

Afghanistan

July 2024

UNHCR has assisted **102,900** Afghan returnees from Pakistan, including **64,000** Proof of Registration (PoR) card holders since September 2023. Around **48%** of the assisted individuals are females, and **2.5%** of the total assisted beneficiaries have disabilities.

Between 15 September 2023 and 21 July 2024, **669,900** Afghans have returned to Afghanistan. At least one in four households assisted are headed by women, and **33%** of them intend to return to five provincial capitals (Kabul, Jalalabad, Kandahar, Lashkargah and Mazar-e-Sharif).

Returns to Afghanistan have been steadily increasing since March. In July, **5,917** returnees were assisted by UNHCR. This shows an increase compared to April (**2,872**) and a decrease compared to June (**5,964**) and May (**7,389**).

KEY INDICATORS

530,819

Individuals directly supported by UNHCR, receiving protection, cash, and in-kind assistance.

54%

of all individuals assisted in June are women and girls.

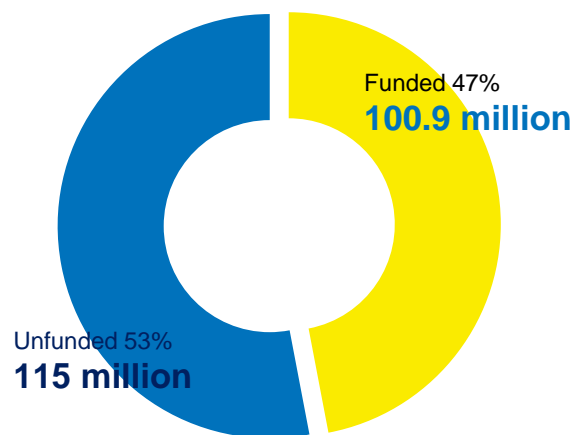
351,978

Individuals participated in assessments and monitoring exercises meant to understand gaps and inform targeted assistance.

FUNDING (AS OF 31 JULY 2024)

USD 215.9 million

requested for Afghanistan



Nazullah, a UNHCR greenhouse house beneficiary in Nawruzkhil village, Tagab district, Kapisa province. ©UNHCR/Mushtaq Munawarzada

Update On Achievements

Operational Context

Afghanistan has an estimated **3.22 million** internally displaced persons (IDPs), **1.56 million IDP returnees**, and hosts around **35,000 refugees**¹, requiring immediate protection and humanitarian assistance, as well as medium to long-term support. The household rapid assessments by UNHCR show that as of 30 July 2024, a total of **8,859 IDPs** have returned to their areas of origin.² UNHCR has assisted **40,822 refugee returnees** who returned in 2024. Additionally, in 2024, an estimated **23.7 million** people – more than half of Afghanistan’s population – are projected to require humanitarian assistance³.

Achievements



PROTECTION

UNHCR Voluntary Repatriation Update: UNHCR has assisted a total of 40,822 individuals (20,040 females and 20,782 males), including 5,917 (3,070 females and 2,847 males) in July alone, in refugee or refugee-like situations who returned to Afghanistan since 1 January 2024. Voluntary Repatriation Form (VRF) holders, Proof of Registration (PoR) card holders, UNHCR Slip holders, UNHCR Certificate holders, and undocumented family members make up the majority of the returns from Pakistan.

In 2024, some 4,000 individuals have been deported so far. The month with the highest level of deportations in 2024 was May (1,300), reaching higher levels than October 2023 (960); however, much lower than in November (24,500) and December (3,500), during the height of IFRP phase 1. Around 48% of the UNHCR assisted returnees and 29% of the heads of households are females.

A total of 1,837 (1,189 males and 648 females) interviews, including 410 in July, were conducted by UNHCR protection teams with newly arrived returnees in 2024 as part of return/protection monitoring activities. Based on the returnee monitoring findings, the primary reasons of return continue to be linked to protection concerns, including fear of arrest and/or deportation, alleged abuse by police or state authorities, concerns related to the PoR card validity and uncertainty related to its extension, concerns related to night raids, and strict border entry requirements, which limits the ability to commute to Afghanistan for temporary reasons. However, many returnees who arrived in

Situation Map



¹ Afghanistan Operational Data Portal

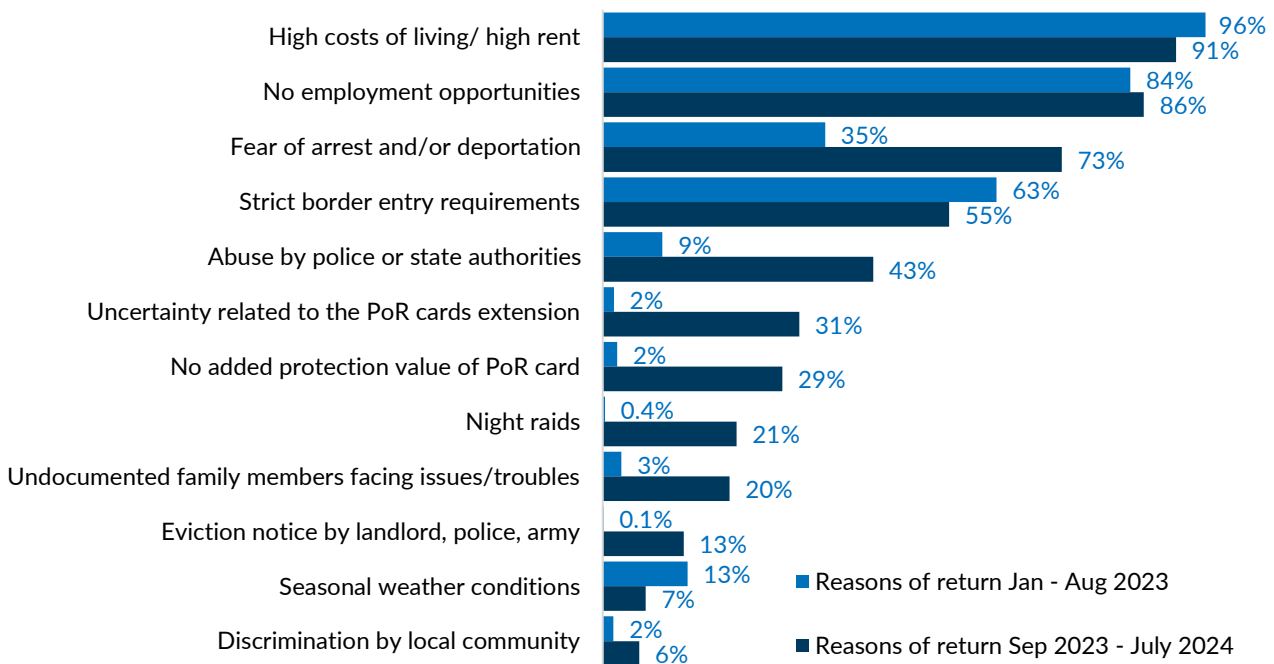
² These figures are expected to increase retroactively with ongoing assessments and considered indicative rather than overall statistical data of IDP returnees in Afghanistan.

³ Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan

June and July reported that recently the level of protection issues faced by Afghans, including refugees (i.e., police harassment, arrest, extortion, night raids, announcements through the mosques addressed to Afghans to leave Pakistan, and difficulties to extend lease agreements with landlords) have been reduced.

On 11 July and following the visit of the UNHCR High Commissioner to Pakistan, Filippo Grandi, the Government of Pakistan announced it had extended the validity of PoR cards for one year until 30 June 2025. This positive development could further impact the return to a declining curve because it provides safeguards to those who would otherwise fear arrest or harassment.

Reasons of return from Pakistan



Returnee Monitoring in Return Areas – Phone Survey

In July 2024, UNHCR started a phone-based returnee monitoring activity, targeting refugees who returned since 1 September 2023. This monitoring will enable UNHCR to re-connect with the refugee returnees following their returns in their areas of origin/current locations in Afghanistan. Returnee monitoring enables UNHCR to assess refugee returnees’ overall protection situation, and coping mechanisms, including needs and challenges they face, as well as their overall socio-economic situation such as, access to basic services, and livelihood condition, which are important factors for sustainable return and reintegration.

The first phase of the exercise, which is targeting 4,405 refugee returnee households, started on 15 July 2024 and will end in early September 2024. UNHCR protection staff collects the data through phone calls and records it in an online Kobo system. The tools, methodology and sampling design using an Age, Gender, and Diversity (AGD) approach.

Since the start of data collection on 15 July, a total of 1,179 interviews have been conducted, including 829 successful interviews, which account for the 19% of the target (4,405 household surveys). A total of 350 interviews were not completed as the respondents could not be located at the time of call, either because the contact number was off or incorrect.

The survey has so far covered a total of 28 provinces, including 694 interviews in 10 provinces which are among the top provinces of return, i.e., Nangarhar, Kunduz, Kabul, Logar, Laghman, Baghlan, Kandahar, Parwan, Kunar and Paktia.

The survey findings will be presented in September. The findings will focus on a range of indicators:

- Protection concerns, safety, mental health and psychosocial support situation and vulnerabilities.
- Food security and access to services, including health, education, water and sanitation, and civil documentation.
- Housing arrangement and access to shelter.
- Movement intentions, i.e., how many are living in the intended destinations they identified upon arrival in Afghanistan; how many left their first return destination; how many intend to leave for another province or intend to go back to Pakistan/Iran elsewhere and why.
- Impacts of UNHCR's repatriation cash grant returnees received after arrival.
- Economic situation, including employment status, income sources, average household income, and coping mechanisms.
- Priority needs.
- Access to information (indicators related to accountability to affected population).



Use of AI technology at the Kabul encashment centre for UNHCR beneficiaries, July 2024.
 © UNHCR/Faramarz Barzin

Border Monitoring - Refoulement/Deportations: A total of 669,900 Afghans returned from Pakistan since 15 September 2023, primarily through the Torkham and Spin Boldak border crossings. The majority arrived in November 2023, following Pakistan's announcement of the Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan (IFRP) in October 2023, setting a deadline of 1 November 2023 for undocumented foreigners to leave the country.

In July 2024, UNHCR conducted 14,420 household/individual level protection border monitoring interviews (inflow and outflow) with Afghans at eight official crossing points with Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. During the same period, a total of 101 interviews were

conducted at unofficial crossing points. Between 1 January to 31 July 2024, a total of 82,592 inflow and outflow monitoring interviews were conducted at eight official crossing points and 563 interviews at around 50 unofficial crossing points. During 2024, an estimated 484,600 Afghan passport holders departed for Iran via Islam Qala and Zaranj, including an estimated 94,500 individuals during July.

Between 1 January and 31 July 2024, an estimated 500,100 individuals travelled to Pakistan via Torkham (408,500) and Spin Boldak (91,600) and 538,000 returned via Torkham (413,300) and Spin Boldak (124,700) to Afghanistan. In the past years, the majority of the in/outflow movements were reported via Spin Boldak.

Angor Ada in Paktika province remains closed. As of 25 July, Dand-e-Patan in Paktia province, and Ghulam Khan in Khost province have been closed. The closure was affected following a conflict which escalated between Shia and Sunni Moslem communities in the Parachinar and Sada cities in Waziristan, Pakistan on 25 July 2024. The border authorities in Afghanistan at Dand-e-Patan reported the arrival of around 150 individuals (70 Afghans and 80 Pakistanis) into Afghanistan. The border officials noted that these individuals moved to Khost province to reach the Ghulam Khan border in order to cross into Pakistan. Consequently, on 30 July 2024, Pakistani authorities completely sealed the Dand-e-Patan and Ghulam Khan crossing points, prohibiting all movements, including commercial activities.

UNHCR continued to biometrically process and provide cash assistance, reaching a total of 5,508 families (including 591 families in July), composed of 23,140 persons (2,119 individuals in June), compelled to return from Pakistan in 2024. The categories include Proof of Registration (PoR) card holders and their nuclear family members, UNHCR slip holders, asylum-seeker certificate holders, and other protection referrals.⁴ Based on the protection/border monitoring information, UNHCR observed that the number of people compelled to return has been declining since April 2024, which could be due to the advocacy efforts carried out by UNHCR offices in Pakistan as well as Pakistan's decision not to implement the second phase of IFRP.

UNHCR's mixed-gender teams are stationed at the Spin Boldak and Torkham border crossing points, conducting protection interviews with the newly Afghan arrivals from Pakistan, including women returnees. Help desks are available to identify persons with sensitive protection backgrounds and to conduct referrals to available services, including to the UNHCR protection team for further assessment of protection concerns and needs. Shelter, livelihood, health, water, sanitation, and hygiene were identified as the most critical needs.

⁴ This only includes the number of returnees assisted through FARE.

Rapid Household Needs Assessments: A total of 54,418 individuals were assessed using the Rapid Household Assessment Form (RHAF) and Community-Based Protection Monitoring (CBPM) in July 2024.

For RHAF assessments, in July, UNHCR completed a total of 5,667 assessments, across 54 districts in 21 provinces of Afghanistan, reaching 41,537 individuals (with children making up over 63% of household members (26,212 individuals). Female-headed households accounted for around 21% of the assessments, which shows an increase compared to June (17%). Around 55% of these households (2,850) facing more than one vulnerability.

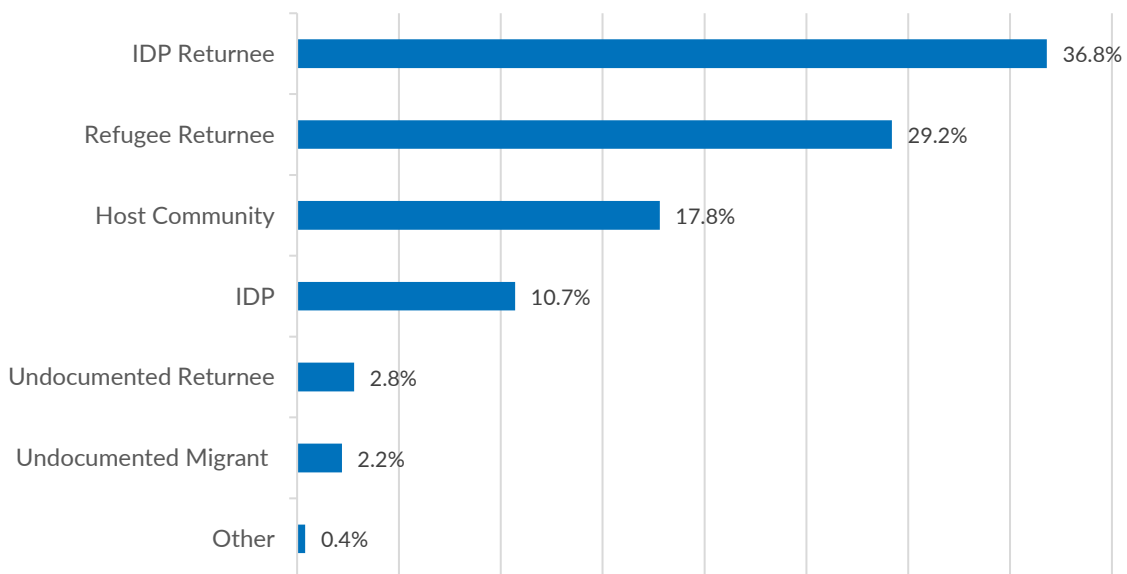
Overall, 39% of the respondents said that they have received assistance, while 61% mentioned that they have not yet received any assistance. Of those assisted, 50% mentioned that they have received cash assistance, followed by food (49.9%), non-food items (44.7%), shelter kit (1.4%) and hygiene kits (0.9%).

The RHAF assessments encompassed a diverse mix of participants from the host community, IDPs, IDP returnees, undocumented migrants, undocumented returnees, and refugee returnees, providing a broad sample for the survey. In July, 36.8% of the returnees assessed were IDP returnees followed by refugee returnees making up 29.2%, and host communities making up 17.8% of the respondents. In July, 36.8% of the returnees assessed were IDP returnees followed by refugee returnees making up 29.2%, and host communities making up 17.8% of the respondents.

Location of Assessments Conducted

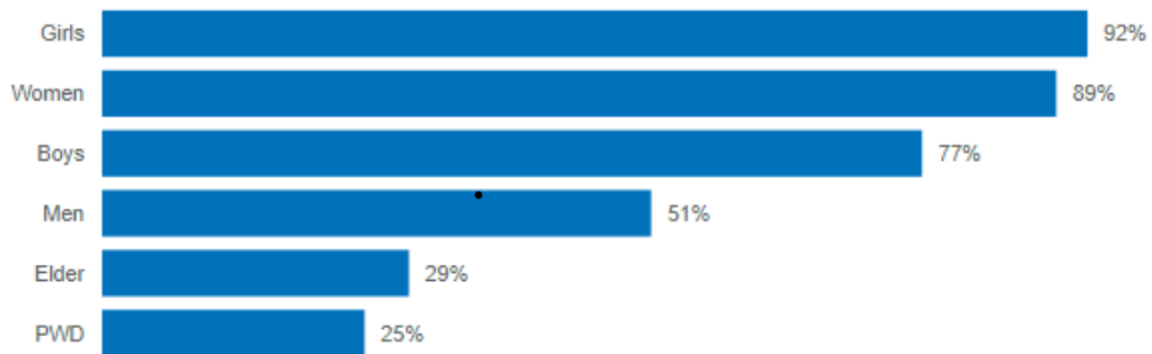


Household Status of the Respondents



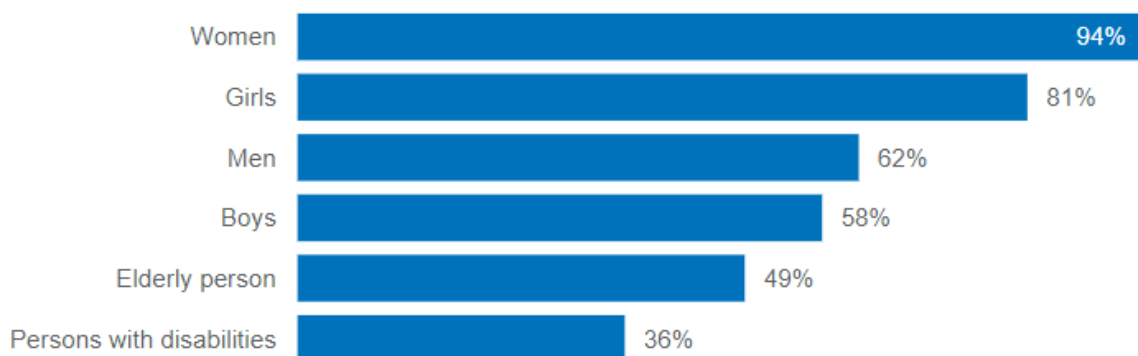
Community Based Protection Monitoring (CBPM): UNHCR used household surveys, key informant interviews and focus group discussions (FGD) to monitor protection risks and coping mechanisms through its CBPM tool in July 2024. A total of 687 male-headed households and 627 female-headed households were interviewed by UNHCR’s CBPM partners, as part of 1,314 household assessments, representing 9,387 individuals. Assessments were conducted in 75 districts of 27 provinces to collect household-level data.

Assessment outcomes found that 68% of the respondents (IDP returnees, host community members, IDPs, refugee returnees, and undocumented returnees) reported that one of their household members lacked civil documentation. The age group of heads of households assessed includes 35-59 years (63%), 18-34 (28%), 60+ (8%) and 14-17 (1%). Over 79% of the interviewees were from rural areas and 21% were from urban areas. Girls and women are the major groups not having legal documentation (please see below chart). UNHCR has embarked on legal assistance projects across the country to help address this problem.



Of the respondents, 70% mentioned that they or their family members were not able to receive MHPSS within the last three months with women/girls amongst the most affected groups.

Were you/your family member able to access MHPSS services in the last three months? If no, which group?



Moreover, 33% reported that they or their family members were not able to receive healthcare services in the last three months. Around 82% reported that they have not received food assistance in the last three months, and 55% do not have easy access to safe drinking water. Further, 42% of respondents mentioned that there are places that women and girls do not feel comfortable to visit, including education centers, marketplaces, water points and clinics due to discrimination, harassment and intimidation, lack of IDs, no mahram, safety concerns and socio-cultural barriers.

UNHCR also conducted 638 interviews with 241 male and 397 female key informants in 84 districts of 29 provinces. The findings of the key informant interviews with IDP returnees, host community

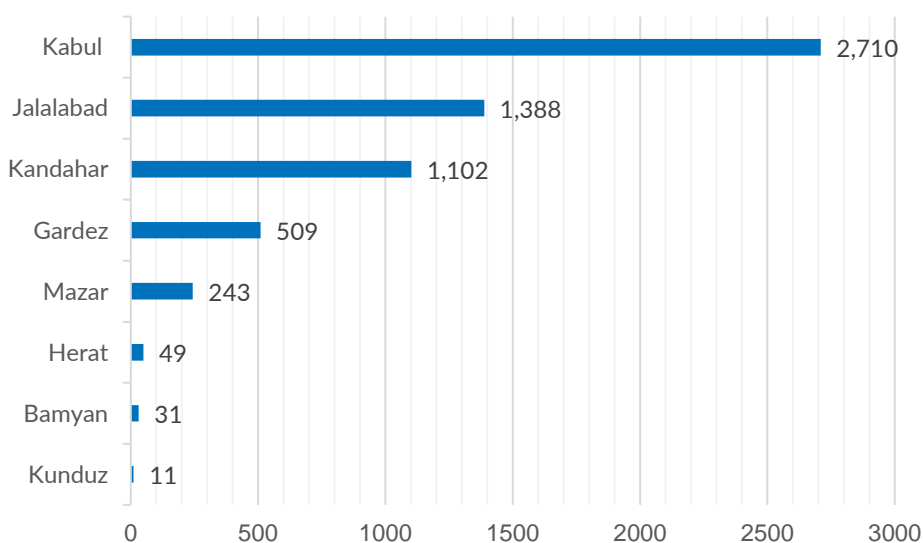
members, IDPs, returnees, refugee returnees and undocumented returnees reveal that 25% of the community members are unable to access services. The top five groups facing challenges to access services are female-headed households (67%), persons with physical disabilities (59%), older person-headed households (57%), child-headed households (47%) and persons with mental disabilities (46%).

The respondents mentioned that electricity, health, livelihood support, food assistance, water, and shelter are the main services they do not have access to. This is due to their inability to pay for services, lack of transportation or inability to pay for transportation, lack of information on services, no mahram, accessibility challenges for persons with disabilities, movement restrictions, discrimination, and interference.

A total of 645 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) conducted with women, men, girls and boys of different age groups and displacement statuses in 103 districts of 30 provinces. Around 70% of the respondents mentioned that there are no places for girls and boys working (under 18) to get support and assistance. Also, 30% said that there are recent arrivals in their communities.

Complaints and Feedback Mechanism (CFM): In July, UNHCR and partners received a total of 6,043 queries from refugees, IDPs, refugee and IDP returnees and host community members. This shows a 63% increase compared to the previous month (3,705) marked by the celebration of the Eid al-Adha. The use of the CFM by women and girls increased from 35% in June to 42% in July. With 2,710 queries, the Kabul UNHCR Office received the highest number of communications (45% of all communications), followed by the Jalalabad (1,388) and Kandahar (1,102) offices.

Number of Queries Received by Office



The continued top position of the Kabul mechanism can be explained by the centralized management of the mailbox in the capital, ensuring coherence and harmonization of the response. Representing 27% of all queries, hotlines were the favored channel of communication (1,641), followed by emails (26%) and community outreach volunteers (23%). The number of queries received via community outreach volunteers reached a peak, rising from a monthly 273 queries in January to 1,407 this month. CFM operators provided a response to all queries. For 2,188 cases requiring tailored follow-up, referrals were made to relevant UNHCR Offices and partners. As of 2024, a cumulative total of 38,481 queries have been recorded, 68% of which are already closed.

Persons with Specific Needs (PSN): During the reporting period, the PSN interventions, including assessments, case reviews, cash assistance, and referrals continued. A total of 1,393 new

assessments were conducted and 797 PSN cases were reviewed by the case approval committee, of which 406 were deemed eligible for cash assistance. Additionally, 317 cases were referred to the PSN network, of which 106 cases received both services (cash assistance and referrals). A total of 72 cases were assisted with cash for protection.

Community Engagement: As part of UNHCR's strategic objective to enhance its accountability to the affected people and strengthen its engagement and communication with communities, UNHCR has launched a country-wide pilot project establishing a network of community-outreach volunteers, nearly 50% of whom are female. Placing communities at the center of the response and empowering them to become agents of their own protection has significantly improved UNHCR's outreach to the most vulnerable population groups, establishing effective two-way communication and ensuring access to information and services for communities in remote areas.

As of July 2024, UNHCR's 145 community outreach volunteers and community outreach focal points have reached 77,670 community members through community dialogues, information desks and other outreach activities. A total of 70,509 individuals were informed about UNHCR's complaints and feedback mechanisms and 5,352 community members with protection risks were identified and referred for specialized services. To harmonize the approach across the country and ensure that the same messages are delivered to the community members, UNHCR developed a common set of messages on different subjects, including but not limited to general protection, women protection, child protection, fraud, SEA and free nature of humanitarian services and assistance.

Protection of Women: UNHCR and its implementing partners facilitated 245 dialogues with 1,225 female and male community leaders, aiming to engage them as active partners in preventing and responding to violence in their communities and facilitating referrals to services. A total of 1,852 women and girls received support through individual and group counselling to respond to the acute mental health needs of women and girls.

Over 5,170 women, girls, boys, and men were reached through information sharing activities, empowering the community with the necessary knowledge and skills about overcoming the negative impact of violence and harmful practices on individuals, families, and communities. Most importantly, these sessions aim to inform women and girls about available support, encouraging them to seek help and facilitating their safe access to multi-sectoral response services. A total of 22 women and girls were referred to different specialized services through interagency referral pathways. UNHCR's Women Community Centres provide a safe space for women and girls to engage in a variety of wellbeing and capacity-building activities, receive information on available services and topics of concern to the community and to seek support through direct interventions by UNHCR partners and referrals. A total of 770 women and girls have attended UNHCR's centres in July.

Child Protection: In July 2024, UNHCR and its implementing partners successfully conducted awareness-raising sessions on child protection topics, including self-protection from dangers and injuries, dealing with psychological distress, the importance of education and hygiene, and child participation. The sessions engaged a broad segment of community members, with significant participation from women, girls, and persons with disabilities. A total of 3,268 individuals attended awareness-raising activities in Kandahar, Herat and Bamyan. Additionally, 140 new cases of children facing unique child protection risks were identified and registered for case management services. Moreover, 2,151 children benefited from psychosocial support and recreational activities in Child-Friendly Spaces (CFSs) and during after-school programs.

In addition, UNHCR's implementing partners trained 100 community-based child protection network members on different child protection topics in Jalalabad. Besides, 100 schoolteachers were trained on MHPSS topics in the eastern region.

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services (MHPSS): In July 2024, a total of 23,890 community members, including 8,905 women, 10,591 men, 1,488 girls, and 2,906 boys attended several MHPSS activities, including:

Non-focused Specialized Services: A total of 2,654 individuals received one-on-one psychosocial counselling services. These services are based on scalable brief psychological interventions, endorsed in Afghanistan.

Community and Family Support:

- Group psychosocial interventions were provided to the affected populations through UNHCR implementing partners. A total of 5,601 individuals attended these activities.
- A total of 103 individuals received family-based interventions in the form of psychosocial sessions. These sessions aimed at providing emotional support, active listening, and linking individuals to available services.

Psychoeducation: Psychoeducation and service orientation sessions were provided to community members. A total of 15,532 individuals attended these sessions, which aimed to orient community members on mental health and psychosocial problems and available services.

Capacity Building: UNHCR conducted its regular supervision and coaching sessions with implementing partners in 19 provinces. These sessions are conducted in the local language, aiming to provide a layer of support with healing plans developed for community members and it is a reflection forum to the psychosocial counsellors.

Legal Assistance: Partners in Gardez, Herat and Kandahar continued to provide legal assistance to refugees, IDPs, refugee and IDP returnees and host community members. In July, some 209 legal awareness sessions were facilitated by partners, reaching 4,611 individuals, including 2,665 women, a total of 471 persons received legal counselling and 951 individuals accessed legal aid. The sessions addressed the importance of legal documentation to access a wide range of services and provided practical guidance on documentation procedures in Afghanistan. As a result of this legal assistance, a total of 309 documents were issued, including Tazkiras and birth certificates.



SHELTER AND CORE RELIEF ITEMS

The construction of 800 earthquake-resilient shelters through CBI modality is ongoing in Giyan and Paktika province with the overall total progress of 40%, and 158 earthquake resilient shelters are planned for implementation in Herat province. Earthquake resilient shelter provision in the Western region will target beneficiaries affected by the Herat earthquakes in October 2023, with the villages assessment and beneficiary selection process ongoing.

Of the 2,540 permanent shelters planned for 2024, 16 are completed under Sub-Office Kandahar. Moreover, a total of 661 shelters (200 in Kandahar, 96 in Balkh, 139 in Kunduz, 180 in Bamyán and 46 in Kabul) are in progress in various construction phases. The selection of beneficiaries has been completed for 1,736 households, based on shelter vulnerability criteria. Major repairs for 647 out of 747 shelters in Baghlan, Kunduz, and Herat provinces have been completed as of July 2024. This brings a total progress of major repairs to 87% by the end of July 2024.



UNHCR provided cash assistance to 14,045 individuals in July 2024 through various CBI programs, including FARE, VolRep, cash for permanent shelter, CARE (for refugee returnees) and PSN assistance. The assistance, which covered a wide range of services, has also supported families to reintegrate, address protection and other lifesaving concerns, and contributed to durable solutions. UNHCR continues to provide cash assistance to refugees and persons in refugee-like situations to assist families in meeting basic needs and contributing to sustainable reintegration processes.

Acknowledgments

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LINKS

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