



**Ministry of
Refugees and Repatriations**
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Afghanistan

Saudi Arabia funds multi-million dollar UNHCR programme to rebuild returnee communities in Afghanistan

KABUL, Afghanistan (26 October 2020) – The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) have launched a USD 10 million programme with the generous contribution of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, aiming at supporting the sustainable reintegration of returnees, internally displaced people and host communities through providing essential services to facilitate community development in Afghanistan.

Under this area-based programme, UNHCR together with MoRR and its partners will construct 37 schools, health clinics and infrastructure projects – including roads and water pipe networks – across Afghanistan in 2020. Recognizing the enormous humanitarian and development challenges facing Afghanistan today, the contribution of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will help facilitate the sustainable reintegration of returnees and displaced people in Afghanistan.

“The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is firmly committed to ensuring the voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration of all displaced Afghans. The Government’s decision to put an end to the protracted displacement of its citizens is steadfast, and we do our best to create conditions conducive internally to achieve this goal. It constitutes one of our highest national priorities”, said Noor Rahman Akhlaqi, Minister of Refugees and Repatriation.

The programme was launched on 1 June 2020, helping some 3 million people in Afghanistan. It is expected to be complete at the end of May 2021. Up to 14 projects funded by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia - including the construction of schools and health clinics in Bamyan, Kabul, Nangahar and Kandahar - are currently ongoing in various parts of the country with the potential to benefit 32,100 people in Afghanistan.

All projects are located in the priority areas of return and reintegration (PARRs). The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and UNHCR have identified 20 priority areas for return and reintegration where returnees and displaced people are living among local communities. These areas have been selected based on the high number of returnees, assessed needs, and suitability for coordinated efforts by a range of humanitarian and development actors.

Since 2002, more than 5.3 million Afghan refugees have been assisted to return home. Despite the prevailing situation including the impact of COVID-19, as of 25 October, some 1,400 Afghan refugees have voluntarily returned to Afghanistan under UNHCR’s voluntary repatriation programme in 2020. Some 2.6 million people have also been displaced in Afghanistan by conflict and natural disasters. UNHCR together with its partners are carrying out a range of activities in the PARRs to improve access to safe

shelters, provide skills training and entrepreneurial support, implement quick impact livelihood projects, and develop public infrastructure including schools, healthcare facilities, community centers and roads.

“We are grateful to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for this very generous donation for supporting the people of Afghanistan”, says Caroline Van Buren, UNHCR Representative in Afghanistan. “This donation is critical to UNHCR’s work with the Afghan Government to ensure that refugee returnees have access to the essential services and the facilities they need to rebuild their lives while also supporting the communities as a whole.”

The projects fall within the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) and its support platform, a regional initiative, which envisages a future, in which displaced Afghans are able to return to their homeland permanently and prosper. Today, there are some 4.6 million Afghans outside Afghanistan, of whom 2.7 million are registered refugees. Collectively, they represent one of the longest-displaced, longest-dispossessed populations worldwide.

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