

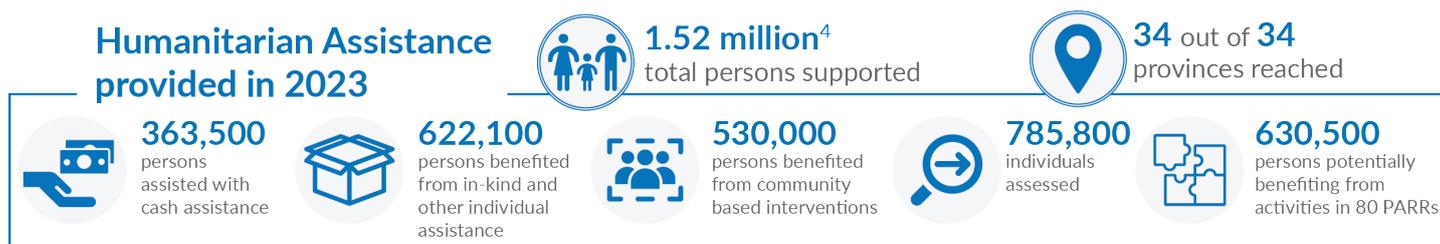
KEY DISPLACEMENT FIGURES



HIGHLIGHTS

- UNHCR and partners in Afghanistan and Pakistan continued to support the cross-border response following the 3 October [announcement](#) by the Government of Pakistan to return undocumented people residing inside the country from 1 November. 493,300 people returned to Afghanistan between 15 September and 31 December 2023. The flow of returnees entering Afghanistan from Pakistan via the Torkham and Spin Boldak border crossing points continued to decline during the reporting period with some 58,700 returns in December 2023. This signifies a notable reduction in cross-border movements compared to the beginning of November. For more information on the response, please see the latest [CORE Update](#) and [External Update](#).
- UNHCR is closely following up on the outcomes of the recent [Global Refugee Forum \(GRF\)](#) – held in Geneva, Switzerland, on 13 – 15 December – with several countries having made significant pledges to address the Afghan situation through the framework of the [Multistakeholder Pledge: ReSolve – for Resilience and Solutions](#), including in the areas of education, livelihoods, health, resettlement as well as a focus on women and girls' well-being. The pledges from the international community largely outlined their current support although reference was also made to future funding. So far, pledges from Australia, Canada, Denmark, the European Union, Japan, the Netherlands and Switzerland have been validated and recorded. Although Pakistan did not make a pledge, the Special Representative for Afghanistan called on the international community to scale up their support and emphasised the need to advance durable solutions.
- UNHCR and partners continued to [respond](#) to those affected by the tragic earthquakes in Afghanistan. Over 7,500 families from 77 villages in Herat received various core relief items (CRIs), including family tents, blankets, kitchen sets, solar lamps and dignity kits. 16,000 people in Injil, Guzara, Karukh, Ghoriyan, Koshk Rabat Sangi, Gulran, and Zindajan districts were reached via awareness raising, including on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and accessed services delivered by UNHCR and partners. Community engagement activities were also carried out with over 330 sessions on protection assistance. Over 4,700 people received psychosocial support through counselling sessions and 130 child protection issues (including on child labour and early marriage) were identified and attended to in the Naib Rafi, Chahak, Mamezak and Sarbaland villages of Zindajan District. Additionally, UNHCR and partners supported some 1,800 children via three established child-friendly spaces in Zindajan District. These spaces offer several activities such as life skills, painting therapy and hygiene promotion.

AFGHANISTAN:



- UNHCR and partners reached an estimated 1.52 million individuals with emergency assistance in 34 out of 34 provinces countrywide as of end-December 2023. Of the total reached, 363,500 were supported with cash assistance while 622,100 were reached with in-kind and other individual assistance. 785,800 individuals were assessed and 630,500 potentially benefited from activities in the priority areas of return and reintegration (PARRs). Other assistance included protection, CRI distributions, shelter and seasonal support.
- UNHCR recently inaugurated two new girls' schools in Afghanistan's Laghman and Nangarhar provinces. Sanger 2 Girls School has 12 classrooms and a laboratory and comes equipped with computers, a solar-powered electricity system, and a water reservoir. Positioned in Sanger Village, which lies within the UNHCR-designated PARR, this school is strategically located to support over 7,000 displaced Afghans and former refugees who recently returned from Pakistan. In addition, another girls' school with a similar set-up was inaugurated in the eastern province of Nangarhar.
- On 27 December, UNHCR signed three agreements with the Afghanistan Humanitarian Trust Fund to enhance access to education, healthcare, and livelihoods opportunities. The agreements – which total \$14.3 million – seek to benefit more than 240,000 individuals in locations inside and outside the UNHCR-designated PARRs.

REGIONAL

- Following a recent visit to Pakistan by US Assistant Secretary for Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM), Ms. Julieta Valls Noyes, UNHCR welcomed US State Department Special Representative for Afghanistan, Mr. Tom West. West's visit was focused on the Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan and shoring up support for the US Resettlement Support Centre. UNHCR Pakistan's Representative gave an update on the current response and ongoing advocacy to secure Proof of Registration (PoR) card extensions. The Special Representative also met with a group of Afghan women, where he learnt about the impact the repatriation exercise has had on the community's mental health and their future plans.
- On 14 December, the [Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees \(SSAR\)](#) Core Group+ – led by the Netherlands which is one of the co-chairs – held a technical level meeting hosted by UNHCR. UNHCR briefed on the latest developments, including the decline in both arrests and deportations in Pakistan, recent visit by the Assistant Representative for Protection to Afghanistan and the situation at the border. UNHCR also gave an update on the recent GRF and expressed appreciation for the SSAR Core Group's support and advocacy in 2023.
- In December, UNHCR Pakistan submitted 64 cases (240 refugees) to resettlement countries. In 2023, 963 cases (4,198 people) were submitted to Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, United Kingdom, and USA. 105 people also departed via complementary pathways to Australia, Canada and the USA. In December, UNHCR Iran submitted 17 cases (53 individuals) to resettlement countries. In 2023, 3,274 individuals were submitted to Australia, Canada, Finland, Italy, Norway and the United Kingdom under an allocated quota. In 2023, 1,489 individuals departed for Australia, Finland, Italy, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. Resettlement remains an invaluable durable solution, responsibility-sharing mechanism, and key protection tool for refugees whose life, liberty, safety, health, or fundamental human rights are at risk.
- As part of ongoing efforts to expand refugees' access to national services, UNHCR Iran supported the enrolment of 95,000 of the most vulnerable refugees into the Universal Public Health Insurance in 2023. In addition, some 15,000 refugee households (70,000 individuals) were reached via multi-purpose cash assistance. This is a significant increase from the 6,722 households supported in 2022.
- UNHCR Iran supported 469 refugee students through the DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) tertiary scholarship programme. The scholarship covers a range of costs, including tuition, study materials, food, transportation, accommodation, and other expenses. Higher education is a critical priority for UNHCR – as outlined in [Education 2030: A Strategy for Refugee Education](#) – and forms an integral part of UNHCR's protection and solutions mandate.

CROSS BORDER SITUATION

- Over 1.46 million IDPs returned to their places of origin between 2021 and 2023. The source of these figures are the 400,300 household-level rapid assessments conducted by UNHCR and partners from 10 October 2021 to 31 December 2023. These figures are expected to increase retroactively due to ongoing assessments and considered indicative rather than the overall statistical data of IDP returnees in Afghanistan. Figures may also be underestimated due to the recent downscaling of assessments undertaken in 2023.

⁴ The total number of persons supported may include multiple counting of beneficiaries receiving assistance through more than one activity during the reporting period.



- Deportations from Iran and Pakistan continued to be reported. Based on information collected by UNHCR Afghanistan, some 661,000 Afghans were deported from Iran as of 14 December 2023. In Pakistan, some 31,700 Afghans were deported from January to December 2023. For more information, please see the latest [UNHCR-IOM Flash Update](#). UNHCR's [advisory](#) against forced returns to Afghanistan – issued in August 2021 and re-affirmed in February 2023 – remains in effect until security, rule of law and the human rights conditions improve enough in the country to allow for safe and dignified returns.
- In Iran, UNHCR facilitated the repatriation of 521 individuals (516 Afghan and five Iraqi nationals) in 2023. 28 individuals were repatriated in December, representing a 37% increase compared to the same period in 2022. The main reasons cited by the returnees were financial difficulties in Iran, family reunification and the improved safety situation in Afghanistan. For more information, please see the latest voluntary repatriation update [here](#).

DONOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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