

# BORDER MONITORING UPDATE

## COVID-19 RESPONSE

10 - 16 May 2020



AHDAA staff (UNICEF partner) providing COVID -19 awareness raising for returnees at the Islam Qala reception center, Herat, Afghanistan  
11 May 2020  
CHA/ E. Karimi

### 318

AFGHAN REFUGEES  
RETURNED TO  
AFGHANISTAN

Since 01 January, UNHCR assisted the return of over **318** Afghan refugees from Iran (**268**), Pakistan (**16**) and other countries (**34**) under its facilitated voluntary repatriation programme. While UNHCR, as of 04 March 2020, temporarily suspended the voluntary return of Afghan refugees from Pakistan, Iran and other countries as a precautionary measure linked to COVID-19, upon request by the Government of Islamic Republic of Iran Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs (BAFIA), UNHCR Iran continued to issue VRFs to the most vulnerable refugees requesting voluntary repatriation to Afghanistan after that date. As of 30 April, voluntary repatriation from Iran has resumed, while it remains suspended for Pakistan and other countries.

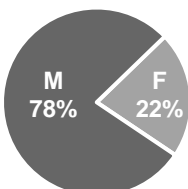
### 287,661

UNDOCUMENTED  
AFGHANS RETURNED  
FROM IRAN AND PAKISTAN

According to MoRR/IOM, during the week of 10 - 16 May, the total number of undocumented returnees from Iran was **7,923** and since 01 January, the total number of undocumented returnees is **287,661** individuals, including **285,828** from Iran and **1,833** from Pakistan. On 01 May 2020, the Government of Pakistan announced that Torkham and Spin Boldak crossing points will open five days a week (Monday – Friday) for commercial purposes. Pedestrian movement of stranded Afghans and Pakistanis is officially permitted once per week (Saturday), though in practice pedestrian traffic has been allowed more frequently. On 16 May, 13,550 stranded Afghans crossed through Torkham into Afghanistan, while 450 Pakistanis returned to Pakistan. Similarly, 16,710 Afghans returned home to Afghanistan via Spin Boldak, while 4,600 Pakistanis returned to Pakistan. The return figure was high compared to last week due to the approaching end of Ramadan and beginning of Eid holidays.

### 3,032

INTERVIEWS WITH  
RETURNEES FROM IRAN  
AND PAKISTAN



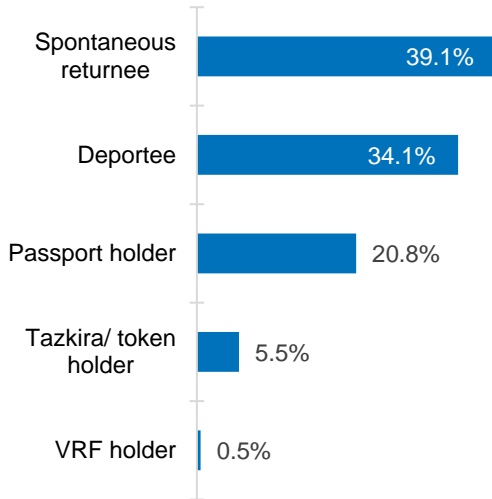
## BORDER MONITORING

In line with UNHCR's protection monitoring objectives, and in the context of increased incidence of COVID-19 across the territory of Afghanistan, UNHCR made the decision to expand its protection and return monitoring activities to the official entry points with Iran (Islam Qala and Zaranj/Milak crossing points) and with Pakistan (Spin Boldak and Torkham), when open for pedestrian movements. Through maintaining a consistent presence at these zero points, UNHCR aims to ensure efficient, timely and systematic gathering of protection information from Afghan returnees.

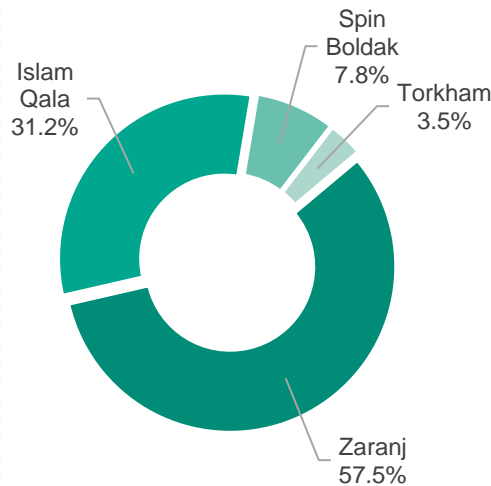
Between 10 - 16 May, **928 interviews, including 699 male and 229 female** respondents, were carried out with returnees from Iran (786) and Pakistan (142). Since the start of border monitoring on 05 April, a total of **3,032 returnees (2,376 M and 656 F)** were interviewed as they entered Afghanistan from Iran at Zaranj/Milak (1,744), Islam Qala (947), and from Pakistan at Spin Boldak (236) and Torkham (105), including 2,257 single individuals and 775 heads of households who returned with their families. The latter group from Pakistan are mainly passport holders.

Note: The female sample size is small as there is a high proportion of single males among the population returning from Iran.

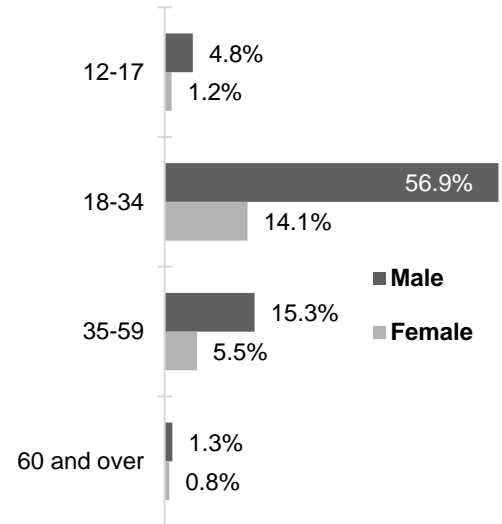
### Respondents' Return Status



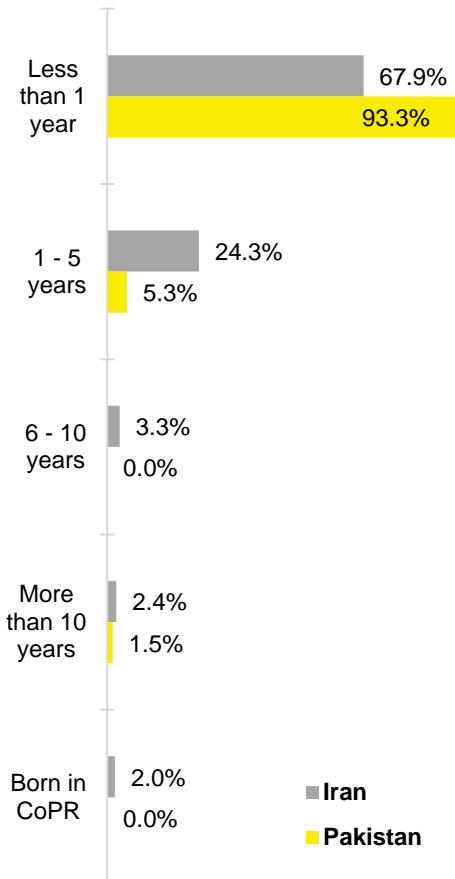
### Respondents (%) by Entry Point



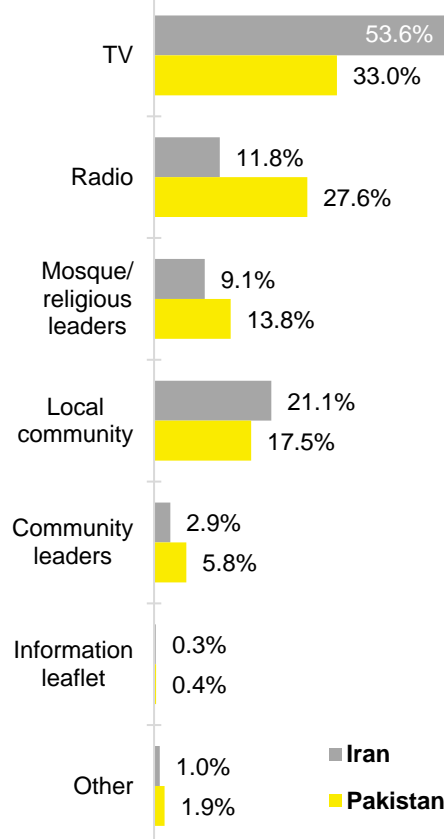
### Respondents' Age and Gender



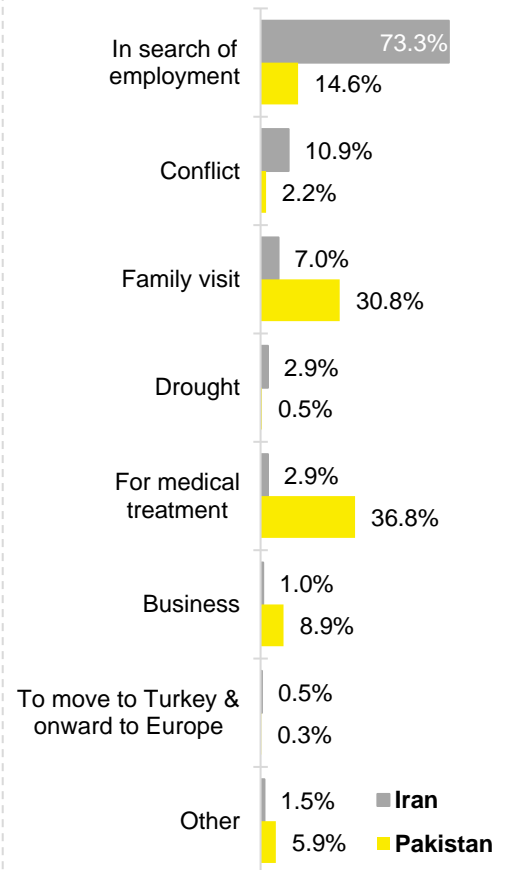
### Years Spent in the CoPR



### Sources of Information about COVID 19 in Iran & Pakistan



### Reason for entry to CoPR

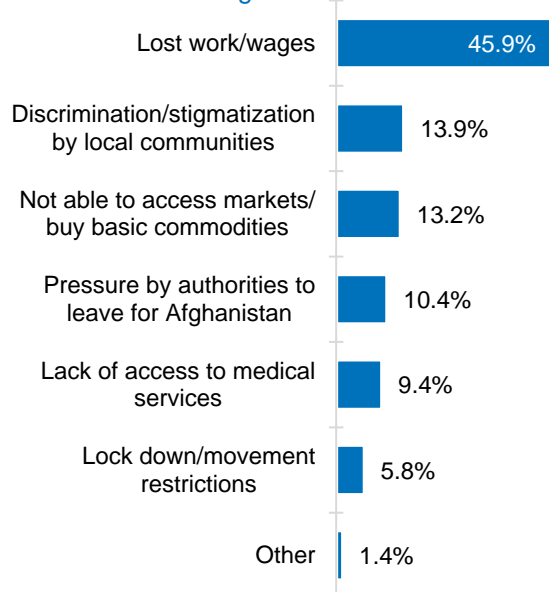


## Situation in Country of Prior Residence (CoPR) - Iran and Pakistan

### Interviewed Returnees from Iran (Islam Qala and Zaranj/Milak):

- 41% spontaneous returnees, 38% deportees, 20% passport holders and 1% VRF holders;
- Over 60% of the interviewed returnees stated that they returned from three provinces in Iran: Tehran, Sistan va Baluchestan, and Kerman; nearly 68% spent less than one year in Iran;
- 73% went to Iran in search of livelihoods opportunities, 11% due to conflict, 7% to visit family/relatives, 3% due to drought, and 6% other reasons;
- 45% (1,201 respondents) claimed that they faced problems during the COVID-19 outbreak, such as lost work/wages, discrimination/stigmatization by local communities, lack of access to markets, pressure by authorities to leave for Afghanistan, and lack of access to medical services;
- 85% stated that they had received information about COVID-19 in Iran, mainly through TV, radio and local communities;
- 28% (764 respondents, most of whom were spontaneous returnees) claimed that they had paid a municipality (return) tax (100,000 – 500,000 IRR/ approximately USD 7-35).
- Recently, Iranian health officials in Dogharoun have conducted a health screening process and provided returning refugees and passport holders with a health certificate issued after a temperature test and interview focused on possible COVID-19 symptoms. UNHCR's office in Dogharoun also confirmed this practice, which was initiated following a request by Afghanistan's MoPH.

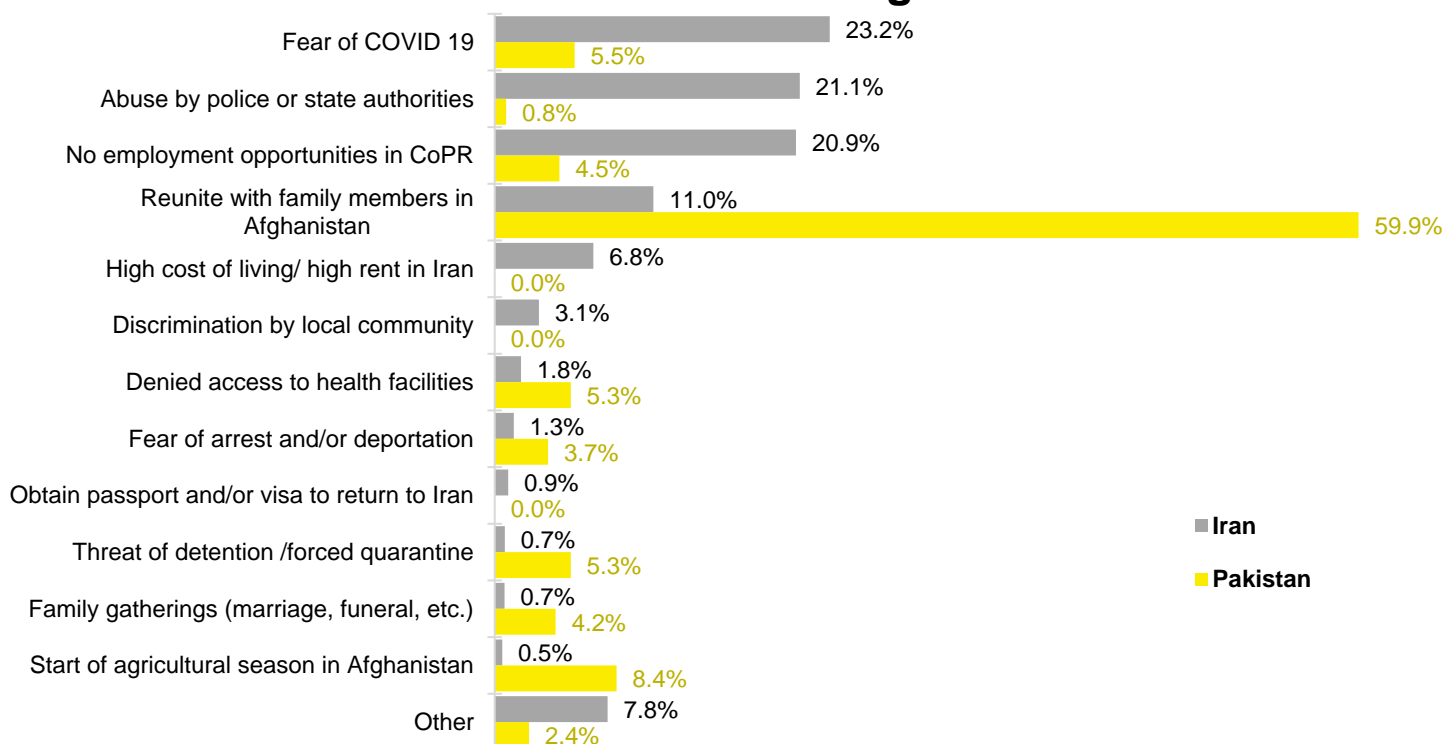
### Types of Problems faced by Afghans during COVID-19 in Iran



### Interviewed Returnees from Pakistan (Spin Boldak and Torkham):

- 49% were Tazkira/token holders<sup>1</sup>, 26% passport holders, and 25% spontaneous returnees;
- 53% of the interviewed returnees stated that they returned from Baluchistan, 23% from KPK, 14% from Sindh, 7% Punjab, and 2% from Islamabad; 93% spent less than a year in Pakistan;
- 43% (145 respondents) claimed that they faced problems during the COVID-19 outbreak, mainly lost work/wages, lack of access to markets, lack of access to medical services and movement restrictions due to lock down;
- 95% stated that they had received information about COVID-19 in Pakistan, mainly through TV, radio and local communities.

## Reasons for Return to Afghanistan



<sup>1</sup> This category are those Afghans who live along the border area in Afghanistan and normally move back and forth to Pakistan and Afghanistan on daily/weekly basis

## Information Dissemination in Afghanistan

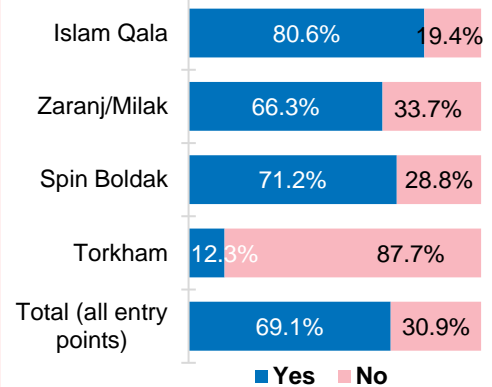


# 69%

OF INTERVIEWED RETURNEES STATED THAT THEY RECEIVED INFORMATION ABOUT COVID-19 UPON ARRIVAL IN AFGHANISTAN

**34%** of returnees interviewed at Zaranj/Milak border crossing point, **19%** at Islam Qala, **88%** at Torkham and **29%** at Spin Boldak stated that they had not received information about COVID-19 upon arrival in Afghanistan. UNHCR has followed up with partners at Zaranj/Milak and were able to identify a gap in awareness raising activities. Following advocacy, IOM and public health authorities are seeking to address this need and ensure that all returnees receive adequate COVID -19 messages upon arrival. UNHCR will continue to follow-up on information gaps with the partners in all four entry points.

Did you receive information upon arrival in Afghanistan?



## Areas of Return in Afghanistan (origin vs intended destination)

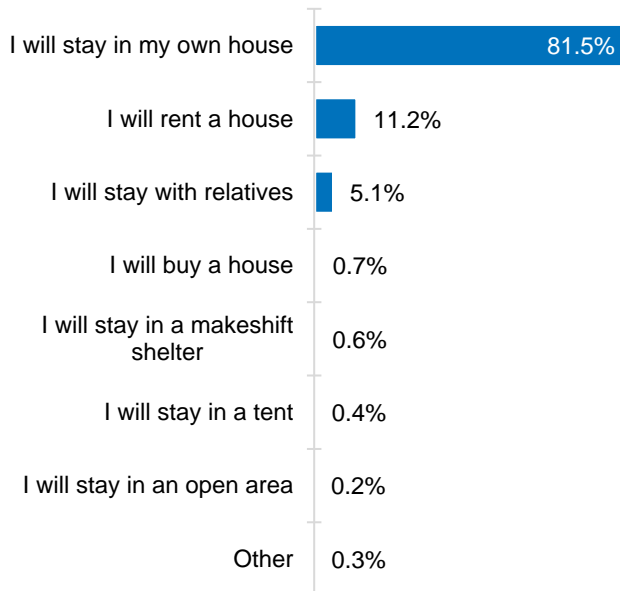


# 96%

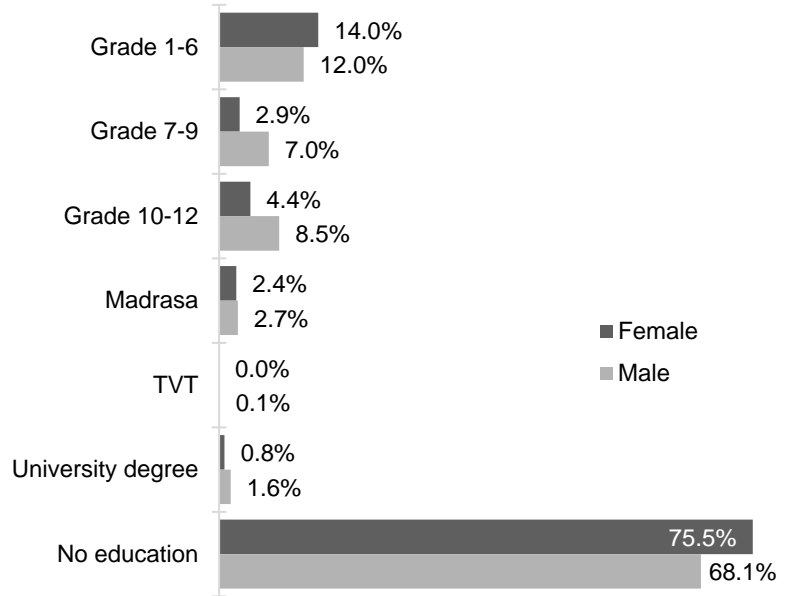
OF THE INTERVIEWED RETURNEES FROM IRAN AND PAKISTAN DECLARED DURING THE INTERVIEW THAT THEY ARE RETURNING TO THEIR AREAS OF ORIGIN

- **4%** Do not return to their areas of origin due to lack of livelihoods opportunities, reunification with family/relatives, lack of housing/shelter, and perceived insecurity.
- Interviewed returnees from Iran were travelling to 33 provinces across the country, with the majority (75%) intending to return to Herat, Kunduz, Nimroz, Farah, Faryab, Takhar, Ghor, Ghazni, Sar-e-pul, and Badghis provinces.
- Interviewed returnees from Pakistan were traveling to 25 provinces, with the majority (72%) intending to return to Kandahar, Nangarhar, Ghazni, Kabul and Paktika provinces.

### Living arrangements after return



### Education Level - Returnees from Iran & Pakistan



## CONTACT US

Angela Moore, Snr. Protection Officer | Tel.: +93 791990160 | Email: moorea@unhcr.org

Mohammad Haroon, Assistant Repatriation Officer | Tel.: +93 791990019 | Email: haroon@unhcr.org