

Afghanistan

September 2024

UNHCR has assisted **111,700** Afghan returnees from Pakistan, including **71,100** Proof of Registration (PoR) card holders since September 2023. Around **48%** of the assisted individuals are women, and **2.5%** of the total assisted beneficiaries have disabilities.

Between 15 September 2023 and 30 September 2024, over **733,300** Afghans have returned to Afghanistan. At least one in four households assisted are headed by women. Around **33%** of returnees intend to return to five provincial capitals (Kabul, Jalalabad, Kandahar, Lashkargah and Mazar-e-Sharif).

In 2024, returns reached their peak in May and June (**38,000** returns per month). Returns have since decreased with some **22,000 returning** in September. In September, over **630** Afghans were arrested or detained, a decrease since May (1,130). Some **6,094** Afghans have been arrested or detained in Pakistan this year.

KEY INDICATORS FOR 2024

780,327

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

54%

of all individuals assisted in September are women and girls

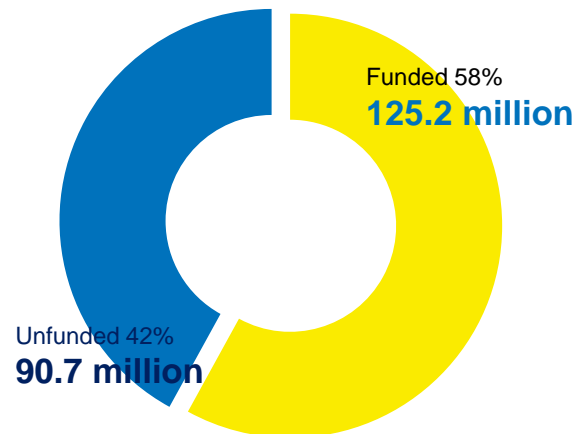
485,900

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

FUNDING (AS OF 30 SEPTEMBER 2024)

USD 215.9 million

requested for Afghanistan



Fazila, a refugee returnee from Pakistan, set up a poultry business with the support of UNHCR in Maidan Wardak province. ©UNHCR/Faramarz Barzin

Update on Achievements

Operational Context

Afghanistan has an estimated **3.22 million conflict-induced** internally displaced persons (IDPs), **1.57 million IDP returnees**, and hosts around **35,000 refugees**¹, requiring immediate protection and humanitarian assistance, as well as medium to long-term support.² UNHCR has assisted **48,338 people** in refugee or refugee-like situations who returned (from Pakistan, Iran and other countries) 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 48,338 individuals (23,883 females and 24,455 males), including 3,552 (1,799 females and 1,753 males) in September alone, in refugee or refugee-like situations who returned to Afghanistan since 1 January 2024. Those assisted include Voluntary Repatriation Form (VRF) holders, PoR card holders, UNHCR slip holders, UNHCR certificate holders, and undocumented family members, with the majority returning from Pakistan.

To date in 2024, over 5,400 individuals have been deported from Pakistan. The month with the highest level of deportations in 2024 was May (1,300), reaching higher levels than October 2023 (960). The months with the highest level of deportations since the start of Illegal Foreigners’ Repatriation Plan (IFRP) phase 1 were in November (24,500) and December 2023 (3,500).

UNHCR observed that the overall voluntary repatriation figures from Iran recorded so far this year (632 individuals) represents a 60% increase compared to the same period in 2023. The increase could be due to the increased anti-Afghan sentiment reported since July 2024, raising concerns with regards to the impact on Afghan nationals residing in the country.

A total of 2,547 (1,667 males and 880 females) interviews, including 357 in September, 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 the protection concerns, including claim to 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 Afghanistan since June 2024 reported a decrease in protection issues in Pakistan, including police harassment, arrests, extortion and night raids, except

¹ [Afghanistan Operational Data Portal](#)

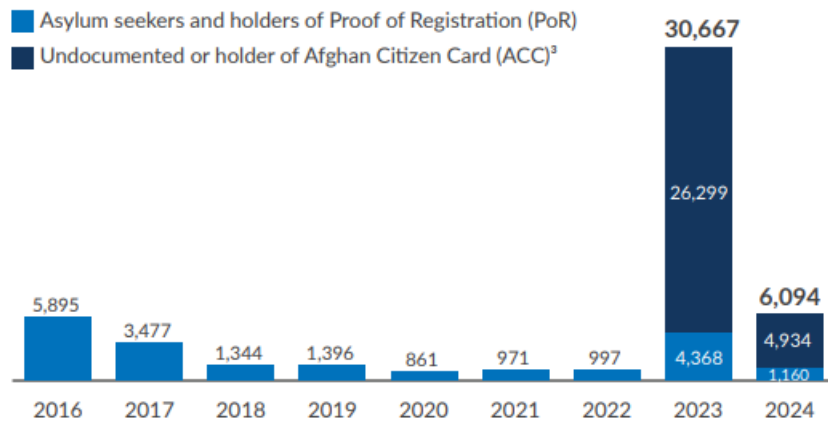
² *These figures are expected to increase retroactively with ongoing assessments and considered indicative rather than overall statistical data of IDP returnees in Afghanistan.*

³ [Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan](#)

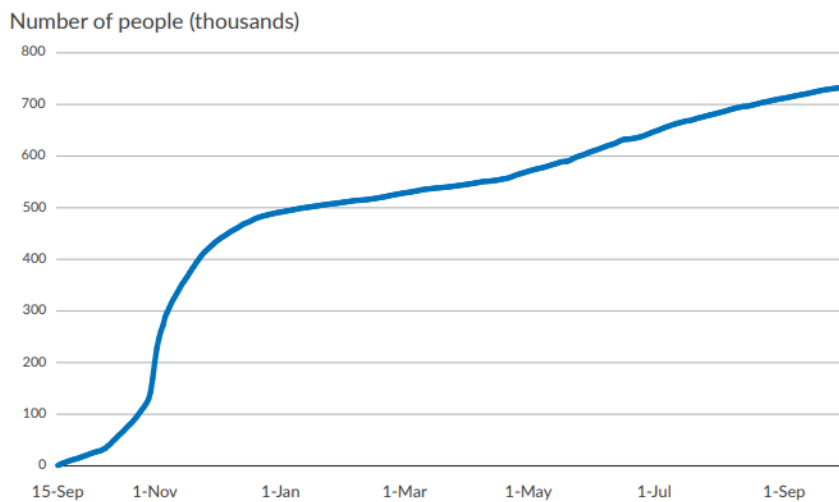
for sporadic incidents in limited locations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan and Islamabad.

In contrast, returning refugees who returned from Iran since July 2024 and have been interviewed in Herat and other encashment centres reported a growing hostility vis-à-vis Afghans, including refugees. Refugee returnees reported that they are facing difficulties in receiving their salaries and in accessing education.

Arrests and detentions (from 2016 to 21 September 2024)



Total Returns from Pakistan since September 2023



Returnee Monitoring in Return Areas – Phone Survey

In July 2024, UNHCR started a phone-based returnee monitoring exercise, targeting refugee returnees who returned to Afghanistan between 1 September to 31 December 2023. Between 15 July and 1 September 2024, UNHCR conducted 4,424 phone interviews with returnees (household level) randomly selected in 31 provinces across 181 districts of which 3,682 interviews were conducted in Nangarhar, Kabul, Kandahar, Kunduz, Helmand, Balkh and Laghman. This includes 1,754 interviews with refugee returnees who returned under UNHCR’s voluntary repatriation programme and 2,670 with refugees /persons in refugee-like situations who returned by other means.

The survey data gathered information about returnees' overall protection situation and coping mechanisms, including their needs and challenges they face, as well as their overall socio-economic situation. This includes access to basic services and livelihood conditions, which are important factors for sustainable return and reintegration. The survey findings will be available soon.

Border Monitoring: Over 733,300 Afghans have returned from Pakistan since 15 September 2023, primarily through the Torkham and Spin Boldak border crossing points. The majority arrived in November 2023, following Pakistan's announcement of the IFRP in October 2023, setting a deadline of 1 November 2023 for undocumented foreigners to leave the country.

In September 2024, UNHCR conducted 14,076 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 117 interviews were conducted at unofficial crossing points. Between 1 January to 30 September 2024, a total of 109,256 inflow and outflow monitoring interviews were conducted at eight official crossing points and 767 interviews at around 50 unofficial crossing points. During 2024, an estimated 716,000 Afghan passport holders departed for Iran via Islam Qala and Zaranj, including an estimated 93,200 individuals during September.

Between 1 January and 30 September 2024, an estimated 689,000 individuals travelled to Pakistan via Torkham (536,600) and Spin Boldak (152,400) and 720,000 returned via Torkham (531,400) and Spin Boldak (188,600) to Afghanistan. In recent years, the majority of the in/outflow movements were reported via Spin Boldak. Angor Ada crossing point in Paktika province remains closed. However, Dand-Aw-Patan crossing point in Paktia province, and Ghulam Khan crossing point in Khost province are only open for commercial movements (trucks transporting goods either way).

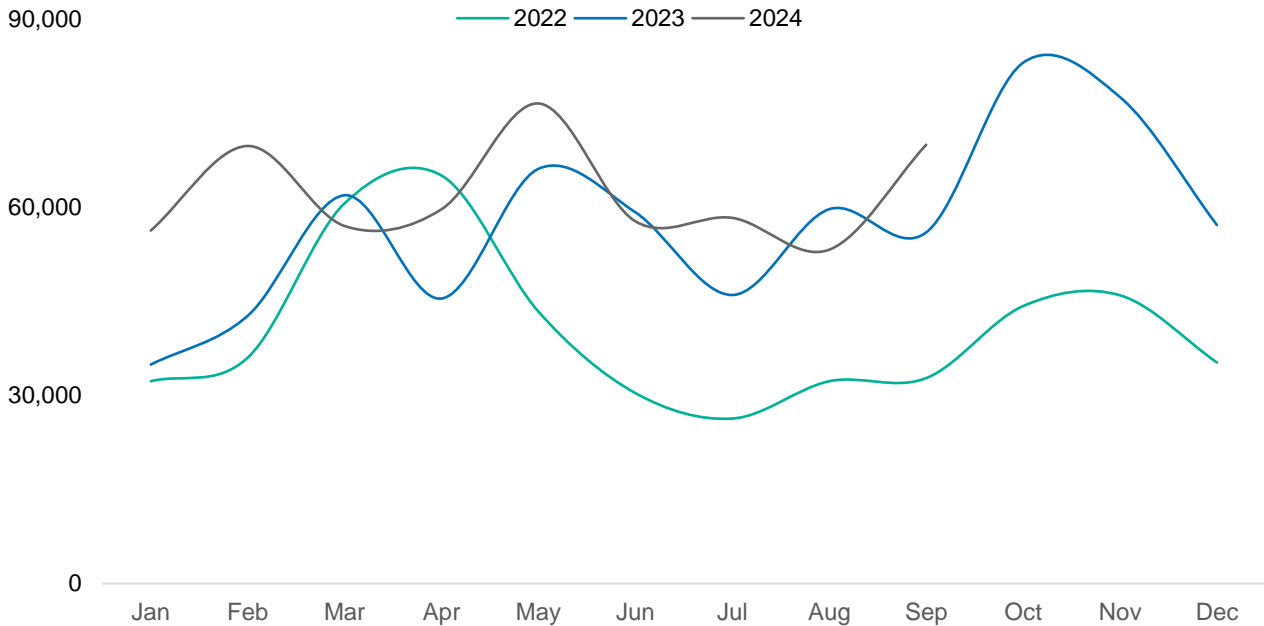
According to key informants, the erection of a border wall by the Government of Iran is ongoing in the bordering areas in Herat province. The wall aims at preventing the irregular movements of Afghan nationals, smuggling of goods, livestock, and drugs to/from Iran. Meanwhile, UNHCR's border monitoring partner reported that since the beginning of September, the deportation of Afghans from Iran continues beyond official hours (up to 9 pm).

UNHCR continued to biometrically process and provide cash assistance, reaching a total of 6,252 families (including 356 families in September), composed of 25,532 persons (1,147 individuals in September), compelled to return from Pakistan in 2024. The categories include 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 decreasing 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 arrived Afghans 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.

Deportation of undocumented Afghans from Iran (1 January 2022 to 30 September 2024)

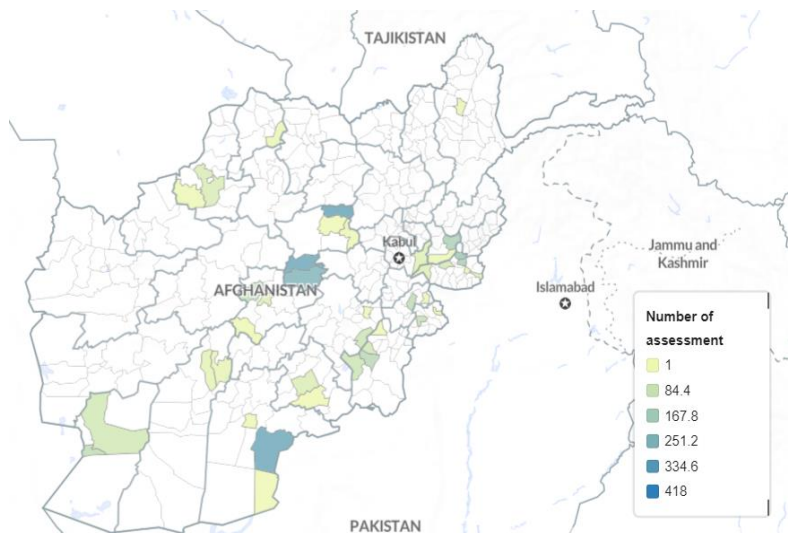
⁴ This only includes the number of returnees assisted through FARE.



Rapid Household Needs Assessments: A total of 50,141 individuals were assessed using the Rapid Household Assessment Form (RHAF) and Community-Based Protection Monitoring (CBPM) in September 2024.

For RHAF assessments, in September, UNHCR completed a total of 5,265 assessments, across 72 districts in 22 provinces of Afghanistan, reaching 39,483 individuals (with children making up over 60% of household members, equivalent to 23,842 individuals). Female-headed households accounted for around 26% of the assessments, which shows a slight increase compared to August (25%). Over 64% of these households (3,250) report facing more than one vulnerability.

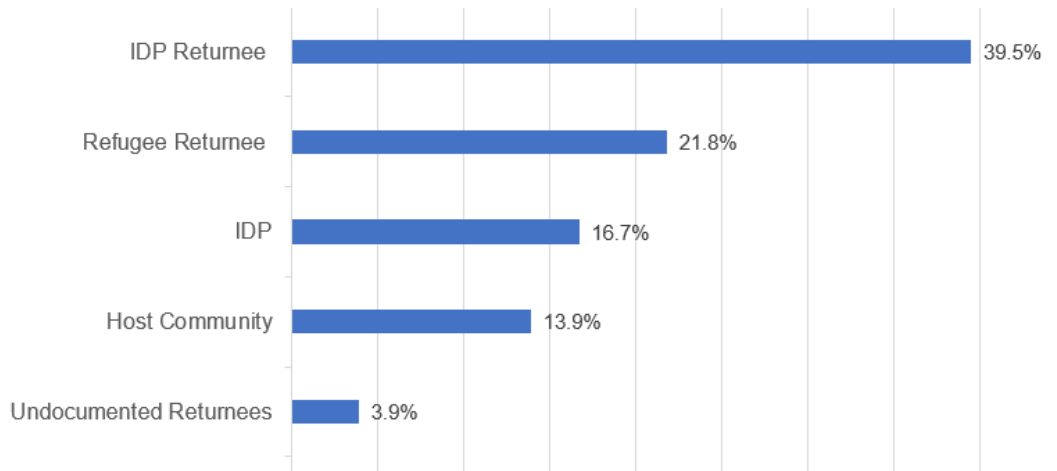
Location of Assessments Conducted



Overall, 30% of the respondents said that they have received assistance, while 70% mentioned that they have not yet received any assistance. Of those assisted, around 53% mentioned that they have received cash assistance, followed by food (47.4%), non-food items (40.5%), hygiene kits (2.1%) and shelter kits (1%).

The RHAF assessments encompassed a diverse mix of participants from the host community, IDPs, IDP returnees, migrants, undocumented returnees, and refugee returnees, providing a broad sample for the survey. In September, 39.5% of the returnees assessed were IDP returnees followed by refugee returnees making up 21.8%, and IDPs making up 16.7% of the respondents.

Household Status of the Respondents



Community Based Protection Monitoring (CBPM): As part of UNHCR’s community-based protection monitoring (CBPM), UNHCR used household surveys, key informant interviews and focus group discussions (FGD) to monitor protection risks and coping mechanisms of IDPs, returnees, host community members and refugees and asylum-seekers in September 2024. A total of 618 male-headed households and 406 female-headed households were interviewed by UNHCR’s CBPM partners, as part of **1,024 household assessments**, representing 7,163 individuals. Assessments were conducted in 76 districts of 27 provinces to **collect household-level data**, indicating the broad geographic reach of UNHCR’s CBPM activities. Some 80% of the interviewees were from rural areas and 20% were from urban areas.

The fact that 40% of the households assessed were headed by women (in addition to 44% female key informants – see below) underlines UNHCR’s ability to reach women and girls as well as the operational commitment to ensure women’s voices are meaningfully reflected in assessments despite the restrictions in place. The age group of heads of households assessed includes 35-59 years (62%), 18-34 (28%), 60 and above (10%), and 14-17 (1%), underlining UNHCR’s commitment to ensuring an age, gender, and diversity (AGD) approach throughout its activities.

The lack of civil documentation continues to be a major issue for all population groups assessed. High fees, the lack of prerequisite documents, the inability to travel to places of origin as well as the lack of knowledge about procedures were among the key challenges mentioned that hamper community members’ access to documentation. Girls and women continue to be the group most affected by the lack of legal documentation. UNHCR continues to undertake legal assistance projects across the country to help address this problem.

The household members continue to report high levels of stress affecting their day-to-day life, the main reasons being lack of employment and severe economic hardship, food insecurity, lack of basic services, physical health problems as well as children being out of school and engaged in labour. Furthermore, 38% of heads of households have noticed negative changes in the last three months, such as stress, lack of appetite, aggressive behaviour and self-harm. Despite the high needs, 57% of households 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.

Moreover, 43% reported that they or their family members were not able to receive healthcare services in the last three months. Around 88% reported that they have not received food assistance in the last three months, and 52% do not have easy access to safe drinking water. Further, 49% of respondents mentioned that there are places that women and girls do not feel comfortable to visit,

including education centres, 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 425 interviews with 240 male and 185 female **key informants** in 76 districts of 28 provinces. The findings of the key informant interviews with IDP returnees, host community members, IDPs, refugee returnees, refugees and asylum seekers and undocumented returnees indicate that nearly half of the community members are unable to access services. The top five groups facing challenges to access services are female-headed households, older person-headed households, child-headed households, persons with physical disabilities, and persons with mental disabilities.

The respondents mentioned that electricity, health, livelihood support, food assistance, mental health and psychosocial support, 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 **614 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)** conducted with women, men, girls and boys of different age groups and displacement statuses in 83 districts of 29 provinces. The qualitative information collected through these FGDs complements the qualitative household-level data, and indicates continued exposure to child protection risks, with reports of boys and girls engaged in different forms of dangerous work. At the same time, the community identified key gaps to include safe spaces and support mechanisms for children. The FGDs also highlight the variety of harmful coping mechanisms community members are required to adopt to cope with the difficult socioeconomic situation.

Complaints and Feedback Mechanism (CFM): In September 2024, a total of 5,368 questions, feedback, suggestions, and complaints were received by UNHCR and partners via the CFM, highlighting a decrease from the previous month. The use of the CFM by women and girls remained stable with 40% of queries originating from women and girls, as reported in August. Host community members remained the category who most frequently used the CFM (32% of all queries), followed by refugee returnees (30%) and IDPs (17%).

Accounting for 36% of all queries, emails were the preferred channel of communication (1,934), followed by hotlines (34%) and community outreach volunteers (COVs) and focal points (20%). This is consistent with the previous report, when hotlines, emails and COVs were also the top channels.

CFM operators provided a response to all queries. For 2,054 cases requiring tailored follow-up, referrals were made to relevant UNHCR Offices and partners. Around 34% of the queries recorded in September are already closed. Looking back at all the queries received since the beginning of the year, 65% have been 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 2,189 new assessments (1,288 females and 901 males) were conducted and 1,664 PSN cases were reviewed by the case approval committee, of which 676 were deemed eligible for cash assistance. Additionally, 450 cases were referred to the PSN network, of which 182 cases were deemed eligible for both services (cash assistance and referrals). As part of its PSN case management, UNHCR provided PSN cash assistance to a total of 229 individuals, including 158 females and 71 males.

UNHCR developed an additional follow up monitoring form that enables UNHCR and its partner to conduct follow up monitoring for the cases referred to other services. An orientation session was also conducted with UNHCR and partner staff on 8 September and the form was rolled out on mid-September.

Community Engagement: As part of UNHCR's strategic objective to enhance its accountability to the affected people and strengthen its engagement and communication with the 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 centre 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 31 September 2024, UNHCR's 145 community outreach volunteers and community outreach focal points have reached 109,283 community members through community dialogues, information desks and other outreach activities. A total of 90,492 individuals were informed about UNHCR's complaints and feedback mechanisms and 8,040 community members with protection risks were identified and referred for specialized services.

Protection of Women: UNHCR and its implementing partners facilitated 116 dialogues with 551 community leaders (260 female and 291 male), aiming to engage them as active partners in preventing and responding to violence in their communities and facilitating referrals to services. A total of 494 women and girls received support through counselling sessions to respond to the acute mental health needs of women and girls.

Over 4,349 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 28 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. Over 468 women and girls have attended different activities at UNHCR's centres in September 2024.

Child Protection: In September 2024, UNHCR and its implementing partners successfully conducted awareness-raising sessions on child protection, focusing on topics, such as the importance of education, hygiene, and the risks and adverse consequences of child labour. These sessions educated parents, children, and communities about child labour's legal and social implications while offering alternative resources. The initiative engaged a wide range of community members, with significant participation from women, girls, and persons with disabilities.

A total of 1,969 individuals (757 males and 1,212 females) attended the awareness-raising activities in Kandahar, Herat, Bamyan, and Jalalabad. Additionally, 381 new cases of children facing specific child protection risks were identified and registered for case management services (243 boys and 138 girls). Furthermore, 1,235 children (495 boys and 740 girls) benefited from mental health and psychosocial support and recreational activities provided in 12 Child-Friendly Spaces and after-school programmes.

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services (MHPSS): In September 2024, a total of 13,015 community members, including 5,046 women, 6,297 men, 636 girls, and 1,036 boys attended several MHPSS activities, including:

Non-focused Specialized Services: A total of 2,691 individuals (1,099 women, 81 girls, 1,331 men, 180 boys) 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 5,999 individuals (2,250 women, 341 girls, 2,870 men, 538 boys) attended these activities.
- A total of 64 individuals (44 women, 20 men) 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 4,261 individuals (1,653 women, 214 girls, 2,076 men, 318 boys) attended these sessions, aimed to orient community members on mental health and psychosocial problems and available services.

Capacity Building: UNHCR Sub-Office Jalalabad delivered a training session to Health-Net TPO, a UNHCR partner, in the eastern region on introduction to problem solving. A total of 30 staff, including 15 women and 15 men participated in this session.

Legal Assistance: UNHCR partners in Gardez, Herat, Jalalabad, Kunduz, Kabul, and Kandahar continued to provide legal assistance to refugees, IDPs, refugee and IDP returnees and host community members. In September, some 227 legal awareness sessions were facilitated by partners, reaching 3,750 individuals, including 1,069 women. A total of 914 persons received legal counselling and 4,856 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 1,435 documents (including 685 to females) were issued, including Tazkiras and birth certificates, showing an increase from August's 570 civil documents.

**SHELTER AND CORE RELIEF ITEMS**

The construction of 800 permanent natural disaster resilient shelters through CBI modality is ongoing in Giyan, Paktika province, with a 78% progress rate by the end of September 2024. The construction of 78 out of 158 permanent earthquake resilient shelters in Herat province are ongoing, and a total of 96 households have been selected in Herat province so far, targeting families affected by the October 2023 earthquakes in Herat province. The beneficiary selection process for the remaining 62 households is ongoing. UNHCR continues to build permanent shelters (a total of 2,433 was planned for 2024) and expects to complete the implementation before the year ends.

Major repairs for 647 out of 747 shelters in Baghlan, Kunduz, and Herat provinces have been completed and the remaining 100 shelters in Kabul will be completed in 2025. UNHCR has already identified the beneficiaries for these shelter repairs. This brings the total progress of major repairs to 100% for 2024. By the end of September 2024, UNHCR distributed 840 emergency shelters (tents) to the flood-affected households in Kunduz, Baghlan, and Herat provinces.

**CBI**

UNHCR provided cash assistance to 14,458 individuals (7,807 females and 6,651 males) in September through various CBI programmes, including FARE, VolRep, cash for livelihoods (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises & job placement), CARE (for refugee returnees), PSN and cash for work. 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

Data portal – X (Twitter) - Facebook