

Case Studies Series

**THE KANDAHAR BUS  
STAND IN KABUL:  
An Assessment of Travel and  
Labour Migration to Iran  
and Pakistan**

Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit

By Elca Stigter

June 2004

Funding for this study was  
made possible by the United  
Nations High Commission on  
Refugees (UNHCR)



**© 2004 The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU). All rights reserved.**

This case study was prepared by an independent consultant with no previous involvement in the activities evaluated. The views and opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of AREU.

## About the Author

Elca Stigter is an independent consultant with previous experience of working with UNHCR, UNIFEM and UNDP. She has a Masters Degree in Social Anthropology of Leiden University, The Netherlands. She worked as the research team leader on transnational networks with the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit from February to October, 2004.

## About the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU)

The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) is an independent research organisation that conducts and facilitates action-oriented research and learning that informs and influences policy and practice. AREU also actively promotes a culture of research and learning by strengthening analytical capacity in Afghanistan and by creating opportunities for analysis, thought and debate. Fundamental to AREU's vision is that its work should improve Afghan lives. AREU was established by the assistance community working in Afghanistan and has a board of directors with representation from donors, UN and multilateral organisations agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Current funding for AREU has been provided by the European Commission (EC), United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the governments of Sweden and Switzerland. Funding for this study has been provided by the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR).





## I. Background

In the Afghan context, one of the assumptions that has predominated the discourse on cross-border movement for many years is that all movement has necessarily been forced and is protection-related in nature. One of the growing realisations is that there have been other kinds of movement during the years of Soviet occupation and consequent periods of civil strife, which were motivated by a wide range of (often combined) factors, including social and economic concerns. Since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, reconstruction efforts have gradually led to a certain degree of stability in the country, merging with a gradual ‘normalization’ of travel and migration routines of Afghans vis-à-vis Pakistan and Iran.

To address the dearth of data in Afghanistan with regard to cross-border travel and labour migration, the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), as part of its “Transnational Networks” project, decided to conduct a preliminary assessment to enhance understanding with regard to the composition and destination of different groups of Afghans travelling to Afghanistan’s neighbouring countries via Kandahar. Moreover, this assessment intended to shed more light on decision-making patterns of labour migrants moving to Iran and Pakistan, in particular with regard to available networks, intra-household decision-making, expectations around earnings, savings and remittances and the expected items of expenditures of these remittances.

This preliminary survey was conducted from 30 March to 5 April 2004 at the Kandahar bus stop in Kabul.<sup>1</sup> Spring had just been ushered in with the arrival of the Iranian New Year, marking an immediate increase in Afghans travelling to Pakistan and Iran. With the majority of movements taking place from Afghanistan’s border provinces with Iran and Pakistan, the overall flow of persons moving is definitely much higher than captured in this sample.

## II. Methods

The assessment was conducted during the first week of April for six days (Friday was excluded as there were hardly any travellers during that day). Every morning the AREU research assistant was present at the bus stop from 6.30 am to 12.30 pm, approaching male travellers. In the afternoon no vehicles would take off towards the south.

Purposive sampling was undertaken to identify and describe the main characteristics of the Afghans travelling to Iran, Pakistan and other neighbouring countries. Male travellers at the bus stand were approached and only those who indicated that they would cross Afghanistan’s national borders were interviewed. The fact that a male assistant was used introduced a male bias to the survey (as he could not approach women), which, however, should be seen in context as there were only some women (and solely in male company) passing through the bus stand.

Questionnaires were used during the interviewing process. The data obtained through the questionnaires were further complemented with semi-structured

---

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Jamil, research assistant of the “transnational network” project of AREU, conducted the structured and semi-structured interviews and observation, as well as part of the initial analysis.

interviews with the bus stand coordinator, the *dalal* (the person calling out for passengers), staff of the hotels around the bus stop, as well as bus and taxi drivers.

The questionnaires allowed for the division of the respondents into groups based on their purposes of travel (labour, business, relatives, other). Tailor-made questions were asked for the first three categories of those travelling to Iran, Pakistan and other countries.

A total of 186 questionnaires of transnational travellers were filled in, with an average of 31 per day (over six days).

Challenges during the fieldwork and subsequent analysis can be summarized as follows:

- ***The sensitivity of the information.*** Respondents were not always keen on answering the questions with regard to future expenditures (in particular *mahr*)<sup>2</sup>, and family-related matters. Thus, answers with regard to financial matters were not always provided or remained incomplete.
- ***The correctness of the information.*** The estimates with regard to earnings and savings could be relatively high, as these are based on expectations (and hopes) and may not necessarily be grounded in reality. Further, estimates of the total number of passengers have been provided by different people and are based on the average number of vehicles leaving the bus stand on a daily basis.
- ***The lack of privacy at the bus stand.*** In particular, when interviewing men going to Iran, their travel companions were surrounding them, thus allowing little space for more private information. Further, bus stands are generally hectic and chaotic places with people shouting and running around.
- ***The predicament of dealing with travellers.*** Interviews were sometimes interrupted as the driver suddenly wanted to take off, or friends shouted that luggage needed to be checked in, etc. Thus, not all questionnaires were filled in entirely.

### III. Transnational Travellers on the Kabul - Kandahar Route<sup>3</sup>

#### A. The Kandahar Bus Stand

The Kandahar bus stop is located between Kote Sangi and the university in Kabul city. It is a busy location, just beside the Silo bread factory and with four hotels in its vicinity. Every morning around nine big buses depart for Kandahar between 6.00 and 7.00 am. Then, smaller buses, mini-buses and taxis depart from the same bus stop until around 12 and 13 o'clock.

---

<sup>2</sup> Mahr means dower.

<sup>3</sup> Transnationalism refers to the multitude of relations and circuits and attachments that occur between and across places or nations (Uehling, 2002; in: Diana Glazebrook and Mohamamad Jalal Abbasi-Shavazi, "Pilgrimage Aspirations and Practice of Hazara Shia Mohajer in Iran, and the Question of Repatriation to Afghanistan." Paper Submitted to the Iranian Journal of Anthropology. 2004.)

**Table 1: Type of vehicles and other details**

Type of vehicle	Number of seats	Departure time	Price per ticket/seat (Afghanis)	Number per day
Big bus	53	6-8 am	180-200	8-10
Small bus	20-30	7-12 am	180-200	5-6
Flying coach (tonus)	15	7-12 am	400	3-4
Taxi (corolla)	4	9-13 pm	700-800	15-20
Taxi (saracha)	4	7-13 pm	500-600	

The passengers of the various types of vehicles can clearly be subdivided into various categories, depending on the amount of money that they have available for travelling. Many coming from the north are travelling in big buses – mostly staying overnight in one of the four hotels around the bus stop (they buy the ticket a day in advance). Those migrating for labour purposes across Afghanistan's borders spend the least amount of money on the journey, while the businessmen prefer to take the taxis – more expensive but more comfortable and faster.

The road from Kabul to Kandahar is approximately 480 kilometres. The travel time from Kabul to Kandahar varies, depending on the vehicle used. The big buses started to become operational at the end of 2003, when that part of the ring road had been completed. They are supposedly as rapid as the smaller buses, whose owners fear the increasing competition. These vehicles require about six hours to reach Kandahar, while the tonuses require six and a half to seven hours. The taxis reach the city in five hours.

According to the bus stand manager, most passengers are travelling in spring, which starts with the beginning of the Iranian New Year (the months of *hamal*, *sowar*, *jauza*). In summer (*saratan*, *asad*, *sanbula*) the number of passengers for Pakistan decline. The number of Iranian passengers does not change. In autumn (*meyan*, *aqrab*, *qaus*) the trend prevalent in summer continues, while in winter (*jade*, *dalwa*, *hoot*) the level of Pakistan passengers increases but the level of travellers to Iran decreases.

The average number of passengers on a daily basis fluctuates, as described above. While the bus stop manager provided his estimates per season (respectively 1250, 900, 900, 1100), these appeared to be relatively high, considering the sum of the number of vehicles and their respective number of seats that depart daily to Kandahar. Based on these estimates, the average number of travellers is around 850 per day in spring.

## B. The Passengers

The passengers using the Kandahar bus stand in Kabul come mostly from outside the city, using Afghanistan's capital as a transit hub. Most of the provinces are represented among them, as well as the various ethnic groups that inhabit the country. It has been estimated that around three-quarters of the passengers travelling to Kandahar will be moving onwards to other countries. This means that a little over 600 travellers a day passing through the bus stand will be crossing the borders with Iran, Pakistan and occasionally Turkmenistan in the spring.



Table 2: Place of origin and ethnicity

Province/region	Ethnicity	Numbers
Bamyan	Hazara	7
Kabul	Hazara	2
	Uzbek	1
	Tajik	8
	Pashtun	9
Kapisa	Tajik	1
	Pashtun	3
Logar	Tajik	10
	Pashtun	14
Parwan	Tajik	4
Wardak/Maidan	Tajik	1
	Pashtun	10
	Hazara	3
<b>Central Total (73)</b>	<b>Hazara</b>	<b>12</b>
	<b>Pashtun</b>	<b>36</b>
	<b>Uzbek</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Tajik</b>	<b>24</b>
Kunar	Pashtun	2
Laghman	Pashtun	9
Nangarhar	Pashtun	13
	Tajik	1
Nuristan	--	--
<b>Eastern Total (24)</b>	<b>Tajik</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Pashtun</b>	<b>24</b>
Badakhshan	Tajik	2
Baghlan	Tajik	13
	Pashtun	2
	Uzbek	2
Balkh	Tajik	4
	Pashtun	2
	Uzbek	2
Faryab	Tajik	1
	Uzbek	2
Jawzjan	Pashtun	1
	Uzbek	2
Kunduz	Pashtun	11
	Tajik	8
	Uzbek	5
Samangan	Pashtun	2
	Tajik	1
	Uzbek	4
Sari Pul	Tajik	1
	Hazara	2
Takhar	Uzbek	4
<b>Northern Total (76)</b>	<b>Pashtun</b>	<b>24</b>
	<b>Tajik</b>	<b>30</b>
	<b>Uzbek</b>	<b>20</b>
	<b>Hazara</b>	<b>2</b>
Ghazni	Pashtun	2
	Tajik	1
	Hazara	7
Khost	Pashtun	1
Paktika	--	--
Paktya	Pashtun	8

<b>Southeast Total (19)</b>	<i>Pashtun</i>	<b>11</b>
	<i>Tajik</i>	<b>1</b>
	<i>Hazara</i>	<b>7</b>
Badghis	--	--
Farah	Tajik	1
Ghor	--	--
Herat	--	--
<b>Western Total (1)</b>	<i>Tajik</i>	<b>1</b>
<b>TOTAL NUMBERS (194)</b>	<b>PASHTUN</b>	<b>95</b>
	<b>TAJIK</b>	<b>57</b>
	<b>UZBEK</b>	<b>21</b>
	<b>HAZARA</b>	<b>21</b>

The data on ethnicity in Table 2 show that approximately half of the group of transnational travellers are Pashtun (49 percent). This can be explained by the location of Kabul, the provinces that the travellers originate from, as well as Kabul's relative proximity to Pakistan. The majority of travellers came from the northern provinces (39 percent), while the second largest group, which contains the largest group of Pashtuns, came from the central provinces (39 percent).

Tajiks were the second largest group (29 percent), and obviously constitute the largest group of travellers coming from the northern provinces. Further, both Uzbeks and Hazaras (both 11 percent) also had a clear presence in the larger group of travellers, with the Uzbeks mostly coming from the northern provinces and the Hazaras from the central and southeastern provinces.

**Table 3: Purposes of travelling to Kandahar**

Travelling to	Reason	Number of respondents
Iran	Employment	70
	Business	4
	Relatives	7
	Mashad shrine	9
Pakistan	Employment	67
	Business	14
	Relatives	14
	Other (e.g. hospital, university)	4
Turkmenistan (via Herat)	Business	1
Total of respondents moving to neighbouring countries		190
Dubai (via Iran)	Employment	1
Iraq (via Iran)	Karbala	2
Saudi Arabia (via Karachi)	Employment	1
Total of respondents travelling elsewhere		4
<b>TOTAL OF RESPONDENTS</b>		<b>194</b>

Out of 194 respondents, 100 (52 percent) were planning to continue after Kandahar to Pakistan. Of those travelling to Pakistan, a division can be made into different categories, namely those crossing the border for employment reasons (68 percent), business reasons (14 percent), visiting relatives (14 percent), and a small number of those seeking treatment in the hospital, going to university, etc. (four percent). Thus, the large majority of travellers to Pakistan intended to seek employment (or return to their job or business).

Ninety-three respondents (48 percent) were going to Iran. Of this group, 75 percent was travelling for employment reasons, four percent for business purposes, ten percent for religious reasons and eight percent to visit relatives. The majority was obviously planning to find work in Iran. Only one respondent was travelling to Herat to cross into Turkmenistan for business reasons. As will be discussed later in the chapter on labour migration, reasons to travel are not always clearcut, and motivations often tend to overlap.

Using the neighbouring countries as transit points, four respondents had a destination further away in mind. Two Hazara respondents intended to pass through Iran with friends to go to Iraq and visit the tomb of Imam Hussein in Karbala. Another respondent was planning to travel to Dubai via Bandar Abbas, the central smuggling hub for Dubai. The fourth respondent intended to go to Saudi Arabia via Pakistan, where he owned a petroleum pump. He returned to Afghanistan every year for two months to visit his relatives and monitor the construction of the houses built by him and his brother.

**Table 4: Travelling alone or with others (excluding labour migration) to Iran and Pakistan**

Way of travelling	Where/purpose	Numbers
Alone	Saudi Arabia/Employment	1
	Dubai/Employment	1
	Iran/Relatives	6
	Iran/Business	2
	Iran/Mashad shrine	2
	Pakistan/Other	3
Friend	Turkmenistan/Business	1
	Pakistan/Business	1
	Iraq/Karbala	1
	Iran/Mashad shrine	1
Friends	Iraq/Karbala	1
	Iran/Mashad shrine	1
	Pakistan/Business	1
Male relative (Father, brother, son, cousin, uncle)	Iran/Relatives	1
	Iran/Business	2
	Iran/Mashad shrine	2
	Pakistan/Relatives	2
	Pakistan/Business	3
Male relatives	----	----
Family (mother, wife, children etc.)	Iran/Mashad shrine	2
	Pakistan/relatives	6
	Pakistan/other (hospital)	1
Neighbours	Iran/Mashad shrine	1
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>56</b>

Afghans travelling for employment purposes beyond Afghanistan's neighbouring countries were travelling alone, while those travelling for religious or business reasons were travelling with at least one friend. Further, a minority was travelling with a woman in their company (see the category "family"). Those travellers who were seeking employment in Iran and Pakistan will be discussed further in section four of this paper.

## C. Passengers Travelling to Neighbouring Countries Other Than for Employment Purposes

Passengers at the Kandahar bus stand represent different strata of Afghan society, ranging from poor migrants who are seeking employment and other opportunities elsewhere, to those pursuing business interests or visiting relatives on the other side of their national border.

### 1. Pakistan

Of those travelling to Pakistan for *business reasons*, Afghanistan's different regions (central – 3 respondents; eastern – 2 respondents; northern – 4 respondents; southeastern – 5 respondents) and three dominant ethnicities were represented (Tajik – 6 respondents; Pashtun – 7 respondents; Uzbek – 1 respondent). Five respondents were in the age group of 20 to 29; seven were in the age group 30 to 39; and two were in the age group 40 to 49.

Unlike the majority of other travellers, many businessmen had passports which enable them to cross the border – a minority did not have a valid ID card. Some businessmen indicated that they have friends or family at their travel destination, but most stated that they did not have any relatives to assist them with their business. Usually, they dealt with larger companies in Pakistan, and then return home to Afghanistan.

The types of businesses varied. Dry fruits and wool are often bought in Kandahar and exported to Quetta, while clothes, machinery and electronics, car pieces and truck tyres are bought in Quetta or Karachi and imported into Afghanistan. One businessman buys Iranian carpets in Quetta and sells these in Peshawar.

The large majority of the businessmen included in the sample travel to Pakistan three to six times a year, spending on average a week there, after which they return to Afghanistan. On average they spend around 6700 Afghanis (US\$134) in Pakistan.

The group of respondents travelling for *social reasons* provide a diverse picture. A few of them live in Pakistan and return to Afghanistan every couple of months to visit their families, demonstrating that close family ties continue to exist across the border. Some of these families appeared to be well established on the other side of the border – some had their own business or shop and for that reason were not planning to return to Afghanistan. Two had no land to return to. They were from the central, northern and eastern regions of Afghanistan, and six of them were Tajik, seven Pashtun and one Hazara.

Two out of the 14 came to visit their in-laws in Afghanistan. The remaining respondents were on their way to visit their relatives in Pakistan, sometimes in one and occasionally in more than one location. Two of the respondents were also travelling to attend a wedding in the family. One husband indicated that he was bringing his wife to Pakistan, as she wanted to be with her family for Eid.

Further, besides visits, family ties were maintained due to the exchange of gifts. Only two respondents indicated that they were receiving remittances. One man's brother worked with the UN in Islamabad and sends remittances to his mother and

brother (US\$200 or US\$500, two or three times a year). Sisters of another respondent were sending remittances to their parents (5000 Afghanis [US\$100] one or two times a year). In both cases, the money was spent on food, clothes, and medicines.

The group “*other*” contained four respondents, of whom two were travelling to Pakistan for medical reasons, one to continue with university, and one to find the person who bought his car the year before but so far had not given him the money.

## 2. Iran

To Iran, Afghans were travelling for different reasons, including *religious ones* to visit the tomb of Imam Reza in Mashad. Eight of the nine respondents were Hazara, while one was Tajik. Most of them were travelling in a group.

Of the four respondents travelling to Iran for *business reasons*, two were Pashtun and two were Hazara. The Pashtuns were travelling with their brothers, while the Hazaras were travelling alone. They intended to purchase items such as blankets, carpets, shampoo, plastic pots, books and bottles in Mashad because of the low prices. They all had Afghan passports, and visited Iran on a regular basis.

Various ethnic groups (Uzbeks, Tajiks, Hazaras and Pashtuns) were all travelling to Iran to *visit their relatives*. Four were planning to pick up their relatives for a number of reasons (to bring a son back home after he had a fight with his father, to bring in-laws back to Afghanistan because of the death of a brother, to accompany a sister to her brother’s wedding in her home country). One man was travelling with his son to Iran to receive medical treatment, arranged by his brother who works at the Afghan consulate. None were receiving remittances from their relatives in Iran, only gifts.

To conclude, evidently there are a variety of reasons for Afghans to travel to neighbouring countries. All are based on the maintenance of regular transnational contacts. As demonstrated, the exchange of goods, money and labour takes place along lines of often pre-established networks that are social-, business- and employment-oriented, which are, in practice, sustained by personal relationships, often based on close ties with relatives, friends and neighbours, but also on shared business interests.

## IV. Labour Migration to Iran and Pakistan

### A. Profile of the Labour Migrants

Out of a total of 194 respondents at the Kandahar bus stand in Kabul, the large majority (137 respondents) was planning to cross the borders into Iran and Pakistan for employment purposes (71 percent). All of them had indicated labour as the only one or one of the major reasons to travel to Iran and Pakistan.

**Table 5: Reasons for going abroad**

Reasons	Iran	Pakistan
Labour	48	52

Labour and relatives	19	14
Labour and other	3	--
Labour, relatives and other	--	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>67</b>

Twenty-five percent of the total number of respondents crossing the borders for employment purposes also intended to visit their relatives in that country. This shows the overlap of transnational labour and family networks in some instances.

**Table 6: Numbers of travellers by province of origin to Iran and Pakistan**

Province/region	Numbers to Iran	Numbers to Pakistan
Bamyan	--	1
Kabul	2	6
Kapisa	1	3
Logar	6	15
Parwan	2	--
Wardak/Maidan	4	5
<b>Central Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>30</b>
Kunar	--	1
Laghman	--	7
Nangarhar	--	10
Nuristan	--	--
<b>Eastern Total</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>18</b>
Badakhshan	--	1
Baghlan	16	7
Balkh	1	3
Faryab	2	1
Jawzjan	1	--
Kunduz	18	4
Samangan	6	--
Sari Pul	2	--
Takhar	4	--
<b>Northern Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>16</b>
Ghazni	4	2
Khost	--	--
Paktika	--	--
Paktya	--	1
<b>Southeast Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
Badghis	--	--
Farah	1	--
Ghor	--	--
Herat	--	--
<b>Western Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>--</b>
<b>TOTAL NUMBERS</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>67</b>

Although the total numbers appeared to be almost equal for both destinations, a clear distinction can be made with regard to the province of origin. The majority of respondents going to Iran were from the northern and central provinces (71 and 21 percent) while those travelling to Pakistan seemed to be more equally distributed between the central, eastern and northern provinces (respectively 48, 27 and 24 percent). No one travelling to Iran originated from the eastern provinces, while among those travelling to Pakistan no-one came from the western provinces. This information confirms the general understanding that eastern Afghanistan is mostly oriented towards Pakistan.

Many inhabitants of the eastern provinces will be using the official Torkham border crossing between Jalalabad and Peshawar, or any one of the unofficial pathways into Pakistan, and not travel to southern Afghanistan to move across in that part of the country. These numbers could not be captured at the Kandahar bus stand in Kabul, as the central hub will be the Torkham bus stands in respectively Kabul and Jalalabad (and then only of those using official transport).

The data further suggest that for those coming from the northern (in particular the northeastern) and the central provinces, travelling via Kabul apparently presents the most efficient and effective way of travelling to southern Afghanistan, namely by following the country's central ring road.

**Table 7: Ethnicity of travellers**

Ethnicity	Iran	Pakistan
Pashtun	21	49
Tajik	26	15
Hazara	6	1
Uzbek	17	2
Turkmen	--	--
Other	--	--
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>67</b>

The data on ethnicity confirm the Pashtun orientation towards Pakistan (73 percent), while the ethnicity of the migrants travelling to Iran is more equally distributed with, respectively, Pashtuns at 30 percent, Tajiks, 37 percent and Uzbeks, 24 percent.

**Table 8: Age and marital status of travellers to Iran**

Age	Single	Engaged	Married	Total
11- 20 years	8	-	--	8
21- 30 years	15	12	20	47
31- 40 years	--	--	15	15
41- 50 years	--	--	--	--
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>70</b>

**Table 9: Age and marital status of travellers to Pakistan**

Age	Single	Engaged	Married	Total
11- 20 years	5	--	--	5
21- 30 years	10	9	15	34
31- 40 years	--	--	26	26
41- 50 years	--	--	2	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>67</b>

Age distribution among the migrants to Iran and Pakistan shows that the largest age group consisted of those between 21 and 30 years old (respectively 69 and 49 percent), and the second largest age group between 31 and 40 years old (respectively 20 and 40 percent). Thus, the peak was slightly more evenly distributed among those migrants travelling to Pakistan. This is further confirmed when taking marital status into account - 66 percent of the migrants travelling to Pakistan were married as opposed to 50 percent travelling to Iran. Thus, half of the Afghans travelling to Iran were unmarried (single or engaged).

In terms of the kind of work sought after, those travelling to Iran appeared to be looking for daily labour jobs. The majority of migrants to Pakistan could also be categorized that way, while a minority had their own business (two respondents –

mechanic shop and bakery), a regular job (three were drivers, one a guard and one working in a big shop) or indicated that they were smuggling light things (Chaman to Quetta and Quetta to Peshawar).

## B. Travel and Border Crossing

The labour migrants travelling to Iran were mostly travelling with others (90 percent), while those travelling to Pakistan were almost equally distributed among the categories “travelling alone” and “travelling in a group” (respectively, 51 and 49 percent). Further, those solely travelling with either neighbours or friends constitute 51 percent to Iran and 19 percent to Pakistan. This confirms the group nature of the travel for Iran, and possibly the support required and preferred as the consequence of travelling in a group.

**Table 10: Travelling alone or in a group**

Travelling alone or in a group	Iran	Pakistan
Alone	7	34
With neighbours	20	6
With brother	11	9
With other male relatives	9	8
With friends	16	7
Two or more combined	7	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>67</b>

**Table 11: Travel single/others versus mode of border crossing in Iran**

Travel	Smugglers	Passport	Other	TOTAL
Single	7	--	--	7
With at least one more person	58	2	3	63
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>70</b>

**Table 12: Travel single/others versus mode of border crossing in Pakistan**

Travel	Smugglers	Passport	Other	No answer	TOTAL
Single	26	4	3	--	33
With at least one more person	28	--	4	2	34
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>67</b>

The fact that most of the migrants to Iran travelled with at least one other person is further substantiated by the fact that the vast majority (65 respondents – 93 percent) indicated that they intended to use smugglers to cross the border. Reasons for the usage of a smuggler included the hazardous trip across the border, and improving their negotiation power when dealing with the smugglers. Only two migrants indicated that they had relevant travel documents (three had no answer).

Of the 67 respondents who were travelling to Pakistan, 55 (82 percent) indicated they were or would be using smugglers. Four respondents had a passport and seven possibly found another way to cross the border. Thus, in the case of Pakistan, the requirement of bargaining power vis-à-vis the smugglers could be considered to be less urgent and necessary.



All of the respondents travelling to Pakistan stated that they would use the Spin Boldak/Chaman border crossing. Those travelling to Iran indicated that 73 percent would use a border crossing in Nimroz, 20 percent in Zabul, three percent in Islam Qala and one percent another border crossing.

### C. Decision-making To Go

The reasons provided to seek work in Iran or Pakistan were fairly evenly distributed among the no work or drought category, although for Pakistan the no work, no land/farm and drought categories appeared to be higher than for Iran (respectively 90 versus 79 percent). Further, drought was still given as the only reason for movement – despite the improved rainfall in some areas in 2003 and 2004 – by respectively 24 percent for Iran and 28 percent for Pakistan.

**Table 13: Reasons for finding work elsewhere**

Reasons for going	Iran	Pakistan
No work	13	17
No land/farm	11	7
Drought	17	19
Other	11	5
Combination of the above-mentioned reasons (without category “other”)	14	17
Combination of reasons - with category “other”	3	1
No answer	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>67</b>

Eight out of the 17 “other” answers for Iran refer to protection or security-related reasons - sometimes in combination with employment or property-related causes. Some examples:

- **Persecution/personal feud.** “My father told us that we should go to Iran because our uncle might otherwise kill us, as he is working for a commander. We had a fight with him over land and I have killed his son because of that.”
- **Capture of land or other assets by commanders.** For example, “our land and sheep were captured by an Uzbek commander last year,” “the Tajik commander took my grape garden” and “my land has been captured by my cousin who is working for a commander two years ago.”
- **Mine-related causes.** For example, the tractor was damaged due to a mine explosion and the man was injured and could not work with the tractor anymore. Or the car that they used for transport to earn money was damaged during a mine explosion which also killed his brother; the land is mined area and cannot be cultivated.

Other reasons given were related to the inheritance of land (division into five portions as there were five brothers – small plots remained), dislike of studying in school, the death of most sheep of the flock as the result of an epidemic.

For Pakistan a similar picture emerges – two of the six “other” answers by Pashtuns were protection-related (e.g., occupation of land by an Uzbek commander and closure of water canal by a Tajik commander). Others refer to earnings (e.g., “I cannot find more money here” and “I am building mud walls, but here in Afghanistan people do not pay me more than in Pakistan”). Another respondent had his own car workshop in Pakistan and the sixth one worked in a petroleum pump but his brother called him to come to Quetta.

The protection-related causes for migration to both Iran and Pakistan were mostly stated by Pashtuns from the north (5 Pashtuns and 1 Tajik) – referring to Tajik or Uzbek commanders that took some or all of their assets with impunity. One respondent from Baghlan and one from Balkh were going to Pakistan – the rest originating from Baghlan, Kunduz and Samangan to Iran.

A few respondents who were travelling to Iran and Pakistan had the category “other” combined with one of the other reasons. For Pakistan both were employment/drought/relative related, while for Iran some were also protection/work related (e.g., no work and tractor damaged as a consequence of a mine explosion; personal land captured by a cousin working for a commander/no available work/drought). These examples show once more the complexities with the formal definitions of refugees and labour migrants, as the reasons that compel people to leave are various and personal and cannot always easily fit within the existing categories.

**Table 14: Decision-making with regard to the departure**

Who made the decision	Iran	Pakistan
The person himself	24	35
The father	12	6
The mother	--	--
The brother	3	2
The family	--	--
The person himself and the father	10	3
The person himself and the parents	1	3
The person himself and the mother	--	--
The person himself and the brother	9	7
The person himself and the ‘other’	4	4
The person himself and the family (wife)	1	--
Parents	1	--
The father and “other”	1	--
The father and the brother	1	1
Other <sup>4</sup>	1	4
No answer	2	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>67</b>

Thirty-four percent of the labour migrants to Iran made the decision to leave their place of origin themselves. Closely following this percentage were those whose fathers made the decision (17 percent), the person himself and the father (14

<sup>4</sup> The category “other” refers to neighbours, more distant male relatives (nephew, cousin), in-laws (brother-in-law and father-in-law), sister and wife.

percent), and the person himself and his brother (13 percent). This picture confirms the level of authority of the male relatives related to their age and position within the extended family. For Pakistan, 52 percent of the group decided themselves to migrate to work. The father decided for nine percent of the respondents, and the brother and the migrant together made the choice in ten percent of the cases.

**Table 15: Decision-making to go to Iran versus age, marital status**

Age/marital status	Decision-making - solely himself	Decision-making - others involved	TOTAL
10-19 years/single	1	7	8
20-29 years/single	3	11	14
30-39 years/single	1	--	1
11-20 years/engaged	--	--	--
20-29 years/engaged	2	10	12
30-39 years/engaged	--	--	--
11-20 years/married	--	--	--
20-29 years/married	12	9	21
30-39 years/married	5	9	14
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>70</b>

**Table 16: Decision-making to go to Pakistan versus age, marital status**

Age/marital status	Decision-making - solely himself	Decision-making - others involved	TOTAL
10-19 years/single	--	5	5
20-29 years/single	3	6	9
30-39 years/single	--	--	--
11-20 years/engaged	--	--	--
20-29 years/engaged	3	6	9
30-39 years/engaged	--	--	--
11-20 years/married	--	--	--
20-29 years/married	9	6	15
30-39 years/married	19	7	26
40-49 years/married	2	--	2
No answer	--	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>67</b>

The difference between profile of migrants going to Pakistan and to Iran could be explained on the basis of age and marital status differentials – those travelling to Iran are relatively younger and a higher number have still not been wedded due to which their relatives have more influence in their decision-making regarding their departure.

**Table 17: Means of obtaining money for cross-border travel**

Means	Iran	Pakistan
Personal savings	29	38
Loan	17	11
Selling of sheep	2	--
Selling of house/land	5	6
Father gave money	5	4
Brother gave money	6	--
Brother sent money	3	4
Other	1	2
No answer	2	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>67</b>

Most of the money used to cover the travel expenses fell in the personal savings category. For Iran and Pakistan the percentages were respectively 41 and 58 percent. The second highest category consisted of a loan, with 24 percent for Iran and 16 percent for Pakistan. For Iran, the average loan was 3853 Afghanis (US\$77), while for Pakistan the average debt was 2518 Afghanis (US\$50). The difference in the average loan between Pakistan and Iran is caused by the relatively higher costs to cross the border into Iran as compared to the expenses required for Pakistan.

The data further suggest that the relatively younger migrants travelling to Iran have less financial resources and therefore resort to other means. At the same time the boundaries of the categories are not entirely clear-cut – male relatives who give or send the money may expect the money to be returned once the migrant has been able to secure work in the destination country.

Further, considering the fact that 20 percent received support from either the father or the brother to reach Iran (as compared to 12 percent for Pakistan), it can be suggested that labour migration to Iran might require a clearer investment (and commitment) from the larger family to support the travel (with the expectations to reap the benefits after some time). The money that is given by, for instance, the father or the brother is often obtained through the sale of personal assets, such as sheep, a car, a horse cart, or trees. This has further been demonstrated by the higher number of male relatives involved in the decision-making with regard to travel to Iran as compared to Pakistan.

**Table 18: Age, marital status in relation to means to obtain the money to migrate to Iran**

Marital status/age	Savings by himself	Debt	Sale of personal property	Money received from father/brother	No answer/other	TOTAL
Single 10-19	2	2	--	2	2	8
Single 20-29	7	2	1	4	--	14
Single 30-39	1	--	--	--	--	1
Engaged 10-19	--	--	--	--	--	--
Engaged 20-29	1	6	1	4	--	12
Engaged 30-39	--	--	--	--	--	--
Married 10-19	--	--	--	--	--	--
Married 20-29	10	2	3	1	1	17
Married 30-39	7	5	2	3	1	18
Married 40-49	--	--	--	--	--	--
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>70</b>

**Table 19: Age, marital status in relation to means to obtain the money to migrate to Pakistan**

Marital status/age	Savings by himself	Debt	Sale of personal property	Money received from father/brother	No answer/other	TOTAL
Single 10-19	2	1	1	--	1	5
Single 20-29	3	1	--	3	3	10
Single 30-39	--	--	--	--	--	--
Engaged 10-19	--	--	--	--	--	--
Engaged 20-29	2	3	--	1	3	9
Engaged 30-39	--	--	--	--	--	--
Married 10-19	--	--	--	--	--	--
Married 20-29	9	1	--	1	4	15
Married 30-39	18	5	--	2	1	26
Married 40-49	2	--	--	--	--	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>67</b>

**Table 20: Reasons of man migrating and not another male relative - Iran**

Parents/ Brothers	No ref. made to brothers	Brother has own household/ does not support me	Brother abroad	Brother disabled	None	Dead	Brother is going with me	Brother is too young	TOTAL
Father is dead	--	6	2	--	4	1	3	--	16
Father is old/sick	--	6	5	--	3	1	1	--	16
Father is looking after the house	--	2	1	1	1	1	1	--	7
Father is working elsewhere	--	--	--	--	1	--	--	--	1
Father is also going	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1
Living with the mother	--	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	1
No ref. to either parents	4	2	6	1	3	1	8	3	28
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>70</b>

**Table 21: Reasons of man migrating and not another male relative -  
Pakistan**

Parents/ Brothers	No reference made to brother	Brother has own household/ does not support me	Brother abroad	Brother disabled	No brother	Brother dead	Brother is going with me	Brother is too young	TOTAL
Father is dead	--	9	1	2	2	--	2	--	16
Father is old/sick	--	2	5	2	1	1	1	--	12
Father is looking after the house	--	--	--	--	2	--	--	--	2
Father is working elsewhere	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Father is also going	--	--	--	--	1	--	--	1	2
Living with the mother	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
No reference made to either one of the parents/no answer	2	10	6	--	4	--	10	3	35
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>67</b>

Some brothers sent the money from Iran or other places (not always specified in the answer). For Iran the only “other” answer was that the mother sold her golden ring for 2000 Afghanis (US\$40). For Pakistan the two “other” answers referred to the cousin and brother-in-law providing the money. All three reconfirmed again the strategic importance of labour migration for households and the extended family.

For both Pakistan and Iran, many travellers relayed the information that their father was either deceased or was too old or sick to travel (Iran 45% and Pakistan 42 percent). Further, ten percent of the fathers of migrants to Iran remained in their place of origin to look after the house – this is in contrast with only three percent of migrants travelling to Pakistan. A reason might be the relatively older and married male population migrating to Pakistan.

The references made to a brother indicated that 24 percent of the Iranian migrants had brothers who provided for themselves and had their own household. Further, 17 percent of the respondents indicated that they had no brother, while three percent had a disabled brother, four percent had brothers that were still considered to be too young to migrate, and six percent had deceased brothers (in total 30 percent).

For Pakistan the picture was slightly different. Thirty-one percent had brothers who had their own households (had separated themselves) – this could again be explained by the difference in age groups and marital status of the migrants to the

two countries. Further, 28 percent of the references made to brothers indicated their incapability to migrate or their non-existence (see above). This is almost similar to the Iranian percentage.

Strong family linkages between Afghanistan and Iran/Pakistan were obvious once more. Twenty percent of travellers indicated that their brother(s) were already in the country of destination, while 19 percent stated that their brothers and one percent that their fathers were travelling with them. For Pakistan, 18 percent stated that their brother(s) were already in the country itself while 19 percent indicated that their brother(s) and three percent that their fathers were travelling with them. This illustrates the strength of these transnational family networks in the Afghanistan region.

Age could be an explanatory factor also for the fact that for Pakistan none of the respondents indicated that their father stayed beyond to look after the house, while for Iran ten percent referred to that situation. In a few cases no reference was made to either one of the parents or brothers; some respondents indicated, “I want to save for the *mahr* myself” (four for Iran and one for Pakistan) – suggesting again the relatively young age of some of the respondents (and their marital status) as well as the fact that it was something that they had to achieve for themselves, to prove their masculinity and to mark the shift from boy to manhood.

Last but not least, a word of caution should be advised when discussing the strength of the family networks. Some of the respondents made clear that there was a lot of tension within their families, in particular with regard to their brothers but also with other male relatives (see protection causes of migration). One proclaimed for instance, “Please do not mention my brother’s name, I hate him.” Others indicated that they had hoped for support (financial or other) from their brothers but that it had not been forthcoming. Thus, solidarity on the basis of kinship can constitute at the same time a source of potential conflict within the family based on the sharing of resources and the different roles and expectations that exist.

#### D. Decision-making with Regard to the Place of Destination

Of the respondents travelling to Iran, 34 were going to Teheran, eight to Mashad, three to Shiraz, eight to Isfahan, six to Zahedan and ten to other destinations. Of those travelling to Pakistan, none were going to Peshawar, three were going to Quetta, none were going to Islamabad/Rawalpindi, 18 were going to Karachi, while 16 were going other places.

**Table 22: Second (or more) visit to the country**

	Iran	Pakistan
Yes	23	28
No	43	37
No answer	4	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>67</b>

Table 22 suggests that more than half of the migrants to Iran (61 percent) had never been to the country itself, while for Pakistan at least 55 percent of the migrants had never visited the country. Thirty-three percent of the migrants to Iran and 42 percent of the migrants to Pakistan had been there before. A cause for

the difference in percentage between the two countries may again be the relatively young age of the migrants to Iran.

**Table 23: Reason for choosing city of destination**

Reason for that city	Iran	Pakistan
Relatives	9	16
Friends	--	--
Work	--	6
Went there before	22	20
Relatives went there before	14	9
Friends went there before	20	12
Other	4	0
Combination of the above reasons	--	2
No answer	1	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>67</b>

Even though many labour migrants were only travelling to Pakistan and Iran for the first time, many were not going to tread on unknown ground, as the majority followed in the footsteps of their relatives, their friends and/or neighbours. These persons were already residing in the city of destination itself, or could direct the new arrival to networks to allow him to get started in his completely new surroundings.

Thirteen percent of the respondents travelling to Iran had at that time relatives residing in their destination city in comparison to 24 percent of the Pakistan travellers. Only in the case of Pakistan, nine percent of the respondents indicated that they decided to travel to a particular city for employment reasons.

## E. Earnings, Remittances and Expenditures

The average daily wages for Pakistan are US\$4 and for Iran US\$9. The daily wages in Iran are clearly much higher as compared to Pakistan's salaries, which partially explains the willingness of labour migrants to incur higher costs to reach that particular country of destination.<sup>5</sup> Not all migrants had high expenditures during the employment period. In some cases, board and lodging were provided by the employer (which would consequently result in a lower daily wage rate). Furthermore, the general cost of living is lower in Pakistan than in Iran.

**Table 24: For whom are the remittances/savings intended**

	Iran	Pakistan
Himself	--	1
Family	42	47
Father	1	--
Mother	1	--
Wife	--	--
Other	--	1
Family and father	7	5
Family, mother, wife	--	--
Himself and family	2	1
Himself and father	2	1

<sup>5</sup> The data on savings appeared to be partially incorrect, not providing a picture that could be explained. For that reason, these data have not been included in the analysis.



Himself and mother	2	--
Family, father, mother	4	2
Family, father, wife	2	1
Family, mother	--	4
Family, wife	2	--
Father, wife	3	1
Himself, wife	--	1
No answer	2	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>67</b>

Table 24 clearly shows that in the large majority of cases, the savings were intended for the family (more specifically for (either one of) the parents or the wife), with only a small minority indicating that part of the savings would be spend on themselves. If comparing the above-listed answers with the intended objects to save for (see below), then it becomes clear that some respondents have given a formally appropriate answer by not indicating that the savings would be used for accumulation purposes for themselves, such as saving for the mahr.

The question about savings was sometimes met with laughter. This was explained by asking whether it was sure that he would arrive, stay alive and save money – indicating the perceived risk and insecurity involved with migration.

**Table 25: Items of expenditures of remittances**

Items	Iran	Pakistan
Food	2	--
Clothes	--	--
Medicines	--	--
Mahr	6	3
Other	--	2
Food, clothes, medicines	34	32
Food, clothes, medicines, mahr	13	12
Food, clothes, <i>mahr</i>	5	6
Food, clothes, other	6	--
Food, clothes, medicines and other	--	2
Food and mahr	--	2
Clothes and mahr	-	2
Food and clothes	2	4
Unanswered	2	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>67</b>

The estimated savings will mostly be spent on basic needs such as food, clothes and medicines (for both Iran and Pakistan 54 percent without including the categories other and *mahr*). Including these categories, at least if combined with one or more of the basic needs items, then the percentage adds up to 89 percent for Iran and 93 percent for Pakistan. Thus, it can be concluded that the vast majority of the savings will cover basic needs of family members staying back home in Afghanistan.

In addition to addressing basic needs, one of the purposes of migrating abroad was to save for the *mahr* - the money to pay to the parents of the bride to allow for the marriage to take place. This was clear from the high number of single and engaged men travelling to Afghanistan's neighbouring countries as well as their relatively young age. Nine percent clearly indicated that the *mahr* was the only reason for their travel abroad to Iran in comparison to four percent of the respondents

travelling to Pakistan, while, combined with the provision of basic needs, the percentage for Iran and Pakistan added up to respectively 34 percent and 37 percent.

Some labour migrants to Iran also indicated that they planned to save the money for gold for their wife or fiancée, a shop, a motorcycle, a piece of land, and gifts for a brother's wedding. For Pakistan the category "other" referred to the following answers: a well for his farm, to start a barber shop, to buy a water pump and dig a well for the garden, to pay the fee of the English course.

No references were made to pay off any debts with the savings. In some cases, this could be hidden in the food and other basic needs categories, while in other cases outstanding debts can be explained by the existence of 'generalised reciprocity' in which for instance loans and gifts allow for the reproduction and reconfirmation of social ties and networks.

The question with regard to the items that the remittances would be spent on was not always met with appreciation. It was indicated that the money really was not going to be spend on sightseeing, the cinema and other activities or matters of leisure and pleasure. This attitude could confirm the obvious need for the remittances to be sent home, the responsibility resting on the shoulders of these young men to provide for their families, as well as the social appropriateness of the answer.

The majority of respondents who had travelled to Iran before had been staying for a period of at least six months. For Pakistan the picture was slightly different – the large majority had stayed for less than six months. An explanation for this difference in length of stay can be sought in the relatively younger age of the migrants travelling to Iran, the place migration occupies in their life cycle (rite the passage), and the relatively higher costs to travel to Iran. While return migrants travelled to Iran during all the four periods, most of the migrants to Pakistan appeared to be in the category "last two years" and a few during the Taliban time.

**Table 26: Expenditures based on sent remittances**

Expenditures	Iran	Pakistan	TOTAL
Food/clothes	7	13	20
Medical treatment	1	2	3
Debts	2	1	3
Wedding/engagement/ Mahar	2	4	6
Sheep	1	--	1
Other	2	3	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>38</b>

For Pakistan the majority of expenditures were on food and clothes, while for Iran it was slightly less than half of the answers fully given. The categories show again the different options that remittances can be spent on. The category "other" referred to one respondent travelling to Iran whose money was stolen along the way and another one who was unable to save money, as his family was in Iran. For those travelling to Pakistan, one person bought a TV and VCD and four others were unable to save their money for various reasons.

## V. Conclusion and Recommendations for Further Research

### A. Conclusion

Kabul is a central hub for travellers in Afghanistan. From its northern, central, eastern and southeastern regions, Afghans conglomerate in its capital at the Kandahar bus stand to move south and even further afield by crossing the border into Iran and Pakistan. The evidence presented herein confirms the regular transnational relations that are maintained along lines of pre-established networks that are social, business and employment-oriented by the exchange of goods, money, labour, information and persons.

The reasons travellers cross the borders into Iran and Pakistan vary. The majority embarked on their journey for employment reasons, while a minority moved for business, social, medical, or religious reasons. About half of the travellers originated from the northern provinces, in particular the northeast. The areas of origin as well as ethnicity reflected the orientation of the travellers, with the majority of Pashtuns travelling to Pakistan. The travellers to Iran presented a more diverse ethnic picture. The high number of Pashtuns travelling to Pakistan is a consequence of the defining characteristics of a borderland region, with Pashtuns predominating and sharing a common cultural heritage on both sides of the Durand line.

Three-quarters of the travellers were going to one of Afghanistan's neighbouring countries for employment reasons. Besides employment purposes, about a quarter were also travelling because of their relatives who were already residing in the country. This suggests the close nexus between labour migration and the presence of relatives, neighbours and friends who preceded the labour migrant to the city of destination. Over time, labour migration has evolved as a self-reproducing system, sustaining the lines of transnational networks.

There was an obvious difference between the labour migrants going to Pakistan and Iran. Half of the Afghans travelling to Iran are single or engaged as opposed to only one third of migrants travelling to Pakistan. This permeates the differences in intra-household decision-making, and the means of obtaining the financial resources for the cross-border travel. For both Pakistan and Iran, the choice for the men migrating was made on the basis of family composition, in particular as a consequence of the number, age, health and marital status of close male relatives (the father and brothers). In comparison to Iran, the majority of travellers to Pakistan had decided to depart themselves, which was partially a consequence of the higher incidence of marriage among these migrants.

The majority of reasons provided with regard to the necessity to leave their place of origin referred to the unavailability of work, land or farms, as well as the continuing consequences of the drought. For a minority, mostly Pashtuns for northern Afghanistan, reasons for departure were also protection and security-related, referring to the ongoing consequences of the conflict (mines), impunity and the weakness of rule of law in Afghanistan.

The majority of travellers save the money or obtain a loan or sell personal property to finance the cross-border travel. The average debt per person was US\$77 for Iran

and US\$50 for Pakistan - this difference can be explained by the higher costs of crossing the border (and onward travel) in Iran, and resulting in a relatively higher degree of support from relatives to reach the country. This suggests that labour migration to Iran might be a stronger investment for the extended family - with the expectations to reap the benefits upon arrival of their son or brother. Some even send the money from Iran to support the travel of their brothers.

The majority travelling to Iran and Pakistan use smugglers. Especially for Iran, the data confirm the group nature of the travel, the perceived risks of the border crossing, the usage of smugglers and the requirement of group solidarity and support to enter Iran. For both countries, male relatives accompanied approximately one fifth of the respondents. In particular for Iran, many of the co-travellers were either neighbours or friends, suggesting the strength of local ties. Migrants use their informal networks to obtain support to cross the borders between Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries. With no travel documents used, migration from Afghanistan takes place in a completely *laissez-faire* fashion with no regulatory framework, government management or private sector involvement.

More than half of the migrants had never been to Iran or Pakistan before, thereby demonstrating that migration is not only of a recurring nature but that the pre-existence of transnational networks has reduced the thresholds to migrate on a temporary basis to one of Afghanistan's neighbouring countries. It further confirms that migration should no longer be viewed within the context of war and protection-related displacements but as an increasingly normalised behavioural pattern that constitutes an intrinsic part of livelihoods strategies.

In terms of the kind of work sought, generally labour migrants to Iran and Pakistan appeared to be looking for daily labour jobs. This explains the relatively higher number of young migrants going to Iran. In addition to the higher costs and risks, the desire to stay for a more extensive period of time is informed by the higher benefits, which not only include possible higher savings but also the culture of a middle-income country. The remittances, mostly sent to the family, were largely intended for basic needs. One of the other purposes to migrate abroad is to save for the *mahr*. This is clear from the high number of single and engaged men travelling to Afghanistan's neighbouring countries, for whom migration ultimately constitutes a rite de passage which supports their transition from boy to manhood, proving their maturity and ability to take on family-related responsibilities.

In sum, the pre-existence of transnational networks between Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries facilitate the movement of people, goods, money, labour and information. These networks are grounded in family solidarity, with its consequent obligations, expectations and tensions, as well as other personal relations based on place of origin, ethnicity, and age. The contextual complexities, such as the interrelationship between protection and labour-induced causes of departure, along with a migrant's personal situation and the expectations of security and employment in the country of destination, determine the decision made to depart or stay. For many migrants, labour migration is a coping mechanism to sustain families in their place of origin and to maintain the level of wealth acquired earlier, while at the same time providing the resources to accumulate to progress to the next stage in the life cycle - essentially enforcing social networks and society by marriage due to a transfer of goods, persons, and responsibilities.

## B. Recommendations

The analysis in this report is based on quantitative data and provides some preliminary insights into travel and labour migration patterns. As the data fit predetermined categories because of the usage of a structured questionnaire, many questions have remained unanswered and will require more in-depth research. Although not meant to be an all-inclusive list, some of the topics that came to the fore during the analysis that might need further exploration are the following:

### A. Social protection and foreign employment policies:

- Labour markets/conditions of work in exile (e.g. in what sectors are labour migrants able to find work, what skills are required, what conditions prevail at work, what level of competition exists with local labour);
- Systems of social protection (e.g. what systems of social protection exist in the receiving countries for migrant workers, including the distinction between government systems and those based on transnational networks);
- Effects of increasing pressures of Iranian policies with regard to Afghans, including labour migrants, in Iran (e.g. whether a higher pressure of the Iranian authorities in the form of increased deportations, limiting employers to hire Afghan labourers and strengthening of border control results in a reduced flow of Afghan migrants to Iran);

### B. Travel documents/usage of smugglers

- Need of travel documents and other policies to reduce the vulnerability of Afghans vis-a-vis smugglers (e.g. what are the different costs for Afghan travellers using smugglers in comparison to using official travel documents (including visa), what are the obstacles to obtain a passport and/or visa);

### C. Remittances

- Systems to transfer remittances to Afghanistan (e.g. hawala);
- Height of remittances in relation to country of destination, age and labour;
- Role of remittances in the household economy;

### D. Labour migration

- Masculinity and labour migration (e.g. to what extent does labour migration confirm existing definitions of masculinity, how do these vary across the various age groups and country of destination, how does labour migration affect definitions of femininity and masculinity for those relatives staying in the place of origin);
- Solidarity within family networks and labour migration (e.g. how does labour migration affect the networks within the family, what are the multiple sources of solidarity, what are potential sources of tensions and conflict between family members, and what are the categorizations and definitions of ownership within Afghan families and societies);
- Women and male outmigration (e.g. how does male outmigration affect the choice in marriage partners, the responsibilities of the wife staying at home, and consequently her/his perception of femininity and masculinity).