

# Area based community profile : Kabul, Afghanistan

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# Overview

This area-based city profile details the main results and findings from an assessment conducted by IMPACT Initiatives in one group of informal settlements in Kabul, Afghanistan, in December 2017. This project was part of a global pilot, aimed at testing an innovative research methodology in collecting and analysing data in out-of-camp settings (more information on p.7). Carried out at community level, this Kabul pilot focused on:

- 1) Understanding community areas, through delineating boundaries of service locations.
- 2) Identifying best sources of information, concentrating on the selection of Key Informants (KI) within the community area. To test accuracy of data provided by the KIs, and thus identify the best informed KI, their answers were compared with the findings of a survey conducted at the household level.

This report presents the findings from this assessment:

**Part 1 - Understanding areas** presents findings from the participatory mapping stage of this pilot. This includes a brief section on the methodology, the mapping exercise carried out in Kabul and its main findings as well as maps to illustrate results and general emergent patterns among the community. The Kabul pilot differs from other pilot phases of this program, as the portion of the city mapped is comparatively smaller. Only one community, composed of host community and four informal settlements (ISETs), has been mapped. This smaller scale provides the opportunity to go more in depth and to investigate the different community boundaries drawn by ISET and host community members.

**Part 2 - Identifying best informed KI** outlines the specific ways in which the best informed KI in a given community can be identified, in comparison to household-level findings. Analysis of the household level data focuses on demographic and livelihood indicators, such as income, displacement status and household composition, as well as access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) services and to women and child services in certain areas. At the community level, data collected via KI interviews illustrates the perceived challenges and issues for their own community area. These KI interviews posed an interesting perspective, providing insight on the type of questions KIs could be capable of accurately answering.

## Part 1 - Understanding areas

**Why?** International actors and the humanitarian community in Kabul and throughout Afghanistan use either administrative or their perception of a community to group ISETs as a basis for interventions and programme planning; an approach that may not capture the actual structure of the area, its local features and characteristics, or the needs of the communities that define the area. Understanding and delineating an area endogenously - with its very own inhabitants - offers the opportunity to outline a territory through local lenses and adapt the response to the needs and capacities of the community; the necessary first step for an adapted, context specific and relevant humanitarian and development response.

**What?** Beyond commonly used administrative boundaries, “community areas” are defined by their inhabitants. Inhabitants share common key characteristics, have a feeling of belonging to the area which is delineated by agreed and commonly recognized boundaries. Delineations of community areas are fluid, dynamic and can change over time.



**How?** Depending on the context and the aim of the exercise, actions are required to understand and delineate areas. Service catchment areas can be straightforward, and may be mapped in conjunction with service providers and/or the municipality. Community areas are more subjective and require the following specific steps:

**1. Background research:** Discussion with local staff, municipality stakeholders and key community leaders on official and unofficial boundaries as well as main characteristics of the city and its neighbourhoods.

**2. Mapping Focus Group Discussions (MFGDs):** Invite inhabitants from each area to conduct participatory mapping. Community members from all backgrounds are gathered to discuss and delineate their own area. To inform this process, a semi-structured question route ought to be drafted with local staff and maps be printed on a detailed scale, allowing participants to identify and draw their community area and indicate key features.

## Participatory mapping of a group of informal settlements in Kabul

Kabul city is the capital and the largest city of Afghanistan with around 4.6 million inhabitants in 2015<sup>1</sup>. Surrounded by mountains, the city is located at 1,800 metres above sea level in the eastern part of the country. Since 2002 Kabul has witnessed a significant expansion despite terrorist attacks, with Afghans from other provinces and returnees from abroad travelling to Kabul to seek improved social and economic opportunities in the city. The city is also a hub for displaced people fleeing insecurity and conflict and looking for a more secure environment. The city is ethnically diverse, hosting Tajiks, Pashtuns, Hazaras and Uzbeks<sup>2</sup>.

Given the exploratory, research-based nature of the AGORA project, the Afghanistan pilot phase focused specifically on a strategically selected group of informal settlements (ISETs), in the East of the city. A cluster of four ISETs, 500 metres apart from each other, were identified by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as a suitable group, based on their geographical proximity to each other and the presence of humanitarian programs and relief deliveries in those ISETs.

Those ISETs are surrounded by host communities, with the whole community area spreading across approximately 2 km<sup>2</sup>. In order to identify if this group of ISETs was considered by inhabitants as one community area and to delineate its boundaries, a total of eight MFGDs with community members from the four ISETs and from four host communities were conducted.



<sup>1</sup> CIA Factbook (2015).

<sup>2</sup> UN HABITAT (2015)



## Key Findings

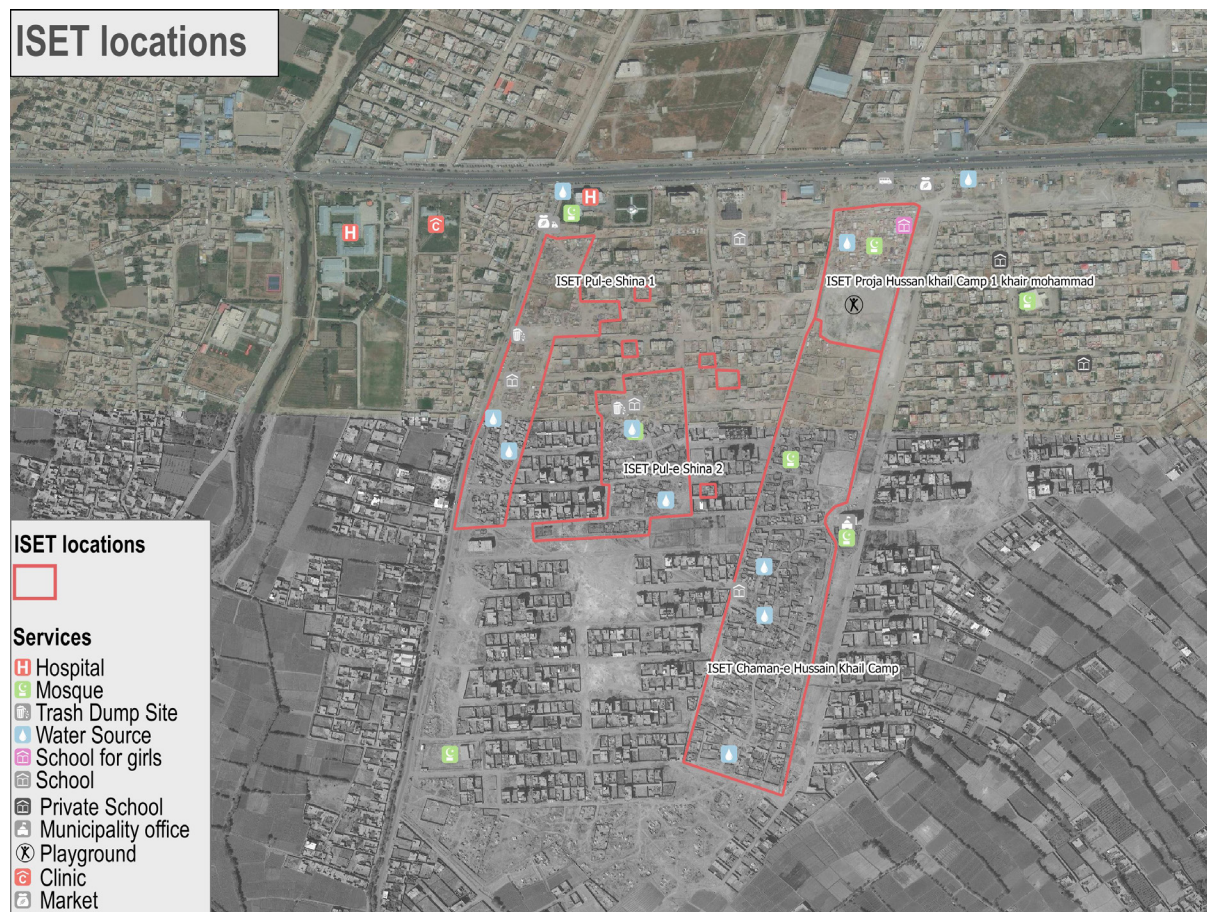
Afghanistan is characterised by widespread and ongoing displacement, with a significant proportion of the population having been displaced in recent years due to natural disasters, protracted crises and increasingly sporadic active fighting throughout the country. Accordingly, across the country and especially in Kabul, the number of people resorting to living in poor quality shelters, such as residing in ISETs, is ever increasing. ISET inhabitants and host community members do not typically consider themselves to be a part of the same community as they are from different backgrounds. This was exemplified during the Mapping Focus Group Discussions (MFGDs), as differences among population groups were identified. Ethnic differences and socio-economic factors were recognised as playing a role. For instance, one section of the Pul-e-shina 2 settlement is populated by people from the Jatt/Jogi community, a stateless ethnicity usually ostracized in Afghanistan, that feels more isolated within the community.

Nevertheless, when asked if their community reaches beyond their settlement or immediate surrounding area, most ISET residents and host communities responded positively. All of the MFGD participants indicated that socio-demographic characteristics and shared services typically tie communities together.

Shared services ensure people feel that they belong to the same community, even extending beyond the immediate vicinity. However, community members do not rank those two factors equally, as detailed below, and differences in the perception of the community boundaries exist.

Host communities tend to consider the whole area as a single community. Indeed, this specific neighbourhood is pretty well delimited by natural features (river on the east, fields in the south and south-west) and by an important highway on the north. This area is also well equipped with services and is as such quite autonomous (see “Community locations” map on the right). Host communities have been living in this distinct urban unit for a long time. They feel tied up to the whole area as they perceive it as coherent, populated by people with similar social characteristics and by siblings, friends and other relations. If host communities do mention sharing services, they consider it a less important factor.

ISET residents noted a perceived isolation from surrounding host communities, based on differences in time spent in the area and on living conditions. However, ISET residents also mentioned that they share resources with nearby host households, and so these shared services draw the two groups together into one community, beyond their own settlement.



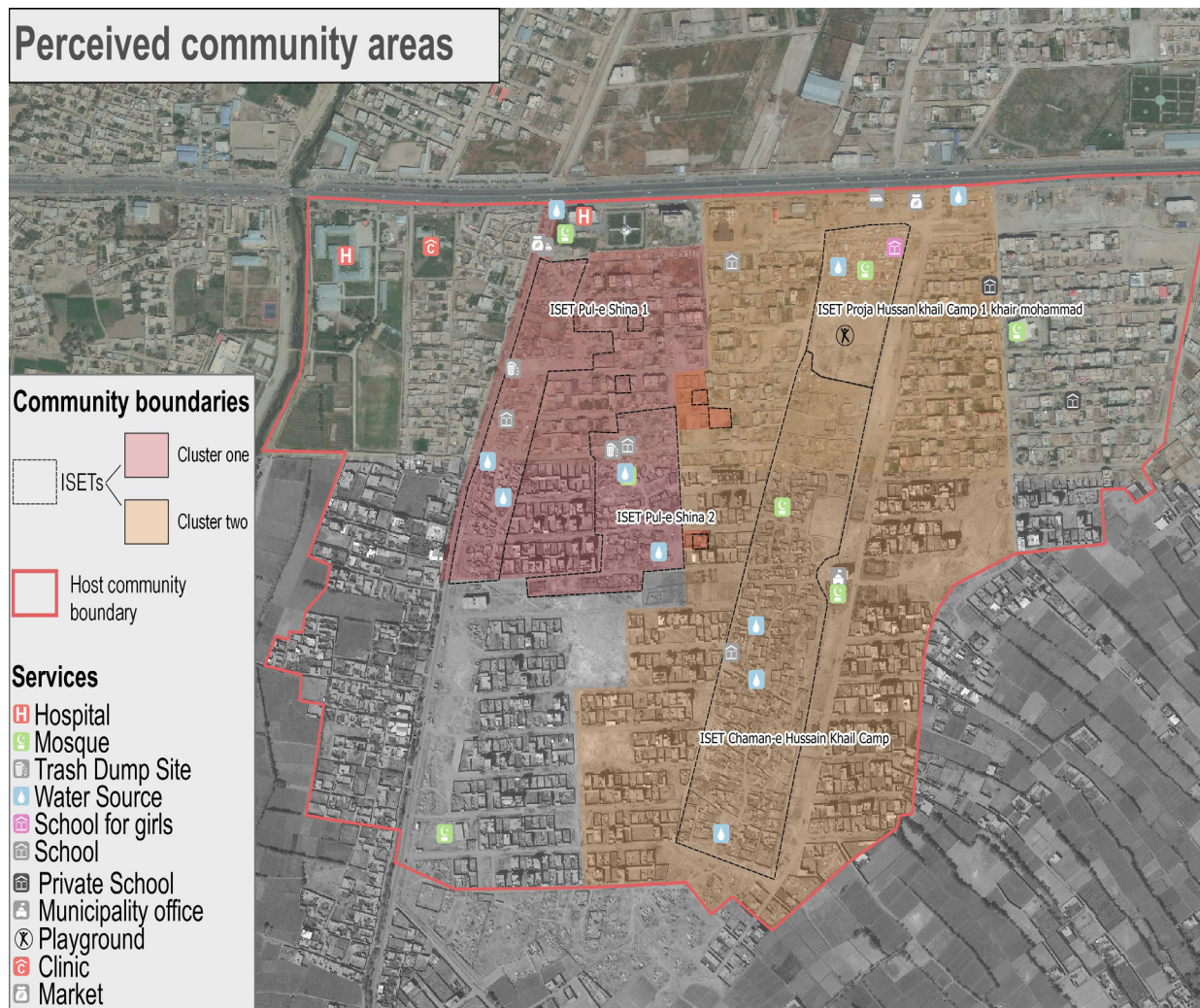
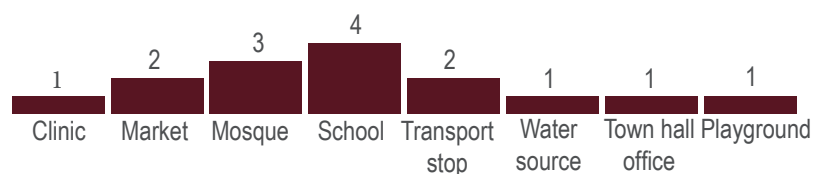


## Key Findings (Continued)

Dynamics around shared services are complex. Overall, 34 services were located in the community area, inclusive of 15 services identified through MFGDs; not previously captured in existing resource databases. Participants indicated that these services were integral to their feeling of a community. This finding is insightful in outlining the way in which urban settings prioritise and structure their community identity. The majority of services mapped were: mosques, markets, schools and public transport stops. In terms of social interactions, mosques and schools were considered the most likely location as they facilitate personal interactions. On the other hand, markets and transport stops were considered impersonal, with scope for limited social interaction.

Findings however revealed that the “shared services” factor is, spatially speaking, limited since basic service catchment areas are usually small, relevant to residents of only the surrounding few hundred metres. Consequently, ISET communities structured around those key services typically have smaller populations than the surrounding host within the community. MFGDs indicated that indeed ISET participants felt their community extended only a limited amount from their settlement boundary, inside the broader community limits.

### Services mapped during MFGDs :



### Redefining ISET census and mapping :

Until December 2017, UNCHR had registered 64 ISETs in Kabul's urban area. UNHCR usually considers ISETs as closed units and distinct quarters. As such, it is common to find groups of ISETs located in close proximity to each other. These can form key areas in which regular information or resource sharing can take place. However, the AGORA pilot methodology provides some insight in how these communities can be utilised to strengthen humanitarian and development interventions. Key findings reveal that such groups of ISETs can group together into one area in which information could be rapidly diffused, while social network analysis indicates certain characteristics of KIs can be used to not knowledgeable community representatives. This new approach could help the humanitarian community to understand geographical and social dynamics within ISETs.

## Part 2 - Identifying best informed KI

### Why?

Given resource limitations, including limited timing, means, security or access constraints, it is not always possible for humanitarian actors to use household level surveys or collect representative data in the field. Accordingly, humanitarian actors are often reliant on the information offered by other data collection methodologies; such as Key Informant (KI) interviews. These KIs are typically assumed to be knowledgeable in their field or geographical areas, and so serve as a source of information in lieu of household-level findings. As such, it is essential to better understand and systematically test the reliability of data collected from appropriate KIs. This is especially true in the context of displacement outside of camps, where the collection of reliable and relevant data on the needs of host and displaced populations is even more complex.

### How?

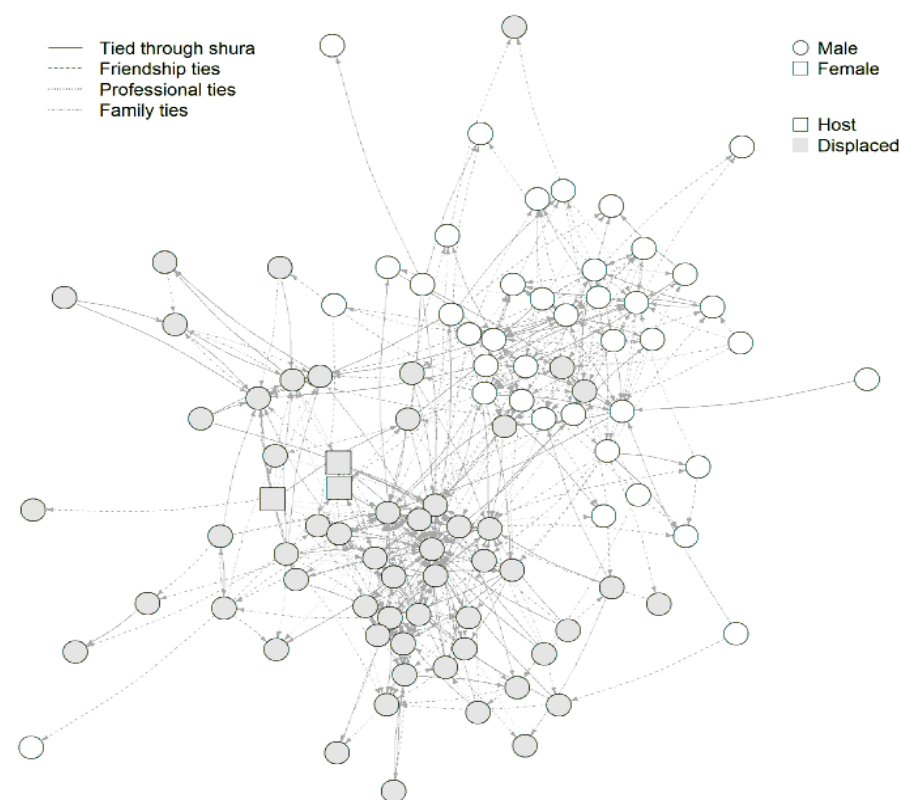
In this pilot study, as pertinent to the overall global programme of which this is a part, the theory of Social Network Analysis (SNA) is used to capture the characteristics of social networks and exchange of information that exists between KIs in a given area; in this case Kabuli ISETs. According to the central hypothesis tested in the programme, social network analysis can predict the characteristics of a knowledgeable KI, based on a set of findings referring to knowledge of their community area.

### Methodology in Kabul

For the selected community group of ISETs and their surrounding community area, 114 Community KIs and 36 WASH-focused KIs were identified for participation. Based on their area of knowledge, these KIs were interviewed on three topics: general knowledge of the ISET community, WASH service provision in the area and access to women and child services in the area. In addition, these KIs responded to a set of questions which identified their exchange of information amongst each other, allowing the discovery of the social network dynamics between the respondents.

Simultaneously, 1,086 households were interviewed, stratified to include Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), returnees and host populations within the community. This number was selected using random sampling and thus offered representative data for the included population groups and one particular ISET (Chaman-e-hussain khail camp), as well as the community as a whole. By comparing findings from this representative data with KI responses, the reliability of data collected from the KIs has been tested.

Social network map : KI interactions, by displacement status and gender:



# Key Findings

## 1. Characteristics of social networks

The KI network is composed of men mainly, only three women were identified as Key informants by the community.

Regarding displacement status, 58% were IDPs or returnees while 41% belonged to the host community. The majority of KIs (67%) identified themselves as community representative, a general term referring to knowledgeable community members who often represent the community during discussions with government officials or NGOs. They are well established in the community, they share the daily life of other inhabitants and thus are recognized as local leaders. Those people can be shop keepers or people with higher education (doctors, engineers, lawyers, etc). The two other main profiles represent typical Afghan community leaders, whose expertise is drawn upon in humanitarian data collection on a wide scale: community elders and profiles linked to the Shura. Findings reveal that the network of KIs were found to be relatively dense with important connections and a significant percentage of bi-directional exchanges (29%).

### Type of ties:

Tied through Shura	44%	<div></div>
Friendship ties	33%	<div></div>
Professional ties	13%	<div></div>
Family ties	10%	<div></div>

### Exchanges origin and destination:

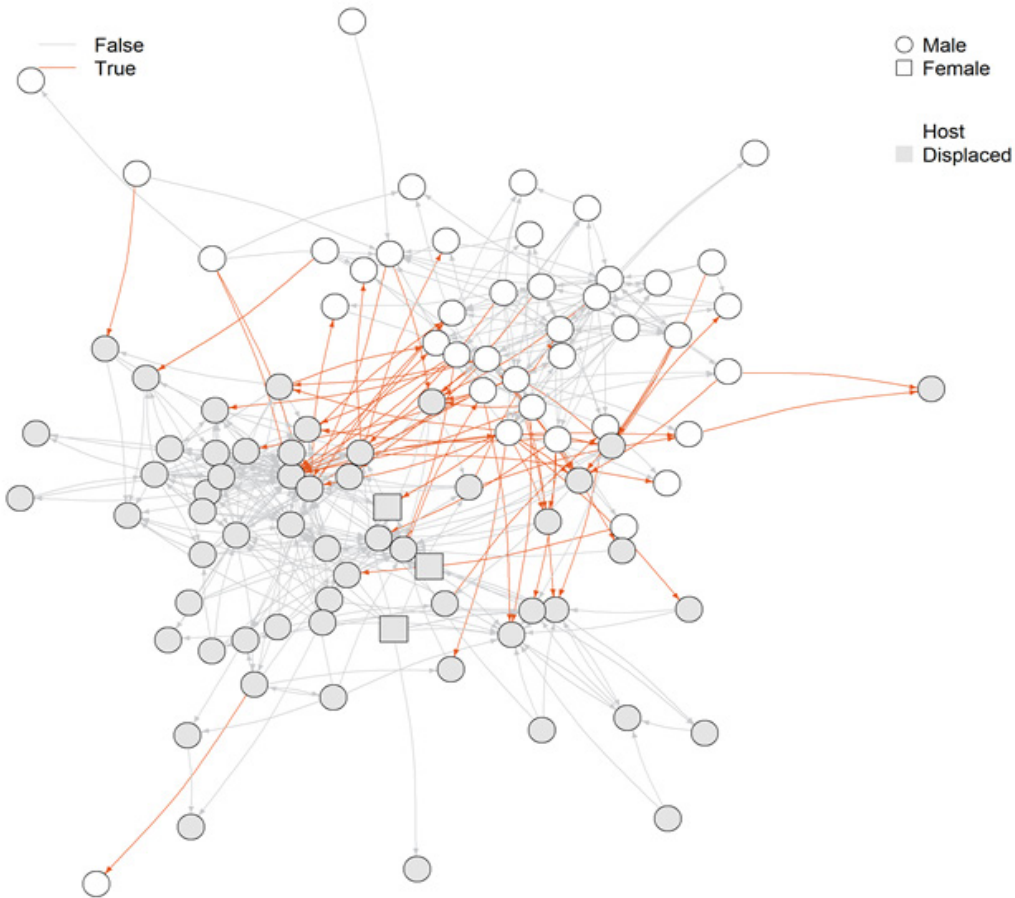
Displaced - Displaced	53%	<div></div>
Host - Host	28%	<div></div>
Displaced - Host	10%	<div></div>
Host - Displaced	9%	<div></div>

One of the most important findings indicates a low percentage of exchanges between those residing within and outside ISETs, revealing **two distinct sub-communities within the broader community**.

The majority of social exchanges within the network (weighted by the number of KI by status) were found to be between displaced KIs (53%), 28% were exclusively between host KIs and the remaining 19% between KIs of varied status. Most commonly, these relationships form either through the Shura (44%) or through natural friendships (33%).The high proportion of exchanges happening in the Shura is not surprising as those traditional assemblies are widespread in Afghanistan and play an important role in social life, conflict resolution and local decision making.

Social interactions between displaced KIs and host community members (in orange on the social network map) had the same characteristics as interactions inside each sub-group (displaced KIs with displaced KIs and host KIs with host KIs, in grey on the social network map). There is no evidence that ethnic differences or the type of relationship influenced how the two KIs from the two sub-networks communicate.

KIs social network map: Interactions between ISET and host community members:





## 2. Reliability of information provided by Key Informants

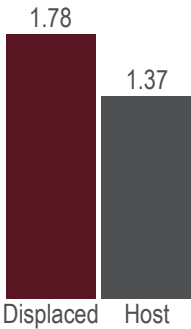
### General Analysis:

Several tests have been done to analyse the reliability of the KIs interviewed. Accuracy scores have been calculated by comparing KI reported informations and the consolidated household interviews in the same area. The scores were averaged by type of KIs and ranged between 0 and 3, 3 being the highest reliability score (see graphs below).

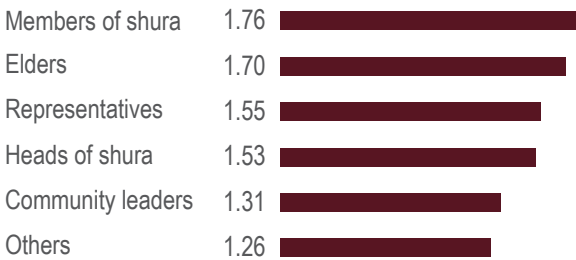
The highest reliability rate in KI responses was found among members of the Shura (1.76 out of 3), community elders (1.70) and community representatives (1.55).

Findings also revealed that displaced KIs were typically more accurate than host KIs.

### Reliability of displaced / host KIs (ranging from 0-3):



### Reliability of KIs according to their function (ranging from 0-3):

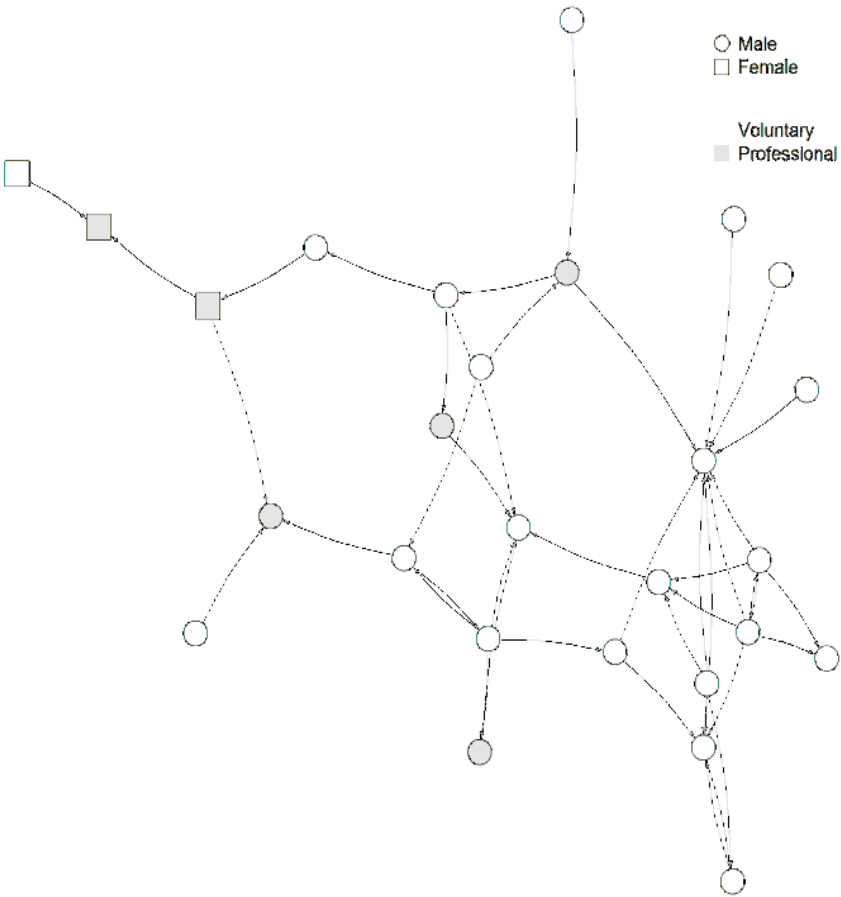


### WASH specific KIs:

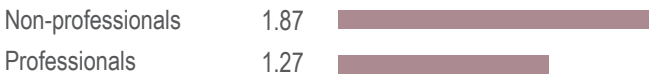
Finally, specific analysis on the knowledgeable of community members and WASH professionals, regarding WASH services.

These findings were based on the responses of 6 professional WASH KIs and 29 non-professional KIs. Interestingly, non-professional KIs provided more reliable results, as indicated in the figure to the right.

### Sectoral social network map: Interactions between WASH knowledgeable KIs:



### Reliability of professionals / others for WASH services (ranging from 0-3):





## About the global programme

This area-based city profile has been developed in the framework of a programme led by IMPACT and ACTED and supported by BPRM which aims at developing a new methodology for area-based approach to data collection in out-of-camp displacement contexts. Recent displacement trends show that up to 60% of refugees and other displaced groups do not reside in camps or designated areas, but within host communities and increasingly in urban areas or informal settlements.

As recognized by UNHCR, out-of-camp responses require: “planning on the basis of data, information and analysis [...] supported by effective information management systems and the better use of available macro-economic and community-level data”<sup>3</sup>. In order to achieve this, it is essential to establish clear communication channels with refugee and host communities to understand local dynamics, vulnerabilities and capacities and inform aid planning in a given area.

In the course of the programme, IMPACT will develop and field-test a toolbox on collecting information about displaced populations and host communities in a given area using Key Informants. By developing a framework for Key Informant area-based data collection, the toolbox will contribute to the broader body of knowledge on area-based coordination and responses by humanitarian actors. The toolbox will enable aid actors to collect consistent and relevant information on host and refugee communities in a specific area, for more efficient planning and delivery of aid. Throughout the course of 2018, once the methodology has been refined through the field pilots and the toolbox finalised, regional trainings and presentations will be held to share this new approach with aid actors.

Kabul in Afghanistan has been the fifth location where the methodology has been piloted. In order to share lessons learned and practices from the field pilot, close collaboration with relevant partners has been set up at the Kabul level, comprising members from BPRM, UNHCR and ACTED as well as other partners in discussions on findings and outputs. These partners have been imperative to the understanding of results and relevance of findings for ISET focused programming within the country, and feedback from these partners has been used to inform inputs and have been incorporated into the methodology.

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<sup>3</sup> UNHCR “Policy on alternative to camps”, 2014