


AFGHANISTAN AREA-BASED APPROACH

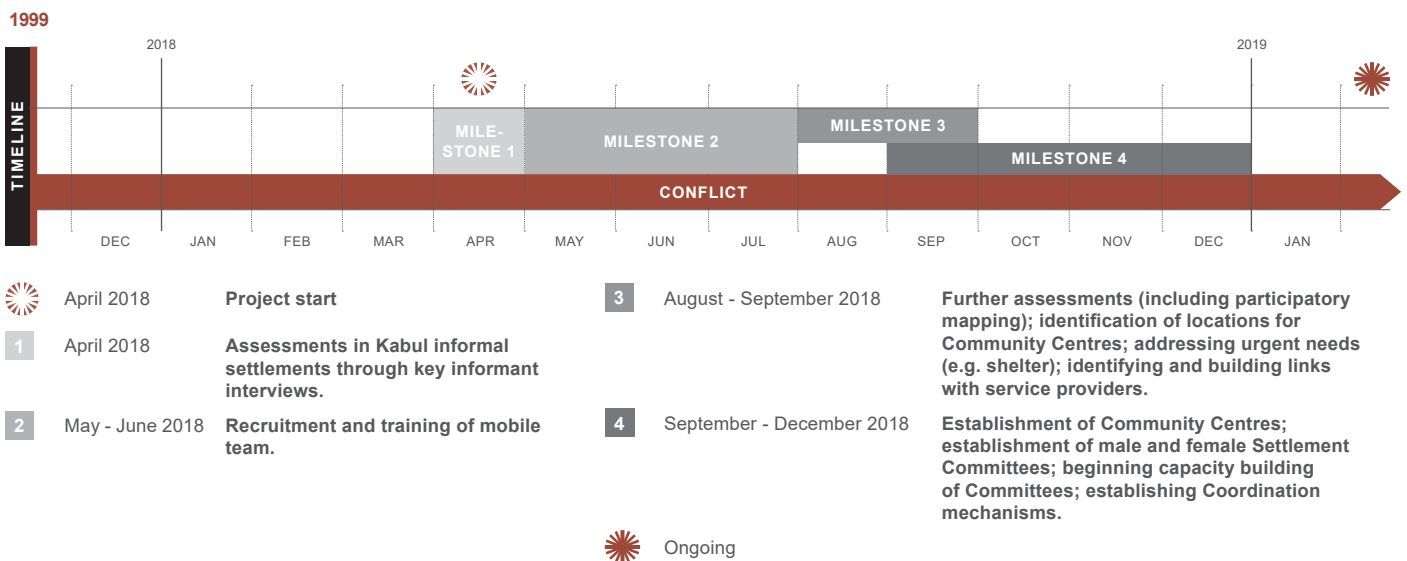
KEYWORDS:

MOBILE/AREA-BASED APPROACH, COMMUNITY CENTRES, COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES, LOCAL STAKEHOLDER COORDINATION, SERVICE INFORMATION, REFERRALS, COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING

CAUSE OF DISPLACEMENT	Protracted Conflict	
DATE OF EVENT CAUSING DISPLACEMENT	1999 - ongoing	
PEOPLE DISPLACED	1,286,000 IDPs nationwide ¹	
PROJECT LOCATION	Kabul - Informal Settlements/districts, (PD8/PD22/12/ Qarabagh)	
PROJECT DURATION	June 2018 - Ongoing	
NUMBER OF PEOPLE TARGETED BY THE PROJECT	40,000 (informal settlements)	
CCCM COORDINATION MECHANISM	No cluster activated, Durable Solutions Working Group	

SUMMARY:

The main project objective was to ensure that the displacement affected communities are protected and able to access life-saving assistance and durable solutions for their recovery. Activities included establishing and supporting community management structures ('committees') in informal settlements, identifying needs and gaps - with focus on very vulnerable people who had fallen through the humanitarian assistance net - , sharing services and procedures information for accessing assistance, and establishing community centres for communities to access information, be referred to relevant services, access space for localised and inclusive coordination meetings, socialising/recreational activities, and provision of services by third parties.





Hewadwal IDP settlement in east Kabul with around 450 families who mostly escaped war and conflict in Nangarhar or have returned or deported from Pakistan.

CONTEXT

The displacement situation in Afghanistan is one of the most complex and largest in recent history.² In 2018 there were 551,000 newly displaced people (an average of more than 2,000 every day)³ as well as more than 700,000 new returnees from Pakistan and Iran, adding to a caseload of more than 1.2 million protracted displaced people.⁴ Reasons for and locations of displacement are diverse and complex – ranging from drought or flood-stricken communities, to those fleeing localized and indiscriminate armed conflict, to returning refugees from Iran and Pakistan. The Government Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, the Afghan National Disaster Management Agency (in charge of IDPs), as well as the Displacement and Return Executive Committee (assisting returning refugees) are the responsible governmental bodies. The Government's strategy on internal displacement is guided by the 2013 National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons,⁵ endorsing to uphold the UN/IASC Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, including obtaining durable solutions for IDPs. However, many of the challenges faced in drafting the policy and developing implementation strategies reflect the wider challenges in terms of law-making and policymaking in Afghanistan more generally.⁶

Besides the Government's strategy on displacement, the humanitarian strategy is set out in the annual Humanitarian Response Plan focusing on responses to the immediate needs of the newly displaced. Little attention is given by the Humanitarian Response Plan on 'bridging' the emergency phase with the protracted displacement situation towards durable solutions for the displaced population. Moreover with no CCCM Cluster active in country, a dedicated forum for the management and coordination of camp-like displacement setting is absent.⁷

In addition, a 'Durable Solutions Working Group' has been established to bring governmental, humanitarian as well as development stakeholders together to support displaced peoples' transition from displacement towards durable solutions. However, progress remains slow due to a wide spectrum of obstacles and bottlenecks.

Various policies and papers have been drafted, and in some cases approved to upgrade informal settlements in terms of the physical infrastructure and shelters or relocation strategies.

However, local and national authorities appear to be unable to implement the policies.⁸ For example, in 2013 the Informal Settlements Upgrading Policy was launched by the Ministry of Urban Development and the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG), aiming to upgrade areas in major cities through a combination of tenure regularisation and infrastructure provision and improvement. However, despite receiving technical approval by the Government, the policy has never been presented to Cabinet for approval.⁹ Similarly, the Ministry of Urban Development drafted a White Paper on Tenure Security and Community-Based Upgrading in Kabul in 2006, proposing spatial planning and management; principles and norms for land use; land titling and legislative measures to improve tenure security; and upgrading programmes to improve the existing situation in informal settlements. Endorsement by the Government has until now not been achieved and local authorities have not approved the upgrading of shelters and infrastructure development initiatives in Kabul's informal settlements.¹⁰

Informal settlements are widespread within Afghan cities, which are characterized by severely inadequate housing conditions and informal settlements account for 70% of the urban housing stock.¹¹ In Kabul there are approximately 55 informal settlements, ranging in size from dozens to hundreds of dwellings and accommodating some 55,819 internally displaced people and refugee returnees¹² living in mainly tents or mud brick and tarpaulin shelters. According to a February 2018 multi-agency profiling exercise led by the Kabul Informal Settlements Taskforce (KIS Taskforce)¹³, 43% of Kabul's informal settlement residents live in tents and 44% in mud-brick dwellings. There is a significant variety between the settlements not only in terms of size, but also in terms of culture and ethnic composition of inhabitants, length of existence (from 2 to 20 years¹⁴) and nature of the land ownership on which settlements are located. Besides this variety, there are important commonalities across almost all these sites: The constant threat of eviction by the private or public landlords; poor physical conditions of the shelters and communal infrastructure; inadequacy of essential services; poor coordination of assistance between and within sites; and lack of information on the part of residents about available services and their rights.

PROJECT

PROTECTION RISKS

The displaced people living in the informal settlements face complex protection risks, ranging from the lack of safe shelters to protect them from the elements and harsh climate conditions, lack of safe sanitation facilities, flooding, as well as insufficient supply of clean and safe water. These inadequate physical living conditions leads to health issues which are compounded by a shortage in quality health services. Insecurity of tenure is one of the most significant protection risks exposing households to the constant threat of eviction and in some cases destruction of their shelters and belongings, preventing any sustainable upgrades to the settlements as well as levelling a heavy mental toll on residents. Psychosocial issues are experienced by all demographic groups, linked to both the reasons and subsequent consequences of displacement, as well as criminal activity linked to drug addiction and substance abuse.

of the context, a mobile approach was adopted to be able to improve access to assistance and protection for the displaced people living in the informal settlements.

Implementing a mobile team approach contributed to address the protection risks in various ways, including the coordination with relevant stakeholders to allow physical upgrades to shelter and facilities in the settlements including bringing together those who can grant permission (such as landowners or authorities) and those who can contribute resources or skills (including both NGOs and community members themselves). Safety audits with Settlement Committees are being planned to identify hazards and threats in the settlements that can be addressed through community-based initiatives and/or NGO-supported interventions.

CCCM ACTIVITIES

The project targets displaced people living in 20 scattered informal settlements in 3 Kabul districts with the highest density of informal settlements. The sizes range from just 24 households to nearly 900 with a total of over 36,000 inhabitants. Besides the residents of the settlements, there are also displaced persons and vulnerable host community members living in the urban neighbourhoods surrounding the settlements. While the settlement residents as well as the host community have an urgent need for support afforded by a Camp Management project, e.g. information provision, coordination of services, none of the informal settlements alone are large enough to warrant a permanent on-site presence by a Camp Management agency. In addition, authorities would be unwilling to give permission due to the political sensitivities around the existence and future for the settlements. In response to the complexity

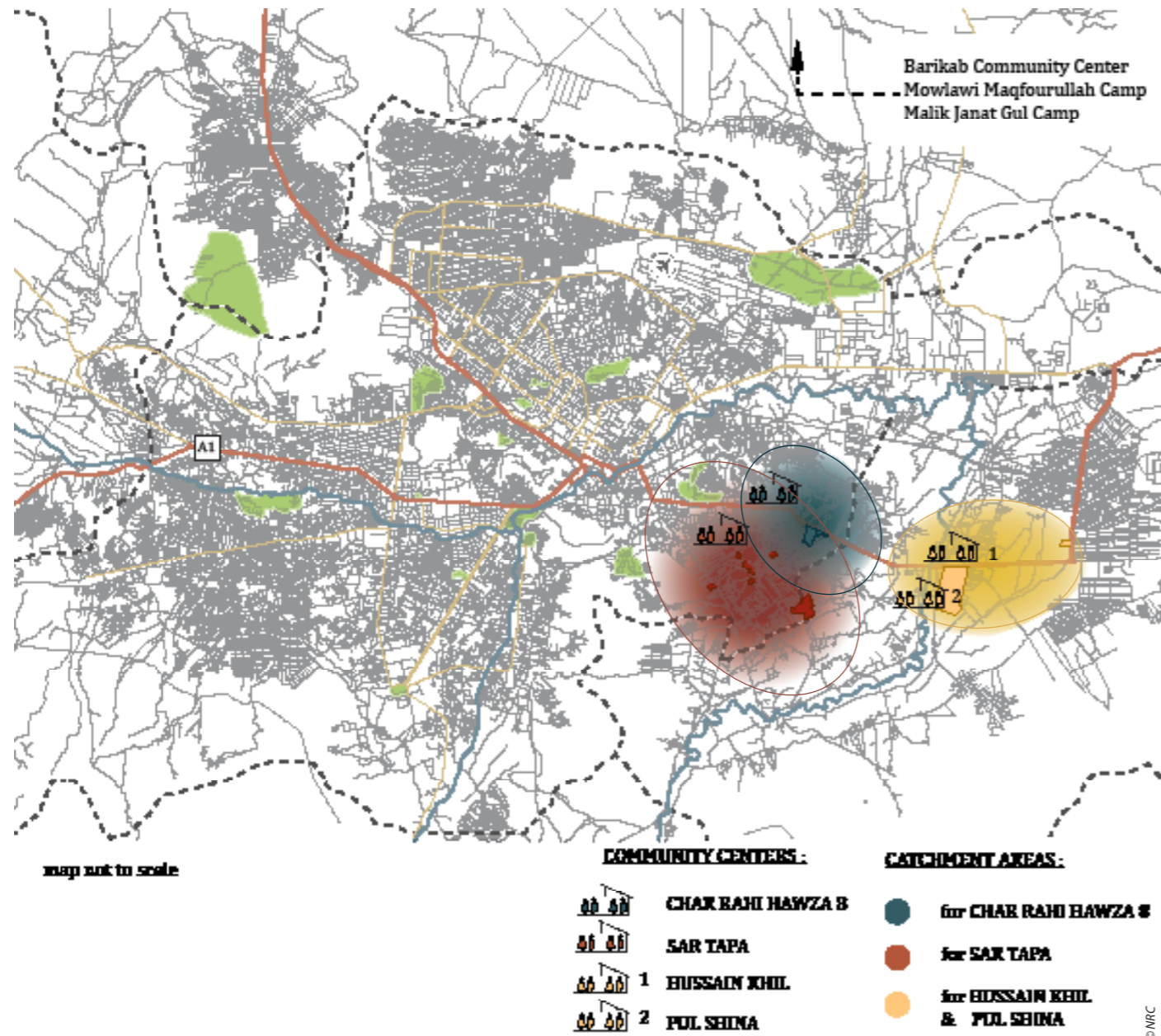
SELECTION OF BENEFICIARIES

The selection of the settlements themselves was done on an area-based approach, whereby administrative areas were identified within Kabul city that contained the most numbers of informal settlements and then targeted all 20 settlements within those three selected districts.

The project targeted the entire population of the informal settlements and the implementing agency aimed to support these at the community-level. As such, individual beneficiary selection was not a part of this project. The project included referrals of individuals to other departments from the implementing agency or external agency for possible assistance or services – these referrals were made based on the individuals/households meeting the selection criteria of the projects implemented by these third parties.



NRC's ICCLA and Camp-Management team talking to the residence of Hewadwal IDP settlement in east Kabul.



Map of Kabul

IMPLEMENTATION

The mobile approach by the implementing agency is based on Mobile Outreach Teams visiting the sites on a regular basis, often multiple times a week. The Outreach Teams' composition is diverse both in terms demographics (men and women, different ages, and different ethnic backgrounds) as well as technical background (including engineering, protection, education, community health, and development), but all members are trained in community engagement, protection, psychological first aid and coordination.

The Outreach Teams are complemented by static community centres strategically located in walking distance from all the informal settlements to enable community members to access information and support without having to wait for an Outreach Team member to visit them in their site. The centres are staffed daily by community-based workers from the local neighbourhood and the informal settlements as well as the mobile Outreach staff, who move between sites and Centres.

Outreach Teams have diverse responsibilities, including:

- Providing information sessions on available services, the responsibilities and code of conduct of service providers and the rights and responsibilities of community members
- Establishing, training and providing ongoing support/coaching to representative settlement committees, such as training in how to identify, prioritise, analyse problems as well as coming up with community-based solutions.
- Identifying and referring vulnerable individuals and households in need of specialized protection services, such as drug addiction, GBV or urgent health cases.
- Coordinating with service providers and local authorities facilitating inclusive coordination meetings which enable participation of affected community members in coordinating to solve problems in their sites and advocate for their needs.



Mud brick and tarpaulin shelter in the Hewadwal IDP settlement in east Kabul.

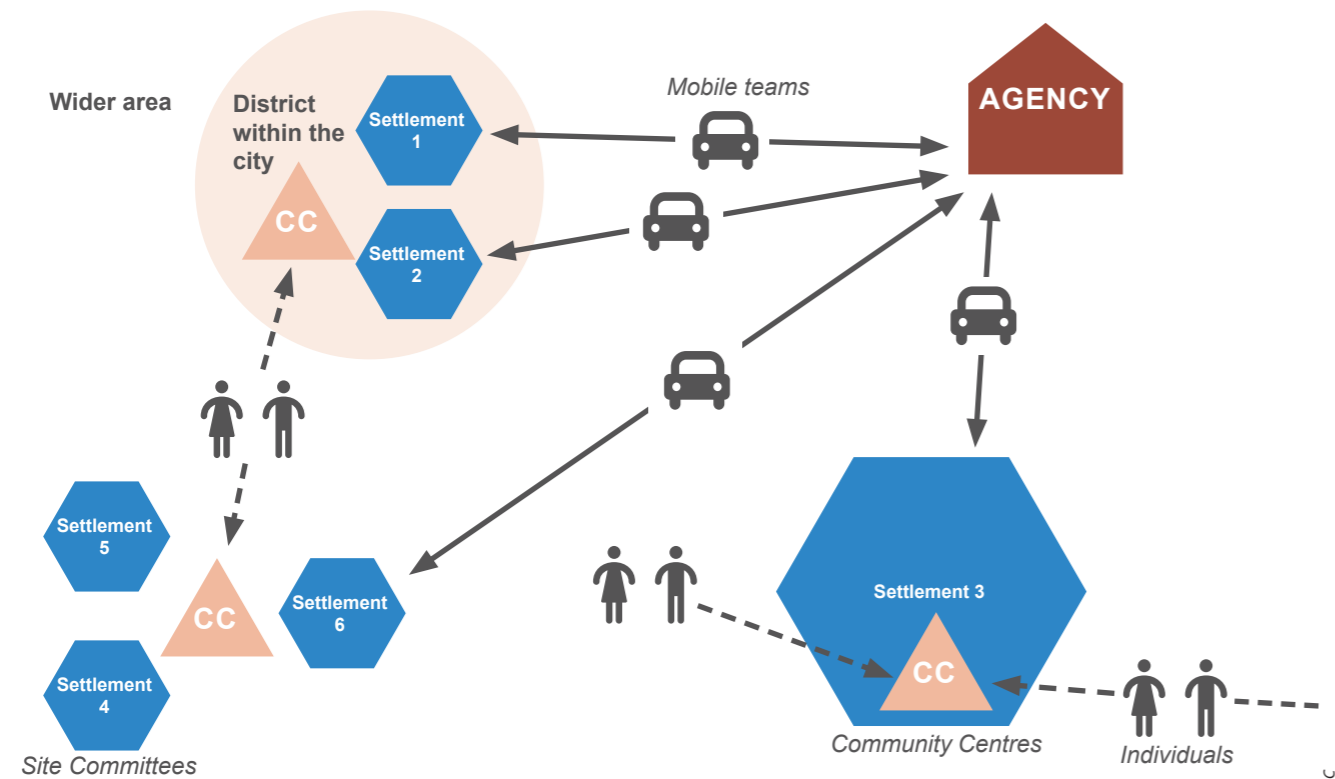


Diagram illustrating the scales of intervention from larger area-based Community Centres to specific neighbourhood Site Committees.

IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT

The project is still at a relatively early stage. However, some positive results have been observed. A monitoring survey undertaken in the targeted informal settlements in January 2019¹⁵ showed that 86% of residents were aware of at least one of the mechanisms (i.e. community centre, site committee, or outreach staff) of the mobile camp management project and of those who were aware of the mechanisms, more than 94% found them useful for information. Of those surveyed, 16% were able to access assistance following their interaction with the implementing agency or a site committee; of those surveyed who had visited a community centre, 94% were happy or very happy with their visit – citing the fact that they could share their problem, they received useful information, or they could meet with others in their community.

From October to November 2018, 40 Site Committees were established (of which 41% of members are IDPs, and 39% returnees) in all of the Informal Settlements targeted and began training them in the essential components of their roles and responsibilities. The committees are still new, so although they have yet to make significant progress in their sites, the foundation has been established for ongoing work with the committees in 2019. Moreover, some of the committees are already coordinating externally (e.g. in one site the committee coordinated with other agencies for education activities) and solving problems through mobilizing their own communities (e.g. for joint purchase of sand for the road).

The project is also encouraging better coordination between stakeholders working in the settlements, e.g. a coordination event was held to bring together the various local and international organisations working in the sites. Moreover, external agencies are also using the implementing agency's Community Centres for the provision of services, for example health education and maternal health and family planning services.

COORDINATION IMPACT

As to date there is no CCCM cluster active in Afghanistan, a natural coordination space for Camp Management programming is absent; hence, extra efforts are required to ensure coordination at the site level.¹⁶ As such, coordination meetings and events were held, including a one-off event bringing together local and international NGOs working in the informal settlements – kick-starting a productive dialogue between these agencies to support more holistic and integrated service delivery in the informal settlements and from the Community Centres located among them.



There are more than 60 informal settlements in Kabul, accommodating nearly 70,000 people in mainly mud brick and tarpaulin shelters in and around Kabul city.



Child playing in the Hewadwal IDP settlement in east Kabul.

ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

ACHIEVEMENTS

- The combination of static community centres – strategically located between multiple sites – and mobile outreach teams, complemented further by site committees, is proving to be successful to reach the informal settlement inhabitants with the needed information and assistance. Given a scattered case load of at least 36,000 people, it would be too resource intensive to have mobile teams of sufficient size to access the entire population in need regularly and thus difficult to ensure that vulnerable cases are not falling through the cracks. By having static centres alongside mobile teams, the community can “self-refer” to the centres.
- At the same time, the mobile teams can work with the community-based committees to visit people in their homes that might not be able to reach the community centres, as well as providing ‘protection by presence’ in the sites. The established community committees extend the reach of the mobile teams, further disseminating information and referring people to mobile teams and/or community centres.
- The mobile teams working closely with ICLA (Information, Counselling, and Legal Assistance) department to address the risk of eviction and worked towards establishing forms of tenure security, advocating for and identify rightful landowners to obtain permission for settlement upgrades.

CHALLENGES

- Coordination has proven to be challenging, given the lack of formal mandate for site management and lack of inter-site coordination, making it difficult to bring much needed assistance and services to the targeted sites. The complex local context and complex relationships with local authorities further intensifies the overall coordination challenges experienced.¹⁷
- Moreover, in Afghanistan generally there is a gulf in the needs affecting IDPs – included protracted displaced – and the services available. This makes it difficult to manage expectations of community members, who may not realise how little assistance is available for them. Nevertheless, a key part of the CM role is to direct the limited assistance to the most vulnerable and to communicate why/how this is done to the rest of the community.
- Managing a variety of activities that need to be established concurrently during the set-up phase of the project is challenging; for example, a strong field presence is required in order to understand internal dynamics within the settlements and to start to collect information to enable advocacy and coordination for more assistance; but the field presence inevitably raises expectations of the communities, which may not be immediately or even subsequently met.

LESSONS LEARNED

- In this context of scattered sites with no inter-site coordination, there is inevitably considerable inconsistency between the sites in terms of services and assistance available. Utilising a mobile team approach who work across several sites, facilitates the comparison between the sites and the identification of how resources could be better distributed to allow a more equitable distribution.
- The mobile approach has proved to be particularly suited to urban and dispersed displacement sites that are in proximity to one another and therefore several sites can be visited by the outreach team within the same day. In contexts where sites are located further apart from each other, the approach may need adjusting.
- **Referrals:** Working outside of a formal camp environment and without a formal mandate for site management, referrals to third parties are challenging. The results of referrals done through the project so far demonstrate that the team has not yet built up the required links with service providers to accept referrals. Learning from this experience, considerable time and effort needs to be invested in external coordination when responding to scattered informal sites – particularly when there is a low level or even absence of inter-site coordination, which is common in a context where the CCCM Cluster is not activated.
- **Empowerment of committees:** Working with community committees in scattered informal sites, which are comprised of vulnerable community members who struggle to pool resources to solve problems by themselves, requires regular follow-up over a long period of time. The community groups require regular support to leverage interventions by third parties. To effectively support this process, outreach team members require training and support, since they themselves may struggle in identifying the relevant stakeholders to ensure follow up.

¹ End of 2017, GRID

² Only in January 2015, at the height of the Syrian crisis, did Afghans finally lose the status that they had held for 30 years as the [world's largest refugee population](#).

³ Based on figure of 551,000 new IDPs displaced between January and October 2018

⁴ [Afghanistan - Cross-border return to internal displacement](#)

⁵ [National IDP Policy](#)

⁶ [An IDP Policy for Afghanistan: from draft to reality](#)

⁷ This has changed in December 2018 when a Task Force (under Shelter cluster) was established for site management coordination.

⁸ Presidential Decree 305 on land allocation commits to finding and assigning state-owned land to displaced persons (IDPs and returnees), including those currently residing in inner-city informal settlements; despite being approved by the president in August 2018, so far no one has been relocated to allocated land under the Decree.

⁹ [UN-Habitat, Afghanistan Housing Profile, 2017, p.27](#)

¹⁰ [UN-Habitat, Afghanistan Housing Profile, 2017, p.28](#)

¹¹ As above p.15

¹² Kabul Informal Settlements Task Force, Kabul Informal Settlement Profiling, 2018. Note:

the profiling only considered informal settlements accommodating primarily IDPs and refugee returnees, and this is what is referenced by the term ‘informal settlements’ in this case study. However, there are also other ‘informal settlements’ in Kabul, which constitute any area of land which is inhabited informally (without permission), and which is either (a) within a Master Plan area, (b) built after the Master Plan was adopted, or (c) violates the Master Plan in some way (as per the draft Informal Settlements Upgrading Policy). There are larger and more dispersed settlements which accommodate a mixture of host community and protracted IDPs, are generally located on the outskirts of Kabul city, and older than the settlements hosting displaced families within the city. These informal settlements are not part of NRC’s mobile CM approach, and thus not part of this case study.

¹³ The Kabul Informal Settlements (KIS) Task Force was formed in 2010, and comprises 15 UN agencies and NGOs. By working collaboratively, the KIS Task Force is aims to coordinate and streamline its members’ interventions in Kabul’s informal settlements.

¹⁴ The KIS Taskforce profiling found that families had been living in these sites for an average of 5.7 years.

¹⁵ NRC internal monitoring survey, January 2019

¹⁶ There is a ‘Kabul Informal Settlements Working Group’ in Kabul, barely active during 2018, with focus on the Settlements Profiling exercise.

¹⁷ e.g. prohibition on digging wells or upgrading shelters by authorities or land owners.