

HLP Assessment Report – Forced Evictions in Northern Afghanistan

Background

Increasing conflict in Afghanistan has caused further displacement to northern provinces. Balkh province has been a key province to where IDPs and returnees have fled, perceiving it as a relatively secure environment; and people displaced from neighbouring provinces have also fled to Faryab and Kunduz provinces.

In November 2020, the Norwegian Refugee Council's (NRC) Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA) team conducted an assessment in Balkh, Faryab and Kunduz provinces to evaluate displacement-affected people's concerns relating to forced eviction and security of tenure.

Methodology

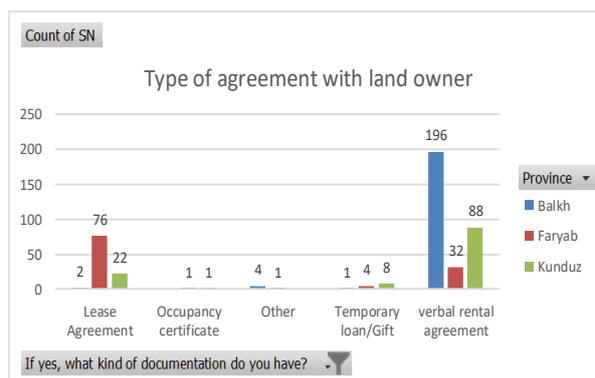
The assessment was conducted from 8 to 12 November 2020. NRC staff conducted individual interviews with 822 head of households of displacement-affected families, as follows:

- 298 individuals (131 female; 167 male) in Balkh province (Nahr Shahi district);
- 266 individuals (170 female; 96 male) in Faryab province (Maimana district);
- 258 individuals (77 female; 181 male) in Kunduz province (Alibad district, Emam Sahib district, and Kunduz city).

The ICLA team conducted face-to-face individual interviews with a questionnaire prepared by the team. Data was collected via Kobo.

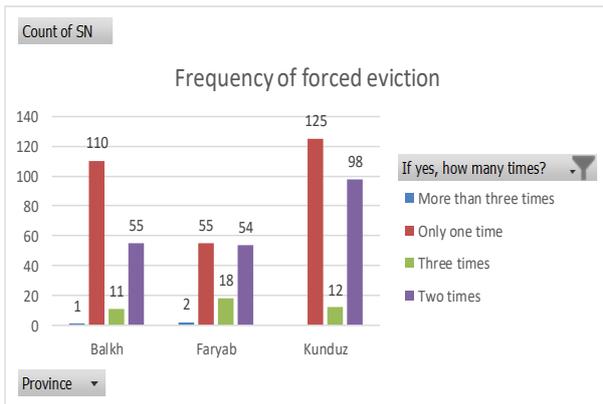
Main findings

Across all three provinces, 53% or 436 head of households stated that they have an agreement with the owner of the house in which they are living. Of those respondents, 100 have a customary lease agreement, two possess an occupancy certificate, and 13 live in the property temporarily as a gift. Notably, 316 of those respondents (39% of total respondents) only have a verbal rental agreement.



Further, the remaining 47% or 386 respondents are tenants but do not have any kind of rental agreement (95 individuals in Balkh province, 266 individuals in Faryab province, and 139 individuals in Kunduz province).

Out of the total surveyed head of households, 66% or 541 respondents had faced forced eviction since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 (177 individuals in Balkh province, 129 individuals in Faryab province, and 235 individuals in Kunduz province). These households had mostly been forcibly evicted because they could not pay the rent due lack of income because of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Finally, around half of total respondents feared forced eviction in the future. This was most prominent in Balkh province, with 85% or 252 respondents concerned about this, mostly due to the fact that their house belonged to a host community member. Across the three provinces, 92% or 757 respondents did not have an alternative place to reside should they face eviction.

This assessment demonstrates the HLP needs and challenges that arise for displacement-affected populations as a result of increasing conflict, complicated by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Results indicated that across the three provinces, a high number of people are living with only a verbal rental agreement with their landlord or no rental agreement at all. Further, over half of the total respondents had faced forced eviction since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

NRC recommendations:

- Awareness-raising through information sessions for tenants and landlords in terms of their rights and responsibilities, including the importance of having a written tenancy agreement.
- Counselling and legal assistance on legal and civil documentation and HLP issues for displacement-affected people to obtain identity documents and tenancy agreements to put them in a better position in the event of disputes between landlords and tenants in the future.
- Advocacy with community and religious leaders, Shura and Jirga members, and landlords at the community level; as well as provincial government departments, the North Region Protection Cluster and the HLP Taskforce.

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