



Afghanistan hosts over **3.2 million internally displaced persons** (IDPs) and over 17 million returnees, with half a million Afghan nationals repatriated from Pakistan in late 2023 alone. This reality calls for new investments in inclusive urban solutions.

Our research in Afghanistan, notably through the [Protracted Displacement in an Urban World \(PDUW\) project](#) from 2020 to 2023 focuses on long-term displacement experiences in urban areas and settlements - with the aim to:

- **Build a robust evidence base** to engage in a conversation with local actors
- **Advocate for inclusive urban solutions** through participatory forum planning processes.



### EXPLORE KEY INSIGHTS & RECOMMENDATIONS IN OUR OUTPUTS BELOW



#### RESEARCH BRIEF

**AFGHANISTAN'S UNFOLDING CRISIS; WELLBEING AND LIVELIHOODS OF DISPLACED PEOPLE BEFORE AND AFTER THE REGIME CHANGE**



#### POLICY BRIEFS

**INCLUSIVE URBAN SOLUTIONS: CITY ACTORS ENGAGING WITH DISPLACED COMMUNITIES**

**DISPLACED PEOPLE IN AFGHANISTAN'S CITIES NEED SUPPORT**



#### CITY NOTE

**JALALABAD PARTICIPATORY FORUMS ON PROTRACTED DISPLACEMENT IN AN URBAN WORLD**



### OUR FOCUS ON INCLUSIVE URBAN SOLUTIONS

An equitable approach to interventions built on the understanding that every individual and community, of all diverse identities and experiences, is instrumental in the transformation of their own societies. At the core of inclusive urban solutions is the recognition that Afghan women, especially those navigating the adversities of displacement due to conflict or climate, have untapped potential and they must be supported.

#### Foundational elements of inclusive development:

- 🌿 **Ecosystems:** Understanding the wellbeing of individuals within existing environmental, economic, political and social ecosystems
- 👤 **Experiences:** Understanding their autonomy, agency and individual choices.
- 👉 **Engagement:** Aiming for full and effective participation.

### METHODOLOGY: A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH TO CITY PLANNING



#### WP1

Collective & individual wellbeing

Understanding refugee and IDP perceptions of wellbeing in urban and camp settings.

#### WP2

Livelihoods & productive economies

Analysing livelihoods and enterprise of displaced people (displacement economies) in urban and camp settings.

#### WP3

Participatory Forum

Developing the capacity of municipal and other local actors to generate and communicate innovative and inclusive solutions to protracted displacement.

In 2021, **889 surveys** were conducted in Afghanistan - in Jalalabad (Nangarhar), and Barikab (Kabul).

In 2022, respondents were contacted again, and asked about their **socio-economic conditions, wellbeing** and **access to services and infrastructure**.

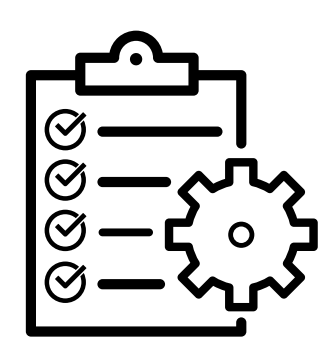
This allowed us to assess changes before and after the Taliban's return to power in August 2021. It was also a requirement of the new authorities in charge.

The data was a basis of engagement for dialogue and co-production at the city level. Through **five (5) participatory forums**, municipal stakeholders- men and women - convened regularly throughout the project, using the data and analysis to **co-design solutions** to the challenges of urban displacement.

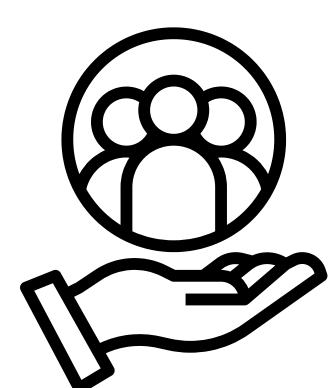
### TOWARDS INCLUSIVE URBAN SOLUTIONS-RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OUR RESEARCH

#### SUPPORT THE WELLBEING OF AFGHAN PEOPLE

The economic downturn severely affected bodily wellbeing. 90% struggled to feed their families. Poverty-induced isolation affected social relations. The level of dissatisfaction with the ability to meet up with friends and family increased from 2% to 28% among urban displaced women between the two rounds of data collection



**Embrace a Nexus approach**, bridging humanitarian aid with structural support, and integrating psychosocial services, information and counselling



**Be principled yet pragmatic** – engage with all stakeholders to identify areas of consensus and invest in civil society organisations and communities to monitor outcomes.

#### INVEST IN LIVELIHOODS WITH A FOCUS ON WOMEN

Our research with UNICEF shows that existing restrictions have also affected women's access to the administration in Jalalabad where the absence of female staff prevents women from entering official buildings such as the municipality to register an enterprise or request a business permit.



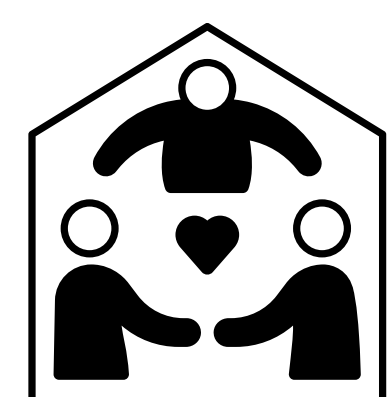
**Offer tailored financial, legal and business support**, longer term funding, and invest in female representation in sectoral unions.



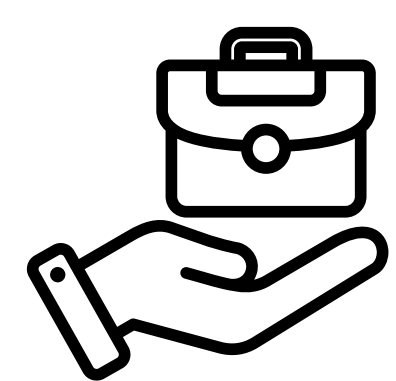
**Provide women opportunities to work from home**, including equipment for women to practise their skills; while also opening opportunities for them to market and sell their products.

#### IDENTIFY INCLUSIVE URBAN SOLUTIONS

Between September 15th 2023 to March 31st, 2024, over half a million Afghan nationals have returned from Pakistan with 26% of returnees intending to settle in Nangarhar, exceeding any other province. Within this context, municipal stakeholders are under pressure to deliver services - it is critical to continue the participatory forums to open up a space to co-design solutions with key stakeholders. City actors have requested for stakeholders to:



**Invest in a cleaner and greener city**, with recreational spaces for children, youth and women.



**Sustain Participatory Forums to** create linkages between the city priorities and funding streams to support local actors



Najma (name-changed) owns a rug company that employs women. She is also the head of an NGO which helps vulnerable children and women. However, since the change of regime, her 1500-member team has had to reduce to 500.

“Women lack employment opportunities. We need to provide them with home-based employment. We need to also formally organise women entrepreneurs. Purchase them a cow, some livestock, train them to weave carpets and tailoring, instead of giving them a sack of flour. Don't give our people temporary handouts. Instead, pave the ground for them to get employed,” she says.



**READ NAJMA'S STORY**