



**UNHCR**  
The UN Refugee Agency

UNHCR'S SUPPORT TOWARD  
THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE

# SOLUTIONS STRATEGY FOR AFGHAN REFUGEES

Enhancing Resilience and  
Co-Existence through Greater  
Responsibility-Sharing

2018-2019

*The purpose of this document is to highlight UNHCR's support toward the implementation of the Solution Strategy for Afghan Refugees. In line with the overall framework of the Strategy, the present document outlines comprehensive measures aimed at building the resilience of refugees and their host communities, supporting their social cohesion and peaceful co-existence, and promoting durable solutions to the protracted Afghan displacement situation.*



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# 1. Regional Overview: 40 Years of Protracted Displacement

## Afghan refugees — the second largest refugee population in the world

After nearly four decades of protracted displacement, Afghan refugees still constitute just over 13 per cent of the global refugee population<sup>1</sup> and one-fifth of the world's protracted caseload, accounting for more than half of the 4.1 million refugees in protracted displacement of 20 years or longer.<sup>2</sup> With almost 2.6 million registered refugees, Afghanistan remains the second largest country of origin in the world.<sup>3</sup>

While Afghan refugees are dispersed across more than 80 countries, an overwhelming 91 per cent of them continue to be hosted by just two countries — the Islamic Republics of Pakistan and Iran. Half of the Afghan refugee population are children below 18 years, underlining the vulnerability of the displaced communities and stressing the need for urgent, prioritized responses.

In addition to registered Afghan refugees, according to the estimates of host governments, there are 1.5 to 2 million undocumented Afghans in the Islamic Republic of Iran and between 350,000 to 550,000 in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. In 2017, both Governments initiated

<sup>1</sup> These statistics refer only to refugees under UNHCR's mandate, and exclude Palestine refugees under the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Source: UNHCR, UNHCR Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2017, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2017/>

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR, UNHCR Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2016, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2016/>

<sup>3</sup> UNHCR, UNHCR Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2017, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2017/>

country-wide exercises to identify the undocumented Afghan population in their respective territories and to facilitate the issuance of documentation, including Afghan national passports.

### **The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan – voluntary return, sustainable reintegration: key to stability in Afghanistan and the region**

Over the past four decades, the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees has taken place in waves, notwithstanding the often challenging circumstances in their homeland and new outflows of refugees during times of conflict. Between March 2002 and September 2018, over 5.2 million Afghan refugees have repatriated with UNHCR assistance through the largest voluntary repatriation programme in its history. While in 2016 there was a spike in returns to Afghanistan, with more than 370,000 refugees returning from Pakistan and Iran, refugee returns declined to 58,800 in 2017 and 12,785 as of September 2018. At the same time, significant numbers of undocumented Afghans have returned from Pakistan and Iran, with nearly 693,000 returns recorded in 2016 and some 561,000 in 2017;<sup>4</sup> as many as 562,000 have returned as of September 2018<sup>5</sup>. Additionally, internal displacement has intensified across the country, with an estimate of more than 554,000 Afghans internally displaced due to conflict and drought between January and September 2018.<sup>6</sup> While reliable figures are not available on displacement in areas not under the control of the Afghan Government, UNHCR and OCHA estimate there to be at least 2 million IDPs in the country as of September 2018.

The increased numbers of refugees returning in 2016 and undocumented Afghans in 2016-2018 to certain areas in Afghanistan, especially to Kabul, as well as continued displacement to urban areas due to ongoing conflict, added further pressure on community services and social infrastructure in Afghanistan affecting its absorption capacity. UNHCR has identified 14 key areas of high return within Afghanistan that will benefit from enhanced support and coordinated action, through Community-Based Protection Measures (CBM) in partnership with development actors and the Afghan Government.

In light of Afghanistan's deteriorating security situation and limited absorption capacity, it is critical to seek solutions to the crisis, promote responsibility sharing regionally and globally, and foster robust and effective linkages between humanitarian action and development initiatives to ensure the long-term sustainable reintegration of all returnees.

### **The Islamic Republic of Iran – host to one of the world's largest urban refugee populations**

Providing for close to 1 million registered Afghan refugees, the Islamic Republic of Iran currently ranks as the fifth largest refugee hosting country in the world. Of these refugees, 97 per cent reside in urban or semi-urban areas across the country. The remaining three per cent live in 20 government-run refugee settlements. The majority of Afghan refugees in

<sup>4</sup> UNHCR and IOM: "Returns to Afghanistan in 2017: Joint IOM-UNHCR Summary Report". See: [http://afghanistan.iom.int/sites/default/files/Reports/joint\\_returnee\\_report\\_iom\\_unhcr\\_final.pdf](http://afghanistan.iom.int/sites/default/files/Reports/joint_returnee_report_iom_unhcr_final.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> According to IOM, 24,631 undocumented Afghans have returned from Pakistan and 537,710 from the Islamic Republic of Iran, IOM Weekly Situation Report, 9-15 September 2018. According to UNHCR, the number of registered refugees assisted to return under the voluntary repatriation programme as of 31 October 2017 is over 55,000 individuals (98% from Pakistan).

<sup>6</sup> OCHA (2018): "Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacement" and "Afghanistan: Overview of Natural Disasters". See: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/afghanistan>

the Islamic Republic of Iran known to UNHCR originate from central, western and northern provinces of Afghanistan and are primarily of Hazara ethnicity. Other ethnic groups include Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks and other minorities.

## The Islamic Republic of Pakistan – world’s second largest refugee hosting country

With 1.4 million registered Afghan refugees, Pakistan remains the world’s second largest refugee hosting country after Turkey. Originating mainly from the provinces in the eastern border areas, the majority of Afghan refugees in Pakistan are ethnic Pashtun (85 per cent) with smaller numbers from other ethnic groups, including Turkmen, Uzbek, Tajik and Hazara. The majority (81 per cent) of refugees reside in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (58 per cent) and Balochistan (23 per cent) provinces bordering Afghanistan. In recent years, a significant number of Afghan refugees have moved out of the refugee villages. Today, 68 per cent live in urban or rural areas, while the remaining 32 per cent reside in 54 refugee villages across the country.

### AFGHAN DISPLACEMENT AND RETURNS: KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- One in eight refugees worldwide is from Afghanistan. With more than **2.6 million** refugees, Afghans constitute the second largest refugee population after Syrians.
- The Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan jointly host **91 per cent** — some 2.4 million — of Afghan refugees worldwide. As such, these two countries host some 12 per cent of the global refugee population.
- Up to **50 per cent** of Afghan refugees are children.
- In 2017 asylum-seekers from Afghanistan filed the highest number of asylum applications globally, with **124,900** applications filed in 80 countries.
- In 2016 there was a spike in returns to Afghanistan, with more than **370,000** refugees returning from Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran, refugee returns declined to **58,800** in 2017 and 12,785 as of September 2018. At the same time, significant numbers of undocumented Afghans have returned from Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran, with nearly **693,000** returns recorded in 2016 and some **561,000** in 2017; as many as **560,000** have returned as of September 2018.
- According to OCHA over **554,000** Afghans have been internally displaced by conflict and natural disasters thus far in 2018. UNHCR estimates that more than **2 million** Afghans are internally displaced as of September 2018.
- According to the World Bank, the incidence of secondary movement among the returnees who came back in 2013 is twice as high compared to those who returned in 2002, despite the fact that there were almost **50 times** more returnees in 2002 than in 2013.



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## 2. Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR)

The Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) is the result of a unique quadripartite consultative process between the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, and UNHCR, initiated in 2011 to identify and implement lasting solutions for Afghan refugees in the region.

Designed as a regional multi-year initiative, the Strategy offers a comprehensive and integrated framework for joint interventions aimed at facilitating voluntary return and

sustainable reintegration, while at the same time providing assistance to refugees, host communities and countries.

### THREE PILLARS OF THE SSAR:

- Creating conditions conducive to facilitating **voluntary repatriation** through community-based initiatives in areas of high return in Afghanistan;
- **Building Afghan refugee capital** in host countries based on livelihood opportunities in Afghanistan to enable **sustainable reintegration**;
- **Preserving protection space in host countries**, including enhanced support for communities hosting refugees.

Since its endorsement by the international community in 2012, the Strategy has served as an enabling multilateral platform for consensus-building, strengthening existing partnerships and engaging new actors.

A Quadripartite Steering Committee, consisting of the three Governments and UNHCR, was formed in 2012 to guide the implementation of the Strategy at the regional level. The most recent meeting of the Committee was held in December

2017, during which the extension of the SSAR Framework for 2018-2019 was endorsed. The previous High-Level Meeting of the Quadripartite Steering Committee took place in October 2016 with the participation of Afghanistan's Chief Executive, Hon. Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, and UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Filippo Grandi.

## 2.1 Unique Features of the SSAR

The SSAR has been developed through a consultative process that ensures a distinctive regional framework is in place to comprehensively address ongoing displacement of Afghans. Key elements of the Strategy include:

- **Government-owned and Government-led:** Since its inception, the Strategy has been owned and driven by the three Governments in the region. This inclusive and consultative process further demonstrates exemplary cooperation between the country of origin and the main host countries.
- **Comprehensive conceptual and operational framework:** The Strategy is aligned with the national priorities and policies of the three Governments and seeks to mobilize resources and political support for their implementation. It builds on the convergence of interests of all stakeholders, reconciling the concerns and needs of host countries and the country of origin, and bringing tangible benefits for entire communities in refugee and returnee populated areas. The Strategy strengthens physical and social infrastructure, building on refugee capital and offsetting adverse impacts of a protracted refugee situation on the local economies and environment in host countries, and enhancing the resilience of communities in areas of high return in Afghanistan to ensure a durable solution for returnees.
- **Broad-based partnership and cooperation across the board:** Since its formulation in 2011, the Strategy has become an inclusive and enabling multilateral platform for consensus-building, strengthening existing partnerships and engaging new actors including more than 60 humanitarian and development actors, UN agencies, international organizations and international and national NGOs. Through such broad engagement of a variety of stakeholders with diverse mandates, complementary capacities, and long presence in the region, the Strategy builds on lessons learned and offers an opportunity to preserve and capitalize on the achievements and gains already made. The developed synergies help to ensure complementarity of approaches, avoid duplication of efforts and maximize outputs. The Strategy will further strengthen this **multi-stakeholder approach** that broadens the spectrum of stakeholders engaged in the refugee response and solutions to the private sector, national and local institutions and civil society.
- **Recognition of the contributions by host countries and communities:** The Strategy applies specific acknowledgement that the protection of refugees, including durable solutions and material assistance to host countries, is a collective responsibility of the international community and requires a commitment of addressing root causes of displacement and greater and more **equitable responsibility-sharing with host countries**. Aside from support for solutions, the

Strategy seeks to leverage financial assistance for refugee hosting countries, particularly in support of **resilience-building measures** (i.e. access to education, healthcare, vocational training, employment, and income generation schemes) that will benefit both refugees and host communities through investments in national and local systems.

- **Focused on strengthening the humanitarian-development nexus**, the Strategy aims to support the country of origin and local communities as well as host countries and communities in meeting both their imminent humanitarian needs and longer term development goals, working towards the environmental, social and infrastructural rehabilitation in areas where large populations of refugees and returnees live. Through broad-based engagement of humanitarian and development actors, as well as efforts to mainstream the needs of refugees and returnees in development planning and processes, the Strategy seeks to bridge humanitarian assistance with long-term development and leverage financial assistance to achieve sustainable reintegration. This holistic, solutions-oriented approach helps to support host communities, empowers refugees and returnees by building their capacity for self-reliance, and allows for a more strategic use of donor resources. The Strategy aims to reduce the prolonged dependence on external humanitarian aid (“care and maintenance”) to build individual capacity and promote productive activities. Enhanced cost-effectiveness is particularly crucial in the current context of growing needs and competing refugee situations in the region.
- The Strategy seeks to **promote investment and innovation** by exploring potential opportunities for private sector engagement, diverse forms of investment and new initiatives for the delivery of humanitarian aid and development programmes.
- The Strategy fosters strong data analysis and evidenced based programming in partnership with other stakeholders including through cross border initiatives.
- The Strategy provides an opportunity to **raise the profile of the protracted Afghan refugee situation higher on the agenda of the international community**, and to elicit more equitable responsibility sharing and highlight the generous contributions and good practices of host countries.

#### KEY MESSAGES

- **Bring** Afghan displacement higher on the international agenda: Support of donors and the international community is all the more essential to ensure progress to solutions in Afghanistan as well as in hosting countries.
- **Build** on gains and sustain the investments already made.
- **Recognize** the immeasurable support provided to Afghan people by the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan for nearly forty years. Learn from the good practices applied.
- **Support** enhanced and sustainable reintegration in Afghanistan and seek complementary pathways to protection and solutions for Afghans, including legal solutions through documentation.
- **Shore up** the ability of front-line host communities to bear and to respond to the prolonged presence of refugees, and enhance the resilience of refugees and their host communities.



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## 2.2 SSAR: Key Achievements and Opportunities (2015-2018)

A number of important developments have taken place over the past three years regionally and in each of the three countries involved in the SSAR, most notably the following.

### REGIONAL

- In 2015 the three Governments participated in the **High-Level Segment on the Afghan Refugee Situation** held during UNHCR's 66<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee meeting. The final statement adopted at the meeting reiterated the urgent need to implement lasting solutions to the protracted refugee situation and called for greater responsibility-sharing by the international community.
- The Strategy, since its inception, was instrumental in raising awareness about the need for a collective and more equitable responsibility sharing by the international community when seeking solutions for Afghan refugees. Its regional platforms including the **Quadripartite Steering Committee** and other country-specific coordination structures kept channels of communication open amongst a variety of stakeholders and its network across governments, international financial institutions, humanitarian and development actors, and donors facilitated joint planning, implementation and resource mobilisation.
- In 2018, Afghanistan and Pakistan expanded bi-lateral cooperation on a range of issues, including refugee protection and sustainable return and reintegration, under the auspices of the **Afghanistan Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity (APAPPS)**.

- **A Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan**, co-hosted by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the United Nations will take place in Geneva on 28 November 2018. Delegations from many countries and international organizations, along with representatives of civil society, the private sector and the media will attend. H.E. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and H.E. Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, will open the Conference. A few side-events are equally planned, including one on “People on the Move” presenting an opportunity to focus specifically on support for refugee hosting countries, sustainable reintegration of returnees and migration management in the region.

#### THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN

- In 2016, the Government of Afghanistan established the high-level **Displacement and Return Executive Committee (DiREC)** and adopted a Policy Framework and Action Plan for Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons under the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF). Importantly, the framework focuses on durable solutions and protection principles and aims at including the needs of returnees and IDPs in all key National Priority Programmes (NPP), including the Citizens’ Charter. **With support of the World Bank, the Citizen’s Charter has been extended to areas of high return and displacement**, including to urban centers where most displaced people live. The Afghan Government has taken key policy decisions related to access to documentation and security of tenure and transparent land allocation procedures. Since 2002, over 5.2 million refugees were assisted to return under **UNHCR’s facilitated voluntary repatriation programme**, including 372,577 returnees in 2016 and over 58,000 in 2017, primarily from Pakistan, and almost 13,000 up to September 2018.
- In 2017, UNHCR implemented **Community-Based Protection Measures (CPM)** benefitting some 400,000 individuals, including livelihoods initiatives, micro-financing and vocational training in marketable skills, with a focus on women and youth empowerment and rehabilitation of community infrastructure through cash-for-work initiatives to promote peaceful co-existence among communities and create a catalyst for longer term development programmes. UNHCR has strengthened its partnership with the World Bank and other development actors in a joint effort to ensure a continuum from humanitarian interventions to the sustainable reintegration of Afghan refugees returning to the country. This programme has been expanded in 2018, with 60 projects being implemented and benefitting more than 500,000 Afghans across the country.
- In 2018, Afghanistan became the first country of origin and the first country in Asia to announce formally the roll-out of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) contained in the New York Declaration and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), which enhances the implementation of the SSAR.

### THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

- The **Supreme Leader's decree issued in 2015** granted all Afghan children (regardless of their documentation status) access to school. In the scholastic year of 2017-18 some 420,000 Afghan children have registered for primary and secondary school out of which 103,000 children are undocumented Afghans.
- Since 2015, the Government facilitated access for all refugees residing in the Islamic Republic of Iran to enrol in the national universal health insurance scheme (**UPHI**). In 2017, more than 125,000 refugees enrolled in the UPHI and UNHCR fully subsidised the insurance premiums for the most vulnerable refugees. In 2018, UNHCR will subsidise the premium for 92,000 of the most vulnerable refugees.
- As part of efforts towards regularising the stay of Afghan nationals in Iran, in 2017 the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran initiated a **headcount exercise of undocumented Afghans**, through which up to 800,000 Afghans have been recorded according to authorities. The Government is taking steps to regularise the undocumented population identified during the headcount exercise.
- Since 2015, UNHCR has enhanced its engagement with the refugee communities. Enabling refugees to take ownership of the situation, build self-reliance and empower them to eventually provide greater opportunities for their sustainable re-integration in Afghanistan, once conditions become conducive for return.

### THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF PAKISTAN

- In February 2017 the Federal Cabinet of Pakistan adopted a **Comprehensive Policy on Voluntary Repatriation and Management of Afghan Nationals** with a potentially transformative impact on refugee protection and migration management in the country. The key elements of the policy include: (i) voluntary repatriation of refugees in safety and dignity; (ii) extension of the validity of PoR cards and enactment of national refugee legislation; (iii) improved border management; (iv) a flexible visa regime for PoR card holders; and (v) registration and documentation of undocumented Afghans.
- Between August 2017 and February 2018, the Government of Pakistan carried out a **country-wide exercise to identify undocumented Afghans** and provide them Afghan Citizen Cards (ACCs). The exercise was carried out in close collaboration with the Government of Afghanistan and with the support of IOM and UNHCR. Some 880,000 previously undocumented Afghan nationals were identified by the Government of Pakistan and some 380,000 of them have already received their ACCs.
- The Government worked closely with the World Bank and UNHCR to access the newly created **IDA 18 Refugee Sub-Window for Refugees and Host Communities**. The comprehensive package of interventions seeks to facilitate the implementation of the Government's Policy and channel large-scale development

- investments to support the empowerment and resilience of refugees and their host communities.
- In 2016, the Government reaffirmed its commitment to the SSAR at **high-level international fora** including the Wilton Park Forum on Protracted Forced Displacement, the World Humanitarian Summit, the UNGA High-Level Meeting on Refugees and Migrants and the Leaders' Summit on Refugees.



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## 2.3 SSAR and the Way Forward: Forging Strategic Partnerships

The global mobility crisis has given impetus to positive developments and new opportunities emanating from a growing recognition that forced displacement is not just a humanitarian, but also a political, peace-building and development challenge. The need for new and more comprehensive solutions-oriented approaches, based on greater responsibility-sharing and engagement of a broader variety of stakeholders across the humanitarian-development spectrum has been reflected in numerous recent high-level initiatives, including in the **UN General Assembly Summit on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants**, resulting in the adoption of the **New York Declaration**. The Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), along with the Global Compact for Migration (GCM), will complement the SSAR to provide a comprehensive framework for addressing the mixed-nature of population movement in a holistic manner.

As an imperative in a global environment where mobilization of resources and political support for Afghan refugees are increasingly challenged by other humanitarian crises worldwide, the 2018-2019 Strategy will **seek to build on these global initiatives and expand partnerships**.

**The SSAR 2018-2019 will:**

### Promote a people-centered approach and support national/local systems

Within the overall people-centered approach, the Strategy will seek to:

- Enhance outreach to **host communities** to further strengthen co-existence and promote greater tolerance towards refugees, and pro-actively engage **refugees and returnees**, particularly **women and youth**, to foster resilience and participation in decision-making processes;

- Promote meaningful participation of women and girls in the development of responses and solutions;
- Promote **participation of national and local service providers** and advocate for channeling of humanitarian and development funding to **support national and local public service delivery systems.**

### Strengthen the humanitarian-development nexus to address root causes of displacement and ensure sustainable return and re-integration

Recognizing the mutually reinforcing relationship between sustaining peace and development, as well as the imperative need to **address the root causes of displacement**, the Strategy will seek to:

- Foster greater **coordination of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding efforts**;
- Strengthen efforts to ensure that **national development plans and processes reflect the specific needs of refugees and returnees** and promote **sustainable reintegration** as a measure to prevent future displacement;
- Strengthen **the humanitarian-development nexus** and work towards tangible engagement of development actors in the implementation of the Strategy, including by encouraging close cooperation between key actors to develop policy, undertake joint planning and implement prioritized activities in favor of refugees, returnees and host communities.

### Explore innovative financing and advocate for greater solidarity and more equitable responsibility-sharing

Emphasizing the centrality of international cooperation to enhance the refugee protection regime and to facilitate solutions, the Strategy will seek to:

- Utilize the **SSAR Joint Resource Mobilization Strategy (JRMS)** and the well-established country-level **Friends of Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (FOSSAR)**<sup>7</sup> networks to advocate with **traditional and non-traditional donors** for reinvigorated support for Afghanistan, including in addressing the root causes of displacement, and greater and more equitable burden and responsibility-sharing with host countries;
- Advocate for more **flexible, consistent and predictable financing** with reduced earmarking and increased multi-year funding;
- **Promote solidarity and responsibility sharing with Afghanistan and the refugee hosting countries**, by bringing together a broad-based, multilateral coalition of stakeholders in support of resilience and a decent life for Afghans and their hosts **through financial and beyond financial aid**;

<sup>7</sup> The Friends of the Solutions Strategy (FoSSAR) is a donor-led platform that brings together representatives from the Governments of the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran and UNHCR, as well as donors and humanitarian and development actors at the country level, to discuss key policy and operational issues and advocate for increased support - political, financial and programmatic - to the refugee crisis. It is currently active in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

- Improve **data collection** and ensure **awareness-raising and information-sharing**;
- Explore existing regional and international platforms and fora to **raise awareness and garner support for the protracted Afghan refugee situation**.



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### 3. Country Interventions: Working Towards Resilience, Co-Existence and Solutions

Years of international support for humanitarian and development interventions in Afghanistan and host countries has resulted in important changes on the ground. The long-term commitment of the international community, however, needed to build on achievements and to ensure the sustainability of investments already made. The Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan have upheld a generous tradition of asylum for nearly forty years and continue to honour their commitments to provide protection for Afghan refugees. These valuable efforts need to be matched by **reinvigorated support and commensurate responsibility-sharing by the international community.**

With a number of newly emerging global refugee and humanitarian crises, the Afghan refugee situation is at risk of receiving diminishing international engagement and support. This demands new ways to respond to this protracted situation and new strategies to keep the interest high on Afghanistan and refugees hosted by its neighbours. **The Strategy confronts this challenge by proposing prioritized areas of intervention to make efficient use of available resources.**

In 2013, the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan adopted a **Joint Resource Mobilization Strategy**, which serves as a framework for coordination and fundraising at both regional and country levels. Key elements of the strategy include ensuring predictable multi-year funding in support of the outcomes of the Strategy, and developing partnerships with non-traditional donors and development actors. Joint efforts of all stakeholders are needed

to secure funds for UNHCR programmes, for the implementation of the three Governments' respective priorities, as well as for initiatives implemented by partners engaged in the implementation of the Strategy.

In the two refugee hosting countries, the proposed UNHCR interventions aim to enhance protection and find solutions for refugees and bolster support for their host communities by supporting the Governments' policy frameworks and priorities and by channelling investments into national public service delivery systems with emphasis on access to health, education, livelihoods and empowerment of refugees to prepare them for sustainable re-integration once conditions become conducive for voluntary return to Afghanistan.

The resilience and solutions measures in Afghanistan seek to provide targeted protection and assistance to the most vulnerable returnees, as well as IDPs and local communities. UNHCR's Community-Based Protection Measures represent a flexible set of immediate interventions focused on vulnerable families and displaced communities in areas of high displacement and return, and in hard to reach areas, through effective humanitarian coordination with partners. UNHCR will continue facilitating the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees through the provision of repatriation cash grants and access to other services upon arrival in Afghanistan. This assistance will enable returnees to cover transportation costs and meet their immediate needs upon return, including food and shelter.

In all three countries, UNHCR will continue to play a catalytic role in calling for reinvigorated international attention and support for Afghanistan and neighbouring refugee hosting countries to ensure more equitable responsibility-sharing and to address root causes of displacement towards solutions. Voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration will remain the preferred solution for the majority of Afghan refugees, subject to the security situation, informed decisions and a gradual return process. UNHCR will continue to advocate for greater engagement of development actors in the implementation of the Strategy.

Within the 2018-2019 Strategy, the resilience and solutions measures outlined in this document cover UNHCR's needs in the three countries concerned for the period of January 2018 to December 2019 amounting to USD 643.6 million.

### **Cross-Cutting Strategic Priority of the SSAR: Investing in Youth Empowerment**

The future security and well-being of refugees is intrinsically linked to the acquisition of transferrable skills and assets, as well as knowledge and capacities developed through education. With limited access to education and livelihood opportunities and with no guarantee of a durable solution, young people face uncertain futures, unable to fulfil their aspirations or ambitions. Furthermore, displacement and lack of education may force refugee youth to resort to negative coping strategies, such as hazardous forms of labour and irregular migration. Refugee youth may take up new roles and responsibilities to ensure their own and their families' basic needs, amplifying their vulnerabilities and exposing them to a variety of new risks.

The Governments in the region, with the support of UNHCR and partners, work to empower refugee and returnee children and youth through a series of inter-linked interventions in the areas of education, including primary, secondary and tertiary education, skills training and livelihoods support, based on the premise that empowered refugees are more likely to:

- Avail themselves of opportunities for durable solutions, particularly voluntary return and sustainable reintegration in Afghanistan;
- Achieve self-reliance and diminish their dependency on aid, allowing them to positively contribute to host communities and to become an active part of the development and reconstruction processes in their homeland upon return;
- Be agents of change, peaceful coexistence and stability.

While self-reliance helps to significantly enhance social protection, cohesion and peaceful coexistence with host communities, it also builds resilience, mitigates potential onward movements and yields important dividends for stability in the region and beyond. Furthermore, this investment in building the human capital of the Afghan refugee youth has a direct impact on the future prosperity and stability of Afghanistan.

#### SUMMARY OF UNHCR EXCOM APPROVED BUDGET PER COUNTRY OPERATION FOR 2018-2019

UNHCR COUNTRY OPERATIONS	Requirements 2018 (in USD)	Requirements 2019 (in USD)	Requirements 2018-2019 (in USD)
Afghanistan	125,834,134	121,705,680	247,539,814
Islamic Republic of Iran	98,756,623	98,916,707	197,673,329
Pakistan	99,201,670	99,201,669	198,403,339
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>323,792,426</b>	<b>319,824,056</b>	<b>643,616,482</b>

**SOURCE:** GLOBAL APPEAL 2018-2019. PLEASE SEE:  
[http://reporting.unhcr.org/publications#tab-global\\_appeal](http://reporting.unhcr.org/publications#tab-global_appeal)



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## 3.1 The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

### 3.1.1 Overview

Since 2002, UNHCR has assisted over 5.2 million registered refugees to return to Afghanistan and provided cash and other assistance to meet their immediate humanitarian needs. In 2016 there was a spike in returns to Afghanistan, with more than 370,000 refugees returning from Pakistan and Iran. In addition, some 693,000 undocumented Afghans returned from Pakistan and Iran. The arrival of registered refugees and undocumented Afghans in Kabul, Nangarhar province and other areas of high return, as well as conflict-induced IDPs particularly to urban areas, added further pressure on community services and social infrastructure in Afghanistan. In 2017 over 58,000 refugees repatriated to Afghanistan, and thus far 12,785 refugees have returned in 2018.

Afghanistan has again been designated to be a country in conflict and continues to witness new conflict-induced internal displacement as anti-government elements (AGEs) expand their geographical influence and control of territory in almost all provinces of the country; as of September 2018 more than 554,000 individuals have been newly displaced by conflict and natural disasters. Civilian casualties have risen each year since 2012, with the highest number of civilian deaths from conflict ever reported in Afghanistan during the first half of 2018, according to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).<sup>8</sup>

In 2017 Afghanistan ranked the highest in terms of the number of new applications for asylum, with some 124,900 applications filed in 80 countries.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> UNAMA: "Highest Recorded Civilian Deaths from Conflict at Mid-Year Point." See: <https://unama.unmissions.org/highest-recorded-civilian-deaths-conflict-mid-year-point-latest-unama-update>

<sup>9</sup> See: <http://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2017/>

Some provincial governments are exploring local settlement initiatives, including land allocation schemes and relocation within municipal or district boundaries, while requesting support from the international community to provide shelter and livelihoods. The initiatives are particularly aimed at IDPs in a protracted situation and at returnees who have been unable to return to their place of origin due to insecurity, illegal occupation of land, specific threats, lack of services and other factors. The restoration of housing, land and property rights remains a challenge, but in 2018 a Presidential Decree on land allocation was enacted, which will hopefully help resolve many of the problems faced by returnees and IDPs.<sup>10</sup> IDPs and returnees have increasingly chosen to move to urban or semi-urban areas where they often live with host community families, in rented or shared accommodation, or in collective shelters.

Returnees often have few options for coping with their situation and limited social protection networks as a consequence of being born outside Afghanistan or because of their prolonged absence from the country, and may be confronted with threats and challenges similar to those facing IDPs. Protection risks for IDPs and returnees include poor sanitation and hygiene caused by insufficient access to sanitation facilities and potable water, negative coping mechanisms (e.g. hazardous forms of labour, child labour, street begging, early or forced marriage, cycles of debt), threats of violence and forced recruitment by AGEs, and death or injury from IEDs and explosive remnants of war (especially among children). Returnees and IDPs may also be deprived of education, access to healthcare and other essential services, sometimes as a result of lacking civil documentation in the form of a *tazkira* (national identity card). IDPs and returnees in hard to reach areas, including areas controlled or contested by AGEs, are subject to even greater vulnerabilities.

The dramatic increase in conflict-induced and natural disaster related displacement and subsequent humanitarian needs, together with the growing number of civilian casualties, have prompted the UN Humanitarian Country Team and national and international NGOs to adapt programmes and interventions to best ensure the protection of civilians, while emphasising the centrality of protection in the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). The initiatives set out below are aligned with the HRP, as well as UNHCR's Global Appeal and UNHCR Afghanistan's Multi-Year Country Strategy for 2017-2019.

UNHCR supports and works closely with the Government of Afghanistan, which takes the lead in the inclusion of returnees and IDPs in its development strategies and implementation through provincial working groups. The core objectives of the SSAR have now been embedded in Afghanistan's national policy framework, including the Citizens' Charter and other National Priority Programmes (NPP).

UNHCR has identified 14 key areas of high return within Afghanistan that will benefit from enhanced support and coordinated action. The locations were selected based on the criteria of: (i) high return, (ii) functional Community Development Committees, (iii) access, and (iv) presence of development programmes (including the National Priority Programs) and include: Gusfand Dara, Akakheil, Ghaziabad and Tarakhel Dag in Kabul, Charbagh in Laghman, Majboorabad in Nangahar, Mirwais Mina and Loy Wala in Kandahar, Sakhi Abad in Jawjan and Rabat in Balkh.

<sup>10</sup> Presidential Decree 305 of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on the Identification and Allocation of Suitable Land for the Re-integration and Construction of Affordable Housing for Returnees, Internally Displaced Persons and Families of Martyrs of the Country's Security and Defence Forces. This replaced Presidential Decree 104 (2005).

### 3.1.2 Facilitation of Voluntary Repatriation

To support the Government of Afghanistan's Comprehensive Voluntary Repatriation and Reintegration Strategy, UNHCR will continue to facilitate the voluntary and gradual return of Afghan refugees, in accordance with the 2012 SSAR vision and established protection principles. UNHCR jointly manages four encashment centres with the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR), which are the first points of contact for returnees and where they are registered with MoRR. At the encashment centres, UNHCR coordinates with humanitarian partners to provide returnees with needed services.

An independent evaluation of the repatriation cash grant, as well as a representative telephone survey of returnees, IDPs and the general population, was conducted in 2017. The findings of this research complement protection monitoring carried out by UNHCR, which indicates that the repatriation cash grant is not only vital to make return financially possible for refugees, but also reduces their vulnerability and reliance on negative coping mechanisms.

UNHCR will continue to collaborate with the Government of Afghanistan and humanitarian and development actors to share and disseminate information on the situation in areas of return, including security and new conflict-induced displacement, in coordination with UNHCR's offices in the Islamic Republics of Pakistan and Iran. This includes an online, publicly-available Afghanistan Data Portal as a new and valuable tool of information management for UNHCR, government counterparts, and partners, and which also makes information available to refugees to enable them to make informed decisions about return.<sup>11</sup> For those who decide to repatriate voluntarily, UNHCR will provide up-to-date information to assist them to prepare for their return, such as explaining the need to obtain consular certification of education documents for children to continue their education in Afghanistan.

### 3.1.3 Support to Persons with Specific Needs (PSN)

Among returnees and IDPs, UNHCR prioritises those in life-threatening situations, and those who are not able to effectively integrate in host communities without external support owing to physical, psychological, and social vulnerabilities and institutional barriers. Persons

#### COORDINATED ASSISTANCE TO RETURNÉES AT ENCASHMENT CENTRES

- Repatriation cash grant of approximately USD 200 per person (adjusted according to costs of transportation) to meet the immediate needs of returnees for food, shelter and other necessities;
- Basic health screening by medical professionals, vaccinations for children, and referrals to emergency services;
- Hygiene kits;
- Mine risk education and awareness;
- Referral for information and legal assistance to obtain civil documentation (*tazkira*) and access to land and education;
- Referral of Persons with Specific Needs (PSN) to partners with specialist expertise, or government agencies, who provide life-saving assistance;
- Child friendly spaces and transit facility for overnight accommodation.

<sup>11</sup> See: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/afg>.

with specific needs may include unaccompanied and separated children, women and girls facing gender related protection risks, single parents, the elderly (especially those who are caregivers for minor children), survivors of mental or physical trauma, persons living with disabilities, and other extremely vulnerable individuals.

UNHCR will identify and refer persons with specific needs to service providers through established PSN Programme networks comprised of government institutions, NGOs, and other UN agencies. In some cases, UNHCR will provide cash assistance to cover basic living expenses, to pay legal fees for obtaining civil documentation, to pay medical costs, or to start a small scale business to support self-reliance.

### 3.1.4 Community-Based Protection Measures (CPN)

UNHCR's programme activities strategically focus on mitigating protection risks, both at an individual and a community level, through Community-Based Protection Measures (CPMs). In line with global livelihoods principles of 'provide, protect, and promote'<sup>12</sup> and the Government of Afghanistan's Policy Framework for returnees and IDPs, CPMs adopt an integrated approach to address the key issues of vulnerability, diversification, and access to livelihoods and economic integration prospects, while fostering social cohesion, peaceful coexistence and community resilience.

UNHCR's CPMs in the 14 high return areas focus on mitigating protection risks, both at the individual and community level. They adopt an integrated community-based approach to address protection issues as well as identify solutions for refugees, returnees, IDPs as well as the host population. This fosters social cohesion, peaceful coexistence and community resilience.

The CPMs are area-based and site selection and site-specific activities are informed by protection monitoring, thorough baseline socio-economic profiling, and protection risk and market analysis. This enables the design of evidence-based programming to systematically address the protection risks and immediate to short and medium term needs of UNHCR's Persons of Concern (PoCs), while fostering linkages with development partners as a continuum to longer-term development.

The CPM programme is aligned to the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANDPF, 2017-2021) and the relevant National Priority Programs. The CPM interventions, in partnership with development actors and the Government, are aimed at creating and establishing a platform with defined linkages to development programmes and private sector initiatives to ensure sustainability of interventions.

In the short-term, activities are aimed at diversifying income sources and preventing negative coping strategies. Accordingly, the focus is to assist communities to recover and/or protect their livelihood assets (i.e., through cash or vouchers for work, community contracting, conditional grants for micro-business initiatives, savings schemes, etc.), and to adapt to new environments (i.e., local language training, life skills, documentation, and employment counseling). In the short- to medium-term, CPMs facilitate the organisation of informal

<sup>12</sup> Livelihoods Programming in UNHCR: Operational Guidelines (2015).

community groups based on livelihoods activities.<sup>13</sup> Advocacy, community mobilization and social awareness-raising promotes the participation, inclusion, and representation of beneficiaries including women and youth in local community decision-making structures (e.g. Community Development Councils, Shuras, etc.).

In the medium-term, CPMs build and improve livelihood assets and strategies through employment, employability and entrepreneurship, including market-based vocational skills training.

CPMs also facilitate the transition to long-term development and sustainability. In this regard, UNHCR's role is to act as a catalyst and interface between the humanitarian and development framework through coordination and joint programming with the Government of Afghanistan<sup>14</sup> and partner agencies including through Afghanistan piloted "inter-agency durable solutions initiatives."<sup>15</sup>

### 3.1.5 Protection Monitoring, Advocacy, Coordination and Partnerships

UNHCR complements the efforts of the Government of Afghanistan, civil society, and the international community to address the needs of affected populations – including IDPs, refugees, returnees and host communities – by bringing a protection lens to humanitarian and development programmes, including as the lead UN agency for the Protection Cluster and the Emergency Shelter/Non-Food Items Cluster that work to address the needs of IDPs. UNHCR's advocacy aims to save lives, protect civilians, promote human rights, enhance social inclusion and support peacebuilding, in a context of active conflict, new displacement, and refugee repatriation.

UNHCR will support the Government of Afghanistan and will work in partnership with local and international NGOs, other UN agencies and development actors to achieve the following protection goals:

- **Promote** the protection of civilians in hard to reach and high intensity conflict areas;
- **Enhance** the capacity of communities and reduce vulnerability of IDPs and returnees;
- **Promote** dignity through access to basic services in areas of high return and displacement.

<sup>13</sup> A *livelihood zone* is a geographical area within which people share basically the same patterns of access to food and income, and have the same access to markets. *Zone Description* offers a general description of local livelihood patterns (crop production, livestock rearing, off-farm income generation, etc.), within the framework of the five types of capital (natural, human, social, physical and economic/financial).

<sup>14</sup> The focus is on linkages to other programs, including the World Bank's livelihoods and women's empowerment initiatives, ILO's Road to Jobs project and Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) model; FAO's Agriculture and Animal Husbandry Programme; UNDP's Sustainable Alternative Livelihoods to Mobility (SALAM) project; the Government's National Priority Programs, the Ministry of Rural Development and Rehabilitation's Returnee Enterprise Development Programme, etc.

<sup>15</sup> Ongoing initiatives led by the Government and co-led by UNHCR include Inter-agency Durable Solutions Initiative in Nangarhar (for returnees) and in Herat (for IDPs) supported by UNDP, IOM, WFP, FAO, UNHABITAT and ILO.

In this context, UNHCR will reinforce the centrality of protection in the humanitarian response through advocacy, coordination and partnerships and an evidence-based protection risk analysis and scaled-up information management. To support peaceful co-existence through conflict-sensitive programming, peace-building actors and experts will be mobilised to influence future interventions.

In close coordination with partners, UNHCR will support the government to implement its National IDP Policy<sup>16</sup> to improve self-reliance and implement early recovery programming in major areas of displacement.

To improve collective outcomes and increase accountability on the basis of comparative advantages, shared responsibilities and multi-year timeframes, the humanitarian response in Afghanistan includes a development perspective to successfully link humanitarian activities to sustainable development programmes.<sup>17</sup> UNHCR, in cooperation with key partners, will continue to advocate for durable solutions for returnees and IDPs as an essential element of peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Through the Emergency Shelter/Non-Food-Items Cluster, UNHCR and its partners will provide one-off assistance to vulnerable families newly displaced by conflict to ensure access to safe shelter. This is carried out in coordination with other humanitarian actors through inter-agency assessments.

To ensure that key policies affecting returnees and IDPs, such as policies on land allocation and documentation, are addressed through a protection lens, MoRR and UNHCR co-chair the DiREC Policy Working Group and offer technical support to a taskforce on housing, land and property in close coordination with UN-Habitat. MoRR, UNDP, UNHCR and IOM also co-chair the Durable Solutions Working Group and foster partnerships and coordination with development agencies and the private sector in view of implementing livelihoods and economic inclusion programmes. As a member of the Diaspora Working Group, Afghans who remain outside the country are engaged in the reconstruction of Afghanistan and in improving the conditions of return. UNHCR will make a significant financial contribution and provide technical support to an inter-agency call centre, which is designed to improve accountability, and access to services and humanitarian assistance.

UNHCR and IOM lead the Return and Reintegration thematic area of the ONE UN Mutual Accountability Framework, to deliver jointly as one in line with the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (2017-2021). UNHCR and IOM working side-by-side will support the Government of Afghanistan in its efforts to provide documentation to Afghan refugees and other Afghans, including through the issuance of passports to Afghans residing in Pakistan and Iran, in order to better manage movements across and within borders.

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<sup>16</sup> The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (2013): "Nationally Policy on Internally Displaced Persons."

<sup>17</sup> This is in line with the collective collaboration ('New Way of Working') among humanitarian and development actors, governments, NGOs and private sector actors to enable meaningful progress – for more info, see: [https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/NWOW%20Booklet%20low%20res.002\\_0.pdf](https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/NWOW%20Booklet%20low%20res.002_0.pdf)



Iran  
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SEBASTIAN RICH

## 3.2 The Islamic Republic of Iran

### 3.2.1 Overview

The Islamic Republic of Iran hosts some 1 million Afghan refugees according to the Government's figure, from mid-November 2015. Refugees are registered and issued refugee identity cards (called *Amayesh cards*) by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Of the Amayesh card holders, approximately 97 per cent live in urban areas while the remaining 3 per cent reside in 20 settlements managed by UNHCR's main government counterpart, the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants' Affairs (BAFIA) of the Ministry of Interior. UNHCR assists Amayesh cardholders, all of whom have access to primary and secondary education in public schools, primary health care, as well as access to the national health insurance scheme. While refugees formally have access to employment in about 87 different job categories, a large proportion also work informally in a variety of other industries.

In addition to Amayesh cardholders, approximately 450,000 Afghans who hold Afghan passports and Iranian visas also reside in the country. Many of them either previously held Amayesh cards and opted for the alternative stay arrangement scheme (ASA), or were undocumented and benefitted from the comprehensive regularization plan (CRP). Visas allow them to access services such as driving licences, university education, job opportunities, and freedom to travel within and out of the country. The Islamic Republic of Iran estimates that 1.5-2 million undocumented Afghans also live in the country.

Following a decree by the Supreme Leader in May 2015 declaring that all Afghan children should have access to public education regardless of their documentation status, the Government has started gradual

In 2015, the Supreme Leader issued a decree granting all Afghan children (regardless of their documentation status) access to public education

registration of undocumented children in schools. In the scholastic years 2017-2018 some 420,000 Afghan children have registered for primary and secondary school out of which 103,000 children are undocumented.

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran estimates that large numbers of Afghans enter the territory on a daily basis. Return movement from the Islamic Republic of Iran to Afghanistan likewise take place, however, it is estimated that at all times 1.5-2 million undocumented Afghans reside in the Islamic Republic of Iran. As part of efforts towards regularisation, in 2017 the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran initiated a headcount exercise targeting specific categories of undocumented Afghans residing in Iran. According to authorities up to 800,000 Afghans were identified through this exercise.

UNHCR will work jointly with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the broader international community within the Islamic Republic of Iran and internationally, to showcase efforts of the Government as an example of broad-based support for refugees and seeking international responsibility-sharing. UNHCR will in cooperation with other partners seek new opportunities to assist the Government in continuing to provide protection and assistance to the refugee population hosted in Iran. UNHCR will also cooperate closely with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to support their efforts to ensure documentation and protection of Afghans and ensure that access to basic services can be further enhanced for Afghans living in the country, whilst working towards longer term solutions for this protracted displaced population.

### 3.2.2 Access to Protection: Legal and Policy Framework

UNHCR will continue to carry out its core mandate activities, including facilitated voluntary repatriation, provision of legal assistance, support for access to civil documentation, targeted support for persons with specific needs, and resettlement for the most vulnerable refugees. The operation will continue to conduct case management and offer support for individual protection cases, however will seek to gradually shift emphasis towards stronger outreach activities, engaging with the communities in prevention activities, capacitating them to build resilience and support mechanisms at community level, and to identify and refer individuals at risk or with specific needs.

#### **Identification of undocumented Afghans**

In January 2017, BAFIA announced the initiation of an exercise called “**The Headcount of the Undocumented Foreigners**” (*Sar-Shomari-e Atbaa Faghede Madrak*). This Headcount invites certain categories of undocumented Afghans to declare their presence with the Government, targeting holders of expired Amayesh cards, undocumented family members of Iranian nationals, family members of those children enrolled in schools, and Afghan passport holders with expired Iranian visas and others. Participants in the Headcount received a slip attesting their participation in the exercise by the Government, which has proven to offer temporary protection to the participants. UNHCR stands ready to support the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran in its effort to regularize the undocumented Afghan population in the

In January 2017, The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran launched “The Headcount of the Undocumented Foreigners.” Up to **800,000** Afghans participated in this exercise which will help to regularise the status of undocumented Afghans residing in Iran.

Islamic Republic of Iran by providing technical support, and advocating for additional resources from the international community.

#### **Targeted support for persons with specific needs**

UNHCR and its partners seek to ensure that individuals with specific needs and those at risk are better **identified**, including through the use of information contained in databases, community outreach, and trends analysis. Multi-functional teams work to find **solutions to their immediate concerns**. Areas of focus include preventing and responding to incidents of violence and abuse, protection and education of children and youth, and protection of the disabled, sick, and elderly.

Through enhanced community outreach, UNHCR will identify and refer refugees with specific needs to essential service providers such as hospitals, rehabilitation centres, Government organizations and NGO partners in the areas of health, education and livelihoods. UNHCR will directly assist the most vulnerable through cash-based interventions or with in-kind support. UNHCR will continue to support the work of the State Welfare Organisation (SWO) as well as other government agencies to further facilitate the inclusion of refugees in national support mechanisms.

### **3.2.3 Access to Basic Services**

#### **Continued access to health services**

Since 2015, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has facilitated the inclusion of registered refugees in the universal public health insurance scheme (UPHI). In addition to the health benefits of this scheme, it improves the social protection of the refugees and reduces the financial burden shouldered by many refugees due to high medical expenses which increases the risk of negative coping mechanisms such as school drop outs, child labour and other social harms.

UNHCR will continue to support the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran in its significant efforts to include all refugees into the national health insurance scheme and to implement its policy of mandatory health insurance for all refugees, as stipulated in the 6<sup>th</sup> national development plan. UNHCR, in support of the inclusive policies of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, extends its support so the most vulnerable refugees, including refugees with special diseases<sup>18</sup> (thalassemia, haemophilia, renal failure, kidney transplant, and multiple sclerosis) and those suffering from cancer and refractory diseases and their families, who benefit from fully subsidised access to the UPHI.

The Government facilitates access of all registered refugees to its Universal Public Health Insurance scheme.

UNHCR will support the efforts of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to provide access to **quality primary health care** in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Medical Education and will also ensure access to specialist referral care at secondary and tertiary levels, and rehabilitation services to refugees with disabilities through community-based

<sup>18</sup> As defined by the Iranian Ministry of Health.

rehabilitation programmes. Given the large number of children and youth in the country, these programmes are important for improving the health status of younger generations, especially for women and girls.

#### ***Infrastructure support for refugee settlements***

Although settlements host only around three per cent of the total refugee population in the Islamic Republic of Iran, many of these residents are some of the most vulnerable and require specific interventions to address their needs. As most refugee settlements were constructed over 20 years ago, the shelters and other infrastructure (water, gas, electricity and public spaces) are in dire need of maintenance or rehabilitation to ensure the sanitary conditions and **physical safety of Afghan refugees, and to give them a more dignified life in the country**. UNHCR will endeavour to complement the Government's effort in this regard. Some of these improvements will also benefit host communities living nearby.

#### **3.2.4 Livelihoods**

The importance of ensuring that refugees gain access to vocational training and marketable demand-driven skills has been recognized as a key priority in order for them to earn a sustainable living, and positively contribute to the host community during their stay in the Islamic Republic of Iran. These efforts will over time enhance refugees' financial, human and social capital and better prepare them for sustainable reintegration upon voluntary return to Afghanistan or in a third country context.

#### ***Capacity building and access to employment***

Access to self-employment opportunities will be promoted and facilitated, particularly focusing on the capacity building of female refugees to start small businesses in different fields. UNHCR will enhance access to **self-reliance opportunities** for refugees through the provision of income-generating activities such as skills and vocational training, as well as the provision of small grants for refugees to establish and expand home based and small businesses. These interventions will be made while also ensuring that **host communities**, especially those who are vulnerable, are included.

Similarly, with the objective of enhancing livelihoods opportunities, access of refugees to **financial services** including business loans and micro credit will be facilitated through financial inclusion (including consolidating the right of refugees to open bank accounts).

#### ***Cross border cooperation***

To enhance job opportunities for Afghan refugees who return to Afghanistan voluntarily, UNHCR and partners will strive to explore creative and innovative ways of cooperation between the Islamic Republics of Iran and Afghanistan. In this regard, cooperation and support in linking skilled Afghans in the Islamic Republic of Iran and job opportunities in Afghanistan and facilitating access of refugees to **financial services** including business loans and micro credit are key priorities. Modalities could include grants to small businesses, a revolving fund mechanism and capacity building equipping refugees for specific professional categories where the demand is high in Afghanistan.

### 3.2.5 Youth Empowerment

UNHCR will continue to emphasise youth empowerment which will furthermore be highlighted in partnership agreements. Youth will be supported to address some of the key challenges they face, building capacity and self-reliance and preparing them for sustainable reintegration when conditions become conducive for voluntary return to Afghanistan.

#### ***Access to primary and higher education***

In supporting the efforts of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, UNHCR will focus on **increasing school enrolment and reducing dropouts**, especially for children in primary school. Various incentives and awareness-raising efforts will be directed to Afghan families, particularly targeting girls. UNHCR is working closely with the Ministry of Education and the Literacy Movement Organization (LMO) but also with UNICEF and national and international NGOs on this matter.

UNHCR, to the extent possible, will enhance its contribution towards the **construction, equipping and rehabilitation of schools** in areas hosting high numbers of vulnerable refugees and host communities. This will contribute to the implementation of the inclusive policies of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for refugee children of school age as well as, facilitating **access of undocumented Afghans to formal education** following the Supreme Leader's decree to this effect.

The Government discontinued the previously applicable refugee-specific school fees. Refugees are entitled to receive the same treatment as nationals.

Following the revision of the regulations on registration of foreign nationals in the Islamic Republic of Iran in May 2016, the refugee-specific school fee was discontinued and refugees are thereby entitled to receive the same treatment as nationals. To ensure refugees have access to education, it will be critical to reduce other education-related costs and provide assistance such as educational kits.

UNHCR will continue advocating with the government to increase support for refugees to **access higher/university education**. In this context, UNHCR will explore increasing scholarship opportunities for refugee students in the Islamic Republic of Iran as well as in third countries and enhance its support to **literacy courses** for adolescents and adults.

#### ***Self-reliance and livelihoods for youth***

UNHCR will continue to enhance access to employment opportunities for refugee youth through the provision of income-generating activities, skills, vocational training and grants to refugees to establish and expand businesses and empower them for their sustainable integration in third countries and/or when conditions become conducive for voluntary return to Afghanistan.

In close cooperation with relevant actors, UNHCR will strengthen advocacy with the Government to expand job opportunities for youth in the Islamic Republic of Iran and through cross-border initiatives, including internship/apprenticeship programs for refugees/students, with a special focus on women and girls. This is especially important for the highly skilled and educated community members who can support others in need of jobs.

### 3.2.6 Durable Solutions

UNHCR will continue to support refugees to seek durable solutions, with a focus on resettlement and voluntary repatriation. UNHCR will facilitate voluntary, safe and dignified return for refugees, including through cash and other form of support in the Islamic Republic of Iran. In addition a **voluntary return and reintegration grant** is provided to returnees at the encashment centres in Afghanistan.

Resettlement as an important durable solution for refugees with protection concerns in the Islamic Republic of Iran. While the resettlement quota for refugees from the Islamic Republic of Iran has been reduced over the past few years, resettlement opportunities remain an essential protection intervention for refugees. Advocacy will continue with resettlement countries to increase numbers for resettlement for refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

As opportunities for resettlement and voluntary repatriation are expected to remain limited in the near future, complementary pathways for solutions in third countries will be explored, i.e. in relation to higher education, job opportunities and other solutions. This will be critical when ensuring alternative legal pathways by which refugees can access opportunities in third countries, while at the same time seeking international responsibility sharing for Afghan refugees.

### 3.2.7 Advocacy, Coordination and Partnership

#### ***Awareness-raising and advocacy***

UNHCR will continue to promote awareness, raise visibility of refugee related issues, and **improve co-existence and positive engagement among refugees and host communities**. As such, UNHCR will support social, cultural, and sports activities including through public events. Such activities will improve mutual understanding and reduce negative perceptions.

Through mass information activities, UNHCR with Government partners, will inform refugees, particularly the young, about conditions in their country of origin with the view to ensuring that refugees can make an informed decision on voluntary repatriation. UNHCR will raise refugees' awareness through various communication means, including printing and distributing posters and placing announcements in refugee reception areas in the UNHCR and BAFIA premises. Information will also be made available in offices of operational partners (i.e. Government Organizations, schools, training classes and NGO offices) and through messages posted on UNHCR's website.

UNHCR will continue to work closely with the **media** to ensure that refugees and refugee protection in the Islamic Republic of Iran are considered positively. This will be done mainly by demonstrating the work of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, highlighting the work of UNHCR, and other partners to ensure that refugees and host communities are supported.

#### ***Coordination and partnership***

UNHCR is working with the Government and other partners to ensure complementary, strengthen coordination and build on synergies for the successful implementation of the Strategy in the Islamic Republic of Iran. UNHCR supports the implementation of the

inclusive refugee policies introduced by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and will advocate for further progressive policies with the host Government, promote regional cooperation on resilience and solutions, and strategically engage donor countries in resource mobilization. UNHCR will facilitate and expand technical coordination among key humanitarian assistance sectors<sup>19</sup> and stakeholders, including the Government, UN agencies, and international and national NGOs.

The **Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs** of the Ministry of Interior remains UNHCR's operational counterpart in the government in implementing the Strategy. Regular coordination between BAFIA and UNHCR will continue, including in multi-functional teams for key intervention areas, at technical level, and at senior management level. UNHCR will continue working closely with line ministries, including with the Ministry of Health and Medical Education, the Ministry of Education, and organization such as the Technical and Vocational Training Organisation (TVTO), affiliated to the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labour and Social Welfare, the State Welfare Organization (SWO), and Literacy Movement Organization (LMO), in coordination with BAFIA.

To ensure effective **multipurpose cash programming** for refugees, an inclusive coordination platform will be maintained to facilitate learning and sharing, a harmonized approach among actors and avoid duplication. It is recognized that cash is and will continue to be used across a wide variety of sectors. UNHCR's own cash-based assistance will aim to address the immediate needs of extremely vulnerable refugees, and cash assistance will be provided mainly in the form of multi-purpose cash assistance as well as support in the fields of education, health, livelihoods, voluntary return, and resettlement.

Regarding humanitarian actors, UNHCR will continue to **enhance and expand technical coordination with its key partners** (with UN agencies, international and national NGOs) including through sectorial working groups to promote information-sharing, harmonised approaches, avoid duplication, and guide monitoring of humanitarian assistance. Within the SSAR framework, UNHCR works with partners to ensure interventions are effective, targeted and efficient, and guided to advance resilience and solutions-based initiatives within refugee communities.

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<sup>19</sup> Sectors include protection, health, education, cash programming and livelihoods.

### MEMBERSHIP OF SSAR IN IRAN AS OF SEPTEMBER 2018

United Nations High Commissioner  
for Refugees (UNHCR)  
Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrant  
Affairs (BAFIA)  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)

#### Government Organizations

Forest, Rangelands and Watershed  
Organization (FRWO)  
Ministry of Education (MoE)  
Ministry of Health (MoH)  
State Welfare Organization of Iran (SWO)  
Technical and Vocational Training  
Organization (TVTO))

#### Non-Governmental Organizations

Association for Protection of Refugee  
Women and Children (HAMI)  
Behnam Daheshpour Charity Organization  
Chain of Hope (COH)  
International Consortium for Refugees in Iran (ICRI)  
Iranian Life Quality Improvement Association (ILIA)  
Kiyana Cultural and Social Group (KIYANA)

Pars Development Activists Association (PDA)  
Rebirth Charity Organization (Rebirth)  
Society for Recovery Support (SRS)  
Society to Protect Children Suffering  
from Cancer (MAHAK)  
World Relief Foundation (WRF)

#### International Non-Governmental Organizations

Danish Refugee Council (DRC)  
Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)  
Relief International (RI)

#### UN Organizations

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)  
International Organization for Migration (IOM)  
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)  
UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural  
Organization (UNESCO)  
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)  
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)  
World Food Programme (WFP)  
World Health Organization (WHO)



Pakistan  
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## 3.3 The Islamic Republic of Pakistan

### 3.3.1 Overview

Today, after nearly four decades of protracted displacement, Pakistan continues to host 1.4 million registered Afghan refugees. As such, it remains the second largest refugee hosting country in the world, after Turkey.

The majority of refugees reside in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (58 per cent) and Balochistan (23 per cent) - the two most under-developed provinces of Pakistan with the highest multi-dimensional poverty indices. Up to 68 per cent of the refugee population live outside of the 54 refugee villages in urban and rural areas along with their Pakistani host communities; and are therefore largely dependent on access to national public service delivery systems (education and health), and local labour markets.

In addition to hosting Afghan refugees; due to the geographic proximity and historical migration patterns rooted in close ethnic, tribal, religious and cultural affiliations; Pakistan has also been a traditional country of destination for hundreds of thousands of Afghan migrants crossing the porous borders, mostly in an irregular manner, to access services and/or better livelihood opportunities. According to Government estimates, there are currently some 350,000-550,000 undocumented Afghan nationals in Pakistan.

The political, socio-economic, financial and environmental consequences associated with the protracted presence of millions of Afghan refugees and migrants placed a heavy burden on the host communities and the over-strained infrastructure and public service delivery systems.

There is a growing concern that the attention of the international community has moved to new humanitarian emergencies and refugee crises, resulting in diminishing financial and

political support for the Afghan refugee situation. Pakistan has been calling for **greater and more equitable international responsibility-sharing** in hosting Afghan refugees and finding solutions for them.

In its statement at the Leaders' Summit on Refugees (20 September 2016), the Government of Pakistan reaffirmed its commitment to solutions and protection for Afghan refugees, and committed to continued provision of education, free healthcare and access to employment.

Against this background, the UNHCR operation in Pakistan stands at a critical juncture in efforts to advance solutions approaches through **joint interventions by both humanitarian and development actors**. This constitutes an effort to move away from prolonged dependence on open-ended humanitarian aid ("care and maintenance") by enhancing social cohesion and building empowerment, resilience and productive capacities of both refugees and their host communities through targeted investments into national public delivery systems (health, education, social protection).

Within the overall framework of the SSAR, the UNHCR operation in Pakistan continues to be guided by its 2017-2019 Multi-Year Country Strategy centred around three key strategic priorities: 1) **innovative solutions approaches** for different groups based on their profiles and needs; 2) **inclusive protection and assistance** to empower, build resilience and self-reliance; and promote social cohesion between refugees and their host communities; and 3) **investing in diversified partnerships and collaboration**, including enhanced engagement of development and local actors.

**The Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas (RAHA) initiative**, which forms a cornerstone of the implementation of the SSAR in Pakistan, remains the principal responsibility-sharing platform for maintaining temporary protection space, promoting social cohesion and enhancing community acceptance of Afghans in Pakistan. As such, it will serve as the central delivery platform for the implementation of the resilience and solutions measures in Pakistan, linking with efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its principal commitment of "leaving no one behind," including refugees and their host communities.

Since 2009, **10.6 million** people (89% are Pakistani host communities) have benefitted from over 3,500 RAHA projects implemented in 47 districts across all four provinces and five FATA agencies. The overall investment made under RAHA exceeds USD **200 million**.

### 3.3.2 Access to Protection: Legal and Policy Framework

Pakistan is not a signatory of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and has not yet enacted a national refugee law. Despite the absence of a formal legal framework, over the years the Government adopted a number of policies aimed at managing the stay of Afghan refugees in the country; and has by and large adhered to the principles of international refugee protection.

The Government of Pakistan acknowledges that the status quo can no longer help address the protracted refugee situation, and that sustainable solutions can only be achieved through comprehensive strategic planning which empowers refugees and enhances resilience. Against this background, and following two rounds of broad-based consultations with major political parties in 2016, in February 2017 the Federal Cabinet of Pakistan adopted a new **Comprehensive Policy on Voluntary Repatriation and Management of Afghan**

**Nationals** (hereinafter “Policy”). The policy acknowledges the different status, profiles and vulnerabilities of Afghans on the territory of Pakistan and proposes differentiated solutions and management approaches for different groups, including: (i) voluntary repatriation of refugees in safety and dignity as the preferred solution; (ii) continued protection for those in need through the extension of the validity of PoR cards and enactment of the national refugee legislation; (iii) improved border management; (iv) establishment of a flexible visa regime for PoR card holders (including visa for skilled/unskilled workers, businessmen, students, etc.); and (v) registration and documentation of undocumented Afghans.

These measures represent a significant milestone with potentially transformative impact on refugee protection and migration management in the country which has been long confronted by challenges of unregulated mixed cross-border population movements. Creation of legal migration channels for skilled and unskilled Afghans will yield significant benefits both at an individual level (for many Afghans migration represents a key livelihoods and risk-mitigation strategy); and at the macro level (potentially easing pressure and constraints on Afghanistan’s strained labour market with 400,000 new entrants each year).

Between January-August 2018, the PCM Centres provided services to nearly **50,000** refugees. This included registration of almost **17,000** births and issuance of more than **12,500** birth certificates.

UNHCR will continue to support the Government in the implementation of the policy, particularly as relates to the promulgation of the national refugee law and introduction of a flexible visa regime for PoR card holders. The support of the international community in the implementation of the policy will be imperative both as a demonstration of greater responsibility-sharing and commitment to supporting lasting solutions.

Nearly **880,000** previously undocumented Afghan nationals were registered by the Government of Pakistan. Some **380,000** of them already received their Afghan Citizen Cards (ACCs)

Following a pilot exercise initiated in July 2017, August 2017 the Government of Pakistan began the country-wide **registration exercise to document undocumented Afghans** through 21 Centers operated by Commissionerates for Afghan Refugees (CARs) and the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA). Identity of applicants is being verified by the Government of Afghanistan through representatives of the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations (MoRR). The exercise was concluded in February 2018. The Government of Pakistan is in the process of distributing Afghan Citizen Cards (ACCs) to eligible applicants.

While the overall responsibility for the process rested with the Governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan, supported by IOM; UNHCR has been observing the process and provided assistance with advocacy, mass information campaigns, and exceptionally also with logistical arrangements. UNHCR ensured that individuals with protection needs were identified and relevant follow-up actions were taken. To complement these efforts, UNHCR will continue to advocate for identification of undocumented Afghans and support the Government of Pakistan in finding practical approaches to the management and regulation of mixed migratory movements, along the lines of UNHCR’s 10-Point Plan of Action on refugee protection and international migration<sup>20</sup> (i.e. data collection and analysis, establishment of profiling, referral systems and differentiated procedures for different groups on the move, addressing secondary movements, etc.).

<sup>20</sup> Please see: <http://www.unhcr.org/the-10-point-plan-in-action.html>

UNHCR will continue to carry out its **core mandate activities**, including facilitated voluntary repatriation, provision of legal assistance and enhanced registration of asylum-seekers. In 2016 the UNHCR operation in Pakistan undertook a paradigm shift which redirected focus from time and resource-intensive resettlement driven refugee status determination to strengthened urban outreach and community-based protection. At the same time, asylum-seekers who approach UNHCR are screened using a streamlined process.

UNHCR Pakistan endorsed the Community-Based Protection and Urban Outreach Strategy (2017-2019). The overall goal of the strategy is to empower Afghan refugees and strengthen their resilient capacity, enabling them to minimize the exposure to protection risks and improve the overall protection environment, with a special focus on the most vulnerable. The Community Protection Measures (CPM) aim to improve livelihood opportunities and peaceful co-existence amongst communities. UNHCR and partners have identified more than 1,000 refugee Outreach Volunteers (OVs) and developed standardized training modules for OVs on a broad range of protection related topics, including SGBV and child protection. In the first half of 2018 UNHCR, OVs and partners carried out 422 community visits/meetings and conducted a comprehensive service mapping as a basis for referral to services. 37 community-led initiatives have been completed to date, including construction of roads to refugee villages, establishment of community meeting spaces, adult and child learning opportunities, health and hygiene activities, support to vulnerable individuals and families.

To ensure civil and birth registration and documentation, UNHCR will continue to support four PoR Card Modification (PCM) Centres which facilitate modification/replacement of existing cards, registration of new born children and issuance of birth certificates. In an effort to reach refugees in remote areas, the use of Mobile Registration Vans (MRVs) is being expanded to provide services to PoCs in KP, Punjab, Balochistan and Sindh. In addition, as a member of the national civil registration and vital statistics working group, UNHCR will continue to advocate for universal birth registration.

UNHCR is in the process of expanding its legal assistance network of ten Advice & Legal Aid Centers (ALACs) that provide free legal assistance and ensure coordination with and training of law enforcement authorities including border officials and the judiciary. Expansion of collaboration with UNDP under the Rule of Law Project and development of a pro-bono network of 24 lawyers are parts of this initiative. Capacity building for Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) and judiciary (judges, prosecutors, border officials and police) will also be continued.

### 3.3.3 Access to Basic Services: Health Strategy

In 2014, UNHCR in Pakistan launched the implementation of a five-year health strategy designed to responsibly disengage from provision of blanket health assistance in refugee villages towards more cost-effective and sustainable targeted assistance for vulnerable refugees. Interventions aimed at building the capacity of refugees through tailored health training programmes enable refugees to cater for their own health needs by effective delivery of critical services through a community-based health care system. UNHCR is engaging refugee communities in management of health services by contributing to the costs of services and nominating young refugees to be trained as professional paramedics or community midwives. The BHU (basic health unit) model is gradually phased out with reduction of staff. Instead, lady health visitors (LHVs) and vaccinators or community health

workers provide essential mother and child healthcare (MCH), while patients with complicated diseases are referred to nearby public hospitals.

Within the framework of its health strategy, the operation will continue to focus on four overarching priorities: (1) enhanced collaboration with the Government and relevant UN agencies; (2) gradual and responsible disengagement from curative services in the basic health units model; (3) development of a pool of refugee health professionals; and (4) maintaining essential preventative health services through mother and child health care and immunization activities.

The strategy is fully aligned with Sustainable Development Goal # 3 (Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages) and the commitment of the Government of Pakistan to improve neonatal, maternal and child health care services at community level. Concurrently, through RAHA projects, UNHCR will continue to invest in upgrading perinatal and child care services in remote health facilities.

It is expected that by end of 2018, most refugee villages will be either served by a reliable Mother and Child Health (MCH) Center, or linked to the nearest department/health facility. Children under 5 years will be treated by health workers using integrated management of neonatal and childhood illnesses (IMNCI) protocols including routine immunization; complicated cases will be referred for specialized care through community based referral systems; and women will continue to receive reproductive health services for pregnancy and delivery care. Basic medicines will be available at the refugee village service delivery point through a local vendor or the community pharmacy.

Communities in many refugee villages in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are planning to start community pharmacies in 2017.

To diminish the need for UNHCR interventions and maximize efficiency and sustainability of investments already made, the future operational priorities will include: continued community mobilization, modelling and piloting of cost recovery mechanisms, development of self-reliant models in perinatal care, establishment of community managed pharmacies, and mainstreaming of vaccination services.

### 3.3.4 Livelihoods

The Population Profiling, Verification and Response (PPVR) survey conducted in 2011 revealed that around 83% of the Afghan workforce in Pakistan is involved in elementary occupations, sales, services and craft and related trades. The vast majority are either self-employed or daily wage labourers.

#### KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2014-18

- Referral mechanisms to nearest Government health facilities were established to ensure provision of curative and emergency obstetric care services;
- The tuberculosis control programme has been successfully transitioned to the Department of Health;
- Vaccines for routine immunization and polio campaigns (previously procured by UNHCR through UNICEF) are now being provided by the Department of Health;
- Afghan refugee students are being enrolled in a 2-year training for health technicians recognized by Governments of both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Over the past years, UNHCR and partners have been delivering livelihoods support to Afghan refugees and their host communities through market-led vocational skills trainings (including artisanal skills in producing 43 different types of crafts), and provision of income generating tools and business start-up equipment, and assisting with the establishment of market linkages.

To adopt a more comprehensive and strategic approach to livelihoods, UNHCR developed a Livelihoods Strategy and rolled it out in 2018. The strategy seeks to maximize the impact and effectiveness of UNHCR's interventions building on existing and new partnerships with a view to (i) enhancing the productive capacities and financial, human and social capital of refugees and their host communities; and (ii) supporting policies that foster an environment in which the most vulnerable members of communities can achieve greater self-reliance. In order to meet the overarching objective of the Strategy – to facilitate voluntary return and sustainable reintegration in Afghanistan - particular emphasis is on enabling Afghan refugees to acquire transferrable assets and skills, based on livelihood and employment opportunities in Afghanistan.

UNHCR Pakistan has been implementing the MADE51 Model to assist Afghan refugees in learning artisanal skills in 43 different types of crafts. Further to production of high quality crafts, the artisans have been assisted in creating linkages with national and international markets by developing an E-Commerce Website: [www.artisanshoponline.com](http://www.artisanshoponline.com)

The website is helping various groups of artisans in refugee and host communities, including marginalized women, to market their products and earn a decent income.

UNHCR and the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) are currently piloting the Poverty Graduation Program targeting 2,000 refugee and host community households in two districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.

The strategy has benefitted from a recent ILO-UNHCR market assessment and value chain analysis<sup>21</sup> and its key components include, inter alia, provision of targeted demand and market-driven skills training, community mobilization, targeted cash based interventions, placement in local job markets and facilitation of access to financial services. Emphasis will be placed on building the human and financial capital of vulnerable persons including women and female headed households. UNHCR will advocate and liaise with relevant provincial departments to include Afghan refugees in their programmes.

### 3.3.5 Youth Empowerment

With an annual population growth of 3.4 per cent, the Afghan refugee population in Pakistan has one of the highest population growth rates globally (a growth rate higher than that of Afghanistan and/or Pakistan). 74 per cent of registered Afghan refugees are second or third generation, born in Pakistan. More than half of the Afghan refugee population is under the age of 15 with children and youth constituting nearly 70 per cent of the Afghan refugee population in the country - figures that underline the vulnerability of the displaced communities and necessitate robust investment in resilience-building and empowerment with a view to enhancing prospects for solutions.

<sup>21</sup> UNHCR, ILO (2017): "A guide to market based livelihood interventions for refugees". Please see: <http://www.unhcr.org/594b7d7f7.pdf>

Only one third of Afghan refugees in Pakistan are reportedly able to read and write; with female literacy rate lower than 8 percent. Refugees cite poverty and cultural barriers to girls' education as the two main obstacles to school enrolment and education attainment. According to participatory assessments, parents generally consider that vocational skills training has more value for their children than formal education. 22.5% of Afghans are economically active with a predominantly (85.6%) male workforce. Most of the adult males work as daily wage labourers in the informal market and do not possess competitive skills to access better employment opportunities and improve their living standards. Children and youth, with little or no access to formal education, resort to garbage collection and/or daily wage labour in informal sectors of the economy to help sustain the family's limited income.

UNHCR established forty home-based girls schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to enable older out of school girls access quality education. Home-based girls' schools are located in accessible and safe locations within refugee communities in teachers' homes. These schools have given 1,145 girls (who had never been to school or were forced to drop out of school) a second chance to complete primary school and progress to formal secondary school.

According to the Mapping of Education Facilities and Access of Afghan Children to Education carried out in 2017, some 36% of Afghan children that attend schools are enrolled in Pakistani public schools

These statistics highlight the vulnerability of the displaced population prone to poverty, marginalization and exclusion; and calls for robust youth empowerment interventions through enhanced access to education, skills training and livelihoods support.

Against this background, UNHCR's Education Strategy in Pakistan prioritizes interventions that will seek to:

- **Enhance** access to, and quality of, primary education (for maximum transferability to secondary education), particularly for girls, through investment in national education facilities in urban and rural areas with high concentrations of Afghan refugees;
- **Equip** young people with transferrable skills through enhanced access to national (certified) vocational training facilities;
- **Empower** and mobilize youth communities to seek and implement solutions at community level.

Envisaged investment in national education and vocational training/skills development facilities will help to promote the inclusion and access of Afghan refugees into public/national systems and simultaneously benefit host communities. The RAHA initiative will serve as a platform for the implementation of these interventions. Through RAHA funding and programming, UNHCR and partners will seek to enhance the absorption capacity and quality of education provided in Pakistani public schools, so as to allow for inclusive enrolment and retention of Afghan refugee children. In addition to shifting away from unsustainable provision of education in schools in refugee villages by UNHCR towards long-term solutions based on cooperation with development actors, this approach will simultaneously yield benefits for the local Pakistani population.

UNHCR will continue working closely with the Government, UN system and other stakeholders to support the Government to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals

(SDGs), particularly **SDG 4** (ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning), as endorsed by the National Assembly. UNHCR is working closely with federal and provincial authorities, as well as the SDG 4 leads, UNESCO and UNICEF, to ensure that refugee children and youth are fully mainstreamed within all relevant initiatives, and that their needs are fully reflected in the new education sector plans and national development planning and processes at both federal and provincial levels.

Article 25-A of Pakistan's Constitution guarantees free and compulsory education as a constitutional right of all children aged between 5 to 16 years.

### 3.3.6 Durable Solutions

Within the framework of the SSAR, UNHCR will continue to facilitate voluntary return of refugees to Afghanistan. In addition to providing information on services and access to return areas and supporting the processing of returnees at the two Voluntary Repatriation Centres (VRCs) in Pakistan, UNHCR will provide a voluntary return and reintegration grant to returnees at the encashment centres in Afghanistan.

Pending return, UNHCR will strive to enhance its support to host communities and continue building the capacity of the Government to manage and assist the protracted refugee population. To pursue this objective, UNHCR will continue to seek close collaboration with key development actors to channel investment into national and local government structures and delivery systems. This will help ensure greater government national ownership, aid efficiency, and better management of current as well as potential future risks and crises.

The UNHCR operation in Pakistan has no quota for resettlement as it remains an option only for urgent and emergency cases.

### 3.3.7 Advocacy, Coordination and Partnership

To support the above measures, UNHCR will continue enhancing its cooperation and partnerships with a variety of stakeholders in Pakistan, with a view to pursuing joint advocacy and forging **stronger synergies between humanitarian and development interventions** towards solutions to the world's most protracted refugee crisis. This collaboration, firmly embedded in the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and its central commitment of "leaving no one behind," will contribute to efforts to move away from short-term "care and maintenance" practices towards long-term and sustainable strategies aimed at building the resilience and self-reliance of both Afghan refugees and their Pakistani host communities through investments in national/public systems.

The focus on strengthening operational and advocacy partnerships and synergies is imperative in a global environment where mobilization of resources and political support for Afghan refugees are increasingly challenged by competing humanitarian crises world-wide. To this end, UNHCR will support the Government of Pakistan in exploring the applicability of the New York Declaration and annexed Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and the Global Refugee Compact (GCR) for the Afghan situation; as these could provide enabling platforms for strengthening partnership-based responses.

Against this background, UNHCR will engage:

**A broader spectrum of Government authorities and institutions at both federal and provincial levels** with a view to further shaping the political willingness to assume a rights-based approach to protection, assistance and solutions:

- Full impact of UNHCR's investment into national public service delivery systems will be contingent upon strengthened relationships with key line ministries (education, health, etc.) at both provincial and federal levels.
- UNHCR's advocacy for greater and more coherent development investments will require forging synergies with existing poverty reduction programmes as well as Government and semi-government institutions engaged in resilience and skills building (i.e. BISP, TEVTA, etc.)

**Host communities and Afghan refugees** with a view to strengthening social cohesion and peaceful co-existence:

- The findings of the study on the socio-economic impact and contribution of Afghan refugees in Pakistan (initiated in 2017) will serve as an empirical basis for future awareness-raising, sensitization of public opinion and targeted policy advocacy.
- UNHCR's strategic reorientation towards community-based protection implies greater outreach to refugees (particularly those residing outside of refugee villages) and pro-active community empowerment and participation in the decision-making processes.

**Key traditional and non-traditional donors** will continue to be engaged robustly and pro-actively to support the implementation of the SSAR. UNHCR will continue supporting the Government's efforts to appeal for greater and more equitable responsibility-sharing by the international community within the framework of the SSAR Joint Resource Mobilization Strategy.

- The meetings of the Friends of the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (FOSSAR) will continue to serve as an important platform for information-sharing and consultations with the key donors at Islamabad level.

**Development actors, International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and other actors:** The success of UNHCR's efforts to move away from current "care and maintenance" towards long-term and sustainable strategies aimed at investing into public service delivery systems is directly linked to UNHCR's ability to develop solid and meaningful partnerships with key development actors and IFIs.

- UNHCR will continue to prioritize its engagement with the World Bank, initiated in early 2016, including by supporting the Government in accessing the new funding facility provided by the IDA 18 Refugee Sub-Window and other WB financial instruments. The program will seek to (i) support the implementation of the Government's policy (ii) channel development investments enhancing the access of refugees and their host communities to quality education, healthcare and livelihoods.

- UNHCR will seek to strengthen its partnership with USAID, DFID and other development agencies (particularly those involved in the education sector) with a view to exploring concrete opportunities for programmatic and operational synergies, information-sharing and joint advocacy.
- UNHCR will continue to expand its partnership with GIZ, notably in the areas of education, livelihoods, capacity-building and cross-border coordination.

#### United Nations

- UNHCR will continue building on the well-established collaboration within the UN Country Team (One UN Program), in particular with a view to operationalizing cooperation in support of the Government of Pakistan's efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals with focus on SDGs 3 & 4.
- The established advocacy cooperation with UNICEF and UNESCO on refugees' inclusion in the national education system will be expanded to operational synergies and joint resource mobilization.

**Civil Society, NGOs and INGOs** will be increasingly engaged in order to strengthen joint advocacy towards rights-based approaches to solutions for refugees.

- UNHCR will further build on the recently initiated advocacy and awareness raising initiatives with prominent academic and research institutions, including the National Defence University, the South Asian Strategic Stability Institute, the BUITEMS University.
- An eminent persons group has been established to promote engagement of key civil society actors and opinion leaders in the refugee and solutions discourse.
- The operation will continue pro-actively engaging the donor community, including through the well-established "Friends of SSAR" group or joint field trips and project inaugurations.
- UNHCR will support creative consultative approaches to engaging new civil society actors and think tanks, such as the national consultations process on Afghan refugees, spearheaded in 2016/17 by CODE.

**International and national media** will need to be engaged in a strategic manner to (i) provide an accurate and objective account of the Afghan refugee situation; (ii) bring attention of the international community to the protracted Afghan displacement in an environment of competing humanitarian emergencies and crises worldwide.

**Private sector engagement and public-private partnerships** will need to be pro-actively explored given their potential to contribute with funding, creativity, innovation and technical expertise. They are often also well positioned to drive policy change and influence public opinion.

## Acronyms

<b>ACC</b>	Afghan Citizen Card
<b>AGE</b>	Anti Government Element
<b>ALAC</b>	Advice and Legal Aid Centre
<b>ANPDF</b>	Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework
<b>ASA</b>	Alternative Stay Arrangement
<b>BAFIA</b>	Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants' Affairs
<b>CC</b>	Citizen's Charter
<b>CPM</b>	Community Protection Measures
<b>CRP</b>	Comprehensive Regularisation Plan
<b>CRRF</b>	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
<b>DIREC</b>	Displacement and Return Executive Committee
<b>EC</b>	Encashment Centre
<b>ECO</b>	Economic Cooperation Organisation
<b>EEE</b>	Employment, Employability and Entrepreneurship
<b>EXCOM</b>	Executive Committee
<b>GCM</b>	Global Compact for Migration
<b>GCR</b>	Global Compact on Refugees
<b>FOSSAR</b>	Friends of the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees
<b>HCI</b>	Humanitarian Country Team
<b>HRP</b>	Humanitarian Response Plan
<b>IDA</b>	International Development Association
<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Person
<b>IED</b>	Improvised Explosive Device
<b>IMNCI</b>	Integrated Management of Neonatal and Childhood Illnesses
<b>IOM</b>	International Organisation for Migration
<b>JRMS</b>	Joint Resource Mobilisation Strategy
<b>LEA</b>	Law Enforcement Agency
<b>LHV</b>	Lady Health Visitor
<b>LMO</b>	Literacy Movement Organisation
<b>MCH</b>	Mother and Child Health
<b>NPP</b>	National Priority Programme
<b>OIC</b>	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
<b>PCM</b>	POR Card Modification
<b>POR</b>	Proof of Registration
<b>PPVR</b>	Population Profiling, Verification and Response
<b>PSN</b>	Persons with Specific Needs
<b>RAHA</b>	Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas

## Acronyms *(continued)*

<b>RECCA</b>	Regional Economic Cooperation Conference in Afghanistan
<b>SAARC</b>	South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation
<b>SCO</b>	Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SSAR</b>	Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees
<b>SWO</b>	State Welfare Organisation
<b>TVTO</b>	Technical and Vocational Training Organisation
<b>UNAMA</b>	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
<b>UPHI</b>	Universal Public Health Insurance
<b>VRC</b>	Voluntary Repatriation Centre



*“When you have educated mothers, you will almost certainly have educated future generations”*

**AQILA ASIFI**

2015 Nansen Refugee Award winner,  
teacher, founder and headmistress  
of girls’ community school in Kot Chandana  
refugee village in Pakistan



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