

Afghanistan

As of 30 April 2020

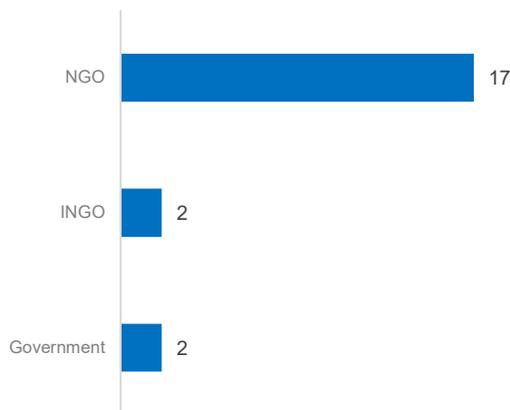
47, 293 beneficiaries including returnees, IDPs and host communities have been reached directly and indirectly through UNHCR's programmes

65,045 individuals have been displaced by conflict and profiled by OCHA as internally displaced persons (IDPs) in need of protection and assistance.

306 registered refugees voluntarily returned to Afghanistan so far in 2020. 256 returned from Iran, 16 from Pakistan and 34 from other countries.

PARTNERS

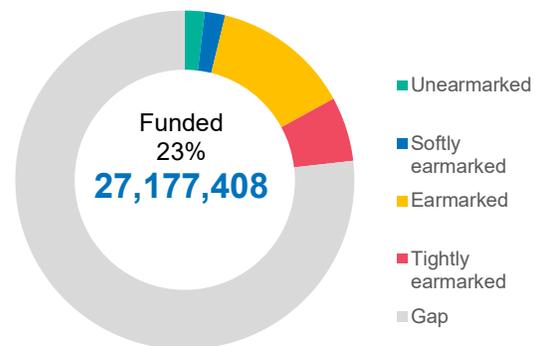
20 partners implementing key UNHCR activities in 2020



FUNDING

USD 117.1 M

requested for Afghanistan



UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

185 National Staff

30 International Staff

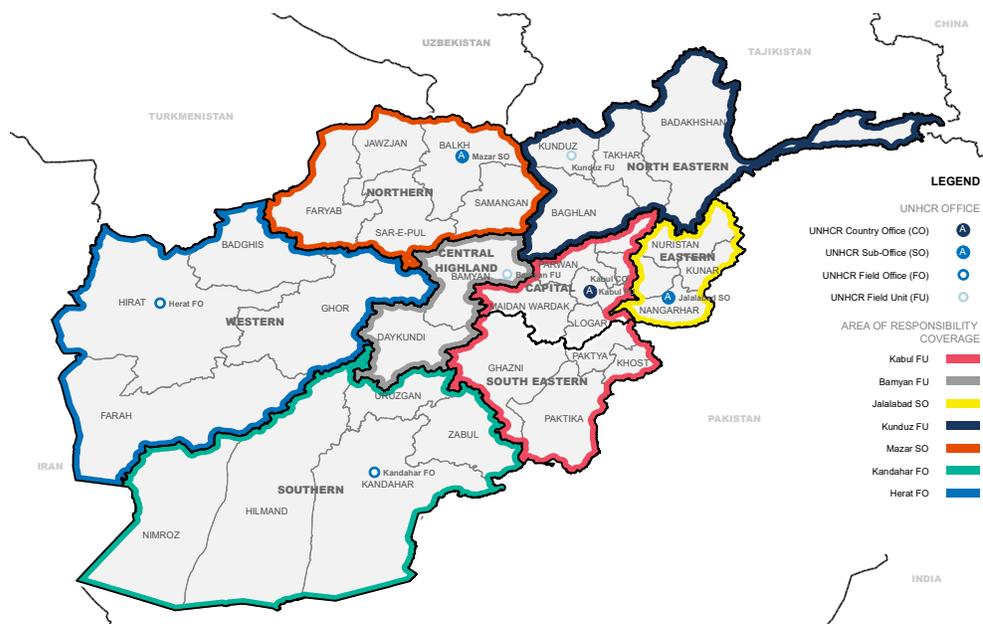
Offices:

1 Country Office in Kabul

2 Sub Offices in Jalalabad and Mazar-i-Sharif

2 Field Offices in Herat and Kandahar

3 Field Units in Kabul, Kunduz and Bamyan



COVID-19 Response

UNHCR is focussing on three key pillars in its response to COVID-19 in Afghanistan as follows:



SUPPORT TO GOVERNMENT

Help strengthen the Government's ability to respond towards curbing the spread of COVID-19 through support to local authorities on the front lines of response.



PERSONS OF CONCERN & AFGHAN COMMUNITIES

Increase awareness among people in high risk areas and priority areas of return and reintegration about how to protect themselves, their families and their communities from the spread of COVID-19 and provide the necessary hygiene items in coordination with humanitarian actors.



COORDINATION

Coordinate with the government and humanitarian community to ensure that all Afghans are covered through activities to prevent the spread of COVID-19.



A zaranj in Jalalabad shares information about COVID-19 on the body of the vehicle and through a loudspeaker. UNHCR/2020



With government counterparts, UNHCR holds awareness raising sessions in Bamyán. UNHCR/2020



UNHCR has increased border monitoring activities at the four major border points in Afghanistan. UNHCR/2020



Children wash their hands at a new water point built by UNHCR in Kandahar. UNHCR/2020

Since March 2020, UNHCR has been supporting the Government's efforts in the **prevention of and response to COVID-19** in Afghanistan, in coordination UN agencies and humanitarian actors. **UNHCR's COVID-19 response** include: providing personal protection equipment and hygiene kits to government officials and UNHCR partner staff working on the frontlines, conducting awareness raising campaigns on COVID-19 prevention measures in high risk areas and Priority Areas of Return And Reintegration (PARRs), providing tents and Refugee Housing Units (RHUs) to health facilities and registration spaces for new returnees from Iran, providing staff end equipment to strengthen monitoring at the points of entry to Afghanistan, renovating reception facilities, distributing soap to refugees in urban locations and in the Gualn settlement and constructing water tanks and hand washing stations. UNHCR also continues to lead the protection and ES/NFI clusters which are playing a key role in COVID-19 prevention and response efforts in Afghanistan and is also member of the Points of Entry working group, including other coordination networks.

Coordination & Partnerships

- UNHCR is the lead agency for the Protection Cluster and the Emergency Shelter/Non-Food Items Cluster, working closely with the Government and partners to coordinate the inter-agency response to the needs of across the country.
- UNHCR, together with IOM, leads the One UN Return and Reintegration thematic working group; and is a member of the COVID-19 Risk Communications and Community Engagement (RCCE), as well as UN country framework for immediate socioeconomic response to COVID-19, including on social protection. Importantly, UNHCR is a member of the Government's Displacement and Returnee Executive Committee (DiREC), Durable Solutions Working Group (DSWG), and supports the government's efforts, at national and local levels, in roll out of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), which aims at addressing the root causes and drivers of displacement.
- UNHCR's main governmental counterpart is the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) at the national level and the Directorates of Refugees and Repatriation (DoRR) at the provincial level. UNHCR also works with other ministries at both the national and local level, including the Ministries of Education, Health, Women's Affairs, Labour and Social Affairs, Rural Rehabilitation and Development, and Urban Development and Housing, while working closely with the Afghan Chamber of Commerce, the World Bank, GIZ, and other UN agencies whose programmes can build on UNHCR's work and provide linkages to longer-term development initiatives.
- In line with the Grand Bargain, UNHCR increased the number of local partners it engages to implement its projects, and in 2020 UNHCR has 1 national, 2 international, and 1 Government partners.
- Regionally, UNHCR coordinates closely with Pakistan and Iran including through the launch of a support platform for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) in 2019 in Geneva on the side-lines of the first ever Global Refugee Forum. The platform seeks to i) enhance international solidarity and burden-sharing for the Afghan situation; ii) galvanize additional investments and expand partnerships for coherent humanitarian and development responses; iii) ensure sustained visibility for the Afghan situation.

Priority Areas of Return and Reintegration (PARRs)

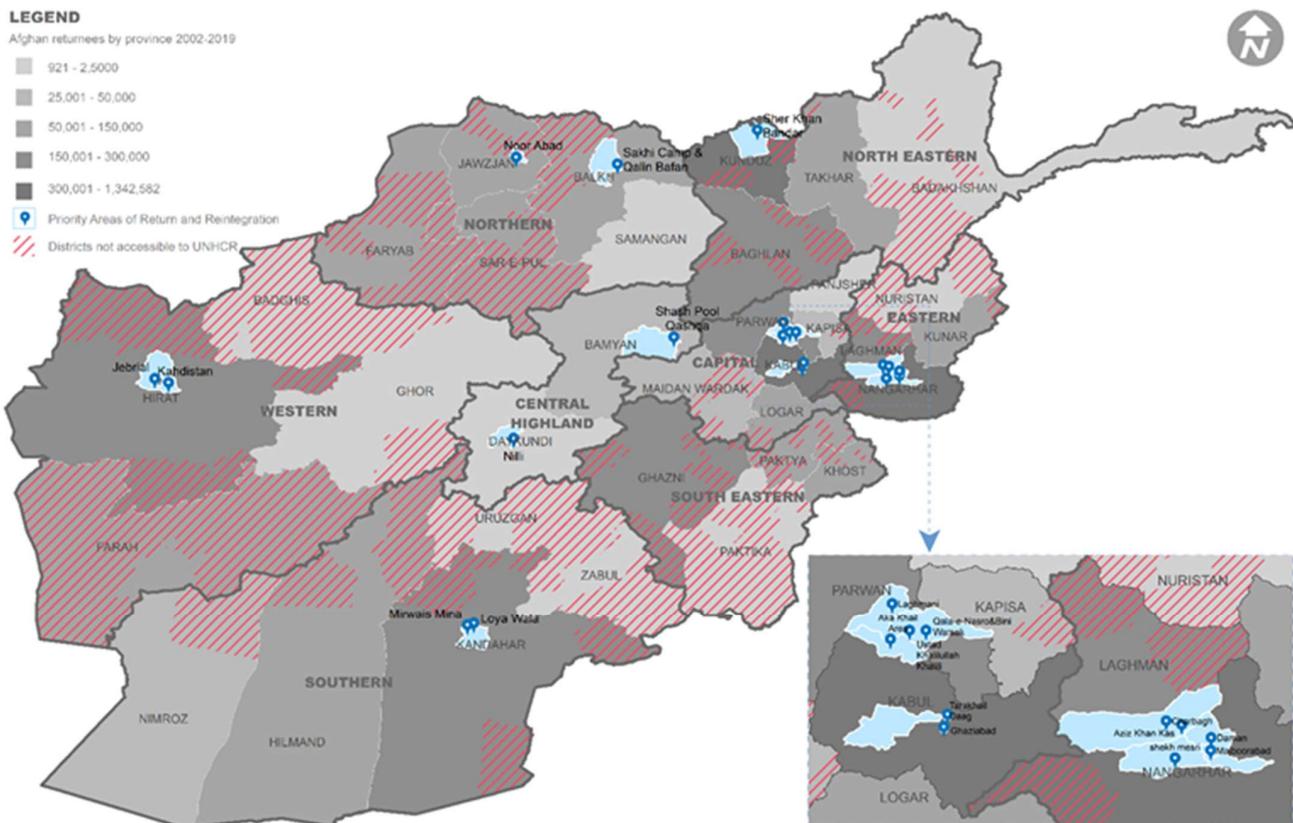
- In line with SSAR, supported by the international community and the affirmation of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), twenty PARRs across the country have jointly been identified by the Government of Afghanistan's Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) at the central and provincial levels and UNHCR. Protection and Solutions programming in PARRs include an area-based approach with a *multi-stakeholder* and *whole of society* engagement (through wide ranging and inclusive partnerships with diverse actors) ensuring the specific attention to marginalized and disadvantaged groups (*Leaving No One Behind*).



Children gather a water point constructed in a PARR in Kabul province, central region.

- In close consultation with the Government of Afghanistan, UNHCR and partners implement, in the PARRs, projects that are designed to reduce and mitigate protection risks and to support sustainable return and reintegration. These include a wide range of activities that deliver cash assistance and in-kind support to vulnerable returnee, IDPs and host community families, improve access to quality protection and solutions-oriented services such as adequate shelter, expand education and skills training, provide entrepreneurial support, implement quick impact livelihood projects, and develop public infrastructure including schools, healthcare facilities, community centres and roads.

- Key focus is on linking UNHCR’s short- to medium-term CBP projects to longer-term programmes of the Government of Afghanistan, the World Bank, UN agencies and NGOs, such as the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF) and the Citizen’s Charter National Priority Programme (NPP) funded by the World Bank. For example, the NPP is currently being implemented in 8 of the 20 PARRs. Eight PARRs also fall within the Government’s Land Allocation Scheme (LAS) sites. UNHCR is working in close coordination with the Ministry of Education on school construction activities to ensure maximum impact and sustainability.
- UNHCR and partners’ projects also promote durable solutions for returnees and IDPs through efforts to expand access to land, documentation, social services, self-reliance, and inclusion in decision-making structure.
- In the PARRs 57% of the targeted population are from host communities, many of whom are extremely vulnerable, which helps ensure peaceful co-existence between returnees, IDPs and host communities. UNHCR and its partners have implemented a range of community-based protection projects including infrastructure, community development, WASH, education, business support and shelter. **In 2019, of 1,346,907 people living in PARRs, some 556,710 were assisted through UNHCR’s activities.**
- In 2020, UNHCR plans to reinforce engagement with the development actors and private sector, in PARRs, based on the *comparative advantage* and *collective outcomes*, to address the root causes and drivers of displacement and promote the inclusion of PoC into national systems and services, including through joint programme and programming.

20 PRIORITY AREAS OF RETURN AND REINTEGRATION


Main Activities

Voluntary Repatriation

- Voluntary repatriation remains the preferred solution for Afghan refugees, and while the situation in Afghanistan is not presently conducive to support large-scale returns UNHCR is working closely with the Government of Afghanistan and partners – including through cross-border initiatives with Pakistan and Iran – to implement a range of programmes aimed at improving the conditions in Afghanistan to support sustainable returns while ensuring Afghan refugees are able to make informed decisions about going home.
- UNHCR facilitates voluntary repatriation of registered Afghan refugees from Pakistan, Iran and other countries to Afghanistan. The return of Afghan refugees from Pakistan and Iran under the Tripartite Agreements with the respective Governments and UNHCR.
- More than 5.2 million Afghan refugees have repatriated with UNHCR assistance since 2002 despite a fragile security situation in many parts of the country and a range of socio-economic and political challenges, the return numbers have significantly decreased in recent years (8,079 in 2019, 15,699 in 2018 and 58,817 in 2017) due to the deteriorating and unpredictable security situation, and dire economic conditions. [So far in 2020, only 309 refugees have returned to Afghanistan.](#)
- Refugee returnees are provided with a cash grant of an average of US\$200 per person to meet their immediate humanitarian needs and transportation costs to their place of origin or destination.
- The four [Encashment Centres in Jalalabad, Kandahar, Herat and Kabul](#) are managed by UNHCR and the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR), and a range of partners provide returnees with important services such as basic health screening and vaccinations for children (provided by Ministry of Public Health with support of UNICEF), mine risk education and awareness (coordinated by the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and the Danish Demining Group/Danish Refugee Council), referral for information and legal assistance to obtain civil documentation, referral of persons with specific needs to partners with specialist expertise or government agencies who provide life-saving assistance.
- Afghanistan is one of the focus countries of a joint UNHCR-WFP project aimed at identifying and mitigating risks of abuse by private sector services providers in their delivery of cash assistance to vulnerable populations.
- As of 4 March 2020, UNHCR temporarily suspended the voluntary return of Afghan refugees from Pakistan, Iran and other countries as a precautionary measure linked to COVID-19. Upon the request of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs, UNHCR Iran resumed voluntary repatriation from Iran as of 30 April. Voluntary return from Pakistan remains suspended.

Community-Based Protection

- UNHCR engages with communities to identify and prioritize their needs and agree on measures that could support returnees, IDPs and refugees in mitigating protection risks, strengthening their resilience and prospects for reintegration, and contribute to social cohesion by promoting peaceful coexistence with hosting communities.
- Projects include: asset-based community development to facilitate peaceful coexistence through expansion of community infrastructure, including the construction of schools, clinics, and youth and women's centres; promoting representation, engagement, and participation among communities, with a focus on expanding the involvement of women in decision-making; promoting self-reliance through education, skills training, job creation and business development in partnership with the private sector, including cross-border programming with refugee populations in Pakistan and Iran.
- So far in 2020, [123, 769 individuals benefited from community-based protection projects across Afghanistan.](#)

Persons with Specific Needs

- UNHCR provides cash and in-kind assistance, along with referrals to other service providers, to assist persons with acute vulnerabilities and protection risks who are identified at the Encashment Centres or through protection monitoring. UNHCR's programme is implemented through a whole-of-community approach that benefits vulnerable refugees, IDPs, returnees, and members of host communities
- So far in 2020, [1,155 persons with acute vulnerabilities and protection risks have received cash or in-kind assistance and/or referral to specialized services such as medical assistance, employment, skills development, shelter, food and education.](#)

Protection Monitoring

- UNHCR undertakes protection monitoring through a community-based approach, collecting and analyzing data and trends to inform programming and response and to support advocacy on issues such as access to education, healthcare, land and civil documentation. Protection monitoring is carried out through individual interviews, focus group discussions and phone surveys with refugees, returnees, IDPs and host communities.
- In 2019, [1,744 protection monitoring missions have taken place across Afghanistan](#) resulting in an increased understanding of protection conditions in different parts of the country to inform programming, assistance and advocacy, and where relevant referrals to other specialized services.
- 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) and with Pakistan (Spin Boldak and Torkham), when open for pedestrian movements. Through maintaining a consistent presence at these zero points, UNHCR aims to ensure efficient, timely and systematic gathering of protection information from Afghan returnees.
- Following a data sharing agreement in 2017, in June 2019, a [joint UNHCR-World Bank report](#) titled "Living Conditions and Settlement Decisions of Recent Afghan Returnees: Findings from a 2018 Phone Survey of Afghan Returnees and UNHCR data" was published which looks at the patterns and characteristics of recent Afghan refugee returns.
- In May 2019, UNHCR signed a [data sharing agreement with IOM](#) to harmonize post return data with joint reporting and analysis through an integrated dashboard. In addition, baseline data for reintegration programming and community selection will be informed by UNHCR protection monitoring and IOM'S Data Tracking Mechanism (DTM).
- [Awaaz Afghanistan](#), the inter-agency information centre, implemented by UNOPs, and funded by UNHCR and WFP entered its third year in 2020. The centre provides information to persons of concern on available services in their geographical area and allows feedback (including concerns and complaints) from communities to be consolidated and shared with respective agencies including UNHCR.

Emergency Assistance

- UNHCR addresses the emergency needs of IDPs, returnees and host communities through the provision of temporary shelter, non-food items, and cash-based interventions. Along with other humanitarian agencies, UNHCR is gradually shifting the focus of humanitarian assistance to cash-based programming including through mobile money and banking services.
- So far in 2020, [9,771 individuals have been assisted, in coordination with the Government through core relief items including emergency shelter.](#)

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

- UNHCR continues to support the Government of Afghanistan with the coordination of the response to the approximately 72,065 persons of concern in Khost and Paktika.
- Currently, approximately 12,000 individuals among the population of concern reside in Gulan settlement in Khost. The others reside outside the settlement. Most of the key needs of these individuals (birth registration,

education, livelihoods, water and sanitation, health) are common to the broader population and are beyond the ability of any individual organization to address. The Government will require resolute support from humanitarian and development actors including UNHCR.

- UNHCR prioritizes interim solutions for the approximately 407 urban refugees and asylum-seekers in Kabul and other locations pending the adoption of a National Asylum Law. UNHCR conducts registration and, as needed, carries out refugee status determination under its mandate as a protection tool. The provision of targeted subsistence allowance and assistance to persons with specific needs (cash-based and in-kind) aims to reduce vulnerability and promote self-reliance.

Durable Solutions

- UNHCR plays a catalytic role in [linking humanitarian action to development](#) programming including projects that provide examples of good practice for development actors to scale up and support local authorities to prepare and implement localized plans and interagency, area-based programming through a CRRF approach. An example is the joint UNHCR, UNDP, ILO and Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs initiative “Supporting Afghanistan Livelihoods and Mobility” (SALAM) which expanded UNHCR and ILO’s good practices in promoting self-reliance of IDPs and returnees through business support and job placement.
- UNHCR co-chairs the Durable Solutions Working Group and engages with Government and partners countrywide to facilitate implementation of National Priority Programmes. Further, UNHCR is supporting the Government to lead the [Inter agency Durable Solutions Initiative \(IDSi\)](#), particularly at the filed level, to provide a comprehensive response in coordination with development actors, including UN agencies.
- UNHCR, through its regional and cross border coordination with Pakistan and Iran, working on [Support for Self-Reliance \(S4S\)](#) initiative (in line with the SSAR+ and CRRF). The [S4S](#) initiative focuses on: (i) cross-border skills mapping and skills-building programming for employment in Afghanistan; and (ii) cross-border business support and entrepreneurship programme, and on a pilot basis will be rolled out in PARRs
- Innovative models have been introduced to link humanitarian action with development programmes to facilitate durable solutions, with particular focus on women and youth, such as internet cafes for women, community centres, and artisanal empowerment through UNHCR’s global MADE51 initiative.

UNHCR is grateful for contributions by:



Sulakshani Perera | External Relations Officer | pererasu@unhcr.org | Cell: +93 (0) 791990011

M. Nader Farhad | Associate Public Information Officer | farhadm@unhcr.org | Cell: + 93 (0) 791990018