

Afghanistan

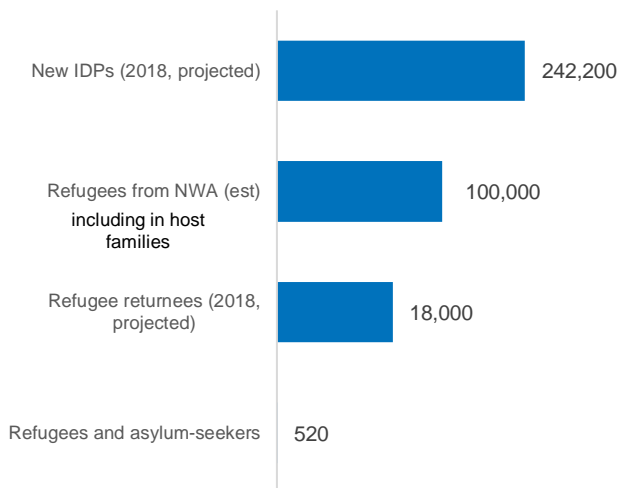
As at 31 August 2018*

11,599 registered refugees have returned to Afghanistan from neighboring and non-neighboring countries (**10,301** from Pakistan).

208,615 individuals have been newly displaced by conflict in 2018 and profiled by OCHA as internally displaced persons (IDPs) in need.

78,340 Pakistani refugees from North-Waziristan Agency have been biometrically registered in Khost province and verified in Paktika province.

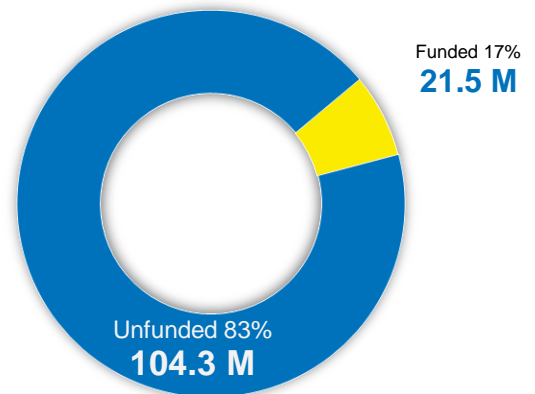
PROJECTED POPULATION OF CONCERN IN 2018



FUNDING

USD 125.8 M

requested for Afghanistan



UNHCR PRESENCE

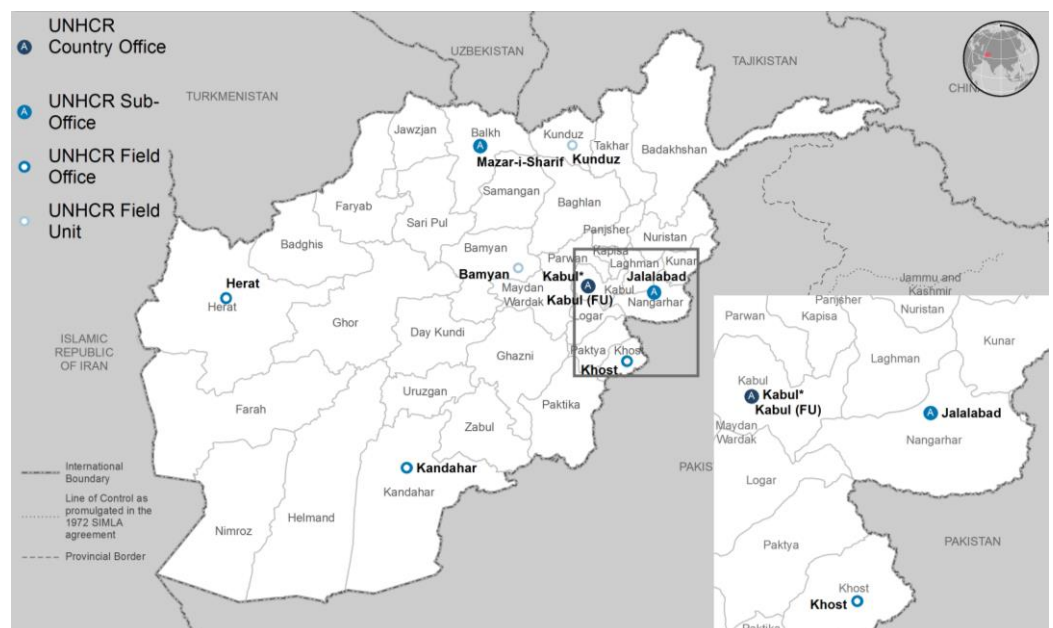
Staff:

204 National Staff
22 International Staff
17% female / 83% male

Offices:

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

*Figures are updated as of 31 August. Please refer to [UNHCR Afghanistan's data portal](#) for latest updates.



Key Updates as at 31 August 2018

Refugee returnees: In 2018, UNHCR assisted **11,599** refugees to return to Afghanistan (**10,301** from Pakistan, **1,185** from Iran, **59** from Tajikistan and **52** from India). This is **76%** less than the number of returns in the same period of 2017.

- ❖ In 2018, the main areas of return are **Kabul**, followed by Nangarhar (eastern region), **Sar-e-Pul** (northern region), **Paktya** (central region), and **Logar** (central region).
- ❖ **2.7%** of the total returnees were identified as extremely vulnerable individuals matching the Persons with Specific Needs criteria.
- ❖ **919** returnees (household) were interviewed at the Encashment Centres (EC) in 2018. The main reasons for return from Pakistan include: lack of employment opportunities, the high cost of living, strict border controls at Torkham and Spin Boldak (as it limits the previously unregulated cross-border movements to persons without valid travel documents and visas), and uncertainty related to the extension of Proof of Registration cards.

IDPs: In 2018, **208,615** individuals / **30,345** families are reported by UNOCHA to be newly displaced by conflict, with the North-eastern, North and Western regions most affected by conflict.

- ❖ During January – August 2018, UNHCR and partners have conducted **185** protection monitoring missions focused on Baghdis, Farah, Ghor and Herat provinces and consulted **42,994** individuals, out of which 50% were women, 7% elderly and 53% adolescents.
- ❖ In 2018 as part of **emergency assistance**, UNHCR has provided **7,255** NFI kits to **46,554** individuals, out of which 44,622 are IDPs, 1,919 returnees and 13 refugees – as well as **6,291** sanitary kits to 6,229 IDPs, 59 returnees and 3 refugees.
- ❖ **Ongoing drought response:** UNHCR through its partners have distributed **260** NFI kits.

Refugees & Asylum-seekers: In 2018, **3,937** refugees have been newly biometrically registered in Khost province (Jan – April 2018).

- ❖ **527** urban asylum-seekers and refugees are also registered with UNHCR.

Persons with Specific Needs: In 2018, UNHCR and partners have assisted **1,231** PSN cases (64% female, 36% male), out of which 51 were referred for services and 1,120 were provided with direct assistance through the PSN programme.

Main Activities

Repatriation

UNHCR Facilitated Voluntary Repatriation (VolRep) Programme

UNHCR continues to facilitate voluntary repatriation of registered Afghan refugees from Pakistan, Iran and other countries in conditions of safety and dignity. The VolRep 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 (Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan). More than 5.2 million Afghan refugees repatriated with UNHCR assistance since 2002. In 2017, UNHCR facilitated the voluntary return of **58,817** refugees (98% from Pakistan, 2% from Iran and other countries).

Cash Grant

UNHCR provides cash assistance of an average of US\$200 per person through its four EC. 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 to be used according to

family priorities in the first phase of post return. According to phone interviews with returnees (1-6 months after they have passed through the EC), the cash grant received from UNHCR lasts between 1-3 months.

Management of Encashment Centres (EC)

UNHCR in close coordination with the Ministry/Department of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR/DoRR) and its partners manage four ECs located in Herat, Jalalabad, Kabul and Kandahar. In addition to cash grants, a wide range of inter-agency services – including basic health care, referrals of emergency health 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 (*tazkira*) through the Norwegian Refugee Council's Information, Counseling and Legal Assistance programme, child friendly spaces (provided by UNICEF) and a transit facility for overnight accommodation.



UNHCR partners providing basic health services at the Kabul Encashment Centre. ©UNHCR

At the EC, UNHCR also conducts household level interviews to assess the voluntary nature of return, return trends and protection risks in asylum and during return. During these interviews, persons with specific needs (PSN) are identified by UNHCR and D/MoRR and referred to service providers for assessment and response (linking with existing service providers through referrals or direct response).

Refugee Returnees and IDPs

Protection Monitoring

UNHCR systematically and regularly collects, verifies and analyses information over a period of time to assess the protection situation of the 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 monitoring is the basis to plan interventions for PSN and community based interventions; and assists UNHCR and partners in their overall programme planning and response, as well as provides evidence-base for advocacy efforts.

To further enhance the analysis of data collected through protection monitoring and to improve profiling through evidence to better inform advocacy and interventions, UNHCR contracted Orange Door Research and Viamo to collect real-time data through mobile phone surveys. Analysis of the collected data is key to its effective usage: UNHCR is in the process of piloting the new analytical framework that will inform key priorities and areas of work.

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 EC; monitoring on their settlement back in communities through regular phone surveys of the representative sample; and community based protection monitoring. From April 2018, UNHCR has facilitated the distribution of SIM cards (free of charge) to returnees through the Afghan Wireless Communication Company at all four EC. UNHCR also provides air time of USD 2 per month for three months, aimed to ensure returnees access to communication services and are easily contactable when UNHCR and partners conduct return monitoring to identify and address protection risks, 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 **on the inter-agency information centre**, renamed to Awaz Afghanistan (implemented by UNOPS, and funded by UNHCR and WFP). The centre will serve the purpose of providing information to persons of concern on the available services in their geographical area, and allow feedback (including concerns and complaints) from communities to be consolidated and shared back to respective agencies including UNHCR; this will further provide a basis for a feedback mechanism to the Government.

Persons with Specific Needs (PSN)

UNHCR's PSN programme provides targeted assistance on an individual basis to people with acute vulnerabilities and protection risks amongst UNHCR's persons of concern: documented returnees, refugees, conflict-induced IDPs. Extremely vulnerable individuals from the local communities and undocumented returnees are also considered as beneficiaries under the PSN programme. The main objective of the PSN programme is to mitigate and respond to the individual emergency protection risks putting in place the self-reliance of each individual when designing a response. PSN partners conduct protection assessments and refer or assist each case on an individual basis taking into account the protection risk analysis. UNHCR links the PSN programme with the Community-based Protection Measures for enhanced, sustainable comprehensive assistance for PSNs.



UNHCR colleagues speak with female IDPs in northern Mazar; UNHCR is helping these women to improve literacy and gain vital skills for their future through a learning center.
 ©UNHCR

Community-based Protection Measures (CPM)

UNHCR supports CPM, to reduce protection risks and vulnerabilities while fostering peaceful coexistence and reintegration of returnees and IDPs with local/host communities, including PSN. These measures include: community support infrastructure facilities, 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 the existing job market demand and include: (i) innovative approaches such as UNHCR's Global MADE51 for artisans' development and Graduation approach for the most vulnerable; and (ii) establishing/promoting linkages with the Afghanistan Government's National Priority Programmes (NPP), development agencies initiatives (including the World Bank), and fostering partnerships with the local and international private sector to link to medium and longer term interventions for sustainability. In the first half of the year, CPM are being implemented in 37 locations with ten partners, reaching some **132,700 households**.

Protection Cluster and Emergency Shelter/Non-Food Items Cluster

UNHCR's presence and active involvement in the inter-agency humanitarian coordination mechanisms and 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 remains crucial to promote efficiency in coordination and humanitarian response. UNHCR promotes protection mainstreaming in all sectors of the humanitarian response, to ensure that protection principles are incorporated and meaningful access, safety and dignity in humanitarian aid are promoted.

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, as well as mobilizing relevant stakeholders for longer term interventions to strengthen the protective 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 3.8 million individuals in Afghanistan, 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

AFG Protection Cluster:

38 Cluster partners

1.1M people targeted

67M funding request

AFG ES/NFI Cluster:

31 Cluster partners

0.7M people targeted

53M funding request

prioritisation of highly affected areas of displacement, such as western Herat and Baghdis provinces. The ES/NFI Cluster also continues to coordinate the response for drought-affected IDPs.

- In August, the **Humanitarian Country Team Protection Strategy** was endorsed and adopted.

Winterisation

As lead Agency of the ES/NFI Cluster, UNHCR participates in year-end inter-agency efforts to address seasonal vulnerability. For the 2017/18 winter, UNHCR distributed cash assistance (approximately US\$200) for assessed/selected vulnerable persons of concern in all 34 provinces. The distribution of cash supports local markets, as beneficiaries purchased items such as heating fuel, warm clothing, household goods and food. Winter blankets and clothes (from UNIQLO) were additionally distributed to vulnerable families.

- The ES/FNI cluster has initiated **preparations for the 2018 winterization programme**.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Khost and Paktika

Afghanistan hosts Pakistani refugees who fled North Waziristan Agency in 2014 in Khost and Paktika. UNHCR leads camp management and coordination in Gulan refugee camp which hosts over 13,000 Pakistani refugees. Many have also settled in host communities 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 PSNs which is designed to build capacity, self-reliance and resilience. UNHCR is coordinating its efforts with partners and advocating with donors to ensure continuity of essential services for the refugee population.



Portrait of Haidar Khan, a Pakistani refugee in Gulan refugee camp in Khost, Afghanistan. ©UNHCR

Urban Refugees and Asylum Seekers

UNHCR prioritizes interim solutions for the approximately **527 urban asylum-seekers and refugees** pending the adoption of a national refugee law and implementation of a national asylum framework. UNHCR conducts registration and, in some cases, 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 remained limited. The likelihood of refugees opting to voluntary return to their country of origin in safety and dignity is not possible. The provision of targeted subsistence allowance and assistance to PSNs (cash-based and in-kind) aims to reduce their vulnerability. 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 asylum-seekers and refugees have access to basic services such as education and health care.

- UNHCR continues to support the Government with efforts to **adopt a refugee law**, which has been highlighted as a priority by the President.

Durable Solutions

Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR+)

UNHCR Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran offices have worked together on the 2018-19 UNHCR regional strategy under the umbrella of the SSAR+ for enhancing resilience and co-existence through greater responsibility-sharing, including strengthened partnership with development stakeholders.

Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework

On 16 July, UNHCR received the official decision of the Government of Afghanistan to join and support the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) becoming the first country in Asia to do so. The operation will work closely with HQ and the Government on the way forward on the **application of CRRF**, as Afghanistan is in a unique position as a country of origin.

Displacement and Return Executive Committee (DiREC) and national policy framework support

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 to implement 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 the national policy frameworks, development plans (Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework) and other priority programmes. UNHCR also advocates for the implementation of the National IDP Policy (2013) and provincial IDP action plans.

Herat and Jalalabad

To implement the 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 contributed with construction of shelter, a clinic and a school. In Jalalabad, UNHCR and partners, with line departments and Agencies, are conducting a joint market assessment and designing 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 and Social Affairs to pilot the joint programming initiative, “Sustainable Alternative Livelihoods for Afghan Mobility” (SALAM) in Nangarhar. The initiative seeks to improve economic livelihoods, especially for the vulnerable population and women through job creation and market driven skills training.

The Humanitarian and Development Nexus

UNHCR works to strengthen the link between humanitarian and development through partnerships with development actors (mainly the World Bank) and the private sectors 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 Group signed a data sharing agreement to better support reintegration of Afghan refugee returnees through strengthened data collection and analysis.

UNHCR is working with the World Bank to assess socio-economic characteristics, employment and livelihoods of post-2014 Afghan returnees (both refugee returnees and 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 return and displacement – to ensure greater inclusion of returnees and IDPs.

Working with Partners and Coordination

- UNHCR’s direct counterpart in the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is the MoRR. UNHCR is also working with numerous line ministries. UNHCR is co-leading on a rotational basis with UNDP and IOM the Durable Solutions Working Group with the Government, at the national and sub-national levels to strengthen the links between humanitarian and development for reintegration of returnees and IDPs.
- UNHCR is part of the Tripartite/Quadripartite mechanisms established with the Governments of the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran to plan coordinate and undertake repatriation of Afghan refugees and the implementation of the SSAR. Plans are underway to work together with the Government of Afghanistan on the roadmap for the CRRF.
- UNHCR Afghanistan works closely with UNHCR Iran and Pakistan for a regional approach to anticipate challenges and align efforts including advocacy and fundraising and share best practices and lessons learned; as well as on cross-border programming for livelihoods.

Presidential Decree on Land

In August, President Ghani endorsed the Presidential Decree on Land. The decree approves the legal framework for the land allocation and supersedes the Presidential Decree 104. This will support efforts towards reintegration for returnees, particularly the allocation of land and adequate housing.

- In line with the regional framework of the SSAR, UNHCR is an active member of the GoIRA's DiREC, co-chairs the related Policy Working Group and is a member of the Technical and Finance Working Groups.
- Within the HCT and UN Country Team, UNHCR is working closely with other UN agencies, in particular, with IOM to ensure sustainable return and reintegration in Afghanistan. The [One UN for Afghanistan website](#) has been 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 and the Emergency Shelter/NFI Clusters. The two Clusters are co-chaired: Protection with NRC and ES/NFI Cluster with IOM.
- UNHCR is working closely with the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and UNMAS to prevent risks related to IED/Mine/UXO as well as to promote respect of International Humanitarian Law by parties to the conflict.
- UNHCR also leads coordination of the Pakistani refugee response in Khost and Paktika provinces.
- UNHCR maintains close relationships with the donor community through, among others, donor briefings, consultations and regular dialogue and 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 program. 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.

UNHCR is very grateful for the financial support provided by donors who have contributed with unearmarked and broadly earmarked funds as well as for those who have contributed regionally and directly to the operation (as at 28 August 2018).

Algeria | Argentina | Australia | Belgium | Bosnia and Herzegovina | Canada | China | Costa Rica | 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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Operational data portal: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/afg>