

# BORDER MONITORING UPDATE

## COVID-19 RESPONSE

16-22 APRIL 2020



CHA staff (UNHCR partner)  
deployed to Islam Qala reception  
center to support DoRR in  
registering returnees

24 March 2020 CHA/ E. Karimi

## 278

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.

## 264,221

UNDOCUMENTED AFGHANS  
RETURNED FROM IRAN AND  
PAKISTAN

According to MoRR/IOM, during the week of 16-22 April, the total number of undocumented returnees from Iran was 10,172, and since 01 January, the total number of undocumented returnees is 264,221 individuals, including 262,388 from Iran and 1,833 from Pakistan. Torkham and Spin Boldak crossing points remain closed as a precautionary measure. However, the movements of commercial trucks in both directions is allowed on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays only. In addition, Torkham was open on 19 and 21 April to allow the return of stranded Pakistani nationals, as well as a limited number of Afghan passport/ID holders. This arrangement will reportedly be extended to Spin Boldak and continued on a twice-weekly basis going forward.

## 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/Milak 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:

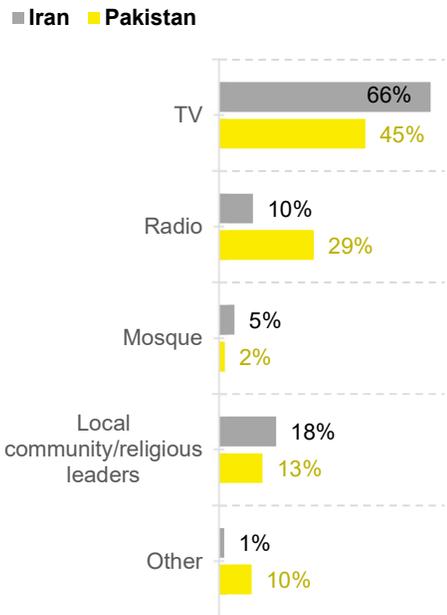
- Collect protection information through sampling of Afghan returnees from Pakistan and Iran, irrespective of their status;
- Assess reasons for return and challenges faced during the COVID-19 outbreak, including access to health care facilities and information on preventive measures in their countries 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.

**691**

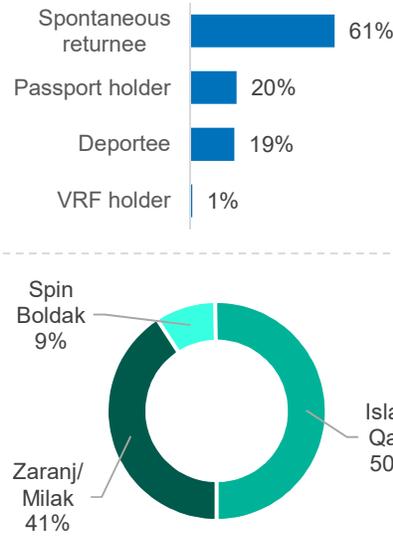
INTERVIEWS WITH  
RETURNEES FROM IRAN  
AND PAKISTAN

Between 16-22 April, 425 interviews, including 342 male and 83 female respondents, were carried out with returnees from Iran. Since the start of border monitoring on 05 April, a total of 691 returnees (578 M and 113 F) were interviewed as they entered Afghanistan from Iran at Islam Qala (347), Zaranj/Milak (282) and from Pakistan at Spin Boldak (62)<sup>1</sup>, including 510 single individuals and 181 heads of households who returned with their families.

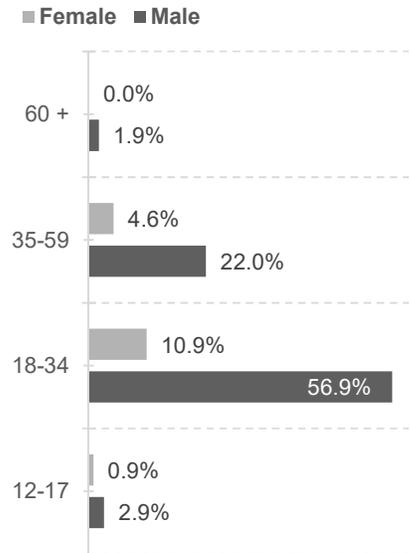
Primary Sources of Information about COVID 19 in Iran and Pakistan



Respondents' Return Status and Point of Entry



Age and Gender of Respondents

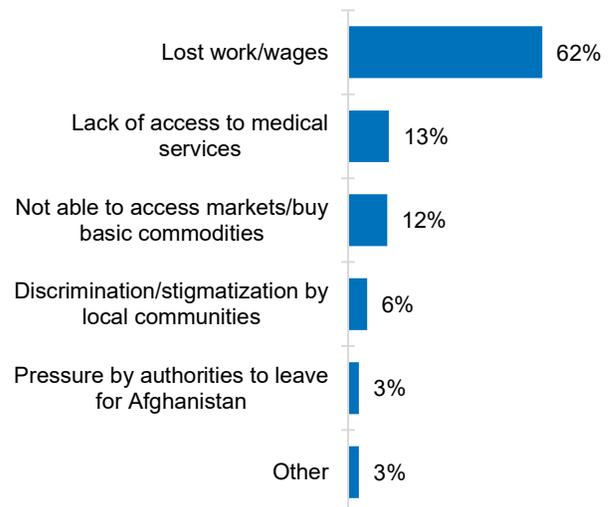


## Situation in Country of Prior Residence (CoPR) - Pakistan and Iran

### Interviewed Returnees from Iran (Islam Qala and Zaranj/Milak):

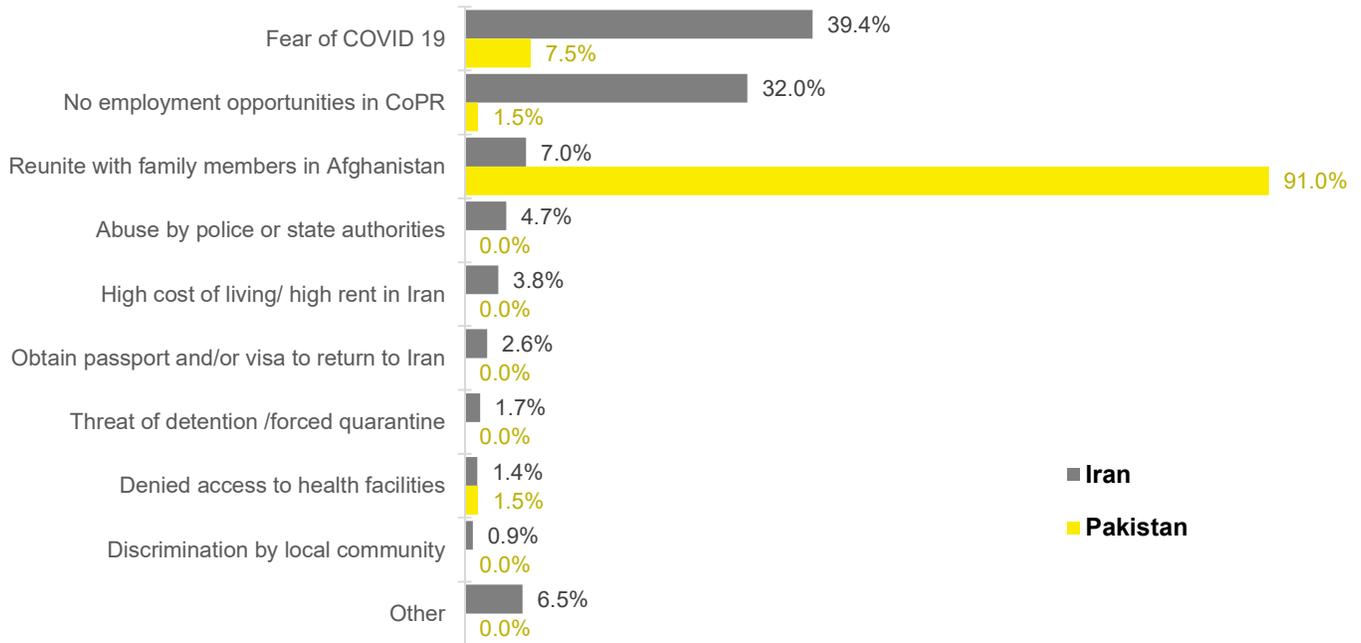
- 58% spontaneous returnees; 20% passport holders; 21% deportees and 1% VRF holders;
- 80% went to Iran in search of livelihoods opportunities; 8% due to conflict, 7% to visit family/relatives; and 5% other reasons;
- 34% (217 respondents) claimed that they faced problems during the COVID-19 outbreak; such as lost work/wages; lack of access to medical services; no access to markets; and discrimination/stigmatization by local communities;
- 92% stated that they had received information about COVID-19 in Iran, mainly through TV and radio;
- Only 8% who returned from Iran (56 respondents who mainly returned through Zaranj/Milak) stated that they did not receive information about COVID-19;
- 61% (382 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).

Types of Problems faced by Afghans during COVID-19 in Iran



<sup>1</sup> Note that UNHCR has not yet initiated border monitoring at Torkham.

## Reason for Return to Afghanistan



## Information Dissemination in Afghanistan

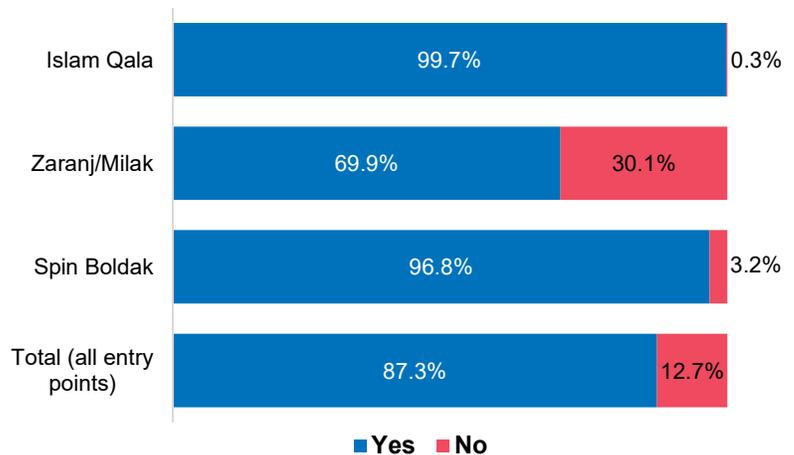
**87%**

RECEIVED INFORMATION ABOUT COVID-19 UPON ARRIVAL IN AFGHANISTAN

**30%**

INTERVIEWED RETURNEES THROUGH ZARANJ/MILAK CLAIMED THAT THEY DID NOT RECEIVE INFORMATION ABOUT COVID-19 UPON ARRIVAL IN AFGHANISTAN

Did you receive information upon arrival in Afghanistan?



## Areas of Return in Afghanistan (origin vs intended destination)

- Returnees from Iran were travelling to 31 provinces across the country, mainly to the border provinces such as Herat, Farah, Nimroz as well as to Faryab, Ghor, Saripul, Takhar, Badghis, and Ghazni provinces.
- 62% cited that they are returning to their provinces of origin.
- Returnees from Pakistan were traveling to more than 20 provinces.
- Most returnees from Pakistan have returned to Kandahar, Paktika and Ghazni provinces.

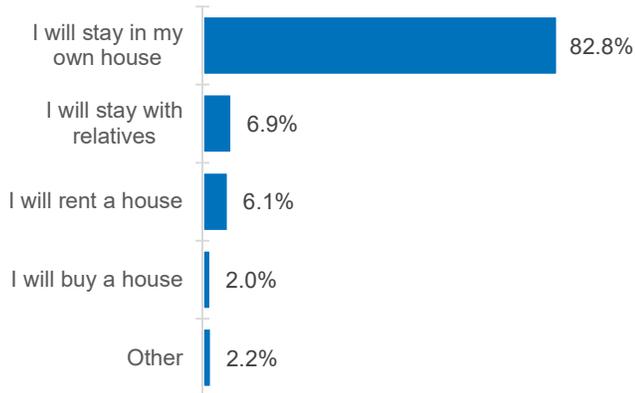
Top Province of Return in Afghanistan  
Interviewed Returnees from Iran

Province	Origin	Destination
Herat	107	104
Faryab	64	44
Farah	48	11
Ghor	43	32
Nimroz	43	16
Sar-e-Pul	41	31
Takhar	39	20
Badghis	37	30
Ghazni	36	11
Kunduz	31	6
Badakhshan	26	10
Other	114	75
<b>Total</b>	<b>629</b>	<b>390</b>

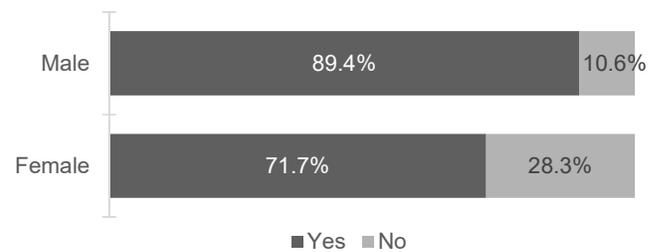
Top Province of Return in Afghanistan  
Interviewed Returnees from Pakistan

Province	Origin	Destination
Kandahar	13	13
Paktika	13	13
Ghazni	12	12
Kabul	4	7
Baghlan	3	3
Logar	3	2
Maidan Wardak	3	2
Hilmand	2	2
Kunduz	2	2
Zabul	2	2
Other	5	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>62</b>

Living Arrangements after Return



Tazkira\* Ownership among Returnees from Iran and Pakistan



\* Tazkira is the official identity card issued by the Government of Afghanistan for Afghan nationals.

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