

KEY FIGURES



3.1 million¹

Afghan refugees and others
in need of international
protection in the sub-region



921,500²

Afghan returns in 2026
from Iran and Pakistan, of
which 38% were deported



3.2 million³

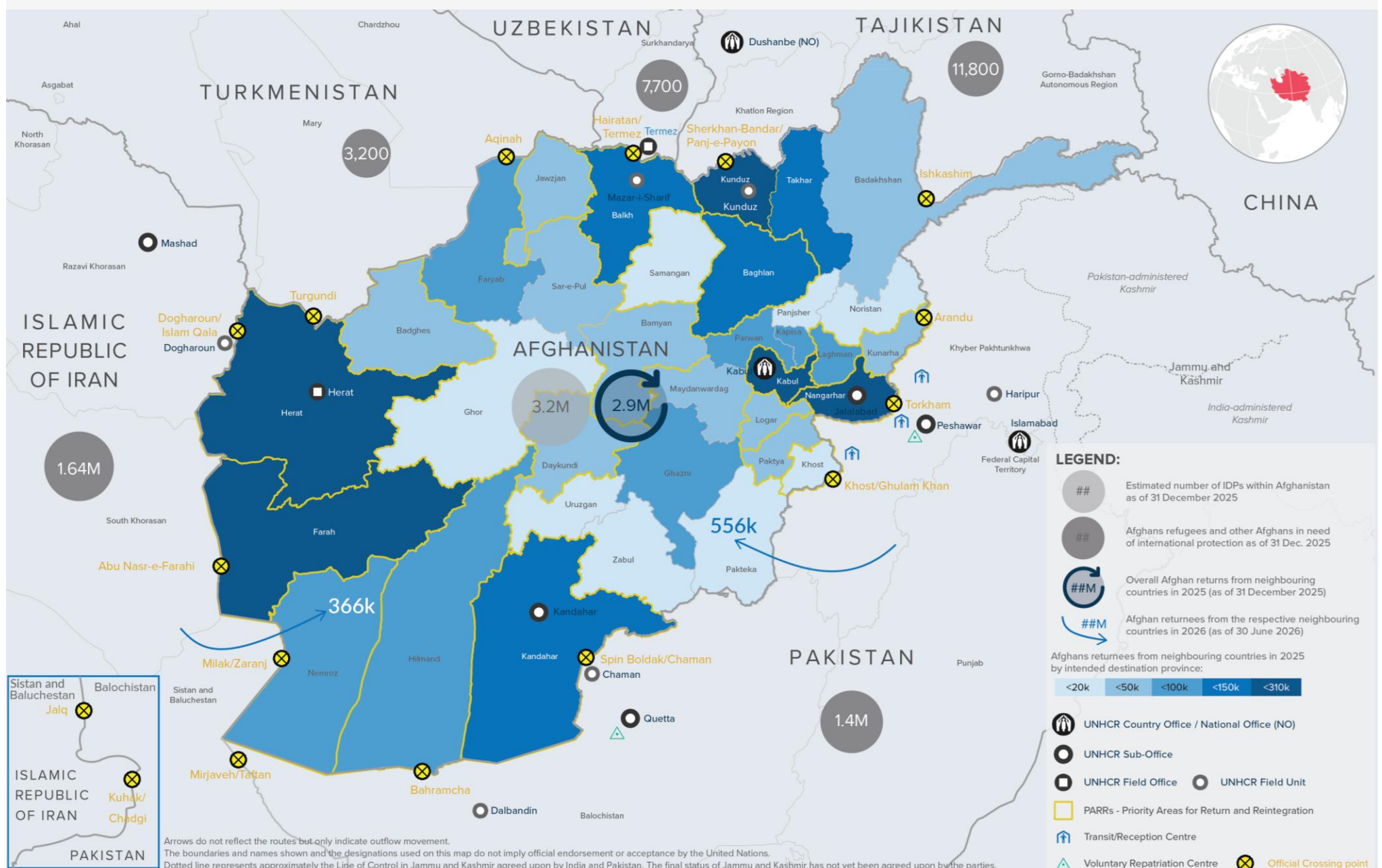
Internally Displaced Persons
(IDPs) in Afghanistan and
69k new IDPs in 2026

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

In **Afghanistan**, large-scale returns from Iran and Pakistan continued to strain border reception facilities and humanitarian services. Temporary disruptions at key border crossings, including during *Muharram* – an important period of religious observance in the Islamic calendar – delayed processing and onward movements for some returnees. The security situation remained volatile amid heightened cross-border tensions and reported incidents in eastern and southeastern border areas. Operational constraints, including restrictions affecting national female United Nations staff and smartphone use, required close coordination with authorities, partners and security colleagues to sustain the humanitarian response.

In **Iran**, the political, security and economic landscape remained challenging. Security incidents heightened uncertainty and protection risks, while rising living costs increased humanitarian needs among refugees and host communities. In this context, UNHCR maintained its presence across Tehran, Mashhad, Isfahan, Kerman and the Dogharoun border, enabling continued monitoring, protection support and the delivery of critical assistance to refugees and other people in need of international protection.

In **Pakistan**, arrests and returns of Afghans declined in June compared to May, largely due to the *Ashura* holidays (a major religious observance marking the 10th day of *Muharram*) and temporary border closures. However, a Government directive issued on 28 June requiring the immediate arrest of Afghans without valid visas from 10 July heightened uncertainty among Afghan communities and increased intentions to return although no immediate increase in arrests was observed during the reporting period. The implementation of the Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan (IFRP), alongside border security concerns and counter-terrorism operations, continued to shape the operational context. Enhanced security measures during *Muharram*, including increased law enforcement deployments, temporary movement restrictions and periodic communication disruptions in some areas, affected mobility and humanitarian access. These developments heightened protection risks, affected return decisions and constrained humanitarian assistance in parts of the country.



¹ As of end-December 2025

² As of 30 June 2026

³ 3.2 million IDPs as of 2025, and 69,000 new IDPs in 2026 from areas reached with assessments.

For the latest figures and updates on UNHCR's broader response in sub-region, visit the [Afghanistan Situation page](#) on UNHCR's Operational Data Portal. For any queries, please contact: RBAPEXT@unhcr.org

Across **Central Asia**, regional cooperation with the United Nations system advanced. In Kazakhstan, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev ratified the agreement and Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations establishing the UN Regional Centre for the Sustainable Development Goals for Central Asia and Afghanistan in Almaty. The Centre will support implementation of the 2030 Agenda by strengthening regional coordination, technical and analytical support and cooperation. In parallel, the Kyrgyz Republic was elected as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for the 2027–2028 term, marking the first time the country has secured a seat on the Council. The Kyrgyz Republic has indicated its intention to focus on preventive diplomacy, peaceful conflict resolution, confidence-building measures, climate security and the protection of vulnerable groups.

KEY PROTECTION AND SOLUTIONS ISSUES

Protection monitoring in **Afghanistan** found that many Afghans returned under adverse circumstances, having faced protection risks and challenging conditions before departure. In Pakistan, returnees described harassment, arrest, deportation, police raids, extortion and forced evictions, leaving families with little time to prepare, sell assets or arrange transport. Upon arrival in Afghanistan, returnees require immediate protection and humanitarian assistance, including food, shelter, health care, transportation and support to replace lost or confiscated documents. Sustained access to livelihoods, civil documentation, and education remain essential to supporting safe reintegration and reducing longer-term vulnerabilities, particularly for households with specific needs.

In **Iran**, economic pressures continued to heighten protection risks for refugees and host communities. Protection monitoring found that many refugee households struggled to meet basic needs as the costs of housing, food, health care, education and documentation-related requirements continued to rise. Following the expiry of *Amayesh* cards on 21 July 2026, the Centre for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants' Affairs (CAFIA) confirmed a three-month automatic extension of *Amayesh* and *Hoviat* cards. The extension was also reportedly communicated to the Central Bank of Iran to safeguard refugees' access to banking services. This measure provides refugees with additional time to complete renewal requirements, including health insurance enrolment, registration in the SANA system (the online platform used for health insurance-related procedures), and housing code documentation.

In **Pakistan**, a UNHCR field visit to Dir Lower, Dir Upper and Chitral Lower in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province confirmed that all refugee villages in the three districts had closed. As refugee families relocated to urban and rural areas, protection monitoring became more challenging. To date, 26 of the 54 refugee villages have closed. The visit identified growing protection concerns, including movement restrictions, documentation challenges, reduced access to education and livelihoods and increased pressure on peaceful co-existence. Health services, however, remained largely accessible. UNHCR further strengthened protection monitoring, legal assistance and community-based protection, while advocating with local authorities to improve refugees' access to livelihoods and essential services.

Across **Central Asia**, progress was made in expanding refugees' and asylum-seekers' access to employment and livelihoods opportunities through improved legal and policy frameworks. In Kazakhstan, following sustained advocacy by UNHCR, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev signed Law No. 277-VIII amending the Labour Code to explicitly recognize asylum-seeker certificates as valid documents for concluding employment contracts. Previously, the absence of these certificates from the list of recognized employment documents had created barriers to formal employment. The amendment removes this obstacle, supporting asylum-seekers' access to lawful work, self-reliance and socioeconomic inclusion. In the Kyrgyz Republic, recognized refugees gained access to state employment support services through Employment Promotion Centres under the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Migration, including jobseeker registration, career guidance, vocational training, job fairs and job-matching support. Building on UNHCR's advocacy with partners, the Government of Tajikistan approved amendments to Resolution No. 529 exempting refugees and their family members from work permit requirements. The reform facilitates access to lawful employment, strengthens self-reliance and socioeconomic inclusion and helps refugees reduce their reliance on humanitarian assistance.

UNHCR RESPONSE

UNHCR and partners in **Afghanistan** continued to provide protection and humanitarian assistance at border crossings and reception centres, including protection monitoring, screening, cash assistance, mental health and psychosocial support, health care, hot meals, transportation and referrals to specialized services. Between 7 June and 4 July, UNHCR provided protection assistance and cash grants to nearly 28,000 vulnerable returnees from around 6,000 households, prioritizing women- and child-headed households and households with persons with disabilities. Hot meal distributions continued at key border crossings, while transportation assistance supported onward movement to return areas.

In **Iran**, rising humanitarian needs amid continued insecurity and economic pressures increased demand for UNHCR support. UNHCR's [Helpline](#) received nearly 18,700 calls in June, compared to 36,100 in May, reflecting ongoing concerns among Afghan refugees regarding access to assistance, documentation, livelihoods and essential services. UNHCR provided counselling, legal aid, mental health and psychosocial support, financial assistance and referrals for people with heightened protection risks. Since the onset of the crisis, nearly 126,000 Afghan refugees have accessed UNHCR support through the Helpline, in-person counselling, registration support and targeted assistance. Feedback through the Helpline and other protection channels highlighted heightened household vulnerability, with refugees reportedly resorting to negative coping strategies such as selling assets, relocating to more affordable areas, accumulating debt, delaying school enrolment and considering irregular onward movement due to financial pressures. Socioeconomic hardship remained the primary driver of requests for support, with financial assistance and resettlement among the most frequently identified needs.

In **Pakistan**, UNHCR further advanced its route-based approach through closer coordination with Government counterparts and UN partners. Protection-sensitive identification and referral procedures at border crossing points were strengthened, alongside improvements in inter-agency data sharing and referral pathways for vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers. Integrated protection programming continued via community-based protection, child protection, legal assistance, mental health and psychosocial support and emergency assistance across operational areas. Community feedback indicated growing fear and uncertainty, with refugees reporting documentation challenges, pressure to vacate rented accommodation, reduced livelihood opportunities and concerns about arrest and detention. Requests for legal assistance, registration support, voluntary repatriation information, cash and shelter assistance remained high, while livelihoods, education, child protection, mental health and psychosocial support were identified as priority needs.

Across **Central Asia**, UNHCR continued to support national asylum systems, advance refugee integration and self-reliance, support efforts to end statelessness and enhance preparedness for potential displacement emergencies through partnerships with governments and other stakeholders. In Tajikistan, UNHCR and Hilton Dushanbe [signed a Memorandum of Understanding](#) to expand skills development, apprenticeships and employment opportunities for refugees, contributing to UNHCR's [50 by 35 target](#) to halve the number of refugees in long-term displacement who depend on humanitarian assistance by 2035. In Turkmenistan, UNHCR and UNICEF co-facilitated a three-day workshop on infant and young child health and nutrition in emergencies, strengthening national preparedness through capacity building for Government officials, health care professionals and humanitarian partners. UNHCR also contributed to sessions on emergency preparedness for mass arrivals, the national refugee and humanitarian assistance framework, and the protection and health needs of refugee children. In Uzbekistan, UNHCR and the National Human Rights Centre signed a [Joint Workplan](#) to strengthen cooperation on asylum and statelessness, including technical exchanges on draft refugee legislation and support for developing a national asylum system in line with recommendations accepted during the 2018 and 2023 Universal Periodic Review cycles.

AFGHAN RETURNS

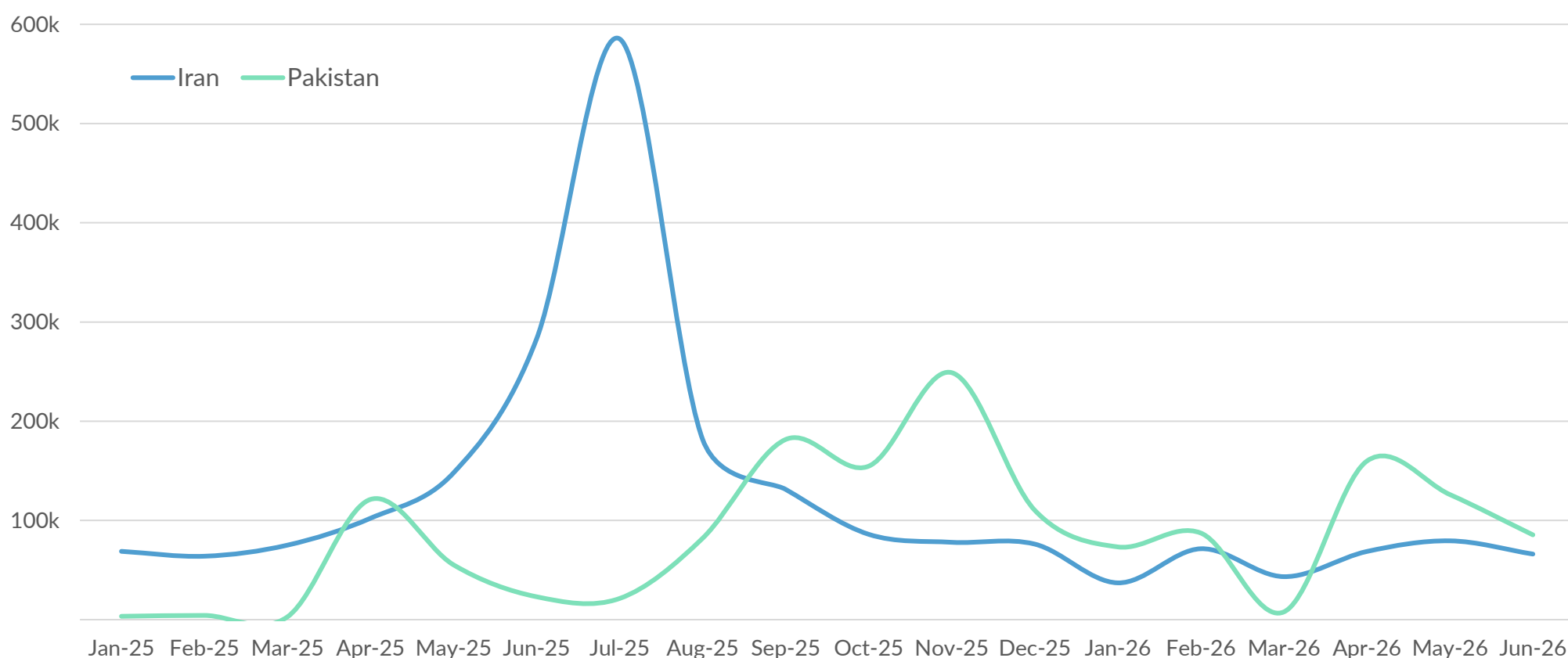
Afghan returns continued, including voluntary and spontaneous movements as well as returns taking place under adverse conditions, largely driven by fear of arrest, enforcement measures and deteriorating protection conditions. By end-June, around 921,500 Afghans had returned from Iran and Pakistan, including 38% deportations.

66,100 people returned from **Iran** in June, including some 59,300 deportations. Returns remained elevated amid continued uncertainty and limited livelihood opportunities. Returnees reported protection concerns associated with return movements, while CAFIA also reported ongoing irregular crossings from Afghanistan into Iran, underscoring the persistent risks of onward movement across the region.

Returns from **Pakistan** continued at lower levels, with some 151,500 people returning during the same period amid ongoing protection concerns linked to documentation status and pressure to leave. While the Torkham border remained open exclusively for repatriation and deportation, cross-border movements were also affected by the temporary reopening and subsequent closure of the Hashim crossing due to overcrowding. Following a security incident in Karachi, law enforcement agencies intensified arrest operations targeting Afghan nationals, contributing to an increase in deportations through the Chaman border.

In **Tajikistan**, more than 1,070 Afghan nationals have been returned since January 2026, including some 609 refugees and asylum-seekers, among them 275 women and 216 children. Reports indicate that some families were returned without access to due process, legal assistance or opportunities to appeal. UNHCR continues coordination across both sides of the border to verify cases, provide protection and humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan, and support vulnerable families remaining in Tajikistan while also advocating with the Government on access to fair asylum procedures in line with national and international obligations.

AFGHAN RETURNS FROM IRAN AND PAKISTAN



OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS



UNHCR briefs participants visiting its Global Stockpile in Termez, Uzbekistan, on emergency relief supplies and preparedness for displacement emergencies. © UNHCR / Komildjon Katayev

UNHCR highlighted its emergency preparedness and response capacity during the 2nd Termez Dialogue on Connectivity between Central and South Asia, held from 4 to 6 June.

On the margins of the Dialogue, UNHCR facilitated a visit for more than 40 government, United Nations and international participants to its Global Stockpile in Termez, Uzbekistan, where they were briefed on the role of the facility in pre-positioning emergency relief items and supporting rapid humanitarian responses across Central Asia and beyond. The Dialogue also provided an opportunity to engage regional stakeholders on cooperation, Afghanistan's socio-economic development, and shared climate and water challenges.

COORDINATION, COLLABORATION AND CONTINGENCY PLANNING

UNHCR continued to coordinate with United Nations agencies, humanitarian and development partners, national authorities and other stakeholders in **Afghanistan** to sustain border reception, protection and onward movement support for returnees. Coordination also strengthened harmonised returnee reporting and supported the smooth transition of border and reception activities to a new implementing partner in southern Afghanistan. Beyond the immediate response, UNHCR worked with partners to advance longer-term reintegration, including through the launch of the Solutions and Protection through Legal Identity project with UNICEF, FAO and UNDP to expand access to civil documentation for returnees and other affected populations.

In **Iran**, UNHCR continued close engagement with Government counterparts, UN agencies, and partners. Coordination with UNHCR offices in Afghanistan supported cross-border information sharing, monitoring of return movements, and alignment of assistance on both sides of the border. Inter-agency mechanisms continued to facilitate joint planning and operational coherence in a fluid and evolving context.

In **Pakistan**, UNHCR expanded strategic partnerships to strengthen protection, coordination and institutional capacity. Collaboration with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development advanced efforts to improve child protection at border crossing points through protection-sensitive identification and referral procedures, closer engagement with border authorities, and the planned establishment of child-friendly spaces. UNHCR also signed a Cooperation Framework Agreement with Quaid-i-Azam University to establish the Pakistan Academic Consortium on Refugee Law and Migration, promoting research, capacity development and evidence-based policy dialogue on refugee protection and forced displacement. Collaboration with IOM, UNICEF and UNDP was further strengthened to improve data sharing, referral mechanisms and coordinated protection responses. In addition, UNHCR participated in the UN Provincial Programme Team Retreat in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where UN agencies agreed actions to enhance joint planning, coordination with provincial authorities and collective programme delivery for 2026–2027.

Across **Central Asia**, UNHCR maintained engagement with government counterparts, including ministries, border and judicial authorities, ombudsperson institutions as well as parliamentary and inter-agency bodies, to advance protection and solutions for refugees and stateless persons. These partnerships supported efforts to strengthen asylum systems, promote inclusion in national services and align legislation with international standards. UNHCR also collaborated with UN agencies, development partners, academia and NGOs across the sub-region to implement protection activities and support stronger legal and institutional frameworks.

FUNDING SITUATION

In 2026, UNHCR requires **USD 454.2 million** to support the response to the Afghanistan situation; to date, only **23%** has been received.

UNHCR is grateful to the following donors who have stepped forward with funding, enabling life-saving assistance and protection to reach those most in need:

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