



**UNHCR**  
The UN Refugee Agency

# Protection and Solutions Strategy

**UNHCR Afghanistan 2025 - 2027**

## I. Introduction

With the end of major hostilities in Afghanistan, after more than 40 years and the consolidation of control by the Taliban led *de facto* authorities (DfA) in August 2021, conflict is no longer the primary driver of displacement. However, 3.25 million Afghans remain displaced because of conflict within the country and over 5.53 million Afghans are registered refugees or in refugee-like situations in the region, hosted mainly in Iran and Pakistan. An estimated 34,840 refugees are living in Afghanistan's Khost and Paktika regions.

Since the takeover of power, the DfA have systematically dismantled human rights in Afghanistan, especially with regards to the rights of women and girls. Decrees restricting the right to work for Afghan women employed by NGOs and UN organisations have significantly constrained access to vulnerable women and girls and impacted the ability to provide services.

The needs in Afghanistan are vast. Approximately 85 percent of Afghans live on less than one dollar a day. The humanitarian country team estimates that 23.7 million people - more than half of Afghanistan's population - require humanitarian assistance in 2024. Afghan people experience drastic rises in poverty, hunger and malnutrition, a near collapse of the national public health system as well as reduced resilience, coping and adaptation abilities to climate change shocks and natural disasters. UNDP's report "[Two Years in Review: Changes in Afghan Economy, Households and Cross Cutting Sectors](#)" shows that the Afghan economy is struggling to recover after a 27 percent contraction since 2020. Two years following the change in regime, seven out of ten Afghans do not have access to the most basic items such as cooking items, winter clothing and basic healthcare. 15.2 million people are categorized as severely food insecure. Women are disproportionately affected by the socio-economic crises, in that their share of employment has nearly halved, decreasing from 11 percent in 2022 to 6 percent in 2023.



While the change in power in Afghanistan in August 2021 is the most important development of the recent past, large-scale returns from Pakistan since September 2023, the June 2022 and October 2023 earthquakes and other natural and climate disasters have contributed to a significantly changed environment.

High levels of returns of Afghans, many of them forced, are expected to continue. Projections indicate over 1.46 million Afghans from Pakistan and Iran will return in 2024. While predictions for 2025 are difficult at the time of drafting this strategy, the escalating rhetoric vis-à-vis Afghans in both Pakistan and Iran is of great concern. While Pakistan is reflecting on implementing the next phase of its plans to repatriate “illegal foreigners”, Iran announced in September 2024 that Afghans must leave the country before the end of the 1403 Persian year (March 2025), referring to up to 2 million people.

Finding durable solutions for forcibly displaced people, including returnees, is core to the mandate UNHCR was given by the UN General Assembly. Above events have fundamentally changed the landscape within which UNHCR is pursuing this mandate and demand new directions for UNHCR’s engagement in Afghanistan. A specific focus on refugee returnees is therefore indicated.

The purpose of this document is to provide such strategic directions for UNHCR Afghanistan’s protection and solutions activities going forward. Key strategic focus areas are:

1. Ensure greater access to rights and services for all forcibly displaced, returnees and stateless people, including through empowering communities to become agents of their own protection.
2. Provide and facilitate greater access to legal protection services and civil documentation for all forcibly displaced, returnees and stateless people.
3. Reinforce resilience, (economic) inclusion, and solutions for all forcibly displaced, returnees and stateless people.
4. Empower women and girls.
5. Facilitate greater protection for refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons and pathways towards durable solutions.

An evidence-based approach will shape the implementation of these priorities to protect, assist and empower vulnerable populations in Afghanistan. Integrated data and protection analysis will serve as the foundation for UNHCR’s planning, interventions, monitoring and evaluation. Through age, gender and diversity-disaggregated data and protection analysis, UNHCR will inform programmes, including in the context of large-scale displacements or returns, with the aim to focus on reaching those who are furthest behind, especially women and girls.

## II. The current protection situation

### International legal framework

Afghanistan is a state party to seven United Nations human rights treaties<sup>1</sup> and remains bound by various international legal obligations and principles outlined in international human rights law, international humanitarian law, international refugee law and international customary law. As such, the DfA must uphold, promote and fulfil the human rights of all individuals within the territory under their control, including forcibly displaced persons.

Afghanistan is also a state party to four Geneva Conventions and two Additional Protocols<sup>2</sup> as well as a state party to the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees<sup>3</sup>. Afghanistan has not acceded to the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons<sup>4</sup>, nor to the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness<sup>5</sup>.

Afghanistan became the first state in Asia to endorse the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework<sup>6</sup>. This endorsement entails implementing the overarching structure of the Solution Strategy for Afghan Refugees, particularly focusing on efforts to create conditions conducive to the sustainable return and reintegration of Afghan refugees.

### National legal and policy frameworks

After assuming controls in August 2021, the DfA suspended the 2004 Constitution of Afghanistan, laws and rules concerning legal procedures, judicial appointments and procedures for a fair trial implemented by the Government of Afghanistan under the republic.

Although Afghanistan acceded to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol in August 2005, the National Law on Asylum remains in draft form. No progress has been observed under the rule of the DfA.

Afghanistan has not acceded to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, nor to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. However, the 2004 Afghan Constitution guarantees the right to nationality for all Afghans, while the 2014 Law on Registration

<sup>1</sup> Afghanistan is a state party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention Against Torture, Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Convention on Rights of Child and Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children child prostitution and child pornography, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

<sup>2</sup> Afghanistan is a state party to the Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field, the Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea, the Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, the Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts and the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts.

<sup>3</sup> The United Nations Treaty Collection, [Convention relating to the status of refugees and Protocol relating to the status of refugees](#).

<sup>4</sup> The United Nations, Treaty Collection, [Status of Treaties](#), Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, as at 12.2.2024.

<sup>5</sup> The United Nations, Treaty Collection, [Status of Treaties](#), Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, as at 12.2.2024.

<sup>6</sup> The United Nations General Assembly, [New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants](#), A/RES/71/1, 3.10.2016.

of Population Records underscores the entitlement of every Afghan individual to obtain a Tazkira through application, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, or place of residence. The citizenship regime operates under a *jus sanguinis* structure, granting automatic citizenship to children born within or outside of the state to two citizen parents. It also offers pathways for children born to one citizen parent and a foreign national to acquire citizenship. In light of the suspension of the 2004 Afghan Constitution and related legislation, the current state of citizenship and legal identity regimes remains however uncertain.

In 2014, the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GoIRA) addressed the pressing issue of long-term and large-scale displacements by adopting a comprehensive national policy on displacement, recognizing the legitimate rights of internally displaced persons (IDPs) as Afghan citizens and aligning with international human rights and humanitarian law, including the 1998 United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. The policy ultimately failed to bring about significant changes in the lives of IDPs.

On 21 August 2024 the de facto authorities announced the ratification of a Law on the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, which further and dramatically restricts the rights of women in the country. The document is the first formal declaration of the vice and virtue laws under the dfa's strict interpretation of Sharia law, and – unlike the previous 'edicts' – was published in the Official Gazette. It gives the Ministry of Vice and Virtue a mandate to enforce the law; in other words, a legal basis for infringement of human rights, with the intention to further restrict women's rights in the public sphere. In addition, the law defined the responsibilities of an inspector responsible for enforcing the prohibitions with discretionary power over arbitrary arrests and detentions.

## Forcibly displaced, returnee and persons at risk of statelessness in Afghanistan

3.25 million Afghans remain displaced by conflict within the country and over 5.53 million are registered refugees or Afghans in refugee-like situations in the region. An estimated 34,840 refugees are living in Afghanistan's Khost and Paktika regions.

### *Refugees and asylum-seekers*

About 34,800 refugees are living in Khost and Paktika regions and 165 registered refugees as well as 324 registered asylum seekers in urban settings. Additionally, there are about 250 asylum seekers of Baluchi origin that are not registered with UNHCR. While no significant changes related to these numbers are expected, refugees and asylum seekers are among the most vulnerable groups of people in Afghanistan in the absence of refugee laws, national policies and governmental programs. This despite Afghanistan having signed the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. Refugees and asylum-seekers in Afghanistan have limited access to basic rights, including economic rights, documentation, education and protection from *refoulement*. Refugees and asylum-seekers are subjected to hate crimes and risks of arrest, detention, intimidation, and harassment are frequently reported. As a result, it is difficult for this

group to secure livelihoods and sustain their families. UNHCR will continue to advocate for the rights of refugees and asylum seekers in Afghanistan, facilitate their access to documentation as well as support with seasonal financial assistance to the most vulnerable. UNHCR will also continue to advocate for support of refugees and asylum seekers by international organizations.

### *Refugee returnees*

While UNHCR has been facilitating voluntary repatriation of Afghans from Pakistan and Iran for some years, Pakistan's "Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan" (IFRP), with a focus on the repatriation of undocumented individuals, has driven return movements in 2023 and 2024. However, status and documentation in Pakistan are not representative of peoples' international protection needs given that access to registration is restricted and many Afghans never had an opportunity to apply for asylum and formally seek protection, including those that fled Afghanistan after the events in 2021. The majority of those returning cited the use of police force and harassment in Pakistan as one of the drivers to return. As a result, some 712,000 Afghans have returned since the start of the IFRP in mid-September 2023 and 31 August 2024, including 23,658 Registration (PoR) card holders. The number of deportations has been progressively increasing during that period, with nearly 34,400 deportations recorded. Documentation/legal assistance, protection services for children, and protection services for girls and women are the top three protection services required by returnees. Loss of social support networks, assets and property and the need to restart lives and livelihoods in unfamiliar locations with few resources present additional challenges for returnees. At the same time, deportations from Iran have been consistently high over the past years, with several hundred thousand people returned in 2023. This must be considered the baseline, with potentially significantly more deportations taking place by the end of 2024 and the years to come. Given these significant pressures from both Pakistan and Iran and related Protection risks and the need for Solutions, refugee returnees are a prioritised population group under this strategy.

### *Internally displaced persons (IDPs)*

As of December 2023, an estimated 3.2 million persons remained internally displaced due to conflict and another 3.3 million because of natural disasters. This makes Afghanistan the country with the largest IDP population in South Asia and the second largest globally, following Syria. Following the withdrawal of international armed forces and the collapse of the Afghanistan Defense and Security Forces, armed conflict ceased. Since August 2021, it is believed that around 1.5 million conflict-induced displaced persons have returned to their previous habitual residences. Lack of documentation is reported by IDPs as a key protection issue - an estimated 41 percent of IDPs lack proper documentation. Among them, women were the most affected at 88 percent, followed by girls at 86 percent and boys at 78 percent. The lack of documentation hinders IDPs to access basic services such as health and education and restricts their freedom of movement. But legal services were also found to be inaccessible to 38 percent of IDPs, with women being the most affected at 93 percent.



Further studies are necessary to determine whether the absence of clear legal provisions and arbitrary actions by authorities could exacerbate barriers for specific groups in accessing documentation. Nonetheless, there has been scant research conducted on populations at increased risk of statelessness in Afghanistan. Among these vulnerable groups are nomadic communities like the Bangriwala, as well as members of the Jat community, including the Jogi, Chori Frosh, and Gorbat communities. The intergenerational lack of documentation and the nomadic lifestyle are key factors contributing to the administrative hurdles these communities encounter in accessing documentation, thus affecting their ability to obtain or confirm citizenship. Other factors contributing to a risk of statelessness include challenges related to documentation, gender, age, displacement, and historical obstacles in establishing citizenship.

## The situation of women and girls in Afghanistan

The most significant development in the recent past affecting the protection situation in Afghanistan of all population groups is the change in power in Afghanistan in August 2021. Restrictions on the rights of Afghans to freedom of opinion, freedom of speech, and freedom of assembly were imposed and there is growing curtailment by the DfA of the human rights of Afghan women and girls.

Since August 2021, there have been more than 50 decrees that directly curtail the rights and dignity of women, including those banning them from public spaces and affairs, for example, the exclusion of girls from secondary school, women from universities, public parks, community baths and gymnasiums. Women spaces have also been closed and the Ministry of Women Affairs abolished. Women and girls have been ordered to travel only with a mahram (male relative chaperone) beyond a certain distance.

The situation has been exacerbated by decrees limiting the employment of Afghan women by NGOs and UN organisations, restricting access to vulnerable women and girls. Currently, there are no signs that the systematic discrimination against women and girls will cease or that their quality of life will improve. On the contrary, on 21 August 2024, the de facto authorities announced the ratification of a Law on the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, which dramatically restricts the rights of women in the country even further. The document is the first formal declaration of the vice and virtue laws under the dfa's strict interpretation of Sharia law, and – unlike the previous edicts – was published in the Official Gazette. It gives the Ministry of Vice and Virtue a mandate to enforce the law; in other words, a legal basis for infringement of human rights, further restricting women's rights. In addition, the law defines the responsibilities of an inspector responsible for enforcing the prohibitions with discretionary power over arbitrary arrests and detentions.

The ban on girls' education beyond grade 6 and the ban on women attending secondary schooling and university is devastating for the individuals, but also the future of Afghanistan. Despite a decision by the Ministry of Public Health to allow female high school graduates in Afghanistan to enrol in state-run medical institutes for the 2024 academic year, the future of secondary and tertiary education for girls is uncertain.



Furthermore, the lack of land and property rights for women constitutes a major cause of gender-based inequality, particularly given that land is often a household's most important asset.

Violations are happening in the context of long-standing gender inequalities in Afghanistan, with high rates of intimate partner violence and of early and forced marriage. UNAMA's recent thematic report "[Divergence of practice: The handling of complaints of gender-based violence against women and girls by Afghanistan's de facto authorities](#)" observes that the already high prevalence of gender-based violence against Afghan women and girls, including domestic and intimate partner violence given their relegation to their homes, is even higher after the takeover by the DfA.

Bans on women working with NGOs and UN organisations have significantly reduced access to displaced women and girls and impacted the ability to provide assistance and services for women and girls, including the provision of safe spaces and lifesaving response services to gender-based violence services. With less female aid workers on the ground, the ability to ensure safe disclosure of violence, including cases of sexual exploitation and abuse, is reduced, as well as the ability to capture the views and needs of women in humanitarian assessments, and to support local women-led organisations.

While exemptions in relation to emergency situations have brought some respite in this regard, for example allowing women UN and NGO staff to receive Afghan women at the border or directly engaging with them in the response to the earthquakes in Herat, the overall policies remain in place. Female aid workers who have resumed work have also reported the need to be accompanied by a mahram and to wear specific clothing, as well as instances of intimidation and harassment.

In view of the situation in Afghanistan, the empowerment of women, in line with the [Sustainable Development Goal No. 5](#) to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, is the cross-cutting theme in all UNHCR interventions in the country. This is done by recognizing the unique challenges faced by women through an age, gender and diversity (AGD) approach. Further to mainstreaming, UNHCR has prioritized the design and delivery of programming by women and for women and the prioritization of women in beneficiary selection, financial inclusion, technical and vocational education, all of which grounded in the accountability to affected people (AAP) framework.

UNHCR's existing strength in community-based protection and Communication with Communities (CwC) is key to maintaining close contact with women and girls. Through this approach, support is delivered directly to the communities and individuals.

### **Ongoing large-scale returns and deportations to Afghanistan**

It was estimated that some 1.3 million undocumented Afghans were residing in Pakistan at the time the Government of Pakistan announced the "Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan" (IFRP), setting a 1 November 2023 deadline for the "voluntary return" of all undocumented individuals in Pakistan to their country of origin. The sudden surge in returns due to this plan has put additional pressure on already strained resources in receiving communities in Afghanistan, including for shelter and basic services.

Despite their own serious humanitarian needs, Afghan communities - serving as first responders - are hosting displaced people and welcoming returnees from Pakistan, Iran and elsewhere. Supporting receiving communities directly is therefore imperative in view of the ongoing crises in the country and the high numbers of returns.

It is estimated that some 840,000 ACC holders are presently residing in Pakistan. Considering the situation of mixed-status households and the generalized risk of harassment and arrests faced by documented Afghans, it is estimated that, in addition to the remaining undocumented Afghans in Pakistan, Proof of Registration (PoR) card holders and UNHCR slip holders may also be compelled to return due to the deteriorating environment in Pakistan.

Large scale returns to Afghanistan, many of which are forced and/or effectively deportations, may additionally lead to a weakening of protection of Afghan refugees globally due to view of returns as a migratory movement by some - disregarding international protection risks of those forced to return, including many who left after August 2021 with risk profiles as per the [Guidance Note on the International Protection Needs of People Fleeing Afghanistan \(Update I\)](#).

Following the deterioration of the political context in Afghanistan in 2021 which produced large scale outflow movements, UNHCR expanded its border monitoring activities at eight official and some 40 unofficial crossing points with Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. UNHCR border monitoring is a protection centric exercise and seeks to understand the triggers, intentions and reasons for Afghan cross-border movements, assess access to territory and the right to seek asylum as well as the barriers which hinder the movement of people who may need international protection.

Finding durable solutions for forcibly displaced people, including refugee returnees, is core to the mandate of UNHCR. This is why UNHCR established the [Priority Areas of Return and Reintegration \(PARRs\)](#) programme in Afghanistan, which was subsequently expanded to include IDPs and IDP returnees. The PARRs model is an area-based approach and designed to adapt to an evolving landscape of displacement and return movements. The emphasis on fostering sustainable livelihoods is fundamental, with interventions designed to enhance market engagement, promote vocational training and small and medium enterprise development, and facilitate financial inclusion, all aimed at strengthening economic independence and community stability. Recent developments, including funding limitations, call for a re-assessment and potentially sharpening up of PARRs activities. Maintaining the area based PARRs approach is however crucial as it increases absorption capacity of host communities and stabilises populations.

### III. Planning scenario

There is no indication that the systematic discrimination of vulnerable groups, and women and girls specifically, will cease in Afghanistan and their lives improve. Sporadic internal conflicts could lead to displacement, whereas urbanization and related population movement may lead to an increase in evictions. Risks for impactful natural and climate disasters remain significant in Afghanistan.

Continued high levels of returns and deportations from Pakistan and Iran can be expected, possibly with a changing profile of deportees more likely to need international protection. Pressure on returns may increase also from other parties. High number of returns to unsustainable situations may increase the risk of onward movements. Returnees generally have civil documentation issues leading to an increased risk of statelessness. Increased return may furthermore lead to more Housing, Land and Property issues.

In view of the humanitarian situation in the country and unchanged positions by the DfA, the protection environment is unlikely to improve in Afghanistan. The humanitarian space is likely to shrink further. Reduced funding for UNHCR and the international humanitarian community risks further speeding up this development.

However, since the DfA took power, there is greater geographical access to all parts of Afghanistan. This presents some opportunities. UNHCR, with its PARRs is well positioned to deliver protection services at key locations across Afghanistan and focus interventions on those furthest behind. At the same time, without a nationwide lifting of restrictions, operational uncertainty in Afghanistan will remain a key challenge.

Security Council Resolution [2721 \(2023\)](#), encouraging increased international engagement, may lead to some opportunities. A joined-up multi-stakeholder approach for engagement in Afghanistan will be critical for UNHCR to effectively implement its mandate and for the international community to assist the Afghan people. Closer collaboration and coordination between stakeholders such as the RC/HC, the Durable Solutions Working Group, the Clusters, INGOs and NGOs as well as Member States and donors could improve the operational, protection and humanitarian spaces.



## 1. Ensure greater access to rights and services for all forcibly displaced, returnees and stateless people, including through empowering communities to become agents of their own protection.

- Protection monitoring tools will be strengthened and streamlined to ensure a continued understanding of the protection risks and needs of displaced populations to inform protection programming. This includes a heightened protection response at the border and the gathering of information on population movements, in particular related to refugee returns. Protection monitoring tools will also be used to monitor the impact of UNHCR interventions on the host community.
- The operation will ensure preparedness and response capacity to assist returnees from Pakistan and Iran. Follow-up on protection cases identified among the returnees, in close coordination with protection partners, remains a key priority.
- The operation will continue to pursue an area-based approach that extends beyond protection monitoring, encompassing the provision of civil documentation, and legal support, continued identification, prevention of and response to violence against women and girls, child protection activities, advocating for the rights of IDPs, returnees and refugees, and fostering social cohesion. All are key to ensure the safety, dignity and rights of all forcibly displaced populations during their (re)integration process.
- A focus will be on community-based protection, including through support to select community structures, legal clinics, grassroots campaigns, and community-led initiatives.
- The operation will focus on a collaborative, multi-dimensional approach to child protection that addresses both the immediate and underlying factors contributing to child protection risks and the vulnerability of children. Recognizing that children, families, and communities are central to the protection of forcibly displaced and stateless children, UNHCR will integrate child protection within community-based protection programming.
- Recognizing the often-overlooked nature of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services in displacement contexts, the operation will place significant emphasis on integrating and making accessible MHPSS in protection, public health, and education initiatives. Particularly in a setting like Afghanistan, where resources are limited and communities face numerous challenges, MHPSS plays a vital role in enhancing resilience and well-being.

## **2. Provide and facilitate greater access to legal protection services and civil documentation for all forcibly displaced, returnees and stateless people.**

- The operation will strengthen legal assistance services for refugees, asylum-seekers, returnees, stateless people and IDPs. Access to civil documentation through legal assistance is not only vital for enabling individuals to assert their rights but also essential for accessing public services and humanitarian aid, which is integral to attaining greater freedom of movement and durable solutions.
- The operation will have a heightened focus on returned refugees and IDPs related to the provision of legal documents such as birth certificates, national identity card (Tazkira) and land title deed. Ensuring access to documentation is a critical element to prevent statelessness.

## **3. Reinforce resilience, (economic) inclusion, and solutions for all forcibly displaced, returnees and persons at risk of statelessness.**

- In the face of significant challenges in Afghanistan, the operation will pursue an approach that goes beyond short-term humanitarian relief but emphasizes both immediate needs and long-term sustainable solutions (Nexus) to foster resilience and increased self-reliance among forcibly displaced, returnees, stateless people, refugees, as well as the host communities they live among.
- UNHCR Afghanistan will enhance women's access to economic opportunities, build resilient livelihoods and foster socio-economic inclusion and self-reliance, with a view towards the realization of protection and solutions outcomes.
- Additionally, efforts will be directed towards empowering Afghan youth economically.
- Recognizing shelter as more than just physical structures, the operation will integrate it within a broader solutions framework that includes livelihoods and access to services. This perspective ensures that when providing shelter, the multifaceted needs of beneficiaries, such as economic stability, are also considered.
- Education related activities will be pursued in close partnership with UNICEF, UNESCO, and other stakeholders, leveraging collective expertise and resources to address education challenges.
- UNHCR Afghanistan will engage with organizations led by or working with persons with disabilities and ensure UNHCR and partner premises are accessible for persons with disabilities, persons with disabilities participate in the humanitarian response, have equal access to information and complaints and feedback mechanisms.

- The operation will adopt a multi-faceted approach that integrates climate action across activities, focusing on collaboration with both humanitarian and development partners to ensure the holistic well-being of displaced communities and ensure activities strengthen preparedness and resilience against the impacts of climate change and natural disasters, e.g., through the building of durable, earthquake secure shelters.

#### **4. Empower women and girls.**

- Empowerment of women and girls is at the core of all protection and solutions interventions in Afghanistan, by recognizing the unique challenges faced by women in the country through an age, gender and diversity (AGD) approach.
- The operation will facilitate design and delivery of programmes by women and for women and the prioritization of women in beneficiary selection, financial inclusion, technical and vocational education, and training is informed by UNHCR's accountability to affected people (AAP) framework.
- UNHCR Afghanistan will facilitate and actively advocate for the rights of women and girls with stakeholders in Afghanistan and rally advocacy support with external partners. A focus on women's and girls' access to rights is paramount for their future and the country itself.
- The operation will seek to expand its response capacity by developing a dedicated case management program for women and girls, that consider the specific needs and heightened risks for survivors in Afghanistan as well as sensitivities for partners.

#### **5. Facilitate greater protection for refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons and pathways towards durable solutions.**

- UNHCR will continue its advocacy to regularize the legal status of asylum-seekers and refugees, with the aim to provide them with greater legal protection and social rights and to facilitate solutions by ensuring access to education, healthcare, documentation, livelihood and employment. Particular focus will be given to access to birth registration for refugee children born in Afghanistan.
- The operation will ramp up case-processing for the urban refugee population with the aim to increase resettlement submissions. Complementary pathways will also be explored, to increase the opportunities of third countries solutions for refugees and asylum-seekers.
- Related to the Khost-Paktika refugee population, the operation will continue implementing an area-based approach, by assisting all individuals in the target area based on vulnerabilities and needs, irrespective of their status. As the population approaches a decade of displacement in 2024, UNHCR will re-double its efforts to enhance economic

self-reliance, ensuring that the refugee population becomes a part of the broader community, and identify durable solutions.

- Related to the stateless population in Afghanistan, the operation aims to establish whether the absence of clear legal provisions and arbitrary actions by authorities exacerbates barriers for specific groups to access documentation. Simultaneously, in its protection monitoring, legal documentation and aid work, a special focus will be on those at risk of statelessness or stateless.

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