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MORE EFFECTIVE PROTECTION FOR INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN SOUTHERN AFGHANISTAN

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PARTICIPANTS:

Introduction:

KEITH EIKENES
Counselor, Defense and Security
Royal Norwegian Embassy

Moderator:

ANDREW SOLOMON
Deputy Director, Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement
The Brookings Institution

Panelists:

ALEX MUNDT
Consultant, Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement

SUSANNE SCHMEIDL
Co-Founder and Senior Advisor
The Liaison Office, Afghanistan

ASHRAF HAIDARI
Embassy of Afghanistan

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. SOLOMON: Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to Brookings for today's discussion on internal displacement in Afghanistan. My name is Andrew Solomon. I am a fellow here at Brookings and also the deputy director of the Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement, which is finalizing a study conducted in collaboration with The Liaison Office [TLO], an Afghan NGO and research organization, on the situation of internally displaced persons and their protection in the Southern Afghan province of Kandahar.

Today TLO and Brookings would like to share with you some of the general themes and findings of our study and this will involve a discussion of the causes of displacement in the south, the gaps in IDP protections, how those who have been displaced are coping, and also an exploration of international and national efforts to respond to displacement and facilitate durable solutions throughout the country in general as well as in Kandahar in particular.

As you are likely aware, Kandahar will play an important part in the recently announced strategy to secure the country and to strengthen stage capacity and governance institutions through the deployment of additional military and civilian personnel. In addition, Kandahar has been the site of intense battles and kinetic activity involving the Afghan insurgency and the Afghan National Security Forces and international security forces.

In addition, Kandahar is also host to one of the largest IDP populations throughout the country. Unfortunately because of the insecurity in the province and the violence there, humanitarian access has been severely limited and until recently, relatively little has been know about the situation of internally displaced persons there.

Now, today, fortunately we have with us several experts in this field who can increase our awareness and understanding of the situation in the south with regards to internal displacement based on their familiarity with the area and time spent on the ground including two months over the course of the summer interviewing roughly 150 internally displaced persons as well as representatives of the Afghan government, NGOs and international humanitarian agencies and military forces.

I'm pleased to be able to present, sitting on my immediate left, the first of our two researchers, Dr. Susanne Schmeidl, who is cofounder of and senior advisor to TLO and sitting next to Susanne is Mr. Alex Mundt who worked for over two years in Afghanistan for UNHCR and who worked here at Brookings as a guest researcher this past year.

We're also very pleased to have with us on the panel sitting next to Alex, Mr. Ashraf Haidari representing the Embassy of Afghanistan, followed by Mr. Keith Eikenes of the Embassy of Norway. Mr. Eikenes will get us underway today, but before I turn it over to him, I would like to thank the government of Norway for their long time support for the IDP Project here and our work.

So, with that, Keith, the floor is yours.

MR. EIKENES: Thank you. My name is Keith Eikenes and I am a counselor at the Norwegian Embassy here in Washington. And first of all, thank you for the opportunity for me to come here today and the report that has just been finished. It's with great honor, I think, that Norway has taken part in this report and supported it. I've been able to read through most of it and I think it's a very solid report and I've also forwarded it to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Oslo, who have commented very positively on it as well. So, I think it's a very good report that offers some very interesting, and I think, relevant recommendations.

And I think the report is published at a very relevant time. As you briefly mentioned, there's a new -- there's a revised or slightly revised Afghan strategy now being launched and there is, in some ways, a refocused international effort under way in Afghanistan, and I think the perspectives that this report brings to bear are very important and the situation of IDPs is something that needs to be given more attention as the international community continues its efforts in Afghanistan.

The situation for IDPs is very, very serious. The number I have is 230,000, which is a very large number and, as the report points out, there has not been sufficient focus on the IDP challenges from the international community so far. And I hope that this report will contribute to raising the awareness of this very serious issue.

Norwegian efforts in this area, I'll say something briefly. Our humanitarian -- a large part of our humanitarian aid to Afghanistan regards -- or is related to refugee and IDP issues. In 2009, I think we spent about $20 million U.S. dollars on refugee issues as a whole, but a lot of this was also meant to address the IDP problem.

As the report points out, there are some gaps in our efforts to address this question. In our view, from the Norwegian perspective, we believe that returnee programs in Afghanistan, they need to be strengthened and better integrated with local community development initiatives. Rural areas, as the report also states, are found to be more insecure thus leading to a pressure towards urban areas where land and housing is scarce. The capacities of the return program, unfortunately, are very exhausted.

UNHCR acknowledges this and will look into how. It, for the meantime, can support refugees in their camps and homes rather than supporting, you know, more voluntary returns.

And in terms of -- I'm actually from the Defense Department in Norway, so an important perspective for me is that IDP the IDP issue is not simply a humanitarian issue, but it's also a security issue with huge potential for destabilizing Afghanistan.

And I also thought the recommendations in the report regarding the international military presence in Afghanistan was particularly interesting and I think it's a very valid point that as we develop and implement a counter-insurgency strategy. I think the IDP question needs to be taken more seriously into account and that is a challenge for the U.S., but it's also a challenge for the Norwegian army or the Norwegian forces that operate in Afghanistan.

And I think the report talks a lot about the international military forces, but I also think there needs to be an effort to sensitize the growing number of Afghan national security forces. Within not too long we will have 144,000 ANA soldiers operating in Afghanistan and I think also on the Afghan side, increasing the awareness and bringing the IDP perspective to the forefront will be important.

I think with that I'll conclude my remarks and pass it on to my next colleague on the panel and look forward to the Q&A session.

MR. HAIDARI: Well, thank you so much. On behalf of the Afghan government and people I would like to thank the Brookings Institution, University of Bern, and The Liaison Office for their collaborative work on a very timely study on the status of internally displaced persons in Afghanistan. And I am also thankful to each of the researchers here for your hard efforts and for taking the risk to identify the many challenges facing the internally displaced persons in Southern Afghanistan. And, of course, we are grateful to the Norwegian government and other donors for their financial contributions to make this

very timely and important study possible.

The saga of Afghan refugees and IDPs began in late December of 1979. Afghans were an impoverished people, but always content with our agrarian and traditional way of life. Afghans hardly wished to migrate abroad or even become internally displaced for economic opportunities, but, of course, our normal lives abruptly ceased in the days following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and then in the ensuing years the killing of innocent civilians, destroying their livelihoods, and thus displacing many Afghans internally or abroad in search of protection and human security.

And more Afghans fled violence, persecution, and ethnic cleansing as a result of regional proxy conflicts in Afghanistan following the fall of the communist regime throughout 1990s. During this period many Afghans sought refuge in neighboring Pakistan and Iran and while those who could not make the trek outside continued to be displaced persons over and over again and I and my family were displaced too back in the early 1990s when, of course, the Soviets withdrew and the Communist regime fell and massive influx of Afghan refugees returned and then unfortunate regional proxy conflicts began. And then those who could afford to went back to Iran and Pakistan and those who couldn't afford to were internally displaced. And we were displaced to the northern city of Mazar-e Sharif and others to Herat and other safer areas.

But in the past three decades, Afghan refugees and IDPs have never hesitated to return home as soon as conditions for a peaceful life have emerged. Back in 1992 and 1993, for example, like I just said, after the fall of the communist regime more than 2 million Afghan refugees voluntarily repatriated from Pakistan and Iran, but their return soon stopped after the breakout of regional proxy conflicts that plunged our country into anarchy and chaos for a decade. And once again, encouraged by international reengagement in Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban, more than 5 million Afghan refugees spontaneously returned home from Pakistan and Iran, and we know that this is the single largest voluntary repatriation in the history of UNHCR at the same time hundreds of thousands of IDPs returned to their villages of origin hoping that they would be provided with reintegration assistance to resume or restart their lives.

But again, like the period following the fall of the communist regime, Afghan's basic expectations for protection and a very basic livelihood did not materialize and today one of the most vulnerable groups of concern, and unfortunately forgotten in Afghanistan is the

internally displaced persons. Last year UNHCR and our Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation identified some 236,000 IDPs across the country. The bulk of this population, about 166,000 was displaced as a result of conflicts and a long draught before and after the fall of the Taliban. Most of these IDPs have settled in temporary camps in south, southeast, and west of Afghanistan. In addition, there are some 53,000 returnees from Pakistan since 2005. And this was of course based on a report that was released last year that they remained displaced in eastern Afghanistan as they were unable to return to their villages of origin when they returned from Pakistan or because of also a lack of land and a lack of basic services in those areas.

In addition, last year UNHCR and our ministry reported that some 10,000 newly displaced people were in Afghanistan because of mostly military operations in the south, and Helmand and Kandahar provinces, and with the exception of a few camps in Helmand, Kandahar, Herat and Mazar-e-Sharif, and with very little assistance, aid organizations have been unwilling or barred by insecurity, to provide assistance to the various categories of IDPs that I've just discussed, and primarily one reason that I hear or cited in the reports is the reason why they don't maintain camps and provide assistance is because they fear that more poor people and more battle affected people flock to those camps for assistance which they think is not there. And we think that this is a legitimate concern, but IDPs, this report, this study, recommends must be identified and assisted.

So, I think I will just pass through my notes and say that we are doing our best, the government of Afghanistan, in particular the Minister of Refugees and Repatriation, do (inaudible) those in need, those who are protracted IDPs and those who have been recently displaced and either as a result of natural disasters or of course recent conflicts in Southern Afghanistan. But the fact is that, of course, first of all, we lack the resources, and second of all, the capacity, to deliver these resources to the needy and particularly in conflict areas, but we do look forward to the implementation of the new strategy which was discussed. And, of course, the focus of the military strategy announced by General McChrystal is on protecting the civilians, which, of course, naturally includes the IDPs, who are even more vulnerable than other civilians.

And we hope that the recommendations of this study will be fully considered by the Afghan government and, of course, by the multitude of aid organizations in Afghanistan that are all there with good intentions, but, unfortunately, often bypass one another and

definitely bypass the Afghan government. I can say this from my own experience. I've been working with UNHCR and I've been working with NGOs that I think it's the last thing on their mind to contact the Afghan government and to involve them and to engage them and to, you know, help them build capacity to address some of these issues increasingly on their own. Most of these NGOs are there, of course with good intentions, and some of them have done good work, and there are some that, of course, we have praised in the past and have been in Afghanistan during even really bad days, but there are a lot of also NGOs that basically perpetuate themselves, write proposal after proposal after proposal without necessarily looking at, of course, what the Afghan government has successfully done or what the UNHCR has successfully done and how to basically pool our resources and our efforts and so on to, strategically coordinate and to deliver assistance. And I think this has to be a policy of all socioeconomic and security and institutions, like my colleague said. Because unless we improve security, unless we provide basic services to people, unless we also implement extensive land reforms, and unless, of course, we employ the judicial reform in order to be able to provide land to IDPs, especially the protracted IDPs to have a piece of land and to deliver assistance for them to work on that piece of land, it's really hard for them to either locally integrate or resettle -- that's another solution -- or reintegrate once they return to their homes.

So it has to be a policy of everything and it has to be an integrated approach, it has to be a whole of government, so to speak, approach, so that we make the impact we all collectively try to make. And, of course, some of the recommendations that I may disagree with because, like I said, unless everything works, it's just really hard to implement some of these recommendations. They're good, but it's always about implementation and the right mechanisms and, of course, the willingness to be coordinated not only the aid organizations, Afghan government, and, of course, multiple contractors and securing institutions.

So, this is really the challenge as we move forward in this process and if we address this challenge, hopefully, then we will be able to implement some of these recommendations to help IDPs. And with that --

MR. SOLOMON: Thank you, Ashraf, particularly for emphasizing the importance on implementation and the challenges to implementing these types of recommendations.

Before I turn it over to Alex, who will begin walking us through the report—I am glad

to see that many of you have picked up copies of the report. Please note that it does say draft on it, on the cover. We did want to release it as soon as possible in this form for today's discussion, but we will be just finalizing it in the next couple weeks and releasing it as a full-blown color glossy report in early January both in hard copy and electronically. So, sorry for that intervention, but Alex?

MR. MUNDT: Thanks. Now, I think many of the things that I was going to sort of introduce have already been covered and I don't want to be repetitive. Let me just explain maybe how this study came about. There's been, over the past year or two, sort of a slow recognition that internal displacement is on the rise in Afghanistan, but at the same time very little is known about it. But it is -- we do have this irony that throughout this year we've been talking about revised military strategies and counterinsurgencies and yet, at the same time, very little has been said about the humanitarian consequences of this strategy.

To the extent international aid is mentioned at all, it's usually in the form of development aid or a surge in development activities, but very little on who's being displaced -- where, why -- so what this study tried to do was focus a little bit of attention on displacement which in many other places, even in the region, is a natural byproduct of conflict. We certainly saw that this year in Pakistan when the operation started there. You immediately had camps set up, international assistance going in. There was no question that these people would be assisted, but you have a very different situation in Afghanistan and I think very little discussion about how to assist and who to assist, for many of the reasons that have been mentioned here. There's this fear of creating pull factors of camps that all of the poor would flock to try to get assistance, but it's created this situation where many people who need assistance the most have not had access to it.

You know, I think having been on the ground, one of the ironic things that, you know, certainly I went in 2006, when at the same time as we were watching conditions deteriorate on the ground, the return and repatriation operation was still being hailed as one of UNHDR's most successful operations. It was the largest in recent history, I think. As of the time of this writing of the report there was nearly four and a half million people who had been helped to come home.

So while you have sort of this situation falling apart in many parts of the country, aid agencies having less and less access, you still had this focus on post conflict and people voluntarily coming home, but I think at the same time over the past couple of years there

has been a renewed focus, certainly that absorption capacity has been pretty well exhausted in Afghanistan. There's been a huge amount of urban migration and at the same time, there's the worsening conflict in many parts of the countryside has forced people to seek safety in urban areas.

In this mix of migratory trends of both economic migration and conflict induced internal displacement, has lead to a big argument over whether these people are economic migrants or internally displaced persons, and I think there's an equally fair question that could be asked, you know, should we even try to sort this out at this point.

If you look at Kabul alone, I think at the fall of the Taliban it was maybe a million people. Today it's 5 million people. The entire city is nearly a great bit squatter settlement.

When I was down in Kandahar I asked an IDP, you know, we were discussing this whole debate over whether they're economic migrants or internally displaced persons, and he had a very simple answer. He said economic migrants leave their families at home. If I were an economic migrant, I would not have traveled with my family. In Pashtun culture, it's a huge humiliation for me to bring my family from home and set up a house somewhere else, to expose my family to that kind of danger. I never would have done it. He said I left because I had no other choice.

I think there's this issue of military tactics and strategy that has tended to focus on civilian casualties and how to win hearts and minds and how to prevent or lessen civilian casualties, which certainly is a valuable thing to be talking about, but very little attention has been focused on issues associated with internal displacement, questions of who is fleeing, why they're going, where are they going, how are they able to survive when they're displaced.

The representative of the Secretary General in the Human Rights of IDPs, who's also the co-director of the Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement, Walter Kälin, he made a visit to Afghanistan in 2007. And one of his recommendations was that a national profile needed to be created to sort out who was who and to try to determine a more national strategy, to look at durable solutions for some of these cases, what could be done as interim solutions, how were they being protected, how could they better be protected. And I think for those of you who've gone through the report -- admittedly it's long -- I think we do take some swipes at the humanitarian community and everybody, but I hope it's in a constructive way. But we do want to point out that since that visit, which was

in 2007, I think a lot has been accomplished.

The national profile was developed by the national IDP task force and that's where this number of 230,000 IDPs comes from.

The cluster approach, which is an interagency collaborative mechanism to be unrolled in IDP emergencies, was rolled out in Afghanistan, I think in 2008. But I think one of the key criticisms that remains, and certainly we try to bring this out in the report, is that too little was done and too late to recognize the problem, and I would say the scope of the problem. We've heard the number 230,000, which was the number that the National IDP Taskforce identified, but the bulk of that was actually protracted caseloads that were well known to UNHCR. It did not contain very much information about new displacement.

To the extent that it mentioned new displacement at all, it made a variety of assumptions that I'm not sure what they were based on. So, for instance, I think it identified several tens of thousands of new battle-affected IDPs. But the operational assumption was that these people were displaced for a very short time, so they would flee either preemptively, having gotten word that there was going to be a military engagement in their area, and they would go back two weeks later.

To its credit, the IDP Taskforce in the report noted that they were likely to be seriously challenged on this point and I think many of our findings shed, I hope, further light on this because we found there are many reasons why there's short-term displacement, but it was not because they preferred to go right now. In many cases they had no other option.

So, when we were looking at what to do and how the Brookings-Bern Project could channel a creative research project that would be most helpful to humanitarian agencies on the ground, two things were suggested: one was a profiling of internal displacement in Kabul, and one was to look at Kandahar province. And we chose to look at Kandahar because I think it has the most interesting mixture of IDP caseloads. You have new battle affected or conflict induced caseloads, you have a longstanding camp base population in one of the sites, Zhari Dasht, which UNHCR is currently in the process of trying to close. You also have a very large caseload at a border site called Spin Boldak where most people consider that IDPs chose to locally integrate there.

So, one of the things we did was we looked at all of these issues on the range of different types of IDPs and look at the process of how decisions were made.

It's also one of the historic places in Afghanistan. I'm sure most of you know it's where the Taliban emerged. It's always attracted certain levels of migration from neighboring provinces as well as from in the province itself. Kandahar City, is, you know, a large historic and economic center of the south. The border crossing, Spin Boldak, is one of the largest that straddles the border with Pakistan. And I think most of the humanitarian agencies acknowledge that it's one of the places that has the largest IDP populations.

But at the same time, because of security and because of access restrictions, it's also a place we know very little about. When I arrived in Kandahar the first stop I went to was UNAMA, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, and I went to see the human rights officer who had been there for six months, and it was an introductory meeting and I said, well, tell me about, you know, Kandahar. And he said I was hoping you could tell me. He said I've been here for six months and I've never left the office.

So even -- and it's not his fault, and I'm not trying to diminish the work they're doing because most of the people there would like to get out, but they're just not able to.

Before I went down, one of the leads on the health sector cluster said they were particularly concerned about Kandahar because they were following the incidence of polio outbreaks and it very closely mirrored the conflict zone which was a sign that real healthcare was not available in most of the province. So, the WHO, for instance, was very worried about what was going on there, but didn't know exactly.

Let me basically maybe say a few words about the international humanitarian community, because I can speak from my own experience, it's an incredibly difficult place to work. You can barely, in some cases, get out to the field, leave your office. A lot of project implementation is done via remote control, as we call it. You use national NGOs or local partners to go inspect projects.

I think at various points, and I think now is probably one of them, more than half the country is off limits to aid workers. My former area, Kunduz, which I had full access to pretty much until the time I left in 2008, is now completely off limits. Most of my former staff have had to move their family into Kunduz City because it's no longer safe for their families to live in the countryside. And this was in the north which was always comparatively safe compared to the south. So, I think that shows you a little bit the deterioration that's happened in the last -- at least in the last year to 18 months.

Humanitarian space has also decreased and I think a lot of the humanitarian actors

find themselves targets of violence. In 2008, nearly 40 aid workers were killed, which is an unheard of number, both national and international -- more national, but I don't think that makes it any more of a tragedy. There's a number of reasons for this, and I think, hopefully, some of them might come out in the Q&A, but I think it has a lot to do with this focus on development assistance and who's doing development and the rise of for-profit development contractors that sort of blurred the lines of impartiality and neutrality and created this perception that aid workers are now fair targets for insurgents. And I think, again, you could dedicate an entire panel to just that very issue.

But in terms of displacement, one of the things we've found that adversely impacts the IDP situation is that much of the development aid continues to be tied to political objectives, so you do have this huge disparity of development money being spent in the south where there's no access, and very little up north. And I think when we were looking at some of the specific caseloads, this gets back to some of the flawed assumptions that we were finding in the course of the study, and let me just mention a couple of them before I turn over to Susanne.

One of the things we looked at was (inaudible) Camp, which is one of the longstanding IDP camps; "longstanding" meaning in 2002 or 2003, it was created basically to move people from Spin Boldak. Over the years, UNHCR has facilitated the return of IDPs willing to go home to the north, but when we went up to the north we found very, very few IDPs or returned IDPs, because no attention had been paid to reintegrating them. They were basically assisted to go home and then they were more or less on their own. So where we did find very small pockets of them, they tended to be very vulnerable households. Most of the men had already gone back to the south, most of them were -- if they were able to access their former homes, could access their houses only, not their farmlands. The discrimination against Pashtun families in the north had not lessened at all, so they weren't able to go into the urban centers in the north and find jobs. So what you found was this big migration of IDPs who went back to Kandahar, only this time they weren't considered IDPs and they didn't enjoy any of the protections normally associated with internal displacement. And that's another one of our concerns now as there are efforts to close down this camp, I don't think there's been a big recognition that these factors are still in play and many of the IDPs we were talking to view this simply as a final opportunity to cash out of the system. I think each IDP is given $50 U.S. basically to hand in their

ration card and go back to the north. And when I was interviewing them, you know, I was in Kandahar City and we went as some were coming in to register and I would interview them, I said, well, are you going to go home? And I could not -- I interviewed, I think, 25 IDPs in Kandahar. I could not find one that actually intended to go back and stay. They all viewed this as an opportunity to cash out. Why did they view this? Because they had been told by the Ministries of Refugees and Repatriation that the camp would be closed, so they had no other option and they decided basically to take the money and use that to try to find a durable solution for themselves.

Some of them may have in fact gone home, we don't discount that, but I think if you look at what's happened over the years with the past people, it's more than likely that these people will come back and find themselves back in Kandahar, but this time really nobody's problem. They won't be registered as IDPs, they'll be off the books of the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, they won't be considered persons of UNHCR concern, but in some cases they may be more vulnerable than before they left.

Just one more example, I think, would be Spin Boldak where most of the agencies, the humanitarian agencies, long ago considered the internally displaced persons to have been locally integrated. And this was based on the fact of when they did the relocation from the border to this camp that was set up, people were given the choice, you either move and we can assist you, or you stay and consider yourself locally integrated. So what we wanted to look at was to what extent were these people actually locally integrated. And what we found was that the appearance of economic integration made people think, yes, on one hand, they're locally integrated, but, on the other hand, they had no political integration, they had no rights, they couldn't vote for the district shura, they were totally dependent on an area strongman who controlled the border, and even though they had managed to buy land, they didn't really have secure land tenure, so they could be thrown off the land at any time they lost the favor of this local strongman.

So, I think we saw how you could consider these people locally integrated, but I think what we found was it was very much a case of partial integration rather than full integration, and that they were still vulnerable and they were still subject to be thrown off the land at any time.

So this is why, just getting back to this question of numbers, 230,000 was the number in the national profile, which was a good start, but we found at least that many in

Kandahar province alone, which suggests that the problem of internal displacement in Afghanistan, is much, much greater in scope than the IDP Taskforce has to date admitted.

Let me shift over to Susanne who's going to, I think, cover some of the more thematic elements that we came across in the paper.

MS. SCHMEIDL: Thanks. I'm trying to avoid some of the redundancies that we may have in the report by trying to just emphasize some of the issues that came very strongly out in our research. I'll try to make it through this talk without coughing. I've just come out of Kabul and the winter, you know, there's something that would be called the Kabul cough, you know, you got that because of pollution and dust.

Now, as the title of the report already says, most of our findings were around limits in protection or gaps in protection. In addition to what Alex so far has pointed out, of course, the main body in charge of protection would be of course the Afghan government, you know, because we're talking about internal displacement, that's within the boundaries of the country, and so, of course, there is a responsibility of the Afghan government to protect its people.

Now, most of you probably have read or heard about the fact that since 2001, when, you know, we had to rebuild a new state when the Taliban were thrown out of the country, of course there hasn't been as much progress as probably both Afghans as well as international actors would have hoped to do so. So far the central government still lacks a lot of capacity at the extremely limited rural areas, which is increasingly diminishing, of course, due to insecurity, the rule of law is very weak and many of the government institutions are still ineffective and also particularly not trusted by the majority of the Afghan people.

Most of the IDPs interviewed expressed little confidence in the ability of the government to deliver services and protection, and particularly the National Security Forces, which potentially, as Keith mentioned, didn't receive as much attention as international military actors, are not so much seen as protectors. I would have to say, there's a big distinction, however, between the Afghan National Army, which usually has a fairly good reputation, but is still very limited in numbers to actually do protection abilities, and the Afghan National Police, which also has limited numbers, but also has an incredibly bad reputation, is actually seen more as a perpetrator than a protector. And that, of course, is what usually civilian populations have the closest connection to.

I always like to make a reference to a report by Andrew Wilder for the Afghan Research Evaluation called “Cops and Robbers,” which kind of sums it up very nicely how the police are seen in Afghanistan. And I think most international actors are quite aware that there’s a lot of capacity building needed in that area of the policing, and I think the Afghan government is aware of that as well.

So, probably in the protection, you know, aside from the fact -- and I don’t think I’m going to go in so much with the weakness of the Afghan government -- is that there are two benchmarks which have not really been reached by the Afghan government yet in terms of national responsibility, and one is, of course, the allocation of adequate resources to address displacement. As most of you know, the Afghan state is still heavily dependent on external contributions and funding, so obviously lacks money and would always have to lobby with donors about money that it needs for any programs including, you know, those to address internal displacement, and that, in our discussions with the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, came out very strongly. They say, of course, “We are willing to assist.” However, it needs the assistance of the international community to do so.

And the second one is the crime and the ability to prevent displacement, and because the Afghan government has a certain weakness, is unable to reign in on the insurgency. There’s a bit of a problem to actually prevent causes of displacement, you know, but it’s not just the insurgency that has got problems with it. It’s also very difficult to reign in the international forces. And there have been many calls from President Karzai to curb aerial bombardment with not as much effect as he probably would have liked. So the government as such also has limited capacity, which many of the IDPs we interviewed for this study noted in their belief that the government is not fully sovereign in that sense, vis-à-vis the international forces. That somehow the international forces can do things as they please without always getting the consent of the Afghan government. And I think that’s an important issue when we look at how international military that comes in as an intervention and then becomes a supportive force could be potentially seen slightly differently, not so much as working into supporting national responsibility to protect individuals, but potentially seen as undermining it. And I think that as we look into our military strategy, the revision, we have to really come to grasp with this. And that’s the reason why international military received a bit more attention in the report, because it’s talking about us, it’s about our own responsibility. We’re not a neutral actor anymore. Yes, as a humanitarian actor

we would usually be; because we have also military in Afghanistan, we are a party to the conflict, and I think that's something that maybe hasn't been addressed as much as it probably should have.

And the interesting thing is that many IDPs even see the country run by the Americans and not the Afghan government, particularly in the south. There are a lot of people, when you interview them, that come out with that, and the new thing we hear is that they make a distinction between the bearded Americans and the not-bearded Americans. That for me shows another issue that we need to come with terms with in terms of military action in Afghanistan. On the one hand, you have ISF NATO, which are there to support the Afghan government for security and development and reconstruction, and then you still have Operation Enduring Freedom and Special Forces operation, which is essentially doing counterterrorism. Those two different mandates really clash and you can see it on the ground. And as I described it, the local population now says there are bearded Americans, who behave extremely badly, and then there are shaved Americans who behave a bit better in the entire issue.

Now, given that those different mandates or different actors in Afghanistan or even within ISF NATO, you have different nations -- which is -- I mean, they try to consolidate, but still you have lead nations. In Kandahar it's the Canadians, in Oruzgan it's the Dutch, in Helmand it's the British, in Zabul it's the Americans when we talk about the south. So the whole issue of protection remains still very vague in Afghanistan, and we argue among those actors, so it's very open to interpretation, you know, so maybe one actor interprets protection slightly differently than the other. I don't think there's a uniform interpretation of what protection really entails and whether or not displacement is actually part of protection.

Civilian casualties have received a lot of attention because a lot of pressure has been put on the military actors there to be aware of civilian casualties. But when I did a lot of the interviews with the military, it was interesting that some of the first answers I've got were that displacement was not part of their mandate. I kept pushing, asking them if their mandate is security, wouldn't displacement be part of that? And then they conceded that, yes, indeed, you know, displacement is part of security. But a lot of people said, well, we're not experienced, most soldiers do not know what an IDP is and they wouldn't be able to identify IDPs, which is probably why, recently, 2,000 more displaced in Helmand were identified by the Afghan Red Crescent Society, but the military says there weren't any, at

least not any more displaced by their activities.

So there's the whole issue of being able to identify displacement and being able to link one's own kinetic, or whatever, activities, to displacement as it happens. Because we are there to protect, we are there to secure, we are there to clear areas, you know. We're certainly not there to displace people, yet it does seem to happen. And in my conversations with military, I don't think it has really been fully thought through as part of the strategies.

Most of the COIN strategies talk about behavior towards the local population, they talk about, again, civilian casualties but don't explicitly talk about displacement. Because when I asked, I was told, oh, it's now in our strategies. And when I asked for a copy and I finally got the copy, there was really nothing explicit about displacement in there. You would have to read between the lines about it. And I think that if I have to read between the lines, it might be extremely difficult for soldiers to read between the lines if they're not sensitized to the issue to begin with and if they, as according to an (inaudible) rep I spoke to, wouldn't even know an IDP if they saw one. And, as he also emphasized, if they lack even the reach in the country to be able to cover everything and understand it.

So, I think that's a big issue in terms of protection we need to deal with. And there's also the question, even (inaudible) protection of Afghans as one of the key (inaudible) when engaging Afghanistan, whether or not the military actually even knows how to do protection, whether they even understand what civilian protection means. There's a lot more to be done and I've actually discussed it with military and some believe that a lot more training needs to be done within the military itself, what it means to protect civilians on the ground.

In addition to not understanding displacement, I think there's a bit of a difficulty to understand the causes of displacement as well and how much people on the ground are really caught between a rock and a hard place because there are extremely complex push factors. The reason why we don't use the term battle-affected displacement anymore in our report, UNHCR also doesn't use that term anymore either in reporting their strategy and that is because it's not simply IDPs fleeing from actual battle. There is this flawed assumption that when the bombs begin falling or when there are kinetic -- I love this word, kinetic activities; I learned it through this report -- kinetic activities in an area, then people flee. It's actually far more complex. It is also difficult for a civilian to live in extremely

uncertain situations, in a situation with very limited predictability, where there's harassment, where they're caught between the different warring parties. And whether it seems to be a lack of understanding of who was the insurgent, who was not an insurgent, who is actually really the enemy, the civilians are really just caught in the middle. So, the question for the civilians is, are you going to leave yourself in that situation or are you going to take yourself out of the situation? So people do flee actual fighting, but people also preemptively flee fighting or they flee harassment. There was one IDP who said, I fled to keep my dignity because of house searches, for example, because they were just so tired of having people come to the houses.

And the problem is that it may not just be one person who comes, it's often that one night the Taliban comes and then asks for food and accommodation and then if nobody protects you, what are you going to do as a civilian? Likely you will have to accommodate the Taliban and give them food because you know that if you don't you might be killed.

And then if you are very unlucky, the next night, the Afghan government and international forces come and say, well, who were the Taliban, what did they want, why did you help them, are you part of them, etc. And if you really -- and then potentially, if you're really unlucky, you're put in -- you are brought then to prison. If you're lucky you might be staying at home and then the next night the Taliban may come again and say, oh, what did the government want? So, and in the words of one IDP, "We are caught in the middle of all of them. If you side with the government, the Taliban will kill you. If you side with the Taliban, the government will take you and the bombs will fall. So, what do you really do as a civilian?"

So, that brings us to coping strategies. What do people do in an environment where there is a lack of protection, but where there's a lot of threats coming from multiple sides? You take yourself out of it and that's the interesting part. There's a lot of debate on how to put that in the report, since it's odd to say that flight is a coping strategy. But, practically every IDP interviewed said that flight was their primary coping strategy. They saw the ability to be able to put themselves out of danger as the primary coping strategy, to put their family and themselves into a secure environment, because security is all relative in Afghanistan right now. I can't say they put themselves in complete security because Kandahar is no longer that secure either. But the areas where there's the high concentration of IDPs, which is Kandahar City and Spin Boldak, are among the three

secure areas. And in Kandahar still, where the government still has a fair amount of reach, so there that's also diminishing.

So, despite the loss of property, despite the loss of livelihood, despite the loss of life in the course of flight, or of everything, they saw that this was actually a successful way to stay alive. I think that's one thing Afghans are very good at is to survive and stay alive, so you put yourself out. And that reinforces again what Alex mentioned, that there's a class effect going on. It's essentially only the people with money that can afford to flee because you have to have the ability to finance the routes into exile. You have to have the ability because there are no camps you can go to where you receive assistance. You have to have the ability to rent houses, unless you have relatives, to go somewhere. So it is essentially that again, it's the poorest of the poor who have to stay where they are, and then, in turn, will have to accommodate themselves with an insecure situation and have to make choices.

We always say there are three choices for an IDP: you flee, you stay, or you join the insurgency, I suppose, so that would be the third choice. So, there's not that many choices that people really have any more in Afghanistan.

So, once you've fled, where do you go? And there's essentially -- okay, let me look back to, actually -- maybe before I say where they go, the assumption of short-term displacement, as Alex already said, is flawed. People don't just leave and go back when the bombing has stopped because that might be rather silly, actually, because why would you go back to an area where there is the potential that the insurgency is there? Why would you go back to an area where the international community is not able to actually protect you still?

Even now in Helmand where areas are cleared, the Taliban is still able to kill civilians it considers pro-government, because you will never have enough military in an area to protect civilians as much, so usually in those areas it's not secure anywhere. So why would you actually go back there if you could be associated with being pro-government by the Taliban or if the Taliban could come back. So, actually it is no longer short-term. It's only the poor people who cannot afford to go elsewhere short-term, most other people have already made the choice to be actually displaced long-term. Some people have started to buy land and houses because they, in the next -- for the two next three years, they do not see that they will be able to return home. They just don't see this

change going on in the areas.

So we have to get away from thinking of short-term displacement. It's a bit of wishful thinking. It's easy for us to assume people just always go home and the problem is over. It is not that case. People are making long-term choices and that's why they're making very careful choices of where they're fleeing to. With short-term you don't have to think so much about it, but if you know that it's long-term, you have to go somewhere where you know that you will have a place to stay, a livelihood, and relative security. And that's why Kandahar is a place where many people are going. And these are rational choices -- very rational, it's just like economic migrants, but we've known for a long time that those who are forcibly displaced make the same rational choice as economic migrants. It doesn't mean they're economic migrants just because they make a choice.

So we see that there are pull factors that impact the directionality of the movement where people go. It's not the reason why they leave. There are clear push factors, there are influences where people go. So whether or not there would be camps, people go to Spin Boldak because it is an enclave. There are already many displaced persons, according to our estimate 50% of the population in that particular district is displaced. You could go into the definition game, what does it mean to be an IDP, because some of them have been there 10 years. But as Alex mentioned, they're economically integrated, but they lack political integration, so according to the Guiding Principles, they remain displaced because there is not a durable solution.

So you have the choices where they're going, and you have enclaves that reduce the risk of flight. The richer people go to Kandahar City where there are more services, but also more expensive houses, and -- the second is family networks are extremely crucial. It decreases the cost of migration. It's a very important informational source about the areas of exile. But also these networks allow you keep in touch with the areas of origin, where they're quite well connected. You have ability of a family member staying home to take care of your property while the rest of the family flees. However, a family needs a male family member to take care of them, so if you don't have that male family member, what we've seen is that they have a reduced ability to flee because if the man needs to go to work, you need to have another male person to stay at home usually with the family.

So that's one of the negative coping strategy of families that we've seen a lot of child labor and a lot of under-aged marriages going on because of IDPs, they lack

assistance, they lack income generation strategies of sending kids to work and marrying their children off -- their daughters off very, very young for that.

One of the most problematic coping strategies is that they seek protection from strongmen and the insurgency, and that's very, very dangerous because it increases the vulnerability of IDPs. There is no government protection, there is no international protection, so they seek protection from whoever is willing to provide it. So we see that strongman Abdul Raziq in Spin Boldak is providing protection. He's the border police commander so he's essentially government, but he also runs a little sideshow in that area and IDPs have become his constituency. He's protecting them, he's giving them land, he involves them a bit in his smuggling business. However, at the same time, they are providing him with more votes and willingness to support him among other things.

So, an example why this is dangerous. In another area we looked at, which was (inaudible) there was a strongman that supported the IDP community initially. The moment he withdrew support and then later was killed, local integration was off the table. It wasn't discussed anymore because at that point the host community said, okay, well, your protector is gone, so we might as well just kick you out. And that is very much linked to why now there is a strong push to close the camp down because the host population wants that land.

So, it's very dangerous. And the worst is when the insurgent becomes your protector because there it comes to the issue of what makes an insurgent. You've seen in (inaudible) as they've lost the protector, now the insurgency is starting to infiltrate the camp and starting to recruit among the IDPs. And if you really have nobody protect you, potentially you are going to accommodate the insurgency. And that also happens for the people that remain, that are unable to flee. They have to accommodate somehow to stay alive if you can't flee. You have to somehow work your way out. And the problem is then that, ultimately, displaced people are seen as insurgents even though they have no choice, and that's an important thing.

And without representation, as Alex mentioned, there's a lack of political integration, a lack of the ability to access national development funds. IDPs have tried to address it by creating their own shuras. We have identified shuras, but they're still rather week because it's, of course, their own community, they will need more support from the Afghan government to be actually (inaudible) to the political process. And so far they have

functioned a bit more as an internal conflict resolution mechanism, so a lot more work is to be done.

And sorry for going a bit over time.

MR. SOLOMON: Okay. Well, we have 25 minutes for Q&A and I do hope we can get a good discussion going. So I would like to invite the audience to ask questions. When you do, please identify to whom you wish to address your question and also please identify yourself with a brief affiliation if you have one.

So, we can start in the back, I hope there's mics in the back. There's a gentleman raising his hand standing up.

SPEAKER: (inaudible) and Asia Today. So much has been going on as far as Afghanistan is concerned, so many think tanks and also new policy from the Obama administration and the generals on the ground. Now, they're all saying that engagement with the people of Afghanistan is the most important and must -- without engaging the people, but you are saying that government has failed to protect the people, but Talibans are there to protect them.

So, what message do you have for the NATO and for the Obama administration, especially the U.S. forces going there, more than 30,000 plus 10,000 from the NATO? So, where do we go from here and is there enough money for the people of Afghanistan compared with the people of Pakistan?

MR. HAIDARI: I think -- I've heard kind of criticism of the Afghan government and I think -- I agree to the extent that we have not tried, but, of course, our efforts depend on resources and efforts, especially coordinated efforts from the international community, and you also have to look at the amount of funding or resources given to civilian causes. If you compare from 2001 until 2008, of course, and then, of course, even now, you see that the military operations always get 80% of all assistance. If you're in the United States or even Europe, mostly spend all their own military operations in Afghanistan. About 20% is given to civilian causes and of that 20%, about only a fraction of that actually goes to the Afghan government. The rest is, you know, going to the donor-related NGOs and contractors and subcontractors. And we also know the story about -- the story of contracting and subcontracting and also the story of this very costly, unfortunately, family of United Nations with the huge overhead costs.

We know about their land cruisers. I used to drive in those and I also know about

the salaries of the international staff of the United Nations. You really have to look at, you know, where the resources are coming from, how those resources are allocated, how much of that resource goes to the military operations, how much of that resource is spent by the military of the 40 plus countries in Afghanistan including the United States. And then, of course, the 20% civilian resources, how that gets allocated and how that's channeled to Afghanistan. And now, this is not what I make up as a government official, these are reports written by NGOs, by think tanks, some of perhaps including the Brookings Institution on aid effectiveness in Afghanistan.

Unless we ensure aid effectiveness, and unless, as I said, through allocation and delivery mechanisms. And increasingly that has been our demand from the very beginning, please help us build capacity for absorbing aid. But if we continue to say that the Afghan government doesn't have absorptive capacity and, therefore, we rely on NGOs and contractors, there will be no state in Afghanistan.

We started from zero state-ness in Afghanistan. There was no state when we reengaged in Afghanistan. The state was gone. It had collapsed. And then we stood up a (inaudible), an institution, side-by-side the Afghan government. A weak, resourceless government on paper versus the 42+ countries plus their NGOs plus their contractors plus, of course, the United Nations and it's families.

That's how, unfortunately, resources have been diverted and wasted so far, and that's why the Afghan government has today remained week or absent. It's not even about weakness, about our failure, but also about our absence. We are not present in the first place including in the provinces that were mentioned. In Kandahar we have very limited presence and access. In Helmand, very limited presence and access, of both our security and institutions, the police -- as much as our police are called corrupt, we're losing three police every day, far more than Afghan National Army, far more than NATO, (inaudible) and U.S. Forces, and as well as our judicial system which is in shambles, unfortunately, because the Italians did nothing to really -- even to jump start it in Kabul let alone, you know, extend it to the provincial level and down to the local level.

So, we're talking about a state building from ground up, eight years on, that has not happened, that needs to happen. And that's what the government of Afghanistan, the leadership of Afghanistan, President Hamid Karzai is committed to working with the international community in a joint, equal partnership to work together to get this right

because it's not only our survival, the survival of the Afghan people, our IDPs, our refugees, but also it's about the security of the United States and the security of NATO.

Thank you.

MS. SCHMEIDL: The one thing I want to like -- we're not saying that the Taliban is necessarily protecting, we're saying that in the absence of protection, the Taliban may step in, but it comes at a cost for the displaced population because the Taliban obviously wants something in return. They say you're being recruited into the ranks, whether or not your ideology (inaudible) or not, so I think it's very dangerous. I just want to emphasize that that's not exactly what the report says so I don't want to have a misunderstanding there.

And for me the call for the international actors is to support the Afghan government to make sure that they aren't undermining national protection responsibilities and that they are able to potentially reconsider their counterinsurgency strategies on the ground as they're contributing to the conflict and displacement.

MR. SOLOMON: Perhaps we can move the mic up just a little bit. I see a question here in this middle, this gentleman. And then we can go here in the front.

SPEAKER: Yes, Anthony Skerbo. I'm an independent analyst. Following up on the last comment, with the administration's new strategy of inserting a great deal more troops and other international military actors adding additional troops as well, tying into the strategy of clear, hold, and build, if the Afghan government is the primary actor in terms of dealing with the IDP problem, how can the international military community either change or introduce a new dynamic in making a positive contribution toward building security for the IDPs and additionally either replacing or restating the role of the camps, temporary locations, things like that? And that's for anyone on the panel.

MR. SOLOMON: Susanne.

MS. SCHMEIDL: Replacing the camps or?

MR. SOLOMON: To decongest the camps and to close the camps.

SPEAKER: Either way. Either to create new secure locations and get people moved back into their communities where they want to be and they belong or to eliminate those areas where they're not secure and they're either being coaxed into leaving or constantly dealing with the revolving door of international military, then the Taliban, then the Afghans, then the Taliban, et cetera.

MS. SCHMEIDL: Well, I mean, it's difficult. If you'd ask me, I'd say stop doing

house searches, you know, stop picking up people and putting them into Bagram, you know, where maybe half the time when they come out they rejoin the insurgency because they're angry or something. So, I mean, I just think there are reasons why we have certain conventions, there are reasons why there's certain international human rights, and I think they're just not being as respected as they could be. And I think that's what I mean by relooking at the counter-insurgency strategy. You have to really understand whether you are contributing indirectly to the insurgency or really countering it?

And that -- I would probably also try to limit area bombardments because in a context like Afghanistan, there's a high likelihood you're going to hit civilians. And you know that undermines your own strategy -- so it's just -- I think it's just very, very difficult, you know, and there are different philosophies on how you can do that. And I think there's just, in my opinion, a lot more thinking that needs to be done, whether we're continuing with the aggressive stance we've had or whether we're looking into different options of how to deal with the problem of the insurgency in Afghanistan. Because, I mean, frankly, with the more troops being put, and I heard 10,000 of them will go into Kandahar, it's not looking so good. It's not going to look so good of how things are going.

Look at Helmand, how people have been displaced from the kinetic activities there. I think, you know, in your clear holds built -- I've heard there's a shape part as well -- you will always displace people and I think just nobody really is prepared in how to do that.

I'm not so sure how much the military really has a role in protecting camps, you know, because it's a civil-military issue for me. I mean, there are certain areas where it already exists. In Spin Boldak, actually, there is access by the Afghan Red Crescent Societies, local organizations have access, parts of Afghan government have access. So if it means just more supporting what there already is, as Mr. Haidari said, often there's a lacking acknowledgement of the problem, a lack of acknowledging that we understand the needs of the population and that money is provided to assist them. But first of all we need to acknowledge it. And right now if you look at any numbers, there's no acknowledgement of IDPs in Spin Boldak whatsoever and hardly in Kandahar City.

So, I mean, first of all, you need to do a profiling and understand the population, and I think then it's possible to assist them. And I'm not necessarily thinking that military needs to do that in those areas because it's secure enough. Otherwise the IDPs would not have gone there.

In the areas, in the field where they're getting displaced, again, I'm not so sure whether it's a military role to actually provide assistance, but the military is to provide the secure area, and then let the humanitarians come and do the assistance. Because the more you are associated with a party of the conflict, that decreases the security of the civilians again. That's what I'd like to repeat because everybody seen as pro-military and pro-government in some of the areas is still likely to be killed and we have to understand that and we can't get around it. And frankly, I don't think that you can get as many soldiers as is needed on the ground to have military protection. That's why we need to change our thinking and strategy.

MR. HAIDARI: I think we also need to listen to the Afghan people, what they really demand. We need to look at the polls. There have been so many polls recently conducted in Afghanistan and when you ask any Afghan the first word that you hear is amnyat, security. Give me amnyat, give me security. Of course, the rest we will take care of. Afghans are resilient. We have survived for the past 30 years, even before the Soviet invasion the government was weak and very limited to Kabul and provincial centers. People were pretty much on their own, very resilient, very enterprising. It's my generation, about 30 years of age, that constitutes more than 60% of the Afghan population. We have a large refugee population in Iran and Pakistan, we have a large diaspora in the west, in the developed countries. We are in touch, we are supporting one another, but, of course, we need to focus on security as much as we can. Where are we, there is security, especially in north. Alex pointed out, we need to provide assistance to people there. We need to create (inaudible) job opportunities there. Of course, job opportunities, they're the second demand of the Afghan people when you ask them, what do you need for security, and then second is a job, give me a livelihood.

So, you don't have to do it in the middle of Helmand, getting people caught in the fire, but people, of course -- Afghans are very rational. They listen to radio, they're very politically savvy. If they know there is assistance going on, there are job opportunities in Northern Afghanistan, Northeast Afghanistan,Western Afghanistan, they will go there. They will just get displaced and go there just like my family and I did. We left Kabul. We didn't go to Pakistan. We went to Muzar-e Sharif because my father knew as a pharmacist he could get a job and he did, and that's how we survived for the next, you know, decade until, you know, the Taliban ethnically cleansed Muzar-e.

So, Afghans know the country well, they have traveled extensively. I think all Afghans are concerned with political integration, but it's not a priority. But really what people care first and foremost is basic security that this family, his members of his family, are safe, and then secondly a livelihood to just make both ends meet. This will, of course, take place, but if we really focus on these issues, the basics of what the Afghan people demand, not so much about human rights. Great, yeah, who doesn't want human rights? Who doesn't want democracy?

But realistically, given the conditions in Afghanistan, given this divided alliance, so forth, given the multitude of rules of engagement and the (inaudible) that is ongoing here, we need to do what the Afghan people demand, the basics, and they always demand the basics. And of course, empower the Afghan government as much as we -- I can, but basically applying the principle of "do no harm," by which I mean, creating capacity in the Afghan government every day as much as we can. If you're an NGO, if you're a UN agency, if you're a contractor, if you're a, you know, a government with (inaudible) there to help the Afghan government gain capacity and provide it with the resources to implement those resources on their own so the people see that the government is, you know, gaining capacity and is providing them with basic services and so that we over time become self reliant.

I think I always see the IDP and refugee issue as needing a whole of government approach. Without the government working and delivering integrated assistance, you cannot solve the IDP problem. You can talk about it, you can make recommendations, you can talk about human rights, and there are so many details that these big reports cover, but unless we do that, unless we really enable the Afghan government and coordinate, like I said in the beginning, and really listen to the Afghan people and deliver on the very basic expectations of the Afghan people, and be innovative in the way you deliver assistance to the Afghan people, it's really hard to resolve it.

MR. SOLOMON: We have one question here and then we'll make our way back. Please identify yourself and --

MR. DUPLAT: Patrick Duplat from Refugees International. I'm sure you've had a healthy debate in Kabul with UNHCR about who is an IDP and, you know, the caseload, et cetera. And I was wondering why do you think there's a reluctance to acknowledge the problem as you've defined it?

And second, Alex, you've talked about the decreasing humanitarian space, humanitarian actors, humanitarian funding. How do we get NGOs, both Afghan and international, to respond to the IDP problems?

And lastly, I just wanted to know if you could comment on the role of PRTs in responding to the IDP situation.

Thank you.

MR. MUNDT: We did have a very healthy exchange with UNHCR. My impression is that for a long time they wanted to keep the IDP problem manageable, and -- I mean, in the context of I think for too long most of the humanitarian agencies, the big agencies, wanted to keep a bit of positive momentum and a bit of this post-conflict mentality. And I think they were also supported across the board by the donors in this. It's a tricky one because I don't think UNHCR in Afghanistan is monolithic. We heard different views from across the board from protection officers, from senior managers who all thought different things.

I don't question their intentions, but I think there are some basic issues that haven't been addressed. And as Susanne said, I think one of the things is you have to acknowledge the scope of the problem because you can't begin to find solutions unless you're willing to acknowledge the breadth of the problem and that people do, you know, have valid reasons for fleeing. Even in terms of the economic migrants, the economic disruptions are so severe in the rural countryside because of the conflict. They can no longer access services, they can no longer send their children to school, there's no livelihoods left except for probably poppy cultivation, then a lot of people don't have choices that are much more indirectly related to the conflict.

When we did talk, we did have some discussions with UNHCR and I think they raised the very good question of, well, is it helpful to separate or try to distinguish IDPs from the larger urban poor? And it's a very fair question because possibly -- especially for a place like Kabul, what you need is an urban poverty strategy not trying to distinguish one group that would create pull factors and create competition among the most vulnerable. I'm not sure that type of thinking can be extrapolated to places like Kandahar where you have a much more manageable and easily identifiable caseloads of people who are in trouble. And like the report points out, this class effect is really disturbing in the fact that the poorest of the poor who need the help the most don't make the choice to seek safety

because there is no humanitarian assistance and they simply can't survive. So they do make the difficult choice to stay there and make whatever compromises they make to survive.

On the question of restoring humanitarian space, I've asked myself this a thousand times and I don't know the answer, and I think it relates a little bit to the last question where we're saying, well, you know, the government has to do this, the aid community has to do this -- I think we have to acknowledge that we've done a pretty poor job across the board. I think the government has done a miserable job in many cases. I think the aid community has been, in many cases, disastrous. And like I said, I fully -- having partaken of one of those high salaries he meant, I'm plagued with guilt about it, but it is a problem and I don't know the answer. And I think the huge influx of for-profit development contractors is a big part of the problem. They'll go anywhere for the right amount of money. They have ruined it for the traditional NGOs. I had so many discussions with traditional NGOs who focus on process and peaceful coexistence and peace building, and the process is important, not so much the quarter of a million dollar school where there's no teachers off in the middle of nowhere.

So, I think there's not a lot of patience for the process of development, and I think development for the sake of development really works. But in most places in Afghanistan, it's not development for the sake of development, it's development for the sake of a political objective that in many cases is not very popular.

So, you know, short of burning down the house and starting over again, I think each sector has to take a very hard look at what they're doing and see how they can recreate and move forward, but it won't be an easy challenge. And I think even with this -- the counterinsurgency strategy of clear, hold, and build -- there's a huge role for development actors in there. But given the restriction that most of the NGOs now face, I don't know how you fill that void quickly enough because most of the development actors, with good reason, can no longer move.

So, that's not an answer, but --

MR. SOLOMON: On the PRT, Keith, do you want to get in on that one?

MR. EIKENES: On the PRTs?

MR. SOLOMON: Yeah, or any.

MR. EIKENES: Yeah, sure. I think one of the problems with PRTs is that the

nations who have lead nation responsibility tend to channel funding to their own PRTs in order to get -- well, for various reasons, but mostly for political reasons, to get results in the province where they operate. And it sort of comes back to the point which was raised earlier that from the Norwegian point of view, we believe that we need to make the Afghan authorities able to solve the IDP problem, we need to build their capacity.

Norwegian civilian aid, which is about $150 million a year, 75% of that goes to the government in Kabul. Less than 20% goes to Farah where we have our PRT. The idea then is that the Afghan authorities need to prioritize and do the development projects after Afghan priorities, not after Norwegian priorities, and that looks good on paper. Obviously there are problems and we have a long way to go, but I do think that that is where we all should be looking at going.

There's a lot of talk about the international community has to do this or the UNHCR needs to do this, but, in fact, we should all be thinking about how we can make Afghan authorities available to do the job because it is, at the end of the day, we need to make this a truly Afghan project.

MR. SOLOMON: Okay, we only have a couple more minutes. I do want to just give people an opportunity -- we have one question here. Could you just ask your question briefly? We'll take three more, one here -- right here, up front -- and then I think this woman in the middle, and then a woman in the back. So, just very briefly.

MS. PAUL: Hi, I'm Diane Paul. I had a question about how to decrease the recruitment capacity of the Taliban through, I guess what you might say, protection activities related to protecting the civilians, in terms of protecting them from recruitment efforts. If you could speak a little bit to that and whether the militaries at all -- whether there's any concept about that, about how to protect civilians and how to create -- and it relates again to creating humanitarian space, but to protecting people from that pressure to participate in the Taliban activities.

MR. SOLOMON: Let's just gather them all and then we'll answer them. This woman in the middle here and then all the way in the back and then we'll wrap up.

MS. HASSAN: Thank you. First of all, I would say thank you to the very important report that you guys presented today and for a very good presentation. I am Palwasha Hassan, Afghan Fellow at the U.S. Institute of Peace. My question is regarding the Afghan policy debate in the United States and especially President Obama's talk on Afghanistan

showed that U.S. will be working in Afghanistan more, like in a decentralized way with governors and ministers who are perceived to be good, and probably some of the provinces in the north will be considered that way. For instance, (inaudible) doesn't have that much instability on the surface, but there is a lot of issues for the minorities and people who -- and that's sort of like what I'm afraid will be consolidation of the warlords and people who have committed atrocities. Maybe overall it looks like a stable and secure province, but not everybody is secure there. An IDP problem is one of the reasons that there should be attention for this kind of strategy in Afghanistan.

So, I would like any of the panelists, if they could comment on this U.S. strategy in Afghanistan working in a decentralized way, and probably working with warlords and continuous support of the U.S. to them.

MR. SOLOMON: One final question, please, very briefly.

MS. EOM: Hi, Laurie Eom. I'm a freelance reporter for 51%, it's a women's radio program.

I'm wondering how many women or females are involved in the IDP problem. What your estimate is for the statistics, and also whether any cultural constraints also may be affecting whether or not they have access to aid or to any of these other programs? I understand that there are some cultural constraints, that women, for example, going to secondary school there are constraints they can't walk alone to the schools, they can get harassed or come under criticism within their own families about doing these sorts of things. So are there cultural constraints that also prevent women from getting access to some of the programs that may be available for IDPs?

MR. SOLOMON: Okay, thank you very much. So we have a question on, I believe, recruitment capacity and protection issues and then working with local officials on the role of strongmen and warlords, and then the issues of demographics, how many women IDPs there are and their specific vulnerabilities and situations.

So, on the protection and recruitment issue, which is sort of referred to in the report, in terms of vulnerability. Anything?

MS. SCHMEIDL: I mean, most Afghan civilians, if you give them the choice, if there was a choice of who to protect them, they would choose the Afghan government, they would not choose the insurgency, so, yes, increased protection would decrease the recruitment potential of the insurgency. Because, frankly speaking, when people

accommodate the Taliban, it's often not by choice, it's not because ideologically they support the Taliban, it's because of a lack of choices. So, I think the moment we increase those choices and we increase the capacity, and if you ask Afghans, they would like to have an increase of the Afghan National Army, they would like to have a better ANP, and they would like to have the Afghan government definitely increase capacity to provide the services that you would expect from government.

Above and beyond, to put more money into putting more soldiers in the country, most Afghans would have said, why you waste money on 30,000 foreign soldiers, why don't you use that money to increase the capacity of the ANA and the ANP? Because likely they're cheaper, more effective, and they're there to stay. It's more sustainable. And again, it is -- they understand the localities a bit better. So that's what you see. If you increase that protection, yes, you will decrease the recruitment potential of the insurgency and (inaudible) insurgency banks right now on an anti-Western propaganda as well. It becomes more dangerous to have more international forces in the country. That's why it's actually better if it's Afghan forces who would fight the insurgency than the international forces, because the moment you deal with international they can have this invader rationale they're using in the propaganda. If it was Afghans fighting the insurgency you cannot use it anymore. So, that on the recruitment part.

MR. HAIDARI: I think there are two types of protection. One is, of course, protective security, then human security. And Afghans need both. Of course protective security is when we help the Afghan security and institutions, the Afghan National Army and the police build capacity, get equipped and deployed, and, hopefully, to replace increasingly from this point on to provide security for the people.

The Afghan National Army is widely accepted and praised by the Afghan people as well as the police, as much as we, of course, complain about the police. But if you look at recent polls, especially one by the Asia Foundation, the Afghan people, 60% approve of the police performance, about I think 85% of the Afghan army. And of the overall Afghan government, about 70%. Unfortunately, the Afghan government has not been good at -- to look at these polls and really, you know, share this with the public inside Afghanistan and, of course, the broader public in Europe and the United States.

And then, of course, on human security the Afghan government has done a good job in terms of providing increased access to education, to health care, as well as also

development on the local level through a national solidarity program which is now reaching over 20,000 villages across Afghanistan, which is one of the best mechanisms in terms of providing, you know, assistance to IDPs or in terms of helping PRTs to do sustainable work on the (inaudible), which, unfortunately, they are not.

So, then institutions, there are some best performing in institutions, some best mechanisms in place, and best national programs in place such as, as I said, national solidarity program, national area-based development program jointly run with UNDP and other such programs. But the fact is that a lot of, you know, non-Afghan entities bypass these, try to come up with (inaudible) institutions. And I could name a few in the U.S. government that have to be just rolled down and their resources channeled into the programs and institutions and the Afghan government that actually operate.

For example, if our Minister for Rural Rehabilitation and Development has an absorptive capacity of over $350 million a year and they can absorb more. I had a good meeting with our minister just recently and they are trying to even tap into the SERP funding, $1 billion a year. Imagine that. Of course, now we have a very good minister within the Ministry of Agriculture. He's working on a national strategy, he's getting more funding and expecting to get more resources to implement a national strategy to help revitalize the agriculture sector, so there will be jobs for many of these IDPs.

So, if we ensure the two and provide the requisite resources and coordinate across the government and within ourselves, the international community, our, you know, profit center, not-for-profit, and the military, then I think we will go a long way. Really, I mean, three to five years, as President Karzai said in his inaugural speech, is realistic if everything works.

And also, it's important that we have been in a warzone for the past 80 years. We have learned by doing things and there are many lessons learned. If it's refugee integration, internal displacement, if it is in security sector -- there are many good lessons learned that we need to exploit and capitalize on.

MR. SOLOMON: I'm sorry. I'm really hesitant to cut this off, but we have run over. Thank you for your patience. Susanne has agreed to just field the last question on the role of women and their particular vulnerabilities and cultural sensitivities, and then we'll close.

MS. SCHMEIDL: I mean, number is really hard because you would need a proper profile, but I would say what holds for most displaced populations, you know, that it's at

least a minimum of 50% and maybe even upwards it's going to be -- if you include children it's going to be higher than that because obviously over 50% of the population is underage anyway. So I would say the majority, actually, of the displaced populations are women and children, because often young family members stay behind or they go off to work somewhere else in migrant labor.

Yes, of course, the cultural constraint, I mentioned the high rate of underage marriage of young girls because income generation strategy. Sometimes they just get married off for livestock, for example, you know, and they often don't necessarily get married off to equal peer, but often to older men, you know, just because it provides more income to the family.

In terms of schooling, it's bad for boys and girls because, as I mentioned, there's child labor. So in many of the women that were interviewed, they're lamenting the fact that their children are losing out on education because they're needed to go and work in the bazaar, to get scrap metal, or other things. It's both boys and girls.

As terms of access to education and those things, I don't think it's different to the urban poor. And in general in Afghanistan, of course, boys have a higher likelihood of access to education than girls. I think there's no distinction, really, so far for displaced populations. What we have seen, however, is women saying that they increasingly have to work, which in Pashtun families you would not have unless there's a necessity for women to go out to work particularly when they come from rural homes. They have mentioned that they have to go and clean other people's houses or have to go and work in bakeries, et cetera. So there is a necessity where the entire family has to pull in, so that's another gender aspect that you could highlight.

Of course widows in the displaced population, but then you also have widows, of course, in the general population of the urban poor, are the ones that probably have the least access because they lack a male family member to speak on their behalf, you know. So that is a problem, you know. But that's something I think that needs to increase and look at it. Again, I don't think it differs from the general Afghan population where widows obviously are a vulnerable group.

MR. SOLOMON: Okay. Well, I'd like to thank the audience very much for attending and for your interest in this topic. And I invite you to give the panelists a strong round of applause. Thank you.

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