

BORDER MONITORING UPDATE

COVID-19 RESPONSE – 21 APRIL 2020



UNHCR Partner staff from Kandahar Encashment Center deployed to Spin Boldak to support DoPH/ screen newly arrived returnees from Pakistan, 09 April 2020 UNHCR/E.Verron

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AFGHAN REFUGEES RETURNED TO AFGHANISTAN

Since 01 January, UNHCR assisted the return of nearly 300 Afghan refugees from Iran, Pakistan and other countries under its facilitated voluntary repatriation programme. As of 04 March, UNHCR suspended the return of Afghan refugees from Pakistan, Iran and other countries as a precautionary measure linked to COVID-19.

244,830

UNDOCUMENTED AFGHANS RETURNED FROM IRAN AND PAKISTAN

According to MoRR/IOM, from 01 January to 11 April 2020, the total number of undocumented returnees is 244,830 individuals, including 242,997 from Iran and 1,833 from Pakistan. An estimated 70,000 passport/ID holders returned from Pakistan between 6 and 9 April.

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 crossing points), with the intention to extend to the crossings with Pakistan (Spin Boldak and Torkham) when opened. Through maintaining a consistent presence at these zero points, UNHCR aims to ensure efficient, timely and systematic gathering of protection information from Afghan returnees.

This border monitoring will utilize targeted, context-specific questions to enable UNHCR to:

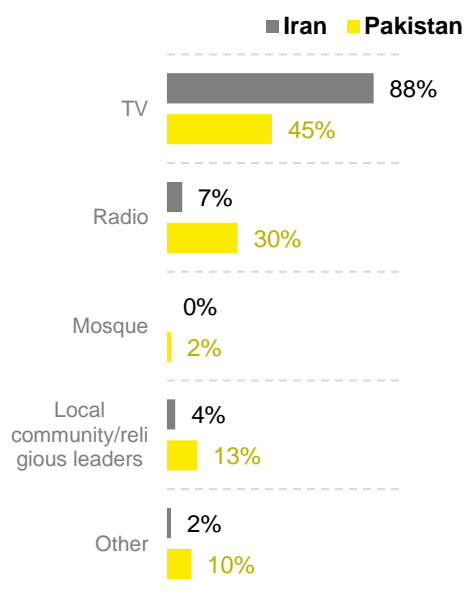
- Collect protection information through sampling of Afghan returnees from Pakistan and Iran, irrespective of their status;
- Assess reasons for return and challenges faced during the COVID-19 outbreak, including access to health care facilities and information on preventive measures in their countries of prior residence; and
- Generate periodic updates through an online dashboard and weekly updates to ensure informed planning of interventions in border areas and in provinces of destination.

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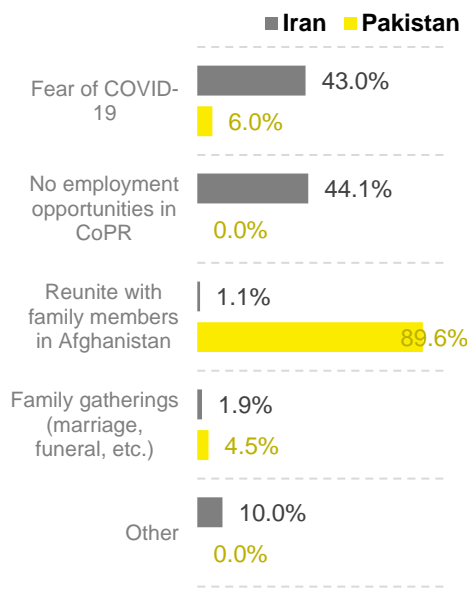
 INTERVIEWS WITH
 RETURNEES FROM IRAN
 AND PAKISTAN

Between 06-15 April, a total of 225 returnees (198 M and 27 F) were interviewed as they entered Afghanistan from Iran at Islam Qala (163) and from Pakistan at Spin Boldak (62)¹, including 170 single individuals and 55 heads of households who returned with their families. This figure represents approximately 2% of the total number of returnees (nearly 15,000) who crossed into Afghanistan between 05-11 April 2020.

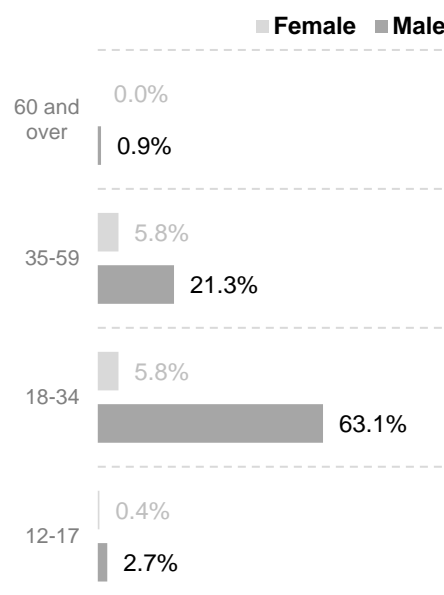
Primary Sources of Information about COVID 19 in Iran and Pakistan



Reasons for Return to Afghanistan



Age and Gender of Respondents



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

① Interviewed Returnees from Iran (Islam Qala):

- 76% spontaneous returnees²; 15% passport holders; 7% deportees and 2% VRF holders;
- 93% went to Iran in search of livelihoods opportunities; 5% to visit family/relatives; and 2% other reasons;
- Only 1% (2 respondents) claimed that they faced problems during the COVID-19 outbreak (citing lost work/wages; and pressure by authorities to leave for Afghanistan);
- 97% stated that they had received information about COVID-19 in Iran, mainly through TV and radio;
- 75% (121 respondents, most of whom were spontaneous returnees) claimed that they had paid a return tax to the government (100,000 – 500,000 IRR/ approximately USD 7-35).

② Interviewed Returnees from Pakistan (Spin Boldak):

- 86% spontaneous returnees; 14% passport holders;
- 60% went to Pakistan for medical treatment; 21% to visit family/relatives; 14% for business; and 5% other reasons.
- 49% (31 respondents) claimed that they faced problems in Pakistan during the COVID-19 outbreak: citing movement restrictions/quarantine and closure of the border (23 respondents); inability to access markets/buy basic commodities (4 respondents); and lost work/wages (4 respondents)).
- 98% stated that they had received information about COVID-19 in Pakistan; mainly through TV, Radio and local community/religious leaders.

¹ Note that UNHCR has not yet initiated border monitoring at Zaranj or Torkham. Border monitoring at Spin Boldak was conducted for a four-day period from 6-9 April, when the border was exceptionally opened to permit the return of Afghans stranded in Pakistan.

² Most of these are ID holders who passed through the procedure for passport/ID holders.

Areas of Return in Afghanistan (origin vs intended destination)

- Return to more than 20 provinces across the country.
- Virtually all stated that they are returning to their areas of origin.
- The majority of returnees from Iran have returned to Herat, Faryab, Saripul, Badghis and Takhar provinces
- Most returnees from Pakistan have returned to Kandahar, Paktika and Ghazni provinces.

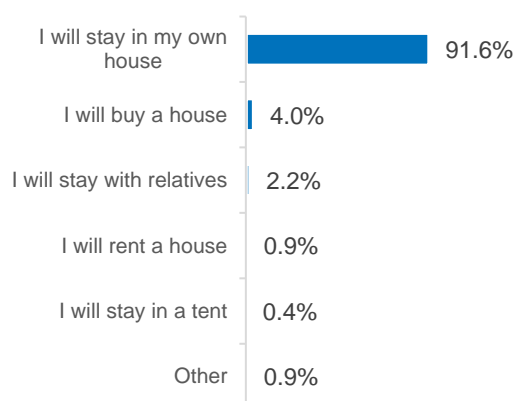
Top Province of Return in Afghanistan
Interviewed Returnees from Iran

Province	Origin	Intended Destination
Herat	36	37
Faryab	24	24
Sar-e-Pul	24	24
Ghor	16	15
Badghis	13	13
Takhar	13	13
Badakhshan	9	9
Jawzjan	5	5
Balkh	4	4
Daykundi	4	4
Kapisa	4	4
Other	10	10
Total	162	162

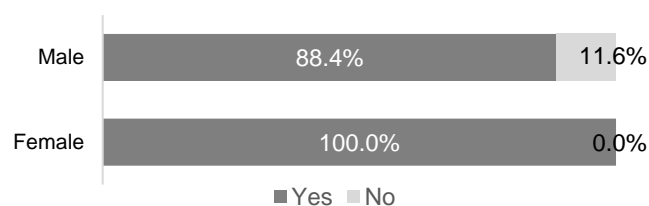
Top Province of Return in Afghanistan
Interviewed Returnees from Pakistan

Province	Origin	Intended Destination
Kandahar	13	13
Paktika	13	13
Ghazni	12	12
Kabul	5	8
Baghlan	3	3
Hilmand	2	2
Kunduz	2	2
Logar	3	2
Maidan Wardak	3	2
Zabul	2	2
Other	5	4
Total	63	63

Living Arrangements after Return



Tazkira Ownership among Returnees from Iran and Pakistan



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