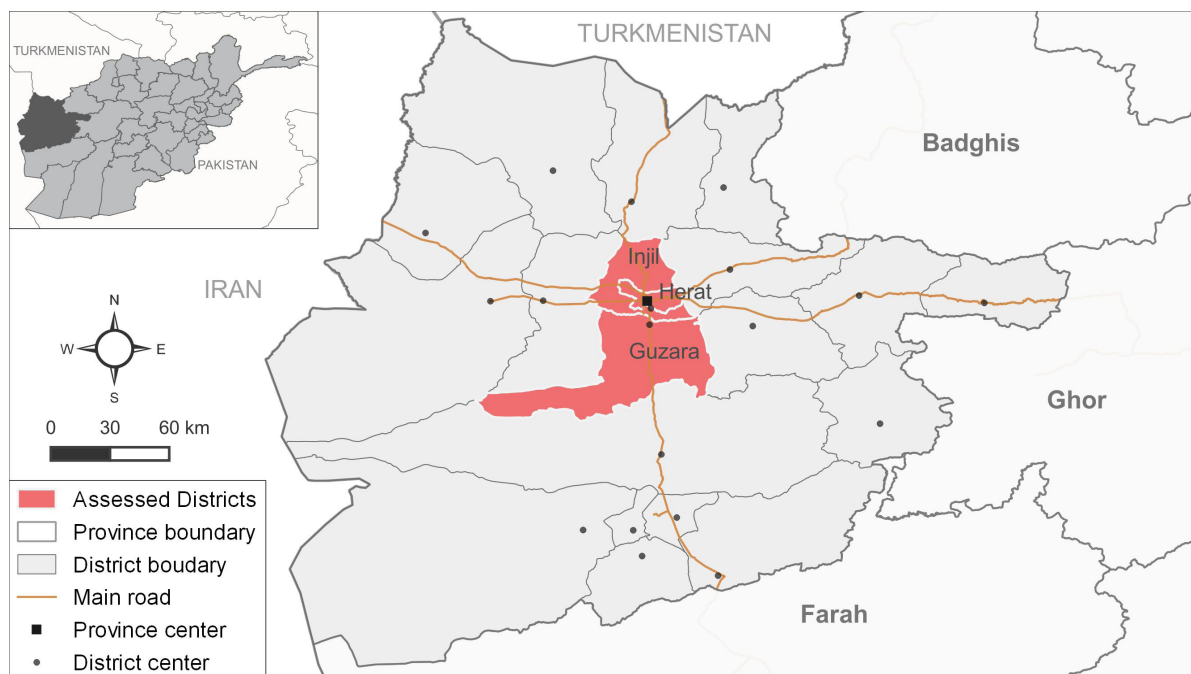


HERAT PROVINCE MAP



METHODOLOGY

This SO draws on three assessments with Key Informants (KIs) conducted in three districts (Guzara, Herat and Injil) in Herat province, including: the Rapid Needs Assessment (RNA) which included 66 KI interviews conducted from 28 July 2021 to 04 August 2021, prior to the transition to IEA governance, the Whole of Afghanistan Assessment in 2021 (WoAA 2021) which included 135 KI interviews conducted from 16 August 2021 to 14 September 2021, just after the transition to IEA governance, and the Humanitarian Situation Monitoring pilot (HSM pilot) conducted approximately four months following the transition to IEA governance, which included 137 KI interviews from 22 December 2021 to 11 January 2022. When referring to Herat province, this SO is only referring to analysis from the interviews conducted in the three districts of Guzara, Injil and Herat. KIs consisted of community leaders with extensive knowledge of the targeted settlement and were identified using a snowball approach.

KI interviews were conducted in every basic service unit (BSU) within the three districts of Injil, Guzara and Herat in Herat province. BSUs are defined as economic/geographic service units which rely on the same services (i.e. healthcare clinics and schools) and common public spaces (i.e. markets and roads). To determine a BSU, face-to-face participatory mapping of settlements and services available in Herat province were conducted by enumerators in June 2021. One interview was conducted per assessed settlement within the BSU and at least 10% of settlements in each of the three districts were assessed. All key findings from these three assessments are indicative and are not statistically representative of the settlements assessed.

CONTEXT

Endemic poverty and conflict coupled with waves of COVID-19, drought, government transition and related economic regression heightened humanitarian need across Afghanistan throughout 2021 and are likely to continue to do so in 2022. Concurrent to the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan, active conflict escalated from May 2021 onward and culminated in the transition to Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) governance across the country on 15 August 2021. This active conflict and the later political transition drove new internal and cross-border movements, and coupled with relating disruptions to service provision and international funding, crippled the Afghan economy. In parallel, the former Afghan government declared a drought across 80% of the country in June 2021. Separately, reported COVID-19 cases spiked from May – July 2021 and from November 2021 – January 2022.

The following Situation Overview (SO) aims to contextualize these shocks and their influence on the evolution of humanitarian needs, access to services and displacement in-country via a case study on Herat province – which borders Iran and houses both formal and informal border crossing that facilitate trade and cross-border movement. This SO focuses on three districts – Guzara, Injil and Herat – which directly experienced active conflict, displacement, lack of rain and COVID-19 in 2021. The following SO includes key findings across three REACH assessments conducted between July 2021 and January 2022 in these three districts of Herat province. When referring to Herat province, this SO is only referring to analysis regarding the three districts of Guzara, Injil and Herat.

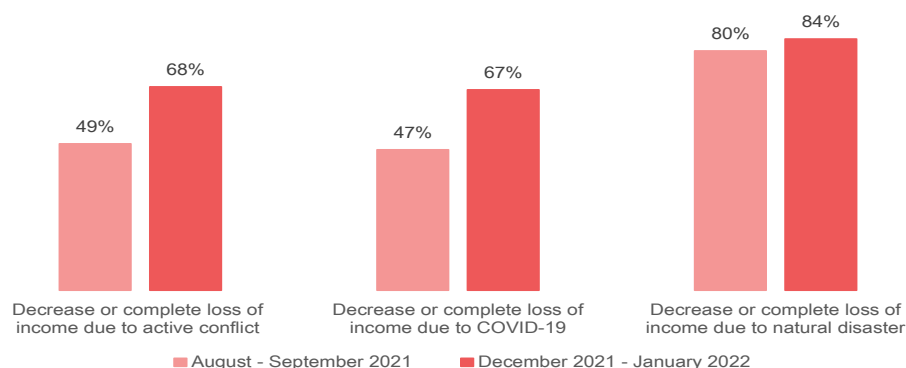
KEY FINDINGS

In contrast to national-level findings, findings from Herat suggest a marginal improvement in the livelihood opportunities of households living in Herat province. This includes an increase in sustainable labor and declining reliance on debt/loans over the reporting period - despite active conflict, COVID-19 and drought reportedly depressing income generation. Nonetheless, poverty and lack of precipitation, were reported as key drivers of IDP displacement. In parallel, both economic and socio-cultural barriers may be driving a decline in reported access to education, healthcare and markets. Food availability marginally improved, despite reportedly increasing food prices, but KI reporting of hunger levels and reliance on coping strategies to meet minimum food needs within 30 days of data collection remained consistently high. Despite some data collection in the wetter winter months, reported access to water worsened – likely due the drought in the province during the reporting period.

SHOCKS¹

Almost all KIs, across the reporting period, reported at least one shock – with active conflict, COVID-19 and drought as the most frequently reported shocks consistently across data collection periods. KI findings further suggest that active conflict, COVID-19 and drought stymied income generation across the reporting period. Among Herat province KIs, decreased or lost source of income was the most frequently reported impact of active conflict and COVID-19 across the reporting period. Separately, KI findings suggest that drought constrained harvests and decreased livestock ownership across the reporting period.

% of KIs Reporting Decrease or Complete Loss of Income, per shock



ACTIVE CONFLICT

- Across Herat province, KI reporting of active conflict as a major event oscillated across the reporting period in line with the conflict dynamics affecting the province at the time of data collection. KI reporting across Herat province increased from 24% in July – August 2021 (prior to the transition to IEA governance on [13 August](#)) to 79% in August – September 2021, before declining to 51% in December 2021 – January 2022 (after the IEA transition). Findings were consistent across districts and urban vs. rural areas.
- Decreased or lost source of income was the most frequently reported impact of active conflict among Herat province KIs. However, findings varied across areas and depending on the reporting period – indicating how active conflict influenced urban vs rural economies differently. Among KIs in rural areas, reporting of a decrease or complete loss of income due to active conflict increased from 41% in August – September 2021 to 74% in December 2021 – January 2022. In contrast, KI reporting of a decrease or complete loss of income due to active conflict decreased from 76% in August – September 2021 to 35% in December – January 2022.

COVID-19

- Among Herat province KIs, reporting of COVID-19 as a major event steadily fell across the reporting period (97% in July – August 2021, 53% in August – September 2021 and 32% in December 2021 – January 2022) likely reflecting the declining influence of COVID-19 in Herat (or the perception of COVID-19 as an ongoing concern) in spite of the high number of reported COVID-19 cases in Herat province period. However, KI findings further suggest that the impacts of COVID-19 varied across the reporting period. In July – August 2021, the most frequently reported impact of COVID-19 was decrease or complete loss of income (77% of KIs), before shifting to illness or death of household members (72%) in August – September 2021, and then returning to decrease or complete loss of income (67%) by December 2021 – January 2022.

DROUGHT

- Coeval with active conflict and two waves of COVID-19, low rainfall and winter snowpack triggered a [drought](#) in the northern, southern and western regions of Afghanistan (including Herat province) and continued into [December 2021](#). External reporting indicates that drought hindered agricultural production during back-to-back planting cycles in-province, with the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) reporting lower wheat yields and poor pasture conditions in [June 2021](#).
- KI findings suggest that drought suppressed harvests across the reporting period. Among the December 2021 – January 2022 KIs in Herat province reporting agriculture as a primary income source, more than half (68%) reported that lack of rain caused a decrease in half or more than half of agricultural production in the 30 days prior. Although the proportion of KIs reporting halving of agricultural production remains fairly high, these are declining compared to August-September (89%)
- Livestock sector findings were similar: among KIs reporting livestock as an income source for the majority of households in the settlement, 81% of December 2021 – January 2022 Herat province KIs reported that lack of rain drove livestock owners to sell livestock in the 30 days prior – again, a marginal decline compared to 87% in August – September 2021.
- KI findings further indicate that the livelihood impacts of drought are most prevalent in the rural Guzara district. Eighty-five percent of Guzara district KIs in December 2021 – January 2022 (among the KIs reporting a decline in half or more than half of agricultural production) reported that lack of rain hindered half or more than half of agricultural production in the 30 days prior. In parallel, almost all (96%) of Guzara district KIs in December 2021 – January 2022 (among the KIs reporting a decline in livestock ownership) reported that lack of rain had driven livestock owners to sell livestock in the 30 days prior.

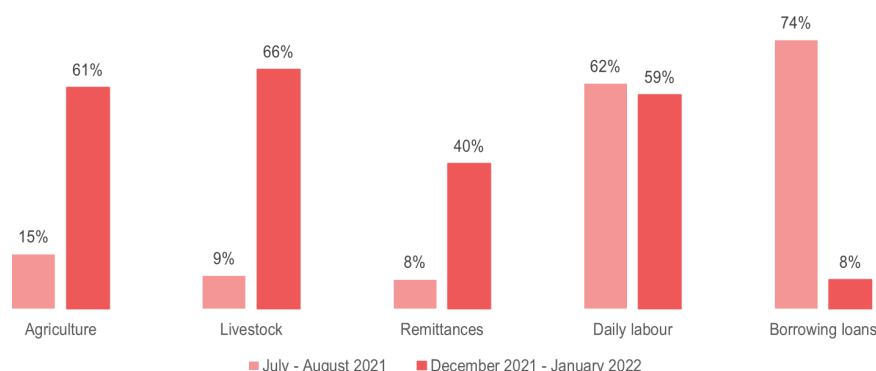
ECONOMY

In contrast to [national-level findings](#), findings from Herat province across the reporting suggest a gradual increase in sustainable labor and declining reliance on debt/loans. However, concurrent with external findings from the [World Food Programme](#) (WFP) and the [Joint Market Monitoring Initiative](#) (JMMI), reported prices of key food staples rose.

LIVELIHOODS

- In parallel with the cessation of active conflict and the onset of the [wheat planting season](#), KI findings indicate a gradual increase in sustainable labour across Herat province – with reported reliance on agriculture and livestock as a primary income source within 30 days of data collection rising across the reporting period. Agriculture as a primary income source within 30 days of data collection increased from 15% in July – August 2021 to 61% in December 2021 – January 2022, livestock as a primary income source within 30 days of data collection increased from 9% in July – August 2021 to 66% in December 2021 – January 2022. In parallel, the proportion of KIs reporting borrowing loans as a primary income source within 30 days of data collection fell from 74% in July-August 2021 to 8% of December 2021 – January 2022 Herat KIs, further suggesting an improvement in livelihood opportunities.
- KI findings from across Herat province indicate that reliance on remittances is rising in parallel with increasing reliance on migration as a coping strategy to acquire food or money to buy food within 30 days of data collection – with 40% of Herat KIs in December 2021 – January 2022 8% of Herat province KIs reporting remittances as a primary income source within 30 days of data collection vs 8% in July – August 2021. These sources of income were more pronounced in urban areas of Herat province and in Guzara and Herat districts.

Most Frequently Income Sources, per % of KIs



DEBT

- Coeval with a falling reliance on borrowing food or money to buy food to meet minimum food needs and borrowing loans as a primary income source, KI findings suggest that debt declined across Herat province in the reporting period (100% in July – August 2021, 97% in August – September 2021 and 63% in December 2021 – January 2022). These findings were consistent across districts and urban vs. rural areas.

PRICE

- KI findings further suggest that prices of key staples rose. Almost all Herat province KIs (97% to 100%) reported an increase in the price of food staples throughout the reporting period – which aligns with external findings from the [World Food Programme](#) (WFP) and the [Joint Market Monitoring Initiative](#) (JMMI). These findings were consistent across districts and urban vs. rural areas.

HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

Despite reported improvements in livelihood opportunities, the magnitude of need regarding food and shelter remains high. While KI reporting that most households in the assessed settlement were able to acquire enough food in the 30 days prior to data collection rose overall, reported hunger levels remained consistently high. In parallel, almost all KIs across the reporting period reported shelter concerns indicating shelter need. In contrast, KI findings suggest that overall protection risks and humanitarian need in urban areas may be decreasing.

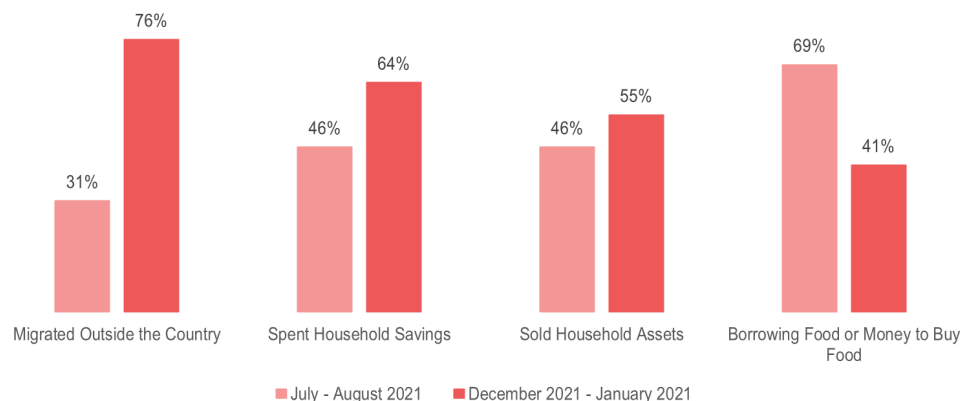
FOOD

- With the cessation of active conflict and a rise in reported delivery of humanitarian assistance, KI findings indicate that food availability increased but hunger remained consistently high in Herat across the reporting period. While KIs reporting that most households in the assessed settlements were able to acquire enough food in the 30 days of data collection rose overall (56% in July – August 2021, to 49% in August – September 2021 and to 70% in December 2021 – January 2022), reported hunger levels remained consistent (KI reporting of “hunger is bad, with limited options to cope” or the “worst it can be, causing death” was 49% in July – August 2021, and 41% in December 2021 – January 2022).
- December 2021 – January 2022 reported hunger levels and access to food in rural and urban areas are similar overall; however, trends between August – September 2021 and December 2021 – January 2022 indicate the situation marginally improved in urban areas (urban Herat KI reporting of hunger decreased: 57% in August – September 2021 vs. 42% in December 2021 – January 2022) but worsened in rural areas (rural Herat KI reporting of hunger increased: 24% in August – September 2021 vs. 42% in December 2021 – January 2022). Access to food increased in both urban and rural areas – with a particularly sharp increase in urban areas (urban Herat KIs reporting that most households in the settlement were able to acquire enough food in the 30 days prior to data collection: 25% in August – September 2021 vs. 61% in December 2021 – January 2022).

HUMANITARIAN NEEDS, CONTINUED

- To mitigate hunger, KI findings reflect a strong reliance on negative coping strategies to acquire food or money to buy food within 30 days of data collection (reported by nearly the totality of KIs across the reporting period), with a reported increase in migration and a decrease in borrowing food or money to buy food as a coping strategy. For more information, please see the figure below.

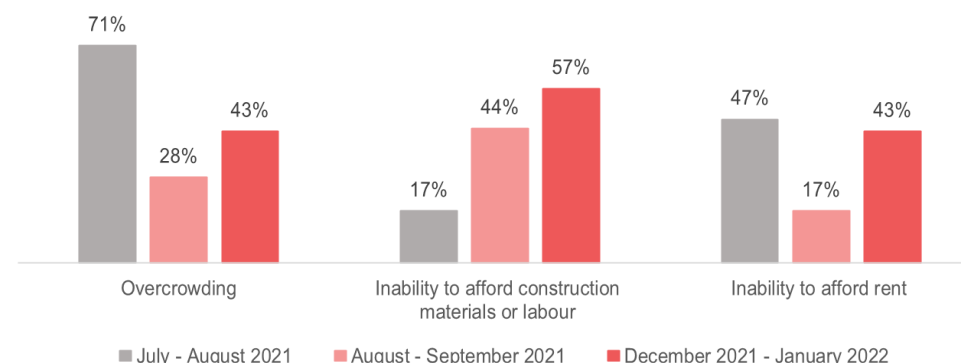
Most Frequently Reported Coping Strategies when there was No Food or Money to Buy Food Within 30 days of Data Collection, per % of KIs



SHELTER

- Shelter need remained consistently high across Herat during the reporting period, with all or almost all Herat province KIs reporting at least one shelter concern (between 82% and 100%). The most frequently reported shelter concerns were overcrowding, inability to afford construction materials or labour and inability to afford rent. KI reporting of economic concerns, including the inability to afford construction materials or labour and the inability to afford rent, rose as KI reporting of overcrowding as a shelter concern fell – which could reflect how broader economic precarity is influencing shelter need across Herat province. For more information, please see the figure below.

Most Frequently Reported Shelter Concerns, per % of KIs



- Findings further suggest that this rising inability to afford rent was more prevalent in Injil district and urban areas of Herat province, where **rental costs were generally higher**, across the reporting period. The proportion of KIs in urban Herat areas reporting inability to afford rent as a shelter concern increased to 73% in December 2021 – January 2022 from 45% in August – September 2021. This could indicate that broader economic precarity is particularly influencing household ability to pay for rent in areas where rent was already prohibitively high.

PROTECTION

- Following the cessation of active conflict, KI reporting of protection incidents was largely consistent across Herat province but markedly dropped in urban areas (50% in August – September 2021 vs. 6% in December 2021 – January 2022). Despite this, **coeval with the cultural contextual shifts observed in-country**, KI reporting of unsafe areas for women and girls more than doubled overall across the reporting period (19% in August – September 2021 vs. 54% in December 2021 – January 2022) – with critical differences between rural and urban areas. KI reporting of unsafe areas for women and girls more than tripled in rural areas (16% in August - September 2021 vs 61% of KIs in December 2021 – January 2022), yet decreased by more than half in urban areas (42% in August – September 2021 vs. 10% in December – January 2022). In parallel, KI reporting of no protection incidents regarding women and girls increased in urban areas (urban KI reporting of no protection incidents targeting women: 46% in August – September 2021 vs. 89% in December 2021 – January 2022; urban KI reporting of no protection incidents targeting girls: 49% in August – September 2021 vs. 95% in December 2021 – January 2022). These findings could suggest that urban centers may be perceived as safer for women and girls.
- KI reporting of child marriages occurring within 3 months of data collection decreased from 63% in August – September 2021 to 46% December 2021 – January 2022 across Herat province. KI reporting differences between urban vs. rural areas and between districts suggest that child marriage declined sharpest in urban areas.²

SERVICES

Despite reported improvements in livelihood opportunities, findings suggest that economic and socio-cultural barriers drove a decline in access to markets, education, healthcare and water across the reporting period. And despite the wetter winter season, findings further suggest that drought increasingly constricted water access across the reporting period.

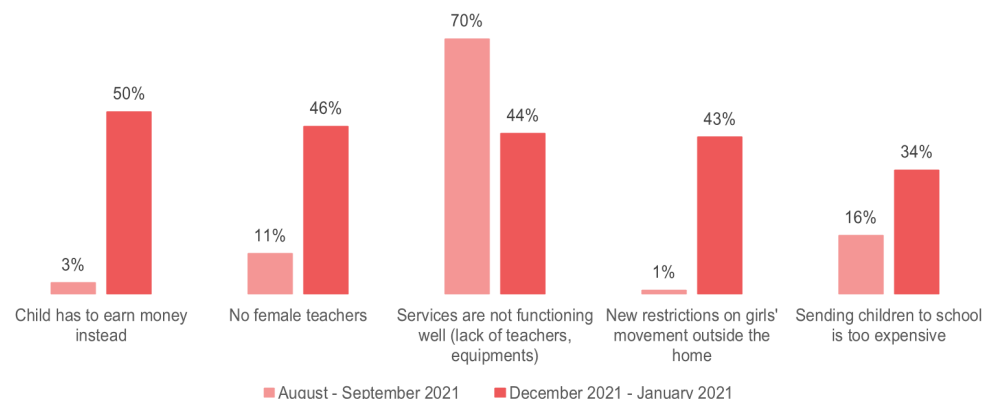
MARKETS

- Reported access to markets with NFIs and winterization materials decreased by almost half in Herat province across the reporting period (85% in July – August 2021, 71% in August – September 2021 to 48% in December 2021 – January 2022). Findings were consistent across urban vs. rural areas, but differed by district, with the highest access levels reported in the urban Herat district.
- Findings suggest that declining market access may be due to prohibitively high prices in most of Herat province with price being the most frequently reported barrier (42% in December 2021 – January 2022),³ especially in the more urban and peri-urban districts of Herat an Injil. Conversely, in the more rural district of Guzara, distance was the most frequently reported barrier to markets with NFIs and winterization materials (by 67% of KIs).

EDUCATION

- Children school enrollment levels were found to have slightly decreased overtime with KI reporting that more than half of school-aged children in the assessed settlement are enrolled passing from 64% in August - September 2021 to 53% in December 2021 – January 2022 across Herat province. The most prevalent decline in educational access, driven by cultural and economic factors: lack of female teachers (64%), restrictions on girls' movement (54%) and children needing to earn money instead (54%), was found in the more rural Guzara district, where KI reporting that more than half of school-aged children in the assessed settlement are enrolled sharply declined from 80% of KIs in August – September 2021 to just 11% in December 2021 – January 2022.
- Although active conflict largely receded, overall reporting of educational barriers did not decline but evolved. Economic factors gradually replaced insecurity as the most reported impediment to education access across Herat province during the reporting period, as KIs reporting cost as a barrier rose from 16% of KIs in August – September 2021 to 34% in December 2021 – January 2022, and reports of the need for children to work increased considerably from 3% of KIs in August – September 2021 to 50% in December 2021 – January 2022. Cultural factors, i.e. lack of female teachers, bans on girls' education and restrictions on girls' movement, also markedly increased across Herat province during the reporting period.^{4,5,6} These findings were largely consistent across districts.

Most Frequently Reported Barriers to Education, per % of KIs



HEALTHCARE

- In parallel with declining market access and rising prices, findings suggest that cost drove a decline in access to healthcare across Herat province during the reporting period. Healthcare access reportedly decreased (85% in July – August 2021 vs. 58% in December 2021 – January 2022) – with cost consistently the most frequently reported barrier across the reporting period. These findings were largely consistent across districts and urban vs. rural areas.
- Concurrent with findings regarding education, KI findings suggest that socio-cultural factors (e.g. lack of female medical staff) increasingly impeded access to healthcare across all areas during the reporting period. This trend was most prevalent in the more rural Guzara district where the proportion of KIs reporting on lack of female staff as a barrier to healthcare access increased from 9% in July – August 2021 to 47% in December 2021 – January 2022.

WATER

- In parallel with the [onset of drought](#) in June 2021, reported sufficient access to water for household use declined across Herat province in the reporting period (by 74% of KIs in July – August 2021 vs. 50% in December 2021 – January 2022) – despite data collection partially occurring during the wetter winter season. Findings were largely consistent across districts and urban vs. rural areas.
- The most frequently reported barrier to water for household use by Herat province KIs in December 2021 – January 2022 was insufficient water points/long waiting times at water points (5% in July – August 2021 vs. 88% in December 2021 – January 2022) - replacing active conflict (59% in July – August 2021 vs. 0% in December 2021 – January 2022). KI reporting that water points were too far, difficult to reach or had dried up similarly increased (44% in July – August 2021 vs. 52% in December 2021 – January 2022).

DISPLACEMENT

Findings suggest that internal displacement decreased while crossborder returns into Herat province increased over the reporting period. Among Herat province KIs reporting the presence of IDP households, the most frequently reported drivers for internal displacement (regardless of whether the IDP households were recent or non-recent) was consistently active conflict. However, lack of precipitation and poverty as reported drivers of displacement sharply increased across the reporting period.

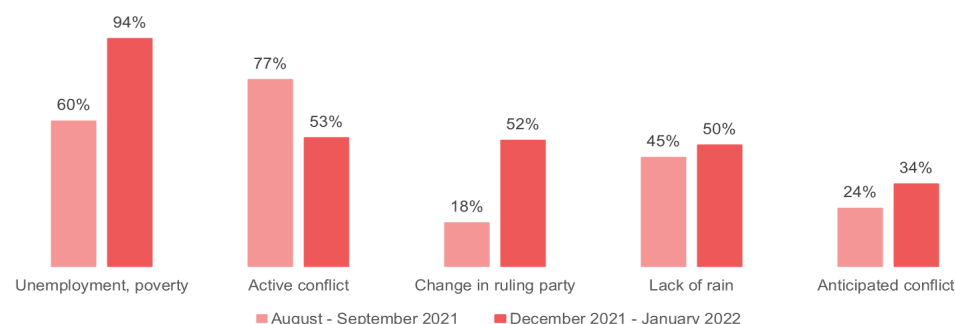
DEMOGRAPHY

- Largely consistent with findings from [IOM District Baseline Assessment – Round 14](#), KI findings indicate that internal displacement decreased while crossborder returns into Herat province increased over the reporting period. The proportion of Herat province KIs reporting the presence of internally displaced persons (IDP) households decreased overall between July – August 2021 (99%) and December 2021 – January 2022 (76%). In contrast to this overall reported decline in IDP households, KI reporting of crossborder returnee households, all from Iran, doubled between July – August 2021 (24%) and December 2021 - January 2022 (50%) across Herat province.

DRIVERS OF IDP DISPLACEMENT

- Among Herat province KIs reporting the presence of IDP households, the most frequently reported drivers for internal displacement (regardless of whether the IDP households were recent or non-recent) was consistently active conflict. However, lack of precipitation and poverty as reported drivers of displacement sharply increased across the reporting period.
- Across Herat province, KI reporting of lack of precipitation as a driver of IDP movement steadily increased from 5% in July – August 2021 to 45% in August – September 2021 to 50% in December 2021 – August 2022. Reports of lack of precipitation as a driver of IDP movement were most prevalent in the rural Guzara, which spiked from 0% of KIs in July – August 2021 to 70% in August – September 2021, then fell to 50% in the wetter winter months of December 2021 – January 2022.
- Similarly, poverty as a driver of IDP movement increased markedly to almost all Herat province KIs (12% in July – August 2021, 60% in August – September 2021, and 94% in December 2021 – January 2022). Findings were consistent across districts and urban vs rural areas.

Most Frequently Drivers of IDP Displacement, per % of KIs



FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information regarding WoAA 2021 can be found [here](#), and further information regarding the HSM pilot can be found [here](#). Formatted analysis from WoAA 2021 KIIs can be found [here](#), and formatted analysis from the HSM pilot KIIs can be found [here](#). A presentation of the HSM findings can be found [here](#). Analysis and methodology regarding the RNA are available on request.

ENDNOTES

- The recall period for questions regarding shocks for the July – August 2021 assessment was 3 months. The recall period for the August – September 2021 and December 2021 – January 2022 assessments was 12 months.
- During August – September 2021 data collection, KIs were asked if they were aware of any GIRL under the age of 16 years getting married. During December 2021 – January 2022 data collection, KIs were asked if they were aware of any CHILD under the age of 16 years getting married. This gender difference in the question asked, coupled with previous exhaustion of this non-regenerative strategy, asked may partially explain the decrease in reporting.
- Among the KIs reporting no access to markets.
- Proportion of Herat province KIs reporting lack of female teachers as a barrier to educational services: 2% in August – September 2021, and 41% in December 2021 – January 2022.
- Proportion of Herat province KIs reporting new bans/restrictions regarding girls attending school as a barrier to educational services: 1% in August– September 2021 vs. 15% in December 2021 – January 2022.
- Proportion of Herat province KIs reporting new bans/restrictions regarding girls' movement as a barrier to educational services: 1% in August– September 2021 vs. 43% in December 2021 – January 2022.

ASSESSMENTS CONDUCTED IN THE FRAMEWORK OF:

Afghanistan Inter-Cluster Coordination Team



Afghanistan
Education in Emergencies Working Group (EIEWG)
گروپ کاری تعلیم و تربیه در شرایط اضطراری، افغانستان



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SOUND
مؤسسه خدمات برای توسعه و همدستی



WASA
Women Activities
and Social Services
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موسسه خدمات اجتماعی زنان (واسا)