Case Study Series

TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS AND MIGRATION FROM FARYAB TO IRAN

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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.

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Glossary

Afghani (or Afs)	official Afghan currency
arbab	village elder
bai	landowner, rich man
bazgar	sharecropper
chapan	traditional robe (can also mean gift)
choppan	shepherd
dehqan	farmer
gelim	kelim, rug
gharib kar	very poor sharecropper, usually accommodated by landlord
hawala	money transfer
hawaladar	person who undertakes the money transfer action
jalab	animal trader
jerib	unit of measurement of land equal to 0.2 hectare
jihad	holy war
khash/khosjar	leftover of the harvest (grain)
kishtmand	tenant
kuch	nomadic movement
kuchi	nomad
mahajerat	migration (due to a problem)
mahram	male chaperone
mahr	dowry
manteqa	area
mujaheddin	holy warriors fighting in *jihad*
nemcha bai	half landlord, able to employ sharecropper
qachaqbar	smuggler
rahbalat	guide
rishsafid	elder, literally “white beard”
sarparast	representative
shoban	shepherd
seer	unit of measurement of weight, equivalent to 7kg (in Faryab)
taqaway	loan from landlord, often in the form of wheat
toman	Iranian currency
wasita	connection/intermediary
zakat	charity

Acronyms

ANFS	Afghanistan Network on Food Security
AREU	Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
BAFIA	Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs (Iran)
CHA	Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance
DoRR	Department of Refugees and Repatriation
IDP	Internally displaced person
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
PDPA	People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNODC	United Nations Office of Drugs Control
TISA	Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan
WFP	World Food Programme

1. Introduction

1.1 Rationale for the research

Since the communist coup in 1978 and the Soviet invasion in 1979, Afghans have found *en masse* refuge in neighbouring countries as well as further afield. The attacks on the World Trade Center in September 2001, and the fall of the Taliban in November 2001, set the stage for a new era filled with hopes for peace and prosperity in Afghanistan. Since 2002, over three million Afghans have returned to their home country with the UNHCR's facilitated repatriation operation,[1] and these large numbers have been perceived to be an expression of the acceptance of, and confidence in, the new government.

The sustainability of this large return movement has been questioned by Turton and Marsden's study with regard to the repatriation operation in 2002 in Afghanistan:

> *The official figure for the number of returnees is an accurate record of those who received assistance, but not of those who repatriated. The provision of assistance to returnees […] resulted in an unknown number of "recyclers" signing up for repatriation and then returning to the country of asylum after having collected the assistance package.*[2]

Furthermore, many of those who returned might have been seasonal migrants who had no intention of staying in Afghanistan, or those who subsequently returned to their country of asylum because of difficulties faced in their home areas.

Agencies often emphasise that refugees are enabled to go "home", without providing a critical analysis of what they conceive to be home, why they go home and how it has changed since they were forced to leave.[3] Voluntary repatriation as one of the durable solutions of UNHCR might not be sustainable in practice, as the term "durable" implies a linear movement along with a degree of finality that does not necessarily reflect the complexities of real life. Returning home does not necessarily mean the end to insecurities or vulnerabilities, and it might not halt migration.[4] Therefore, return might prompt onward movement, leading to a pattern of multidirectional cross-border movements.

The diverse nature of cross-border movements warrants a further examination of the formal categories used by international agencies. These categories cover a broad spectrum – with refugees, asylum-seekers, and those offered "temporary protection" (based on the 1951 Refugee Convention) on one side, and those leaving for economic or environmental reasons on the other side.[5] The boundaries between refugees and economic, also referred to as voluntary, migrants have become increasingly blurred for different reasons.

[1] UNHCR, 2004: 2
[2] Turton and Marsden, 2002: 1
[3] Bakewell, 1999: 1
[4] Black and Koser, 1999: 3
[5] Until recently, UNHCR made a conscious effort to maintain a sharp distinction between refugees and other types of international migrants, so as to underline their special status and protection needs. This position confirmed the explicit objective of host governments and agencies to contain and prevent migration (Black and Koser, 1999: 8).

Decision-making in favour of departure can be informed by a wide variety of reasons and personal factors as well as social, economic and political strategies. Secondly, a less rigid categorisation allows recognition of the overlap of more than one form of migration at once, as well as their transformation of one into the other over time.[6] Therefore, the term "migrant" will be used here to indicate that people have moved as a result of at least some degree of compulsion, without making any assumptions about the predominant nature of this move.

Associated with repatriation is the concept of sustainable reintegration, which implies that returnees root themselves again in their village or area of origin by re-establishing their livelihoods. The "migrant cycle" however indicates that return is not necessarily followed by a permanent stay, and that "home" and "belonging" can have various meanings at different points in time. Sustainable reintegration therefore does not imply being rooted in one place, but, on the contrary, may presuppose the active maintenance of dynamic social networks over a wide geographical space. These transnational networks give protection as well as structure and meaning to an individual's life, which can facilitate return and reintegration of former migrants providing that others stay abroad.[7]

AREU's Transnational Networks project is a follow-up to the research conducted by David Turton and Peter Marsden in 2002, which resulted in the publication of *Taking Refugees for a Ride? The Politics of Refugee Return to Afghanistan*. This coincided with UNHCR's framework of strategies for the remaining Afghan caseload in Pakistan and Iran post 2005. Besides the continued need for protection of some Afghan refugees, and the provision of visa and other basic human rights for those Afghans who will not return to Afghanistan in the longer term, the framework emphasises the need to manage those migratory movements that are largely economic in nature.[8]

Because of the dearth of data on the current nature and scope of migratory movements to Iran and Pakistan, this study aims to enhance an understanding of this phenomenon – to support bilateral negotiations as well as to advise the government of Afghanistan on how to provide minimum standards of security and income to Afghan migrants in the longer term.

1.2 Main questions and structure of the report

This case study will concentrate on Faryab Province in northwestern Afghanistan. Because of its location, it was decided to focus only on Iran as one of the asylum countries in the region. Therefore, the main questions of the research were:

- What is the extent of labour migration of Afghan individuals and families from one urban and one rural area in Faryab Province to Iran?
- What are the causes of these migratory movements?
- What informs the social strategies and intra-household decision-making patterns with regard to these migration processes?
- What are the costs and the benefits of labour migration for individuals and their social networks in Afghanistan and Iran, in particular with regard to entry into Iran, debts, remittances (money sent home) and savings?

[6] Barrett, 2003:1–2, Van Hear, 2003: 1
[7] Transnationalism refers to the multitude of relations, circuits and attachments that occur between and across places or nations (Uehling, 2002 in Glazebrook et al, 2004).
[8] UNHCR, 2003: 3

- What have been the immediate consequences of a more hostile Iranian policy towards Afghans, in particular for Afghan labour migrants?

This case study on Faryab Province was undertaken as part of AREU's Transnational Networks research project, in which AREU has so far published one other case study on Herat Province.[9] In 2005, research will be undertaken in eastern Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran, to better understand transnational networks as a key livelihood strategy and to inform advocacy efforts at the government level in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries.

This report presents the findings of this research and makes recommendations for the governments of Afghanistan and Iran, and for assistance agencies. Parts 2 and 3 describe the urban neighbourhoods and the rural area featured in the case study, with a particular emphasis on prevailing livelihood strategies and the causes, motives and strategies of past and current migration patterns. Part 4 presents the means of Afghans travelling to Iran, with a specific focus on the routes, the usage of smugglers and passport and visa issues. Part 5 describes the life of Afghan migrants in Iran, including employment opportunities, remittances and savings, as well as the difficulties faced in the context of an increasingly hostile Iranian policy. Part 6 presents the conclusion and recommendations.

1.3 Methodology

The study in Faryab was undertaken in April and July–August 2004. The research team consisted of a female research team leader (expat), one male and one female research assistant (both Afghan), a *mahram* (male chaperone) for one of the female research assistants (who accompanied the mission for one day to the rural area because of the absence of the Kabul research assistants) and a driver.

The rural area field research took place over three weeks in April 2004. The actual number of days spent in the villages was just seven due to suddenly heightened insecurity from 8–12 April, including violent protests, large movements of armed men, and the flight of Faryab's governor. After three weeks, the research was cut short because of the potential return of the previous governor which could have given rise to renewed tensions in Maimana. As a consequence, three additional days of the second research period were devoted to the rural area to complement the initial set of data collected.

The rural area was selected on the basis of its proximity to Maimana (around two hours by car), its accessibility during the rainy season, the presence of an NGO for the initial introduction (InterSOS), and the high prevalence of labour migration to Iran. Interviews were held with a total of 53 individuals of all age groups and socioeconomic classes, of which 32 were men and 21 were women. Key individuals were visited several times because of their expertise and/or to adhere to the formal hierarchy in the area. One Arab, one Uzbek and one Pashtun village was selected to investigate the interlinkages between ethnic group, socioeconomic class and contemporary migration.

The two urban neighbourhoods in Maimana were covered over a three-week period in July and August 2004. These were selected on the basis of place-of-origin

[9] Stigter, 2004

information provided by one displaced Uzbek woman in Herat: her father's house in a slightly better off neighbourhood, and her husband's house in a relatively poorer neighbourhood. Interviews were held with 84 respondents of all age groups, with 30 in Neighbourhood A and 54 in Neighbourhood B. Fifty respondents were women, and 34 were men. Respondents were Uzbek, Tajik and Pashtun, and were from various occupational groups.

As in the rural area, urban interviewees were at various stages in the cycle of migration, including:

- migrants returned from Iran (single and, only in the urban area, with their families);
- migrants returned from Pakistan;
- migrants returned from elsewhere in Afghanistan (alone and with their families);
- migrants from elsewhere who had settled in Faryab; and
- men who had definite plans to go to Iran.

Furthermore, in Maimana, interviews were undertaken with various NGOs (Save the Children, InterSOS, CHA), UN agencies (UNHCR, WFP, UNAMA) and government (Department of Refugees and Repatriation [DoRR], the Passport Unit in the Police Department, the former governor, and the mayor of Maimana). Interviews were also conducted with *hawaladars*, leather traders, taxi drivers, the taxi stand manager of the Herat taxi stand and the Head of the Security Department of Jumaa Bazar.

As a result of the insecure environment, ongoing challenges for the research were: relatively short working days (restricted to the daylight hours of 8am–4pm including the three- to four-hour drive to the rural area), the delayed arrival of research assistants from Kabul during the first phase of the field research; a high level of distrust because of the political climate; and different respondents playing their own political agendas and sometimes using the research team to position themselves in Faryab's political arena.

Other challenges during the fieldwork were:

- Striking a balance between different ethnicities, socioeconomic classes and genders. In particular, when landlords unexpectedly arrived, the interview with the respondent of a lower echelon came to an immediate halt. In some instances the same occurred when men entered the scene with only women.
- Especially in the urban neighbourhoods, access to young men proved to be difficult; they were often absent because of work in Iran or elsewhere in Afghanistan. This explains the relatively higher number of female respondents in the urban area.
- In some cases the confusion caused by conducting research without the provision of assistance, especially against a backdrop of continuing demands for humanitarian aid, might have biased the information provided in terms of ethnic profile, expected numbers of return and estimated numbers of potential migrants. Triangulation of data allowed for a correction of these biases.
- The research team was sometimes received with suspicion, in particular when asking detailed questions about migration to Iran. Fears were that if respondents provided information about plans, routes and life in Iran, a clampdown on migration opportunities would be the immediate result. For

this reason direct references to the areas where field research was conducted have been removed.
- There were several language-related challenges that included translating from to Dari–English, as well as finding good translators in Maimana to allow for quality translation of Uzbek–English in those instances where older Afghans or poor households only knew Uzbek.

The primary research methods were semi-structured interviews, mapping and observation. Interviews were held in informal groups and with individuals. It was decided to focus on individual interviews because of the sometimes politically tense situation, which caused respondents to be more hesitant to provide information in informal group settings. Structured interviews were held with *hawaladars*.

Triangulation of data was achieved by:

- repeated visits to a selected number of households;
- interviewing of different members of one household;
- usage of different research methods over an extended period of time (e.g. the interviewing of a displaced Uzbek household in Herat in spring, and then upon return in Maimana in July–August, as well as visits to the rural area in both April and August); and
- use of a multi-ethnic and gender-balanced team.

2. Migration from Two Urban Neighborhoods

The provincial capital of Faryab, Maimana, was on the main caravan route between Persia, the Indian sub-continent and what is now Central Asia. The growth in trade accompanied the cultivation of land, resulting in a more sedentary lifestyle in the nineteenth century.[10] During the reign of King Zahir Shah, this major trading centre was well known for its karakul sheep and their skins, leather, carpets, *gelims*, rice, wheat, grapes and raisins, pistachios and melons. However, in the seventies Faryab was, in comparison with other provinces, underdeveloped and received relatively little foreign aid.[11] Thirty years later, the situation has changed little. The poor road network prevents export to other provinces, and limited financial assistance has continued to hinder economic development. It remains an important overnight stop for traders and travellers between Balkh and Herat, but commercial activity has continued to be relatively minimal.

2.1 A comparison of two neighborhoods in Maimana

The two neighbourhoods studied in Maimana were established at different times, which is reflected in their distinctive profiles. Both are ethnically and professionally mixed, though the large majority of inhabitants in both are Uzbek, with some Tajik and a few Pashtun families. The *arbab* was unknown to the large majority living in the neighbourhoods. Most families share a compound with up to four related families, and most houses are owned by the occupying families. In terms of professional profiles and wealth, the composition of the neighbourhoods varies.

Neighbourhood A is characterised by the presence of government officials and militant Junbesh youth.[12] Thirty years ago, land was relatively cheap and because of its close proximity to government offices many officials had their houses built there. Some were originally from Maimana, while others had left their rural areas of origin, as well as their extended families, behind – their departure prompted by the search for employment. Others came to the neighbourhood at a later stage for security or professional opportunities; among these were shopkeepers, bakers, nurses and daily labourers. Rents have been increasing with the decreasing availability of properties and rising land prices.[13]

Neighbourhood B shows an intricate pattern of settlement, with extended families occupying different houses adjacent to each other based on the family's original connections to the leather industry. The leather factory used to be in the centre of town, but was shifted to the outskirts of Maimana on the other side of the Rod-i-Maimana during the seventies. Along with the factory's relocation, many residents were forcibly removed without receiving compensation. Some bought plots of land on the Maimana side of the river, across from the leather factory, which was agricultural land at the time and therefore cheap.

Compared to relatively secure government positions, the other jobs done by men in both neighbourhoods demand a greater degree of flexibility and provide less financial certainty. Before the Soviet invasion, the current male heads of household and their fathers in Neighbourhood B had different, seasonally bound, jobs. Many

[10] Lee, 1987: 121
[11] Lee, 1987: 1
[12] There are also households affiliated with Jamiat-i-Islami living in the neighbourhood.
[13] Annual rents are between 10,000 Afghanis (US$200) and 36,000 Afghanis (US$720).

were *dehqan* (farmers) on the land of smaller landlords around Maimana in spring and summer, while working in the leather factory during the agriculturally lean periods.[14] Others divided their time between trading (carpets, wool, leather, *chapans*), religious education and wage work.

Over time, as a result of the Soviet occupation and the subsequent years of civil strife, men started learning other skills in their places of refuge, at the same time as material assets being lost to the looting of the mujaheddin and the Taliban. Some families entered high debts that still pose a burden now. Currently, men earn their money by finding (often irregular) daily wage work, in particular through *wasita* (connections), or as shopkeepers, mullahs, conductors and taxi drivers on the Mazar-i-Sharif and Herat routes.[15] A few have invested again in the leather factory or in trade, or are employed by the government. Many household incomes are supplemented by the earnings of various male and female members; within Neighbourhood B there are a relatively higher number of women earning money and having male relatives in Iran than in Neighbourhood A.

Besides employment, wealth is also determined by the availability of social support networks, which in turn will directly influence decision-making with regard to migration, and whether or not it is feasible to migrate all the way to Iran. Pain (2001: 6) makes a distinction between relatively vertical redistribution networks, which run from richer to poorer households and are maintained on the basis of a redistribution of resources such as *zakat* (charity), and a system of loans between landlords and dependent households. On the contrary, horizontal networks exist among households of equal socioeconomic status, allowing for a sharing of risk and the building of assets in times of need. As will be discussed later, those households with an absence of more extensive horizontal networks are unlikely to migrate as there is no one with whom to activate this informal insurance mechanism.

2.2 Migration from Maimana over the past 25 years

The migrations patterns of inhabitants of the two neighbourhoods in Maimana partially overlap, with mostly similar socioeconomic classes displaying parallel migration patterns.[16] This similarity in flows can be explained by the fact that, with similar causes of departure and return, the individual members of an extended family (and also neighbours and friends) tend to follow the same lines of the network to similar places where others are already or to where they will be followed. There are many causes and motivations that affect converging and departing lines within this network: of utmost importance is the protection of immediate family members, as well as the need to earn a livelihood.

During the Soviet occupation many stayed within Maimana's borders, though some families moved elsewhere within Afghanistan for employment. Some were avoiding conscription and others left to work in the army. In some cases, men from the lower echelons moved to Iran for protection reasons:

[14] The leather trade used to be seasonal, with a peak in autumn because of the approaching winter. The processing time for leather is a month in summer and up to three months in winter.
[15] The weekly monitoring reports of WFP Maimana indicated a doubling of labour prices between January 2003 and 2004 (from 80 to 163). After that, the monthly estimates were 150 for February, 120 for March and 130 in April 2004. Wages are tied to age, with an able-bodied man earning about 150–160 Afghanis daily and 3,000–4,000 Afghanis monthly (US$60–80), but an older man only earning one or two-thirds of this amount in the summer of 2004.
[16] A few social networks of Neighbourhood A include relatives that are living in Europe and the US. It is unclear to what extent these networks provided assistance and how close the contacts were.

> *When I was 24, I came back to Maimana. I worked here for one year. The first time I had worked in the army of Dr Najibullah, while the second time I was asked to join Junbesh. Then my father told me that you have served once, you have the right to do whatever you want to do. Then I went to Iran. [For Junbesh] you had to attack the enemy right in front of you, and if you did not do that then you were shot in the back.*

Membership of an ethnic group was sometimes the determining factor in fleeing, depending on the prevailing power relationships at that time. Rasul Pahlwan's reign of terror in the countryside apparently failed to reach all the way into Maimana, however the arrival of the Taliban in Maimana caused a large-scale exodus of Uzbeks, with families fleeing the area because of the reprisals taken against Uzbeks and other ethnic groups in northern Afghanistan.[17]

Wealth and professional backgrounds partially determined subsequent migration patterns. Many government officials fled to Iran while leaving their families behind under the protection of a male relative. Almost half of the respondents indicated that either they or their husbands had gone to Iran at least once in their lifetime, mostly during the Taliban time. Poorer families fled into the districts around Maimana for a couple of days at a time while others stayed away for the whole period. One man without strong horizontal redistribution networks explains:

> *During the other periods I was here – only during the Taliban we left, the three of us. We walked to Cham Kanai. I was beaten by the Taliban. We stayed four months and then we went to Jumaa Bazar for one and a half years. Then the conflict started again and we came here. I had locked the door when I left and started working as a cleaner in a café. Throughout the revolution I did not know how to shoot, I was only trying to find better dry bread for my wife.*

Families with strong horizontal networks have a migration history that is not necessarily similar in terms of movements but comparable in terms of motivations and places of destination. Many of the bakers and leather-producing families moved to Herat or Mazar-i-Sharif for economic and protection reasons, as the town was larger than Maimana and ensured a greater degree of anonymity. In other cases, men (and women) moved to Herat because of the imprisonment of their sons or husbands in the city's jail.

Some young and middle-aged men had first brought their families to Shirbergan, Mazar-i-Sharif or elsewhere, ensured that they were looked after by a male relative (or the management of a camp), and then left for Iran – either because of fears of persecution, for work or for medical care. Thus, the presence of some family members prompted the move of others to Iran, with the support of male relatives of overriding importance to the decision-making process. Upon return from Iran, onward movement occurred in some cases, while in others there was a prolonged stay in Herat before returning to Maimana – exemplifying the cyclical as well as multidirectional movement of migrants.

[17] Rasul Pahlwan controlled significant parts of Faryab in the early nineties. He concentrated much of his energy on eradicating Jamiat-i-Islami (run by the Tajik Atta Mohammad) from Faryab and on expanding his area of control southwards.

Table 1: An example of an Uzbek man's displacement history from Maimana[18]

When	Where to	How long for	Who	Reason for return or onward movement
Until the time of Najibullah	Maimana to Kabul	many years	Parents, three sisters and brother	Conflict
Until the arrival of the Taliban (1987–97)	Kabul to Mazar-i-Sharif	10 years	Parents, three sisters and one brother (father and brother died; subject and one sister got married)	Taliban attacked Mazar-i-Sharif
Taliban period (1997–2001)	Mazar-i-Sharif to Maimana	4 months	Mother, two sisters, wife	No work
	Maimana to Shibergan	2 years	Mother, two sisters, wife and one child	No work
	Shibergan to Iran	1 year	Alone – mother, two sisters, wife and one child were left in Shibergan with subject's brother-in-law	Subject's brother-in-law was leaving Shibergan
	Iran to Shibergan	2 months	Alone	No work
	Shibergan to Maimana	4 months	Mother, sisters, wife and one child (one sister got married)	No work
End of Taliban period	Maimana to Herat	2.5 years	Mother, one sister, wife and two children	No work and house destroyed
Karzai's government (summer 2004)	Herat to Maimana	Since June 2004	Wife and three children	Increasing rental prices in Herat, other Uzbek families leaving, family in Maimana

Government officials returned after the departure of the Taliban, while many Uzbek families returned to Maimana in 2003–04 because of increasing rents in Herat. Some Afghan migrants are not expected to return from Iran at all, particularly if their immediate family is with them, and if they have been able to carve out a niche that secures their livelihood. Some women without immediate relatives left in Afghanistan may not return, particularly if they lack *mahrams* to assist their passage or livelihood opportunities once in the country.

2.3 The leather industry

Leather used to be one of Maimana's main trading articles, however employment and trading opportunities in the industry have been adversely affected by regional conflict and the development of the global economy. The industry has also been subject to changes in perception of the status of certain professions, shifting interests and the difficulties of obtaining credit. Its highs and lows exemplify a shift in social strategies, partially as a result of transnational networks.

[18] Adapted from Monsutti, 2004a: Annex 5

All the leather-makers used to be Uzbek, and the skills were handed down from father to son over many generations. Dozens of leather-makers worked in Maimana's factory before the revolution in 1978. During the Soviet occupation, the leather business continued to be profitable because of the establishment of factories in Kabul which used leather for shoes, bags and belts.[19] Since then, civil conflict has persistently disrupted production and trading opportunities, with few merchants calling at Maimana and men having to join the army, leaving to avoid conscription or seeking employment elsewhere – or a combination of these reasons.

Even though leather was considered to be an economically industry risky which required hard physical labour and little gain, there has been some re-investment in the leather factory since the establishment of Karzai's interim government. In the summer of 2004, four men were producing leather as it allowed them to stay in Maimana to look after their families and continue their professional heritage, while expecting income in return for their investments of approximately US$2000.

Although the leather producers emphasised that they were proud of their fathers' tradition and glad to have a degree of autonomy, they also admitted to their relatively low status in society, the lack of respect they received and the physical hardship they had to endure. Furthermore, the work was considered to be dirty and unhealthy – standing for many hours in chemical baths in all seasons. In general, those who had left the leather factory for reasons other than old age had moved on because of their respective migration experiences, subsequently acquiring new skills, physical problems or, as in some of the younger generation, the inability to learn leather-producing skills. They had also become less attracted to the leather industry because of shifting interests and the relative high entrance costs.

Table 2: Income in relations to profession on a monthly basis, Maimana[20]

Profession	**Av. monthly income**	**Profession**	**Av. monthly income**
Government – low to mid level	2,200–2,500–3,000 Afghanis	Wool/leather trader	3,000–4,000 Afghanis
Government – senior level	5,000 Afghanis	Daily labourer	4,240 Afghanis (180/day)
Leather producer	3,600–4,800 Afghanis	Workshop repairing electrical devices	12,000 Afghanis
Cleaner in hospital	2,000 Afghanis	Cooking/selling *bulani* (street food)	3,600 Afghanis
Shopkeeper	1,680–4,800–9,600 Afghanis	Tailor	1,600–2,000 Afghanis
Conductor/driver	1,600–2,000 Afghanis	Teacher	2,500 Afghanis
Driver (own car)	6,000 Afghanis	Guard	3,000–4,000 Afghanis

[19] In line with the Soviet model, the Karmal government focused on investments in industries run by the state. The industries largely used raw materials provided by agricultural practices, which were stimulated by providing subsidies and other incentives to market-oriented farmers. Many Afghans were employed in the new factories, and a growing number of families in and around Kabul became dependent on the government on the basis of free or subsidised distribution of commodities, including food aid (Rubin, 2002: 137–9).

[20] Daily wages have been multiplied by six (six days work per week) and four (four weeks per month). Investments into materials (e.g. leather, flour, thread, shop articles) have not been taken into account.

Migration to Iran, as well as working with the transport network, had turned into a social strategy by which new migrants followed in the steps of others who preceded them. In particular, for those who had been to Iran before, the decision to return there was made easier by the fact that for many the leather industry had failed to remain a livelihood option. The current capacity of the industry remains low, with its growth dependent on large-scale investment and infrastructure. Afghanistan's incorporation into the global market means that the leather industry must compete with other mass-produced items that enter the country. Furthermore, persistent drought has led to a deterioration of the quality of skins, further hampering re-establishment of this local industry.

2.4 Contemporary migration to Iran

In 2004, only a few heads of households or sons living in Neighbourhood A appeared to be in Iran or elsewhere in Afghanistan for employment reasons. Only three husbands had a history of regularly going to Iran to find employment. Generally, usually when they had received an education, men with job security and status (such as provided by government jobs or shop ownership) did not even consider the option of relocating, despite the potentially higher (or similar) wages obtained through physical labour.[21] This indicates that after comparing the costs and benefits of relocating to Iran, the advantages of staying in Maimana outweighed the advantages of leaving.

In both neighbourhoods, the opportunities in Iran were seriously considered by those men who earn daily wages or are unemployed in Maimana (or elsewhere). Migration to Iran as a livelihoods strategy is, however, only an alternative for those who have access to a certain degree of wealth – which in part includes available support networks both in the area of origin as well as in Iran. In the summer of 2004, most families in Neighbourhood B had at least one young or middle-aged close relative in Iran, and 24 male relatives had left Maimana after the summer of 2003 to find employment there. This ongoing movement clearly indicates the continuing need to find employment elsewhere. It also suggests that the movement has become an established social strategy, making it easier for young men to depart initially, and, for those with migrant experience, increasing the likelihood of returning to Iran to seek employment.

Different perceptions exist with regard to the availability of work elsewhere in Afghanistan, with information dependent on contacts who are part of an individual's social network. Furthermore, different calculations were made on the basis of the different costs and benefits. While wages in Afghanistan's main cities were only 50–150 Afghanis (US$1–3) per day, those in Iran were much higher, with an unskilled labourer earning around US$7–9, though the cost of travel, the risk of deportation and the emotional costs of family separation were accordingly higher as well.

In terms of intra-household decision-making, men often discussed the option of going to Iran with their wives, brothers and parents. On the other hand, sometimes the decision to leave was made by the husband, while the wife was informed at a later stage. In most instances, male and female family members agreed with the need to seek work elsewhere to cover basic needs, despite the emotional distress caused by

[21] On average, even with a senior-level government official's income of 5,000 Afghanis per month (US$100 per month), the comparative advantage of daily wages in Iran remains unquestionable: an average monthly income for construction work in Iran is approximately US$130.

the departure of husbands, sons and brothers. In some cases, fathers requested their sons to migrate. Some sons, when relatively young and as part of a rebellious, 'coming-of-age' process, had left with friends without informing, and thereby defying the authority of, their parents.

In conclusion, as is seen in the rural area which will be discussed next, transnational networks are maintained by extensive economic and social channels between Afghanistan and Iran, by remittances, letters, phone calls and news passed on by personal messengers. In addition, besides return to Afghanistan because of seasonal employment patterns, illness or deportation, migrants return for major social occasions such as engagements, weddings and funerals – reinvesting in ties to their areas of origin. These transnational networks are also influenced by social strategies whereby the return of one member can prompt the departure of another, while sustaining a larger family in the home area.

3. Migration from a Rural Area

The rural *manteqa* (including 32 villages and hamlets) that was chosen for this study is notable because of its different ethnic groups (Arab, Moghul, Pashtun and Uzbek), with Arabs in the majority.

Before the Soviet invasion, the Afghan economy was characterised by subsistence agriculture, pastoralism and trade based on agricultural produce. Eighty to 85 percent of the Afghan population depended directly on the rural economy.[22] Currently, few people are involved in farm labour only; instead, agricultural labour is seasonally determined, with non-farm labour filling in the gaps during certain periods when no employment is available.

It is unknown whether any men from this *manteqa* had migrated to Iran in the seventies; however since 1979, primarily because of the lack of security and for employment opportunities, a high level of migratory movements has occurred. It was claimed that over a hundred families returned after the fall of the Taliban, with a minority of those from Iran and Pakistan. Several hundreds of men stayed in Iran and dozens elsewhere in Afghanistan, mostly for employment reasons. As Grace and Pain (2004: 49) point out, rural households in Afghanistan use labour migration as a strategy for accumulation (in wealthier households), as a coping strategy for uneven job opportunities within the village, or for seeking better-paid work.[23]

The level of male migration has dramatically increased since the drought, which started in 1997 and has caused extremely low harvests and widespread loss of herds of sheep, goats and other animals. Though 2003 saw a major improvement with record harvests, in 2004 populations were threatened again in localised pockets as the result of extreme weather conditions, the loss of groundwater, diminished snow packs and less rainfall. Significant crop losses have been observed, a situation which has been aggravated by the use of uncertified and untested seeds, diluted and low-quality fertilisers, as well as plant diseases affecting the wheat and watermelon harvests.[24] Along with the drought and a general lack of economic opportunities, in some parts of Faryab men continued to flee their villages to avoid conscription and forced taxation during 2004.[25]

3.1 Socioeconomic classes and main livelihoods strategies

The *manteqa* that was studied is a stratified society divided into socioeconomic classes with clearly prescribed roles and responsibilities. Generally, each ethnic group lives in a distinct village or hamlet. The Arab village has over a thousand families of which 75 are landowning. The other two villages incorporated into the

[22] Pastureland accounts for almost two-thirds of the area. Over 30 percent of the area is cultivated as rain-fed land, and less than 7 percent of the area is under irrigation (Wiley, 2004: 7). The main crops are wheat, barley and vegetables, which are supplemented by sesame and watermelon in rain-fed areas.

[23] AREU's Rural Livelihoods research project found that over a quarter of the rural households involved in the study used labour migration as an income-accumulation strategy.

[24] ANFS, 2004: 1. Faryab is one of seven provinces (out of a total of 34 provinces) with over 50 percent of its population unable to meet their basic food needs during winter and spring (ANFS, 2004: 4).

[25] A 2003 Amnesty International report indicated: 'In the north of the country, local commanders are forcibly recruiting men and boys to participate in the internecine fighting [...] Other families had been compelled to send their sons away, most often to Iran and Pakistan, to escape forced recruitment' (p. 9). In 2004, in some pockets of Faryab, men had left to Iran because of their fear of conscription by the local commander (pers. comm., Kahin Ismail, protection officer, UNHCR).

research area were a Pashtun hamlet with approximately 15 families and an Uzbek compound with 12 families. The three settlements represent different socioeconomic classes, sometimes with more than one in their respective groups.

The extended landowning Arab family has 2000 *jeribs* of irrigated land, and 3000 *jeribs* of rain-fed land is divided among its male members.[26] Some families have animal herds. Besides being landlords, the male members also occupy positions at the district and provincial government level, or educational, legal and medical positions in the area or elsewhere. Because of its wealth and political affiliations, the family provides employment to tenants, sharecroppers, and daily labourers, and is therefore of crucial importance, both economically and politically, to the area.

Families with comparably fewer assets are referred to as "mid-level families". Their land holdings vary from 10–20 *jerib*, while a few families have 20–200 sheep and goats and several dozen families have 10–15 sheep and goats. Ownership of herds or land is not equally represented within extended families. While a father and a son can own herds or land, other male relatives might not have one single animal or *jerib*, and they then implement other livelihood strategies.

While wealth is unequally distributed within extended families, it also shifts over time. The *arbab* relates:

> *My father used to have 300 sheep, 27 cows, four or five camels and four donkeys. Many were confiscated by the mujaheddin and the commanders. During Dr Najib's and Babrak Babrak Karmal's period my father had only two camels to carry straw. Now he has about 50 sheep. We have a* chopan *[shepherd] to look after the sheep.*

In the Arab village, estimates of the percentages of the various agricultural work arrangements vary greatly, further complicated by fluctuations between the different categories over the past five years. Though the large majority of the population occupy the lower socioeconomic classes, there are differences amongst them that are reflected by assets (including land, animal and house ownership), contractual relationships with landowners, skills, education and number, sex and age of children. The boundaries between these classes are relatively fluid as a consequence of accumulation and, particularly over the past 25 years, a decrease in assets due to drought, pests, conflict, illness and death. For instance, the number of *kishtmand* (tenants) has greatly decreased because of the drought, which has led to the death or forced sale of animals, poor harvests and a lack of availability of seeds for the next cultivation cycle.

The majority of Arab men are farmers or daily labourers, however the interdependency of the employers and labourers is compromised when drought and other disasters result in low harvests. In 2004, some of the Arab men reactivated coping strategies such as a reduction of food intake, or even a depletion of assets (such as the early marriage of their daughters) causing their entrance into the ranks of the destitute families which are dependent on *zakat* from wealthier families. This group already consisted of widows, especially those without close male relatives, and families without the necessary older sons whose male heads of the families were ill, old or otherwise unable to work. When households reach this stage, their horizontal networks tend to decrease if they have insufficient assets (e.g. adult

[26] Some of the Arab landowning clan have no land as they were forced to sell their land during the drought or to meet demands from former Taliban leaders (Wiley, 2004: 27).

sons), while the vertical redistribution mechanisms continue on the basis of *zakat*, gleaning rights, loans and begging.

The Uzbek and Pashtun hamlets are located about 10 minutes by foot from the Arab village, the Pashtun hamlet was established by a Pashtun *kuchi* (nomad) man who had received 100 *jeribs* of irrigated and 200 *jeribs* of rain-fed land as a reward for the services of his father during the reign of King Zahir Shah. Since the Soviet occupation, the family started to move away from its semi-nomadic existence on the basis of herds, as (an estimated) hundreds of sheep and goats died or were taken by the mujaheddin. Currently only a few animals can be found in the hamlet.

After the death of the hamlet founder, the property was divided among his nine sons, who all received five *jeribs* of irrigated land and ten *jeribs* of rain-fed land. Two of them were still living in the hamlet in 2004, referring to themselves as *nemcha bai* (small landlords). His grandsons face more economic difficulties as a result of ongoing division of the land, thereby diminishing income opportunities, and population growth will further decrease those livelihoods opportunities based on access to land and its produce. The family's relative wealth is, however, characterised by extensive horizontal social networks which are part of a vast transnational network covering Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran.

The Uzbek families live on the landowner's land in their own hamlet. Most came 20 years ago from the district of Shirin Tagab, while others joined in more recent times from rural Maimana – all drawn to the area for economic reasons. The men are *dehqan*, or, when drought hits the area, they become daily labourers or move away from the area (as they did in the summer of 2004). They obtain one-fifth of the crop or daily wages (160 Afghanis/two *seer* of wheat a day), housing and *taqaway* (loans of wheat) in exchange for their labour.

The Uzbek families' situation is characterised by a degree of looming insecurity, with the *bai* maintaining the right to evict them from the settlement at any time. The majority of families experience a lack of other economic opportunities, and dependency on the landlord is their best option. With weak or no horizontal redistribution networks, for the majority of these Uzbek families their relationship with the landlord and their dependence on him for addressing their basic needs is precarious and not to be tested, to ensure that the relationship can continue peacefully at all costs.

3.2 Patterns of migration

During the Soviet occupation and afterwards, migration patterns in Faryab were influenced by the immediate violence of local power struggles, as well as by professional and political affiliations, employment opportunities and the availability of national and transnational networks. Over the past 25 years, the *manteqa* has witnessed a high level of displacement and migration in which a complex pattern of dispersal has been established featuring transnational networks from Iran to Afghanistan, and also Pakistan in the case of the Pashtun families.

The Faryab-based Pahlwan family was notorious for pursuing their own interests, and not only Pashtuns but also Arabs and Uzbeks had to endure their share of human

rights violations.[27] With the arrival of the Taliban, half of the Arab families reportedly left. Their departure was prompted by fear of harassment, looting, rape, taxing and imprisonment. Some went into the surrounding areas for a couple of nights at a time, while others moved to IDP camps or found their own housing elsewhere for a longer period of time. Persecution prevailed across all socioeconomic classes, and the landowning Arab family saw many of its men leaving for Iran to seek safety.

Table 3: Migration from 1979–2003: a focus on Faryab[28]

Period	Ethnic group	Who	Why
Beginning of Soviet occupation, including period of Babrak Karmal (1978–86)	Arab, Uzbek, Pashtun	families, individual men	conflict and fighting, conscription
Najibullah (1987–1992)	Arab, Uzbek, Pashtun	families, individual men	insecurity, lack of employment, conscription
Mujaheddin/Rasul Pahlwan and Malik Pahlwan (1992–98)	Uzbek Pashtun, Arab	families families, individual men	fear of conscription, harassment, looting, ethnic persecution
Taliban (1998–2001)	Uzbek and Arab	families, young and middle-aged men	fear of persecution (for many younger men)
Karzai (2001–)	Pashtun, Uzbek, Tajik	families, men	persecution, conscription and general lack of rule of law

The Pashtun families inhabiting the hamlet are widely connected with relatives in Shirin Tagab (Faryab), Pakistan and Iran, with some offshoots in Saudi Arabia and Turkmenistan. From the time of the Soviet invasion, families moved to these places because of the fighting, high levels of insecurity, lack of employment opportunities and the drought. One respondent says:

> *During Zahir Shah's period, everyone was one, there was no difference and we were all drinking from one well – we were all Afghan. The Soviets came and everybody rose up against them. Then families left one person in each place. The mujaheddin were everywhere and we could not move from one place to the next.*

Although this historical explanation clearly begins with a Pashtun bias, it continues with the Pashtun's strategy of dispersal initiated and maintained throughout the years of conflict, in which people, information, and goods travelled along the lines of elaborate social networks. Political positioning appeared to be a crucial part of this social strategy. Different members affiliated themselves with distinct political factions over time, always leaving some families behind while others left, fearing

[27] After the death of Rasul Pahlwan in the mid nineties, his brothers, Abdul Malik and Gul-i Pahlwan, continued with his regime by opposing Abdul Rashid Dostum while supporting the same culture of human rights violations towards not only Pashtuns but also other ethnic groups.
[28] Amalgated from data collected in Maimana and Qarashikhi, Giustozzi (2004) and Rashid (2000).

conscription for their men or recurring human rights abuses during Najibullah's and the Pahlwans' periods.

The arrival of the Taliban resulted in a new wave of displacement. Some families moved from other districts in Faryab to Herat or Pakistan. The end of the Taliban period signalled another flow of onward and return movement of many of the hamlet founder's descendents. Some of the *kuchi* families left the area at that time, suggesting their political affiliations through their reluctance to return to Afghanistan in the near future. Irrespective of their support for the Taliban or not, more retaliative actions occurred against Pashtuns between November 2001 and February 2002, and many fled to the south of Afghanistan. A report of the Return Commission's Working Groups stated:

> *The recent abuses by Uzbeks (both civilians and armed militias) against Pashtuns is only the latest round of a cycle of abuses committed by each ethnic groups against the other over the last three decades as regimes changed and different groups gained power in the province over the last 30 years. Illegal taxation, extortion of money, animals and harvest and forced recruitment are common in all the districts monitored and Pashtuns are not necessarily particularly targeted. […] A culture of denial and finger pointing is prevalent among the factional leaders, at all levels, both in Maimana and in the districts.*[29]

Since the establishment of the interim government of Hamid Karzai, other Pashtun families have returned from Herat or come from elsewhere in Faryab because of harassment by their Uzbek neighbours. The Uzbek families, on the contrary, appear to have led a relatively immobile life after their arrival in the rural area, with the exception of one Uzbek family. This family had their own transnational network originating from their home area in Shirin Tagab and extending all the way to Iran, allowing some of its male members to escape situations of insecurity. Again, this suggests the crucial importance of social networks with regard to migration to Iran.

3.3 Contemporary migration to Iran

Whereas the rural area's patterns of migration varied slightly from those of the urban neighbourhoods (because of differences in ethnic composition, professions and places of origin), in general the decision to migrate to Iran was made through similar intra-household mechanisms and it was affected by similar horizontal and vertical redistribution mechanisms. Some young and middle-aged men were found to go to Iran to avoid the erosion of social capital through the informal insurance mechanism of risk-sharing. They would thereby also avoid having to call upon other survival strategies which could lead to erosion of their social networks and the separation of families.

It became apparent at the household level that sometimes these motivations became confused with the desire to migrate as a "rite of passage" – to prove that boyhood has been left behind. Furthermore, the availability of social networks and employment in Iran continued to discourage men from returning to Afghanistan, exemplifying the cyclical nature of migration in which a homecoming would be followed by an onward movement back to Iran. Security, safety and economic

[29] Return Commission's Working Groups report, 2003: 1 (informal report)

opportunities are all equally important for a sustainable return. In April 2004, one man in his early twenties related the following:

> *I returned from Iran three months ago because there was peace in Afghanistan. They announced it on the Iranian television. Only three returned of the initial group of 20. Iran is still the best place – we cannot work here. Security is still not fine – I cannot buy a car. Friends have a mobile so I called them in Tehran. I have decided to go back to Iran because there is nothing here – perhaps tomorrow, perhaps later, depending on when a group is leaving.*

Furthermore, once men have migrated to Iran for the first time, the likelihood of them returning is greater, and migrating a second time on the basis of the previous migration experience is made easier. An exception can be found among the landowning Arab family, of which only a few young men have more recently found their way to Iran. Besides employment and seeking adventure, another cause of departure was the intention to cross the border with Turkey and to move onward to western Europe. Some of these cases clearly saw their travel to Iran as different from that of the poor man who goes "to eat to not die". While the drought dramatically reduced their income, it did not force more Arab males to find work elsewhere.

Some young and middle-aged men of the mid-level wealth category, however, experienced a renewed desire to migrate to Iran – to join the ranks of other socioeconomic classes seeking work elsewhere. Though their family background provided them with relatively more *wasitas* to find daily wage work within the area, the irregularity of that wage work (see Part 5 for amounts of wages in Iran and Afghanistan), and the fact that the annual income of farmers was estimated at 4,000–5,000 Afghanis (US$80–100) for 2004, the apparent benefits to migrate to Iran outweighed the costs. The perceived economic opportunities in Iran allow Afghan rural families to adjust to seasonal and climatic fluctuations, with increased migration during times of hardship, less in times of agricultural abundance.

Natural events such as drought impacted heavily on the other socioeconomic classes of the Arab village – from tenant to sharecropper to daily labourer to beggar. Assets decreased and many men were forced to leave the village to seek employment elsewhere, with the majority following the trail set by previous migrants and often departing with a group of migrants from the village. Protection mechanisms for remaining families were not solely based on horizontal networks (as they were for the urban neighbourhoods), but also on vertical ones with the landlord, who ensured the fulfilment of their basic needs while they continued to live on his land during the migrant's absence.

Migration to Iran also became one of the strategies of Pashtun families to temporarily mitigate the impact of natural events. The tenants and farmers who used to work on their land (mostly consisting of their own sons or other male relatives) had become jobless, and decided to follow the pre-established lines of their transnational network which covers Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran, and in which Zindajan in Iran appears to the central meeting point for all young and middle-aged men seeking temporary work. In 2004, approximately ten young men had already left for Iran during the summer, while others were planning to leave in the near future. Elderly men, wives and children remain in the hamlet.

Even if the agricultural situation improves in the years to come, the need to find work elsewhere will probably continue as a consequence of population growth. The descendents of the founder of the Pashtun hamlet have strategically stretched their families over a wide geographic space, and considering the unlikelihood that the families in Pakistan will return in the current economic climate, the situation with stretched families and households moving along the lines of a triangle running from Faryab to Quetta to Zindajan will be sustained.

Of the Uzbek families, only two have close male relatives in Iran. In one case, four brothers have distributed themselves between Iran and the *manteqa*, while their families are in Shirin Tagab with a maternal uncle. Departure to Iran of one brother can be prompted by the return of another for weddings and other social and lifecycle events. In this way, at least one brother has continued to provide labour to the Arab landowner to secure this source of income, exemplifying the spread of risks and the use of migration as a social strategy. Because of the absence of horizontal redistribution mechanisms and the potential of reallocating resources to share risks and build obligations, the other Uzbek families continue to survive on the basis of their vertical linkages with the landlord, perpetuating this cycle of economic dependency. As one man explains:

> *There is no donkey or car to carry me from one village to another to find work – how can I go to find work elsewhere? Some can go to other places, but others cannot.*

4. The Route to Iran – Means and Ways

4.1 Iranian policies and Afghan migrant flows

The first refugee outflows in the eighties and nineties as a result of the communist-led coups and the Soviet occupation, along with the conflict between the Najibullah government and the mujaheddin, received a warm welcome in Afghanistan's neighbouring countries. The Iranian government took formal responsibility for the Afghans and allowed them to live where they found work. In addition, they had access to healthcare, basic education and subsidised food, and were allowed to work in designated sectors.[30] The Iranian government took a certain pride in this offer of assistance to the approximately two million Afghans that had fled the communist, infidel regime.

When the Najibullah government fell in 1992, many Afghans repatriated to their country. This movement came to a halt because of further interfactional fighting and the advance of the Taliban from 1994 onwards, with mainly ethnic minorities fleeing from central and northern Afghanistan.[31] Since the mid nineties, the majority of Afghans in Iran have remained undocumented, and it has become clear that the Iranian government has withdrawn its original position on Afghan migrants.

Since the perceived installation of peace in Afghanistan in late 2001, Iranians generally feel that their country's hospitality has lasted long enough and that it is time for Afghans to go home.[32] By early 2002, most starkly expressed by Home Offices and the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs (BAFIA), the government was implementing policies to provide disincentives for Afghans to stay in Iran.[33] The general view was that Afghan refugees posed a significant burden because of their sheer numbers and the relatively high levels of unemployment in Iran. In September 2001 the government announced that there were 2,355,427 registered Afghan aliens in Iran, of whom the majority (61 percent) were male.[34] Moreover, the issue of national security appears to be of primary importance, particularly in relation to drugs trafficking still taking place along its border, and an uncontrollable flow of migrants that continue to cross the border into Iran.[35]

Iran's policies to encourage the repatriation of Afghan refugees started with greater regulation and control of the labour market, exemplified by an increase in raids on working sites by Iranian security forces,[36] and penalties applied to employers hiring Afghan labourers. Other measures which have increased pressures on Afghans, especially families, have been the closure of informal Afghan schools[37] and the restriction of opportunities for higher education in 2003,[38] and the denial of access

[30] Strand et al, 2004: 2
[31] UNHCR, 2004: 6
[32] Afghan refugees themselves feel that they are no longer welcome in Iran because of the increasing denial of basic human rights and both subtle and overt discrimination (Amnesty International, 2003: 4)
[33] Strand et. al, 2004: 4
[34] UNHCR Iran. *Annual Protection Report Iran – 2002*. Confidential, unpublished report. Geneva: UNHCR, 2003: 2.
[35] Parallel to rising levels of trafficking, Afghanistan's neighbouring countries are also affected by growing levels of abuse, resulting from a spill-over of trafficking, often a consequence of remuneration in kind. Expressed as a percentage of the population age 15 and above – up to 2.8 percent of the people in Iran consume opiates, a far higher percentage than in Western Europe. (UNODC, 2003: 15).
[36] UNHCR Iran, 2003: 7
[37] Hoodfar, 2004: 2 (informal report on education in Iran)
[38] Strand et al, 2004: 3

to housing as well as to administrative services (including bank accounts and interest-free loan associations and financial and credit institutions, and insurance policy and services).[39] Furthermore, formal documentation that had granted Afghans a legal identity was withdrawn, and Iranian women who had married Afghan men lost their Iranian citizenship (the number of these women who could be sent back amounted to 30,000).[40] The only Afghans who can circumvent the implications of these measures are those holding a valid passport, visa and residence permit.

The formal repatriation operations from Pakistan and Iran started respectively on March 1 and April 1, 2002. An agreement was reached with BAFIA to refer unregistered Afghan families and vulnerable individuals to UNHCR for their inclusion in the organised repatriation movements. The subsequent trends have been as follows:

- From 1 March 2002 to 31 October 2004, 770,643 individuals returned from Iran with the UNHCR's voluntary repatriation operation, of which 20,745 individuals (or three percent of the total number of returnees) indicated that they went to Faryab.[41]
- Of this number of returnees to Faryab, 32,339 were men and 15,292 were women.[42]
- The pace of organised repatriation varied through the reporting period, reaching a peak in the summer months, particularly in 2002 and 2004, after which it slowed down. The peak was in July 2004, with almost 80,000 people returning during that month.[43]

The relatively high number of men using the repatriation operation to return to Faryab suggests that the reasons for their stay were other than just protection, with the predominant motive likely to have been seasonal employment.[44] These repatriation numbers are complemented by the statistics collected on return numbers to Iran at the Shegali crossing in Farah Province (see Stigter, 2004). In addition, the representative of the DoRR in Faryab claimed that over the past two years more than 20,000 individuals had left Faryab to go to Iran, with approximately 5,300 men leaving for Iran during the first half of 2004. This suggests that these cross-border movements are likely to be two-way, in which return to their place of origin can be prompted by another departure to Iran.

[39] Islamic Republic of Iran, *Decree: Regulations on Accelerating Repatriation of Afghan Nationals*, Tehran, 15 December 2003.
[40] Strand et al, 2004: 2
[41] UNHCR Kabul, 2004: 2
[42] UNHCR Kabul, 2004: 7
43 UNHCR Kabul, 2004: 4
44 Approximately 40 percent of Afghans returning from Iran, who were predominantly single, unregistered men, have repatriated outside the official UNHCR assisted voluntary return process (UNHCR, 2004: 11).

Table 4: DoRR migration data (Faryab to Iran)[45]

Period	Pashtun Kot	Qaisar	Khuja Musa	Almar	Maimana	KSP	Shirin Tagab	Gurziwan	Belcheragh	Dawlatabad	Kohistan	Total
28/05–30/06/04	229	155	121	148	181	103	130	167	95	79	85	**1493**
01–15/05/04	32	32	16	36	22	8	12	8	25	12	–	**203**
13–28/04/04	53	94	47	79	76	38	48	84	51	18	–	**588**
01–15/04/04	39	45	30	27	24	35	36	41	31	–		**308**
13–28/03/04	35	46	22	58	31	39	32	5	19	35	–	**322**
1–12/03/04	31	72	63	92	78	77	80	38	24	–	–	**555**
12–28/02/04	103	151	157	157	165	67	81	–	–	–	–	**881**
01–12/02/04	42	103	28	111	122	29	38	–	–	–	–	**473**
17–29/01/04	24	64	33	52	27	25	–	28	–	–	–	**253**
27/12–15/01/04	24	48	28	82	17	17	16	–	–	–	–	**232**
Total	**612**	**810**	**545**	**842**	**743**	**438**	**473**	**371**	**245**	**144**	**85**	**5308**

4.2 The route to Iran

Afghanistan's approximately 900 kilometre-long border with Iran has two official border crossings: Islam Qala in Herat Province and Rah-e-Abrishim in Nimroz Province. The Afghanistan side of the border is said to be out of the realm of control of the central government, while constructed fortifications along its eastern border, and increased number of Iranian law enforcement personnel, are in place to counter drug trafficking activities. With the assistance of smugglers,[46] Afghans continue to

[45] The DoRR data was collected by a team of investigators at check posts in Maimana and district centres, and through contacts with transport, smugglers and travellers. Though the data should be read with caution for a number of reasons, it does give an indication of movement of travellers to Iran.

[46] The term "smuggler" is used in various ways, and a distinction between "guide" and "smuggler" is sometimes made. In Faryab, references to smugglers were reportedly always made using the term *qachaqbar,* although some of these took on the intermediary function. In the AREU case study on Herat (Stigter, 2004), a reference is also made to the term *sarparast*, who is someone "leading" a group of migrants, often relatives, neighbours or friends, on the basis of his age or previous migration experience, while also taking on an intermediary role without the potential risk of exploitation attached to his role.

use informal border crossings to enter Iranian territory, and the desert-like frontier continues to be porous.[47]

Formal border crossings have often been closed for periods of time over the past 25 years, and the large majority of migrants have resorted to using smugglers to enter Iran. As well as Farah and Nimroz, Herat used to be one of the major migration hubs on Afghanistan's border with Iran. Smugglers were easy to find in Islam Qala, the town at the formal border crossing, and in Herat, from where groups of travellers would be taken down to the other two provinces bordering Iran. Herat Province as an illegal border crossing became off-limits after the Taliban period, and migrants from the far northwestern corner of Afghanistan were forced to travel further south to enter Iran.[48]

The majority of migrants travel in groups of up to 20 people, either with relatives or neighbours from their area of origin, or co-travellers picked up along the way. The group provides the travellers with a sense of security, and, in some instances, eases some of the bargaining pressures encountered on the journey. The smuggler or intermediary, who accompanies the group to the south, maintains contact with Baluch smugglers who facilitate the border crossing and then hand the group over to fellow smugglers responsible for onward movement in Iran. Some experienced migrants travel south by themselves to reduce costs.

Border crossing takes place by foot, car and in the past by ship (since then the Helmand Sea has turned into a dry basin). Taxis take the travellers to the border, where a couple of nights might be spent before the actual crossing by foot or car, and where "there are no houses, just a few small teashops. Smugglers are sitting there, exchanging persons."[49] The Iranian guards at the various checkpoints are bribed to ensure successful passage.[50] In Iran, the group is handed over to another Baluch smuggler, and divided into smaller groups based on their intended destination. Public transport (train, truck and bus) is often used at night to reach the place of destination.[51] The total number of days of travel varies, depending on the city of destination and the amount of time spent at the frontier. In ideal circumstances, migrants coming from Faryab could reach Tehran in four days.[52]

Recently, smugglers have started to operate in Faryab itself, both from Maimana and the rural areas. Arab smugglers tap into their own ethnic group to find potential clients, while Pashtun men prefer to travel south themselves to find a Baluch smuggler recommended by their relatives. This suggests that the people smuggling networks to Iran are often, yet not always, based locally – partially influenced by ethnic and area of origin affiliations.

[47] Human smuggling is the illicit movement of people, such as migrants, across international borders (Koser, 2004: 182).
[48] The high level of violence is one explanation given for the shift of the smuggling route along the Herat border, while the smuggling of opium and arms continued because of the obvious high profits of the latter (interview with Ministry of Interior staff).
[49] UNHCR Herat, 2004: 2
[50] The smugglers pay around 3,000–5,000 toman (US$3–5) per person to the guards (UNHCR Herat, 2004: 2).
[51] The smugglers are reported to pay more money to the bus and truck drivers to transport the group to their final destinations than the usual transport fares. (UNHCR Herat, 2004: 2).
[52] This is based on the following route: Faryab–Herat; Herat–Zabul; border crossing at night; travel during the next night to Tehran.

4.3 Smuggling networks: costs and benefits

In all cases, migrants commit themselves to paying the negotiated price in Iran. The trip from Faryab to Herat costs approximately 600 Afghanis, while by air it is 1,500 Afghanis with Kam Air and 1,100 Afghanis with Ariana. There are different possibilities for onward travel – the migrant can agree to pay only the vehicle rent up-front from Herat to Zabul, or to hand over the entire amount on arrival in the place of destination. The estimate often quoted for the costs of travel from Faryab to Iran is US$300. More specific estimates provided were 150,000 toman (US$150) from Herat to Tehran, and 200,000 toman (US$200) from Herat to Isfahan.[53]

Besides the distance, prices are influenced by the bargaining power of larger groups of migrants, whether or not the smuggler knows them, commonalities between the migrants and the smuggler, and where the smuggler is picked up – with a likely price reduction along the way towards the south as the number of smugglers to be used, and the distance, decreases. There have been no indications that the smuggler will make a distinction between the reasons for departure, either protection-related or economic, to increase or decrease the price.[54]

In some cases, migrants sold assets to cover the costs of travel. Others borrowed the money from relatives and neighbours before departure and paid back the money from Iran or upon return to Afghanistan. The large majority of men, however, indicated that the money was paid to the smuggler upon arrival, either by their male relatives or close acquaintances, or from their salary. The debt, and thus the costs of travel, can increase in two instances: during the travel itself when the smuggler is at liberty to increase the price, or when the migrants have to work to pay off the negotiated price. The longer the debt takes to pay off, the more it increases – also increasing the potential for exploitation.

As part of transnational networks, smugglers facilitate the movement of migrants across borders, and, especially when they are from the same area of origin, can become critical to the maintenance of these networks. Afghans actively use these smuggling networks for their own benefit. First of all, smugglers guide them to, and past, the border, by maintaining contacts with local Iranian authorities to ensure secure passage, and secondly, they organise transport, basic accommodation and food.

The agreement that the migrant enters with the smuggler is based on trust, which is often greatly enhanced when the smuggler is recommended by a friend or relative, or in those cases where he is from the same area or ethnic group. This mutual dependence becomes more obvious when considering that the smuggler often acts as a source of credit for the migrant. Either the money is paid at the end of the trip, by relatives or acquaintances of the migrant in the place of destination, or the migrant is brought to an employer who is known to the smuggler to enable him to start earning money immediately to repay the debt. This second case carries the risk of an increase in the debt to be repaid, as one respondent from Maimana relates:

> *It was similar to hostage-taking – after eight months I was finally free and went to another [employer]. We were in one tent, the smugglers' relatives and I. The Uzbek from Maimana was contracted by the government. He was*

[53] These prices do not concur with those mentioned in a study undertaken by UNHCR. Prices given in 2004 were Zaranj–Tehran 170,000 toman (approximately US$205) per person and 60,000–130,000 toman Zaranj–Shiraz/Isfahan/other provinces (UNHCR Herat, 2004: 2).
[54] Koser (2004: 186) confirms this, though states that only limited research is available.

> *working as a supervisor and had many labourers. In one month I earned 20,000 toman. The smuggler had told the supervisor that I was in debt. I was given 1,000/2,000 toman for bathing and food. After eight months we discussed 25,000 but then they charged 70,000 toman at that time as they suddenly also increased the price of meals.[…] I stayed there as I had no place to escape to, no relatives.*

Although many Afghan men migrating to Iran know what to expect, especially when they have been across the border before, smugglers are well known to deceive potential migrants with promises of paradise and mountains of income. The Arab *arbab* related this story of his stepbrother, who was approximately 16 at the time of the incident:

> *My brother came back four months ago. He stayed in Iran for four months and had been persuaded by someone from the village to join him. My brother had sold three sheep to pay for the journey. He earned one lakh toman per month, but that person had told him that the salary is 30 lakh toman per month. He also came back to the village with my stepbrother's money, namely two lakh toman.*

He indicated that he had not yet seen the money returned to his brother.[55]

In another case, a mother described the forced labour her son, who was about 15 years old at that time:

> *It was near Shiraz – the practice there happens to young men. He worked for one year for an Iranian man to pay back the money. […] For two years he was working for that man – he threatened to kill him all the time though he had told that man that he had only agreed to work for him for one year.*

Using smugglers can increase both the financial and the psychological costs for the migrant, in particular when the new arrival is unable to find relatives or friends at their destination. In case of a delay in remittances sent home, these costs not only affect the migrant himself, but also his family who is required to cover their own expenses.

There is often assumed to be an overlap between people- and drug-smuggling networks. In the eighties and nineties, opium and arms were often smuggled along the same routes, with Baluch smugglers organising large-scale trafficking along ethnic lines – limiting it to Afghanistan's immediate neighbours.[56] Overlap between these networks appears to continue, but on a minor scale. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM)[57] indicates that "smuggling and hostage taking is closely linked with other illegal activities, including drugs and arms smuggling", with hostages running the risk of forced drug couriering. Furthermore, with drug addicts continuing to move from Faryab to Iran, it is likely that drug smuggling does take

[55] Although there have been no references to instances of trafficking in the text, it is acknowledged that this occurs. It was felt to be beyond the scope of the report to categorise the instances of exploitation, though various instances spoken of during the field research suggested a process which started off as smuggling but which developed characteristics which could indicate trafficking.
[56] UNODC, 2003
[57] IOM, 2003: 48

place, albeit with relatively small amounts of drugs.[58] This situation puts the irregular migrant more at risk and could dramatically increase the costs of his trip.

At the same time, the use of smugglers provides migrants with a number of benefits. Besides acting as sources of credit, (potentially biased) information, knowledge of Afghan social networks in places of destination, and potential employers, smugglers can also act as a postal service, as messengers and as (intermediaries of) *hawaladars*. These functions can ease some of the challenges that migrants face upon arrival, while, particularly when the smuggler is known in their area of origin, facilitating the flow of information and possibly also remittances.

4.4 Access to passports

Since the end of the Taliban period, a minority of migrants have been able to obtain a passport and visa to go to Iran. The main difficulties in obtaining passports, like ID cards, are related to the centralisation policies of the current government and the overall lack of birth registration. Afghan men should have ID cards from when the age of 15, however the large majority of Afghans do not have ID cards at all, nor any other official documentation of their existence, as their place and date of birth have never been registered.[59] Afghans with no ID card or letter of recommendation from an *arbab* or other representative cannot fulfil the official requirements of proving their identity.

Besides these difficulties in getting the necessary documents, the system is highly bureaucratic, costly and time consuming. The passport office in Maimana does not have the capacity to issue passports, and potential migrants from Faryab need to travel to Mazar-i-Sharif or any of the other cities of which the local government is allowed to issue passports (Kabul, Kandahar, Kunduz, Herat, Paktia and Jalalabad). The official process is, however, to provide proof of citizenship, sound financial status and the non-existence of criminal records to the passport office in Maimana. The office is supposed to verify these documents, then provide a letter of recommendation to facilitate the process in Mazar-i-Sharif.[60]

When the letter of recommendation has finally been obtained, the concerned person has to travel a day to submit the papers in Mazar-i-Sharif. Besides time, he must possess the necessary means to cover the costs of travel, board and lodging. Furthermore, it was reported that Balkh Province favours its own residents over those of neighbouring provinces.

The passport office in Kabul indicated that the cost of a passport is 1,160 Afghanis (US$23.20), though other prices were quoted in Faryab – suggesting a lack of reliable information about the cost of a passport (3,000 Afghanis [US$60] or 5,000 Afghanis [US$100] of which 4,500 Afghanis was said to be the bribe). With the need to pay bribes, only Afghans with sufficient funds can obtain a passport. This study suggests

[58] In December 2000, 3,768 Afghan nationals were in prison for drug-related crimes, accounting for 5 percent of all inmates imprisoned for drug-related crimes (80,415), or 94 percent of all foreign inmates (3,988) (UNODC, 2003: 64). It is unclear if some are actually victims of the practices of drugs smugglers who have combined the drug trade with human smuggling. Only one example of the merging of drugs and human smuggling was reported during the field research, with migrants carrying a suitcase filled with drugs for the smuggler, for which they were subsequently arrested. This happened many years ago, at the Islam Qala border.

[59] In a study conducted in western Afghanistan, 98 percent of Afghan women did not have formal identity papers (UNHCR Herat, 2003: 5).

[60] The Maimana passport office indicated that it distributed about 90–100 forms per month.

that the large majority of potential migrants are forced to find other ways to either obtain a passport or travel to Iran.

Those from rural areas experience even more challenges in obtaining a passport – particularly in finding the required social connections in their area of origin and in Mazar-i-Sharif. Indicating the inaccessibility of certain social networks within and outside Arab society, one man explains: "If I had a passport I could go alone. If you have money or if you know someone in the passport office, then it is easy […]. Do you really think that the *arbab* would bring me to the governor?"

In particular over the past year the usage of passports has increased. Illegal ways to obtain passports are opted for because the official ways appear to be almost entirely impossible for many Afghans. In the rural area, criminal networks exploit the poverty and lack of knowledge of some of its residents, causing them to enter a high debt in exchange for a false passport.[61] Allegedly, since the beginning of this year, poor villagers have been buying passports for 15,000 Afghanis (US$300), which is almost 13 times the official price.[62]

When considering the costs and benefits of using smugglers versus obtaining a passport and visa, the predominant decision appears to still be in favour of smugglers (who might even provide the passports), because of:

- time required to arrange the travel
- information available in the area of origin (in particular when the smuggler is part of the transnational network of the migrant)
- costs (depending on the extent of bribes and the negotiated price of the journey)
- extreme difficulties obtaining passports and Iranian visas through the official channels

4.5 Deportation from Iran

At the border there is a significant risk that smuggled migrants will be arrested by the Iranian police, imprisoned for a definite period of time and then deported back to Afghanistan. Deportation mainly takes place at Islam Qala, the formal border crossing in Herat, and the formal border crossing in Nimroz. In the latter province, reports show that approximately 97 percent of the deportees are undocumented and have little or no money.[63] In Islam Qala a total of 26,732 Afghans were deported in 2002 and 28,311 in 2003. In 2002 the number of deportations increased significantly in September (to over 5,000) because of the passing of the Iranian government's deadline for all unregistered Afghans to register and repatriate voluntarily.[64] Nearly 95 percent of total forced returns in 2002 and 2003 were single men.

There are two main categories of deportees: those who are captured while entering Iran or on their way to their destination, and those who are arrested during "round-ups" in major Iranian towns. The latter are often deported in large groups comprising up to 400 people.[65] The majority, however, are arrested en route to their

[61] The passports are invalid because of the non-matching fingerprints.
[62] See Stigter (2004) for further details about this issue.
[63] IOM, 2003: 47–8
[64] UNHCR Herat, 2004: 1
[65] UNHCR Iran, 2003: 4

cities of destination, a couple of days after having entered Iran.[66] One man tells of his experiences at the border:

> *It was the end of the Taliban time. […] Then smugglers came to us, and took us to the border and then to Zahedan and there we were arrested and deported back at night. They kept us for two days inside the trucks and we were about 120 persons. For one hour we had a break for drinking water and urinating and other things, and during these two days we were beaten and tortured, and then send back to Afghanistan. The second time when we went we were deported as well. Every time we stayed and delayed our departure for one week close to the border. Finally, the third time, we could pass the border. We did not pay the smugglers because we did not have money in cash – but we paid them in Tehran with money borrowed from our relatives.*

Other stories of deportees include harassment by the police, forced labour and poor treatment in prison or deportation centres. When arrested in an urban area, imprisonment in one of the detention centres is likely – involving beatings, scarce food, confiscation of belongings, extortion, forced labour and difficult sleeping conditions. Since February 2003, Afghans who have been detained have indicated some improvements in detention centres (in Safed Sang in particular), but so far no major improvements have taken place in Kerman detention centre.[67]

When deportation occurs at the border, an immediate attempt to return to Iran is likely as no major costs have so far been incurred, except psychologically. Deportees are also more inclined to try re-entering Iran to avoid returning home without having been able to send promised or expected remittances.

For some migrants, however, the experience of arrest and deportation is so degrading that they fear ever having to go through it again. For those picked up during one of the round-ups in the cities, a decision against return is sometimes made when considering the new debts that would need to be entered, and the exacerbated challenges if it happens to be winter. In some exceptional cases the actual costs of deportation are high, in particular when money has been borrowed at high interest rates and if deportation has happened repeatedly.

Many migrants, however, are able to stay in Iran for an extended period of time, saving money for themselves and their families: smuggling persists by addressing a need among many Afghans. Furthermore, the fact that the majority of men are picked up en route does little to deter their return to Iran, as their costs are relatively small up to that point. The experiences of deportees, as well as the stories of experienced migrants about the difficulties of life in Iran, fail to deter the majority of Afghans from going, in particular as other push-and-pull factors are more compelling.[68]

[66] Among the interviewed deportees, 62 percent were arrested en route, mainly on the way to Tehran and Kerman (UNHCR Herat, 2004: 4).
[67] UNHCR Herat, 2004: 4
[68] See Koser, 2004 for assumptions underlying deportation.

5. Employment, Wellbeing and Savings in Iran

Transnational networks have been shown to be crucial in providing support and information to migrants in Iran, as well as in determining the selection of the place of destination (based also on the presence of relatives, neighbours and friends). Tehran topped the list of preferred destinations in this study: it was perceived to be the best option for the availability of work and, due to its size, a prevailing atmosphere of relative safety and less harassment than other cities. Also, Bam (after the earthquake), Shiraz and Isfahan were considered as places of destination.

5.1 Transnational networks as initial safety networks

Ideally, relatives or friends in the different neighbourhoods of the migrants' arrival provide the initial care for new arrivals. They lend the money to pay the smuggler, offer a place to stay for the first couple of nights, lend or give some money to buy Iranian-style clothing (jumpers, jeans), provide start-up funds for a business, give advice on where to find employment, and possibly make introductions to potential employers. The availability of acquaintances offers support in an environment which is perceived to be foreign, in particular for first-time arrivals. Some relatives were said to provide the initial funds for free (except smuggling fees); others indicated that they had been given this as a loan.

These financial gifts can sometimes be given on the basis of generalised reciprocity, found among close kin and where the social component is more important than the material one, or on the basis of balanced reciprocity, which can be found among neutral strangers who exchange goods and services of equal value.[69] Both generalised and balanced reciprocity enhance social ties; the existence of debts is not necessarily perceived as a negative state of affairs but is dependent on the position of the giver and receiver. Both balanced reciprocity and generalised reciprocity, in which the bond is not necessarily cut off when the receiver fails to reciprocate, result in a reconfirmation of those transnational bonds that drew the migrant to the place of destination in the first place.

If taken in by relatives or friends upon arrival, and depending on the composition of the household, the migrant may be expected to move out and start his life in Iran as a migrant labourer. One man described how his relatives helped him find work:

> *It was easy to find work. We went to construction work places to find work. They helped me and showed me the places. They showed me three or four before I found work. There was a mason who was contracting me and I followed him to three or four places. He was Afghani. We slept in the same place. We bought our own mattress and blankets. We got food from hotels and restaurants.*

In some instances where relatives suddenly move on or lose touch with the new migrant, his vulnerability to exploitation by smugglers' networks dramatically increases. In this case the migrant may be handed over by the smuggler to employers that he is affiliated with, to ensure that he recovers the costs of the trip (and possibly more than had been initially negotiated) over a period of time that is not

[69] Sahlins, 1965, 1972 in Monsutti, 2004: 225

always defined. This situation can be referred to as negative reciprocity, in which the attempt on the part of the taker is to gain from the interaction.[70]

5.2 Employment opportunities

Afghan migrants find different kinds of employment, with construction work, digging ditches, and agricultural work most often quoted. From the rural area there was a clear pattern of initially taking on agricultural work before moving on to other, better paid, jobs in construction. Over time and with increasing familiarity with the new environment, the migrant starts taking on jobs which either provide higher salaries or are less physically demanding. For instance, one man indicated that initially he worked as a shepherd and earned 50,000 toman (US$50) per month (four years ago), while the second job he took was in construction where he earned 90,000 toman (US$90) per month.

Depending on the kinds of work, comments such as "boring", "difficult" and "heavy" refer to the uninspiring and often physically demanding nature of the work performed by Afghan migrants. Migrants often move around from one job to the next, and temporary unemployment can occur depending on the season, the locality and the strength of the support networks. In only a few instances, migrants moved from one city to the next in search of work along lines of pre-established social networks:

> *It was not difficult to find work, but to decide what kind of work. Finally we found construction work. In the beginning it was difficult – breaking stones – but when we became familiar with the area we were able to find lighter work.*
>
> *I was three months busy in one place, and then worked six months as a guard. As it is the nature of the work, boring, you cannot always continue or you get ill so you have to find something else.*

Payment occurs either per day or month, or per amount of work delivered.[71] Salaries based on daily rates vary depending on the kind of work, age and the level of experience. For example, in construction the salary of an unskilled man is up to 7,000 toman (US$7) a day, while a skilled labourer in masonry and construction could earn up to 15,000 toman (US$15) a day. Only a small portion of these wages is spent on food and other basic needs – the rest can be saved.[72]

Winter is a low season for construction and some agricultural work, and this seasonality can encourage the migrant to return to Afghanistan. However, other blue-collar jobs are available all year round, such as in machinery workshops, gardens, some agricultural work and security (such as guards and watchmen). Repeated migration to Iran often, but not always, results in a return to the same employer.

Migrants prove their flexible attitude through their continuing adjustment to short-term employment opportunities, different kinds of work and available wages. Competition for employment opportunities between Iranian and Afghan labourers is

[70] Sahlins, 1965, 1972 in Monsutti, 2004: 225

[71] For instance, in a brick-kiln factory during the Taliban period, payment was 900 toman for 1,000 bricks, and a maximum of 1,000 toman per day for *digging* ditches with 50 tomans per 15–20 metres.

[72] In a personal interview, Alessandro Monsutti mentioned that a foreman can earn up to 15,000 toman a day while spending 1500 toman per day.

uncommon as Iranians are said not to perform hard physical labour. Though the actual reality on the ground might be more complex, it is reasonable to say that Afghan migrants provide a flexible and highly productive labour source to the Iranian economy.

5.3 Welfare and wellbeing

Since the fall of the Taliban, the Iranian government has increasingly implemented policies to decrease the number of Afghans in Iran. The main measures include:

- action against employers who illegally recruit foreigners
- closure of informal Afghan schools
- preventing opportunities for higher education
- closure of administrative services such as bank accounts
- preventing access to financial and credit institutions, and insurance companies

Yet male migrants, partially because they come without their families, are only affected to a certain degree by such policies – in particular those that potentially reduce the number of employers willing to hire them, or that increase the risk of deportation.

The migrant's transnational networks – relatives, neighbours and friends, close connections to individuals and sometimes families known from the home area – provide his social, economic and psychological support. Even more distant relationships, such as with smugglers and *hawaladars*, can enhance the socioeconomic significance of these networks. On arrival in Iran, new opportunities arise to negotiate the extent and type of the links of these networks on the basis of new contacts, both Afghans and Iranians.

In the majority of cases, the Iranian employer provides housing for his Afghan employees, which is often a room shared between two and 20 Afghan labourers working on the same site. Sometimes one or more close relatives have one room together. Roommates can become a close-knit unit, providing company and financial and emotional assistance wherever needed. In cases of illness, they take each other to hospital and share household responsibilities such as cooking, cleaning and washing.

The employer might cover some of the costs of healthcare in case of accidents happening on the labour site during work hours. As Afghan migrants generally do not have medical insurance, no compensation can be sought for injuries caused by arduous physical work, and often an injured migrant will return to Afghanistan to recover as staying in Iran without income is difficult.[73] In other cases, earnings are spent on hospital bills instead of remittances to home. Furthermore, psychological distress because of the absence of family during illness can increase medical costs.

Most agreements with employers are to work six days per week, with Fridays off. The weekly holiday is devoted to rest and recuperation, including recreation such as going to the park or the cinema. For a few migrants, drug addiction and the pursuit of leisure appear to have overshadowed their responsibilities to earn money in order

[73] It is unclear whether or not legal recourse is possible to bring the employer to court.

to send remittances home. Often the employer or supervisor may not know about these activities as long as their employees turn up at work.[74]

When venturing outside their local areas, migrants can be confronted with an often-hostile environment characterised by discrimination towards Afghans in general:

> *I have lots of bad memories from Iran – the insults and abuses of Iranians, and that lots of our young boys are drug addicts and have been killed in Iranian prisons. Actually I have no good memories from there, everything was pain, working, hearing abuses.*

Afghan migrants also live in constant fear of the Iranian police. They can be arrested at the work site or on their way home, and face harassment while working in public places. Police sometimes raid construction sites, workshops and other places that are known to have Afghan workers to arrest them for deportation. One man relates:

> *One time the police came and checked the construction site. I hid myself in a barrel. They arrested some Afghans on the site – my employer went and could not do anything to release them, so they were deported.*

Once the Afghans are in the deportation centre of Safid Sang, close to Mashad, the employers cannot do anything to assist with their release.

The Iranian police are notorious not only for deportations but also for arresting Afghans on the basis of false criminal charges: Afghans are perceived to be an easy scapegoat. The Embassy of Afghanistan does not provide any kind of assistance for its citizens in these kinds of circumstances.

What filters through the various stories is that some employers are prepared to protect, stand guarantee and bail out their employees, at least if they have been able to maintain good relations with the local Iranian authorities. Others, however, appear to be part of those networks (some of which feature Afghans themselves exploiting compatriots) that exploit newly arrived migrants. The pre-existence of transnational networks can protect migrants from such potential costs of the informal nature of cross-border migration.

5.4 Remittances and savings

Savings sent home by migrants constitute a major source of funds for the basic needs of relatives, either by directly enhancing their purchasing power, or by covering debts. The money follows the lines of transnational networks, reconfirming their links and overall socioeconomic importance. Depending on the arrangements and the sum of cross-border travel costs owed to third parties, the first time that the migrant might be able to remit money is after three months of his arrival.

On average, about 70–80 percent of migrants' income is saved in Iran. The average amount of remittances is about US$490 annually for Maimana/Neighbourhood A, US$500 for the rural area, and US$750 for Maimana/Neighbourhood B, while individual estimates vary from US$100 to US$1,200 per year. An exceptional amount was quoted by the *hawaladars* in Maimana, who indicated that skilled migrants can

[74] The only examples of drugs or gambling addiction that the research team came across were from Maimana. In one instance, a father had sent away his addicted son to avoid the constant humiliation and fights that characterised their relationship.

remit up to US$3,600 per year. Remittances are sent home two to six times annually, at an average of four times a year.

> *My nephew has been in Iran for two years – he sends money every three months – about 5,000 or 6,000 Afghanis (US$100–120). He went to Iran to make money and get engaged, and one year ago he got engaged and sent money to his father – paid half of the mahr. Some money his mother is saving for him.*

This adds up to US$400–500 per year.

> *His youngest brother is now in Iran. He sends every half year 400,000 toman to me as the oldest son – our father died some time ago – and I divide it up among the three brothers.*

This adds up to US$800 per year.

The money is often sent to the head of household, which is the father when the migrant is single or has left his own family with his father. In other instances, the money is directly sent to the migrant's wife or mother (not only if she is a widow) or to the oldest brother if the father has died. Sometimes money is forwarded to different members of the same household at the same time for different purposes. Only in a minority of cases, migrants fail to save money – and with expectations set high by his relatives in Afghanistan the disappointment is profound when these remain unfulfilled.

Remittances and savings are mostly used for basic subsistence needs, such as food, clothing and medicine. The World Food Programme (WFP) Vulnerability Analysis Mapping Unit conducted in 2002 (see Annex A) confirms the crucial importance of remittances for households in supplementing their purchasing power to obtain food.[75] Savings can also be used for accumulation purposes, and invested in assets to increase the wealth of the family at home, including the construction of a house, a shop, *mahr* (dowry) and wedding expenses. In particular when the migrant is still single, at least part of the savings is used for the *mahr* and wedding expenses – reconfirming existing social networks through the redistribution of wealth. Two *hawaladars* confirmed that remittances were used to buy land in Maimana.

For some households, remittances and savings augment their wealth. This, however, is relative and based on various factors such as family size, reasons for travel to Iran (protection-related, drought, lack of employment opportunities), income in Iran and other income sources of the family. Once basic needs are covered, families can start investing in assets, but this is more the exception than common practice. Moreover, wealth is only augmented in households other than those at the lowest echelons of society, as the poorest socioeconomic classes do not have the horizontal solidarity networks to support the absence of one of their members by means of spreading risks. In this way, income inequality as a consequence of remittances and savings can both augment and close some of the distance between socioeconomic classes.

Besides savings and remittances, Afghan migrants also spend money in Iran on consumption (food and other basic needs) as well as jewellery and other presents for

[75] Other studies came to the same conclusion. Pain (2001: 40) indicated that 11.4 percent of the respondents had considered remittances to be the first, second or third most important strategy for some of the households in Almar in response to the drought.

their families in Afghanistan. Expenditure data of Afghans in Iran could provide an indication of their contribution to the Iranian economy.

5.5 The *hawala* system and other ways to transfer money

The *hawala* system in Afghanistan is known for its efficiency in the absence of formal banking systems. Money exchange dealers, or *hawaladars*, provide a reliable, convenient and cost-effective system of making international and domestic payments.[76] The system is based on networks between main cities in Afghanistan, with *hawaladars* from Maimana maintaining close contacts with Tehran and Mazar-i-Sharif. One *hawaladar* had counterparts in Herat, Kabul, and Pakistan (Peshawar). Counterparts can be relatives or business associates. The *hawaladars*' clients include Afghan migrants in Iran and businessmen who hold valid passports and visas – constituting an essential part of the money transfer system.[77] One *hawaladar* explains how it functions:

> *Businessmen from Mazar-i-Sharif sell clothes or other things in Maimana. From Tehran the clients are mostly employees. For instance, in Tehran an employee gives money to my counterpart in Tehran. The employee (or his counterpart) calls me and tells me that he will send me x amount of money. My friend or other contacts, businessmen or companies who use the money to bring the items to Mazar-i-Sharif for selling, sell these and gives the money to my counterpart in Mazar-i-Sharif.*

Besides its economic function, the *hawala* system has an important social function, which allows for the reproduction of social ties over time and geographical space. The circulation of goods, documents, people and money exemplify these transnational connections.[78]

The *hawaladars* interviewed in Maimana indicated that their businesses were established after the fall of the Taliban, partially a result of the increased demand for money transfer services due to the relatively high, drought-related migration of men. Before the Soviet invasion, Afghan migrants coming from Iran were said to carry the money themselves (in secret pockets, through friends or invested in goods), while during the almost 25 years of conflict, smugglers transferred some of the remittances, albeit charging up to 10 percent commission. One man described the spreading of risk in order to bring the savings safely back home:

> *I sent money twice to my family – each time two lakh toman, which is 100,000 old Afghanis. When I decided to come back to Afghanistan, I carried 11 lakh tomam with myself, and my friends took the other part of the money. It was Taliban time and I got married.*

The cost of money transfers through the *hawala* system and other informal money-transfer channels is generally lower than through institutional channels.[79] In April 2004, commission for remittances from Iran charged by the *hawaladar* to the remitter was 3000 toman per 1 lakh toman (equivalent to 3 percent commission). In Iran, some individuals were known to contact labour migrants directly to transfer the

[76] Maimbo, 2003: 1
[77] See Monsutti 2004a and 2004b: 226–38 for a more elaborate description of the functioning of the *hawala* system.
[78] Monsutti, 2004b: 239
[79] El-Qorchi, 2002, in Ratha, 2003: 173

money at the rate of 5 percent commission, acting as an intermediary between the migrant and the *hawaladar* and increasing the costs to the labour migrant.[80] To what extent these are sometimes smugglers who take on the additional money transfer function is unclear.

[80] Commission rates differ, depending on the place, the kind of remitter and the place of origin of the remittances. The *hawaladars* from Maimana stated that the NGO's commission was 0.25 percent (Kabul), 0.1 percent (Mazar) and 2.5 percent (Pakistan). Maimbo (2003: 5) in his study on the *hawala* system in Kabul mentions that "the cost of making funds transfers into and around Afghanistan averages 1 to 2 percent." Formal bank rate transfers are likely to be much higher. As Ratha (2003: 165) states, weaknesses in the financial system and in government administration can impose substantial transaction costs on remitters. For instance the average cost of transferring remittances to Central and South America is around 13 percent, but in some cases exceeds 20 percent. Easing these financial restrictions could bring a larger share of remittance payments into the formal financial system.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

In Afghanistan, if ten people go to the market only one may be able to find work.

I want my sons to become educated and do something for their country so they do not have to go to Iran.

Following the channels of pre-established transnational networks of relatives, neighbours and friends, the majority of men migrating to Iran do so to seek employment. The nature of this flow is overwhelmingly informal, with a clear disregard for Afghan government regulations. Instead, the migratory movement is facilitated by transnational networks that sustain themselves through the movement of people, information, goods and money, while providing protection and information to the individual migrant. Moreover, the availability of these networks allows for families to stay in their home area and remain integrated through the migratory movements of young and middle-aged men.

Instead of the "cyclical movement" that characterises the discourse of humanitarian agencies, the cross-border movements between Iran and Afghanistan are multidirectional, with migrants returning home until their departure is prompted once more for a variety of reasons. With government-led national programmes having limited outreach and impact in Faryab, and with most employment opportunities in the informal and private sectors, there are only a few alternatives for earning an income. Furthermore, the recent drought has further decreased livelihood opportunities and motivated an increasing number of men to follow their relatives, friends and neighbours in seeking employment across the border in Iran, where jobs in the informal sector can be found with relatively higher wages and a greater chance of regular work.

However, these contextual factors do not fully explain why some men leave and why others stay in Afghanistan. The presence of horizontal networks, and in rural areas of vertical ones, determines whether migration to Iran is actually feasible in terms of spreading risk and economically supporting the household in the home area. In the rural area, migration in the current context of severe drought cuts across various socioeconomic classes, and daily labourers, sharecroppers (both farmers and tenants) and small landlords are all among those making their way to Iran. Only a small, relatively wealthy minority would be using Iran as a stepping stone for other migration destinations.

For most households (and families when it concerns several brothers), migration is considered to be a coping strategy to maintain some of their assets, cover basic needs and repay debts through remittances. At the same time, for single men and some married ones, migration can contribute to a further accumulation of assets – be it the *mahr*, the construction of a house or purchasing land (which in the case of the *mahr* and the wedding will be used to reconfirm relationships in the area of origin by a redistribution of assets). Although socioeconomic inequality will not necessarily be reduced, for some classes between the two extremes of destitute and wealthy, politically influential or large landowning families, positive shifts could occur.

The decision to migrate to Iran is however not only a household, or family-based decision, but also dependent on personal characteristics such as age, health, position in the order of siblings, number of brothers and wealth. Those men who are able-bodied, young and middle-aged, with sufficient male support to take care of the family staying behind, are more likely to depart. This would be decided on by themselves, their parents or in close discussion with their family. Status and job security in the home area further determine whether a man is likely to migrate to Iran or not.

Constituting an essential part of transnational networks, the intermediary smuggler facilitates the travel to Iran. For some migrants, they simply function as a guide and deal with the Baluch smugglers in southern Afghanistan, while for those originating from the migrants' area of origin, smugglers also take on additional roles, such as providing credit, finding employment, transferring money and delivering letters. This movement of information and money is crucial in the maintenance of transnational networks. The benefits of continuing to use smugglers outweigh the potential costs such as the risk of trafficking in which coercion, deception and exploitation characterise the travel and period after arrival. The use of smugglers is also seen as a viable alternative to other formal border crossing options, such as with formal passports and visas, because of the time and costs involved, and the general inaccessibility of these documents for many ordinary Afghans from the study areas.

The Iranian government's disincentives for Afghans to stay in Iran have impacted to a lesser degree on Afghan labour migrants, who circulate within their own networks that provide guidance, credit support, information on labour markets, social and psychological support and banking facilities. With the large majority of migrants seeing their stay in Iran as temporary and economically necessary, the benefits are that they are able to find work and save money to sustain their families in Afghanistan and to fulfil their obligations as the male provider of the family.

The lack of availability of formal contracts and insurance once working in Iran make Afghans particularly vulnerable, and subject to an irregular income that can be suddenly cut off at any point. Furthermore, without a legal identity in Iran, Afghan migrants face difficulties in accessing justice if they experience discrimination. Psychological costs are for some acute – many live in fear because they are always at risk of deportation, and stress is exacerbated by the absence of close relatives.

The continuation of transnational networks is intrinsically linked to their very nature, namely men migrating because these cross-border networks provide meaning, protection and support to their individual members. For young men, migration facilitates their transition from boy to man by proving their masculinity, while for married men the act of migration allows them to fulfil their responsibilities as providers for the family. Moreover, besides reducing costs and risks, the mere presence of the transnational network offers a way of life by which migrants follow in the steps of others who have preceded them.

6.1 Recommendations

General

Additional research work is required in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran to:

- give additional details and confirm the extent of migratory movements;

- deepen awareness, knowledge and understanding of migration and its contribution to livelihoods and development; and
- guide policy and institutional development in the field of migration

Afghanistan

Recommendations include:

- Commissioning of studies into border management, issuing of documentation (visas and passports), improved data collection and analysis of Afghan populations abroad.
- Improved targeting of national programmes in areas of high migration outflows and/or refugee returns.
- Development and inclusion of a national policy on migration within the National Development Framework and budget.
- Formation of a department to be tasked with the responsibility of developing a foreign employment policy.
- Training and awareness-building among Afghan consular/embassy staff in neighbouring countries.
- Organisation of appraisal missions to look into the government's technical and financial support needs and to prepare a support and development programme.
- Opening of bilateral negotiations with neighbouring countries on the management of population movements as part of the broader economic, social and commercial cooperation agenda.
- Development of an anti-trafficking law for children as well as for adults – both men and women.

Iran

Recommendations include:

- Conducting a study and analysis of labour markets impacted by Afghan presence.
- Development of a regulatory framework (working visas, entry fees, tax, certification) to encourage and manage legal migration and thereby reduce dependence on smuggling and trafficking networks.
- Engagement of Afghan authorities bilaterally on issues of border management, migration and documentation.
- Easing of visa requirements and procedures for family reunion and students, and for health and education purposes.

For assistance agencies

Recommendations include:

- Support additional research into migration from different parts of Afghanistan and its potential contribution to local and national development.
- Evaluate the cash value and the transmission systems for remittances to see how they could be improved and/or linked to development processes.
- Examine ways to improve and enhance programmes supporting sustainable reintegration of returning migrants and refugees in selected areas.

- Provide technical assistance and financial support to Afghan government ministries and departments tasked with the responsibility of border management, labour and employment, foreign and consular responsibilities.
- Ensure humanitarian protection and intervention for Afghans abroad (both refugees and migrants) in need of continuing assistance.
- Enhance the coordination of a common vision, programmes and activities among the different agencies that address the root causes and effects of trafficking.

Annex A: WFP Vulnerability Assessment – Faryab

Percentage of food contribution coming from remittances[81]

Faryab Province	Areas with food-insecure pockets	Farming pra/agro-ecological zone (FP/AEZ)	% Food contribution from agriculture	% Food contribution from livestock	% Food contribution from labour	% Food contribution from other sources	% Food contribution from remittances	Total % of food requirements covered (disaggregated)	Total % of food requirements covered (aggregated)
Almar		Canal-irrigated and rain-fed land	44	2	3	0	5	55	49
		Rain-fed and intermittently irrigated land	27	2	8	0	7	44	
Andkhoy		Urban area	32	0	47	7	0	86	82
		Downstream intermittently irrigated land	37	6	25	11	0	80	
Bilchiragh		Canal-irrigated and rain-fed land	26	10	31	11	2	81	67
		Rain-fed and intermittently irrigated land	9	3	35	0	5	53	
Dawlat Abad		Rain-fed and intermittently irrigated land	41	4	42	0	8	96	96
		Canal-irrigated and rain-fed land	71	3	17	0	4	96	
Gorziwan		Canal-irrigated and rain-fed land	9	3	16	0	9	37	49
		Rain-fed and intermittently irrigated land	33	8	10	0	6	58	
Khani Chahar Bagh		Downstream intermittently irrigated land	41	1	14	9	0	65	65
Khwaja-musa		Rain-fed and intermittently irrigated land	51	6	9	0	9	75	74
		Canal-irrigated and rain-fed land	49	4	13	0	8	74	
Khwaja Sabz Posh		Rain-fed and intermittently irrigated land	64	1	18	0	13	95	92

[81] WFP, 2003: 52

		Canal-irrigated and rain-fed land	63	1	20	0	6	89	
Kohistan		Rain-fed and intermittently irrigated land	0	8	25	0	25	58	67
		Canal-irrigated and rain-fed land	46	6	15	0	4	72	
Maimana		Urban area	36	16	13	1	4	69	66
		Downstream irrigated land	34	13	12	0	3	62	
Pashtun Kot		Canal-irrigated and rain-fed land	54	4	18	0	6	81	73
	**	Rain-fed and intermittently irrigated land	0	2	12	0	6	20	
Qaramqol		Canal-irrigated and rain-fed land	26	12	6	21	1	67	67
Qaysar		Intensively irrigated and rain-fed land	71	1	7	1	2	82	64
		Canal-irrigated and rain-fed land	62	2	6	0	2	72	
	*	Rain-fed and intermittently irrigated land	21	0	5	0	11	37	
Qurghan		Canal-irrigated land	9	0	19	16	0	44	34
		Canal irrigated and rain-fed land	14	1	15	1	0	31	
Shirin Tagab		Rain-fed and intermittently irrigated land	47	3	13	0	13	76	74
		Canal-irrigated and rain-fed land	52	3	11	1	6	72	

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