AFGHANISTAN MONTHLY PROTECTION MONITORING SUMMARY

JULY 2024

8,279 assessments conducted in July

54,629 persons reached

238% increase of total assessments compared to June

Conducted across **103 districts** in **32 provinces**

29% of interviewed households are headed by women. Out of the overall household members, **52 %** are female, of which **31 %** are girls, and **60 %** are children

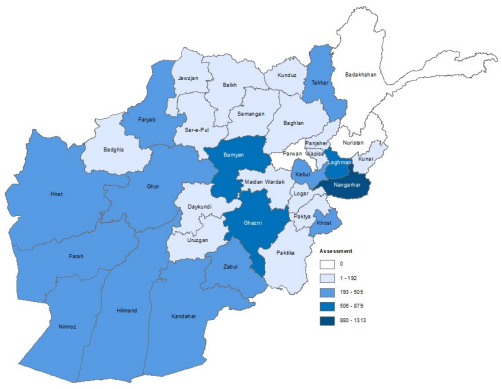
7% heads of households with **disabilities**

Introduction

The analysis provided in this report relies on data gathered through UNHCR's protection monitoring tools. UNHCR's **Community Based Protection Monitoring (CBPM)** interventions include household-level assessments, key informant interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs), aiming to collect evidence-based information on the protection needs and risks of displaced, returnee and host communities. CBPM outcomes inform UNHCR programming and strategic decision making and advocacy, and also feeds into the Afghanistan Protection Cluster's analysis and information products. **Rapid multi-sectoral household assessments (RHAF)** aim to identify persons in need of assistance through UNHCR's protection and assistance programmes and also provide valuable insights into the vulnerabilities of households as well as related protection needs and risks. The selection of areas is based on the high density of displaced and returnees among communities, including priority areas of return and reintegration and newly accessible areas. UNHCR's population groups include refugee returnees, IDPs, IDP returnees, refugees and asylum seekers and members of the host communities.

KEY POINTS

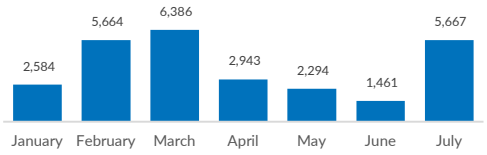
- **Women and girls** continue to face significant challenges in accessing basic services and assistance, reflecting their systemic discrimination and movement restrictions.
- **Among the surveyed population in July, 55% of head of household** reported experiencing one or more forms of vulnerabilities, reflecting a 14.5% increase compared to June.
- **Food assistance** was the most crucial need highlighted by surveyed households, followed by healthcare.
- **Many families reported having resorted to harmful coping mechanisms**, such as borrowing money, selling assets, or harmful practices that imply serious child protection risks.



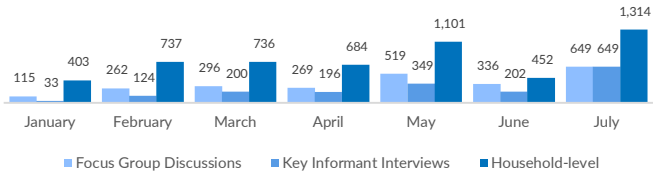
- The number of **RHAF and CBPM assessments has increased significantly by 238% compared to June,** primarily due to the successful expansion of geographical coverage in July.

OVERVIEW OF THE DATA COLLECTED

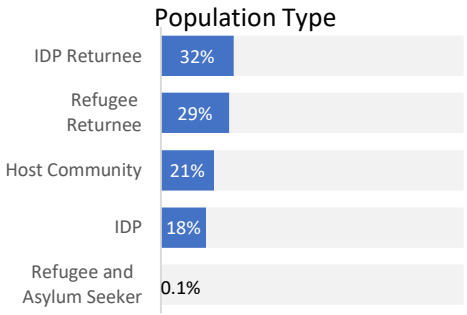
RHAF Assessments (household-level)



CBPM Assessment



- UNHCR conducted **8,279** assessments in July 2024, using various tools such as household assessments, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions to assess communities' protection needs and risks. This number of protection assessments has **surged** since June due to the one-week Eid holiday suspension of partner activities and expanded geographical coverage in July.
- **Most interviewed households were IDP returnees**, followed by refugee returnees, reflecting UNHCR's focus on the specific protection issues that Afghans face upon their return.
- Across all assessment modalities, **UNHCR reached 54,629 individuals** in July, primarily women and children. 29% of the households were headed by women, indicating a 0.5% increase compared with June.
- UNHCR is working closely with all its partners to **ensure the participation of female staff in all activities** and is using various modalities to **capture the voices of women and girls despite the severe restrictions.**



IDENTIFIED VULNERABILITIES

55% with **vulnerabilities**

62% **experienced stress** affecting their day-to-day life

7% **heads of households** with **disabilities**

- **According to the RHAF survey conducted in July, 55% of head of households have some form of vulnerability,** among them female headed households, single male headed households, persons with life-threatening health issues, persons with disabilities, elderly persons at risk and children at risk. These findings are supported by the CBPM household assessments, which also point to 13% of the households surveyed being headed by widows and 8% by older persons or children, showing an increase of 3% from the previous month.
- **According to the CBPM survey conducted in June, 62% of respondents indicated that they or their family members had experienced feelings of stress that affected their day-to-day life**, pointing to a high prevalence of MHPSS issues among the surveyed population. This shows an increase of 13% from the previous month. The main stressors identified were lack of employment and severe economic hardship, food insecurity, and unavailability or lack of access to services, alongside physical health problems, school dropout, child labor, armed conflict, family violence, community tension, denied access to education, forced marriage, and denial of services and opportunities excluding education As a result of experiencing stress, 45% of the respondents indicated that they had observed **behavioral**

changes in the household, which included family members appearing sad and stressed, loss of appetite, aggressiveness, self-isolation, and thoughts of self-harm.

- Vulnerabilities were also high among household members, pointing to the **multi-faceted protection risks that Afghan families face.** The main vulnerabilities observed under the RHAF include female headed household 14%, single male headed household 13%, persons with life threatening health issues 12%, persons with disabilities 10%, elderly persons at risk 8%, and children at risk **8%.** In addition, CBPM data also points to high rates of school dropouts (30%) among surveyed families due to a lack of financial support by families and the engagement of children in child labor. Life-threatening health issues 30%), age (9%), legal protection and security needs (5%), and drug dependency (2%) are among other risks and vulnerabilities pointed out by the CBPM respondents. **CBPM monitors have also observed tension or violence in 27% of the households** affecting predominantly children (44%), women (42%), persons with disabilities (8%) as well as older persons (6%).

SAFETY & FREEDOM

42% mentioned community areas **off-limits for women and girls**

- **42 % of the heads of households indicated that there are places in the community that women and girls cannot access,** highlighting the significant challenges in freedom of movement and participation in public life.
- The **main places that women and girls cannot go to** include education facilities, markets, clinic, water points, c and latrines.
- The **main reasons for movement limitations** include discrimination, harassment and intimidations in public areas, lack of identity and civil documents, mahram requirements and safety concerns related to debts and social and cultural barriers.

CIVIL DOCUMENTATION

68% reported lack of **civil documentation**

51% reported barriers **accessing legal services**

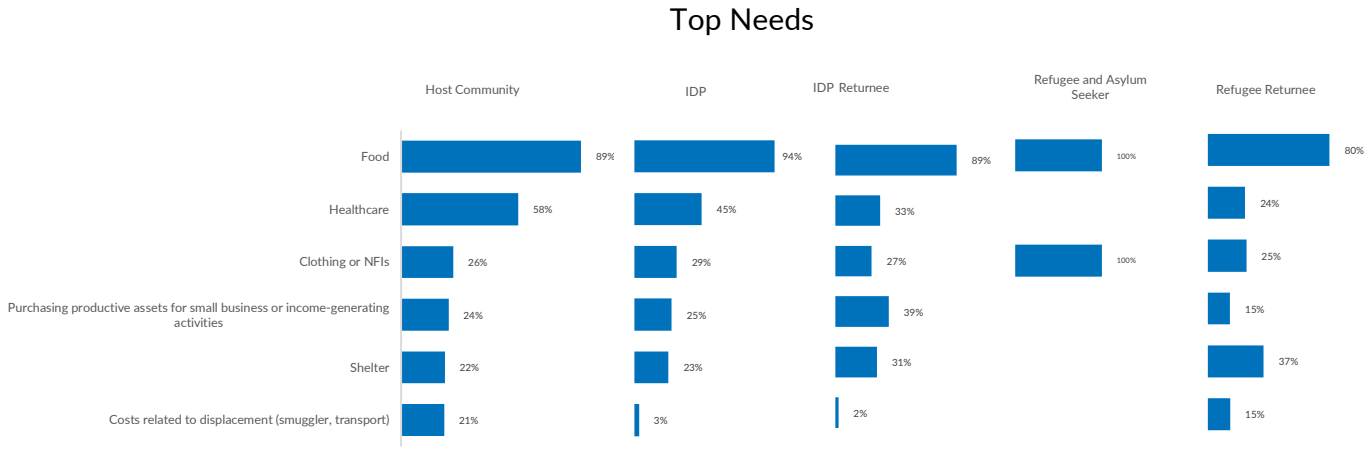
- Around **68% of all households surveyed have members who need civil documentation. Women and children are by far the most affected population groups. Undocumented returnees and refugee returnees display significantly higher rates (82% and 80%, respectively),** while the percentage of IDP returnees and IDPs is lower (67% and 64%, respectively). In light of the civil documentation needs reported for Afghan returnees from Pakistan, this trend will be closely observed over the following months.
- The **primary documents missing are** e-Taskera, followed by passport, paper Tazkera, marriage certificates, birth certificates, e-Tazkera and the paper ta and other certificates. The main reason is that these documents were never obtained, the households interviewed lack knowledge about the procedures and lack of knowledge about the importance of these documents.
- The **CBPM survey conducted in July** indicates that legal assistance projects were more effectively implemented and reached more people compared to June. The trend in CBPM assessments shows a 12% decrease in barriers faced by respondents in accessing legal assistance, including civil

documentation and HLP, compared to the previous month. Unavailability of services, high costs, lack of information on services, and transportation limitations affected women and girls the most.

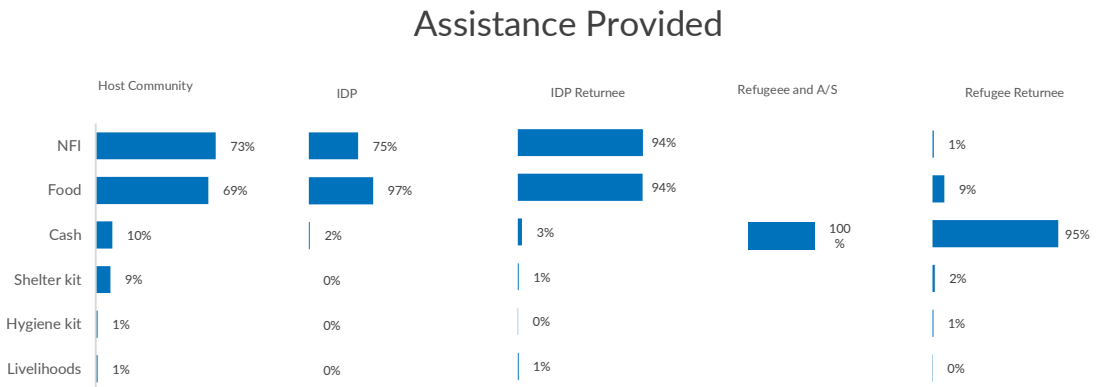
- The **impact of not having documentation is drastic**, with two-thirds of the respondents indicating that it prevents them from accessing basic services. It is also a barrier to accessing education and governmental or humanitarian assistance and contributes to movement restrictions and property ownership disputes.

NEEDS PRIORITIZATION, ACCESS TO SERVICES AND ASSISTANCE PROVIDED

86% mentioned food as the most pressing need



- **Food assistance** was the most crucial need prioritized by households surveyed under the RHAF, followed by health costs, the need for purchasing productive assets to run a small business, clothing/NFI, and energy. According to the RHAF survey conducted in July, despite the assistance provided, 61% of the surveyed households are still in need of humanitarian assistance.

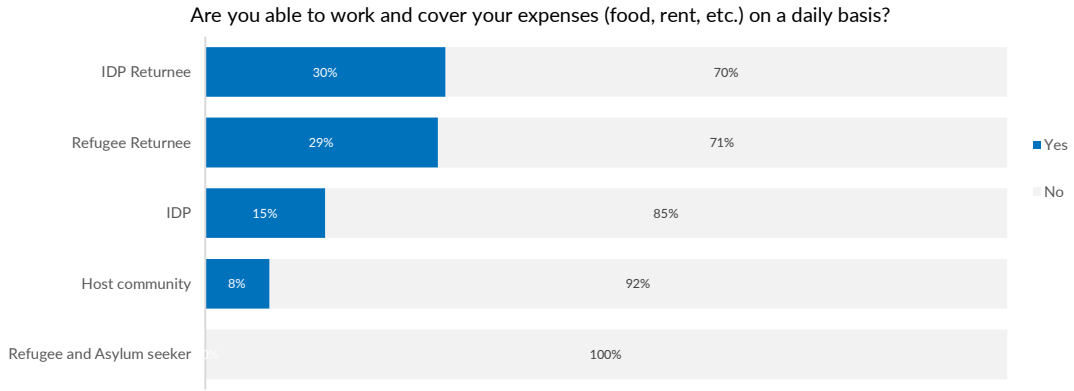


- This is confirmed by the CBPM findings, which show 82% of all households reported being in need of food assistance in the past three months, mainly due to not being assessed for assistance, lack of knowledge about eligibility criteria and procedures and due the discrimination or exclusion by the community leaders. The percentage is even higher among female respondents (84%) than male respondents (80%), pointing to the heightened economic vulnerability of women.
- **Respondents also face challenges in accessing MHPSS services and drinking water**, with 70% and 55% of households needing access to these essential services. However, irrespective of the gender of the head of household, **all respondents highlighted that among those facing access challenges, women and girls are by far the most affected groups**. Refugee returnees and host community members are particularly affected by overcrowded shelters. Other shelter related concerns include damages, lack of protective walls and doors and privacy.
- **Overall, women and girls continue to face significant challenges in accessing the most basic service**s, reflecting the systemic discrimination and movement restrictions.
- Other main barriers to accessing services include unavailability of services, high costs (including for transportation), lack of information on services as well as lack of documents.

LIVELIHOODS AND COPING STRATEGIES

81% reported **selling assets** to meet vital needs.

77% struggled to cover **daily living expenses** (food, rent, and other basic needs)



- Due to financial constraints and high poverty, many families have resorted to harmful coping mechanisms with severe implications that significantly impact women and children. CBPM and RHAF data indicate that most households borrow money to cope with **financial problems**. The prevalence was even higher for refugee and returnees surveyed.
- **Other coping mechanisms** identified were selling assets (81% of RHAF respondents and 61% of CBPM respondents have resorted to this measure), child labor, skipping meals or reducing meal sizes, engaging in hazardous work, or family members relocating abroad.

According to the CBPM findings, a significant number of the surveyed respondents indicated that due to acute poverty and financial reasons, their **families had adopted harmful practices.** These included borrowing money, selling household assets, engaging children in labor including sending them to the neighboring countries to work, skipping meals, and arranging early marriages for their children to alleviate financial burden. The findings highlight the urgent need to support vulnerable families through integrated programming interventions, including child protection, livelihoods, and community engagement.

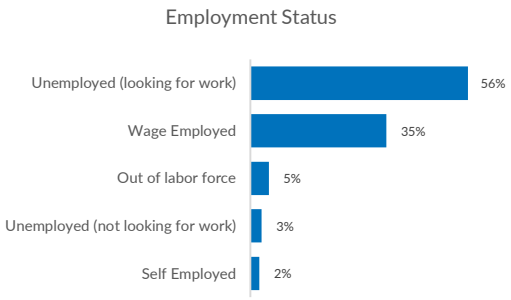
HOUSEHOLDS EMPLOYMENT STATUS & SOURCE OF INCOME

80% engaged in **informal income-generating activities**

94% relied on **financial support from relatives**

55.5% are **unemployed**

- **According to the RHAF survey conducted in July,** over 55.5% of households are unemployed, 94% have accrued debts, and 34.6% rely on daily labor, with whatever income generated usually spent on essential needs and debt repayment. A total of 77% of the surveyed households were not able to afford daily living expenses such as providing food, rent, and other basic critical needs.
- The lack of economic opportunities, entrenched poverty, repeated and protracted displacement, and the shrinking protection space have eroded people's resilience and point to the critical need for livelihood and economic empowerment interventions.



LEADING CAUSES OF DISPLACEMENT AND INTENTIONS FOR RETURN AND REINTEGRATION

While **49% of all IDPs** refer to **armed conflict including human rights violations** as top reason for their displacement, those displaced within the last three months referred to **natural disasters** as the main cause.

- **According to the CBPM survey conducted in July,** the main reason for the displacement of IDPs in the last three months is natural disasters, followed by security and human rights concerns, vulnerable

migration, personal security, and community tension. **According to the CBPM survey conducted in July, only 18% of the IDPs displaced in the last three months expressed to return due to safety and family considerations, while 35 % indicated that they will remain in the current location, and 47 % are uncertain about whether to return, integrate, or move onward, mainly due to overall security situation, economic hardship, children's education, natural disasters and lack of humanitarian assistance**.

- **Based on the findings of the CBPM survey in July,** 30% of IDPs and refugee returnees were uncertain about returning to their places of origin due to economic hardship, lack of humanitarian assistance, natural disasters, children not being able to access education, and security concerns.
- **29 % of FGD participants** noted that their communities have received new arrivals. These include returnees deported from Pakistan and Iran, as well as families displaced by floods, drought, and security issues.