



GVP Consulting

DANISH REFUGEE COUNCIL

CONFRONTED WITH DESPAIR & DISILLUSIONMENT

**A qualitative research into the
Afghan Diaspora's perceptions
about information-sharing with
migrants**

December 2019





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Abbreviations and Acronyms

4Mi	Mixed Migration Monitoring Mechanism Initiative
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
EASO	European Asylum Support Office
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
MMC	Mixed Migration Centre

Executive Summary

The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) decided to enhance protection information for displaced people from Afghanistan through collaborative engagement with diaspora communities in Europe. As part of a three-year project, launched in June 2019, the research ‘Confronted between Despair & Disillusionment’ aims to understand the views of selected Afghan diasporas in Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands on irregular migration. The paper explores the diasporas’ own role and connections with a focus on information sharing in particular in relation to protection assistance to displacement affected people in country of origin and on the move. This document reports the findings of this research.

The research is based on two qualitative data collection methods: a desk review and twelve focus group discussions with diaspora members in Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands, conducted between September and November 2019. In total, 102 Afghans residing in Europe were consulted with regard to the four research topics: connections, role, information-sharing and potential support. Focus group discussion participants represented various population groups within the Afghan diaspora: men and women, younger and older members, older and new arrivals, and different ethnicities.

The research resulted in the **following main findings:**

Connections:

Communication channels between the diaspora and migrants are based on existing connections and use a variety of communication means. However, there are differences between European diaspora in how much the topic of migration is discussed. The initiative comes mainly from the person interested in migrating, with some proactive behaviour on the side of the diaspora. Trust plays a key role in determining who to ask for information. Diaspora organisations and respected individuals are also contacted by people they do not know.

Although women and youths are said to exchange information, the tendency is for men asking for advice to people perceived to be knowledgeable. This potentially leaves children and women in a disadvantaged position, but increasingly, educated female diaspora members have more knowledge on the matter as well. From the perspective of the diaspora, most potential migrants will ask for advice before departure. However, the diaspora has no influence on the actual decision to migrate, and are at times confronted with a ‘fait accompli’.

Information-Sharing

The main message of the diaspora toward potential migrants is not to come. For them, the potential risks en route do not outweigh the benefits of successful migration. However, what potential migrants mostly want to know about is what to expect upon arrival and how to make their migration successful. Due to the mismatch in information-sharing and the tendency to provide a generic answer, information from the diaspora is often not used and their advice not effective.

Different information is shared between men and women, resulting in the fact that (potential) female and male migrants have distinct kinds of information. Whereas diaspora want to share a true picture, this is hampered by cultural issues, lack of consistency across diaspora and the (unintentional) image of their own situation. At the same time, diaspora often do not have a full picture of the protection risks and stated to lack information, in particular on specific legal issues.

Role

Most Afghan diaspora members think they have a role in terms of information-sharing with potential and actual migrants. Where some are convinced of the need for better information, other Afghans doubt that better information would lead to safer migration. Nevertheless, the role of diaspora is influenced by a number of factors: on the side of the recipient, on the side of the sender and due to contextual aspects.

When despair is high, having a realistic picture of the protection risks, will make no difference to decision-making. Women and families are more open to information than young men who are ready to take risks, but suffer from the actual challenges upon arrival. Diaspora remain only one information source for the migrants, and their message has not been strong enough to counter false information, myths or rumours.

Potential Support

Afghan migrants have information gaps which the diaspora can fill. However, the diaspora needs guidance on how they can better take up their role in sharing information, taking into account their paradoxical situation. Therefore, it is recommended to strengthen the messages of diaspora, including through the development of more proactive and creative ways of sharing information. In addition, awareness-raising should take place in the importance of the matter and of existing initiatives.

The research concludes that a lack of credibility is the major hindering factor for diaspora to take on their role of sharing information with Afghan migrants. Trust, although perceived to be an important aspect in Afghan society, has proven to be insufficient in overcoming this problem. It is suggested that the main message of diaspora, "Don't come", should be changed. There is a need to move away from advising into actual information-sharing.

For information to be used in order to enhance safe migration, messages need to be tailored, in particular to the vulnerable parts of the population. The ambition should be about sharing practical tips. This kind of information is expected to enhance safer behaviour on routes, possibly leading to less suffering and perhaps even saving some lives. Migrants tend to lack the current information needed to be able to counter information of the smugglers or have so far not been able to sufficiently share the real stories and traumatic experiences Afghan migrants have gone through.

The potential of diaspora to inform (potential) migrants about the dangers en route and the conditions upon arrival is not exhausted yet. A strengthened, tailored and consistent message from diaspora is the only answer. They would need support on how best to do that, building on the good work already done.

1. INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

This research explores the perceptions of Afghan diaspora¹ in Europe of their role and connection to the current migration flow into Europe. Previous research, including from the Danish Refugee Council (DRC)², has identified a need to further explore the relationship between Afghan Diaspora and potential Afghan migrants³ or migrants who are already en route.

A particular problem statement is the following: Afghan migrants are faced with numerous protection risks during their journey or upon arrival. However, research⁴ has indicated that one out of three Afghan migrants does not have a realistic or accurate picture of the possible protection risks en route, their rights and ways to access services or the asylum procedures upon arrival. This is despite the fact that many Afghans have undertaken the journey to Europe in the past years and in previous decades. In addition, research from the Mixed Migration Centre (MMC)⁵ has indicated that friends and family in the country of origin form one of the main information sources prior to and during migration. This paradox requires further understanding.

Attention to this problem is justified since recent statistics of Eurostat and EASO indicate that Afghans were the second largest group among asylum-seekers arriving in the European Union in 2018 (total of 12,290 registered applications), including one third of all requests made in Germany.⁶ MMC updates state that as of 2018, Afghans have become the largest national group arriving in Greece from Turkey outnumbering the Syrian migrant population.⁷

¹ "Emigrants and their descendants, who live outside the country of their birth or ancestry, either on a temporary or permanent basis, yet still maintain affective (emotional) and material ties to their countries of origin." Source: IOM and the Migration Policy Institute. 'Developing a Road Map for Engaging Diasporas in Development: A Handbook for Policymakers and Practitioners in Home and Host Countries,' 2012.

² DRC & RMMS (December 2017). 'Split Loyalties: Mixed Migration and the Diaspora Connection'.

³ This report will use the term 'migrant' to refer to "people who have moved from their habitual place of residence, regardless of motivation and legal status, including refugees and asylum seekers protected under the 1951 Refugee Convention, as well as people moving through informal or irregular means, leaving their homes in search of a better future in more affluent parts of the world." Source : DRC & RMMS (December 2017). 'Split Loyalties: Mixed Migration and the Diaspora Connection'.

⁴ Mixed Migration Centre (September 2018). 'No choice but to keep going forward. Experiences of female refugees & migrants in origin, transit and destination countries. A comparative study of women on the move from Afghanistan, East and West Africa'.

⁵ Mixed Migration Centre, Monthly Migration Movements, Social Media, August 2018.

⁶ Accessed through Mixed Migration Centre (2nd Quarter 2019). 'Mixed Migration Regional Updates. Mixed Migration from Asia to Europe'.

⁷ Mixed Migration Centre (3rd Quarter 2019). 'Mixed Migration Regional Updates. Mixed Migration from Asia to Europe'.



This research

The Danish Refugee Council decided to enhance protection information for displaced people from Afghanistan through collaborative engagement with diaspora communities in Europe.

This research is part of the DRC project "Enhancing Protection Information for Displaced People from Afghanistan through Collaborative Engagement with Diaspora Communities in Europe", funded by the Mixed Migration Grant of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and implemented in the time frame of June 2019 until June 2021. The project aims for 'Afghans on the move and Afghans considering migrating through irregular means to have a realistic and credible picture of the journey, understand the protection risks and their rights'. Afghan migrants should be able to make informed decisions in any given situation to reduce exposure to protection risks. This 36-months project aims to support members of the Afghan diaspora in Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands to engage with migrants and refugees in a way that reduces protection risks.

This research is a first step in this project⁸ in order to inform the project, and therefore aims: *To understand the views of selected Afghan diasporas in Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands on irregular migration, including an exploration of diasporas' own role and connections with a focus on information sharing in particular in relation to protection assistance to displacement affected persons in country of origin and on the move.*

Objective:

The objective of the research is to collect and analyse Afghan diaspora's perceptions of their role and connections to the current migration flow from Afghanistan to Europe.

Specific objectives:

1. To document good practices in relation to diaspora protection information management
2. To map existing Afghan information sources and channels (including ICT)
3. To explore how the information ranks with regard to credibility, importance and usage

Expected outcome

To explore the most effective options for successful assistance to the diaspora communities in Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands.

Target audience

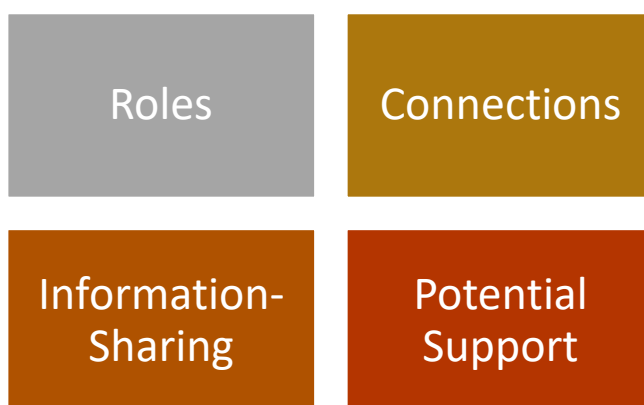
Women and boys/young are the primary target audience of the project due to their increased exposure to potential risks.

⁸ Information on how this research fits into the log frame of this project can be found in Annex I.

1. METHODOLOGY

Research Questions

The research was facilitated by breaking down the research question into four topics, namely



The four research topics were explored by using a number of research questions, based on the original ToRs and complemented after a first desk review. A research framework was drafted and provided the basis for the interview guides and the analysis.⁹

Scope

The research aimed at dealing with a particular and well-defined topic: the support of Afghan diaspora toward migrants prior to leaving or already 'en route' to Europe in terms of information-sharing. The focus was on diaspora communities in Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands, and those individuals who are in contact with migrants from Afghanistan. The focus was on the current migration flows, and how the Afghan diaspora has supported the migrants through information sharing in the recent past (roughly as of 2015). Whereas the diaspora supports Afghan migrants in a number of ways, including money transfer, provision of shelter or donation of goods, the research looked into support through information-sharing only.

Data collection methods

The research consisted of two qualitative data collection methods:

1. The **desk research** consisted of a review of reports from the Mixed Migration Centre, Mixed Migration Monitoring Mechanism Initiative, Danish Refugee Council, UNHRC, IOM, other NGOs and academic papers. A first phase of the desk research was conducted before the drafting of the inception report, in early September and served

⁹ The research framework can be found in Annex II.

as a basis to develop the research methodology and data collection tools. More literature was collected during the rest of the data collection phase.¹⁰

- The main data collection tool was the **focus group discussions** (FGD) held in the three project countries, namely Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands from September to November 2019. Primary data collection was the most important information source for the report. The research included twelve focus group discussions, as depicted in Figure 1. In the context of the DRC project, data from returnees and potential Afghan migrants are collected by the Mixed Migration Centre. These two researches need to be perceived as complementary.

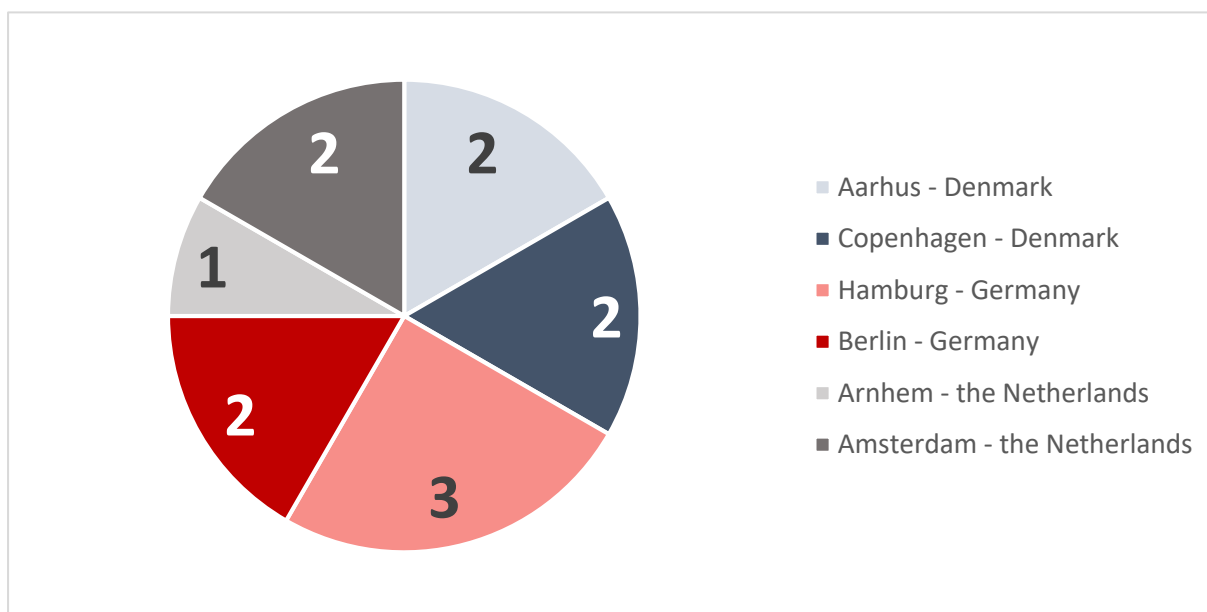


Figure 1: Number of Focus Group Discussions per Location

102 Afghan diaspora members were consulted in these twelve focus group discussions. Figure 2 represents the division across the three countries and according to gender:

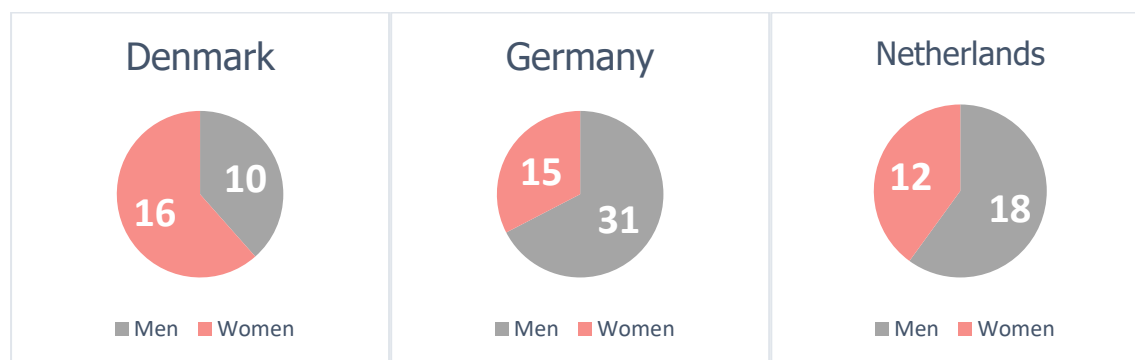


Figure 2: Number of FGD participants per country and according to gender

¹⁰ A list of the documents reviewed can be found in Annex III.



The focus group discussions were carefully planned to guarantee the validity and quality of the collected data and to maximize the representativeness of the opinions shared:

- **Questions:** Interview guides¹¹ were developed to support the data collection, but the FGDs were more of a semi-structured nature to engage participants and to facilitate the conversation. As a result, some FGDs focused more on a particular research topic than others, however the four main themes were discussed in all twelve group discussions.
- **Size:** The ideal size of FGDs was set to be around eight people, however the actual participation proved difficult to control. In the end, focus group discussions gathered between three to fourteen participants. Larger FGDs were compensated with more time.
- **Participation:** Discussions lasted between 1h10 and 1h45. Efforts were made to engage all participants in the discussions. Naturally, some people spoke more than others.
- **Location:** In each country, two cities were selected as follows: either there was a high concentration of Afghan diaspora, or the city would be a central point for Afghans in other regions. The discussions took place in a comfortable and neutral environment, mostly in hotels centrally located. In Denmark, they took place on weekday evenings and in Germany and the Netherlands during the weekends in order to maximize participation. Food and beverages were provided.
- **Confidentiality:** At the outset, participants were assured that the discussions would remain confidential. The researcher was not given any names thereby to ensuring that no direct references could be made. Once permission was given from the FGD participants, discussions were audio recorded for the sake of accuracy. All recordings were deleted following transcription. Any names mentioned in the discussions, were not included in the notes.
- **Bilateral follow-up:** The coffee breaks provided a good occasion for bilateral follow-up and more personal discussions with the participants.
- **Selection:** The invitation to participants was the responsibility of the DRC project officer, who had direct contact with the Afghan diaspora. Invitations were distributed across networks in each country. There was less control over the exact selection than would have been methodologically preferred.
- **Translation:** All discussions were facilitated by a translator (English to Farsi and back). No Pashto translation was necessary. Some participants opted to talk directly in German, English or Dutch with the researcher.

As a result, the research reached its target level of participants, and even exceeded it, as demonstrated in Table 1.

Country	Target	Actual
Denmark	20	26
Germany	40	46
Netherlands	30	30
TOTAL	90	102

Table 1: Number of Afghan diaspora members consulted per Country: Targeted and Actual

¹¹ The interview guidance can be found in Annex IV.



Research Challenges

Anticipated Challenges	Impact on Findings
<p>The qualitative research was not expected to be statistically correct given that this is a qualitative social research and due to the small number of FGD participants in comparison with the overall diaspora population.</p>	<p>Eventually, more diaspora members were consulted in this research than was foreseen: 102 instead of 90. The FGD were successful in attracting a variety of backgrounds and opinions. Gender balance was acceptable (42%). The FGD included old and new arrivals (about one quarter of the total had arrived since 2015), young and old Afghans (with youngest being 17 and some born in Europe), legal and illegal arrivals, and different ethnicities, including Pashtoon, Tajik and Hazara. The ethnic influence could not be sufficiently explored since it proved to be too sensitive. Also the difference between high and low sending areas could not be looked into within the scope of the FGDs. FGDs were set-up according to gender in Denmark and according to age in Germany and the Netherlands. Eventually, ages were mixed in most discussions and depended on the availability of participants.</p>
<p>New arrivals would be reluctant to speak openly.</p>	<p>The FGD successfully included several new arrivals, especially in Germany. The person arriving last had come to Germany in April 2019. As such, the research included the latest perspectives. The set-up of the research did not consult any children who had recently travelled.</p>
<p>Focus group discussions would only gather those who are willing to talk and share their story.</p>	<p>Whereas inside contacts within the diaspora were used to attract participants, it should be accepted that probably only the more engaged Afghans participated in the discussions. Most participants supported the idea of sharing information with migrants, however a small minority did not see the purpose of it.</p>
<p>The research topic was deemed to be of a sensitive nature for diaspora communities. There was concern that they could misunderstand the objective of the research, namely that the project aims to halt the migration rather than enhancing the protection of potential and actual migrants</p>	<p>The invitation was sent out together with a one-pager explaining the research objects and why the research might be of interest to participants. Confidentiality was assured, even though the sessions were audio recorded for transcription purposes. However, the discussions often lost focus and participants, especially the elderly, regularly elaborated on the political dimensions of the topic. This tendency was influenced by the latest political developments in Afghanistan.</p>
<p>DRC had little experience of engaging with the Dutch diaspora and it was foreseen to</p>	<p>IOM was not involved in the end, but the DRC project officer successfully reached out to Dutch diaspora organisations and gained their interest in the project.</p>



<p>rely on mapping of other organisations, including IOM</p>	
<p>The smugglers have a central role in terms of information-sharing, but the scope of the research did not include their perspectives.</p>	<p>This is a limitation that should be accepted, since it falls out of the scope of the research. FGD participants did mention the role of smugglers and how it influenced their capacity to share information.</p>

Figure 3 demonstrates the year of arrival of FGD participants and clearly indicates the variety of profiles represented in the discussions.

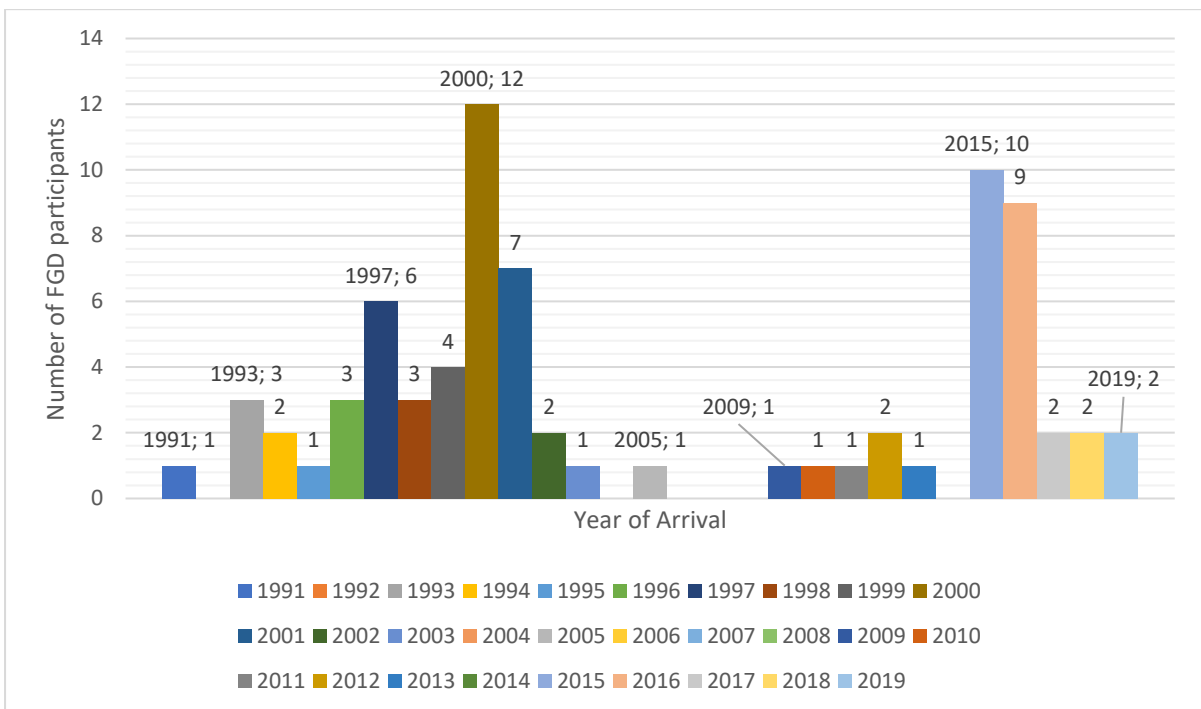


Figure 3: Year of Arrival (for 77 out of 102 FGD participants) – For 25 participants, the year was not provided in the FGD, although most of the 25 people had arrived more than 20 years ago.



2. RESEARCH FINDINGS

A DRC research paper from December 2017 stated that the perceptions of diaspora vis-à-vis the current mixed migration flows are insufficiently understood.¹² The research paper 'Confronted with Despair & Disillusionment' builds on the findings of the DRC research paper by zooming in on the aspect of information-sharing between the two groups of Afghans, and further examining how these interactions affect diaspora perceptions and migrant decisions.¹³ Whereas most findings of the previous research will be confirmed, this new research approach allows us to shed more light on a number of prior observations due to its strong focus on Afghan diaspora in three European countries and its narrow research question.

In the following sections, the findings are organized according to one of the four research topics: connections, information-sharing, role and potential support. The section will first provide key findings for this topic and then deepen into the findings organized by thematic area.

2.1 Connections

Key findings

- Communication channels are based on existing connections and use a variety of communication means. There are differences between European diaspora in how much the topic of migration is discussed. The initiative comes mainly from the person interested in migrating, with little indication of proactive behaviour on the part of the diaspora.
- Trust plays a key role in determining who to ask for information. Diaspora organisations and respected individuals are also contacted by people unknown to them.
- Although women and youths are said to exchange information, the greater tendency is for men asking advice to people assumed to be well informed. This potentially leaves children and women at a disadvantage, but educated female diaspora members increasingly have more knowledge on the matter.
- From the perspective of diaspora, most potential migrants will ask for advice before departure. However, the diaspora has no influence on the actual decision to migrate, and are at times confronted with a 'fait accompli'.

Regular contact between Afghan Diaspora and Afghanistan

Afghan diaspora are in frequent contact with family, relatives and friends in Afghanistan. FGD participants confirmed they were often in weekly contact, or even on a daily basis, with close

¹² DRC & RMMS (December 2017). 'Split Loyalties: Mixed Migration and the Diaspora Connection'.

¹³ DRC & RMMS (December 2017). 'Split Loyalties: Mixed Migration and the Diaspora Connection', p. 6.



family. Extended family members were contacted for special occasions. Since the notion of family is rather extensive for Afghans, it can be assumed that the diaspora is in contact with a wide spectrum of people.

Two additional observations from the FGD were that, first, several FGD participants were in regular contact with people in Afghanistan for professional reasons, and second, also the second generation of diaspora had contact with cousins and other family members, even if less frequently than their parents.

The most frequent communication means were by phone, including Skype, Whatsapp or Lyca, messenger services, and Facebook and other social media. FGD participants also referred to personal or professional visits to the country as an information-sharing tool. The choice of means depended on the internet access of relatives in Afghanistan.

In addition, diaspora organisations were said to be running TV and radio programmes, including through social media.

Migration as a common topic in communication

Previous DRC research concluded that there is limited communication between diaspora and migrants about what is involved in migrating before the actual journey starts.¹⁴ The data collection of this research partly contradicts this finding. The topic of migration is frequently discussed in these conversations, but the depth to which it is discussed depends. Some FGD participants were more open to talk about the topic than others, but in the end all seem to talk about the matter or are asked for advice. Only few participants barely discuss migration and few report their relatives in Afghanistan as having no interest in migrating.

From the FGD, it appeared that the subject is less discussed for example with young diaspora members, who have been living most of their lives in Europe. They rather exchange information on their lives – usual topics for their age. Youngsters are interested in the matter, but their experience with the topic is indirect, through listening to their parents' conversations.

Migration is a topic for discussion when these young Afghans later engage professionally in the matter. In the FGD, there were several young professionals, such as lawyers, who focused in their profession in assisting Afghans in Afghanistan or Afghan migrants. For them, the topic of migration stood central in their exchanges with fellow Afghans.

Migration is not only discussed with Afghan nationals in Afghanistan given that many Afghans have been living in Iran, Pakistan or Turkey. Family or friends may be living there and contact the diaspora in Europe, or the Afghans in Europe may have lived themselves in these countries and maintain contact with their network. Defining contact between diaspora and (possible) Afghan migrants should be understood in a broad sense.

¹⁴ DRC & RMMS (December 2017). 'Split Loyalties: Mixed Migration and the Diaspora Connection'.



Trust is an important element in the establishment of contact lines¹⁵

There are three patterns in terms of how potential Afghan migrants discuss the topic with the diaspora.

1. Most diaspora members are asked about migration as part of their usual communication patterns. This means that they talk about migration with people they know. Within these kinship relations, usual societal customs are mainly conducted on the basis of age and gender. Younger people will reach out to younger family members, whereas older people to older diaspora members. *"Those who consult me are completely different categories than my mum."* Men will usually contact men, and women discuss with female members. *"My uncles would never consult me on leaving Afghanistan, they would rather consult my parents."*

However, the pattern is not strict and changes take place reflecting the development of the society and in particular of the diaspora in Europe. In the younger generation, gender-differences are less pronounced and contact between women and men is easier. Due to the education level of some female diaspora members, they also might be contacted due to their knowledge of the matter.

2. A second category of people is those who call respected people within the diaspora community. Usually, these are men who used to have a prominent job within Afghan society and who remain trusted. They may have been referred to by a third party and thus advise people whom they do not directly know. At this level, trust and respect are central aspects.
3. Members of diaspora organisations report being frequently contacted, including by people they do not know. For example, a member of a diaspora organisation in the Netherlands reported being contacted two to three times per week on Facebook with questions from all kinds of people: men, families, young people. These questions also include specific kinds of requests for assistance.

In general, it was said that it was mainly men who asked for advice on migration. Women were said to have less access to a phone or the internet and thus have less information, although the literature stated that women with access to information sources would not have full awareness either.¹⁶ One person said that both migrants and their families asked for information. If a cousin wanted to migrate, diaspora talked to the child and the parents, and was at times a mediator in the decisions.

Less contact during travel

Most conversations seem to take place when the migrants are still at their starting point, be it in Afghanistan or another country. When people reach out to the diaspora en route, it is

¹⁵ The influence of ethnicity on the contact lines could not be explored in the focus group discussions due to the sensitivity of the matter.

¹⁶ Mixed Migration Centre (September 2018). 'No choice but to keep going forward. Experiences of female refugees & migrants in origin, transit and destination countries. A comparative study of women on the move from Afghanistan, East and West Africa'.



usually because they have run into problems and they need specific advice, assistance or money. Smugglers take advantage of the connections between migrants and diaspora by asking for additional money and extorting the diaspora.¹⁷ Migrants often resume contact when they have arrived at an intermediary station, such as in Turkey. One recently arrived person said that he blocked some of his contacts who were calling him frequently asking for support for their difficult living situation in Turkey or Greece.

FGD participants who recently arrived referred to challenges of remaining in contact with family and friends during the journey. Someone explained that contact until Turkey was possible, but beyond that point, contact was lost. Challenges included not knowing where they were or the inability to purchase a SIM card, including due to language difficulties. This seems to confirm findings of a UNHCR report that Afghan migrants rarely possess mobile phones en route, and that one of the first actions upon arrival was to buy a smartphone. However, FGD participants did indicate the use of smart phones during travel as well, then again supporting findings from MMC that social media is used as a source of information.¹⁸ The present research indicates that mobile phones are used during travel, but not on a consistent basis, be it for finding information or for contact with people in Europe. A difference would therefore have to be made between access to the internet and having a SIM card: only 43% had a smartphone, but 80% had a phone while travelling.¹⁹ It seems certain that without a phone or the internet, contact with diaspora was limited and the dependency on the smugglers to receive information increased.²⁰

Limited influence of Afghan diaspora

Several diaspora members complained that in the past they were sometimes informed too late about departures, or not consulted at all. "*Oftentimes, we don't even know that they have plans to come. They just show up and we learned it from other people that they are already here.*" As such, it can also be for them a *fait accompli*. Especially, young people may take the decision to migrate in a rapid manner, whereby societal dynamics play a role in the decision to migrate and the willingness to accept risks. (to which we will come back to later). It was said that such young people would arrange all in secrecy, even vis-à-vis their parents. This seems to imply that the actual influence of the diaspora on the decision-making is limited, and the diaspora can try to influence, but lacks the authority to decide.

The frequency of being contacted differed between individuals (and research countries). Whereas some participants stated to be contacted several times a week for advice, others referred to cases of one or two times a year, once a quarter, and a minority said that they were never contacted. An influencing factor seems to be the situation in Afghanistan – when the security situation deteriorates; more advice about how to leave the country is asked. This

¹⁷ DRC & RMMS (December 2017). 'Split Loyalties: Mixed Migration and the Diaspora Connection'.

¹⁸ Mixed Migration Centre (August 2018) & 4Mi. 'Monthly Migration Movements. Social media'. Data from UNHCR report was retrieved from this text.

¹⁹ BRENNER (Yermi) and FROUWS (Bram) (23 January 2019). 'Hype or hope? Evidence on use of smartphones and social media in mixed migration'

²⁰ DRC & RMMS (June 2016). 'Getting to Europe the 'WhatsApp' way'. The use of ICT in contemporary mixed migration flows to Europe'.



goes in line with findings of the SEEFAR study that when there is optimism about the peace process, fewer respondents intend to emigrate irregularly.²¹

Whereas in most cases, reference was made to potential migrants as initiating the conversation about migration, some FGD participants stated that whenever they have the opportunity to talk to relatives, they would bring up the matter themselves. Some of the diaspora organisations have TV and radio programmes, which were said to discuss the topic of migration, and they broadcast their activities and conferences online. Except for that, they did not have proactive activities in engaging with potential migrants. Usually, they were being contacted.

2.2 Information-sharing

Key findings

- The main message of diaspora toward potential migrants is not to come. For them, the potential risks en route do not outweigh the benefits of successful migration.
- The main information requirement of potential migrants is different, and they mainly ask about what they should expect and how to make their migration successful. Their information need is less in terms of 'should I migrate or not'.
- Due to the mismatch in information-sharing and the tendency to provide a generic answer, the information given by diaspora is often not used and their advice is not effective.
- Different information is shared between men and women, resulting in the fact that (potential) female and male migrants have distinct kinds of information.
- Diaspora want to share a true picture, but this is hampered by cultural issues, lack of consistency across diaspora and the (unintentional) image of their own situation.
- Diaspora often don't have a full picture of the protection risks and reported having a lack of information, in particular on specific legal issues.

Incomplete knowledge of the diaspora about protection risks

Diaspora share the opinion that the migration route from Afghanistan to Europe is dangerous. However, the degree of knowledge of diaspora of the protection risks varies considerably. The communities are very diverse, mainly due to the different years of arrival in Europe and the mode of migration they have used themselves. Some have personal experiences about the current routes, others only know it from reported stories. Emotions (and traumas) further influence the picture. Everybody has a piece of the puzzle, but nobody has the general overview.

FGD participants referred to a variety of dangers migrants are faced with. Drowning was a risk that was frequently mentioned. Some interviewees had travelling companions drowning.

²¹ SEEFAR (August 2019). 'How the Afghan peace process and emotional well-being impact migration decision-making. Findings from Wave 4 of a longitudinal study on Afghan irregular migration'.

Others had had relatives lost at sea. A third category had helped receive the boats on the Greek islands, or had been dealing with the dead bodies. The crossing from Pakistan into Iran, and in Iran, was generally perceived as a particularly dangerous part of the travel, due to the mountains, long walks and the possibility of being shot at. The problematic human rights situation in Eastern Europe was another risk mentioned.

The situation in the refugee camps in Greece was often referred to, but some FGD participants said that they only fully realized the extent of the misery when they came to see it for themselves, despite the fact that they already had families living there. Such experiences were 'eye'-opening, even though they thought they would be prepared for it. According to the MMC Mixed Migration Regional Update of the 2nd Quarter of 2019²², 42% of the current refugee and migrant population on the Aegean islands were Afghans, indicating that the situation on the Greek islands is growing in importance for the Afghan community.

Especially, the new arrivals (some of which were likely to still be traumatized) were very outspoken on the protection risks of the journey and firmly stated that if one wanted to travel along the route, they need to accept a 100% risk of death and rape. Several of them shared bitter stories about their experiences.

Conditions upon arrival and the asylum-process are the questions most asked by potential migrants

When potential migrants contact their networks in Europe, they mainly asked for information about a possible future for them in Europe and about what would happen upon their arrival. They looked for feedback on the asylum-seeking process and living conditions in Europe, such as *'How can we live here normally? Will we be accepted? How can we integrate? Can we continue our studies?'* A recurring question was which country is best or where will we be accepted. Such kinds of requests for information are valid given the huge differences between countries in terms of accepting Afghan asylum requests.²³ This also confirms the finding of SEEFAR Wave 4 study that destination choices are influenced by contacts abroad.²⁴

Potential migrants further sought advice on how to prepare their cases to be accepted and to be granted asylum. They want to know which story to tell in order to increase their chances. Some requests of potential migrants were not in the capacity of the diaspora, such as securing a visa in a given country, or assisting in the asylum-seeking decision-making.

Furthermore, potential migrants asked which route they should take to Europe. *"When entire families want to come, they ask which way is safe. When they have economic problems, they ask which way is cheaper."* A recurring request to Afghan diaspora was to tell them when the routes were open again, or to seek verification of rumours that the route was indeed open or of information on open media of what is the cheapest route. Only few FGD participants said that potential migrants ask about the conditions of the routes, and for their own experiences.

²² Mixed Migration Centre (2nd Quarter 2019). 'Mixed Migration Regional Updates. Mixed Migration from Asia to Europe'.

²³ Mixed Migration Centre (1st Quarter 2019). 'Mixed Migration Regional Updates. Mixed Migration from Asia to Europe'.

²⁴ SEEFAR (August 2019). 'How the Afghan peace process and emotional well-being impact migration decision-making. Findings from Wave 4 of a longitudinal study on Afghan irregular migration'.



There are also indications that potential migrants ask the diaspora which smugglers are most effective in bringing them to Europe, which would be confirmed by other reports stating that smugglers get in contact with their clients through referrals from other smugglers, friends and family.²⁵

Diaspora's main message is 'Don't come'

The main message provided by the diaspora to any request for information is not to come. Whereas there is an understanding in the diaspora of the difficult situation in Afghanistan and for the desire of people to leave, they are of the opinion that the risks of the journey, the difficult living circumstances in Europe and the low probability of being accepted are not worth taking the risk. This seems to be a generalized answer, no matter the needs and backgrounds of the people. Some diaspora members stated that they did not answer any of the specific questions potential migrants may have, but only gave this standard answer.

Where possible, advice is given to look for alternatives, including to apply for a visa for countries like Turkey or Central-Asia, in order to avoid the dangerous route through Iran. There was an increased awareness about the internal difficulties in Iran, which actually corresponds with the declining number of migrants wanting to go through Iran.²⁶ One woman said that she advises them to travel to Turkey as a compromise, which she said was closer to Afghan culture. Another example: FGD participants advised family members, in particular the educated ones, to look for scholarships, but at the same time criticized the corrupt system in Afghanistan where scholarships did not always go to those who applied for it. Some filled in the US visa lottery for their relatives, just to try something, or suggested looking for skilled labour needs in certain countries. Several women openly stated that they advise the potential migrant to find a spouse in the diaspora community to avoid having to migrate illegally.

Only a minority stated that they engage in deeper conversations and ask for the exact reasons people want to leave in order to provide them with tailored information depending on their economic possibilities or the route that they intend to take. Some tried to explain the legal procedures, including the Dublin process and its implications for migrants.²⁷ Others gave very practical advice, such as not to provide their finger prints in southern European countries if they want to travel up north, or not to have their travel exceed forty days. (This was assumed to be the maximum period they could spend in one country before they would need to make an asylum request.) Such information seemed to have been better received and builds on the logic applied by existing initiatives to inform migrants en route, like Refugee.Info, namely to get away from general messages, and to put in place real people answering the specific information needs of migrants.²⁸

²⁵ BRENNER (Yermi) and FROUWS (Bram) (23 January 2019). 'Hype or hope? Evidence on use of smartphones and social media in mixed migration'

²⁶ Mixed Migration Centre (3rd Quarter 2019). 'Mixed Migration Regional Updates. Mixed Migration from Asia to Europe'

²⁷ Literature confirms that this system, also known as indirect refoulement, is of particular reference to Afghan migrants. Mixed Migration Centre (1st Quarter 2019). 'Mixed Migration Regional Updates. Mixed Migration from Asia to Europe'

²⁸ RC & MercyCorps (no date). 'Refugee.Info2'

Most diaspora want to share the true picture

FGD participants said that they always tell the truth about the protection risks on the route and the conditions in the host country. *"We tell them that if you decide to take this route, it is possible that your child will die or you will lose your own life."* New arrivals confirmed that people in Europe provided the right information and said that the route is dangerous. In addition, they themselves advise others that if they want to take the route, they need to take the full risk and the high possibility of dying.

However, there is a contradiction here. Whereas the first answer during the discussions was that they share the true picture; later on in the conversations, it was admitted that migrants don't always feel like they can (or want to) share the full picture. Several people stated that people did not want to hear the true information either, and such honest sharing even deteriorated relationships. *"That is why when I share that information, people don't like me."*

Indeed, some diaspora members continue to share a 'rosy picture' of their living circumstances, including due to cultural aspects of pride and accountability. Some will deliberately exaggerate their jobs and their possessions. Others said that they did not want to talk about the journey anymore after they had arrived safely. The FGD did not allow confirmation that all newcomers share this positive picture, since some new arrivals said that they would also share the negative aspects, including with their mothers. Thus whereas Afghan culture has a role in the contents of the information shared, it is not the only determining factor.

Actually, some diaspora members realized that such a rosy picture was transmitted non-deliberately by sharing holiday pictures on Facebook or when visiting Afghanistan, creating peer pressure²⁹. Or simply the fact that they had succeeded – 60% of Afghans applying for protection in EU states in 2015 got refugee status or subsidiary protection³⁰ - was an indirect sharing of a success story. One person said that because of that, he refused to be active on social media. The fact that one fifth of Afghan migrants sends remittances to their Afghan family, friends or communities, is another sign that can be interpreted as the success of migration. Moreover, 40% of those transfers came from pending asylum-seekers, which would make any information relating to the difficult situations faced by asylum-seekers questionable in the eyes of Afghan nationals.³¹

Gender-differences in information-sharing

The contents and nature of the messages depend on a number of variables, including legal status, time of arrival, gender, age and education. The differences between information shared between men and women are of particular importance here. First, there is a difference of the awareness of risks between men and women migrating, and this will influence the content of the messages shared. Second, men were said to be the people most likely to reach

²⁹ DRC & RMMS (June 2016). 'Getting to Europe the 'WhatsApp' way'. The use of ICT in contemporary mixed migration flows to Europe'.

³⁰ IRC (June 2016). 'Afghan refugees and the European Refugee Crisis'.

³¹ Mixed Migration Centre (September 2018) & 4Mi. 'Monthly Migration Movements. Remittances to Afghanistan'.



out to ask for information. However, this did not mean that men had a complete picture. Women were said to speak more openly with other women.

In fact, there are some particular protection risks that would not be shared with men. For example, the risk of rape is an element that is discussed between women only, since there continues to be a taboo on the subject for men, in particular when men are victims of rape. However, it was said that husbands would make different decisions if they knew of the risk of rape for their female family members. Female FGD participants raised the issue and said that they deliberately aimed to provide gender-specific advice to women; they felt less in a position to communicate this information to men. The safety of children is also a risk that is mainly discussed between women or the challenges posed by menstruation and the need for birth control pills.

Men would share other kinds of information, such as if the boats were too small, which smugglers to contact, or the road is tough. In fact, one man highlighted that experiences from single men are misguiding the decisions for families, since families faced completely different risks than single men.

Potential migrants find most information of diaspora not useful

This research allows the confirmation of findings of studies for other migrant populations, namely that information from diaspora is not used: *„Contrary to the widespread belief that the diaspora in Europe has a strong role in providing information to prospective refugees and migrants, providing them with information on life in Europe and how to get there, the qualitative data collected through this research points to a more complex picture for the three nationalities studied.”*³²

The discrepancy in what potential migrants ask and the answer provided by the diaspora results in the fact that information provided by diaspora is not very much used. Migrants ask information about how to migrate and what to expect upon destination and diaspora mainly share their opinion on to migrate or not, and provide advice which was not requested. The initial trust factor necessary for potential migrants to reach out to families and networks abroad for information, is not strong enough for migrants to be satisfied with this answer. This is also due to the fact that many people have already decided to migrate, and are not interested in listening to all the challenges and risks involved.

In the FGD, many examples were shared of diaspora advising not to come, but the people, sometimes close family members, did not listen and came anyway. One person told her aunt for example, that coming with a little child is very dangerous, but she did not accept that. Another woman lost a close relative with her child drowning in the sea, but nevertheless her sister engaged in migration very soon afterwards. Luckily, the FGD participant said, she did not succeed on getting on one of the boats.

On the other end of the spectrum, there were few examples of people actually taking the advice of the Afghan diaspora not to come. Whereas trust and respect were regarded as being

³² REACH and MMC (November 2019). 'Outspoken but Unheard: how diasporas in Europe shape migration along Mediterranean Sea Route'



contributing elements in this decision, they cannot be considered to be the only factors since we have seen that even close family members disregard advice. Some FGD participants referred to the fact that the people who did indeed follow the advice of the Afghan diaspora not to come, must have had an alternative, were economically stable and were probably educated. Or they simply could not have found the means to finance their journey. These reflections should be linked as well with the observation that families in low-sending areas tend not to send their children when aware of the actual risks.³³ Therefore, it is far more likely that the decision to use the information of diaspora will be influenced by push factors rather than trust.³⁴

In addition, there are some initiatives either initiated or supported by diaspora organisations, including the translation of new laws relevant to migration by European countries, and shared online. Whereas the objective is to better inform the people on the procedures of asylum-seeking, this research could not confirm if this information was being used by potential or actual migrants.

Diaspora often lack information

In general, diaspora members share the information that they have themselves. This is mainly based on their own experience or on the information that they have heard from others. When it comes to information regarding the journey, the accuracy of that information depends on when they undertook the journey themselves. Many diaspora members admitted that they did not have sufficient or had no recent information regarding the routes, especially for those Afghans who arrived 25-30 years ago. Some said that their experience did not apply to others, since they were not taking the exact same route. Many shared what they had heard on the news. When it comes to information with regard to life in European countries, they could share their own stories; for life in other countries, this was more challenging.

When it comes to information on specific legal advice regarding the asylum-seeking process, or possibilities for family reunification, or scholarships or skilled labour needs, more than the migrants own experience and knowledge is required. Some diaspora members had the required legal expertise and could provide targeted advice for a specific country. Others had networks, professional or academic networks or knew members of diaspora in other countries, to whom they could transfer these questions. But many others, admitted that they lacked the detailed knowledge of the rules and regulations, especially for other countries as well as their own. An additional difficulty to be considered here, is the huge difference in the likeliness for obtaining asylum for Afghans depending on the country.³⁵ Some FGD participants spoke honestly to potential migrants when they did not know of something, in a conscious effort not to misguide them. However, there was no mention of how this information was verified.

³³ AREU and UNHCR (December 2014)- 'Why do children undertake the unaccompanied journey? Motivations for departure to Europe and other industrialised countries from the perspective of children, families and residents of sending communities in Afghanistan'.

³⁴ Additional arguments to support this statement can be find in SEEFAR (April 2019). 'Sustained interested, delayed migration. Emerging irregular migration dynamics in Afghanistan'.

³⁵ Reference is made to an asylum lottery in Mixed Migration Centre (1st Quarter 2019). 'Mixed Migration Regional Updates. Mixed Migration from Asia to Europe'.



2.3 Role

Key findings

- Most Afghan diaspora members think they have a role in terms of information-sharing with potential migrants and migrants en route. Where some are convinced of the need for better information, other Afghans doubt that better information would lead to safer migration.
- The role of diaspora is influenced by a number of factors: on the side of the recipient, on the side of the sender and due to contextual aspects.
- When despair is high, having a realistic picture of the protection risks, will make no difference. Women and families are more open to information than young men who are ready to take risks, but suffer from the actual challenges upon arrival.
- The lack of credibility is a key problem in the information exchange between diaspora and migrants. Diaspora have not yet found the best answer to the needs of the migrants.
- Diaspora remain only one information source for the migrants, and their message has not been strong enough to counter false information, myths or rumours.

Most diaspora see a role for themselves to better protect migrants

On the basis of this research³⁶ and previous research³⁷, it can be stated that diaspora communities perceive themselves as having a role in terms of information-sharing with potential migrants or migrants en route. "*Advice is always needed.*" Several FGD participants recalled their own lack of information when travelling. Some stated that they would be proud if they could save any lives.

There are differences in the interpretation of this role, as could be observed throughout the different discussions across the three countries. In Denmark, men were not convinced that migrants needed their advice, whereas diaspora organisations in Germany and the Netherlands were more keen on engaging themselves. Some individuals liked to engage in a larger role than others.

There is also a difference between generations within the Afghan diaspora in how they perceive their role vis-a-vis Afghan migrants: young people provide more targeted information, profiting from their education in Europe, and their knowledge of the host country. They have been less confronted with the difficulties in Afghanistan and are able to take distance from the problem. They can visit Afghanistan, but can return to their host country at any time with their European passports. Older diaspora members stay in the political narrative, which is less useful for migrants. At times, they are far removed from the matter and take very different standpoints which do not necessarily correspond to the needs of the current migration population.

³⁶ A note of caution: the FGD attracted people who are interested in the matter. It could be that diaspora members who did not come to the FGD do not see a role for the diaspora in information-sharing. However, the participation of diaspora organizations, which can be considered to represent the wider community, contributes to the representativeness of the results.

³⁷ DRC & RMMS (December 2017). 'Split Loyalties: Mixed Migration and the Diaspora Connection'.



There were also critical voices. Some participants did not believe in the objective of this project, and said that information-sharing would not change anything. Afghans would still undertake the dangerous route, with or without proper information and decisions would not change. *"I chose between life and death. Migrants leaving Afghanistan also choose between life and death, and advice is useless."*

Other participants did not welcome the idea of DRC helping the diaspora to help the migrants and felt that it was the responsibility of DRC to help the migrants directly rather than passing the 'burden' to them. They also felt that it was the responsibility of political actors to assist the migrants. It was often referred to that the root causes of the problem, the violence and insecurity, had to be solved instead, that the transit and destination countries had to guarantee that the routes were safe, or that legal alternatives had to be offered. For them, information-sharing was not the key to the solution.

The execution of the information-sharing role of the diaspora is hindered by a number of factors:

The decision to migrate is not necessarily a rational decision

As discussed earlier, the diaspora has no control over the actual decision to migrate or not. It remains up to the person (and at times, their environment) to decide if they will undergo the journey or not. The diaspora is of the opinion that there are two kinds of migrants: first, they who know the risks and are ready to take them, and second, those who lack information about what is waiting for them. A survey with Afghans in Afghanistan in 2019 indicated a level of risk awareness since they understood that irregular journeys involve physical and financial dangers.³⁸ But even for those who know the risks, it does not mean that the plans will be aborted, but rather delayed.³⁹

In addition, there are elements that hinder (potential) migrants from using the information provided by the diaspora:

- **Despair:** Diaspora repeatedly referred to the desperate situation people in Afghanistan find themselves in. Many FGD participants stated that Afghans have no choice but to migrate.⁴⁰ This limits the space for the diaspora with which to influence, and is an important explanation of why migrants 'do not want to listen' and 'do not want to be convinced'. It was said that due to the problems in Afghanistan, they will accept the risks. Some quotes of the FGD: *"They would like to emigrate because instead of dying 100 times, it's better to test our chance and see, with the hope that they make it here safely."* Or *"An Afghan, when he or she leaves the house in the morning, he or she is not sure that*

³⁸ SEEFAR (August 2019). 'How the Afghan peace process and emotional well-being impact migration decision-making. Findings from Wave 4 of a longitudinal study on Afghan irregular migration'.

³⁹ SEEFAR (April 2019). 'Sustained interested, delayed migration. Emerging irregular migration dynamics in Afghanistan'.

⁴⁰ More information on drivers for migration can be found in the Mixed Migration Regional Updates by MMC, and many other documents



they will return in one piece, so a person finding themselves in that situation will of course be ready to take any risk." These statements are confirmed by the high number of civilian deaths in Afghanistan, whereby 2018 was stated by a UN report to be most lethal year with 3804 deaths and 7189 injuries.⁴¹

- **No choice of going back:** Moreover, many Afghans give up everything when leaving, they are effectively 'burning their bridges'. This results in having no choice but to proceed.
- **Perception of what is normal:** Information about the dangers does not impress people, since as one person stated their definition of normality has been influenced by the conflict-situation in Afghanistan. Living in dangerous environment and being exposed to human rights abuses and enduring hardships within Afghanistan has become a large part of their lives. As a consequence the migrants perceptions of risks and protection risks vary greatly. These different interpretations of 'normality' impedes information-sharing amongst people who sharing an equal mindset and morality. In addition there might also be a perception of 'the risks do not apply to me'.
- **Gender Issues:** There are differences in the openness of migrants depending on gender and age. Men tend not to reveal all their information to women. However, it was said that if women had certain kinds of information, such as concerning rape or the dangers for children, they would make other decisions. It seems that the more vulnerable parts of the populations (families, women) would be more keen on hearing the actual stories. One example was the story of two boys, the cousins of one participant, that came to Germany despite negative advice. But shortly after, their sisters showed an interest in migrating, and the family clearly discouraged them. When one sister did try to come to Turkey and saw the risks, she returned to Afghanistan. Gender differences need to be placed in the larger frame of who is actually taking the decisions. Women and girls were expected to travel mainly with family and depend on the decisions of others.
- **Young men:** Research pointed out that migration drivers are different according to family structures; young men travelling alone had different reasons to migrate than families. Economic ambitions and societal expectations are relevant for this group.⁴² In addition, there are sociological aspects, namely that most young men are hard to influence and are ready to take any risk. They are not afraid of the dangers and coming out of a tight social structure the idea of freedom may actually attract them.⁴³ Therefore, information about dangers on the routes will be irrelevant to them. This is different when it comes to information about what is likely to attend them when they arrive in country, namely unemployment, waiting time, housing in reception centres, possibly in small rooms, depression, etc. *"When you arrive in European countries, you expect your rights, but also here you get problems. I chose death to come here and I arrived four years ago. And I still did not get an answer (to his asylum-seeking request). My life is in the air. I do not*

⁴¹ UNHCR and UNAMA. Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2018, February 2018.

⁴² Mixed Migration Centre (July 2018) & 4Mi. 'Monthly Migration Movements. Family structures'.

⁴³ DRC & RMMS (December 2017). 'Split Loyalties: Mixed Migration and the Diaspora Connection'.

have anything. They give me food and this is it, for the rest, I have nothing.” Some FGD participants were very angry about this situation. This information is in general not known beforehand, as confirmed in FGD and literature.⁴⁴

- **Misinformation:** Migrants continue to have misperceptions about life in Europe, about the average income, property or integration possibilities, even when they are in migration camps in Greece, and it is proven to be very hard to get rid of these images. For example, a survey with Afghans in early 2019 identified that the average expected length of the journey would be one to four weeks and 90% of the respondents expected to pay the smuggler after they had arrived at destination, indicating a completely unrealistic image of the journey.⁴⁵ However, they want to see the positive picture, they want to have hope. Therefore, positive images and success stories are perceived to be more credible to them. Apparently, one of the strongest images was the welcoming message of German Chancellor Merkel in 2015 and the welcoming banners, which attracted many people to come. However, as one person said, the message that they are no longer welcome or accepted, has not arrived yet in Afghanistan. *“Unfortunately, the rosy picture that has been painted for them, it’s difficult to convince them that the reality here is different.”*
- **Uncertainty:** Some diaspora members stated that it was difficult to advise them, since migrants did not always know where they were going to and that they continuously seek opportunities while travelling. This is in line with MMC findings that 18% of those travelling as part of a family structure, have not yet chosen a specific destination country.⁴⁶ Stories from the FGDs indicated that migrants travelling alone are even more flexible, depending on opportunities they can identify, success stories they hear or challenges they encounter *while* travelling.

Conflicting attitudes of the diaspora limit their own role

Diaspora find themselves in an ambiguous situation. On the one hand, they advise fellow migrants not to come, on the other hand they have taken a similar decision before and are waiting for the borders to reopen to bring their families over. These conflicting attitudes were identified in previous research⁴⁷ and were once again confirmed in the FGD. This difficult attitude led to several observations, at times contradictory, illustrating the complexity of their role in information-sharing:

- **Lack of credibility:** The immediate negative reaction by diaspora when potential migrants ask for information results in a loss of credibility of the message from the diaspora. The first reaction is one of envy and sadness in the sense “You are safe, but we are not” or “You don’t want us to join your good life”. Migrants get the feeling of not being understood and in fact this advice is not only ineffective, but may even strengthen the determination

⁴⁴ SEEFAR (April 2019). ‘Sustained interested, delayed migration. Emerging irregular migration dynamics in Afghanistan’.

⁴⁵ SEEFAR (April 2019). ‘Sustained interested, delayed migration. Emerging irregular migration dynamics in Afghanistan’.

⁴⁶ Mixed Migration Centre (July 2018) & 4Mi. ‘Monthly Migration Movements. Family structures’.

⁴⁷ DRC & RMMS (December 2017). ‘Split Loyalties: Mixed Migration and the Diaspora Connection’.



of migrants to come. The lack of credibility is a key problem in the information exchange between diaspora and migrants, as is confirmed by other research⁴⁸, and diaspora struggle a lot with this aspect themselves.

- **Disappointment:** When migrants do not listen to diaspora, the latter feel betrayed and disappointed. They have meant well, but when migrants don't listen, they feel insulted. An example was given of someone telling a family not to come, but the family came without the person knowing. The boat transporting them from Turkey to Greece sank and two of their children (17 and 6) drowned. These are traumatic experiences for diaspora.
- **Forced to help:** When people undertake the journey despite their negative advice, diaspora are forced to continue to help including through means of assistance other than information. MMC research calculated that 12% of assistance provided en route came from diaspora.⁴⁹ One example was a person, discouraged to come, who decided to sell his properties, left Afghanistan, but arrived in Turkey empty-handed and then asked for money from relatives in Europe and the US. This leaves the diaspora in a difficult situation, one which they never wanted to happen. But such actions do not only have negative results for themselves, in fact, they feel sorry for the person. For the diaspora, it is a terrible thing to happen, when a person gives up everything to come, and eventually is deported back to a situation where nothing is left. In addition, they realize that the prevalence of such deportations has increased, which is confirmed in the literature.⁵⁰
- **Afraid of responsibility:** Many diaspora members are afraid to take the responsibility over other people's lives. Therefore they are hesitant in providing advice, or some simply refuse it. One argument was that they feel lacking in information, and therefore think that they are in no position to advise anything. According to them, this should be the job of professionals. *"So despite the fact of knowing that their lives are in danger in Afghanistan, for a person like me, it's extremely difficult to basically incite them to undertake that trouble because I have close relatives they've lost their lives in the waters on their journey to Australia. I have a pain. It is a difficult think to bear on your shoulders."*
- **Afraid of doing something illegal:** Some FGD participants were afraid that providing information to (potential) migrants could be perceived as being an illegal activity, namely to support illegal migration. The hesitation to engage in information-sharing for that reasons was noted across all countries. Individuals who had decided to help fellow Afghans in Greece for example were viewed critically by authorities, so it was said. There was a fear that social media accounts and telephones would be checked and some had the feeling that they were under surveillance by local authorities. As such, the willingness of diaspora in assisting migrants needs to be understood in relation to their position in the host countries and the attitudes of the general population and authorities towards them.

⁴⁸ DRC & RMMS (December 2017). 'Split Loyalties: Mixed Migration and the Diaspora Connection'.

⁴⁹ Mixed Migration Centre (November 2018) & 4Mi. 'Monthly Migration Movements. Assistance en route'.

⁵⁰ Mixed Migration Centre (2nd Quarter 2019). 'Mixed Migration Regional Updates. Mixed Migration from Asia to Europe'.



- **Feeling powerless:** Diaspora sometimes feel powerless. *“What should we advise them?”* They are limited in which support they can actually offer, and at times, they don't know what to tell migrants anymore since there are no real alternatives. One FGD participant said that migrants tend to become angry when the diaspora cannot provide them with the information that they need. *“We provide info as long as it is accepted”*
- **Lack of understanding of what migrants need to know:** Diaspora don't always understand which information can be useful to migrants. In FGD, it was often said that they know it all, yet a little later in the discussions, practical tips were identified that could help migrants. Also, some argued that it would be wrong to think that diaspora have more information than migrants. This resulted in providing general and superficial information, and no sharing of personal experiences, without considering that (potential) migrants could listen to certain information more readily than to other.
- **Lack of the “real-first-hand information”:** The fact that diaspora lacks certain kinds of information, including because they have themselves not taken that route, hampers the potential role they could play. For example, diaspora do not necessarily have the required information to counter (or to confirm) the information of smugglers, even when asked to. In addition, some FGD participants did not think that their own experience would be relevant for newcomers. This was especially the case for older members of the diaspora.
- **Focus on Afghans in Europe:** There are no diaspora organisations with the specific aim of sharing information with Afghan migrants. Their main focus is on assisting Afghans who are in Europe, to help them integrate and to preserve their culture. This was noted in the FGD, but also confirmed in previous documents.⁵¹ Many representatives of diaspora organisations were of the opinion that the needs in Europe were that urgent, that they should be helped first. They focused on specific cases requiring assistance, but seem to miss the big picture. Another important activity for them is to support development activities within Afghanistan, including supporting women's rights. Work with/for migrants is for most diaspora organisations only a small portion of their work.
- **Trauma:** The influence of trauma, especially amongst the new arrivals, should not be underestimated in terms of their ability to share true and accurate information. Whereas this topic is usually approached as a problem for the person itself⁵², and possibly for the host society, it may have negative consequences for relatives and friends of those migrants who rely on their information. Even in the FGD, talking about their experiences, proved to be difficult for some. This is even more the case when talking about experiences which they are ashamed of.

⁵¹ For example, DRC (date unknown), 'Draft Report on Afghan Migration in Denmark' or DRC (date unknown), 'Draft Report on Afghan Migration in Sweden'.

⁵² DRC & RMMS (December 2017). 'Split Loyalties: Mixed Migration and the Diaspora Connection'.



- **Fragmentation of diaspora:** Literature referred to the divisiveness and fragmentation of diaspora as one of the main challenges.⁵³ This was not clearly visible from the FGDs, however it could be that this was because most participants came from similar diaspora organisations. Whereas previous reports explain this fragmentation in ethnic terms, this could not be confirmed in the research (except for the sensitivity of the matter). When the question of ethnicity was raised, there was strong opposition from the present diaspora members who stated that 'All Afghans help Afghans'. On the basis of the FGD, the dividing lines seem to run more along generational divisions, whereby young people have a more hands-on approach to the problem than their elders, and become frustrated with the recurring political narratives of their parents.

External factors limit the role of diaspora

For Afghan diaspora to be able to support migrants and to support a safe journey, the full dynamics of migration need to be considered. A number of external factors limit their ability to play their role.

- **Access to the internet:** Populations in rural areas were said to have little or no access to the internet. Therefore, these populations were deemed to be less informed about the risks and dangers of the route and migration in general. Diaspora do have contact with relatives in these areas via phone, but possibly less than with relatives in cities. Also, Afghans who are analphabetic – which is estimated to be the majority of the population⁵⁴ - have less access to information, and would depend more on information from networks.
- **Other information sources:** The diaspora community is only one source of information. The literature perceived social media as being a second source, complementing information from personal networks.⁵⁵ In addition, (potential) migrants got information from the internet, the media in Afghanistan or governmental sources. The rating given by migrants as to which information source is most trusted varies over time.⁵⁶ But whatever its importance, these many sources provide different kinds of information, possibly resulting in confusion. At the same time, there are gaps. Some FGD participants stated that there are (little or) no migration stories being shared on social media. Even though, there are a lot of issues being discussed, no real migration problems were found, confirming that social media is mainly used for success stories.⁵⁷ Another person said that one moment he was looking for specific information on how to get out of a miserable situation in Bulgaria, but he could not find anything useful on the internet. The impact of information from diaspora needs to be placed in this larger context.

⁵³ DRC (date unknown), 'Draft Report on Afghan Migration in Denmark'. DRC (date unknown), 'Draft Report on Afghan Migration in Germany'.

⁵⁴ <https://tolonews.com/afghanistan/illiteracy-rate-afghanistan-terrible-danish>

⁵⁵ Mixed Migration Centre (August 2018) & 4Mi. 'Monthly Migration Movements. Social media'.

⁵⁶ SEEFAR (April 2019). 'Sustained interested, delayed migration. Emerging irregular migration dynamics in Afghanistan'.

⁵⁷ DRC & RMMS (June 2016). 'Getting to Europe the 'WhatsApp' way'. The use of ICT in contemporary mixed migration flows to Europe'.

- **Smugglers:** Even when 40% (or 49% depending on the report)⁵⁸ of interviewed migrants said to contact friends and family in countries of destination, the largest influence on information-sharing about the journey seem to be smugglers⁵⁹. Smugglers are not perceived to be a reliable source of information by diaspora, however they understand that migrants value their information, in particular for financial issues and details on the routes. *"They have to kind of trust the untrustworthy. They have to pick one of those and people managed to know that."* Smugglers limit the space for the Afghan diaspora to play a role, and diaspora are not strong enough to counter the false information of smugglers.
- **Wrong or incomplete information:** Diaspora members referred to certain people who spread wrong information online, intentionally or not, but this has apparently created a lot of problems, and even led to the rejection of asylum requests. Another person said that educational centres in Afghanistan provide wrong information and make false promises about possible ways of staying in Germany. These result in further rumours, against which the diaspora is not strong enough to counter.
- **Restrictions in sharing information:** Reference was made to the Greek migration camps, where police closed the camps and media were not allowed to interview. Such restrictions hamper the sharing of accurate information between migrants, but also for diaspora to have the latest information.
- **Changed situation from 2015:** FGD participants realized that the situation on the routes and at the borders has changed drastically since 2015. Asylum-seeking policies became more restricted. Borders were better controlled. Security forces applied harsher methods. The mentality of the host population in Europe has hardened and the welcome banners have gone. Humanitarian organisations, including the Red Cross Red Crescent, are less present on the route. In short, the situation has become more difficult and less safe. Diaspora do not necessarily have these latest updates.

2.4 Potential Support

Key findings

- Afghan migrants have information gaps which the diaspora can fill.
- Diaspora needs guidance on how they can take up their role in sharing information, taking into account their paradoxical situation.

⁵⁸ BRENNER (Yermi) and FROUWS (Bram) (23 January 2019). 'Hype or hope? Evidence on use of smartphones and social media in mixed migration'

⁵⁹ UNHCR (April 2017). 'From a Refugee Perspective', data accessed through Mixed Migration Centre (August 2018) & 4Mi. 'Monthly Migration Movements. Social media'. Although there seems to be discussions depending on which research is used. BRENNER and FROUWS, for example, state family and friends in countries of destination as the first information source along the routes. The FGDs tend to give preference to the first interpretation.



- The messages of diaspora need to be strengthened and complemented. More proactive and creative ways should be developed.
- Diaspora need general support in raising awareness of the issue and of existing initiatives to make their message consistent and effective.

Information exists that can be given and to which is listened to

On the basis of suggestions made by diaspora in the FGD, there is information that should/could be shared with potential migrants, including:

- **About the decision to leave or not:** There is little the diaspora can say about the choice to migrate or not which can be perceived as credible by potential migrants. They are simply not in the best position to provide general advice. The best option is for them to deepen the discussion on this matter with the migrants in order to understand them and their motivations better.
- **About the protection risks en route:** Since some migrants already have information on the dangers and protection risks, the focus should be on practical tips. Diaspora identified a number of key messages, but these are by no means exhaustive:
 - *Anticipations:* Expect the route to be dangerous. Despite the fact that migrants were said to know the dangers, more specific and tailored information was deemed to be useful.
 - *Travel preparation:* Take with you: copy of passport or other identification, emergency phone numbers including coast guards, medicines/birth control, etc
 - *Geographical knowledge:* Turkey is not Europe. Make sure to keep money and resources until arrival in Turkey.
 - *Financial management:* Don't give your money to the smugglers at the outset of the journey.
 - *Legal knowledge:* Regulations in Greece, namely that migrants will be kept on the islands and are not allowed to cross to the mainland.
 - *Survival knowledge:* Walking at night, learn to swim, don't come in winter, the journey will be long. (cfr SEEFAR about length of journey), learn to provide correct doses of medicines to children
 - *Behavioural knowledge:* Respect rules and regulations in transit countries.
 - *Self-protection:* Adapt concept of normality to non-conflict situations. Human rights violations are not acceptable.
- **About asylum and acceptance:** Diaspora stated that predicting the future to migrants would be of importance. Information about this category is needed, based on statements like: "*When they get here, they are faced with a life reality that is much worse than in Afghanistan*". Therefore, information should be provided about:
 - Laws and policies in destination countries.
 - Actual life in Europe



- Update from conditions of 2015
- Living conditions of asylum seekers, including housing, unemployment, language possibilities, restrictions.

Diaspora members argued that migrants should be aware of the following difficulties:

- Challenging integration processes
- Spending a couple of years in a transit stage
- Waiting for admission to language classes and the difficulties of learning the language
- Possible loss of status, especially relevant for men
- Possible family or relation problems
- Possible loss of income
- Need to respect other religions
- Different lifestyle
- Difficulties entering education
- Discrimination

Messages of diaspora organisations should be strengthened

Diaspora organisations in Denmark, the Netherlands and Germany are already organizing a number of activities to inform migrants. However, these activities could be strengthened and complemented in the following ways:

1. The suggestion that was mostly mentioned was the sharing of first-hand personal experiences. A recurring idea was to document the lives of migrants en route, for example in the camps in Greece or in Turkey. Also personal stories of people who lost relatives could be recorded. In addition, stories should be documented from Afghans who arrived in destination, both the new arrivals and their difficult situations, and of the older arrivals, about the difficulties they continue to experience.⁶⁰ These ideas are in line with the peer-to-peer approach applied by IOM in Senegal which makes it easier for migrants to relate to the information shared.⁶¹ Some diaspora members argued that both positive and negative stories should be captured, to demonstrate alternatives through legal ways, scholarships or skilled labour schemes. This would equally avoid the perception that the objective of the campaign was to halt migration, which has proven to be unsuccessful in the past.⁶²

Such stories could be captured in the form of films, radio programmes or books. Audio-visual material would be preferred in order to make the information accessible to a broad

⁶⁰ Previous consultations with diaspora - DRC Diaspora Programme & ADSP (September 2018). 'Report on Consultation with Afghan Diaspora in Denmark' - showed that younger and older segments of the diaspora experience different difficulties. Since the migration community is that diverse, these variety of challenges could be relevance to include.

⁶¹ IOM & GMDAC (October 2019). 'Migrants as Messengers : The impact of peer-to-peer communication on potential migrants in Senegal'.

⁶² Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en Documentatiecentrum. Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie (November 2016). 'Raising Awareness, changing behaviour? Combatting irregular migration through information campaigns.



audience. Such stories could be shared by diaspora organisations on their website or through their networks, but should also be shared within Afghanistan. Information should reach potential migrants before they decide to leave, thus before they have given up on their previous lives. Ways should be found to transfer that information into provinces where people had less access to the internet.

Information should be specific. For example, particular rumours could be contradicted with hard facts and specific experiences. In addition, whereas the most recipient audience was supposed to be women and families, it was argued that men also had to be informed since they were the decision-makers.

2. A second idea was the creation of an information-sharing platform, where Afghan diaspora organisations and humanitarian organisations would join forces in order to provide accurate information. Such a joint information channel would be an opportunity to strengthen their message across Europe. All organisations could share the information they have, however there could be a kind of controlling system to guarantee that the information is accurate. A possibility was to link existing initiatives to the platform, such as the translation of the latest laws and regulations in Germany. The platform would need to contain country-specific information, but it would be easier to refer people to the right information. Finally, it would allow cooperation between diaspora organisations across countries and contribute to overcoming the fragmentation of the communities, strengthening existing cross-country links based on kinship, family ties and friendship.
3. The third idea was that DRC would provide diaspora organisations with accurate information. The suggestion for DRC to facilitate access to information was already raised in previous consultations with diaspora⁶³. The idea was again confirmed by many FGD participants and said that it would be of direct assistance to both individuals and organisations. The idea that DRC would provide them with information was welcomed, since the need for specific legal information and reliable information in terms of rules and regulations from experts was considerable. Diaspora organisations could take on a facilitating role to spread that information and the representatives of Afghan organisations who participated in the FGD, were looking forward to cooperate. Moreover, it could be a two-direction exchange, whereby also diaspora members would have interesting information to share with DRC, to be spread further through the diaspora network.⁶⁴

Awareness-raising needed within the Afghan diaspora

The research allows us to conclude that awareness-raising efforts are needed within the Afghan diaspora on two issues.

⁶³ DRC Diaspora Programme & ADSP (September 2018). 'Report on Consultation with Afghan Diaspora in Denmark'.

⁶⁴ In fact, it would not be impossible to combine the three suggestions depending on the resources and decisions of DRC on how to proceed with the project.

1. Awareness-raising on the role of diaspora towards Afghan migrants

Most diaspora members agreed that they have a role to play in terms of information-sharing to (potential) migrants. However, also those Afghans in Europe who do not feel they have an immediate role, should be sensitized about the importance of transferring accurate information. All Afghan diaspora members transfer a certain message, intentionally or non-intentionally, through speaking about experiences or by hiding them, by giving advice or by refusing to give advice. They are being looked at. Therefore, it would be important to spread a number of minimum guiding behaviour ideas, such as not to provide an immediate negative answer, not to brag about their lives in Europe or not to provide wrong information. Diaspora could be informed on what to share and what the needs of the migrants are in terms of information. They should be aware of the risks when providing wrong messages. At the same time they should also realize that incomplete information could lead to miscalculations from the side of the migrants, possibly jeopardizing their level of trustworthiness with relatives and friends.

In addition, diaspora are in need of knowing what the limits are of assisting migrants, and where they could run into legal problems and to be perceived as assisting illegal migration. At this moment, they are scared of bringing themselves in danger.

During the FGD, several offers were made to DRC to speak on radio or TV shows, and this could be one way of raising awareness.

2. Awareness raising on existing tools in terms of information-sharing

Whereas tools, platforms and initiatives exist to provide accurate information to migrants, such as Refugee.Info.⁶⁵, they were never mentioned in the FGDs. The only reference made was to the official information campaigns of governments, for example the German Campaign "Rumours about Germany", which was said not to be really successful since they focused on negative aspects.⁶⁶ Therefore, it can be assumed that diaspora are insufficiently aware of the possibilities that already exist and there is clearly room for improvement in guiding them to those sources of information that could contribute to their own knowledge or be shared with families and friends.

One particular suggestion, made twice, was to raise awareness on the documentary 'Midnight traveller'. This self-made movie attracted attention from diaspora, where at the same time they appreciated its demonstration of the dangers of the journey. FGD participants suggested supporting the broadcast of this movie on a large scale, including by Afghan media.

⁶⁵ More info on <https://www.refugee.info/>

⁶⁶ Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en Documentatiecentrum. Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie (November 2016). 'Raising Awareness, changing behaviour? Combatting irregular migration through information campaigns



3. CONCLUSIONS

Lack of **credibility** is the major hindering factor for diaspora to take on their role of sharing information with Afghan migrants. Trust, although perceived to be an important aspect of Afghan society, has proven to be insufficient in overcoming this problem. In fact, it is hard to see how the lack of credibility can be overcome. Therefore, it is suggested that the main message of diaspora, 'Don't come', should be changed. This decision is not theirs, and it has not been under their control. There is a need to move away from advising into actual information-sharing.

For information to be **used** in order to enhance safe migration, messages need to be tailored, in particular to the vulnerable parts of the population. It will have to be accepted that one part of the population, is unlikely to heed any warnings about the dangers of the routes, however, they could possibly be influenced when they are confronted with images of the miserable situation many of their peers find themselves in. The ambition should not be set too high, but should rather be about sharing practical tips that could help in making the journey a little less risky or for migrants to be a little better prepared. Practical tips at micro-level, are expected to enhance safer behaviour on routes, possibly leading to less suffering and perhaps even saving some lives, for example the right doses of medicines for children or learning to swim.

Information arriving from diaspora during the journey is not the most **important** information source for migrants, since they tend to rely on the smugglers. Migrants tend to lack the up-to-date information necessary to be able to counter information from the smugglers or have so far not been able to adequately share the real stories and traumatic experiences Afghans went through.

The potential of diaspora to be the number one information source for the future of the migrants in host countries or in terms of expectations, is not exhausted yet. This is also where they have a credible message to share, one that will likely be used. A strengthened, tailored and consistent message from diaspora is the only answer. They would need advice on how to best do that, building on the good work already done.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PROJECT

The following considerations are recommended with regard to the **target audience** of the project, namely women and boys/young men:

Women:

There are particular gender-specific pieces of information that are expected to attract the attention of women (and men), namely sexual violence, in particular rape, and child-protection

aspects. The research has shown that this information can only come from women. Due to the cultural taboo on the topic, it will be much less likely for men to openly discuss this matter. FGD participants expected that women would change their behaviour based on that information. In general, it has been noted that women engage in more open discussions. For these reasons, women-to-women information-sharing should be encouraged. In particular, the younger female diaspora members have great potential for effective information-sharing. They benefit from their education, but are confronted with social and cultural restrictions. Gradually their expertise and knowledge becomes acknowledged within the diaspora community.

However, men should not be excluded from such discussions. It was deemed important that men should also become aware of the risks related to sexual violence, since they usually take the final decision on if/how to migrate and they hold other parts of information. FGD participants were of the opinion that men would also change their behaviour if they were aware of the potential risks that their female family members might face.

Whereas men have been identified as the people seeking most information, this research has indicated that women also have access to information sources. These channels should be encouraged and strengthened. Another relevant finding is that there is a need for tailored information, due to the fact that single men and male heads of household are exposed to different protection risks during migration. In the past, these two types of message have become mixed.

Boys/Young Men:

This research has once again confirmed that boys and young men are unlikely to be deterred by information on the potential risks and dangers of the routes. Societal expectations about men, but also common behaviour typical for that age and gender are strong hindrances. From this research, it is assumed that better and more accurate information will not be the key for change. However, behavioural change could be triggered in the following ways. First, this group has too little information about what to expect upon arrival. Although this is relevant for the entire migrant population, young men especially are faced with huge disappointment upon arrival. Whereas young men tend to be able to face dangers, or at least they say so, they are not prepared for the long waiting process, the living conditions in reception centres and forced passiveness in the host countries. First-hand stories about depression and loneliness should be shared in the hope of breaking the vicious cycle of misinformation and false hopes of a better life that tend to filter their way back to Afghanistan.

In addition, information about dangers should continue to be shared, but the focus should be on survival tips rather than on deterrence. There is room for improvement for this aspect. Finally, it is believed that better information-sharing with mothers, based on the earlier findings, could perhaps have an influence on their behaviour. This observation also builds on earlier research that children and family members in low-sending areas would not wish to engage in further unaccompanied travel when having better information.



Rural population

Even though the rural population was not a specific target audience of this project, this research has identified large information needs from these parts of the population. As such, it is recommended to focus on women and boys/young men in these areas first since they rely more on false or incomplete information for their decision-making.

The research produced additional information with regards to the **lessons learned** included in the project document:

1. Migrant behaviour can be influenced by information

Yes, the behaviour of migrants can be influenced, however ambitions in how much behaviour can be changed need to be limited. The objective should be to provide **practical information** that has been partly neglected until now. In fact, small behavioural changes can contribute to safer migration, such as not travelling in winter, and could have a comparably large outcome. This should be taken into account when applying a Social and Behaviour Change Communication Approach. However, it should be considered that migration decisions are not necessarily rational decisions, and more information will not necessarily lead to safer migration. Information needs to be tailored and well thought through.

2. Information campaigns that are overtly aimed at stopping migration are not effective

Indeed, a similar development occurs when diaspora members' only message is 'don't come'. Migrants need to have the feeling that they are understood and they need to be able to relate to the message and to the messenger. Therefore, the **peer-to-peer** approach, recently applied by IOM in Senegal, could be an interesting idea to explore.

3. Diaspora members are able to develop convincing messages

Yes, diaspora members had shown that they are able to develop convincing messages, albeit on a small scale, often delivered by individuals, such as travelling to Greece together with lawyers to inform migrants about their legal rights or raising awareness on the recent laws and regulations, translated into Afghan languages. These individual efforts would have to be **strengthened**, either in terms of knowledge, capacities or resources. Such undertaking could lead to a two-way direction of information-sharing, benefitting DRC and diaspora organisations.

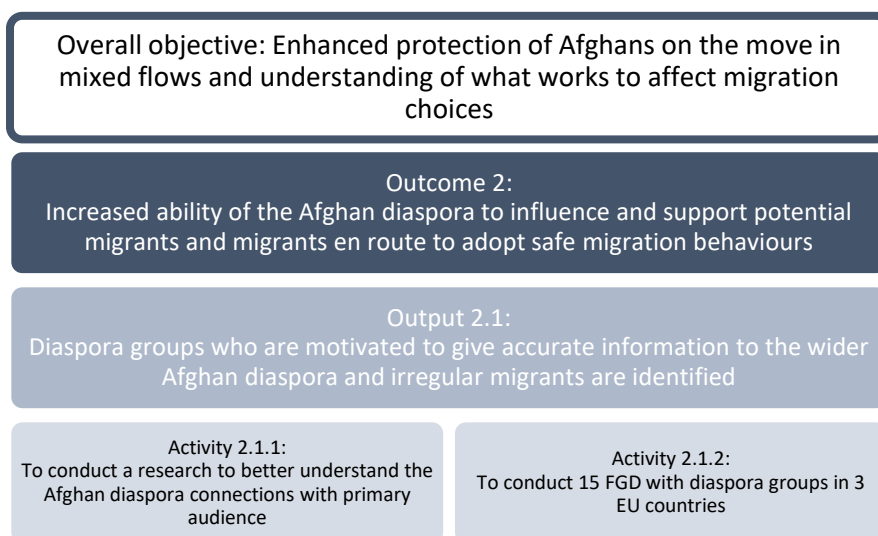
4. Not all diasporas members are considered credible

It is not the diaspora members that are not considered credible, but their message. The fact that (potential) migrants contact diaspora is a sign of trust, but most diaspora have not been able to meet the expectations in terms of information sharing. Therefore, a **joint and consistent** approach across diaspora communities would be required. This could be done through a platform, usage of social media, developing of audio-visual tools, but more **awareness-raising** about new and existing tools should take place within the diaspora community and amongst the (potential) Afghan migrants.

ANNEX I: Project Information

The project ‘ *Afghans on the move and Afghans considering migrating through irregular means have a realistic and credible picture of the journey, understand the protection risks and their rights* ’, is funded by the Mixed Migration Grant of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is implemented by the Danish Refugee Council in the time frame of June 2019 until June 2021, for

The qualitative research on Afghan Diaspora fits as follows into the logframe of the overall project:



This qualitative research should explore the most effective options for successful assistance to the diaspora communities in Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands.

The research had the following **aim**:

To understand the views of selected Afghan diasporas in Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands on irregular migration, including an exploration of diasporas’ own role and connections with a focus on information sharing in particular in relation to protection assistance to displacement affected persons in country of origin and on the move.

Objective:

The objective of the research was to collect and analyse Afghan diaspora’s perceptions of their role and connections to the current migration flow from Afghanistan to Europe.

Specific objectives:

1. To document good practices in relation to diaspora protection information management
2. To map existing Afghan information sources and channels (including ICT)
3. To explore how the information ranks with regard to credibility, importance and usage



ANNEX II - Research Framework – Qualitative Research Afghan Diaspora

Research Topic	Research Question	Variables	Relevant FGD Questions
Role	1. What role(s) do the Afghan diaspora community have in relation to information sharing to potential migrants or migrants en route? To what extent do the diaspora assist migrants en route through sharing information?	Age Gender Ethnicity Research country Legal Status Time of Arrival	1. Did you ever talk with Afghans who were interested to migrate? 2. Did you ever talk to migrate who were travelling to Europe?
	2. What role(s) do the Afghan diaspora think they should have?	Age Gender Ethnicity Research country Legal Status Time of Arrival	3. Why should you talk to your country men about migration?
	3. Is there a difference between this perceived role before or during the migration?		4. Do you think it is important to talk before migration? Or during?
	4. Do the diaspora have the impression that the execution of this perceived role is somehow constrained by external factors or other actors?	Age	<i>(no direct question)</i>
	5. What role in terms of information-sharing should diaspora organisations have and what role should individuals have?	Age	5. Did other Afghans in Denmark encouraged you to share information or was this your own decision?
Connections	6. What are the engagements between the diaspora communities and potential migrants or migrants en route?	Age Gender Ethnicity Legal Status Time of Arrival	6. When Afghans are on their way to Europe, do you have contact with them?



	7. When in the migration process do these engagements take place?		7. When do you have contact with them?
	8. How often do engagements take place between parties?		8. How often do you speak or are you in contact within?
	9. What are the primary ways of engaging? (Through social networking, social remittances, telephone, visits etc.)?	Age Gender Education	9. How do you contact Afghan migrants? Through phone, skype, WhatsApp, social media, text messages?
	10. What are the primary reasons for being in touch?	Age Gender	10. Why are you in contact with them? Can you give some examples?
	11. Who initiates the contact? The diaspora or the people in Afghanistan?	Age Gender Family Status	11. Do they first contact you or do you reach out?
	12. Whom is mostly contacted within the diaspora community?	Age Gender	12. Are some people in the Afghan community more in contact with migrants than others?
	13. How are the contact lines established? Through direct contact? Through reference? By whom?	Ethnicity Place of origin	13. Do you know the people who ask you for information? 14. If not, how did they find you?
	14. Who contacts the diaspora? Interested migrant him/herself, family father, intermediate person, etc?	Age Gender	15. When the person is still in Afghanistan, is it the migrant him/herself who contacts you, or somebody else?
Information-Sharing	15. What is the primary information requested by people in Afghanistan?	Age Gender Family Status	16. What do Afghans ask you about migration?
	16. What is the primary information shared by the diaspora?	Age Gender	17. What do you tell them? 18. Do you share pictures as well?
	17. Is the information tailored to the person? Does the nature of the information depend on the recipient?	Age Gender	19. Do you tell different things to different people?
	18. To what extent do the diaspora know about the potential protection risks related to irregular movement and specifically migrant smuggling (drowning, robbery, sexual assault, beatings, abandonment, harsh climates, death etc.)?	Age Gender Family Status	20. Do you think that the journey is dangerous?



	19. How do the diaspora balance these risks against the potential benefits of successful migration and/or asylum acceptance? – what do they advise those who want to come prior departure.	Age Gender Time of arrival	21. Do you tell good and bad things about the route?
	20. What do they advise those who are en route when confronted with risks?	Age Gender Time of arrival	22. What do you tell migrants who are in difficult moments during the journey?
	21. Is the nature of the information (deliberately) positive or negative? Does this nature change along the way?	Age/Gender Time of arrival Legal status	<i>(no direct question)</i>
	22. Where do they find the information they provide? What is seen as trusted sources of information?	Age	23. Where do you look for, if you don't know something?
	23. How do they verify the information?	Age	24. Did you ever share information that you were not sure it was correct?
	24. How is the information perceived by the migrants?		25. Are the migrants pleased with that information? What is their reaction?
	25. Is the information shared by the diaspora used? How do they know this?	Age Gender Family Status	26. Do you feel that the information you share is used? Why/Why not?
	26. Do the diaspora have the impression that they can share a credible picture?	Age	27. Do you feel that you can share everything? Why/Why not?
Potential Support	27. What information and knowledge do the diaspora lack in their opinion?	Age Gender	28. Do you feel that you have sufficient information and knowledge to inform you country men?
	28. What kind of support would diasporas like to receive from CSOs/NGOs?		29. What would you need to better protect your countrymen from the risks during migration?
	29. Why would that support be useful to have?		30. What would you do better with that support?
	30. What support would be needed for individual people and what support would be needed for organisations?	Age Gender	<i>(no direct question)</i>

ANNEX III – Documents Reviewed

- AREU and UNHCR (December 2014)- ‘Why do children undertake the unaccompanied journey? Motivations for departure to Europe and other industrialised countries from the perspective of children, families and residents of sending communities in Afghanistan’.
- BRENNER (Yermi) and FROUWS (Bram) (23 January 2019). ‘Hype or hope? Evidence on use of smartphones and social media in mixed migration’.
- DRC (date unknown), ‘Draft Report on Afghan Migration in Denmark’.
- DRC (date unknown), ‘Draft Report on Afghan Migration in Germany’.
- DRC (date unknown), ‘Draft Report on Afghan Migration in Sweden’.
- DRC (date unknown), ‘Draft Report on Afghan Migration in UK’.
- DRC Diaspora Programme & ADSP (September 2018). ‘Report on Consultation with Afghan Diaspora in Denmark’.
- DRC & RMMS (June 2016). ‘Getting to Europe the ‘WhatsApp’ way’. The use of ICT in contemporary mixed migration flows to Europe’.
- DRC & RMMS (December 2017). ‘Split Loyalties: Mixed Migration and the Diaspora Connection’.
- DRC MMC Asia & Diaspora Programme (date unknown). ‘Full Proposal on Enhancing Protection Information for Displaced People from Afghanistan through Collaborative Engagement with Diaspora Communities in Europe’, including proposal, short description, timeframe and results framework.
- IOM & GMDAC (October 2019). ‘Migrants as Messengers: The impact of peer-to-peer communication on potential migrants in Senegal’.
- IRC & MercyCorps (no date). ‘Refugee.Info2’.
- IRC (June 2016). ‘Afghan refugees and the European Refugee Crisis’.
- Mixed Migration Centre (July 2018) & 4Mi. ‘Monthly Migration Movements. Family structures’.
- Mixed Migration Centre (August 2018) & 4Mi. ‘Monthly Migration Movements. Social media’.
- Mixed Migration Centre (September 2018) & 4Mi. ‘Monthly Migration Movements. Remittances to Afghanistan’.
- Mixed Migration Centre (September 2018). ‘No choice but to keep going forward. Experiences of female refugees & migrants in origin, transit and destination countries. A comparative study of women on the move from Afghanistan, East and West Africa’.
- Mixed Migration Centre (October 2018). ‘Monthly Summary on Asia’.
- Mixed Migration Centre (November 2018) & 4Mi. ‘Monthly Migration Movements. Assistance en route’.
- Mixed Migration Centre (1st Quarter 2019). ‘Mixed Migration Regional Updates. Mixed Migration from Asia to Europe’.
- Mixed Migration Centre (2nd Quarter 2019). ‘Mixed Migration Regional Updates. Mixed Migration from Asia to Europe’.
- Mixed Migration Centre (3rd Quarter 2019). ‘Mixed Migration Regional Updates. Mixed Migration from Asia to Europe’.
- REACH and MMC (November 2019). ‘Outspoken but Unheard: how diasporas in Europe shape migration along Mediterranean Sea Route’.



- SEEFAR (April 2019). 'Sustained interested, delayed migration. Emerging irregular migration dynamics in Afghanistan'.
- SEEFAR (August 2019). 'How the Afghan peace process and emotional well-being impact migration decision-making. Findings from Wave 4 of a longitudinal study on Afghan irregular migration'.
- UNHCR (June 2010). 'Trees only move in the wind. A study of unaccompanied Afghan children in Europe.'
- UNHCR and UNAMA. Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2018, February 2018.
- Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en Documentatiecentrum. Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie (November 2016). 'Raising Awareness, changing behaviour? Combatting irregular migration through information campaigns'.

ANNEX IV – Guiding Material for FGD

1. Welcome and Introduction by Ms. Nila Noori (based on one-pager)
2. Welcome and setting of rules by Gudrun Van Pottelbergh
 - a. Invitation to speak openly and for all to participate
 - b. Guarantee confidentiality: no personal information needed, no direct quotation, transcripts deleted
 - c. Offer bilateral follow-up for sensitive information
 - d. Ask all for respect for each other and for time
 - e. Ask for language needs and Introduction of translator
3. Introductory questions (not ask for names): All participants to tell:
 - a. Year of arrival in country
 - b. Age (less than 25, between 25 and 40, between 40 and 60, over 60)
 - c. Place of origin in Afghanistan/Ethnicity
4. Open Questions
 - Did you ever talk with Afghans in Afghanistan who were interested to migrate? Thus before?
 - Did you ever talk to migrate who were already travelling to Europe?
 - Why are you in contact with them? Can you give some examples?
 - Did other Afghans in Denmark encouraged you to share information or was this your own decision?

 - When do you have most contact with them? Before or during the journey?
 - How often do you speak or are you in contact within?
 - How do you contact Afghan migrants? Through phone, skype, whatsapp, social media, SMS?
 - Do they first contact you or do you reach out?
 - Do you know the people who ask you for information? If not, how did they find you?
 - Is it the migrant him/herself who contacts you, or somebody else?
 - Are some people in the Afghan community more in contact with migrants than others?

 - What do Afghans ask you about migration? What information do they need?
 - What do you tell them?
 - Do you share pictures as well?
 - Do you tell different things to different people?
 - Do you tell good and bad things about the route? Do you feel that you can share everything? Why/Why not? (Do you think that the journey is dangerous?)
 - What do you tell migrants who are in difficult moments during the journey?

 - Where do you look for information, if you don't know something?
 - Did you ever share information that you were not sure it was correct?

 - Are the migrants pleased with that information? What is their reaction?

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- Do you feel that the information you share is used? Why/Why not?
 - Why do you think it is important to talk to your country men about migration?
 - Do you feel that you have sufficient information and knowledge to inform you country men?
 - What would you need to better protect your countrymen from the risks during migration?
 - What would you do better with that support?
5. Thank you. Inform about further process.

