

Afghanistan

25 February 2019

15,699 registered refugees voluntarily returned in 2018 to Afghanistan from neighboring and non-neighboring countries. So far in 2019, 167 refugees have returned. Returns from Pakistan are currently on winter break, and will commence in 1 March.

343,341 individuals were newly displaced by conflict in 2018 and profiled by OCHA as internally displaced persons (IDPs) in need of protection and assistance. 8,101 individuals (1,179 families) have been recorded displaced in 2019 to date.

75,121 Pakistani refugees from North-Waziristan Agency have been registered in Khost and Paktika provinces.

POPULATION OF CONCERN

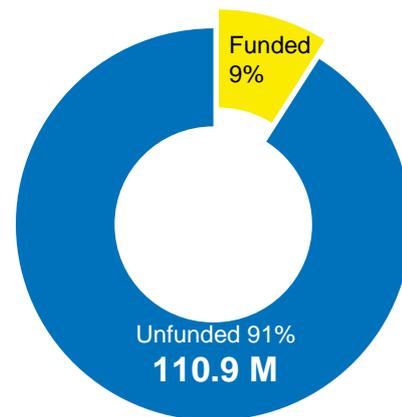
510,800

New Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)	400,000
Refugees	50,300
Refugee Returnees	60,000
Urban Refugees and Asylum Seekers	500

2019 FUNDING

USD 121.7 M

requested for Afghanistan



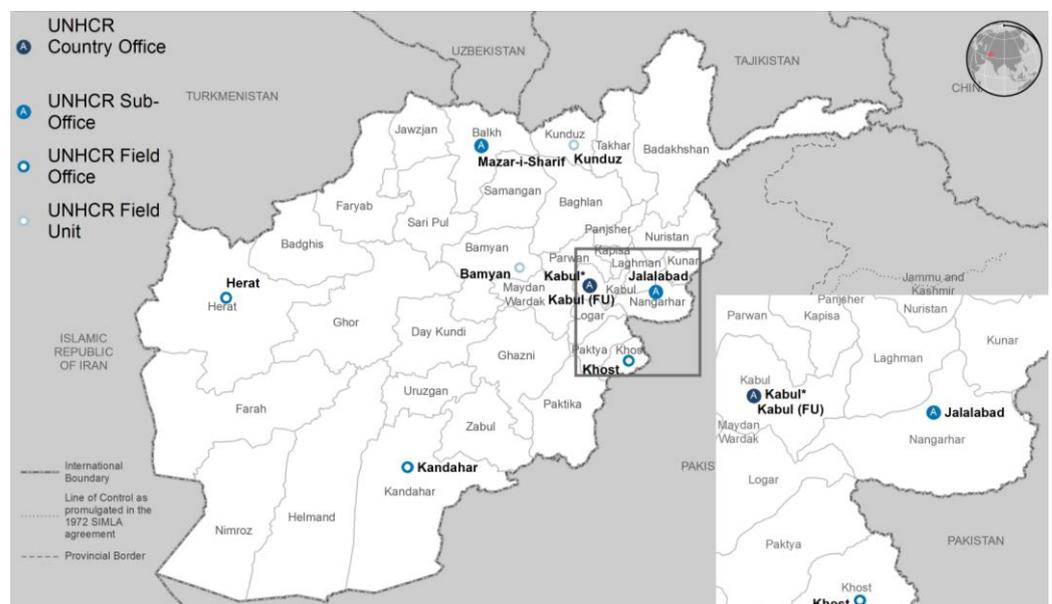
UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

193 National Staff
25 International Staff
16% female / 84% male

Offices:

- 1 Country Office in Kabul
- 2 Sub Offices in Jalalabad and Mazar-i-Sharif
- 3 Field Offices in Herat, Kandahar, and Khost
- 3 Field Units in Kabul, Kunduz, and Bamyan



**FACILITATING REPATRIATION****UNHCR Facilitated Voluntary Repatriation (VolRep) Programme**

- UNHCR continues to facilitate voluntary repatriation of registered Afghan refugees from Pakistan, Iran and other countries to Afghanistan. The return of Afghan refugees from Pakistan and Iran is taking place under the Tripartite Agreements with the respective Governments and UNHCR. The Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) remains the regional framework for Afghan refugees (involving Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan).
- More than 5.2 million Afghan refugees have repatriated with UNHCR assistance since 2002. In 2017, UNHCR facilitated the voluntary return of **58,817** refugees (98% from Pakistan), while in 2018, **15,699** refugees returned to Afghanistan (87% from Pakistan, 12% from Iran and 1% other countries).

Cash Grant

- UNHCR provides cash assistance of an average of US\$200 per person through its four encashment centres. UNHCR's repatriation cash grant to refugee returnees is a key protection tool and is intended to prevent, reduce, and respond to immediate protection risks and vulnerabilities upon return to Afghanistan. The cash grant provides returnees with the means to meet their immediate humanitarian needs, as well as transportation costs to their places of origin or destination, providing returnees a sense of dignity and freedom to decide how the grant is used according to family priorities. Based on phone interviews with returnees (conducted between 1 and 6 months following return), the cash grant received from UNHCR normally lasts between 1-3 months.

Management of Encashment Centres

- In close coordination with the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) and local offices of the Directorate of Refugees and Repatriation (DoRR), UNHCR and its partners manage four encashment centres located in Herat, Jalalabad, Kabul and Kandahar. In addition to cash grants, a wide range of inter-agency services are provided, including: basic health care, referrals of serious medical cases to hospitals, and vaccinations for children (implemented by Ministry of Public Health with support from WHO and UNICEF); mine risk awareness (coordinated by UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and implemented by the Danish Demining Group); back to school campaign (provided by the Ministry of Education and UNICEF); referral for information and legal assistance to obtain civil documentation (through the Norwegian Refugee Council's Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance programme); child friendly spaces (provided by UNICEF); and a transit facility for overnight accommodation at the encashment centres.
- UNHCR conducts household level interviews to assess the voluntary nature of return, return trends and protection risks in asylum and during return. As part of these interviews, persons with specific needs are identified by UNHCR and DoRR/MoRR and referred to service providers for assessment and response.
- The programme facilitating voluntary return from Pakistan is currently paused for the winter break from 1 December 2018 to 1 March 2019. The Encashment Centres located in Kabul, Jalalabad and Kandahar serving returnees from Pakistan are not operational during this period, while returns from Iran and other countries will continue throughout the year.

**ASSISTING REFUGEES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPS)****Protection Monitoring**

- UNHCR systematically and regularly collects, verifies and analyses information over a period of time to assess the protection situation of IDPs, returnees and host communities in order to plan effective responses. Protection risk analysis helps to inform the overall humanitarian response and uphold the centrality of protection. UNHCR's community-based protection measures provides a basis to plan interventions for persons with specific needs and community based initiatives, and provides evidence for advocacy efforts and assists UNHCR and partners in overall programme planning and response.

Return Monitoring

- Return monitoring constitutes an integral part of the protection monitoring system in Afghanistan. It consists of three components: monitoring upon arrival at the encashment centres; monitoring of returnees following their settlement in communities through regular phone surveys; and community-based protection measures. From April 2018, UNHCR has facilitated the distribution of SIM cards (free of charge) to returnees through the Afghan Wireless Communication Company. UNHCR also provides air time of US\$2 per month for 3 months, which aims to ensure returnees' access to communication services and to facilitate return monitoring to identify and address protection risks and to gather information on the situation and services available in areas of return.
- In November 2017, UNHCR signed a **data sharing agreement with the World Bank** to strengthen existing data collection processes and enhance technical capacity for a comprehensive analysis of the return process and how best to support the reintegration of returnees over time.
- In December 2017, UNHCR signed a project partnership agreement **with the inter-agency information centre, Awaaz Afghanistan** (implemented by UNOPS, and funded by UNHCR and WFP) and the site was launched in May 2018. The centre provides information to persons of concern on available services in their geographical area, and allows feedback (including concerns and complaints) from communities to be consolidated and shared with respective agencies including UNHCR. Details are presented through an online dashboard: <https://awaazaf.org/>



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Persons with Specific Needs (PSN)

- UNHCR's PSN programme provides targeted assistance on an individual basis to people with acute vulnerabilities and protection risks among refugee returnees, refugees, and conflict-induced and other IDPs. Extremely vulnerable individuals from local host communities and undocumented returnees are also considered as beneficiaries under the PSN programme. The main objective of the programme is to mitigate and respond to individual protection risks and facilitate self-reliance through targeted response. PSN partners conduct protection assessments and refer (or directly assist) individuals taking into account a comprehensive protection risk analysis. UNHCR links the PSN programme with its Community-Based Protection Measures for enhanced, sustainable comprehensive assistance for persons in need.

Community-Based Protection Measures (CPM)

- UNHCR supports CPM to reduce protection risks and vulnerabilities while fostering peaceful co-existence and reintegration of returnees and IDPs with local host communities, including persons with specific needs. These measures include: community support facilities and infrastructure, in-cash and in-kind support for subsistence, promoting representation in community decision-making structures, and skills development for employment, particularly focused on women and youth.
- The measures focus on community empowerment in line with existing job markets and local demand, and include innovative approaches such as UNHCR's Global MADE51 for artisans' development. The programme works to promote linkages with the Afghan Government's National Priority Programmes, development agencies' initiatives (including the World Bank), and fostering partnerships with local and international private sector actors to implement medium and longer term interventions that enhance sustainability. In 2018, CPM projects are being implemented in 60 locations with 10 partners, reaching some 132,700 households.

Protection Cluster and Emergency Shelter/Non-Food Items Cluster

- UNHCR's is actively involved in inter-agency humanitarian coordination mechanisms, including through its leadership of the Protection Cluster (including co-leadership of the Housing, Land and Property Task Force) and the Emergency Shelter and Non-Food Items (ES/NFI) Cluster. This cooperation remain crucial to UNHCR's efforts to promote protection mainstreaming in all sectors of the humanitarian response, and ensures that protection principles are incorporated in all activities and that meaningful access, safety and dignity in humanitarian aid remain priorities. In August 2018 the Humanitarian Country Team's Protection Strategy was endorsed and adopted, and this will go a long way toward enhancing and coordinating protection interventions system-wide.
- Efforts are directed towards action oriented and cross cutting coordination. To that aim, UNHCR is leading a review process of protection priorities for the Afghanistan Protection Cluster strategy, to refocus on the protection of civilians and displacement related protection concerns, and to mobilize relevant stakeholders for longer term interventions to strengthen the protection environment. UNHCR is also reinforcing coordination between regional and national levels by documenting protection concerns and engaging in advocacy to ensure response.
- Drought in 2018 affects an estimated 2.2 million individuals in Afghanistan, with some 150,000 Afghans displaced from their homes, with OCHA coordinated assessments ongoing. An inter-cluster contingency plan is in place for the drought response, with protection closely integrated in WASH, Health, Nutrition and Food Security interventions. The Protection Cluster is strongly advocating for the prioritisation of highly affected areas of displacement, such as western Herat and Baghdis provinces. The ES/NFI Cluster also continues to coordinate the response in terms of shelter and NFIs for drought-affected IDPs.

2018 Protection Cluster:

38 Cluster partners

1.5M people targeted

67.0M funding request

ES/NFI Cluster:

31 Cluster partners

0.7M people targeted

53.0M funding request

Winterisation

- As lead Agency of the ES/NFI Cluster, UNHCR is coordinating with the government of Afghanistan the winterisation efforts. For the 2018 winter, UNHCR distributed cash assistance (approximately US\$200 per person) for assessed vulnerable persons of concern in all 34 provinces. The distribution of cash assistance supports local markets, as beneficiaries purchase items such as heating fuel, warm clothing, household goods and food. Winter blankets and clothes (from UNIQLO) were also distributed to vulnerable families. The ES/NFI cluster's preparations for the 2018 winterization programme has been carried out.



PROTECTING REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

Khost and Paktika

- Afghanistan hosts some 75,000 Pakistani refugees who fled North Waziristan Agency in 2014, mainly in Khost and Paktika provinces. UNHCR leads camp management and coordination in Gulan refugee camp, which accommodates over 13,000 refugees. Many have also settled in host communities in the two provinces and benefit from UNHCR and partners' community-based protection measures. With the emergency phase of displacement over, UNHCR is transitioning to a protection strategy built on targeted assistance to persons with specific needs that is designed to build capacity, self-reliance and resilience. UNHCR has initiated a process of assisting the Government in taking over primary responsibility for coordinating the refugee situation in Khost and Paktika, and is strengthening efforts with national and local authorities and partners, while also advocating with donors, to ensure continuity of essential services for the refugee population, in line with the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) modalities and whole of community approach.

Urban Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

- UNHCR prioritizes interim solutions for the approximately 524 urban refugees and asylum-seekers in Kabul and other locations pending the adoption of a national asylum law and implementation of a national asylum framework. UNHCR conducts registration and, as needed, carries out refugee status determination under its mandate as a protection tool. Local integration is currently unattainable for legal, social, economic and other reasons, while resettlement opportunities remain extremely limited. The likelihood of refugees and asylum seekers opting to voluntary return to their countries of origin is generally limited. The provision of targeted subsistence allowance and assistance to persons with specific needs (cash-based and in-kind) aims to reduce vulnerability and promote self-reliance. Through advocacy with the Government of Afghanistan, UNHCR mitigates protection risks, including detention and refoulement, and has developed agreements with line ministries to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers have access to basic services such as education and health care. UNHCR continues to support the Government in its efforts to adopt a national asylum law, which has been highlighted as a priority by the President.

**DURABLE SOLUTIONS****Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR)**

- UNHCR in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran have worked together on the 2018-2019 UNHCR regional strategy under the umbrella of the SSAR, with the aim of enhancing resilience and peaceful co-existence through greater responsibility-sharing, including strengthened partnership with development stakeholders.

Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF)

- On 16 July 2018, UNHCR received the official decision of the Government of Afghanistan to join and support the CRRF, becoming the first country in Asia and the first country of origin to do so. UNHCR will work closely with the Government to develop a plan for the application of the CRRF in Afghanistan.

Displacement and Return Executive Committee (DiREC) and National Policy Framework

- As an active member of the DiREC Technical and Finance Working Groups and co-chair of the Policy Working Group, UNHCR supports the Government of Afghanistan in the implementation of the Policy Framework for Returnees and IDPs and the related National Action Plan. UNHCR advocates with Government ministries and development actors for the needs of returnees and IDPs – as well as for the mainstreaming of protection issues – to be part of national policy frameworks, development plans (including the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework) and other National Priority Programmes. UNHCR also advocates for the implementation of the National IDP Policy (2013) and provincial IDP action plans.

On 7 December, UNHCR participated in the Housing, Land and Property (HLP) Taskforce workshop on durable solutions, incorporating the regional HLP Taskforce. As part of the meeting, UNHCR contributed to the 2019 strategic planning for the HLP Taskforce.

Joint Programming in Areas of High Return

- As examples of the implementation of its durable solutions policy, UNHCR spearheaded two inter-agency initiatives on durable solutions in Herat and Nangarhar provinces with national and provincial ministries and UN Agencies (UNICEF, WHO, IOM, UNDP, UN Habitat, WFP and FAO). These initiatives translate national plans into provincial planning and joint programming in areas of high return and displacement.
- In Herat, UNHCR and partners have contributed with the construction of shelters, a clinic and a school. In Jalalabad, UNHCR and its partners, together with line departments and agencies, have conducted a joint market assessment and designed sustainable livelihoods programmes through strengthened partnerships with development actors and the private sector. In February 2018, the proposed site in Jalalabad has been approved by the provincial DiREC. UNHCR, UNDP, and ILO are working together with the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled to pilot the joint programming initiative, “Sustainable Alternative Livelihoods for Afghan Mobility” (SALAM), in Nangarhar. The initiative seeks to improve economic livelihoods, especially for vulnerable populations including women, through job creation and market driven skills training.

The Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus

- UNHCR works to strengthen linkages between humanitarian and development through partnerships with development actors (mainly the World Bank) and the private sector to ensure access to documentation, livelihoods and essential services and to facilitate the representation of women in community decision making. In November 2017, UNHCR and the World Bank signed a data sharing agreement to better support reintegration of Afghan refugee returnees through strengthened data collection and analysis.

- UNHCR is also working with the World Bank to assess socio-economic characteristics, employment and livelihoods of post-2014 Afghan returnees (both refugee returnees and those who are undocumented) through a phone survey, randomly identifying returnees among the population and following up with a detailed interview. This will lead to better comparative understanding on the situation of returnees. UNHCR also participates in the consultations for the World Bank supported Education Quality Reform for Afghanistan (EQRA) program, which targets 14 provinces, including those with high levels of return and displacement – to ensure greater inclusion of returnees and IDPs.

Working in Partnerships

- UNHCR's direct counterpart in the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR). UNHCR is also working with numerous line ministries. UNHCR is co-leading with the Government, on a rotational basis with UNDP and IOM, the Durable Solutions Working Group, at both the national and sub-national levels, to strengthen links between humanitarian and development to facilitate the sustainable reintegration of returnees and IDPs.
- UNHCR is part of the tripartite and quadripartite mechanisms established with the Governments of the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran to plan, coordinate and undertake repatriation of Afghan refugees within the framework of the SSAR. Plans are underway to work together with the Government of Afghanistan on the roadmap for the CRRF towards the Global Refugee Forum scheduled in December 2019.
- UNHCR Afghanistan works closely with UNHCR in Iran and Pakistan to implement and coordinated regional approach to anticipate challenges and align efforts, including with regard to advocacy and fundraising, as well as cross-border programming for livelihoods, and to share best practices and lessons learned.
- In line with the regional framework of the SSAR, UNHCR is an active member of DiREC, co-chairs the related Policy Working Group, and is a member of the Technical and Finance Working Groups.
- Within the Humanitarian Country Team and UN Country Team, UNHCR is working closely with other UN agencies, in particular IOM, to ensure sustainable return and reintegration in Afghanistan. The [One UN for Afghanistan website](#) was rolled out in July 2018, and will serve as an effective communication tool on activities of the UN in Afghanistan.
- UNHCR advocates and works with development actors to support the Government's policies and National Priority Programmes (NPP) for interim and longer term solutions.
- UNHCR works with 27 partners across the country, including 2 international and 25 national NGOs, as well as the World Bank and the private sector.
- UNHCR leads the Protection Cluster and the Emergency Shelter/NFI Cluster. The Protection Cluster is co-chaired with NRC and the ES/NFI Cluster is co-chaired with IOM.
- UNHCR is working closely with the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) to prevent risks related to IEDs, landmines, and UXOs and to promote respect of International Humanitarian Law by all parties to the conflict.
- UNHCR leads coordination of the Pakistani refugee response in Khost and Paktika provinces.
- UNHCR maintains close relationships with the donor community through donor briefings, consultations and regular dialogue, and assists in coordinating field visits.
- UNHCR is working to harmonize data and strengthen information management to enhance protection outcomes. UNHCR has signed a data sharing agreement with WFP to ensure food assistance to vulnerable returnees through WFP's SCOPE programme. Through an inclusive and participatory approach, UNHCR is engaging with persons of concern to generate data and evidence-based results to demonstrate the impact of UNHCR programmes, identify gaps for strategic direction and programming, and inform the wider humanitarian community.

Donor support

UNHCR appreciates the partnership and financial contributions of both unearmarked and broadly earmarked funds from donors, as well as for those who have contributed regionally and directly to the operation.

Algeria | Argentina | Australia | Belgium | Bosnia and Herzegovina | Bulgaria | Canada | China | Costa Rica | Czech Republic | Denmark | Estonia | European Union | Finland | France | Germany | Iceland | India | Indonesia | Ireland | Israel | Italy | Japan | Kuwait | Liechtenstein | Lithuania | Luxembourg | Monaco | Montenegro | Netherlands | New Zealand | Norway | Philippines | Portugal | Qatar | Republic of Korea | Russian Federation | Saudi Arabia | Serbia | Singapore | Slovakia | Sri Lanka | Sweden | Switzerland | Thailand | Turkey | United Kingdom | United Arab Emirates | United States of America | UNIQLO | Uruguay | Private Donors |

1. All financial information contained in this update is indicative and does not constitute official UNHCR financial reporting.
2. Unrestricted and regional funds mentioned above include all sub-regional and regional contributions worldwide.

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LINKS

- UNHCR's data portal for Afghanistan: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/afg>
- UNHCR's Global Focus website for Afghanistan: <http://reporting.unhcr.org/node/4505>
- Global Compact on Refugees: <https://www.unhcr.org/towards-a-global-compact-on-refugees>
- Afghanistan Protection Cluster website: <http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/en/field-support/field-protection-clusters/countries/afghanistan.html>
- Afghanistan Shelter Cluster website: <https://www.sheltercluster.org/response/afghanistan>
- Humanitarian Response Afghanistan website: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/afghanistan>
- UNHCR's global website: <http://www.unhcr.org/>
- ONE UN for Afghanistan: <https://www.af.one.un.org/>
- Twitter: @UNHCRAf