



14 March 2014 –Afghanistan will hold its first peaceful and democratic handover of power in July/August after 35 years of protracted conflict. Voters will take to the polls in less than four weeks to elect the successor of President Hamid Karzai amongst 11 possible candidates. However, along with electoral expectation, important humanitarian issues remain. To ensure a peaceful transition and increase stability the continued support of the international community is imperative.

Emergency health services remain a critical area. On average the country has only one health worker for every 10,000 Afghans. The 2014 [Strategic Response Plan](#) says the number of people in need of access to health services has increased from 3.3 to 5.4 million. With conflicts in Syria and the CAR coming to the forefront, some fear the continued situation in Afghanistan could become a “
[forgotten emergency](#)”.

Internal displacement has increased due to instability caused by the withdrawal of international troops, as well as natural disasters. More than 2.5 million Afghan refugees remain and there are nearly six million refugee returnees. “For long-term solutions, I think stability and job security is going to be the key to IDP [internally displaced persons] returns, said Nigel Jenkins until recently the country director for the International Rescue Committee. Ensuring employment and

rural development are priorities to help refugees resettle.

International troop involvement is one of the few areas where a [decrease](#) in international support can be beneficial. Aidan O'Leary, head of the UN office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Afghanistan stated that, "We have to recognize that there is no long-term peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan with 130,000 international troops" With fighting at a stalemate the battlefield will not lead to a long-term solution. Rather, it is through dialogue that peace can be obtained, though both sides are awaiting the post-election environment to be established before continuing talks.

External assistance accounts for 70-75 percent of GDP, making Afghanistan dependant on international aid. Though this year's funding will decrease, some members of the aid community believe the funds will have a more direct impact. The withdrawal of international troops allows aid worker to focus on the needs of the population instead of donor security objectives. Though humanitarian issues persist the international community remains committed to addressing them. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon voiced this commitment; "We must all continue to stand with the people of Afghanistan in their quest for security, stability and prosperity."

[Source: IRIN](#)

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