

# IRAN

January-May 2022

In January, UNHCR launched the **2022 Afghanistan Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP)**; for Iran, the plan targets 2.2 million persons of concern, including Afghans of varying status and host communities. The 2022 RRP will support host governments in their efforts to promote resilience. It will aim to ensure that no one is left behind and that the needs of Afghans and their host communities can be met. The situation inside Afghanistan continues to remain fluid.

Meanwhile, Iranian borders remain officially closed for those trying to seek asylum, but Afghans continued making their way to Iran informally through unofficial border crossing points.

According to evolving estimates by the Government of Iran, some **500,000-1,000,000** Afghans arrived in Iran since January 2021.

**Sustained international humanitarian support** remains needed to help the Government of Iran in maintaining their inclusive refugee policies.

## POPULATION OF CONCERN

**800,000**

**Afghan** **780,000**

**Iraqi** **20,000**

Based on the data received from the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran in October 2020.

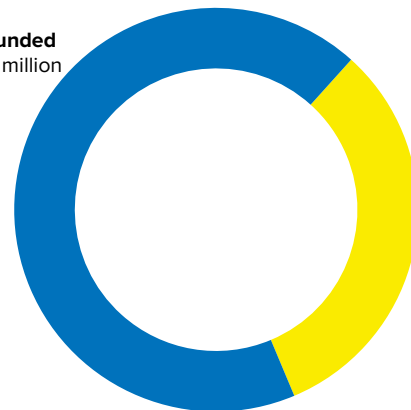
**38,175 Newly Arrived Afghans**

\*since January 2021 based on information from Afghans approaching UNHCR's receptions directly .

**USD 119.4 MILLION**

NEEDED FOR IRAN IN 2022

**68% Funded**  
USD 81 million



**32% Gap**  
USD 38.4 million

## Registration and documentation

The Government of Iran is responsible for the registration of asylum-seekers and refugee status determination, and annually renews refugee identification cards - *Amayesh* cards for Afghans and *Hoviat* cards for Iraqis. These cards give refugees conditional freedom of movement, access to basic services and eligibility for temporary work permits.

- According to data received from the Government in October 2020, some **800,000 refugee cardholders** reside in Iran, of which it is estimated that 780,000 are Afghans and 20,000 are Iraqis. In addition, some **586,000 Afghan passport-holders** with Iranian visas reside in the country, including former *Amayesh* cardholders, as well as some **2.1 million undocumented Afghans**.
- The Government of Iran in April 2022 initiated a **headcount exercise** for the undocumented and newly arrived Afghans in the country. The exercise, which is planned to conclude on 30 June 2022, will provide a snapshot of the undocumented Afghan population in Iran. It is expected that some level of protection would be extended to those who participate. While this is a positive step, the headcount exercise does not replace a functioning asylum system.
- According to various government estimates, **500,000-1,000,000** Afghans have **newly fled** to Iran since the deterioration of the situation in Afghanistan in 2021. As the situation in Afghanistan remains volatile, UNHCR foresees that Afghans will continue to flee to Iran in the coming months. Based on UNHCR estimates, **65%** of all new arrivals are returned by the government at the border areas. Smaller percentages

include people who will continue moving to Turkey and the EU and those who chose to come to Iran for economic or family reasons before returning to Afghanistan on their own. UNHCR estimates that by the end of 2022, **274,000** new arrivals will remain in Iran and will need protection and assistance.

## Durable solutions

- In February 2022, UNHCR issued a [Guidance Note on the International Protection Needs of People Fleeing Afghanistan](#), superseding the previously issued non-return advisory of August 2021. As such, UNHCR does not promote returns to Afghanistan and only facilitates **voluntary repatriation** of Afghan and Iraqi refugees who chose to return to their countries of origin. As of the end of May, UNHCR facilitated the repatriation of **124** Afghans and **1** Iraqi. **29%** of these returnees were Afghan students for which UNHCR facilitates the return from Iran to Afghanistan to obtain student visas to pursue their studies back in their country of asylum.
- While in 2021 UNHCR Iran received no quota for **resettlement** of Afghan refugees, in 2022 it is working with resettlement partners and the Government of Iran to resettle **3,000** refugees, given the increasing protection needs of refugees in Iran combined with the security situation in Afghanistan. As of the end of May 2022, **142** individuals were submitted to resettlement countries.

## Community-based protection

In Iran, community-based projects, awareness-raising sessions, focus group discussions and participatory data collection exercises are key activities that facilitate community engagement. Until the end of May 2022, UNHCR Iran reached **7,850** refugees through awareness-raising and information dissemination activities, virtually and in person.

## Legal support

UNHCR, jointly with the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants' Affairs (BAFIA), operates a legal services project to provide free legal assistance to refugees in Iran to resolve disagreements through alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. As of the end of May 2022, **16** Dispute Settlement Committees (DSCs) and **17** UNHCR Hired Lawyers (UHLs) are operational across the country. By end of May 2022, UHLs provided assistance to **1,596** individuals and DSCs provided assistance to **452** individuals.

## Education

Since May 2015, all children in Iran have had access to primary and secondary education, regardless of their documentation status. Refugee, undocumented and foreign national children study side by side with Iranian school children and follow the same national curriculum. According to the Ministry of Education (MoE), the number of Afghan and Iraqi children enrolled in primary and secondary schools in 2022 is **500,080** including **185,000** undocumented children. Moreover, UNHCR continues to support the Government of Iran in providing access to non-formal education (literacy classes), and to tertiary education through the DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) scholarship programme.

- **School construction:** In 2022, UNHCR is supporting the Government by co-funding the construction of **20** schools for refugee and host community children in refugee-hosting provinces.
- **Literacy Training:** In 2022, a total of **7,000** refugees will benefit from accelerated education programmes (AEP) through classes conducted by the Literacy Movement Organisation of Iran (LMO).
- In 2022, under the **DAFI Scholarship Programme**, some **510** refugee students will benefit from support with tuition fees and living allowances.

## Health

- **Primary healthcare:** Primary healthcare, which includes vaccinations, antenatal care, maternal and child health, essential medicines and family planning, is available for free for refugees and undocumented Afghans in health posts located in settlements and refugee-populated urban areas. In 2022, UNHCR is supporting (including through procuring medicine) **134** health posts. For **26** of these health posts, which are primarily in refugee-hosting areas, UNHCR is also covering personnel costs of essential health staff. Every month, some **14,788** refugees visit the health posts inside settlements and **17,607** refugees visit the health posts in urban areas.

- **Universal Public Health Insurance (UPHI):** Since 2015, as part of the agreement between UNHCR, BAFIA and the Iranian Health Insurance Organisation (IHIO), and in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, all registered refugees have had access to the national health insurance scheme, similar to Iranians, covering both hospitalization and para-clinical services at a subsidized rate. For the 8<sup>th</sup> cycle (25 Feb 2022 to 24 Feb 2023), UNHCR is covering **100%** of the insurance premium for up to **120,000** of the most vulnerable refugees, including those who suffer from special diseases<sup>1</sup> and their families. The remaining refugee population can enrol in the health insurance by paying the premium fee.
- **COVID-19:** UNHCR, in collaboration with the UN Country Team, has supported the Government's application for the supply of vaccines for **20%** of persons of concern through the **COVAX Humanitarian Buffer**. As of February 2022, **80%** of the total population of concern (refugees, undocumented, and new arrivals) have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

## Livelihoods

Enhancing refugees' livelihoods remains a priority for UNHCR, as it can prepare them to become more self-reliant and self-sufficient – enabling them to meet the basic needs of their families and become less dependent on humanitarian assistance.

- **Employment/income generation:** In 2022, UNHCR, in collaboration with the Government and non-governmental partners plans to implement a diverse portfolio of livelihoods interventions to enhance income and employment opportunities for refugees. These interventions include certified technical and vocational training in some **60** occupations which benefited a total of **1,488** refugees, as well as income generation projects which benefitted some **28** refugees as of the end of May 2022.
- UNHCR implements **cash-based interventions (CBIs)** directly and through partners to assist extremely vulnerable refugees in meeting their immediate protection and basic needs. CBIs are also used to facilitate access to higher education and healthcare, support shelter and livelihoods needs, persons with disabilities, and cover documentation and transportation needs prior to resettlement or repatriation. UNHCR has disbursed USD **876,550** to **13,644** individuals during the first five months of 2022. One-off multi-purpose cash assistance to the documented Afghan refugees (*Amayesh* cardholders) comprises **48.5%** of total cash assistance, while **32.4%** USD **284,829** has been allocated to **2,517** individuals with no legal documentation, either new arrivals or undocumented in situ refugees. Additionally, through partnership with the Iraqi Refugee Aid Council (IRAC) NGO, **120** Iraqi refugee households will receive cash assistance.

## Shelter and infrastructure



**96%** of refugees live in urban areas side by side with the local community.



**4%** of refugees live in **20** refugee settlements in **12** provinces of Iran.

To improve refugees' access to essential services (including shelter, water, domestic energy, sanitation and community halls), UNHCR supports critical infrastructure needs in the most refugee-populated urban areas and refugee settlements. UNHCR is building **516** shelters to provide a more dignified living environment for refugees in the settlements of Niatak and Torbat-E-Jam; **4** halls are also being built to improve reception conditions in the transit centre of Dogharoun and Mil78.

## Inter-Sector Coordination

In 2021, following the development of RRP for the Afghanistan emergency situation, UNHCR Iran successfully implemented measures to strengthen inter-sectoral coordination. The **Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG)** was launched under the framework of the RRP. Seven sectors were activated which included protection, food security, health and nutrition, education, logistics, shelter/NFI and WASH. In 2022, the ISCG also activated the livelihoods and resilience sector. In recognition of the inter-agency and sectoral coordination work undertaken under the RRP, BAFIA called for a first inter-agency meeting in Tehran in April 2022 with UNHCR and partners with the objective to identify priorities for coordination and humanitarian assistance provision to Niatak and Torbat-e-Jam settlements.

## Working with partners

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<sup>1</sup> Special Diseases include Haemophilia, Thalassaemia, Renal Failure, Kidney Transplant, and Multiple Sclerosis as defined by Iranian MoH.

The **Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants' Affairs (BAFIA)**, of the **Ministry of Interior**, is UNHCR Iran's main government counterpart.

- **Governmental:** Ministry of Education (MoE), Literacy Movement Organization (LMO), Ministry of Health and Medical Education (MoHME), Technical and Vocational Training Organization (TVTO), Iran Health Insurance Organization (IHIO).
- **National NGOs:** Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV), Rebirth Society, Society for Recovery Support (SRS), Pars Development Activists Institute (PDA), Iranian Life Quality Improvement Association (ILIA), KIYANA, Iraqi Refugee Aid Council (IRAC).
- **UN agencies and International Organizations:** UNHCR coordinates with UN partner agencies, NGOs and international organizations under the umbrella of the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR). The SSAR is a quadripartite multi-year regional strategy between UNHCR and the Governments of the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan.



The boundaries and names shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Source: UNHCR as of July 2022.

## UNHCR presence

243 National Staff

54 International Staff

### Offices:

1 Country Office in Tehran

1 Field Office in Tehran,

3 Sub-Offices in Mashhad, Kerman and Shiraz

2 Field Units in Esfahan and Dogharoun

## Financial information

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to the operation in Iran, as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programs with broadly earmarked and unearmarked funds. Earmarked contributions for the Iran operation amount to some USD **40.2 million**:

**Germany** 16.9 million | **EU** 7.4 million | **Italy** 5.6 million | **United Kingdom** 3.4 million | **Japan** 1.5 million | **France** 1.0 million | **Republic of Korea** 0.7 million | **UN Programme on HIV/AIDS** 0.06 million

Donors of unearmarked and softly earmarked contributions to the 2022 global programmes:

**France** | **Austria** | **USA** | **Australia** | **Switzerland** | **Netherlands** | **Germany** | **United Kingdom** | **Spain** | **Sweden** | **Norway** | **Denmark** | **Japan** | **Korea** | **Belgium** | **Ireland** | **Italy**

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## Links:

Data portal: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/irn>

Website: <https://www.unhcr.org/ir/>

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