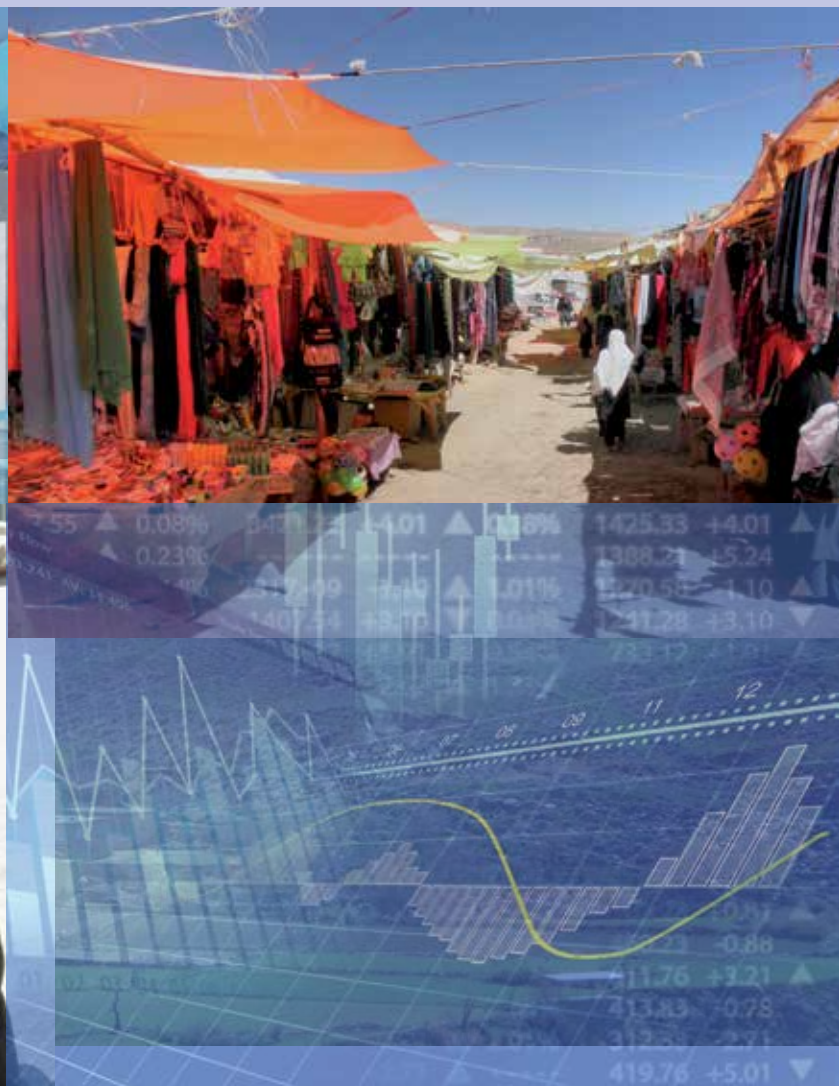






# NATIONAL RISK AND VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT 2011 - 2012

(Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey)



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# FOREWORD

The National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA), which is called Afghanistan Living Condition Survey (ALCS) by then is providing data about the country for almost 10 years. This publication is now the fourth release after the surveys of 2003, 2005 and 2007-08 by financial supporting of European Commission.

This new round of the survey has brought some more innovations and more details compared to the previous surveys. The questionnaire is now designed in modules that will be 'rotating' from round to round to cover all the needs for data to capture the living conditions of the nation.

This survey is still the only nation-wide survey available in Afghanistan and is therefore of utmost importance for the country, its policy makers and all the Organization investing in the future of the country. It is also capturing seasonal variations to make it more accurate to the various realities that the population face throughout the year, especially in terms of labour, poverty and food security.

As the principal agency responsible for the production of national statistics, the Central Statistics Organization is proud to deliver key indicators and statistics at national and provincial level for a broad array of development sectors, including population, poverty, food security, labour market, agriculture, health, education and housing.

The life of the survey is still on-going as a new round has just been launched as we published this report and I hope to be able to address you again in about 18 months to present you with the latest changes in the living conditions of the people of Afghanistan.

I sincerely hope you will enjoy reading this publication, find all the information you expect and use it fruitfully.

**Associate Prof. Hasibullah Mowahed,  
Acting President General  
Central Statistics Organization of Afghanistan  
Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan**

# KEY INDICATORS

INDICATOR	ANDS no.	MDG no.	Sub-groups <sup>a</sup>	National
<b>Demography</b>				
Percentage of population under 15			U 42.0; R 50.1; K 53.0	48.4
Percentage of population 65 and over			U 3.3; R 2.2; K 2.3	2.5
Sex ratio			U 105; R 106; K 110	106
Dependency ratio			U 83; R 110; K 124	104
Child dependency ratio			U 77; R 105; K 119	99
Aged dependency ratio			U 6; R 5; K 5	5
Average household size			U 7.5; R 7.4; K 7.3	7.4
Percentage of women in polygamous marriage				7.6
Percentage of married women aged 15-19 whose husband is 10 or more years older				7.9
Percentage of married women aged 20-24 whose husband is 10 or more years older				10.6
Under-five Mortality Rate	8.a	4.1	U 72; R 96 M 89; F 92	91
Infant Mortality Rate	8.b	4.2	U (34); R (54) M (49); F (46)	(48)
<b>Labour force (national definition)</b>				
Labour force participation rate			M 80.0; F 18.5 U 43.1; R 51.3; K 64.4	49.8
Employment-to-population ratio		1.5	M 74.5; F 15.5 U 39.2; R 47.1; K 61.0	45.7
Percentage not-gainfully employed population			M 21.8; F 39.3 U 17.6; R 26.9; K 28.7	25.0
Under-employment rate			M 15.4; F 22.8 U 8.6; R 18.7; K 23.3	16.8
Unemployment rate			M 6.4; F 16.5 U 9.0; R 8.2; K 5.4	8.2
Youth unemployment rate	17.a		M 8.1; F 18.8 U 13.6; R 9.9; K 4.4	10.4
Youth unemployment as percentage of total unemployment			M 38.1; F 40.8 U 46.3; R 37.4; K 24.9	39.1
Proportion of own-account and contributing family workers in total employment		1.7	M 79.3; F 87.0 U 59.3; R 85.6; K 95.7	80.5
<b>Agriculture and livestock</b>				
Percentage of households owning irrigated land				37.9
Percentage of households owning rain-fed land				16.8
Percentage of households owning a garden plot				12.6
Mean size of owned irrigated land (in jeribs <sup>b</sup> )				6.0
Mean size of owned rain-fed land (in jeribs <sup>b</sup> )				16.4
Mean size of owned garden plot (in jeribs <sup>b</sup> )				2.0
Median size of owned irrigated land (in jeribs <sup>b</sup> )				3.0
Median size of owned rain-fed land (in jeribs <sup>b</sup> )				7.0
Median size of owned garden plot (in jeribs <sup>b</sup> )				1.0
Number of cattle (in thousands)				3,715
Number of goats (in thousands)				7,281
Number of sheep (in thousands)				8,772
Number of chickens (in thousands)				12,156

<sup>a</sup>Urban, R: rural, K: Kuchi, M: male, F: female

<sup>b</sup>One jerib is 0.2 hectare (2,000 m<sup>2</sup>)

( ) Indicators between brackets are considered less reliable and are indicative only.

INDICATOR	ANDS no.	MDG no.	Sub-groups <sup>a</sup>	National
<b>Poverty</b>				
Poverty headcount	1.a (alt)		U 28.9; R 37.7; 53.8	36.5
Poverty gap	1.b	1.2	U 5.8; R 9.2; K 13.3	8.6
Squared poverty gap			U 1.8; R 3.2; K 4.7	3.0
Gini Index			U 29.2; R 28.1; K 22.3	31.6
Share of poorest quintile in national consumption	1.c	1.3		8.5
<b>Food security</b>				
Percentage of population with calorie deficiency	2.b	1.9	U 34.4; R 29.1; K 25.6	30.1
Percentage of population with protein deficiency			U 21.3; R 19.1; K 15.3	19.4
Percentage of population with calorie and protein deficiency			U 20.3; R 18.2; K 14.5	18.5
<b>Education</b>				
Adult literacy rate (15 years of age and over)			M 45.4; F 17.0 U 53.5; R 25.0; K 7.2	31.4
Youth literacy rate (15-24 years of age)	3.c	2.3	M 61.9; F 32.1 U 71.4; R 39.1; K 9.7	47.0
Net attendance ratio in primary education	3.a	2.1	M 64.4; F 48.3 U 77.9; R 53.8; K 19.4	56.8
Net attendance ratio in secondary education			M 42.0; F 23.2 U 54.3; R 26.3; K ...	32.7
Net attendance ratio in tertiary education			M 8.1; F 2.7 U 13.1; R 2.4	5.4
Gross attendance ratio in primary education	3.a (alt)		M 82.8; F 60.9 U 99.1; R 68.7; K 24.9	72.4
Gross attendance ratio in secondary education			M 55.3; F 29.0 U 69.5; R 34.3; K 6.0	42.3
Gross attendance ratio in tertiary education			M 9.1; F 3.8 U 15.3; R 3.1	6.5
Percentage of households within two kilometres distance from boys' primary education facilities			U 95.1; R 43.8; K 29.3	53.9
Percentage of households within two kilometres distance from girls' primary education facilities			U 96.5; R 36.4; K 26.8	48.1
<b>Gender equality</b>				
Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector		3.2		11.1
Literacy gender parity index, age 15 and over			U 0.55; R 0.27	0.37
Literacy gender parity index, age 15-24	4.d	(10)	U 0.73; R 0.40; K 0.09	0.52
Ratio of girls to boys in primary education	4.a	3.1	U 0.90; R 0.68; K 0.54	0.74
Ratio of girls to boys in secondary education	4.b	3.1	U 0.74; R 0.38	0.53
Ratio of girls to boys in tertiary education	4.c	3.1	U 0.65; R 0.17	0.42
<b>Health</b>				
Percentage under-fives with vitamin-A supplementation			U 75.8; R 56.4; K 50.5	59.8
Percentage under-fives with birth certificate			U 63.8; R 29.5; K 16.3	35.2
Women with at least two TT injections			U 42.8; R 34.6; K 13.1	34.9
Antenatal care coverage (at least one visit)	9.d	5.5	U 78.4; R 46.3; K 23.2	51.2
Antenatal care coverage (at least four visits)		5.5	U 20.8; R 7.7; K 3.5	9.9
Percentage of births attended by skilled health personnel	9.b	5.2	U 75.5; R 32.6; K 13.4	39.9
Percentage of deliveries in institutional facilities			U 69.5; R 28.8; K 13.2	35.8

INDICATOR	ANDS no.	MDG no.	Sub-groups <sup>a</sup>	National
<b>Housing</b>				
Percentage of households living in communities with distance to nearest drivable road of 2 or less kilometres			U 100.0; R 75.2; K 60.4	80.0
Mean number of persons per room			U 3.0; R 3.1; K 4.8	3.2
Percentage of households living in overcrowded dwellings			U 33.6; R 35.5; K 69.9	37.0
Percentage of urban population living in slums	14.a (alt)	7.10		86.6
Percentage of population using improved drinking water sources	13.a	7.8	U 70.9; R 39.4; K 21.0	45.5
Percentage of population using an improved sanitation facility	13.b	7.9	U 29.1; R 2.4; K 0.0	8.3
Percentage of households with access to any source of electricity in the last month			U 95.0; R 63.8; K 30.3	69.1
Percentage of population using solid fuels	12.e	(29)	U 32.5; R 93.4; K 99.8	79.9
Mobile cellular subscriptions per 100 inhabitants	19.a	8.15	U 27.1; R 10.6; K 6.3	14.1
Internet users per 100 population	19.b	8.16	U 1.6; R 0.2; K 0.0 M 0.8; F 0.2	0.5



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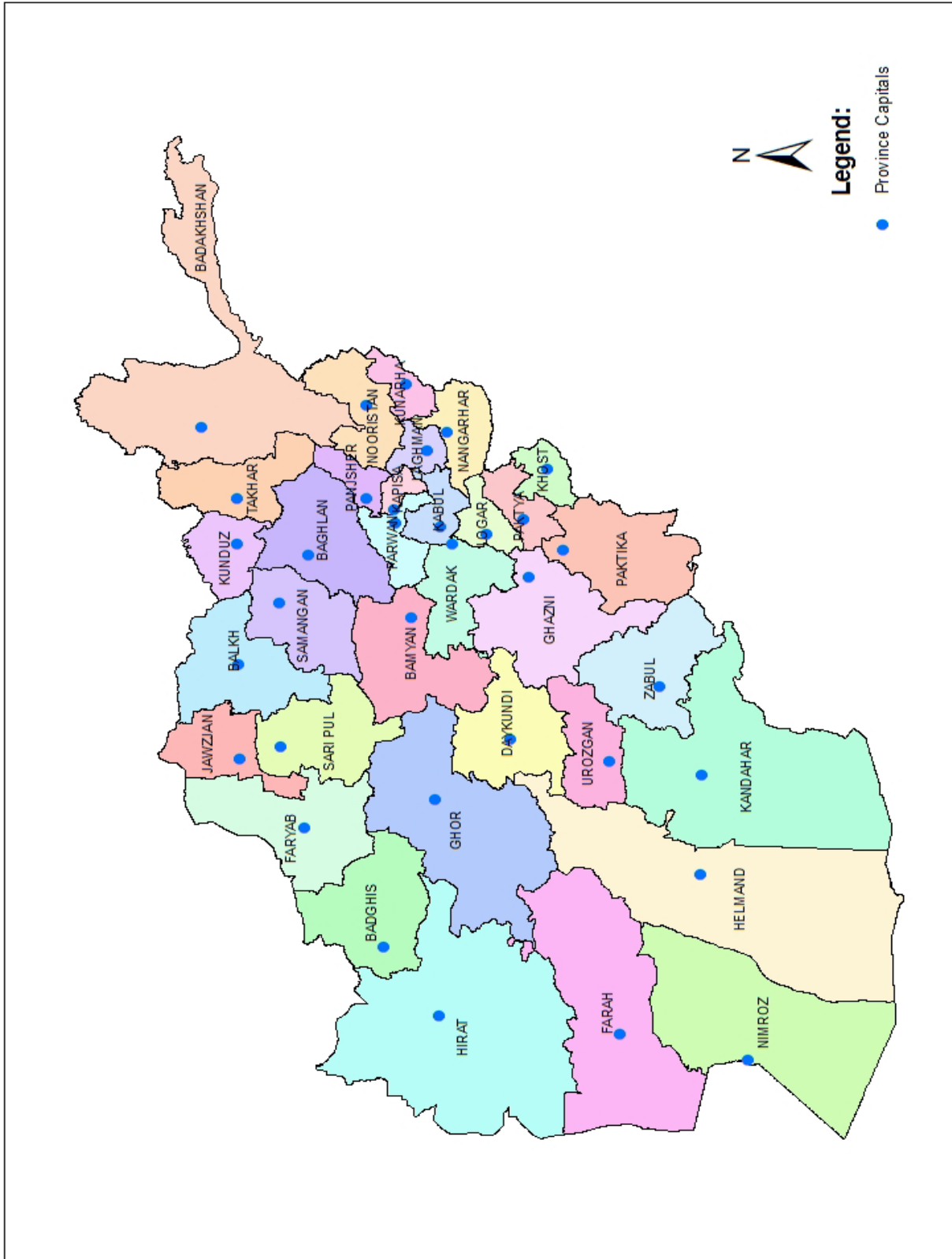
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# ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	-	Asian Development Bank
AHS	-	Afghanistan Health Survey
ANC	-	Ante-Natal Care
ANDS	-	Afghanistan National Development Strategy
ANSP	-	Afghanistan National Statistical Plan
ARI	-	Acute Respiratory Illness
BPHS	-	Basic Package of Health Services
CA	-	Consumption Aggregate
CBN	-	Cost of Basic Needs
CDC	-	Community Development Council
CI	-	Confidence Interval
CSO	-	Central Statistics Organization
DfID	-	UK Department for International Development
DPS	-	District Price Survey
EA	-	Enumeration Area
FAO	-	Food and Agriculture Organization
FCS	-	Food Consumption Score
GAR	-	Gross Attendance Ratio
GDP	-	Gross Domestic Product
GIZ	-	German Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GoA	-	Government of Afghanistan
ICSE	-	International Classification of Status in Employment
ILO	-	International Labour Organization
IMR	-	Infant Mortality Rate
ISCED	-	International Standard Classification of Education
Kcal	-	Kilocalorie
MAIL	-	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock
MDG	-	Millennium Development Goal
MICS	-	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MMR	-	Maternal Mortality Ratio
MoE	-	Ministry of Education
MoEc	-	Ministry of Economy
MoF	-	Ministry of Finance
MoEW	-	Ministry of Energy and Water
MoLSAMD	-	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled
MoUA	-	Ministry of Urban Affairs
MoWA	-	Ministry of Women Affairs
NAR	-	Net Attendance Rate
NMAK	-	National Multi-sectoral Assessment of Kuchi
MRRD	-	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
MoUD	-	Ministry of Urban Development
NRVA	-	National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment
NSP	-	National Solidarity Programme
PPS	-	Probability Proportional to Size
PSO	-	Provincial Statistical Officer
PSU	-	Primary Sampling Unit
REFSA	-	Rapid Emergency Food Security Assessment
RSO	-	Regional Statistical Officer
SBA	-	Skilled Birth Attendance
SC	-	Steering Committee
TBA	-	Traditional Birth Attendants
TFR	-	Total Fertility Rate
TAC	-	Technical Advisory Committee
U5MR	-	Under-five Mortality Rate
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	-	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNFPA	-	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNICEF	-	United Nations Children's Fund
UNU	-	Ultimate Sampling Unit
TT	-	Tetanus Toxoid
WB	-	World Bank
WFP	-	World Food Programme

# MAP OF AFGHANISTAN



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**Mohamed Sami Nabi**  
**Director of Field Operation Department**  
**Central Statistical Organization**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2011-12 National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) is a survey, which provides national and international stakeholders with information that is required for monitoring development progress and formulate development policies and programmes. The survey was conducted by the Central Statistics Organization (CSO) of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and provides results that are representative at national and provincial level. It covered 20,828 households and 159,224 persons across the country, and is unique in the sense that it also includes the nomadic Kuchi population of Afghanistan. Building on previous survey rounds in 2003, 2005 and 2007-08, it has grown into Afghanistan's most comprehensive source of statistical information. The survey covers a wide range of development themes and indicators, which were agreed upon by government departments, donors and international Organizations.

The picture that emerges from the NRVA 2011-12 is one of significant improvements in various areas of development, especially in education, health and access to safe drinking water. In other areas – such as food security and poverty – results indicate stagnation or even deterioration. Despite observed improvements in many areas, the living conditions of Afghanistan's population as measured by any development indicator are among the worst in the world. Moreover, the national figures conceal dramatic differences within the population. With only very few exceptions, the situation in urban areas is much better than that in rural areas and among the Kuchi population. And invariably, gender-specific indicators show that men and boys are far less disadvantaged than women and girls.

The remainder of this summary recapitulates the main findings of the thematic chapters of this report. An in-depth analysis of the interaction between development indicators – and more specifically the apparent nexus between poverty, food insecurity, poor labour market performance, low levels of education, high fertility and mortality, and limited access to services – is beyond the scope of this report and will require additional efforts.

### Population

The population share of children under 15 of 48 percent is among the highest in the world. Afghanistan's very young age structure produces a situation in which a relatively small number of persons in the economically most productive age group 15-64 has to provide for a very large number of people in the dependent ages below 15. This implies a heavy burden for the working population, especially given the poor labour market opportunities in Afghanistan. The fact that the labour market to a large extent excludes women further aggravates this burden for the working population. The high fertility level underlying the young population composition also implies high risks for maternal and child mortality, especially in view of the poor access to health services in the country. In addition, the ever-increasing numbers of children and young adults exceed the absorption capacity of the education system and the labour market.

The Under-five Mortality Rate (U5MR) of 91 deaths per thousand live births confirms a robust downward trend in the percentage of children dying before reaching age 5. It suggests that in the four years since NRVA 2007-08 (with an U5MR of 161) out of one thousand newborn children 70 more survive to age 5.

Besides fertility and mortality, migration is a very important component in population change in Afghanistan. The migration context of the country is particularly complex and is, among others, related to job opportunities, security, (nomadic) lifestyle, gender roles and policies toward Afghans in neighbouring countries. This results in an intricate interaction of gender, age, distance and reasons for migration. Around 16 percent of the population in Afghanistan is born in a district that is different from the district of current residence; 6 percent is born in another province and 3 percent in another country. The corresponding percentages of the urban population born elsewhere are significantly higher, respectively 36, 18 and 4 percent. Kabul is the biggest magnet of attraction by far, and for both internal and international migrants: out of 4.2 million inhabitants, some 360 thousand people were born abroad and 1.9 million elsewhere in Afghanistan. Immigration is dominated by persons arriving from Pakistan (67 percent) and Iran (32 percent). For emigrants Iran is by far the most important destination (76 percent), with smaller numbers going to Pakistan (13 percent) and the Gulf states (8 percent) alongside other countries.

Marriage remains almost universal in Afghanistan and is characterized by early marriage for women. However, the share of marriages below age 18 is consistently dropping for each successive birth cohort in the last decade: whereas 60 percent of women 30 and over were married at age 18, for women aged 20-25 this decreased to 50 percent. Similarly, the age difference between husband and wife has decreased from a mean difference of 7 years for women aged 40 and over to 4 years for women under 20. Both trends could be interpreted as a strengthening of the position of women within marriage.

## Labour force characteristics

Two factors dominate the Organization of Afghanistan's labour market: the importance of the agricultural sector – farming and livestock – and the underrepresentation of women. Afghanistan's labour force – all persons in the working age of 14 and over who are currently active by being either employed or unemployed – shows a large gender disparity. Out of the labour force of 7.2 million persons, only 1.3 million are women. These numbers underlie the vastly different labour force participation rates for men and women – 80 and 19 percent respectively – and indicate the difficulty for women to economically add to the position of their households, as well as to the economy at large. The share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector – the labour force MDG indicator for gender equality – is only 11 percent. The finding that high participation rates are found for boys 14 and over, as well as for elderly men 65 and over, indicate the dire need for many to contribute to the household income.

In the context of Afghanistan – characterized by low-paid, low-productivity employment and the absence of pensions and unemployment insurance – international definitions of employment and unemployment are largely irrelevant as indicators of labour market performance. Therefore, the country has adopted national definitions that are better attuned to the Afghanistan reality. In this national conceptualisation, the labour-market indicator that is considered to have most policy relevance is the percentage of the labour force that is not gainfully employed. This not-gainfully employed population includes the category of underemployed – persons who need more or other employment in order to provide for sufficient and sustainable income or livelihood – besides the unemployed.

The share of the labour force that belongs to the not-gainfully employed is 25 percent, indicating that the labour market is short of 1.8 million jobs to provide people with an adequate living. Some 17 percent of these are considered underemployed and the remaining 8 percent are unemployed. The figures for the not-gainfully employed differ sharply by residence: whereas 18 percent of the urban labour force cannot find adequate work, the figure is as high as 29 percent for the rural labour force. The corresponding figures for men and women are, respectively 22 and 39 percent, indicating that almost two in five women who want to work cannot find adequate employment. The share of not-gainfully employed youth aged 15-24 (26 percent) is similar to the share of the total labour force, but the component of youth unemployment is somewhat higher (10 against 8 percent).

The share of the working population that is in vulnerable employment – own-account workers, day labourers and unpaid family workers – is 81 percent, 79 percent for men and 87 for women. The sector that absorbed the largest share of the employed (40 percent) is agriculture. Compared to men, female work is much more concentrated in just a few sectors, particularly in livestock tending and food processing. Also in terms of working hours large gender differences are observed: on average men work 45 hours a week and women 30.

## Agriculture and livestock

Farming – and more particularly farming irrigated land – is the economic backbone of Afghan society: some 40 percent of the labour force is engaged in farming. Around 38 percent of all households own any irrigated farm land and the corresponding figures for households owning rain-fed land and garden plots are, respectively, 17 and 13 percent.

Households owning irrigated land on average own 6 jeribs, with more than half (57 percent) owning an area of 3 jeribs or less. Those owning rain-fed land on average own 16 jeribs, with around half (51 percent) owning 7 jeribs or less. Cereals – especially wheat, the principal staple food in Afghanistan – are the main farm produce from both farmland types. Around 80 percent of wheat is produced on irrigated land. NRVA results suggest a spring cultivation production of 2.4 million tonnes of wheat in 2011 and 2.8 million tonnes in 2012, which would indicate a serious shortfall of the wheat requirements of around 5 million tonnes. Garden plots are on average 2.0 jeribs and for 53 percent of plot-owning households one jerib or less. They represent an important supplementation of households' diet and income, as they provide high-value and nutrition-rich produce, in particular fruits and nuts.

Among the main challenges for a productive agricultural sector are water shortage and infertility of farmland. Some 20 percent of the estimated 17 thousand km<sup>2</sup> of irrigated farmland is left fallow, primarily because of lack of water (71 percent) and land infertility (21 percent). For rain-fed land (18 thousand km<sup>2</sup>) the share that is not cultivated is even 37 percent, mainly because of lack of rain (53 percent) and land infertility (18 percent).

The national stock of cattle seems to have dropped since the Livestock census of 2002-03. The NRVA 2011-12 estimates the number at 2.9 million, compared to 3.7 million at the time of the census. On the other hand, the herds of



small ruminants show significant increases. The number of sheep and goats are estimated at, respectively, 10 and 18 million, compared to 7 and 9 million in the census. The share of households that own one or more cattle, goats, sheep and chickens is, respectively, 39, 29, 31 and 44 percent. Besides providing households with a range of dairy and animal products, market sales of animals or livestock products are an important income source for these households.

With regard to livestock production factors, NRVA 2011-12 shows a relatively good vaccination coverage (between 72 and 91 percent for different types of livestock), but relatively low access to feed concentrate (53 percent). Livestock owners significantly (67 percent) rely on private service providers for veterinary services.

### Poverty incidence, trend and profiling

NRVA 2011-12 indicates that 36.5 percent of the Afghan population has a consumption pattern that is below the poverty line. The indicators that measure the depth and severity of poverty (the poverty gap and the squared poverty gap) have values of 8.6 and 3.0, respectively. These figures imply that at national level no poverty change is observed in Afghanistan since the NRVA 2007-08, although at regional level some changes are evident. The stable poverty figures also imply that, due to rapid population growth, in terms of absolute numbers the volume of poor people has increased.

Survey results also show that inequality over time has grown, with consumption of the richer quintile growing much faster than that of the poorest two quintiles. Consequently, the Gini Index increased from 29.7 to 31.6 between the latest two NRVA surveys and the share of the poorest quintile in national consumption declined from 9.1 to 8.5 percent.

The national poverty figures hide significant differentiation across regions and residence. Thus – and similar to 2007-08 – the urban poverty headcount is 28.9 percent, compared to 37.7 percent for rural residents and 53.8 percent for the Kuchi population. Similarly, a large gap exists between the region with the lowest share of population living under the poverty line (Southwest, 28.0 percent) and that with the highest (Northeast, 50.9 percent).

Correlates of poverty include household size and the dependency ratio, an indication that high fertility is positively associated with poverty. The NRVA also suggests that literacy and education of the household head are inversely related to poverty and that households headed by women are worse off than male-headed households. It furthermore suggests that underemployment is even more important than unemployment to make households vulnerable to poverty, thereby confirming the need to focus in labour market policy on not-gainfully employment instead of only unemployment.

### Food security

NRVA 2011-12 analysis indicates that around 30.1 percent of Afghanistan's population – 7.6 million people – had a calorie intake that is insufficient to sustain a healthy and active life. This figure implies that food insecurity has slightly worsened compared to the NRVA 2007-08 when the food-insecure represented 28.2 percent. Out of the total number of the food-insecure, 2.2 million (8.5 percent) are very severely food-insecure and 2.4 million (9.5 percent) severely food-insecure. In addition, 19.4 percent of the population – 4.9 million people – have insufficient protein consumption, a deficiency that particularly affects the nutrition of children under five.

Food-security varies by residence, household characteristics, season and geographical region. Some 34.4 percent of the urban population is food-insecure, compared to 29.1 percent of the rural population and 25.6 percent of the Kuchi population. However, in terms of absolute numbers there are more food-insecure people in rural areas (5.2 million, excluding the 5 percent Kuchi population). Households with larger household size, higher ages of the household head and with a widowed or divorced household head are more likely to be food insecure. Relatively many more food-insecure people live in the North-eastern, Central and Central Highlands regions.

In a largely agricultural society like Afghanistan the annual cultivation cycle produces significant variation in food security across seasons. Although locally harvest and lean seasons vary considerably due to the geographic diversity of the country, a clear pattern is observed in the sense that winter and spring time tend to be dire seasons and food security increases in summer and autumn. The variation across seasons in urban areas is less pronounced because here more households rely on market purchases rather than own production of food.

When coping with household shocks, the majority of households use short-term strategies including decreasing food expenditure and reducing food quality. Around one-third of the households reduces food quantity or purchase food on trader credit.

## Education

All education-related indicators for Afghanistan – including gender equality indicators – show improvement since NRVA 2007-08, even though at the same time it is observed that the pace of improvement has slowed down. Despite major achievements in the last decade, education performance in Afghanistan is still among the poorest in the world, and the current rate of improvement will fail to achieve the ANDS targets by 2020.

The share of the Afghan population 25 years and over who have completed any level of formal education is very small – less than 25 percent, and for women as few as 10 percent. However, major improvements in primary and secondary school completion are observed for the younger age group 15-24 years, especially for girls. This is the result of increasing school attendance in the past decade. The net primary attendance ratios for girls and boys are now 48 and 64 percent respectively, up from 29 and 43 percent in 2005, and 42 and 60 percent in 2007-08. The downside of these figures is that still some 1.2 million girls and over 900 thousand boys are missing out on the opportunity to learn basic life skills. Net secondary attendance ratios are 23 and 42 for girls and boys respectively, up from 10 and 22 percent in 2007-08.

Opportunities to attend education are few, especially for girls and women, and rural and Kuchi populations in general, even though the gender gap in education and literacy show continuous improvement, in both absolute and relative terms. Thus, the ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education are 0.74, 0.53 and 0.42 respectively, compared to 0.69, 0.49 and 0.28 in 2007-08. For girls, cultural barriers are dominant among the reasons for not attending school; for boys the main reason is the need to contribute to family income. The importance of these reasons increases with age. Insecurity and distance to schools are important reasons for non-attendance in rural areas. No more than around two in five rural households live within two kilometres of a primary school. Overall net primary school attendance in rural areas is 54 percent, while in urban areas it is 78 percent.

With regard to literacy, similar patterns and changes are recorded as for school attendance. The adult literacy rate is 45 percent for men and a low 17 percent for women. The improvements in literacy between 2005 and 2011-12 are particularly observed in the youth literacy rate, which increased from 20 to 32 percent for females aged 15-24 and from 40 to 62 percent for male youth. Consequently, the gender parity index for youth literacy has improved from 0.45 in 2007-08 to 0.52 in 2011-12. Again, the population in rural areas is at a severe disadvantage: the youth literacy rate there is only 39 percent, compared to 71 percent in urban areas.

## Health

Although Afghanistan's health indicators are poor in an international perspective and cultural barriers impede progress for many components of maternal and child health, significant improvement is evident from successive surveys in the ten years preceding NRVA 2011-12.

Perhaps the most consistent and impressive improvements are observed for maternal health indicators. The proportion of women served by skilled birth attendants has increased to 40 percent, compared to 24 percent in 2007-08 and only 16 in 2005. Similar improvements are found for provision of skilled ante-natal care – to 52 percent, compared to 36 percent in 2007-08 and 23 percent in 2005 – and deliveries in institutional health facilities – 36 percent, compared to 15 percent in 2007-08.

Improvements in the areas of child health seem more modest as far as indicators were measured by NRVA 2011-12. Full protection against neonatal tetanus through at least two TT injections was received by 35 percent of women during their last pregnancy, which is only a small difference with the figure for 2007-08 (33 percent). Supplementation of Vitamin A even seems to have declined in the past four years. The proportion of children officially registered at birth is still only 35 percent.

One of the main concerns with respect to Afghanistan's health system performance is the very unequal health care provision between urban and rural populations. Invariably, for the majority of Afghanistan's rural population service delivery and health outcome indicators are significantly lower than for urban dwellers. And the situation is generally even far worse for the nomadic Kuchi population. Thus, in urban areas the percentage of deliveries assisted by skilled health personnel is 76 percent, while that in rural areas is only 33 percent and for Kuchi women even only 13 percent.

In terms of time required to reach the nearest health facility, access to these facilities has improved significantly with the implementation of outreach programmes of the Ministry of Public Health and the distribution of private health facilities



across the country. However, cultural responsiveness of the health sector – for instance in terms of provision of female health care providers – remains an important obstacle for the effective use of health care, especially by women. In addition, costs for health services and treatment are prohibitive for many households, in particular for poor households.

## Housing and household amenities

The housing conditions of the Afghan population can be defined as poor, with large differences between urban and rural communities. However, several indicators show marked improvements.

Overall, 46 and 8 percent of the population use improved drinking water sources and improved sanitation facilities respectively. The figure for safe drinking water is a significant improvement compared to NRVA 2007-08, when it was only 27 percent. The situation improved in rural areas in particular, where the percentage using improved sources increased from 20 (2007-08) to 39. The situation with regard to sanitation improved slightly, but continues to be poor, with only 8 percent of the population having access to improved sanitation. The still widespread lack of basic infrastructure for water and sanitation implies high risks of potentially fatal diseases, and is especially detrimental for the health and survival chances of infants and young children.

Health conditions in the household are further impaired by the use of solid fuels for cooking (80 percent) and heating (97 percent). The lack of electricity is becoming less of an impediment for the effective spread of information to the general public through mass media, like radio, TV and the internet, as 69 percent of households had access to some source of electricity in the month preceding the survey, compared to 42 percent in 2007-08, and only 23 percent in 2005. However, use of the internet is still virtually non-existent among the population (only 0.5 percent of Afghans use the internet), while mobile phones are used by only 14 percent of the population (up from 6 percent in 2007-08).

Physical access to rural communities is often problematic, as around 14 percent of households there live in villages located more than 6 kilometres from the nearest drivable road. Only 14 percent of Afghans – 45 percent in urban areas and 5 percent in rural areas – live in a dwelling that can be considered durable. Some 37 percent live in an overcrowded dwelling, and – taking water and sanitation conditions into account – 87 percent of urban dwellers (5.3 million people) live in slum-like conditions of poverty and physical and environmental deprivation.

## Challenges and strategies

Afghanistan is a country with a high-risk profile, due to a combination of climatic and natural circumstances and being a historically grown hotbed of social and political conflict and economic vulnerability. Consequently, household and community assessments depict challenging and uncertain living conditions for a large majority of the population in Afghanistan. No less than 84 percent of households reported for the year preceding the survey experiencing one or more household shocks – risk events with negative outcomes that are outside people's direct control. Many shocks are related to food and farm prices (reported by 61 percent of households), drinking water supply (47 percent), agricultural problems (37 percent) and natural disasters (36 percent), most of which are related to the combination of a largely agricultural society, harsh climatic conditions and underdeveloped farming and veterinary support.

As the main priority both households and Shuras stress the need for further improvement of a safe drinking water supply. In addition, improvement of road, irrigation, electricity, health and education infrastructure are high on the Afghan wish list.

In terms of coping strategies, many households have resorted to food intake reduction (42 percent of households that experienced a household shock) or other detrimental coping strategies like sale of production means or removing children from school and placing them in low-paid jobs. Decreasing household expenditure (52 percent) and taking out loans or buying on credit (39 percent) are other strategies frequently applied by households experiencing such a shock. The NRVA survey indicates that 55 percent of Afghan households are in debt, to an average amount of 77 thousand Afs. The survey also suggests that various food-for-work, cash-for-work or income-generating programmes employed more than 420 thousand people and benefited 320 thousand households.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

After decades of war and political instability, Afghanistan remains one of the poorest countries in the world. In 2011 Afghanistan ranked 172nd out of 187 countries in the UNDP Human Development Index, a summary measure that is based on development dimensions of health, education and living standards (UNDP 2011). This poor ranking represents the challenges faced by large parts of the country's population, but at the same time hides significant improvements in different sectors in the period since 2001.

In order to address the information needs of the Government of Afghanistan and other parties to inform and prioritise development policies and programmes, the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) and the Central Statistics Organization (CSO) started to conduct the National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA). Building on two survey rounds in 2003 and 2005, the NRVA has developed into a full-blown multi-purpose survey under the sole responsibility of CSO. It now captures a wide variety of development indicators in such areas as poverty, food security, labour market performance, demography, education, health, gender equality, housing and agriculture.

As such, the NRVA is the major single source of socio-economic statistics of the country. The survey is unique in the sense that – with inclusion of the nomadic Kuchi – it represents the entire population of Afghanistan, and that – since the NRVA 2007-08 survey – year-round data are collected in order to capture the seasonality of indicators like employment, food security and poverty. In order to underline the comprehensiveness of the NRVA, from the next (2013-14) survey round onwards the survey will be labelled ALCS – Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey.

This report presents the results of the latest NRVA that was conducted in 2011-2012. The primary aim is to provide the latest information about the living conditions of Afghanistan's population and about the performance of, among others, the agricultural sector, the labour market and the education and health systems. The information presented includes 22 indicators to monitor the implementation of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) and 20 Millennium Development Goals (MDG) indicators. The main focus in this report is on information at national level, frequently disaggregated for residential populations (urban, rural and Kuchi). Provincial-level information is largely outside the scope of the present report, although Annex 10 provides tables for selected indicators and statistics at provincial level. The information provided in this report is also largely descriptive in nature; cross-sectoral and more in-depth analyses – especially those aiming at cause-and-effect relationships – will require additional efforts and reporting.

Chapter 2 describes the main methodological characteristics of the NRVA 2011-12, including brief descriptions of the sampling design, survey questionnaires, data collection and processing, data limitations, and comparison with the previous NRVA surveys. Several annexes provide further elaborations and technical details of the methodology.

Subsequent chapters cover the subject-matter of the survey. Population structure and change are addressed first in chapter 3, as these factors permeate into every development aspect of the remaining report sections. Afghanistan's population composition by age and sex is analysed, as well as some of the underlying demographic dynamics. In addition, household and marriage patterns are examined.

Chapter 4 provides an analysis of the structure of Afghanistan's labour market and covers various labour force indicators, including employment, underemployment, unemployment, working hours, vulnerable employment, and differentiation by age and sex.

Agriculture, including farming and livestock production, is the subject of chapter 5. The chapter analyses the agricultural sector with a view on access to land, land area size, farm and garden production, type and number of livestock, and sale of animals and animal products, as well as relevant production factors in this sector.

The key chapters 6 and 7 present the results of, respectively, poverty and food-security analyses. Both chapters engage in a first attempt to profiling the poor and the food insecure population in Afghanistan, and compare the results with those from NRVA 2007-08.

The twin chapters 8 and 9 are dedicated to the social sectors of education and health, and to the changes occurring in these sectors. The former analyses literacy rates, school attendance and educational attainment, whereas the latter's main focus is on out-of-pocket health expenditure and maternal health, besides some indicators for access to health facilities and child health.

The housing situation is described in Chapter 10, with a view on tenancy arrangements, physical characteristics of the dwelling and housing facilities, like electricity, drinking water and sanitation. Household shocks and coping strategies, as well as community preferences for interventions are outlined and analysed in chapter 11.

The last annex to this report provides a comprehensive list of concepts and definitions that may guide the reader in a deeper understanding of the presented materials.