
Danish Refugee Council in Iran

Strategic Programme Document

2016 – 2018



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1. Summary

The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) has been operational in Iran since the spring of 2012 through one office in Tehran. DRC Iran forms part of the regional DRC response to the Afghan displacement axis in Central and South West Asia (CASWA), covering Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan and Tajikistan. Throughout the region, DRC focuses on strengthening protection and supporting livelihoods in urban and peri-urban areas and is working to conduct cross border programming to support return where possible. DRC Iran's focus links strongly with DRC's global aim of finding solutions for displaced and conflict affected people based on their needs rather than their status. DRC Iran works in close partnership with the Government of Iran, the affected people themselves and international and local partner organizations.

2. Situation Analysis

2.1. Root Causes of Displacement in Iran

There have been thirty-five years of displacement in Iran for Afghans. The displacement commenced in the early 1980s and continues to the present day. The principal causes of the displacement to date are:

- ⊗ War and physical insecurity in Afghanistan, with a continued deterioration of the security situation since mid-2015
- ⊗ High levels of poverty amongst rural and urban communities in Afghanistan
- ⊗ The continued deterioration of labour market in Afghanistan
- ⊗ Public lack of confidence in the current Afghan government
- ⊗ The migration "crisis" in Europe acting as a pull factor for mixed migratory flows from Afghanistan through Iran.

2.2. Situation of Afghan Refugee Communities in Iran

UNHCR estimate an approximate number of 3.6 million displaced in Iran, with 979,410 documented (*Amayesh* card holders), 2 million undocumented, and 620,000 passport holders. 97% of the displaced live in urban and peri-urban areas.

Their situation in Iran and their prospects for return to Afghanistan are dictated by the following:

a. Repatriation: The deteriorating socio-economic and security situation on Afghanistan, the limited job opportunities within the country, lack of public faith in the current government, and continued fighting between the Taliban and government forces. The result is that conditions for repatriation are not conducive. Accordingly, return figures across Iran since 2015 have been at an all-time low and this situation is expected to remain.

b. Demography: A large majority of Afghans in Iran have been living in the country since birth and are under 30 years old. UNHCR reports the majority of voluntary returns to Afghanistan were temporary in nature in order for students to apply for student visas to attend Universities in Iran.

c. Services: Access to essential services for the displaced in Iran is improving. The Supreme Leader decreed in late 2015 that all children, including the undocumented, have a right to education in Iran. A corresponding 50,000 children have registered in 2016. This decree, along with the Universal Health Care Initiative to include documented refugees, while signaling an openness to refugee reform by the State, has also placed pressure on Iranian public infrastructure and human resources.

d. Legal Status: There are indications from the State that there is a strong possibility of moving towards a larger scale registration of the undocumented allowing for legalization of stay in Iran. The move to register the undocumented could be due both humanitarian and security reasons but, either way, will imply significant costs to the State as well as creating a possible pull factor for a new influx of migrants from Afghanistan.

e. Push and Pull Factors: The refugee and migrant influx into the EU is expected to shape the State's policy towards refugees in the coming years. The fact that the majority of Afghans entering Europe are either originating from Iran or using Iran as a transit country have refocused international attention the plight of refugees in Iran with UNHCR estimating 168,000 Afghans transiting Iran illegally in 2015. Afghans following the so called *Balkan Land Route* to Western Europe were singled by police authorities out as not being of need of international protection due to longer residence in a safe third country, such as Iran or Turkey.

f. Labour Market: Legislation of Iran prohibits a large swathe of the displaced population in Iran from obtaining Iranian work permits. The consequence of this ineligibility to work has been financial insecurity for households.

2.3. Key Duty Bearers

ACTOR	AREA	2016 - 18 FOCUS
Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs (BAFIA)	The main State interlocutor at central and provincial levels for humanitarian response	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Infrastructure and provision of equipment in health and education sectors 2. Partial opening to community based programming in limited partnership with LNGOs 3. Allowing limited income generating activities for Afghans but open to <i>innovation</i> 4. Universal Health Care Initiative 5. Provision of access to education for all children 6. Emergency assistance to the most vulnerable cases Increasing openness to accessing services to the undocumented
Local NGOs (LNGOS)	Nationwide	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Advocating for sustained and increased access to displaced communities 2. Working across all sectors but primarily health, education and livelihoods and rights based issues 3. Focus on documented, undocumented and host community 4. Seeking increased coordination with LNGOs and INGOs
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	Nationwide	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Protection, health, livelihoods and education sectors 2. Maintaining the Universal Health Insurance Programme, the 1soing high level negotiations with the MFA and BAFIA on RSD, the SSAR and vulnerability criteria standardization 3. Pursuing a community based approach to support opening up access to the undocumented, also coupled with bilateral and low key advocacy 4. Moving towards larger scale individual humanitarian assistance primarily through cash based assistance 5. Research on Secondary Movement towards Europe in collaboration with NRC and DRC

ACTOR	AREA	2016 - 18 FOCUS
Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)	Kerman, Alborz, Semnan, Tehran, Qom. Kerman province where it has a small sub-office.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scaling up in education as a global NRC priority and undocumented focus 2. 50% of its activities will be outside settlements in 2016 3. Scaling up unconditional cash transfers through food security programming
Relief International (RI)	Tehran, Khorasan Razavi, Yazd, Fars	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Capacity building of Civil Society Organizations 2. Health promotion, winterization, education, and scaling up unconditional cash transfers through food security programming 3. Advocating for access to the undocumented to provide individual humanitarian assistance
Doctors Without Borders (MSF)	Tehran, Kerman	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Operates a primary health care clinic for sex workers and drug users in southern Tehran 2. Establishing a tuberculosis (TB) referral system 3. Focus on access to healthcare for the undocumented

2.4. Risk and Mitigation

Field Safety: Field safety in Iran is excellent, rated at DRC SLS 1, though access is strictly controlled by the State. Iran has a functioning transport and communications infrastructure.

Principal Risks: Accordingly, the principal risks to the operational effectiveness of the DRC Iran office are related to: (a) the security environment in Afghanistan; (b) maintaining a productive working relationship with the Iranian Ministry of the Interior; and (c) the limited donor funding base in Iran.

RISK	LIKELY EFFECTS	MITIGATING MEASURES
Growing instability in Afghanistan	Reduced rate of refugee returns and extremely limited job placement from Iran to Afghanistan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pilot Cross Border Programming including durable solutions advocacy 2. Focus and advocacy on community based income generation opportunity in Iran

RISK	LIKELY EFFECTS	MITIGATING MEASURES
Disconnect between the strategic programming objectives of BAFIA and DRC	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Slow BAFIA approval processes 2. Access to local partners is restricted 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Advocacy for apprenticeship and job placement with government in collaboration with other NGOs. 1. Weekly meetings & sustained follow up through dedicated focal point 2. Memorandum of Understanding signed and adhered to by all parties 3. Inclusion at all levels of the programme cycle 4. Transparency in correspondence 5. Clear explanations / mentoring of humanitarian programming and cycles 6. Direct implementation by DRC
Decreasing funding base	Funding support from donors for the Iran Country Office remains unstable	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strong and pro-active fundraising with all major international donors 2. Engagement of private enterprises in Iran and Denmark which support corporate social responsibility (CSR)

3. Strategic vision and objectives of DRC in Iran

3.1. Strategic Programming Objectives

DRC's vision that no displaced person should be in need of assistance in Iran is explained through two principal strategic objectives (SOs):

Strategic Objective 1

To empower displacement affected people to become more self-reliant in pursuing transitional and durable solutions

Strategic Objective 2

To ensure that access to rights and essential services of the most vulnerable among displacement affected people is protected.

DRC uses the term displacement affected people to include both the displaced and the host community. The term also ensures the focus on meeting the needs of displaced

people rather than providing assistance based on their legal status in Iran. This is coupled with a global focus of ensuring displaced people remain the central agents of the humanitarian response. DRC's SO 1 is focused on livelihoods and SO 2 on protection and mixed migration programming, which are two of DRC's areas of global expertise.

3.2. Programming Objectives and Indicators of Success

3.2.1. Livelihoods

DRC currently works with the State run Technical and Vocational Training Organization to provide vocational training courses at both basic and advanced levels. In this strategic period, DRC will adopt a community based approach to programming to ensure (1) sustained access to the community to empower them in programme design and implementation and (2) equal access to documented and undocumented displaced. DRC will focus on developing income generation programmes in partnership with local organizations which will also include job opportunities, the provision of business grants and, cash transfer to enhance in food security. Vocational training will be linked to income generating opportunities wherever possible. Finally, all DRC livelihoods programming will have a strong protection component, ensuring community participation at all stages, and where local authorities and partners will identify and engage at risk and vulnerable displaced people for inclusion into programme activities. DRC will also engage in cross border programming between Iran and Afghanistan to support sustainable return. Target groups for all programming will be displaced people in urban and peri-urban areas in DRC's area of responsibility.

Strategic Objective One Indicators

1. % of livelihoods programming participants who report improved advantages in the job market
2. % increase in displacement affected people reporting improved access to basic needs in their household
3. Number of community based, partnership model livelihoods programmes operating sustainably over a two-year period.

3.2.2. Protection

DRC currently conducts programming in the provision of emergency assistance in cash or in kind to extremely vulnerable individuals regardless of status through its Individual Protection Assistance (IPA) programme. DRC has also conducted programming in health and education to date. In 2016-18, DRC will strengthen its protection strategy through proactively leading closer coordination with other protection agencies operating

in Iran to develop common approaches, to conduct joint advocacy, effective referrals, and the provision of coordinated and targeted support programmes, through developing the IPA programme further. Key target groups that have been identified through DRC operational experience in Iran, partners and local authorities are (1) women at risk, including survivors of gender based violence (2) children at risk (3) the elderly and (4) people with a disability. Protection programming, as a result, will focus on GBV prevention and response, child protection, youth empowerment, and EVI support with health and education components. Protection will also be mainstreamed across livelihoods programming.

3.2.3. Mixed Migration

As mixed migration is one of DRC's global strategic priorities in 2016, DRC Iran will spearhead the establishment of a Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat in the CASWA region. DRC Iran will contribute to developing a Mixed Migration Monitoring Initiative to monitor, identify and analyze protection trends and risks in mixed migratory flows and in particular the protection risks faced by people on the move. DRC Iran will establish a dedicated team producing reliable and regular qualitative and quantitative data for use by

Strategic Objective Two Indicators

1. % of emergency protection cases responded to directly or referred in a timely manner
2. % increase in GBV cases reported and responded to according to international standards
3. % increase in displacement affected people reporting improved access to essential services
4. # of protection risks identified by DRC through mixed migration monitoring successfully responded to by duty bearers.

partner agencies and policy makers on migration issues in the region.

3.2.4. Accountability

In 2016-18, DRC will also carry out its beneficiary selection jointly with BAFIA provincial staff. DRC will conduct preparatory meetings with the International Directorate of BAFIA in Tehran so that they are fully aware of new project activities that are being implemented in support of the displaced communities. At present, DRC's beneficiary-selection criteria are being coordinated with other agencies working on similar initiatives, such as UNHCR, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), and Relief International (RI). DRC

will, through community based programming and the partnership model, consult directly with displacement affected communities themselves in order to ensure that the most vulnerable households are included in all projects, and so that the process of community liaison and participation is open and transparent. DRC monitors its activities (with prior BAFIA approval) by means of beneficiary interviews and discussions. Furthermore, DRC's finance officer will visit the implementing partners on a bi-monthly basis to ensure their financial vouchers can be inspected and verified. Finance certification is a pre-requisite before any installments are paid to partners or contractors.

3.2.5. Exit Criteria

The needs of the displaced communities in Iran are expected to continue for many more years and it is probable that development projects in Iran coupled with the provision of individual humanitarian assistance to vulnerable individuals will be required for the foreseeable future. The Iran operation also remains of strategic importance to the DRC CASWA response with all countries in the region following similar sectorial programming in livelihoods and protection, cross border initiatives and mixed migration monitoring. Thus it is premature to define an exit strategy, DRC's exit from Iran will currently occur only if BAFIA refuse to extend the operating license of DRC in Iran, or if sustained donor funding for project activities is no longer tenable.

4. Capability

4.1. Relations with key stakeholders

Relating to pursuing transitional and durable solutions for conflict affected populations, DRC commits to pursuing ever closer coordination efforts with the Government of Iran and local and international partners to coordination bodies.

A) BAFIA DRC since 2012 has maintained a good working relationship with BAFIA. DRC conducts weekly meetings and routine written correspondence with BAFIA to ensure the State's inclusion at all stages of programme implementation, as well as for capacity building, advocacy and information sharing purposes. The State remains reluctant to develop joint coordination mechanisms preferring bilateral relations and restricted access to local NGOs.

B) UNHCR As a key partner for DRC in Iran, DRC will proactively engage with UNHCR in supporting the agencies efforts to establish community based programmes in the provinces DRC operates in, joint advocacy on documentation and vulnerability, and mixed migration programming. DRC will remain a supportive and active member of UNHCR's

Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) as it is the principal mechanism in Iran for the coordination of assistance to refugees by the United Nations, INGOs, Iranian NGOs, and the Governments of Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan. The SSAR highlights the need to empower Afghan refugees in Iran through improved education, access to health services, and diversified livelihoods training and opportunities. Local integration is not discussed in the SSAR but discussions on *stabilization* (a more politically neutral term but with the same meaning) of the displaced population in Iran have begun. DRC remain committed to supporting this strategy and will remain an integral part of the SSAR.

C) Local Partners Since the spring of 2012, DRC Iran has implemented most of its projects through local implementing partners, above all the Technical and Vocational Training Organization (TVTO) of the Iranian Ministry of Labour, and HAMI. The advantage of this operating method is that DRC has been able to capitalize on Iranian technical expertise for project implementation, which has enabled more rapid start-up times and a more efficient use of donor funding. In addition, local partners have excellent community acceptance and connections with other Iranian NGOs and with local government authorities; these connections have facilitated the necessary space for DRC to operate in Iran. For all these reasons, the partnership model is preferred, though it remains prone to restrictions by the State. It is also more economical for DRC and financially supports LINGOs efforts to become sustainable in Iran.

D) Coordination Mechanisms DRC is committed to developing a cooperative and mutually supporting coordination environment in Iran. As a result DRC participates actively and takes a leadership and facilitator role where necessary in the SSAR, the Protection Working Group, the Joint Livelihoods Working Group, the Education Working Group and senior management coordination meetings. DRC will advocate in this period for the inclusion of local partners where possible.

4.2. Area of Responsibility

DRC, with the approval of the Government of Iran, is working in Tehran and Alborz provinces in 2016 to ensure effective community access and participation and also accountable monitoring and evaluation systems. Projects established in these provinces at the community level can be replicated in other provinces in 2017-18 pending funding; in particular Fars and Yazd provinces where DRC has prior operational experience and experience of working in partnership with local authorities and the UNHCR.

Displaced statistics from UNHCR (2015):

1. Tehran – 265,000 Afghan / 6,000 Iraqi Refugees – documented (x 2.5 for undocumented)
2. Alborz – 36,000 Afghan documented (x2.5 for undocumented)
3. Fars – 58,500 Afghan / 1000 Iraqi – documented (x2.5 for undocumented)
4. Yazd- 27,000 Afghan / 2600 Iraqi – documented (x2.5 for undocumented)

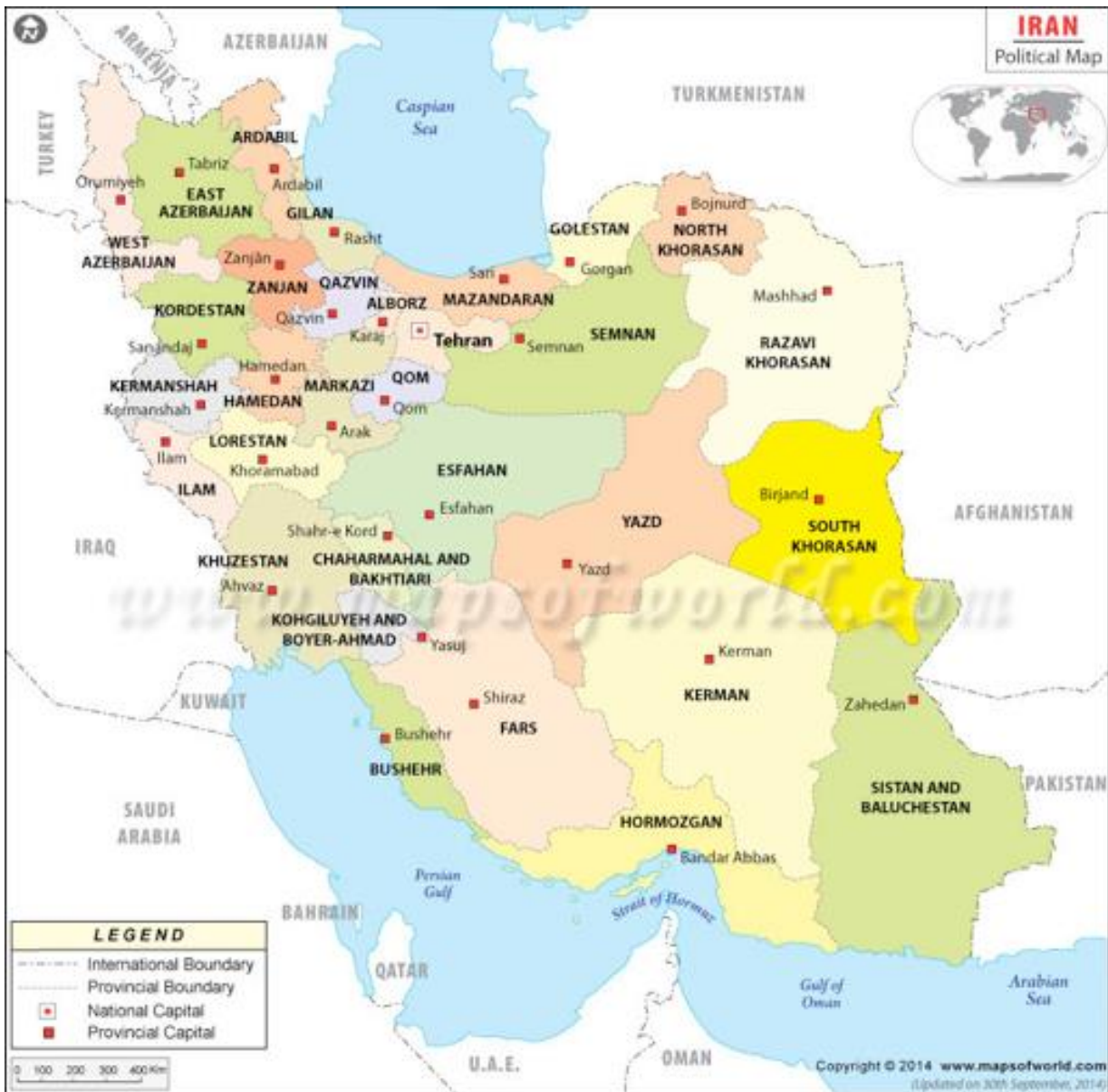
4.3. Human Resources (HR)

See annexed organogram for DRC Iran. In the period 2016-18, DRC will renew efforts to ensure staff retention through nationalization of posts where possible, a defined training and mentoring plan, and coordinated induction programmes. Staff capacity and well-being budget allocations will form part of all proposal submissions. DRC Iran will harmonize job descriptions, HR manual and salary scale across the CASWA region. DRC is currently not registered in Iran, as is the case for all INGOs, DRC will take active measures to ensure it is a registered and legal entity operating in country.

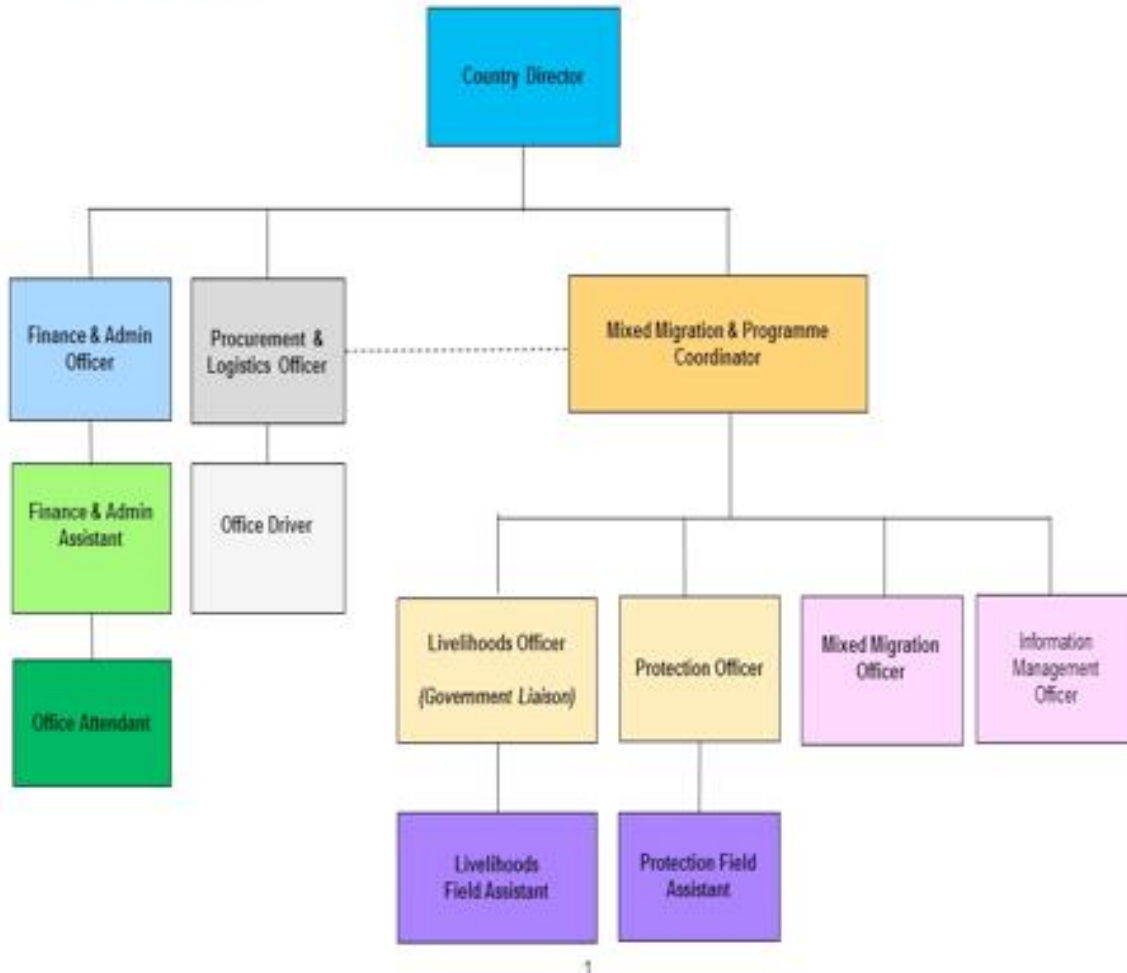
4.4. Funding

Given the global context of record levels of displacement and conflict, the funding situation in Iran requires sustained and active engagement with both traditional and corporate sources. Key donors for DRC Iran will remain DANIDA, the German Foreign Office, the EC and ECHO. Joint donor funding proposals with the UN and INGOs should be considered along with a demonstrable commitment to coordinated responses. To maintain a productive relationship with the State, DRC's displacement solutions focus must find a balance between short-term humanitarian funding cycles and longer-term style projects with the State prizing infrastructure in health and education above community and individual level engagement. DRC globally must engage with donors to ensure their full understanding of the new strategic vision for DRC transcending the humanitarian and development divide. Fundraising opportunities with corporate donors should be sought in particular to finance community based infrastructure projects. The State also advocates with the humanitarian community for more *innovative* forms of livelihoods programming implying an openness to a wider range of income generating activities in Iran over the coming years. Given the migration flows into the EU, donors are showing increasing focus on cash based programming, livelihoods and mixed migration initiatives. Current funding for DRC in Iran averages about USD 1.75 million per year. DRC in order to retain its strategic position in the CASWA response should at a minimum maintain the amount of 2 million USD per year. However, to expand programming in other provinces, be accountable and / or to operate a satellite office, a budget of USD 3 million is required. Two to three

year cycles of funding are required to ensure the sustainability of programmes in the country and to maintain the State's positive relationship with DRC as the State seeks longer term solutions to the issues affecting displaced people.



Annex 1 – Provincial Map of Iran



Annex 2 – Organogram of Danish Refugee Council in Iran