



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Pakistan : Afghan Refugee Return

Monitoring Update (1st Mar - 30th Jun 2019)

Introduction



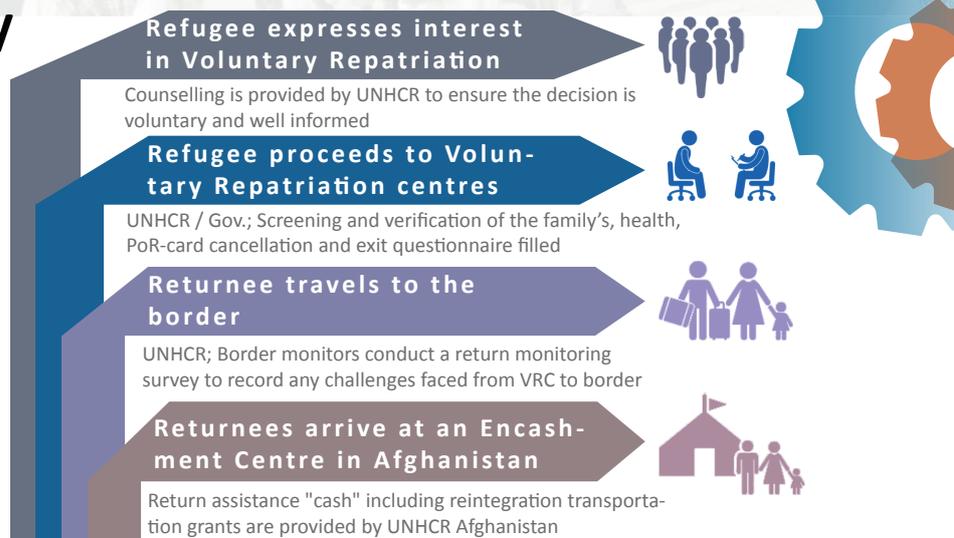
UNHCR Pakistan facilitates the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees as part of its mandate to provide durable solutions, and operates two Voluntary Repatriation Centres (VRC) in Quetta, Balochistan and Nowshera, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. At the VRC, families who wish to repatriate are counselled, to ensure the voluntary nature of the return, and scheduled for their return to Afghanistan. In addition, UNHCR also conducts an exit questionnaire to understand the profiles of individuals wishing to return, the push and pull factors, special needs, and In May 2018, UNHCR strengthened their monitoring of returns at the border. This includes a returnee interview, which allows UNHCR to gather information on any protection issues faced inbetween the time the families depart the VRC and arrive at the border. In addition to interviewing returnees, UNHCR staff systematically report on the protection situation and changes in procedures or practices of border authorities to better inform UNHCR's advocacy, planning, and protection interventions.

Purpose

- 1 To capture any protection issues and concerns faced by returnees between the Voluntary Repatriation Centre (VRC) and the Afghan border, including detention, delays, etc.
- 2 To monitor the quality of services provided at the Voluntary Repatriation Centre (VRC) to ensure that persons of concern are adequately prepared for their return.

Process and Methodology

- Monthly narrative reports are completed by UNHCR protection staff to analyse key security developments, changes in practices of the border authorities, and any protection concerns.
- Border monitors conduct return monitoring interviews with a random selection of returning families. Data from these interviews is recorded in KOBO (an online/mobile data collection) tool for analysis and reporting.



Border Situation and Observation



Key Political and security developments:

Torkham, KP; Between March and June 2019, there were few notable security developments. Several hundred of Khassadar and Levies personnel participated in rallies to protest over the police merger between officials in the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). While these protests created some delays and disruptions, a committee appointed by the Chief Minister assured the protestors that their demands would be addressed under the laws and constitution of the country, and all former FATA officials would receive proper training before being inducted into the KP police force.

Chaman, Balochistan; Two explosions took place near Chaman border in March and April resulting in stricter security procedures. However, UNHCR did not note any direct negative impact on refugees attempting to cross the border.



Practice of the Border Authorities:

Torkham, KP; The National Logistics Cell (NLC) has begun construction of a state of the art terminal at Torkham Border. The new terminal will include a customs station, baggage scanners, banks, a warehouse, and a weigh station. UNHCR's transit centre will be affected during construction, but UNHCR is working with the NLC and local officials to minimize any inconvenience for refugees. It is reported that the NLC is hole-punching valid documents (POR card, ACC, Tazkira, etc.) for all Afghans traveling to Afghanistan through the government immigration processes. UNHCR met with NLC staff who informed that they received orders from senior officials regarding the punching of documents. UNHCR has enhanced refugees' counseling (through different CBP mechanisms), reiterating that PoR cards are not travel documents and should not be used for that purpose.



Key Political and security developments:

Also in **Chaman, Balochistan**, the Inspector General Frontier Corps (IG-FC) visited the Pakistan-Afghanistan border to monitor the ongoing fencing project, adding that the project should be completed by the end of 2019. IG-FC visited local communities who shared their concerns that the border fencing will negatively impact their businesses, however IG-FC indicated that the regularization of the border will positively support their legal trade.



KPractice of the Border Authorities:

Chaman, Balochistan; The official border timings at Chaman have been changed following an agreement between Pakistan and Afghanistan officials. UNHCR has shared the updated information with POCs. It is believed that the revised schedule will provide UNHCR's assisted returnees with sufficient time during the day to travel from the VRC to the border to return to Afghanistan. It was noted that refugees are being well treated at both Torkham and Chaman border.



Protection and Other Concerns of Afghan Returnees:

At **Torkham, KP and Chaman, Balochistan** border points, movement on both sides of the border was significantly reduced due to the observation of the holy month of Ramadan. No UNHCR POCs were reported to be arrested or detained during the reporting period, however undocumented Afghans continue to face challenges when crossing the border illegally and without documents. At both Torkham and Chaman border points, anti-polio vaccination is carried out. The campaign applies to all travellers and is not limited to UNHCR POCs. UNHCR counsels returnees on the campaign and the importance of vaccinations. At Torkham border, UNHCR held a protection training (in May) for security and other partners' staff (including IOM and WHO) working at the transit centre. UNHCR's protection mandate, persons of concern, refugee status in Pakistan, refugee documentation and the responsibility of the government towards refugees was discussed. At Chaman, UNHCR's Field team met with the District Police Officer, Federal Investigation Agency, CAR and IOM to brief on UNHCR's mandate and areas of intervention.



Ongoing Actions:

Torkham, KP and Chaman, Balochistan

At both Torkham and Chaman borders, UNHCR border monitors and protection staff will continue to: ensure regular coordination with local authorities at the border for smooth, safe, and dignified passage of UNHCR assisted POCs returning through the border checkpoints; visit and coordinate with checkpoints on route to the border to ensure that UNHCR assisted POCs are not harassed or mistreated on their journey back to Afghanistan.

Return Monitoring Interview Statistics



596 HoH (2,280 Indvs.)
(100% of rep. families)

**Overall
Voluntary Repatriation**



499 HoH (2,165 Indvs.)
(84% of rep. families)

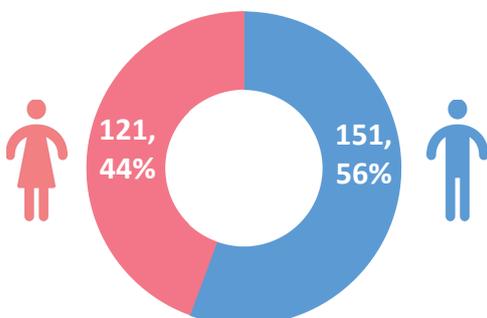
**Interviewed through
Exit Questionnaire**



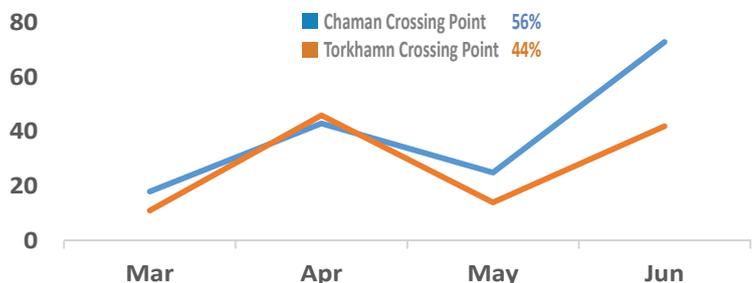
272 HoH (786 Indvs.)
(46% of rep. families)

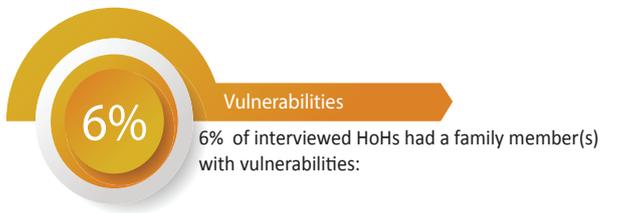
**Interviewed through
Return Monitoring**

Gender Breakdown (HoH)



Monthly Interview Trend (HoH)





	Older Person at Risk	38%
	Women at Risk	38%
	Disability	12%
	Child at Risk	6%
	Serious Medical Condition	6%



	Shelter	30%
	Non Food Items	19%
	Food Items	18%
	Health	12%
	Education	12%
	Legal	1%
	Other	8%



	Household Items / Personal Belongings	74%
	Medicine / Medical Item	22%
	Livestock (Animal)	4%



	Satisfied	99%
	Partially Satisfied	1%

Places of Return from Pakistan

