



MISSION REPORT

Subject: Monitoring mission – IRAN

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Date: 29/05 – 09/06/2016

Participants:

- ECHO: Lâle, ECHO Bruxelles in charge of the Afghan refugee file, Luc, Head of Office ECHO Kabul, Devrig, ECHO Bangkok regional Food & Cash, & Luc, ECHO Islamabad
- Partners: UNHCR, RI, NRC & DRC

Places visited & Interlocutors:

See detailed comprehensive program

BAFIA – national in Tehran & provincial in Mashhad, Yazd, Sarvestan for Fars province, Qom & Kerman

RI – Relief International

NRC – Norwegian Refugee Council

DRC - Danish Refugee Council

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY / HIGHLIGHTS + INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Good quite long mission enabling to see & understand the context better & how the partners address it: quite **adequately** with good professional committed teams, with **BAFIA**, The Bureau for Alien and Foreign Immigrants' Affairs, covering the lion's share with **90 % of the budget dedicated to Afghans in Iran**.

Huge burden with estimated up to **3 million Afghans in Iran for some 35 years, out of which only up to 1 million documented** – people often lose their documented status because they cannot afford to pay for the related fees; children often drop from school for the same reason.

Settlements are pretty good but they shelter only 3 % of the Afghans in Iran. Will from the authorities to gather there the most vulnerable ones so that they can access all the good services offered – people in the camps would want to shift to urban areas, closer to work opportunities; National security do not want all Afghans gathered in settlements.

WASH – Shelter activities visited were pretty good if not top of the art & over engineered / conservative with the limitation of **social / community involvement lacking**: plan to work increasingly more on mobilization / sensitization. Sanitation in Bardsir settlement: good plan by NRC to rehabilitate the existing sewage plant with good potential.

(Rohingyas are arriving in Iran from Myanmar; what about their status?)

2. ISSUES DISCUSSED, COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Iran: 1.6 M km2, 79 M cap

Majority at 16 years of age; death penalty in vigor

Entry by UNHCR representative

800 000 deportations in 2015.

Health insurance for 83 000 documented / Amayesh card holder Afghans, to be continued with commitment; US\$ 52 M from the government, 8 M from UNHCR.

Cash based interventions increase.

Refugees are allowed to have a bank account.

DG BAFIA Tehran

BAFIA said the 3 organizations, UNHCR, RI & NRC, are doing a very good job.

The Supreme leader engaged for everybody to have access to education; then, 50 000 undocumented Afghan children got enrolled in 2015 – 16 + many more to come: many new schools are needed.

Priority needs are education, health & livelihoods.

Shortcomings?

UPHI (Universal public health insurance scheme) addressed hospitalization; special diseases, cancer, diabetes were not covered. Duration will be increased from 6 to 12 months. With the improvements, will get attractive.

Sustainability?

1 – increase awareness of refugees,

2 – increase duration of coverage,

3 – increase package to make it as comprehensive as possible.

No difference in terms of public health situation between refugees & the rest of the population. Regarding WASH, 97 % of the refugees have access to same conditions as the host population; hygiene education was given children & their parents.

Literacy of refugees increased from 6 % to 60 %.

Soleimankhadi administrative center

In Tehran province, (272 000 registered refugees + passport holders) = 0.5 million + 300,000 undocumented Afghans; 170 000 served in the center – undocumented are not served. Out of the 272 000, 90 % are vulnerable & 30 % extremely vulnerable.

High standards & expectations, highly educated.

Part of the Afghan population do not have access because of their way living in remote locations, men out from 06:00 to 21:00, women staying in home taking care of household affairs. No outreach clinics or counseling.

UNHCR needs authorization from BAFIA for all activities; they work daily in the center.

FGD (Focus group discussion) with 3 female Afghan refugees:

- 'survival sex' is cited;
- temporary (1/2 h to 99 years) marriage = not formally registered by civilian law but linked to sharia;
- early marriage – young girl with old man; parents want to keep their children uneducated to avoid resistance.

FGD with 6 very elite educated males: main problems cited, applying to vulnerable Afghans:

- health insurance not known, dissemination missing, too expensive;
- high cost for Amayesh card & other fees, employment;
- financial assistance needed for skilled people without means.

Lack of information about Afghanistan.

Limited skills allowed or recognized for Afghan refugees, including driver's license.

Meeting with UN RC, Resident coordinator, & head of UNDP, Gary Lewis, by courtesy

We had a number of home visits in every location we were with diversified situations, documented or not, woman headed, vulnerable households who benefited from the Winterization Support Programme by RI: the **assistance came late, cash would have been preferred**, plastic sheeting to improve shelter conditions was not well / sufficiently available; **other priorities were estimated higher**, food, rent, electricity & water bills, administrative fees, health, education.

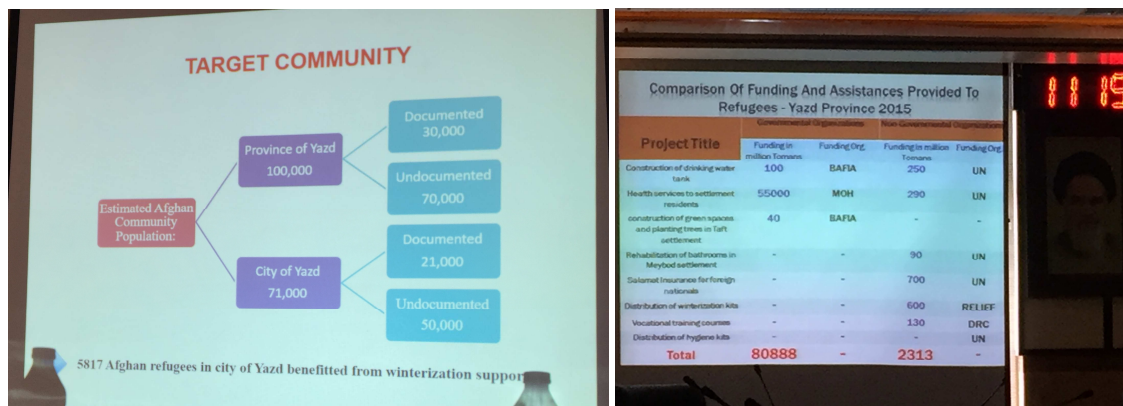
People left Afghanistan mainly for economic reasons + education & security.

Difficulty to pay deposit / guarantee for accommodation.

Lots of disabled people, who are not much taken care of.

RI smartly used Telegram application, similar to WhatsApp, to register their beneficiaries, with pictures, & facilitate communication both ways.

In Yazd, the Ministry of Health told us the mortality rate for Afghan delivering mums is 2 times greater than for Iranian ones.



A good side effect of the projects is for volunteers, people to make friends with different tribes and ethnicities.

Domestic violence would be fuelled by vulnerability / poverty.

Most everywhere, including in poor houses, there was a cooling system comparable to air conditioning or at least a ventilation fan. Most houses or rooms had a refrigerator & TV.

Sarvestan settlement Health center with UNHCR: it is pretty good! & well equipped, including in terms of staff.

But it had only one sanitation facility, quite clean, latrine & water tap; **have more water points** so that health staff wash their hands at all times; more water points and an extra latrine were requested: to be followed.

We were told there was no WASH related public health morbidity.

Existence of a nice library, but little frequented.

292 shelters, 25 m2 each, for 650 cap or 130 families; in 2015, were plastered with chalk. The settlement represents less than 0.5 % of the Afghan population in the province. Surface rainwater drainage through significant size channels.

In 2014, gas was connected & electricity. The camp has existed for more than 20 years. People receive food monthly from WFP & NFIs & hygiene kits with which they are satisfied. Water is free and available. It is pumped from a 12 km distant borehole through a top of the art system. **Chlorination** was considered: it is definitely **not advised**, costly, as the source is very secure, very well designed & with no possible contamination. Water network in the settlement as a loop, self-balancing, with pipe diameters ranging from 200 to 50 mm. Quite **adapted smart sensible approach & design**: 5 surrounding villages with an autochthone population of 2500 to 3000 capita are served by the same whole system.

BAFIA requests for more money to improve the situation in general, the services.

Recommendation: possible easy improvement, **install a few water meters** at the right locations to even better manage the system, control it, check it, anticipate dysfunctionings like leaks.

Qom with NRC & local BAFIA

Meeting with some 40 women with children + a few men. Asked about WASH – Shelter, their first request was for gas: BAFIA answered it would come soon; for 6 months per year, respiratory diseases because of oil heating + numerous burns.

The surface water collection project is what they wanted, keeping the roads & area mud less & dry, enabling to move easily. Stagnant water was observed for which cleaning needs to be organized through **community / social mobilization & sensitization**, which is currently clearly lacking, no community spirit & ownership seem to exist, the population seemed quite demanding, seemingly having developed the dependency syndrome.

The audience cited water, of which quality would not be satisfactory, actually salty – they buy treated water.

They ask for a bus line / bus stop.

Solid waste is collected in containers – with no lids - & then by municipality every other day. In terms of shelter need, the mosque is cited for rehabilitation.

Bardsir settlement, population # 3000 up to 4100, since 25 to 31 years; settlement capacity is 6000.

Hygiene improved but, at the beginning, people did not wash their hands, did not shower, did not use latrines.

Shelters: the oldest ones are ‘**alunak**’ (= tiny), traditional construction made of mud, which people currently do not like because of dust and leaks & they are not earthquake resistant. 200 shelters were built by NRC in 2015 & 40 more in 2015 with an improved design, looking oversized & engineered, at least conservative. Third batch of shelter construction, some 70 & < 100, planned to replace the remaining alunaks.

Also plan to rehabilitate the existing sewage plant, currently only used as storage, the waste is then trucked away at a very high cost. The rehabilitation of the sewage plant, which worked for only 1.5 years, will eliminate the need for trucking & enable recycling of effluents as fertilizer & irrigation with the potential to develop & boost farming like roses grown nearby.



Dasht Zahmat Keshan – FGD with some 25 women

Water from wells is saline; then water is purchased from private tankers at the cost US\$1/5 per 20 l jerrycan – corresponding to US\$ 10 / m³, while quality is of concern; **the authorities from neighbor small town Zangiabat promised they would look into possibilities to improve the water supply situation.**

Among the distributed **hygiene items** are floss & mouthwash, which people did not know before & will not pay for in the future: those are clearly questionable as not sustainable. Before the distribution, people used to purchase shampoo, soap, dish washing liquid (- detergent).

Female menstruation pads are distributed by UNHCR.

If distribution of hygiene kits is replaced by cash, need to look into the possibility to maintain the provision of **sanitary pads**, which could be dropped otherwise as not prioritized.

Simkhardar

High standard for the latrine – shower, all the more compared to the other constructions including accommodation, but wanted by the authorities; could be considered to be downgraded in agreement with BAFIA

Visit of impressive powerful Iran Red Crescent Society: they have 2 M volunteers, 31 provincial branches, # 400 branches, 7000 waged staff, 20 helicopters

End of mission debriefing with NRC

- 1) NRC seems to have gotten & capitalized on experience, built with time, showing with & translating into actual better **construction of shelter**, with the big constraint of the Iranian code / standard from alunak to earthquake compliant building
- 2) Good **competency, team spirit**, sound ambiance: congratulations & thanks NRC for that!
- 3) **Involvement of municipalities**, NRC plays a role of catalyst, regarding extensions after playground, sanitation, water supply
- 4) **Social / community mobilization greatly needed** – fight against dependency, assistance syndrome
- 5) **Lobbying / advocacy for the Afghan population** like, for example, gas in Qom & Bardsir – make sure it gets actually made available as promised before coming winter
- 6) **Hygiene items** – floss, mouth wash: are those relevant, worth keeping distributing? Unless showed the contrary, probably not & then advised to be dropped
- 7) Sanitation: **rehabilitate the sewage plant in Bardsir** settlement where very good potential for development with final outflowing effluent as fertilizer for agriculture & irrigation, allowing significant savings cancelling the need of trucking & interesting technical project & challenge in high standard demanding

Iran with existing available technical know-how & competency & partners, with the stated **will of the local authorities to facilitate & take over**

- 8) **Reinforce partnership between NRC & ECHO:** after knowing each other, share better & more systematically & at the time ongoing, to also perhaps benefit from other good ideas & experiences from elsewhere – start with sharing design of Residential units & Latrine & shower unit: very comprehensive & professional