EASO Country of Origin Information Report

Afghanistan Networks

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The review carried out by the departments, experts or organisations mentioned does not necessarily lead to an endorsement or approval of the content of the report, which is the full responsibility of EASO. The review is a contribution to the quality of the report.

Contents

Disclaimer

This report was written according to the EASO COI Report Methodology (2012) ([1]). The report is based on carefully selected sources of information. All sources used are referenced. To the extent possible and unless otherwise stated, all information presented, except for undisputed or obvious facts, has been cross-checked.

The information contained in this report has been researched, evaluated and analysed with utmost care. However, this document does not claim to be exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist.

Furthermore, this report is not conclusive as to the determination or merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

'Refugee', 'risk' and similar terminology are used as a generic terminology and not as legally defined in the EU Asylum Acquis and the 1951 Refugee Convention.

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The target users are asylum caseworkers, COI researchers, policymakers, and decision-making authorities.

The drafting of this report was finalised in January 2018. Any event taking place after this date is not included in this report. More information on the reference period for this report can be found in the methodology section of the introduction. This second online version was uploaded in February 2018 to incorporate some minor amendments and corrections on page 14 and 27 of the report.

([1]) The EASO methodology is largely based on the Common EU Guidelines for processing Country of Origin Information (COI), 2008, and can be downloaded from the EASO website: https://www.easo.europa.eu/.

Glossary and Abbreviations

AAN	Afghanistan Analysts Network; an independent non-profit policy research organisation based in Afghanistan
AREU	Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
Chai khana	Local tea house
CSO	Central Statistics Office; Afghan governmental organisation responsible for surveying and maintaining statistics about Afghan society and government
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas; the semi-autonomous tribal region in north-western Pakistan
Hawala	Well-established informal system for payments and money transfer across borders
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
Manteqa	Manteqa is described as a level between a village and a district, and is an important marker of identity and solidarity shaped amongst the local population[2]
Qaum	Context-dependent and flexible solidarity group[3]
Pashtunwali	The idealised customary, social and legal codes of behaviour and conduct among Pashtuns
RFE/RL	Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
SSAR	Solution Strategy for Afghan Refugees; agreement with Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan and the UNHCR to set up sustainable solutions for people returning from the neighbouring areas of Iran and Pakistan.

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[2] For the concept of *manteqa* see Barfield, T., Afghanistan. A cultural and political history, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2010, p. 19.
[3] For the concept of *qaum* see Barfield, T., Afghanistan. A cultural and political history, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2010, p. 19.

Samawar	Original meaning is a traditional kettle used for brewing and serving tea, however in the context of this report, the term is interchangeably used in referral to a tea house – the *chai khana*
TI	Transparency International
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
4Mi	Mixed Migration Monitoring Mechanism

Introduction

This report was drafted by the Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, Landinfo, as referred to in the Acknowledgements section of this report.

The report describes various types of networks in Afghanistan and the significance of these networks for individuals and families be it during displacement, or for reintegration after return from abroad or after internal displacement within the country. More than six million Afghans have returned to their country since 2001, primarily from the neighbouring areas of Iran and Pakistan. The majority of those who have returned have settled in urban areas, primarily the large cities, and not in their original home areas. Many Afghans currently still live outside the country's borders, and some of them return to their native country, either voluntarily or under duress. The report discusses which networks Afghans usually have available to them, and the help and support they can rely on from their networks.

Methodology

The report is mainly based on open, publicly available sources, in addition to information that Landinfo has obtained during numerous visits to Afghanistan, most recently a joint mission with Lifos, the Swedish Country Information Unit, in April/May 2017. In the selection of written sources, Landinfo has taken the sources' familiarity with, and connection to, Afghanistan into account. The themes to be discussed relate to fundamental social conditions, and therefore it is important that the sources be well rooted in Afghan culture.

The oral sources that Landinfo and Lifos met in April/May 2017 are all Afghans living in Afghanistan. They are local employees in international organisations and western embassies, as well as representatives of a local research institution and a local think tank. The sources can be described as primary sources, and they illustrated the information they provided with their own experiences. Thus the accounts given here may be influenced by their subjective experiences and points of view, and may not be representative of the general population. Another important point about the methodology used is that the range of oral sources does not represent all ethnic groups, and Pashtuns are overrepresented amongst the informants. Women are under-represented. Although the sources live in cities and belong to the educated, urban middle class, most originally came from rural areas and still have family and relatives there. Therefore, they are still rooted in rural, traditional Afghanistan. Potential bias among the oral sources has been taken into consideration in the selection of written sources in order to counterbalance it.

The oral sources have been made anonymous and neither their names nor organisational affiliations are referred to. This is primarily done to ensure their safety.

In order to ensure that the authors respected the EASO COI Report Methodology, a review was carried out by COI specialists from the countries and organisations listed as reviewers in the Acknowledgements section. All comments made by the reviewers were taken into consideration and most of them were implemented in the final draft of this report.

Structure and use of this report

This report focuses on the subject of Afghan networks in general, and on the role of networks in the context of migration in particular. Firstly, a number of types of networks are described in Chapter 1, ranging from the extended family to tribes, clans, ethnic and other networks. Core principles, obligations and loyalties exist within these networks, and are discussed accordingly. The second chapter looks at the role networks play when it comes to individual and group decisions concerning internal and external migration. A separate sub-chapter examines the situation for unaccompanied minors and networks. The third chapter looks at how migrants and networks maintain contact. Finally, the report focuses on issues relevant to networks in relation to settlement and reintegration (employment, housing, etc.) upon return from abroad or after internal relocation.

Map of Afghanistan

Map 1: Afghanistan - administrative divisions, source: UN OCHA   © United Nations

1. Networks

The Afghan state is weak, and Afghans in general can expect little or no aid or assistance from public authorities, including when it comes to displacement and re-establishment of livelihoods upon return [4]. Afghanistan is far from being a welfare state and Afghans generally do not count on public authorities for support. Various networks substitute and compensate for the weak state apparatus. This is especially true in rural areas, where, in some areas, the government is completely absent. For example, it is the networks, and not the state, which are critical for the security, protection, support and care of vulnerable people [5].

Loyalty to family, clan and local leaders is stronger than the attachment to the state or the authorities. The collective comes before individual wishes and needs. There is limited room for opposing decisions made by the collective. There was a consensus among the people Landinfo spoke to that it is difficult to imagine an Afghan who is completely alone, who is not in contact with his or her family and does not have any other network [6].

Based on Landinfo's years of experience researching Afghanistan and background literature [7], Landinfo concludes that a number of different and important networks define Afghan social fabric. These various networks are based on extended families, tribes, clans and local communities. There are also networks based on ethnicity, religion, professional networks (colleagues, fellow students etc.), political networks and so on. Different networks perform different functions and carry different weights, and the role of the network varies between urban and rural areas. Networks, for example, are important in terms of gaining access to the labour market. This is true for both the informal, unregulated labour market, which primarily consists of manual work without any requirements for formal qualification or education, and the more regulated labour market.

Some networks, for instance family-based and clan-based networks, are constant and absolute. Other networks are built and developed. Afghans in general are good at building networks, and those who settle in a place in which they do not already have existing networks need to develop them. Such networks are dynamic and change in character as a result of changing living conditions, migration or relocation within the country. Dynamic networks can disintegrate as a result of not being maintained, due to migration, for example. A certain balance is required within the networks if they are to survive; this means all parties have to contribute, and all parties have to give and take. It is not sustainable if an individual is a mere burden to the network. This is especially the case for the urban poor [8].

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[4] In 2012 the Afghan authorities signed a quadrilateral agreement with Iran, Pakistan and the UNHCR regarding the Solution Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR). The purpose of the agreement was, among other things, to set up sustainable solutions for people returning from the neighbouring areas of Iran and Pakistan. Even though the authorities have taken some action and developed a framework for reintegration, the general consensus is that the main intentions of the agreement have not been achieved. Ahmadi, B. & Lakhani, S., The Forced Return of Afghan Refugees and Implications for Stability, January 2016 (url), p. 2.

[5] Salangen-Nyheter, Sterkt foredrag!, 13 February 2014 (url).

[6] Local employee at Western embassy, conversation in Kabul, 30 April 2017. Representative of international organisation, conversation in Kabul, 2 May 2017.

[7] Amongst others: Barfield, T. Afghanistan. A cultural and political history, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2010.

[8] Beall, J., e.a., S. Urban livelihoods in Afghanistan, August 2006 (url), pp. 51-52. Samuel Hall, A study of Poverty, Food Security and Resilience in Afghan Cities, 2014 (url), p. 9; Afghanistan, State of the Afghan cities. Volume One, 2015 (url), p. 3.

Long-lasting conflict and major humanitarian challenges have eroded Afghans' resources, and some of them therefore have a limited capacity to help people other than those closest to them. At the same time, hospitality is a virtue in Afghanistan, and according to the Pashtun code of honour, the *Pashtunwali*, hospitality and the physical safety of guests are crucial. Hospitality is also an important concept for other ethnic groups. Afghan hospitality and the wish to assist is considerable, and a host is morally obliged to provide shelter and food for guests ([9]).Landinfo considers this an important reason for, and explanation of, the fact that millions of returning and internal migrants have been able to settle and be absorbed in Kabul city and other urban centres in the years since 2001 ([10]).

According to a 2017 report that Fabrizio Foschini, an analyst for the Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), wrote for the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), the most recent settlements in Kabul are often composed of residents with a common regional or ethnic background, and lean exclusively on each other to find housing and jobs. These neighbourhoods 'perpetuate a sort of village society, in which everyone knows each other and everybody's business, and which often have more direct connections with the province of origin of the local residents than with areas of central Kabul' ([11]).

However, according to a report by the World Bank, local support and informal safety nets have become less effective because other family or community members that might help are themselves often exposed to shocks, such as poverty, unemployment, or security incidents ([12]). This is particularly true for urban environments, where compounded vulnerabilities and the absence of traditional coping mechanisms, such as subsistence agriculture, have eroded social safety nets ([13]).

At the same time, the armed conflict has led to greater suspicion and vigilance towards strangers. While there was previously a high level of trust within the population, the conflict over the course of the last few decades has led Afghans to perceive that strangers may pose a security threat. A representative of a local research institution indicated that before the conflicts started in the late 1970s, it was possible to stay overnight in the mosque, and the villagers would contribute food and tea for free. This is no longer the case ([14]).

1.1 The extended family

The extended family is the central pillar of the Afghan society; it is the smallest unit in society and by far the most important building block of the Afghan social structure. The extended family, as the key social institution, constitutes the primary social safety net for Afghans. It contributes to protecting, taking care of and providing for the members of the family group. The extended family is an economic unit, and the men in the family group are under an obligation to support the members of the extended family and represent the family in public. The women are responsible for the daily running of the extended family household, and carry

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([9]) BFA, Bundesamt für fremdenwesen und asyl, Principals of the tribal & clan structure, 5 April 2017 (url), p. 29.
([10]) Landinfo analysis. For more on this subject, see Landinfo, Afghanistan: Kommentarer til endringer i UNHCRs anbefalinger om internflukt og relokalisering, 11 March 2015, pp. 4-5.
([11]) Foschini, F., Kabul and the challenge of dwindling aid, 10 April 2017 (url), pp. 6-7.
([12]) Wieser, C., Rahimi, I., Redaelli, S., Afghanistan poverty status update : progress at risk, 2017 (url), p. 42.
([13]) EASO, Country of Origin Information Report. Afghanistan. Key socio-economic indicators, state protection, and mobility in Kabul City, Mazar-e Sharif, and Herat City, August 2017 (url), pp. 66-67.
([14]) Representative of local research institution, conversation in Kabul, 4 May 2017.

out tasks such as cleaning, making food and caring for the family's children, sick and elderly ([15]).

The extended family is an important identity marker. It defines an individual's social status, and the extended family is what Afghans primarily identify themselves with: 'An individual's honor, social status, and personal code of conduct are largely determined by the institution of the family' ([16]).

The extended family often lives under the same roof in a shared household. On average, an Afghan household consists of 7.8 people. At the same time, more than half of Afghans live in households consisting of nine or more people ([17]). An Afghan household traditionally consists of a male head of the family, usually the oldest man, his wife, his married sons and their wives and children. In addition, unmarried daughters are a part of the household, as well as widows and possibly other family members in need of special care, like the chronically ill or those with intellectual disabilities. When the head of the family dies, the eldest son will usually take over his position ([18]). An Afghan extended family thus contains multiple generations and several degrees of kinship. These are large networks; Afghan women on average give birth to more than five children ([19]). As there are many children being born, the Afghan population is growing rapidly, and almost half of the population (47.3 %) is below the age of 15, according to a 2016-2017 Afghan government survey ([20]).

Landinfo is not aware of any sources that provide a clear definition of how far an extended family reaches, but it appears sensible to distinguish between the extended family that constitutes a shared household and the wider extended family. Normally, a young woman cannot live in the same household as men she might marry, for example her cousins ([21]). This is mostly based on traditions and customs, and not on *Sharia* law, which is often referenced in this context. Afghanistan is a diverse country, and arrangements which are made when girls in the households reach puberty vary considerably ([22]).

Even if the wider extended family does not live in the same household, under the same roof, they usually settle close to one another. The decision-making power lies with the wider extended family even if it does not comprise a shared household. Afghan households change over time as a result of, among other things, displacement and migration, both inside and outside the country's borders ([23]).

([15]) Emadi, H. Culture and Customs of Afghanistan, Greenwood Press, Westport, 2005, pp. 165, 166.
([16]) Emadi, H. Culture and Customs of Afghanistan, Greenwood Press, Westport, 2005, p. 166.
([17]) CSO Afghanistan Living Conditions. Survey 2016-17. Mid-term results – Highlights. April – September 2016, March 2017 (url), p. 7.
([18]) Emadi, H., Culture and Customs of Afghanistan, Greenwood Press, Westport, 2005, pp. 165-166.
([19]) CIA, The World Factbook – Afghanistan, last updated: 1 August 2017 (url).
([20]) CSO, Afghanistan Living Conditions. Survey 2016-17. Mid-term results – Highlights. April – September 2016, March 2017 (url), p. 6.
([21]) Male relatives that a woman cannot marry include her father, brothers, biological uncles and nephews. UNAMA & OHCHR, A Way to Go: An Update on Implementation of the Law on Elimination of Violence against Women in Afghanistan, December 2013 (url), p. 22.
([22]) Such arrangements may be limited amongst liberal families in the cities, however the families will, for example, ensure that male and female cousins do not stay in the same room alone together. In conservative rural families, separation is more absolute. The dwelling areas are larger in rural locations, and one solution may be to build a new room within the extended family's compound. Diplomatic source, e-mail, 12 September 2017.
([23]) Smith, D. J., Decisions, Desires and Diversity: Marriage Practices in Afghanistan, February 2009 (url), p. 3.

The representative of the local research institution estimated that the wider extended family is normally considered to cover four degrees of kinship, and therefore includes the sons of cousins. This source believes that the more distant the kinship is, the fewer reciprocal obligations there are ([24]).

1.1.1. The extended family's obligation to provide assistance

The reciprocal obligation to help and support each other within the extended family is strong, and the traditions of undertaking responsibility for people within the group run deep. The closer the kinship, the stronger the obligation is to help and support. According to several of the people that Landinfo spoke to in Kabul, it is not possible to reject those closest to you, such as brothers, the children of your father's brother, etc., unless there is a serious conflict within the family. It would be impossible to imagine an Afghan not offering shelter if the alternative was that a close family member would be left living on the street. It is culturally unacceptable to reject someone who asks for shelter, and this applies particularly to close relatives. The duration of the stay depends on the family's means. Obligations towards the extended family apply to all Afghans, regardless of ethnicity, but are probably strongest amongst Pashtuns ([25]).

Internally displaced people, and the large number of returnees from the neighbouring areas (especially Pakistan) who returned during the autumn of 2016, survive primarily because of the solidarity that Afghans show towards relatives, and because family obligations and hospitality is so far-reaching, according to a diplomatic source ([26]). Samuel Hall Consulting similarly found that for Afghans it is largely the family network and other social networks that determine where returnees and displaced persons re-establish ([27]).

Because solidarity and mutual dependency is very strong in extended families, balance and reciprocity are less important for the level of support within such a network. An illustration of this was given by a local source employed at a Western embassy who is the provider for his unemployed brothers and their children. In order to house everyone, he has built an extension to his house ([28]).

For people who belong to the same extended family, it is not the personal relationship that is crucial and necessary when it comes to determining whether to help someone. In other networks, however, the personal relationship is more decisive. Tribal links can under some circumstances, such as the existence of a personal connection, be a sufficient reason to assist, as explained in Section 1.2. Similarly, the family's means are of less significance; the extended family is all about blood ties and strong kin connections, according to a representative of a local research institution ([29]).

Families that live for long periods of time outside the country's borders, for example in Iran and Pakistan, may find that contact with the extended family inside Afghanistan becomes

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([24]) Representative of local research institution, conversation in Kabul, 4 May 2017.
([25]) Local employee in UN organisation, conversation in Kabul, 1 May 2017.
([26]) Diplomatic source, e-mail, 7 July 2017.
([27]) Samuel Hall, Urban Poverty Report. A study of poverty, food insecurity and resilience in Afghan cities, 2014 (url), p. 33.
([28]) Local employee at Western embassy, conversation in Kabul, 30 April 2017.
([29]) Representative of local research institution, conversation in Kabul, 4 May 2017.

weaker and less frequent ([30]). However, a local NGO employee gave the view that re-establishing contact with the extended family and relatives is 'easy'. A person who, for example, was born and/or raised in Iran, or who has been away from Afghanistan for a long time, might still seek out the extended family, who would be culturally obliged to aid him or her. This still depends on the extended family having some basic knowledge of the person and being aware of his or her existence, knowing who their father and grandfather are, etc. The same source was of the view that in most scenarios, the person is '[...] most welcome to visit them' ([31]). However, there is no guarantee that the returnee will be at ease with the situation. According to a representative of local research institution, things are hardest for those who have never lived in Afghanistan ([32]).

1.1.2. Obligations towards mother's family

Afghanistan's patrilineal societal structure means that children belong to their father's family, and kinship follows the paternal line. This is the outcome of firmly established social and cultural relations, traditional law, *sharia* law and formal legislation. A woman who marries leaves her biological family and becomes part of the spouse's family and household. At the same time, the institution of marriage is an important way of establishing alliances between families and strengthening pre-existing networks and alliances ([33]).

One of Landinfo's interlocutors, a local embassy employee, pointed out that it is natural for him to support a sister in need of help, but without intervening in the relationship between her and her husband. It can be difficult if there is a conflict between the sister and the husband, and different considerations must then be balanced. If the sister's children need help or support, it is natural that they turn to relatives on their father's side. Relatives on the mother's side may assist if the family on the father's side have scant means and they consent ([34]).

A study carried out in certain provinces and with a sample drawn from different ethnic groups, concluded that, on average, about half of marriages in Afghanistan are between close relatives, and there is '[...] a high level of consanguinity' ([35]). As a result of marriage patterns, Landinfo finds that there are often close bonds between the mother's and the father's family. They might also belong to the same extended family, if the marriage partners are, respectively, the son and daughter of two brothers ([36]).

Therefor, Landinfo concludes that the mother's family may be a part of an individual's network, even if they are not necessarily in the same extended family ([37]).

([30]) Representative of international organisation, conversation in Kabul, 2 May 2017.
([31]) Local employee in NGO, conversation in Kabul, 2 May 2017.
([32]) Representative of local research institution, conversation in Kabul, 4 May 2017.
([33]) See for example: Landinfo, Afghanistan: Ekteskap. 5 June 2014 (url), p. 6.
([34]) Local employee at Western embassy, conversation in Kabul, 30 April 2017.
([35]) Saify, K., e.a., Consanguineous marriages in Afghanistan, 9 June 2011 (url).
([36]) Landinfo's analysis.
([37]) Landinfo's analysis.

1.2 Tribes and clans

The social organisation in tribe and clan is based on the assumption of a common ancestor, and thus an assumed relationship between the members of the tribe/clan. Several Pashtun tribes and clans are large and consist of millions of people ([38]).

Pashtuns are believed to be the world's largest tribal society; their social structure consists of tribes, which are in turn divided into clans ([39]). The term clan is also used by other ethnic groups, and is an important part of the social structure in rural areas of Afghanistan. For example, ancestry is also important to Hazaras and it is regarded as the foundation of their social structure, although most cannot trace their ancestors back more than eight generations ([40]). Unlike the Pashtuns and Hazaras, the Tajik population in Afghanistan is not organised into tribes and clans, nor do they have any notion of a common ancestor ([41]). However, according to analyst Obaid Ali, there are certain exceptions to this; in Ghor province, for instance, the Tajik population is organised according to tribal connections, and tribe seems to be more important than ethnicity ([42]).

In Afghanistan there is a tradition of local self-government and the tribal leader has great power in that context. Leading families within the tribes enjoy high local social and economic status. Identifying with a tribe/clan is an important social indicator to indicate: 'I am one of you'. However, the different tribes/clans are not a homogenous group, and different political, economic, social and value-related dividing lines may split members. The various regimes that have ruled the country have had both supporters and opponents within the same tribe and clan. The same applies today, and in most tribes there are both supporters and opponents of both the state-building project and of the armed opposition ([43]).

In addition to descent, Pashtuns ideally define themselves by their adherence to a code of conduct, the *Pashtunwali*, and their ability to speak Pashtu. However, anthropologist Thomas Barfield states in his 2010 book on the cultural and political history of Afghanistan that urban Pashtu do not necessarily all speak Pashtu or conduct themselves according to tribal honour codes ([44]).

Landinfo finds it therefore difficult to generalise about whether tribal/clan networks trigger an obligation to   support. Hospitality and safety of the guests are important virtues in *Pashtunwali* ([45]). For example, when speaking to Landinfo, a UN source said that several hundred thousand Pakistanis from the tribal areas (Federal Administered Tribal Areas, FATA) arrived in eastern Afghanistan after Pakistani security forces started a military offensive in the FATA during the summer of 2014. The majority of these resided privately, for reasons to do,

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([38]) Glatzer, B., The Pashtun Tribal System, in G. Pfeffer & D. K. Behera (eds.): Concept of Tribal Society (Contemporary Society: Tribal Studies, Vol 5), 2002, pp. 265-282, available at: (url).
([39]) Glatzer, B., The Pashtun Tribal System, in G. Pfeffer & D. K. Behera (eds.): Concept of Tribal Society (Contemporary Society: Tribal Studies, Vol 5), 2002, pp. 265-282, available at: (url).
([40]) Mousavi, S. A., The Hazaras of Afghanistan. An Historical, Cultural, Economic and Political Study, Curzon Press, Richmond, 1998, p. 51.
([41]) Minority Rights Group International Afghanistan – Pashtuns, n.d. (url).
([42]) Ali, O., "You must have a gun to stay alive": Ghor, a province with three governments, 4 August 2013 (url).
([43]) Minority Rights Group International, Afghanistan – Pashtuns, n.d. (url).
([44]) Barfield, T., Afghanistan. A cultural and political history, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2010, p. 25.
([45]) BFA, Bundesamt für fremdenwesen und asyl, Principals of the tribal & clan structure, 5 April 2017 (url), p. 29.

in particular, with the importance of tribal relationships *(tribal links)* ([46]). Another factor that may have played a role is the Afghans' desire to return a favour to the Pakistani population, who over the last few decades have hosted millions of Afghans ([47]).

At the same time, the representative of a local research institution stated that tribal links are not sufficient in themselves, but that a '[...] point of contact' ([48]) is also necessary – a personal relationship beyond membership of the common tribe/clan – in order to be invited into a family's home. However, the personal relationship might be enhanced by the circumstance that families belong to the same tribe/clan. The degree of support depends on how close the personal relationship is, as well as on the financial situation and the means of the hosting family. The source said that it is rare for guests to stay more than two or three nights – after that they will no longer feel at ease ([49]).

1.3 Ethnic networks

The sense of ethnic belonging is strong, and most Afghans know which ethnic group they identify with and belong to. Ethnic disputes and struggles were a feature of the conflicts in the country in the 1990s ([50]). It is Landinfo's understanding that ethnicity can at the same time be complex and fluid. Two aid workers with many years of experience working in Afghanistan point out that there is not always a correlation between one's own understanding of ethnic affiliation and the view other people take of it; e.g. some Sunni-Hazaras define themselves as Tajiks, while the Tajiks reportedly consider them to be Hazaras ([51]).

People who belong to the same ethnic group speak the same language, they usually belong to the same religious denomination within Islam ([52]), and share fundamental cultural values and traditions. Many of those who return to Afghanistan, or travel from rural areas into the cities, prefer to settle in an area where the population shares their ethnic background ([53]).

Identification with and loyalty to the tribe/clan/ethnic group are generally stronger than loyalty to central and local authorities, a fact which helps explain the major issues facing the Afghan state-building project. Loyalty to decisions made on a collective level is expected. For example, voting during elections largely follows ethnic divisions, and there is a general agreement that without comprehensive electoral reform, it will be difficult for a non-Pashtun (the Pashtuns are the largest ethnic group in the country) to become president ([54]).

According to the employee in the local research institution, being of the same ethnic origin is not sufficient in itself for activating support; people of the same ethnicity do not automatically support each other. An Afghan cannot knock on any door in the neighbourhood – even if the

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([46]) UN source, Kabul, autumn 2014.
([47]) UNHCR & Government of Pakistan, Census of Afghans in Pakistan, 2005 ([url](url)).
([48]) Representative of local research institution, conversation in Kabul, 4 May 2017.
([49]) Representative of local research institution, conversation in Kabul, 4 May 2017.
([50]) See for example: Landinfo, Afghanistan: Hazaras and Afghan insurgent groups, 3 October 2016 ([url](url)), pp. 10-12.
([51]) Johnson, C., e.a., Afghanistan – The mirage of peace, Zed Books Ltd., New York, 2004, p. 52.
([52]) The exception is the Tajik ethnic group, which consists of both Sunnis and Shias. The Shias primarily live in the western part of the country (Minority Rights Group n.d.). There are also some Hazaras who are Sunni Muslims. Representative of local think tank, conversation in Kabul, May 2017.
([53]) Strand, A., researcher at Chr. Michelsens Institute, Seminar in Landinfo, 29 November 2013.
([54]) Diplomatic source, e-mail, 31 August 2016.

inhabitants of the area are of the same ethnic origin – and expect support. Such a person would be met with suspicion; who is he and what is he doing here? According to the source, in such a case there also needs to be a *point of contact*; they must know each other and have some kind of relation, for example, they must be from the same village, have lived in the same refugee camp, or have been to school together. In such cases, the source said, it is hard not to provide support – at least for a short while. It might be a bed for a few nights while the guest finds a lasting solution to their situation ([55]). Analyst Fabrizio Foschini also explains that in Kabul, for example, a common ethnicity is not a guarantee for better security; 'only when a common background is added can a certain level of mutuality and collaboration be assumed' ([56]). Thomas Barfield states that in the cities, money is more important than kinship ([57]). For example, in Kabul, illegal armed groups prey primarily on their fellow community members ([58]).

1.4 Other networks

There are several other kinds of networks. These may be professional networks, networks between people who have studied or worked together, between people who have lived within the same local communities, or lived in the same reception centre in a western country, for example. According to the source at the local research institution, having spent time in the same refugee camp in Pakistan may, for example, help create strong bonds between people. The source mentioned the Shamsato camp in particular ([59]). A local employee in a UN organisation also said that it is enough for people to know each other from a refugee camp in order to be invited to each other's homes. The source referred to Afghan hospitality, and how refusal in a situation of that kind would go against cultural and religious norms. The source however finds it hard to generalise about what support could be expected from such networks; it would depend on how close the personal relationship was, and on the resource situation of the families ([60]).

Qaum is an Afghan concept of a social unit based on notions of solidarity, such as shared experience, that is context-dependent and flexible, and which can make it difficult to understand for outsiders. Afghans belong to a number of different social groups at the local level that could be considered as *qaum*. As the term *qaum* depends on the context, the answer to which *qaum* a person belongs to depends on who is asking. The answer may vary from the smallest units on a local level, to an ethnic group ([61]). Foschini explains that newcomers to Kabul settle according to their place of origin, to benefit from *qaumi* support in order to access land, housing and jobs ([62]).

Networks that arise out of belonging to the same local community are important to many Afghans. Companionship and solidarity with neighbours can be stronger than bonds through tribe and ethnicity. *Manteqa* is described as a level of community between a village and a

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([55]) Representative of local research institution, conversation in Kabul, 4 May 2017.
([56]) Foschini, F., Kabul and the challenge of dwindling aid, 10 April 2017 (url), p. 17.
([57]) Barfield, T., Afghanistan. A cultural and political history, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2010, p. 65.
([58]) Foschini, F., Kabul and the challenge of dwindling aid, 10 April 2017 (url), p. 17.
([59]) Representative of local research institution, conversation in Kabul, 4 May 2017.
([60]) Local employee in UN organisation, conversation in Kabul, 1 May 2017.
([61]) Barfield, T., Afghanistan. A cultural and political history, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2010, p. 19.
([62]) Foschini, F., Kabul and the challenge of dwindling aid, 10 April 2017 (url), pp. 6, 16.

district. This is an important marker of identity and solidarity that can cut across other dividing lines. In areas with a diverse ethnic population, solidarity within the *manteqa* may be stronger than between persons sharing the same ethnicity who come from outside of the area ([63]).

([63]) Barfield, T., Afghanistan. A cultural and political history, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2010, pp. 18-19; Monsutti, A., War and Migration, Routledge, London & New York, 2005, pp. 84-86.

2. Migration and urbanisation

Migration and movement within the country's borders are part of the social and cultural landscape of Afghanistan. For generations, young men have travelled shorter or longer distances to take up seasonal work and contribute to the support of the family. According to the representative of the local research institution, migration is still a widespread strategy for ensuring safety and supporting oneself and one's family ([64]).

It is difficult to quantify how many Afghans live outside the country's borders. In just a few months in the autumn of 2016, 600,000 Afghans returned to Afghanistan from Pakistan. More than 440,000 Afghans returned to Afghanistan from Iran in 2016 ([65]). Pakistan and Iran host approximately one million registered Afghans each. An additional 1.5 million undocumented Afghans are estimated to live in Pakistan ([66]). According to estimates by Iran's official Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants' Affairs (BAFIA) quoted by Human Rights Watch in 2013, between 1.4 and 2 million undocumented Afghans live in Iran ([67]). During a conversation with Landinfo, a former politician estimated that there are four million Afghans living in Europe, Australia, the American continent, the Gulf states and other countries ([68]). Based on these estimates gathered by Landinfo, there are almost ten million Afghans living outside the country's borders, which is equivalent to approximately 25 percent of the total Afghan population.

The desire to migrate among Afghans is still great, even though the Afghan authorities have run campaigns and informed people of the dangers and problems involved in leaving the country ([69]). In 2015, 196,170 Afghans applied for asylum in Europe, which represents an increase of several hundred percent as compared to previous years. A quarter of these (49,495 people) claimed to be minors ([70]). In 2016, there was a marginal decline of three percent in the number of Afghans leaving for Europe; about 190,000 Afghans applied for international protection in Europe, two out of three applied in Germany ([71]). According to a local employee in an NGO, the population is well aware of the obstacles that they may face on their way to Europe; border controls and closed borders, the agreement between Turkey and the EU, and a more restrictive immigration policy in many western countries. Because of this, some now contemplate the situation before making the final decision to leave ([72]).

Ongoing urbanisation is significant in Afghanistan and an increasing proportion of the population are settling in the urban centres. Returnees from neighbouring areas and Europe alike are mainly settling in the cities. As noted above, thousands of Afghans returned to Afghanistan from Pakistan during the autumn of 2016. According to a well-informed source in

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([64]) Representative of local research institution, conversation in Kabul, 4 May 2017.
([65]) IOM, Return of Undocumented Afghans from Pakistan and Iran. 2016 Overview, 2017 (url), pp. 1-4.
([66]) Ahmadi, B. & Lakhani, S., The Forced Return of Afghan Refugees and Implications for Stability, January 2016 (url).
([67]) Human Rights Watch, Unwelcome Guests, 2013 (url), p. 2.
([68]) Former Afghan politician, conversation in Kabul, 20 April 2016.
([69]) Washington Post (The), Young people don't see a future in Afghanistan, so they're leaving, 13 August 2016, (url).
([70]) EASO, Annual report on the situation of asylum in the European Union 2015, 2016 (url), pp. 45-46.
([71]) EASO, Annual report on the situation of asylum in the European Union 2016, 2017 (url), pp. 46-47.
([72]) Local employee in NGO, conversation in Kabul, 2 May 2017.

the UN, only very few have returned to their places of origin inside the country ([73]).

There are also major internal displacements within the country. The representative of the local research institution said that, in contrast to earlier times, it is becoming more common that entire families move to the cities ([74]). Another source, a local employee at a western embassy, believed that, because of the difficult economic situation, it is still common for young boys to travel to the cities from the countryside to look for work. These are usually groups of three to four people renting a room and living together. It is unusual for youths to come alone to the cities ([75]).

The causes of urbanisation are complex. It is, amongst other factors, explained by the security situation and the state of the economy. Drought, floods and earthquakes make it difficult to live from agriculture. Some of the sources in Kabul also pointed out that the shortage of health and educational services in rural areas is a contributing cause of urbanisation ([76]). In the 2014 *Urban Poverty Report* by the independent think tank Samuel Hall, the background for the urbanisation is summarised as follows:

> Afghan urban centres are attractive hubs as they are perceived as offering what remote rural areas cannot - or cannot any more - offer rural populations: job opportunities, safety and basic services ([77]).

2.1 Unaccompanied minors

Landinfo interviewed a representative of a local research institution who stated that it is the extended family that in most cases decides to send one of the family's underaged sons to Europe. A minor who does not have assistance and support from the family network will normally not be able to make the journey to Europe. The extended family is the central social institution, and all children belong to a family network. To send an underage family member to Europe is an important network decision; it involves splitting up the family, a hazardous journey and – it is hoped – a large boost to family finances ([78]).

A 2014 qualitative study carried out by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) into the motivations for underage minors to migrate confirms that sending a minor to Europe is primarily a collective decision. There are several factors behind such a decision, though the community plays a strong role in deciding to migrate unaccompanied; those who are successful in providing remittances back to their family are 'held in high regard' by their communities ([79]). Family members outside of the country have a moral obligation to help support their relatives back home. Many Afghans are worried about developments in the security situation. They consider it useful to have a close family member in the West in case the situation dramatically worsens, as that person would then be able to help get the rest of

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([73]) Local employee in UN organisation, conversation in Kabul, 1 May 2017.
([74]) Representative of local research institution, conversation in Kabul, 4 May 2017.
([75]) Local employee at Western embassy, conversation in Kabul, 30 April 2017.
([76]) Local employee in UN organisation, conversation in Kabul, 1 May 2017; Representative of local research institution, conversation in Kabul, 4 May 2017.
([77]) Samuel Hall, Urban Poverty Report, 2014 ([url]), p. 33.
([78]) Representative of local research institution, conversation in Kabul, 4 May 2017.
([79]) Echavez, e.a., Why do children undertake the unaccompanied journey?, December 2014 ([url]), p. 14.

the family out ([80]).

The hope is that the minor will be able to find a job and help support the family financially. A source pointed out that a sum of EUR 30 to 50 per month can make a big difference to a family in the Afghan countryside. Families are still willing to send children to Europe even though they are aware of the risks involved along the smuggling routes. At the same time, Afghans are familiar with the practices of the asylum countries, and are aware that it is easier for minors to get a residence permit in the West than it is for adults. Many have lost hope of a future for children in Afghanistan, which also helps to explain the decision to send minors on the long and dangerous journey to Europe ([81]).

Iran is the most important transit country for Afghans on their way to Europe. Of the 440,000 who were returned to Afghanistan from Iran in 2016, 38 % were minors (under the age of 18) ([82]).

However, not all young Afghan migrants are passive subjects of family decisions. According to research conducted by the Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), interviewing households with one or more members that migrated in 2015, in the majority of the cases they surveyed, it was the migrant themselves that had initiated the conversation on migration. These young migrants had to convince their families to let them go and justified their wish to migrate by pointing at lack of economic and educational opportunities in Afghanistan ([83]). In such cases, minors sometimes plan and carry out the journey themselves. These are often young people from well-educated, prosperous families. The director of a news organisation who was interviewed by Landinfo was worried about his own son, who had several friends in Europe. The friends posted images on social media of beautiful women and the 'successful' life in Europe. The director was aware of cases where minors had stolen money from the family to pay for the journey to Europe ([84]). Another study by AAN points at the importance of friends in the decision making to leave. These can be friends that have already left and live in the West, sharing pictures of their lives that starkly contrast the life in Afghanistan, or friends that have the same desire to leave and motivate each other to undertake the journey ([85]). Assunta Nicolini, an analyst from Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), confirms that information posted on social media by Afghan migrant youth often presents an idealised image of life in Europe and the life they are living, although the reality may not match these expectations ([86]). Chona Echavez refers in a report for the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) and UNHCR to certain cases where the idea and initiative of travelling to Europe have come from the young person himself and the journey became a reality when the extended family gave their consent. Only exceptionally, young people also travel without their family's consent ([87]).

([80]) International expert on Afghanistan, e-mail, 20 November 2015.
([81]) Representative of local research institution, conversation in Kabul, 4 May 2017; Local employee in NGO, conversation in Kabul, 2 May 2017; International organisation, conversation in Kabul 2 May 2017; AAN, "We knew they had no future in Kabul", April 2016 (url).
([82]) IOM, Return of Undocumented Afghans from Pakistan and Iran. 2016 Overview, 2017 (url), p. 4.
([83]) AAN, "We knew that they had no future in Kabul", April 2016 (url), p. 4-5.
([84]) Director of news organisation, conversation in Kabul, 18 April 2016.
([85]) Kazemi, S.R., Afghan Exodus: Maruf's tale of an emerging transnational community between Herat and Europe, 22 July 2016 (url).
([86]) Nicolini, A., Safar ba London: Afghan Youths in the move, 6 August 2013 (url).
([87]) Echavez, C., et al., Why do children undertake the unaccompanied journey?, December 2014 (url), pp. 15-16.

In an Afghan context, an illegal journey to the West costs a considerable amount of money. In 2016, the GDP per inhabitant was USD 561 ([88]). The average income in Afghanistan is USD 80-120 per month ([89]). The price of the journey depends on the route, the means of transportation and the destination and whether smuggling routes along the land route are used. Sources from January/February 2017 indicate that the journey to Turkey costs about USD 3,000; to be smuggled across the Afghan-Iranian border costs, on average, approximately USD 300; while a journey with a visa to Germany costs at least USD 20,000 ([90]). Minors do not dispose of such means, nor do they normally have the competencies or access to networks required to make a journey to western countries ([91]).

Families that have no savings will borrow money, sell property and land or enter into agreements with the smuggler for repayment. Sometimes they use a dowry for one of the family's daughters for this purpose ([92]). It would appear that the money transfer system, *hawala* (see also 4.3 Assistance from remote networks), is often used as a way of paying smugglers. It is common for the cost of the journey to be paid off in instalments as successive milestones are reached. Another widespread method is said to be for a person that both parties trust to be designated to deliver the money to the smuggler when the mission is completed, that is to say after safe arrival at the agreed destination ([93]).

([88]) World Bank (The), GDP per capita (current US), n.d. (url).
([89]) BAMF, IOM and ZIRF, Country Fact Sheet Afghanistan 2016, 10 January 2017 (url), p. 2.
([90]) DRC & 4Mi, Smuggling Networks, February 2017 (url), p. 3.
([91]) International expert on Afghanistan, e-mail, 20 November 2015.
([92]) Local journalist from Nangarhar, conversation in Kabul, 30 April 2016; Director of news organisation, conversation in Kabul, 18 April 2016.
([93]) DRC & 4Mi, Smuggling Networks, February 2017 (url), p. 3.

3. Contact with the networks following migration

Afghans abroad usually maintain close contact with relatives in Afghanistan. An international organisation that provides assistance to returnees, informed Landinfo that only very few of those who return from Europe have lost contact with their family. The quality of the contact with the family may still depend on how long the person has been abroad, and if they lived in Afghanistan before they left the region ([94]).

Analyst Martine van Bijlert of the AAN conducted a series in-depth interviews with 12 families in Afghanistan who all had a family member who had left for Europe in 2015. All the families have contact with the migrant, are well informed as to where the person is and of how the family member's situation has been upon arrival in Europe. The analyst interviewed the families in the home country rather than the actual migrant, because:

> [...] it provides insight into the continued linkages with the home front - a factor that tends to be underplayed in asylum interviews. (Many migrants, in particular minors, are coached to claim they no longer have living relatives or that they have lost all contact) ([95]).

A local UN employee that Landinfo spoke to said that single men who have been outside of the country's borders for a shorter or longer period of time are most likely to have a family in Afghanistan to return to. The source pointed out that most of those who return from Europe are unaccompanied and thus have a family in Afghanistan that they can return to. The exception may be those who have family networks in the neighbouring areas, in Iran or Pakistan ([96]).

Those who have left Afghanistan together with their family network may lack their closest family members upon return ([97]). Refugee Support Network (RSN), a London-based charity that has conducted research on Afghan returnees, followed up on 25 Afghans who had a temporary residence permits in the UK until they turned 18, and were then deported to Afghanistan. Most of them (78 %) stayed in Britain for more than five years. The report, which followed the returnees for a period of 18 months, claims that eight of the youths had not been successful in getting in touch with their extended family. In half of the cases, the reason was that the person's family had left Afghanistan. All the returnees ran into a series of problems and difficulties upon returning, according to the report ([98]).

([94]) Representative of international organisation, conversation in Kabul, 2 May 2017.
([95]) van Bijlert, M., Deciding to leave Afghanistan: What happens after arrival in Europe, 19 May 2016 ([url](url)).
([96]) Local employee in UN organisation, conversation in Kabul, 1 May 2017.
([97]) Landinfo's analysis.
([98]) Gladwell, C., e.a., After return. Documenting the experiences of young people forcibly removed to Afghanistan, April 2016 ([url](url)), p. 22.

Several million Afghans have spent a long time in neighbouring Iran or Pakistan. Over the last few years it has been relatively easy for Afghans in Pakistan to stay in regular touch with relatives in their native country, since the Afghan-Pakistani border is porous and it has been easy to cross without travel documents ([99]). The border between Afghanistan and Iran, on the other hand, is in effect closed. Those who do not have a valid visa for Iran need a smuggler to get them across the border. There are Afghans born in Iran who have never been to their native country. For them, Afghanistan may seem like a foreign country. Those who have travelled to Europe from Iran, and who still have their closest family in Iran, do not wish to stay in Afghanistan, and most travel on to Iran if they are returned to Afghanistan ([100]).

Several factors confirm that there is close contact between Afghans residing in the West and the family networks back home. Many Afghans in Europe travel to their native country or the neighbouring areas on holiday, and for shorter or longer stays. Marriage patterns amongst Afghans abroad show that they primarily marry people of the same nationality, and a considerable number find marriage partners in Afghanistan. As an example, more than 10,500 Afghans who arrived between 1990 and 2015 and settled in Norway have, according to SSB (Statistics Norway), generated 4,000 family reunifications ([101]). Numbers from the SSB show that Afghan women in Norway who married in the period from 2008 to 2012 primarily married someone of the same origin: in more than 80 percent of cases, the partner was of Afghan origin, residing either in Norway or abroad. Only a very small percentage – fewer than two percent – of Afghan men married a person from the Norwegian majority population ([102]).

Another indicator of the close bonds between the diaspora and the family networks back home is that large sums of money are being sent back to the family networks in Afghanistan by Afghans abroad. It is hard to establish a figure as to how much is being sent. The funds are sent through a variety of channels, both official and unofficial. The World Bank estimates that money transfers in 2016 accounted for about 1.6 % of Afghanistan's GDP ([103]). In 2015, more than USD 300 million was transferred to recipients in Afghanistan. Figures from the World Bank show that transfers have increased substantially since 2008, when approximately USD 85 million was transferred ([104]). There is broad consensus that transfers from abroad are an important source of income for many Afghan families. In 2007, the World Bank estimated that 15 % of households in rural areas received funds from abroad and that the funds covered 20 % of the families' daily expenses ([105]).

The scale of the transfers demonstrates, as Landinfo sees it, that Afghans abroad feel obliged to help support relatives and family back in the home country. This may in itself help family

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([99]) There have, from time to time, been attempts to increase border control at the border posts between Afghanistan and Pakistan. In April 2017, a diplomatic source reported that Pakistan had opened the important border crossing points to Afghanistan at Torkham and Chaman, which had at that time been closed for a month. The reason for closing them was, among other things, to stop terrorists crossing over from Afghanistan. However, Pakistan has decided to reinforce controls on the border with Afghanistan. Amongst other things, a fence is to be built in areas most exposed to cross-border attacks. Facilities for radar, sensors and technical surveillance equipment are also going to be built. Diplomatic source, e-mail, 2 April 2017.
([100]) Conversation with international source in Kabul, May 2017
([101]) Dzamarija, M. T., e.a., Familieinnvandring og ekteskapsmønster 1990-2015, 2016 ([url](url)), p. 48.
([102]) Sandnes, T., e.a., Familieinnvandring og ekteskapsmønster 1990-2012, 2014 ([url](url)), p. 35.
([103]) World Bank (The), Personal remittances, received (% of GDP), n.d. ([url](url)).
([104]) World Bank (The), Personal remittances (current US), n.d. ([url](url)).
([105]) IOM, Afghanistan. Migration Profile, 2014 ([url](url)), p. 144.

members to maintain ties with each other ([106]). While most migrants returning to Afghanistan are positively received back by their families, failed migration also lead to a familial stigma caused by a loss in financial investment, family honour and community standing ([107]).

3.1 How to maintain contact with networks?

Mobile phones are widely used and most households have one or more phones. According to the Afghan Ministry of Communication & Information Technology, there are more than 23 million mobile phone users in Afghanistan ([108]). The land-line network is very inadequate, which may explain why mobile phones so quickly made inroads into the Afghan market ([109]). An international organisation claimed in a conversation with Landinfo that Afghanistan has good mobile coverage and advanced technology, among the best in the region. In certain areas, however, there is only coverage during the day and the system goes down during the night ([110]). Writing in September 2017, Tolo News states that this has been the case in the province of Kunduz for more than a year ([111]).

In a survey by the Asia Foundation in 2016, almost 90 % of respondents reported that the household had at least one mobile phone and 55 % of respondents had their own phone ([112]). There are five mobile operators on the Afghan market, who combined have approximately 25 million subscribers ([113]).

Mobile and smart phones have become common in Afghanistan making it easier for Afghans abroad to regularly stay in touch with their family and networks in Afghanistan. The price of long-distance calls can, nevertheless, be a factor in reducing the frequency and duration of phone calls for those who do not have smart phones and cannot communicate using internet services such as Skype ([114]).

Compared to how widespread mobile phones are on the Afghan market, there is still only modest use of the internet. In 2011, only 3 % of the population were internet users. Five years later, in 2016, the number had increased to 13 % ([115]). Landinfo interprets that these numbers do not include those who have access to the internet via smart phone. Internet is available, according to an international organisation, but the quality varies between different provinces. The signal is weak in some provinces. In the large cities and in certain districts, 3G packages are sold with a certain number of megabytes (MB). The cheapest package costs about 50 afghani (or USD 0.7), and will, for example, cover the costs of a couple of days of Facebook usage. Roshan is the leading telecommunication service provider in Afghanistan. According to their website, a monthly package of 1.5 GB costs 350 afghani (+/- EUR 4.10) and 3 GB is available for the price of 450 afghani (+/- EUR 5.30) ([116]). 4G has not been introduced in

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([106]) Landinfo's analysis.
([107]) EASO, Afghanistan. Individuals targeted under societal and legal norms, December 2017 (url), p. 96-98.
([108]) Ministry of Communication & Information Technology, Telecom's Sector Recent Achievements, n.d. (url).
([109]) BuddeCom, Afghanistan – Telecoms, Mobile and Broadband – Statistics and Analyses, 22 May 2017 (url).
([110]) Representative of international organisation, conversation in Kabul, 2 May 2017.
([111]) TOLO News: Mobile phone service blackout has Kunduz residents fuming, 24 September 2017 (url)
([112]) Asia Foundation (The), A Survey of the Afghan People. Afghanistan in 2016, 2016 (url), p. 11.
([113]) BuddeCom, Afghanistan – Telecoms, Mobile and Broadband – Statistics and Analyses, 22 May 2017 (url).
([114]) van Bijlert, M., Deciding to leave Afghanistan: What happens after arrival in Europe, 19 May 2016 (url).
([115]) BuddeCom, Afghanistan – Telecoms, Mobile and Broadband – Statistics and Analyses, 22 May 2017 (url).
([116]) Roshan, Data Bundles, n.d. (url). Currency converted at 17 January 2018 through http://www.xe.com/.

Afghanistan. According to a representative of an international organisation in Kabul, the use of social media is widespread in cities. Some people, especially in Kabul, have access to Wi-Fi, but it is relatively expensive and the quality is variable ([117]). Broadband is almost non-existent: fewer than 0.1 % of the population have access to it ([118]). There are internet cafés in the big cities; in Kabul a separate internet café has been set up for women ([119]).

Landinfo finds reason to believe that there are considerable differences in internet usage between cities and rural areas, and there is probably also a dividing line between the educated middle class and others. The illiterate and people with reduced reading and writing skills may not be able to use the internet and digital media. The representative of the research institution in Kabul said that social media are nonetheless also important to people living in rural areas and that it is particularly through Facebook that migrants in Europe stay in regular touch with their extended family and other networks ([120]).

3.1.1. How can family members be found?

According to the representative of an international organisation, families are generally well informed about each other. There are many gatherings, social get-togethers and frequent contact between people in the same family network ([121]). The NGO representative claimed that Afghans are 'amazing at networking and finding people' ([122]). However, it does sometimes happen that contact is broken or that family members lose each other or are separated on their way to Europe ([123]).

There is no national population register in Afghanistan, nor are there 'yellow pages' or databases with lists of phone numbers. There are still ways of finding family members. The village the family comes from is a natural place to start searching for those who want to trace family members. Local communities possess a lot of information about the families in the area and the elders have a good overview ([124]).

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) runs a project to track family members and also has an online platform where pictures of missing persons can be posted. ICRC works closely with the Red Crescent. ICRC cannot enter all areas of Afghanistan and that is when the Red Crescent is used ([125]).

Radio stations can also be used to track people. A local employee at a Western embassy said that Radio Free Europe/Radio Azadi, based in Prague and run by an Afghan journalist, has such a service ([126]). The station has a wide reach and many listeners; according to the station itself, it reaches 36 % of the entire country's population and broadcasts for 12 hours a day. It broadcasts in both Dari and Pashto ([127]).

([117]) Representative of international organisation, conversation in Kabul, 2 May 2017.
([118]) BuddeCom, Afghanistan – Telecoms, Mobile and Broadband – Statistics and Analyses, 22 May 2017 (url).
([119]) Reuters, Afghanistan opens first women-only internet café, 8 March 2012 (url).
([120]) Representative of local research institution, conversation in Kabul, 4 May 2017.
([121]) Representative of international organisation, conversation in Kabul, 2 May 2017.
([122]) Local employee in NGO, conversation in Kabul, 2 May 2017.
([123]) Representative of international organization, conversation in Kabul, 2 May 2017.
([124]) Representative of international organisation, conversation in Kabul, 2 May 2017.
([125]) ICRC, Restoring Family Links in Afghanistan, n.d. (url).
([126]) Local employee at Western embassy, conversation in Kabul, 30 April 2017.
([127]) Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, RFE/RL's Afghan Service: Radio Azadi, 1 Augustus 2017 (url).

4.   Possibility of settling in urban centres without a network

Although Afghan authorities since 2016 have developed a new policy framework for IDPs and returnees that foresees a multidimensional approach for reintegration, the only concrete assistance that returnees get upon return, is from the government of the European country from which he/she is returned ([128]). There are a few organisations in Afghanistan that assist returnees, primarily with legal aid and counsel ([129]). IOM offers temporary accommodation up to two weeks at Jangalak Reception in Kabul for returnees from European countries ([130]).

Analysis from the World Bank highlighted that state-funded social protection in Afghanistan has low coverage and does not effectively target the poorest and most vulnerable households. Only 6 % of all Afghan households participated in any social protection program in 2013-14, of which 23 % received food-for-work, 78 % received cash-for-work, and only 1 % participated in an income generation-based program ([131]). Landinfo is not aware of any functioning public support system in Afghanistan that provides assistance in practice to people who wish to settle. Unemployment and the lack of support schemes are factors which make it challenging for people without a network to settle ([132]).

Afghanistan has experienced massive return numbers since 2001. Overviews of which factors have contributed to or worked against successful resettlement in all areas of Afghanistan, are still relatively incomplete. Nonetheless, it is Landinfo's estimation that networks are likely to have played an important role in the process of re-establishment ([133]). Factors that may have contributed to making this possible are personal resources, such as having an education and/or know-how that is in demand in the labour market, as well as financial resources such as money or valuables that might be used, for example, to set up one's own workplace ([134]). For further information on recent developments in the urban economy, poverty, employment and coping strategies, please refer to the EASO Country of Origin Report *Afghanistan, Key socio-economic indicators, state protection, and mobility in Kabul City, Mazar-e Sharif, and Herat City* ([135]).

4.1.   Access to the labour market

Access to the labour market is a critical factor for successful reintegration. The labour market in Afghanistan is challenging and the unemployment rate is high. It is difficult to estimate the rate of unemployment because of the informal nature of the market. Even for those who are highly educated and well qualified, it is, according to a source in the UN difficult to get work without a network, and without someone recommending you and introducing you to an

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([128]) Bjelica, J. & Ruttig, T, Vountary and Forced Returns to Afghanistan in 2016/17, 19 May 2017 (url).
([129]) Refugee Legal Aid Information for Lawyers representing Refugees globally, Afghanistan pro bono directory, n.d. (url); Afghanistan Migrants Advice & Support org, about, n.d. (url).
([130]) IOM, Restart a new life in Afghanistan, n.d. (url).
([131]) Wieser, C., Rahimi, I., Redaelli, S., Afghanistan poverty status update : progress at risk, 2017 (url), p. 43.
([132]) See EASO, Key socio-economic indicators, state protection, and mobility in Kabul City, Mazar-e Sharif, and Herat City, August 2017 (url), pp. 24, 66.
([133]) Landinfo's analysis.
([134]) For informationon on provision of economic support from states and NGOs see Asylos, Afghanistan: Situation of young male 'Westernised' returnees to Kabul, August 2017 (url), pp. 19-21.
([135]) EASO, Key socio-economic indicators, state protection, and mobility in Kabul City, Mazar-e Sharif, and Herat City, August 2017 (url).

employer ([136]). Afghanistan is described as highly corrupt by Transparency International ([137]). Nepotism is widespread and most of the senior positions in both the administration and society in general are distributed on the basis of relationships or prior acquaintances. From an employer's point of view, it is practical to hire someone from one's own network, since he will know exactly what he is getting. If someone in the extended family is hired, the resources are kept within the family network. A 2012 study by the International Labour Organization (ILO) about employment patterns in Afghanistan confirms that employers value personal relationships and networks above formal qualifications and this is key to securing employment ([138]). There is, according to Landinfo's analysis, no evidence that suggests that the situation has changed since 2012.

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) there are local web pages that advertise vacancies in the public and private sectors ([139]). Most Afghans are unskilled and are a part of the informal, unregulated labour market. The labour market mainly consists of manual work without any requirement for formal education, and reflects the low level of education ([140]).

A local embassy employee described how day labourers are hired from the street. In Kabul, there are local meeting points for people looking for work and people who have a job they want done. The meeting points are in specific areas of the city. People in need of work and those who need manpower meet early in the morning. Here they strike agreements on day labour and minor tasks of short duration, usually unskilled manual labour, although it can also be more qualified labour. By bringing along their own tools or equipment, the job-seeker indicates what he can do. After a short conversation and assessment, the 'employer' decides who is hired. Many people turn up, and not everyone gets work. The salary is about 300 afghani (approx. USD 4.3) for unskilled workers, while skilled workers can earn up to 1,000 afghani (approx. USD 14.5) per day ([141]).

4.2 Access to lodgings

In the big cities, most people are relegated to the rental market, as buying property is expensive. According to IOM, rental costs in 2016 for a flat are between USD 400 and 600 per month, plus water and electricity costs calculated at about USD 40 ([142]). The National Consumer Price Index from March 2014 from Central Statistics Organization in Afghanistan confirmed that after the transition in 2014, rental prices in Kabul, among other places, dropped owing to reduced demand ([143]). According to a source in the UN interviewed in May 2017, the prices have gone up again because of the large numbers returning from Pakistan ([144]). There is also the possibility to rent a room rather than a flat, which, according to

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([136]) Local employee in UN organisation, conversation in Kabul 1 May 2017.
([137]) TI, Corruption Perception Index 2016, 2017 (url).
([138]) ILO, Afghanistan: Time to move to sustainable jobs, May 2012 (url), p. 31.
([139]) BAMF, IOM and ZIRF, Country Fact Sheet Afghanistan 2016, 10 January 2017 (url), p. 2.
([140]) EASO, Key socio-economic indicators, state protection, and mobility in Kabul City, Mazar-e Sharif, and Herat City, August 2017 (url), p. 22.
([141]) Local employee at Western embassy, conversation in Kabul 30 April 2017.
([142]) BAMF, IOM and ZIRF, Country Fact Sheet Afghanistan 2016, 10 January 2017 (url), p. 2.
([143]) Central Statistics Organization, National Consumer Price Index March 2014, March 2014 (url), accessed 17 January 2017.
([144]) Local employee in UN organisation, conversation in Kabul 1 May 2017.

Landinfo, is less expensive ([145]).

Some people build their own houses, on land given to them by the authorities, land they have purchased or land where the ownership is unsettled. A large share of the real estate in Kabul, for instance, is informal and there is no documentation of ownership. Returnees with money can purchase land from the authorities or private actors, and can build their own house in the long term ([146]). According to analyst Fabrizio Foschini, displaced people in Kabul without family connections or the ability to rent a house ended up in camps, including settlements of tents or makeshift huts, or squatting in abandoned government buildings ([147]).

In the cities, there are hotels and guesthouses with a range of prices and standards. Some hotels are of a very high standard and are in a high price category, even by western standards. Other hotels are of a more modest standard and charge much lower prices. Guesthouses are generally cheaper than hotels and have fewer facilities, and the guests share bathrooms and toilets ([148]).

There are lower quality services throughout the entire country that can be utilised by drivers and other travelers, day workers, street salesmen, young people, single men and others who do not have permanent housing in the area. These are simple, large rooms where tea and simple, cheap food is served. It is also possible to spend the night there for a low price. According to Landinfo's sources, the price is between 30 and 100 afghani (equivalent to USD 0.4 to 1.4) per night. The local term is *chai khana* – popularly known as *samawar* – which can be translated as *tea house*. In Kabul and the other large cities, there are many such *chai khana* and, if one place is full, it is possible to get room and board somewhere else. One does not need to know anyone to be allowed in, and it is not unusual for guests to come alone ([149]). Afghan researcher Hafizullah Emadi describes the *chai khana* as an important meeting point and arena for socialisation ([150]). The Afghan Embassy in Oslo describes them as follows:

> The most typical characteristic of Afghan society are the Chai Khanas, or tea houses, which abound everywhere in the country. Often beautiful[ly] decorated, the Chai Khanas are the central gathering place for every town and village in Afghanistan ([151]).

According to a diplomatic source, this is an arena for men, and whereas it would be a rarity that women visit a *chai khana* during daytime, it is unthinkable that women would stay overnight ([152]).

According to one of Landinfo's sources, it is no longer possible to spend the night in mosques ([153]). The authorities do not have any assistance schemes that provide short-term support to individuals or families settling in a new location. As previously mentioned, people who return

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([145]) Landinfo analysis
([146]) EASO, Key socio-economic indicators, state protection, and mobility in Kabul City, Mazar-e Sharif, and Herat City, August 2017 (url), pp. 58, 59.
([147]) Foschini, F., Kabul and the challenge of dwindling aid, 10 April 2017 (url), p. 15.
([148]) Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Oslo, Travel and Tourism. n.d. (url).
([149]) Representative of local research institution, conversation in Kabul 4 May 2017; Diplomatic source, e-mail 2 July 2017.
([150]) Emadi, H., Culture and Customs of Afghanistan, Greenwood Press, Westport, 2005, p. 135.
([151]) Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Oslo, Travel and Tourism, n.d. (url).
([152]) Diplomatic source, e-mail 10 October 2017.
([153]) Representative of local research institution, conversation in Kabul, 4 May 2017

from Europe are offered temporary accommodation (up to two weeks) at Jangalak reception centre in Kabul, run by IOM ([154]).

4.3. Assistance from remote networks

In a recommendation to the asylum countries in June 2005, the UNHCR stated that assistance and support from networks was limited to areas where the networks were physically present ([155]). Landinfo assesses that, in line with technological developments, geography has become less important for the use of networks. As stated above, mobile phone ownership has become 'universal', and digital communication is becoming more and more commonplace, especially in the cities.

Money can be transferred through the banking system, but not all Afghans have a bank account. This especially applies to the rural population. Trust in banks and banking systems among the ordinary population is low ([156]). Those who cannot or do not want to use the banking system can send money through an informal money transfer system (*hawala*). This is a well-established system for payments and money transfer across borders, and one that the population trusts. A certain percentage of the sum transferred is paid as a fee. Money can be sent to all parts of the country and also to and from neighbouring countries, such as Iran and Pakistan ([157]).

([154]) IOM, Restart a new life in Afghanistan, n.d., available at: ([url](url))
([155]) UNHCR, Update on the Situation in Afghanistan and International Protection Considerations, June 2005, available at: ([url](url)), p. 67.
([156]) IOM, Afghanistan. Migration Profile, 2014 ([url](url)), p. 148.
([157]) Local employee at Western embassy, conversation in Kabul, 30 April 2017.

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