance Programme – Assists temporary and medium term displacement by providing assistance packages to those displaced by military activities.
- Construction of Health and Education Facilities- Works with the Afghan Ministries of Public Health and Education to construct hospitals, midwifery training schools, and teacher training colleges.
- Support to Voter Registration- Provides support in capacity building for trained staff for the Independent Election Commission.
- Return of Qualified Afghans- Coordinates the return of qualified Afghans to participate in the reconstruction process. According to IOM; “846 Afghan experts living abroad have returned to Afghanistan from 32 countries with IOM's assistance in order to participate in the rebuilding of their nation”.
- Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration- Coordinates the voluntary return of failed asylum seekers from developing countries; “IOM has assisted over 7,600 Afghans with their returns, approximately 2,500 of whom received individually-tailored reintegration assistance packages. Assistance includes training, self-employment, business start-ups and employment referral”.
- Counter-Trafficking Initiative- Seek to provide awareness and protection to victims of Trafficking.
- Passport and Visa Issuance Capacity Building- Provides passport and visa issuance to support the capacity building of the Afghan Government.
- Border Management- Seeks to provide support to managing the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan and Iran.
- Support to Provincial Governance- Provides grants for sub-projects that are based run by the Provincial governments and their partners.

These programmes provide the core of the activities of the IOM in Afghanistan and are essential to providing services to Afghans.

The IOM in cooperation with the European Union established the Return, Reception, and Reintegration of Afghan Nationals to Afghanistan (RANA) programme in 2004. This programme seeks to provide additional assistance to Afghan nationals returning to Afghanistan from EU member states (IOM, 2007). The objective of the programme was to encourage and provide for sustainable return to Afghanistan. The programme provided training, employment, on-the-job training, and self-employment assistance to returnees (IOM, 2007). As of 2007 a total of 2,097 Afghan refugees had utilized the programme to return, of which 35.2 percent were from The Netherlands and 35 percent were from Germany (IOM, 2007, p. 6).

### ***7.3 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees***

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has had a key role in the protection and reintegration of refugees in Afghanistan. The UNHCR provides immediate and emergency services as well as long-term services to returnees. Since 2002 the UNHCR has “supported the construction of more than 181,000 shelters in rural areas benefiting over 1 million homeless returnees” (UNHCR, 2009). The UNCHR also provides services such as developing water points: “9,415 water points have been completed under UNHCR’s water programme in high or potential return areas, as well as those hit by drought” (UNCHR, 2009). In addition, UNHCR has provided a limited number of income-generating projects in areas of high return to assist returnees in

building livelihoods (UNCHR, 2009). The UNCHR also provides services to Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran. This includes running the refugee camps in Pakistan and providing voluntary return centres in both countries.

## **8. Migration Relationship with the Netherlands**

This section will examine the relationship between Afghanistan and the Netherlands through the political relationship, migration flows between the two countries, and the Afghan population in the Netherlands.

### ***8.1 The Netherlands and Afghanistan: Background and Political Relationship***

The Netherlands has supported Afghanistan in the reconstruction effort since the fall of the Taliban in 2001 through humanitarian aid, development assistance, and the deployment of Dutch troops. The Dutch effort is targeted to fighting poverty in Afghanistan and helping to establish stability in the region. The Netherlands is a member of the Afghanistan Compact and pledged US \$10 million to support Afghanistan in 2006. The Netherlands is the country lead in the area of good governance and provides assistance for elections and developing a democratic state (Buitenlandse Zaken, 2006).

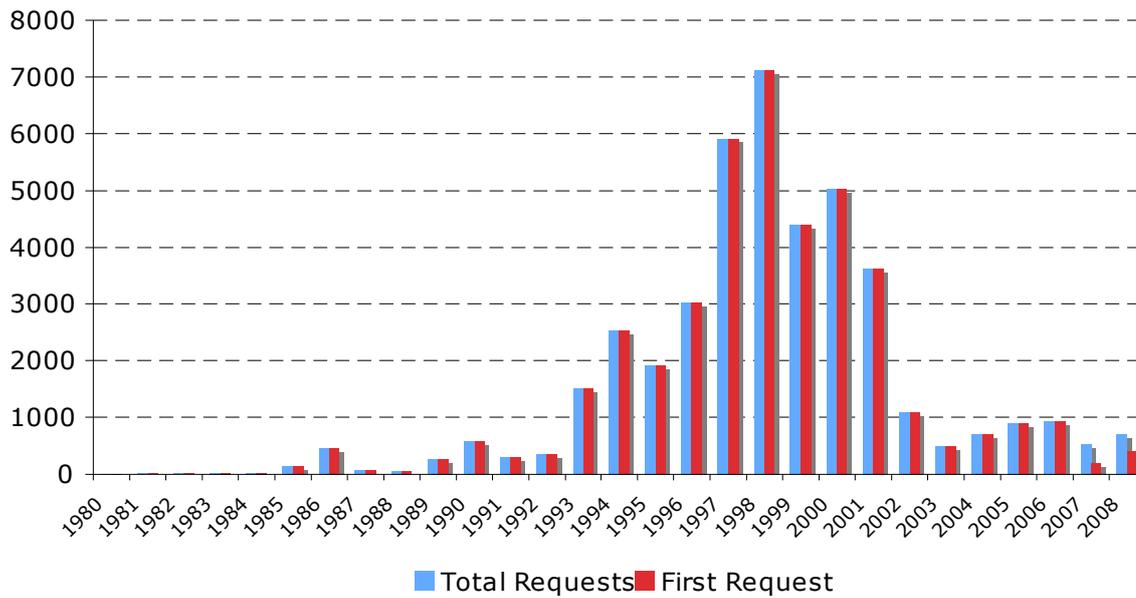
In 2006 1,400-2,000 Dutch troops entered Afghanistan and established responsibility for the province of Uruzgan in Southern Afghanistan (Buitenlandse Zaken, 2009). At that time the Dutch committed troops to the NATO International Security and Assistance Force in Afghanistan until 2008. The mission has been extended to 1 August 2010, with a reduction in troops to 1,100 (The Netherlands UK Embassy). The Dutch mission has been active in providing security and development aid to Uruzgan.

The Netherlands development assistance to Uruzgan has included the building of infrastructure, support of education, support of women and girls, and health care. At this time, 15 schools and seven large health centres have opened in the region, and there are plans to establish a total of 78 new schools and provide further health support and services. Saffron corns have been distributed in the region along with cultivation lessons to help farmers establish a crop that demands a high price on global markets. The Dutch have supported the establishment of a radio service to connect the people of Uruzgan with the Afghanistan government. Finally, microcredit programs have been established to provide economic opportunities to men and women in the region. Further initiatives are underway in Uruzgan, but it is evident that a holistic approach has been taken to provide development assistance to the area (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2009).

### ***8.2 Migration Flows between the Netherlands and Afghanistan***

Immigration from Afghanistan to the Netherlands was virtually nonexistent prior to 1985. Figure 9 illustrates the number of asylum applications from Afghanistan to the Netherlands from 1980- 2008. It is evident that the majority of asylum applications were received during the Taliban rule between 1992-2001. Since the fall of the Taliban, the number of asylum applications has significantly fallen.

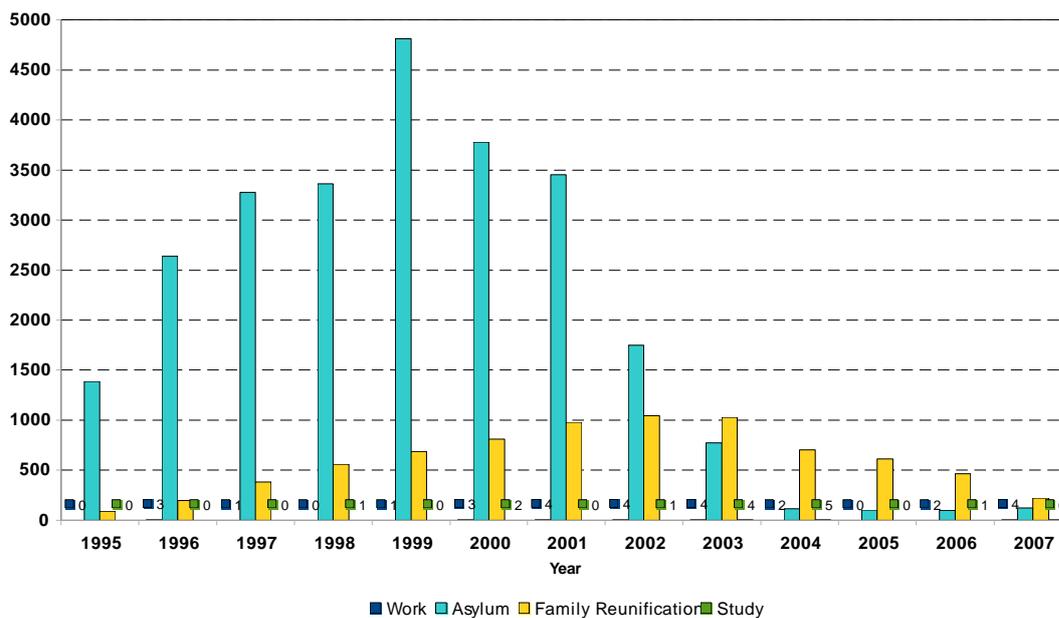
**Figure 9: Number of Asylum Applications from Afghanistan Citizens**



Source: CBS Statline, 2009

Figure 10 shows the migration motivations of individuals to the Netherlands. It is evident from Figure 10 that the vast majority of migrants are asylum-seekers. The numbers for family reunification have followed a relatively similar trajectory as asylum applications with a few years lag, which rationally illustrates that asylum-seekers apply for family reunification once they have received their own statuses. Figure 10 also illustrates that the number of students and labour migrants to the Netherlands are negligible.

**Figure 10: Migration to the Netherlands by Motive**

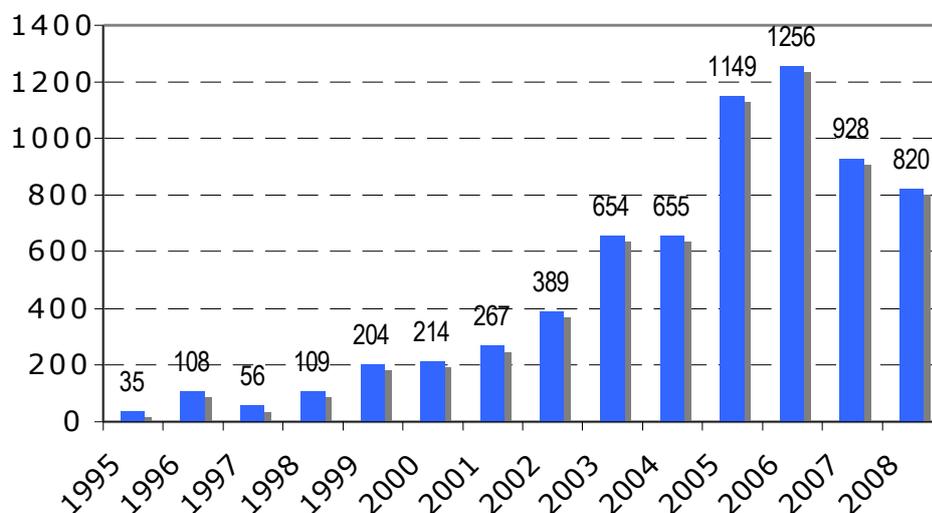


Source: Siegel et al, 2009 from CBS, 2009

It can be deduced from the data that the majority of Afghans to the Netherlands are fairly recent migrants that have arrived within the last 20 years and have received residence in the Netherlands based on refugee status.

Emigration numbers of Afghans from the Netherlands have been small. Figure 12 shows the number of Afghan emigrations from the Netherlands from 1995-2008. In 2003 the Netherlands, Afghanistan, and the UNHCR signed a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding on voluntary return migration from the Netherlands to Afghanistan (UNHCR, 2009). This agreement provided further assistance to Afghans returning to Afghanistan. It is possible that this program contributed to the increase in return numbers illustrated in Figure 11 from 2003.

**Figure 11: Afghan Emigration from the Netherlands**



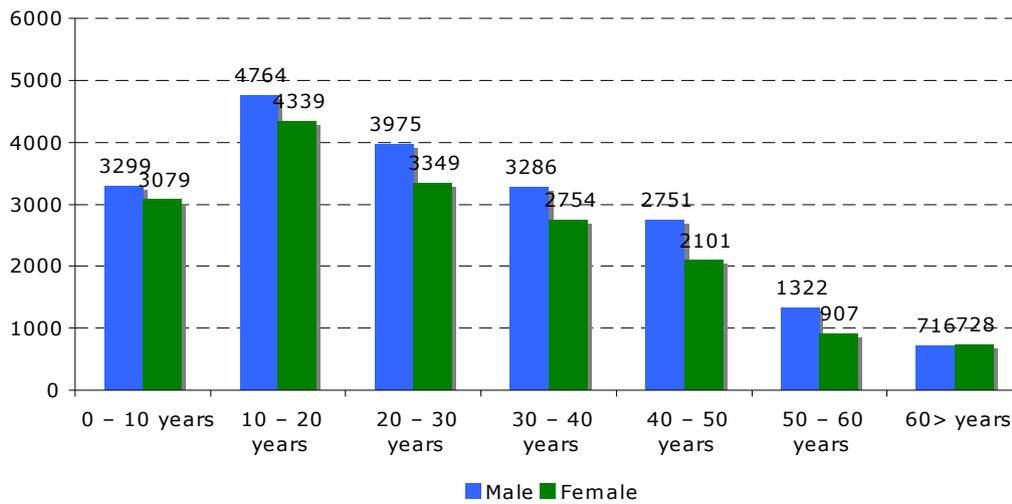
Source: CBS, 2009

The data indicates that Afghan immigration to the Netherlands has been more pronounced than Afghan emigration.

### ***8.3 The Afghan Community in the Netherlands***

In 2009 there were 37,709 Afghans living in the Netherlands (CBS, 2009). Figure 12 shows the age and gender distribution of the Afghan population in the Netherlands in 2008. Figure 12 illustrates that there are slightly more males (54 percent) than females (46 percent) living in the Netherlands. It is also evident that the population of Afghans in the Netherlands is young with 90 percent of the population being under the age of 50 years.

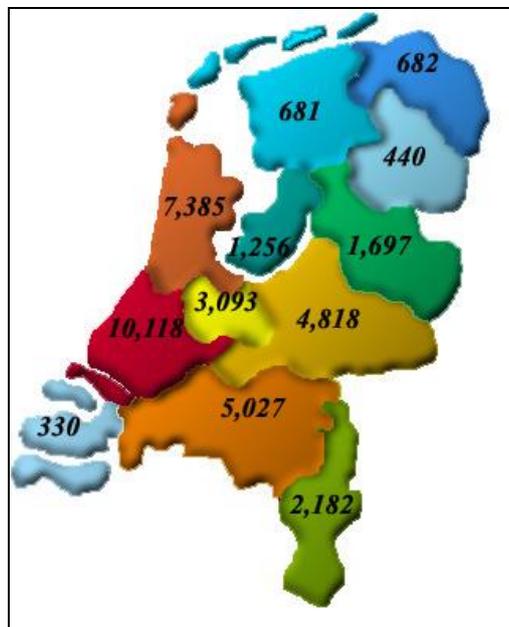
**Figure 12: Afghan Population in the Netherlands by Age and Gender, 2008**



Source: CBS, 2009

Figure 13 illustrates the number of Afghans in each province of the Netherlands. It is evident that Afghans have primarily settled in North and South Holland (46 percent).

**Figure 13: Afghan Population by Province, 2008**



Source: Siegel et al, 2009: 12

Formal remittance sending from the Netherlands to Afghanistan was estimated at €79,664 and informal remittances flows at €200,000 in 2009 (Siegel et al., 2009). In a Remittance corridor analysis conducted by Siegel et al. (2009) among 180 individuals in the Netherlands, 40 percent had sent remittances in the last 12 months to Afghanistan. The *hawala* system is widely used in sending remittances from the Netherlands to Afghanistan. In

general the amounts remitted are between €100- €300 (Siegel et al., 2009). The remittances are primarily used in Afghanistan to meet daily needs.

The Afghan community in the Netherlands has grown rapidly since the early 1990's. The Afghan community is young and the vast majority of Afghans have come to the Netherlands as refugees. It is thus not surprising that there is over 60 percent unemployment of Afghans in the Netherlands and over 50 percent of the population is on social assistance (Siegel et al., 2009).

## 9. Future Perspectives of Migration

High levels of multifaceted migration flows have been prevalent in Afghanistan for the last thirty years, and the evidence indicates that these flows will continue in the future. Three key reasons for continued migration can be noted. First, migration in and from Afghanistan has been motivated by insecurity, underdevelopment, severe poverty, and lack of opportunities. Unfortunately all of these conditions presently persist in Afghanistan. This alone suggests that migration will continue. Secondly, the UNHCR predicts that the population of Afghanistan will be 97,324,000 in 2050 (Stigter and Monsutti, 2005, p.3). Afghanistan's economy is based on agriculture, and the rural landscape is already overpopulated. The high levels of population growth indicate that the rural communities will not be able to support the population, which will lead to increasing migration flows. Third, the evidence has illustrated that Afghans are a highly mobile and resilient people. The World Bank states: "Afghans are a resourceful, resilient, creative, opportunity-seeking, and entrepreneurial people (as witnessed by the high incidence of labor migration, entrepreneurial activity wherever they are located, trading networks, and remittances)" (2005, p.147). Afghan culture and historical migration patterns of the Afghan people provides strong indication that migration will continue from Afghanistan.

The continuation of high levels of migration flows will pose many challenges for Afghanistan. Primarily the skill drain will become a more acute issue as the population increases and skilled individuals are needed to meet the needs of the population. Retaining skilled workers will be a great challenge for Afghanistan if the situation in the country does not improve.

In addition to emigration, there are also questions of future return migration to Afghanistan. The current refugee situation between Afghanistan and Pakistan and Iran has promoted much debate regarding the competing geo-political interests. Stigter and Monsutti (2005) argue that repatriation from Pakistan and Iran of all Afghan refugees is not feasible and would have a negative impact on the reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. Stigter and Monsutti (2005) propose the following recommendations:

"Establish a bilateral labour migration framework that provides a clear legal identity and rights for Afghan labourers in Iran; Provide easier access to passports for Afghans; Increase awareness of the contribution, both in labour and otherwise, of Afghans to the Iranian and Pakistani economy; and In line with international conventions, continue to uphold the refugee status and protection of the most vulnerable" (p. 2).

This approach clearly provides for the increased rights and protection of Afghan refugees. It also suggests that Afghan refugees be permitted the legal right to remain in Pakistan and Iran in the future. Alternatively, however, Pakistan and Iran are seeking to decrease the rights of Afghan refugees although they positively contribute to the economy in both countries. This situation poses future challenges as to how the refugee situation in Pakistan and Iran will be addressed. The question remains if the refugees will be forcibly repatriated or allowed to reside in Pakistan and Iran.

Overall, it is evident that migration flows from and to Afghanistan will continue in the near future. Stigter and Monsutti state (2005): "For many migration has become a way of life: it is now highly organized and the transnational networks that have developed to support it are a major, even constitutive, element in the social, cultural and economic life of Afghans" (Stigter and Monsutti, 2005, p. 3). Migration is embedded in the Afghan way of life and will continue to be a key element of the culture, social and economic fabric.

## 10. Conclusion

Afghanistan has experienced one of the largest migration flows of any country in the world over the last three decades. These flows have been multifaceted but have been primarily driven by conflict and insecurity and the vast underdevelopment of the country. Through the periods of war and now in a time of reconstruction, migration continues to be a key livelihood strategy of Afghan families.

Afghans have complex webs of migration that are based on historical, ethnic, cultural, and social networks. Afghanistan has particularly strong migration relationships with its neighbors Pakistan and Iran. Flows from Afghanistan to Pakistan and Iran have occurred throughout the last century. Monsutti states:

“Channels of pre-established transnational networks exist between Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran, as the movement of individuals to seek work, to escape drought or to flee war has been a common experience in the whole region...Many Afghans have been shifting from one place to the next for years- some never returning to their place of origin, others only a temporary basis before deciding to return into Iran, Pakistan, or further afield” (Monsutti, 2008, p. 61).

These transnational networks have aided the transmission of money, capital, goods, and ideas among Afghans around the world. The *Hawala* system is based on social networks and spans virtually all corners of the globe, connecting Afghans via trade. It is the most widely-used method for Afghans to send remittances and goods back to their country.

The engagement of the Afghan Diaspora both financially and socially has contributed to the reconstruction of the country. Skilled Afghans have returned to their country both temporarily and permanently to design policies and programmes or to work to assist in the rebuilding effort. Financial remittances sent to Afghanistan are used primarily to meet family’s daily needs and comprises a major source of income for remittance-receiving families.

Afghanistan continues to face many challenges in the reconstruction effort, including the management of returned refugees, managing migration relationships with Pakistan and Iran, the return of IDPs, and rapid urbanization. The country has experienced difficulty in absorbing the large rates of return, and poverty is high. Retaining the highly skilled poses a great challenge to the country at a time when skilled workers are in demand. Until significant change occurs in the form of political stability, peace, development, infrastructure, and poverty alleviation, however, it can be assumed that high levels of migration will continue to occur out of Afghanistan. Migration has been a way of life for Afghan’s for decades, and it will continue to be a key survival strategy.

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