



## A 2025 Webinar Series on Climate Action in Afghanistan

### Session 4: Climate Change, Livelihoods, and Displacement - 25 November 2025

#### Five Key Takeaways

1. Agriculture-based livelihoods, which sustain around 80% of all Afghans, are under severe strain from accelerating climate shocks including droughts, floods, extreme temperatures, and expanding plant and animal diseases.
2. Environmental hazards driven by climate change are now a major driver of both temporary and long-term displacement and migration, intersecting with existing migration pressures, large scale returns, and deepening urbanization and urban vulnerability.
3. Climate shocks are eroding the foundations of durable solutions by undermining livelihoods, housing, and health, especially for the 5.5 million Afghan returnees since 15 September 2024 already facing extreme economic precarity.
4. Resilience efforts must be tailored to meet individuals and households where they are, prioritized to where programming can make a difference, and scaled for the most critical interventions.
5. Technical ministries have developed strategic plans, such as the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock's Agriculture and Livestock Development Plan which prioritizes areas including agricultural infrastructure, mechanization, and value chains, efficient irrigation, and natural resource management.

#### Opening Remarks

Sarah Klonski, Agriculture, Climate Change, and Rural Development Project Officer, EU Delegation opened by highlighting that drought, natural hazards, and water depletion driven by climate change are threatening livelihoods and food security in Afghanistan and increasingly driving displacement, which may become permanent. She stressed that climate change, livelihoods, and displacement are core priorities for the EU in Afghanistan, focusing on advocacy and dialogues, evidence-based analysis, and integrated community resilience.. With donor funding declining, the EU stresses creativity, prioritization, collaboration, and strong coordination, while calling on the de facto authorities to create a conducive operating environment for programming and resilience building.

"We need to move from strategic discussions to joint programming, from fragmented aid to comprehensive and coordinated aid, from nexus approach to nexus implementation." - Sarah Klonski



#### Lightning Presentations: Key Insights

1. Kaustubh Devale, Emergency and Rehabilitation Officer, FAO overviewed the interconnection between climate change and livelihoods in Afghanistan. Mr. Devale depicted the land cover of Afghanistan, where cultivated land (11-12% - roughly half irrigated and half rainfed), rangeland (47%), and forest cover (2-3%) provide livelihoods for nearly 80% of the population through crop cultivation, horticulture, agroforestry, livestock systems, aquaculture, and off-farm agro-based activities. Climate change impacts these agro-based livelihoods through a variety of pathways, including the cascading impacts of intensifying droughts, to flood induced damages, extended hot or cold spells and the proliferation of plant pests and animal diseases which all impact agricultural yields and thus economic outcomes.





“There is an immense pressure on these agriculture-based livelihoods to produce more, from less, while adopting climate-smart, sustainable practices, but not having the resources, capacities or extension services to make that happen.” - Kaustubh Devale

2. **Modher Alhamadani, Senior Programme Coordinator, IOM** summarized recent data and information from IOM’s second round Afghanistan Climate Vulnerability Assessment, particularly around displacement due to environmental factors and climate change; in Q1 2025, 5 million individuals were impacted by environmental hazards; 208,000 individuals were temporarily displaced (1 day - 1 month, return but with socioeconomic impacts); an additional 175,000 internal displacement (79% of displacements) were caused by environmental factors; 172,000 migrants abroad due to climate and disasters triggering livelihood-based migration, seeking job opportunities in neighbouring countries and beyond. Mr. Alhamadani reflected diverse dynamics - such as drought conditions leading to the most heavy and longest term displacement, while floods or rapid onset disasters cause asset damages and shorter term displacement. Considering an existing internal displacement caseload of 3.1M IDPs, 2.6M IDP returnees, and 5.5M returnees from abroad since 2021, there are complex intersections between mobility and environmental pressures, including intensifying urbanization.



“Climate change and drought affect the economic and livelihood situation of the population, triggering migration outside the country. There is a correlation between people living in high-risk areas to climate change and the decision to migrate or leave the country.” - Modher Alhamadani

## Panel Discussion: Key Messages

1. **Farhana Stocker, Senior UN Solutions Advisor - Durable Solutions, UNAMA** outlined the UN’s work on durable solutions in Afghanistan, stressing that durable solutions are about creating the conditions for displaced persons and returnees to rebuild their lives in safety and dignity. Ms. Stocker noted the data paints a clear picture: environmental hazards are destroying the very foundations of durable solutions - livelihoods, housing, and health. She stressed on the dramatic macroeconomic strain in Afghanistan from the influx of 5.5 million returnees since 15 September 2023, trying to integrate into a shrinking economic pie, where returnees are often the most vulnerable, competing with the poorest Afghans in the most vulnerable areas. Climate shocks worsen economic precarity, making it increasingly difficult for people to stay or invest in rebuilding their lives, often spurring secondary displacement.



“Climate change is not a side issue. It’s a central driver that intensifies economic decline and unravels the fragile progress towards durable solutions.” - Farhana Stocker

2. **Rina Mattinson, NRM, Agriculture and Environment Sector Advisor, Welthungerhilfe** reflected on existing approaches to building climate resilience in Afghanistan and what can be improved. After summarizing the typical programmatic approaches, she highlighted areas for improvement. First, for household level practice change, treating communities as homogenous groups is not working - solutions need to be tailored to the household and individual level, meeting people where they are at in resources and worldview. Second, resilience programming needs to be ruthlessly prioritized to where it can make a difference - noting it is possible many places receiving small scale resilience programming should actually be preparing for displacement. Third, significant gains could be made by identifying critical but low cost adaptation activities that could be



mainstreamed across larger project frameworks and donors, achieving scale.

“In humanitarian settings, you respond where the needs are the highest. But in building resilience, I would argue that project implementers need to ruthlessly prioritize and ask: where can we actually make a difference?” - Rina Mattinson

3. **Najibullah Hamidi, Climate Impact Analysis and Modelling Specialist, *de facto* Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL)** summarized the Ministry’s Agriculture and Livestock Development Plan, which he noted focuses on nine key priority areas that also support community resilience to climate change, highlighting: agriculture infrastructure; agriculture mechanization and research; irrigation efficiency and expansion; irrigation technologies, protection and restoration of forests, rangelands and natural resources; alternative livelihoods to poppy cultivation; value chain development; and improving land management and regulation.



“This strategic plan is designed to improve rural livelihoods, increase productivity, expand exports, create jobs, and lead Afghanistan towards food security and economic self-reliance, and adapting vulnerable communities against climate change.” - Najibullah Hamidi

This summary overviews the shared insights from a [webinar convened by Samuel Hall and UNAMA as part of the 2025 Climate Action in Afghanistan Series](#). It brings together humanitarian, development, and technical perspectives to clarify what earlier, more coordinated, and more community-driven climate action must look like in practice. The session brought together:

The [United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan](#) (UNAMA) is a UN Special Political Mission supporting the Afghan people. Its vision is a peaceful, stable, and prosperous Afghanistan where everyone’s rights are respected without discrimination.

[Samuel Hall](#) is a social enterprise that conducts research, evaluates programmes, and analyses data in and on contexts of migration and displacement. Our research connects the voices of communities to changemakers for more inclusive societies.