THE SUPPORT PLATFORM FOR THE SOLUTIONS STRATEGY FOR AFGHAN REFUGEES
A Partnership for Solidarity and Resilience
When dealing with such a complex situation as the one prevailing in Afghanistan, it is necessary to be fully aware of the past, to have an accurate knowledge of the present and to develop a vision of the future which is both realistic and ambitious.

H.E. Lakhdar Brahimi, former Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
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FOREWORD

Recently, we marked a tragic anniversary. It is now forty years since the first Afghan refugees left their country, in what would become one of the biggest displacement crises of our time. At the Islamabad Refugee Summit, convened by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in February 2020, the international community honoured the extraordinary resilience of Afghan refugees, and recognized the exceptional generosity and hospitality of their host countries and communities. Above all, participants reiterated the imperative for solutions – including through a broader partnership base built on solidarity and responsibility-sharing. The Support Platform for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees, which builds on the Global Compact on Refugees, aims to achieve just that.

There have been immense changes, across the region and globally, since the Support Platform was launched in December 2019 at the first Global Refugee Forum. In the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, insecurity persists, along with many other complex challenges, yet efforts to build greater stability are also in evidence. And across the region, the COVID-19 pandemic is pushing millions of vulnerable people further into poverty, with implications for population movements within the region and further afield.

The Support Platform can play an important role in driving potential solutions, including in the context of the peace process, and preserving and strengthening the investments and hard-won gains of the past. The needs of Afghans and their host communities are vast, calling for complementary, prioritised investments by a wide range of partners, to ensure the most efficient and impactful use of resources. This is where the Support Platform can help.

The integrated projects presented here are designed to respond to the most urgent priority needs. They have been identified jointly by the Islamic Governments of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, UNHCR and other stakeholders within the framework of the SSAR. The portfolio is geared towards building the resilience of individuals and communities, and enabling solutions, and is designed to be scaleable. Complementary investments are invited – by bilateral and multilateral development actors, international financial institutions, the UN system, the private sector, NGOs and civil society – in support of the Governments’ efforts to address the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 on refugees, their hosts and other affected communities, and to make progress towards the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

In the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan, the projects support generous Government efforts to include Afghan refugees in national systems and social services, notably in the areas of health, education, youth empowerment and the development of human capital towards solutions. In the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the focus is on twenty priority areas of return and reintegration (PARRs). The United Nations system has recently committed to pursuing area-based humanitarian, development and peace investments in the PARRs, as a means of confidence-building and supporting the peace process. This common vision should create new momentum towards the establishment of conditions for sustainable return and reintegration, by tackling some of the drivers of displacement and humanitarian crises through a whole of society approach.

The generosity of the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan, as the two principal host countries, must be supported and sustained. For too long, they have shouldered a vastly disproportionate responsibility, and this must be accorded recognition, and more equitably shared. At the same time, the people of Afghanistan must not be abandoned at this critical moment in their country’s recent history.

The Global Compact on Refugees was a response to the imperative of a more predictable and effective response to refugee flows, and more equitable burden-sharing, especially in large-scale protracted refugee situations. Now is the time to make that commitment real.

I encourage donors to help drive the Support Platform, both through direct support and by helping mobilise additional resources, including from development partners and the private sector. Through the Support Platform, we have the possibility to transform the lives of millions of refugees and their hosts, and to galvanise progress towards solutions. By contrast, the costs of inaction would be high - measured in generations still in limbo, increased population flows, and deepening socio-economic, peace and security consequences as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic resonates across the region. Now is the moment – if ever there was one – to stand in solidarity with Afghan refugees and their hosts, help build resilience and solutions, and avert another decade of displacement and despair.

Filippo Grandi
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
FORGING A NEW PARTNERSHIP:
The Support Platform for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees

The Support Platform for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees is both a logical outgrowth of a long-affirmed regional strategy and a new departure under the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). Partners, both old and new, are invited to join with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan as we work toward greater resilience and durable solutions for Afghan refugees and the communities who host them.

Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees

The Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) is the result of an unprecedented quadripartite consultative process among the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan and UNHCR. Since its launch in 2012, the SSAR has served to jointly identify and implement approaches toward lasting solutions for Afghan refugees in the region. Building on a convergence of interests and reconciling the priorities of the country of origin and the principal host countries, the SSAR has provided a comprehensive strategic vision and operational framework for three overarching objectives: facilitating voluntary repatriation; enabling sustainable reintegration; and assisting the host countries and communities.¹

Three Pillars of the SSAR

Creating conditions conducive to voluntary repatriation through community-based investments in areas of high return

Building Afghan refugee capital based on livelihood opportunities in Afghanistan in order to facilitate sustainable return and reintegration

Enhanced support for refugee hosting communities, preserving protection space in host countries and resettlement in third countries

Inspiring the Global Compact on Refugees

The SSAR pre-dates, and indeed inspired key elements of, the Global Compact on Refugees. It pursues an area-based and whole-of-society approach in refugee-hosting areas and areas of return. And it engages a broad variety of actors with complementary mandates and expertise, forging strong links between humanitarian assistance and long-term development.

Since its endorsement by the international community in 2012, the SSAR has served as a multilateral platform for solutions dialogue, consensus-building and partnership for Afghan refugees and their hosts.

The GCR reaffirmed the fundamental principles and approaches of the regional SSAR at a global level. It also recognized the urgent need for more predictable and equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing for hosting the world’s refugees. Accordingly, it provided the international community with new tools and opportunities to galvanize support for large-scale and protracted refugee situations. Chief among these are regional approaches – such as the SSAR – and support platforms.²

UNHCR and the Governments of the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan launched a dedicated Support Platform for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SP4SSAR) in the context of the first Global Refugee Forum in December 2019.³ Borne of the GCR’s aspiration for enhanced solidarity, the Support Platform seeks to revitalize the international community’s political and financial commitment to the Afghan refugee situation through investment in the implementation of the SSAR.

“...The collective ability of the international community to deliver on the key objectives of the Support Platform will be a litmus test for the Global Compact on Refugees – its applicability to the most protracted refugee situations and its promise of greater responsibility-sharing with countries that have shouldered the burden.”

Chairperson’s Summary of the Islamabad Refugee Summit, February 2020⁴

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² Global Compact on Refugees, Section III, A. 2.2., available at https://www.unhcr.org/5c658aed4
Revitalizing Partnerships

Building on the achievements of the SSAR over the past eight years, the Platform will draw from the objectives, commitments and momentum of the GCR as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These three frameworks are mutually reinforcing in their commitment to addressing the development impacts of displacement as integral to achieving solutions, and to "leave no one behind."

“\[There is increasing recognition of the development challenges posed by large refugee situations and the advantages of shared and inclusive economic growth in refugee-hosting areas from which all can benefit, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.\]”
Global Compact on Refugees, para. 64

The Support Platform is poised to redefine how the international community responds to the Afghan refugee situation. This response must be rooted in recognition of three imperatives: the host countries’ progressive and inclusive policies, the needs of host communities, and the Government of Afghanistan’s staunch commitment to create an environment conducive to voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration at a time of historic political, peace and security junctures.5

The Platform provides opportunities for committed partners to forge strong and sustainable multi-year humanitarian and development responses across the region. The important contributions of long-standing donors and operational partners will be complemented by a broader base of stakeholders, including non-traditional donors, bilateral and multilateral development actors, international financial institutions, civil society and the private sector. All interested stakeholders can contribute -- whether through political, financial or material support-- in line with the operational priorities of the SSAR.6

This document provides an overview of the dynamics in the sub-region. It then highlights urgent needs and opportunities in the priority sectors of education, health and livelihoods, as identified by the three Governments and UNHCR in line with the SSAR’s objectives and Sustainable Development Goals 3, 4, 6 and 8. Finally, a country-specific portfolio of projects is provided in annex, with both standalone and scalable interventions that need financial and technical support from committed donors and partners in the near- to medium-term.

This specific portfolio of projects is one piece of the support that is needed: it complements the critical investments of others. Other interested stakeholders may use this document to inspire their own engagement within the Support Platform, with a view to forging synergies, building on comparative advantages and complementary approaches.

“We know the solution lies in Afghanistan. Working towards solutions for the Afghan people is not just a sign of solidarity; it is in the world’s best interest. Peace efforts leading to intra-Afghan negotiations will pave the way, but sustainable peace and security hinges on better integrating our work on humanitarian, development and peace efforts. Done right, this work can be a model for the rest of the world.”

António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations


May 2012
SSAR is endorsed by the international community.

September 2015
UNHCR’s Executive Committee calls for reinvigorated international support for implementation of the SSAR at the High-Level Segment on the Afghan Refugee Situation during its 66th session.

December 2018
The UN General Assembly affirms the Global Compact on Refugees.

2012 - 2020
The Governments of the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan and UNHCR implement the SSAR. Several SSAR Quadripartite Steering Committee Conclusions call for greater international burden- and responsibility-sharing.

December 2019
The UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the three Governments launch the SSAR Support Platform in line with the GCR, one of only three platforms globally. Long-term partners and donors made strong statements of support.

February 2020
The Islamabad Refugee Summit convenes the Prime Minister of Pakistan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Second Vice President of Afghanistan, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and more than 500 Ministers and other high-ranking representatives of the international community, civil society, private sector, academia, media, and refugees. The Chairperson’s Summary calls upon the international community to join the Support Platform.

February 2020
The Governments of the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, and UNHCR endorse the Modalities of the Support Platform and adopt Terms of Reference for the Core Group of States.

July 2020
The SSAR Support Platform Portfolio of Projects is launched.

November 2020
The 2020 International Conference on Afghanistan will be convened by Finland.
What we can achieve together

1. **FACILITATING VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION**, including by: i) sharing timely information on the development of the Priority Areas of Return and Reintegration (PARRs) with refugees in the host countries to ensure well-informed decisions on return; ii) supporting the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in distribution of land to returnees; iii) investing in the human capital, resilience and portable skills of refugees in host countries to enhance the potential for return and reintegration; iv) tailoring assistance to enable anchoring upon return; and v) assisting host governments in registration, data collection and documentation processes that support regulated border management and inform cross-border programmes on return and reintegration.

2. **ENHANCING CAPACITY AND CREATING CONDITIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE REINTEGRATION IN AFGHANISTAN** by leveraging humanitarian and development partnerships in the Priority Areas of Return and Reintegration (PARRs). The twenty PARRs link short- and medium-term community-based projects to longer-term development programmes and encourage private sector investment. They are aligned with Afghanistan’s National Peace and Development Framework and relevant National Priority Programmes, notably the Citizens’ Charter, as well as the Displacement and Return Executive Committee’s Policy Framework and Action Plan on Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons.

3. **CHANNELING ADDITIONAL INVESTMENTS INTO THE NATIONAL PUBLIC SERVICES IN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLICS OF IRAN AND PAKISTAN** (education, healthcare, vocational skills development and social protection) to mitigate the impact on national systems and support the inclusive policies of the host governments, benefitting both host communities and refugees pending their return to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.
Having entered a fifth decade of displacement, Afghans are the second largest refugee population in the world under UNHCR’s mandate, in one of the most protracted refugee situations in modern history. While nearly 5.3 million refugees have returned to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan since 2002, the region has remained in flux and return movements have been interspersed with waves of emigration, sporadic flows of refugees, and soaring internal displacement. More than 440,000 Afghans were internally displaced by conflict in 2019 alone, in addition to hundreds of thousands driven from their homes by recurrent natural disasters. Yet despite these challenges, many Afghans retain an abiding desire to return home, and they do so when conditions are conducive. The vast majority of Afghan refugees do want to return -- bringing with them the education, skills and training they have received in exile -- to help rebuild their country and create a future for their families.

Despite this strong desire, voluntary repatriation has decreased in the last 2 years, with only 8,100 refugees having returned to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in 2019. Concurrently, a sharp increase in the movement of predominantly young, urban and mobile Afghans beyond the region toward Europe was seen in 2019. By year-end, Afghans constituted the largest group of mixed arrivals of migrants and refugees in Europe, surpassing Syrians. These movements continued in early 2020 and will likely intensify as people struggle to meet their most basic needs due to the loss of livelihoods resulting from the socio-economic impact of COVID-19.

While the security situation and uncertainties surrounding political transition in Afghanistan did affect recent return and onward movement, refugees continue to identify access to land, livelihoods and basic services, such as education and healthcare, as the key obstacles they face in realizing their hope to return. The SSAR Support Platform is committed to addressing these challenges by building synergies with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework, including the Citizens’ Charter.

“[Afghanistan is my home, I want to go back. But I need to be able to provide for my children. I need to send them to school, take them to a doctor when they are sick, and put food on the table. This is all any father asks.”]

Rahimullah, 46, Afghan refugee

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**ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN**

- **81.8M** population
- **950,000** registered refugees

- 3% in refugee settlements
- 97% living in host community

**ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN**

- **37.1M** population
- **5.3M** refugee returns (since 2002)

**ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF PAKISTAN**

- **212.2M** population
- **1.4M** registered refugees

- 31% in refugee villages
- 69% living in host community

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.
Today the Islamic Republics of Pakistan and Iran host nearly 90 per cent of the world’s 2.7 million Afghan refugees, shouldering a disproportionate share of the collective responsibility to protect them. Given the traditional mixed nature of cross-border movements in the sub-region, both countries also host millions of documented and undocumented Afghans who left their country in search of economic opportunity or access to basic services. The majority of Afghan refugees in both countries reside in urban and peri-urban areas, outside of refugee villages and settlements, relying on national public services that are available to them. Despite their own challenges and the needs of their own populations, the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan have upheld their international protection obligations and have pursued non-discriminatory policies, notably in areas of education, health care and human capital development.

This progressive approach is further evident in the inclusion of Afghan refugees in the governments’ national response plans to the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, the Support Platform also aims to galvanize international solidarity with and assistance for both host countries.

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan or the Islamic Republic of Iran has ranked as the world’s top refugee hosting country for 33 out of the past 40 years.

Project in Focus

Under UNHCR’s multi-year Regional Project for Afghan Refugees in the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan and for Returnees and IDPs in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (2018-2021), supported by the European Union, immediate needs are addressed through the provision of cash and targeted interventions in the health and WASH sector, while sectoral investments in livelihoods and education offer long-term perspectives and build the resilience of people and communities. This approach fosters strengthened linkages between humanitarian aid and development cooperation.
COVID-19

Already overwhelming fragile health systems, the COVID-19 pandemic and measures for prevention and mitigation will have a long-lasting socio-economic impact on the people and States of South-West Asia.

As the situation continues to unfold, economic contraction and loss of GDP will have a ripple effect well beyond 2020, especially for those already living below the poverty line. Dependency upon ODA, high debt-to-GDP ratios, and complex geo-political conditions will constrain the governments’ ability to pursue stimulus measures. Government revenues will be impacted by a sharp downturn in economic activity, while additional expenditures will be required to contain the spread of the virus and support the economy, amidst growing unemployment, inflation and poverty. The capacities of the Islamic Republic of Iran are further constrained by restrictions on international trade, cooperation and aid, while Afghanistan and Pakistan suffer economic losses due to declining remittances and a paralysed informal labour force.

While the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan maintain inclusive and non-discriminatory COVID response measures for all people on their territories, irrespective of nationality and status, the fast growing needs, overstretched capacities and mounting economic vulnerabilities render it impossible to provide all needed assistance to millions of Afghan refugees in addition to local communities.

The majority of Afghan refugees and returnees and large portions of the local communities have lost their livelihoods in the informal sector and are struggling to meet their most basic daily needs of food and shelter.

Traditional coping mechanisms and resilience have been eroded, and economic recession in the principal host countries may trigger further returns. If unprepared and unsupported, these returns will amplify the vulnerabilities of returnees and local communities, increase tensions over scarce resources, and add to protracted internal displacement. A combination of unsustainable returns and an untenable economic situation in the host countries could amplify onward movement to Europe that had begun pre-COVID and continued in early 2020.

The SSAR Support Platform projects will complement the ongoing emergency response through coordinated investments in resilience-building to address the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 in the medium- to long-term, with benefits for refugees, returnees, internally displaced persons and host communities alike. In the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, this will include measures to enhance access to social protection and social safety nets.
Today some 14 million Afghans are estimated to be in need of humanitarian aid. Living conditions have been eroded by decades of conflict, recurrent natural disasters, economic stagnation and under-investment in critical infrastructure and human resources.

Returning refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) most often live side by side with each other and with vulnerable and affected local communities. Together they share meagre resources and over-stretched infrastructure, making an area-based approach essential.

Macro-development investments over the past 18 years have had considerable impact and have resulted in gains for the urban populations. Since 2001, the number of children enrolled in school has risen by 900 per cent from 0.9 million (almost none of them girls) to 9.2 million (39 per cent girls). The number of schools has increased from 3,400 to 16,400. The Government has enacted a number of development reforms to support poverty reduction and social inclusion. At the same time, there has been a lacuna of community-based, conflict-sensitive programmes in rural areas which has negatively impacted prospects for sustainable return and reintegration. The Support Platform seeks to address this gap by building synergies around an area-based approach.

Nearly half of the Afghan population are under the age of 15, giving the country the youngest population worldwide, and rendering strategic investments in education, training and youth empowerment an imperative.

The majority of refugees in the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan cite lack of access to livelihoods, land, shelter and basic services as the main obstacles to return and reintegration. At the 2019 Global Refugee Forum, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan pledged to redouble its efforts to expand returnees’ access to education, health and livelihoods, and called for robust support of the international community.

“Unless all refugees return home, the Afghan nation will remain incomplete.”

H.E. Ashraf Ghani, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

AFGHANISTAN: PRIORITY AREAS OF RETURN AND REINTEGRATION
To address these challenges, in 2019-2020 the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and UNHCR identified **20 Priority Areas of Return and Reintegration (PARRs)**, where targeted and integrated area-based humanitarian-development investments can increase absorption capacity and strengthen (re)integration prospects. Programmes in key sectors in the PARRs will address the most urgent needs and vulnerabilities of the entire community – returnees, IDPs, and non-displaced alike – in a sustainable manner. The PARRs were selected based on: the priorities of the Government, including the *Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework*, the *Citizens’ Charter* and the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*; the number of returnees; protection needs of the communities; availability of basic infrastructure; and the security situation and accessibility.

In 2019 alone, projects implemented in the PARRs by the Government, UNHCR and other partners benefitted nearly 557,000 people. Interventions improved access to shelter and renewable energy, expanded education and skills training, provided entrepreneurial support, quick impact livelihoods projects, and public infrastructure including schools, healthcare facilities, community centres and roads, and delivered cash assistance and in-kind support to vulnerable families. Additional programmes promoted durable solutions for returnees and IDPs through efforts to expand access to land, documentation, social services, self-reliance and inclusion in decision-making structures.

"The international community will contribute resources and expertise to support countries of origin to address root causes, to remove obstacles to return, and to enable conditions favourable to voluntary repatriation. These efforts will take into account existing political and technical mechanisms for coordinating humanitarian, peace-building and development interventions, and be in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development." Global Compact on Refugees, para. 88

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The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's education system has been devastated by more than four decades of conflict. An estimated 3.7 million children are out of school, of whom 60 per cent are girls⁸, and permanent dropouts may increase due to the socio-economic impact of COVID-19. Insufficient schools and low quality instruction - with fewer than 50 per cent of teachers having minimum academic qualifications - are key impediments. Many returnee children and youth who have obtained education in the host countries are unable to continue schooling upon return due to the unavailability of schools. The portfolio of projects in the PARRs will increase access to formal education, especially for girls, through the construction of additional schools. This objective was one of the Islamic Government of Afghanistan's pledges at the Global Refugee Forum.

Insufficient funding, inadequate infrastructure and equipment, ongoing conflict, and recurrent outbreaks of communicable diseases paint a grim reality: one-third of the Afghan population does not have access to basic health services within a two-hour travel radius. Only half of children under the age of 5 have received the recommended vaccinations. The proposed projects would improve access to and quality of health care in the PARRs through construction of health clinics and enhancement of existing health facilities, with a focus on women and rural populations. Since 2019, UNHCR has been supporting midwifery training to enhance community-based reproductive healthcare and provide employment opportunities for women. This work will be further expanded.

Amidst soaring unemployment, lack of formal livelihoods and limited private sector opportunities, many households depend upon daily-wage labour, particularly in the agriculture and construction sectors, to meet their needs. To increase self-reliance and build human capital, with particular focus on women and girls, the portfolio of projects in the PARRs prioritizes vocational training and entrepreneurship. Additional efforts will enhance the quality of national social protection services.

Shelter remains one of the most pressing needs of returnees and IDPs in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Through UNHCR’s Cash for Shelter project, vulnerable households receive a cash grant that enables them to build their own shelter and sanitation facilities, with the technical support of UNHCR and partners. This innovative approach aims to ensure safe, dignified and sustainable housing; empower households and communities while reducing their dependency on humanitarian assistance; address protection concerns; and inject investment into the local economy. Additional projects will improve access to clean, sustainable and renewable energy through provision of solar packages and the extension of power networks. All efforts will be made to link these initiatives to the Government of Afghanistan's Land Allocation Scheme.

Particularly in the context of COVID-19, infrastructure interventions will improve access to potable water, construct WASH facilities, and build irrigation networks and roads.

UNHCR and partners continue to facilitate voluntary repatriation of registered Afghan refugees through services and support provided at four Encashment Centres located in Jalalabad, Kandahar, Herat and Kabul. Returnees receive a cash grant averaging USD 250 per person to meet immediate needs including transportation. Returnees also receive services including basic health screening, vaccinations for children, mine risk awareness training, referrals to legal assistance to obtain civil documentation, and referrals of persons with specific needs.

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What we can achieve together in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

- **USD 800**
  - one family receives a solar package and has access to clean energy

- **USD 800 + USD 1,500**
  - one person receives vocational training and business start-up assets, improving the well-being of the whole family

- **USD 3,300**
  - one family receives cash for shelter and has a place to call home

- **USD 12,000**
  - 700 people have access to WASH facilities, improving their health and hygiene

- **USD 50,000**
  - an entire community of 3,500 has a new solar-powered potable water scheme

- **USD 170,000**
  - construction of a 6-classroom school = 600 more children go to school per year

- **USD 300,000**
  - construction of a 12-classroom school = 1,200 more children go to school per year

- **USD 300,000**
  - construction of a basic health clinic = 10,000 people can access basic healthcare

A Partnership for Solidarity and Resilience
Currently some 1 million registered Afghan refugees live in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The overwhelming majority of refugees (97 per cent) live in urban and peri-urban areas with their host communities, with the remainder residing in 20 settlements. UNHCR supports the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran in sustaining inclusive and progressive policies towards refugees, who face severe challenges in meeting their most basic needs. UNHCR also facilitates solutions, including voluntary repatriation.

“ Afghans should be fully respected.”

Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran

PROJECT IN FOCUS
Since 2015, following an initiative of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, all refugees can enrol in the Universal Public Health Insurance (UPHI) scheme, on par with Iranian nationals, and access treatment services at subsidized costs. In 2020, UNHCR, in partnership with the Bureau for Foreign Aliens and Immigrants’ Affairs, the Ministry of Health and Medical Education and the Iranian Health Insurance Organisation, has contributed to financing the insurance premium for 100,000 extremely vulnerable refugees.
The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has maintained a fully inclusive approach to refugee education. More than 480,000 Afghan and Iraqi children are enrolled in primary and secondary schools. Refugees can also access tertiary education and national literacy training programmes.

To support the efforts of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, projects will target refugee students and their parents by promoting enrolment, reducing dropouts, and equipping, constructing and rehabilitating schools in areas hosting large refugee populations. Literacy courses will be provided to support participation of refugees in formal education.

All refugees enjoy access to primary health care at no cost, on par with nationals, and can access healthcare by paying the approved tariff through the Islamic Republic of Iran’s Universal Public Health Insurance (UPHI) scheme. In addition to the health benefits, UPHI improves refugees’ social protection and reduces high out-of-pocket expenditures. UNHCR covers premium fees for the most vulnerable refugees, including those with special diseases⁹. In 2019, 92,000 extremely vulnerable refugees had access to UPHI through UNHCR’s contribution to the scheme. More support is needed to subsidize and cover the insurance premiums for the most vulnerable. The health projects prioritize support for UPHI, as well as enhanced access of refugees to primary healthcare, including through construction and rehabilitation of health posts.

Efforts to enable refugees to access vocational training have been recognized as a key priority. Such projects will build refugees’ financial, human and social capital, better preparing them for voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan or for third-country solutions.

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⁹ As defined by the Ministry of Health and Medical Education.
What we can achieve together in the Islamic Republic of Iran

- **USD 102**: one vulnerable refugee can access Universal Public Health Insurance for 12 months
- **USD 190**: one refugee with a disability is provided with support
- **USD 290**: one refugee child is supported to access primary, secondary or high-school education
- **USD 71,700**: construction/rehabilitation and equipment of a health centre
- **USD 574,000**: construction of a 12-classroom school (primary, secondary, high-school levels)

© UNHCR/Morteza Nikoubazl
The Islamic Republic of Pakistan is the world’s second largest refugee hosting country, with 1.4 million registered Afghan refugees (Proof of Registration (PoR) card holders), some 880,000 Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) holders, and an estimated 300,000-500,000 undocumented Afghans. The majority of refugees reside in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (58 per cent) and Balochistan (23 per cent) – the least-developed provinces of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, with the highest multi-dimensional poverty indicators.

Nearly 70 per cent of refugees live in urban and semi-urban areas with their Pakistani host communities and rely on access to national public services and local, mostly informal, labour markets. The remaining thirty per cent live in 54 refugee villages. 73 per cent are second or third generation refugees, having been born in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Children and youth constitute 61 per cent of the Afghan refugee population in the country – a figure that underlines the imperative of robust investment in education, resilience-building and empowerment to enhance prospects for solutions.

The presence of millions of Afghan refugees over four decades has placed a heavy burden on public services, local infrastructures and resources. To redress the impact on host communities and promote social cohesion, in 2009 the Government, with the support of UNHCR, UNDP and a consortium of other UN agencies, launched the Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas (RAHA) programme.

The aspirations [of Afghan refugees] are genuine and must be met with equal opportunities. Today, I am asking you to join hands with Pakistan to provide for their basic needs and enable them to live a dignified life. No state can handle the magnitude of this crisis alone, international cooperation is required, more than ever before. It is imperative that you revalidate the principles of sharing responsibility and burden.

For Pakistan, the caring of refugees is shaped by the human values of our people, the values of generosity, compassion and hospitality.”

H.E. Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan, Refugee Summit Islamabad, 17-18 February 2020

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.
Like the PARRs in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, RAHA constitutes the cornerstone of the implementation of the SSAR in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. RAHA is aligned with and complementary to Pakistan’s efforts to meet the Sustainable Development Goals and to realize the 2030 Agenda’s commitment to “leave no one behind”. It remains the principal responsibility-sharing platform for mitigating the impact of the protracted refugee presence, supporting protection space, and enhancing the community acceptance of Afghan refugees. Through targeted humanitarian and development investment in national systems, social protection, income-generating opportunities and infrastructure, RAHA delivers whole-of-community resilience-building measures benefitting refugees and their host communities. Over the last decade, RAHA benefitted 12.4 million people through more than 4,260 projects (totaling USD 220 million) in 47 districts across all provinces of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.¹⁰ In 2019, RAHA projects in the sectors of education, health, livelihoods, infrastructure and WASH benefitted 280,000 refugees and their host communities.

"In this broader platform, each of the new entrants has an important and committed role to play...including States, development actors, civil society, and the private sector, and would give fresh emphasis to the strategy and priorities of the SSAR.”

H.E. Me hoof Sultan, Federal Minister of States and Frontier Regions of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan at the launch of the SSAR Support Platform

In 2017-18, the Government of Pakistan, in cooperation with the Government of Afghanistan, registered some 880,000 previously undocumented Afghan nationals.

¹⁰ More information on RAHA is available at https://unhcrpk.org/raha/

PROJECT IN FOCUS

To support the Islamic Republic of Pakistan’s inclusive policies, in 2018-2019 UNHCR, in cooperation with the Government, constructed the first-ever vaccine storage facility in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, which hosts more than 820,000 refugees. Worth USD 1.2 million, the facility stores large quantities of vaccines, benefitting 1 million children and 1 million women of child-bearing age, including refugees and their Pakistani host communities.
**Areas of focus: Islamic Republic of Pakistan**

**EDUCATION SDG 4**

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan enables Afghan refugee children to access national education institutions. This generosity is all the more remarkable as nearly 23 million Pakistani children are out of school. There is an urgent need to support the Government’s efforts to improve access to and the quality of primary and secondary education, with a focus on infrastructure, to accommodate all Afghan refugee and Pakistani children. The portfolio of projects prioritizes the construction of new schools and classrooms and the upgrading and expansion of existing schools. School equipment and furniture will be provided, as will solar energy systems for larger schools.

**HEALTH SDG 3**

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan provides Afghan refugees with access to its national health care system. It has also ensured that refugees are included in COVID-19 prevention and response programmes. The portfolio of projects supports this inclusive approach by enhancing infrastructure and the quality and coverage of primary, secondary and tertiary health facilities through construction and the provision of medical equipment and solar systems.

**LIVELIHOODS SDG 4 & 8**

With 64 per cent of the population under the age of 30, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan has the largest generation of young people in its history. Pakistan’s Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system faces multiple challenges, including access, quality and alignment with market needs. Some three million young people enter the job market each year, but the TVET system can accommodate fewer than half a million trainees annually in its 3,500 institutes across the country. This means that a large number of youth enter the job market without any skills training. The large and very young Afghan refugee population only puts additional pressure on the overstretched vocational training opportunities and the job market.

Despite these challenges, the Government recognizes that interventions aimed at building the financial, human and social capital of refugees yield important dividends, building refugees’ self-reliance during their stay in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and bolstering their potential for sustainable reintegration upon return to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Afghan refugees are therefore encouraged to enroll in the TVET programmes of its premier institution, the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC). This enables Afghan refugees to acquire transferrable skills and promotes social cohesion with host communities. In February 2019, the Government took a landmark decision to enable Afghan refugees to open bank accounts, paving the way for greater financial and economic inclusion and opportunity.

In line with the Government’s priorities, the portfolio of projects includes the construction of government vocational skills training institutes, provision of equipment, enhancement of Women’s Protection Centers, and the provision of certified and internationally-recognized technical and vocational skill trainings. Support is provided for start-up toolkits and apprenticeship opportunities for graduates. Women’s empowerment is prioritized across all interventions.

**WATER SDG 6**

Access to clean drinking water remains one of the most pressing needs of Afghan refugees and their host communities, particularly in the Balochistan province. Water table levels across the country have declined as a result of droughts, desertification and human intervention, affecting local economies and leaving communities without potable water. The Support Platform projects will enhance access to water through new or upgraded water supply and distribution.

**VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION**

UNHCR will continue to facilitate voluntary repatriation to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan by providing updated information on return areas, with emphasis on the development of the PARRs, and supporting the processing of returnees at two Voluntary Repatriation Centres in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.
What we can achieve together in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

USD 600 + USD 300 + USD 100
one refugee receives certified, internationally recognized technical and vocational skill training + a start-up toolkit + an apprenticeship opportunity

USD 15,000
one Government health facility receives a solar system = 1,200 people benefit per month

USD 15,000
one school is solarized = 700 children enjoy a safe and sustainable learning environment every year

USD 160,000
collection of a water supply and distribution scheme = 2,500 people have access to potable water

USD 250,000
one Government health facility receives life-saving equipment = 1,200 people benefit per month

USD 350,000
construction of an 8-classroom Government school = 900 more children attending school per year

USD 1.5 million
construction of a state-of-the-art Government Technical and Vocational Training Institute = 1,500 people become self-reliant

USD 2 million
construction of a basic health clinic = 10,000 people can access basic healthcare
The collective work and achievements of the Support Platform will be reviewed against the agreed Indicator Framework for the Global Compact on Refugees, which provides a number of outcomes and indicators for each of its four objectives. These objectives – to ease pressures on host countries, enhance refugee self-reliance, expand access to third-country solutions, and support conditions in counties of origin for return in safety and dignity – are well aligned with those of the SSAR.

Through monitoring informed by the GCR indicators, participants in the Support Platform will obtain a global overview of international solidarity and responsibility-sharing for the Afghan refugee situation and the impact for refugees, returnees and host communities. Because the portfolio of projects prioritizes investment in education, livelihoods and health in all three countries, the following GCR indicators are most relevant to their implementation:

- Proportion of refugees and returnees who have access to decent work
- Proportion of refugee and returnee children enrolled in the national education system (primary and secondary)
- Proportion of refugees, returnees, and host community population living below the national poverty line

These will be supplemented by a comparable indicator to capture support for national health services:

- Proportion of refugees and returnees who have access to basic health services

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Annex I: Country Portfolios of Projects

As noted in the High Commissioner’s foreword, this portfolio of projects, presented by the Governments of the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan and UNHCR, is the first joint initiative of the Support Platform. It is just one critical part of the revitalized investment that the Platform seeks to mobilize, and will be complemented by the support and direct interventions of other participants and partners.

Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Potential Output (number of units)</th>
<th>Average Unit Cost</th>
<th>Average Number of Beneficiaries per Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Population has optimal access to education</td>
<td>Construction of school premises (scalable 6, 8, 10, and 12 classroom buildings), particularly aimed at increasing enrolment of girls</td>
<td>Construction of 24 school premises</td>
<td>$ 300,000</td>
<td>1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Health status of the population improved</td>
<td>Construction and/or improvement of Basic Health Clinics (BHC), Comprehensive Health Clinics (CHC) and other existing health facilities</td>
<td>Construction / improvement of 15 health facilities</td>
<td>$ 550,000</td>
<td>11,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livelihoods</td>
<td>Self reliance and livelihoods improved</td>
<td>Business start-up support and skills development (vocational training suspended due to covid-19)</td>
<td>Support to home-based business and skills development for 460 households</td>
<td>$ 1,100</td>
<td>460 households</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelter</td>
<td>Shelter and infrastructure established, improved and maintained</td>
<td>Provision of solar packages and cash grants for shelter to families</td>
<td>Support to 5,000 families</td>
<td>$ 5,200</td>
<td>estimated 5,000 families with average 7 persons per family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: including WASH</td>
<td>Improved community infrastructure to promote livelihoods and hygiene</td>
<td>Construction of WASH facilities, roads, irrigation networks, water wells, power networks, kindergartens, sports facilities, community centers</td>
<td>48 initiatives</td>
<td>$ 800,000</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Islamic Republic of Pakistan**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Potential Output</th>
<th>Average Unit Cost</th>
<th>Average Beneficiaries per Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Population has optimal access to education</td>
<td>Construction and/or upgrade of boys’ and girls’ schools;</td>
<td>Construction and/or upgrade of 51 education facilities</td>
<td>$271,471</td>
<td>1,578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>construction of additional buildings and classrooms; equipping education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>facilities for solar power</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Health status of the population improved</td>
<td>Construction of health units, mother and child health posts, hospitals</td>
<td>Construction and/or expansion of 57 health facilities</td>
<td>$866,667</td>
<td>3,360 / Month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and/or expansion of existing hospitals; supply of additional equipment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and equipping education facilities for solar power</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livelihoods</td>
<td>Self reliance and livelihoods improved</td>
<td>Construction of state-of-the-art institutes to train to prepare youth</td>
<td>Construction of 15 centers including 3 women’s centers; support to 4,000</td>
<td>$500,000</td>
<td>1,313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>for emerging and conventional fields; provision of vocational</td>
<td>persons</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>training equipment and start up tool kits</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>WASH</td>
<td>Supply of potable water increased or maintained</td>
<td>Construction of drinking water supply schemes along with water distribution</td>
<td>Construction of 27 water supply schemes</td>
<td>$160,000</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>system</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Protection</td>
<td>Provision of documentation for refugees linked to</td>
<td>Re-verification and issuance of new smart cards to Proof of Registration</td>
<td>Smart cards with biometrics to 100% refugee population (POR card holders) in</td>
<td>$718 per person</td>
<td>1,42 million POR card holders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and voluntary</td>
<td>their temporary stay in Pakistan and voluntary</td>
<td>POR (PRO card) holders</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>repatriation</td>
<td>repatriation</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Average unit costs and beneficiary breakdowns will be provided by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran*
Accessibility Organistion for Afghan Disabled (AOAD), Action Against Hunger (AAH), Action Aid for Afghanistan (AAA), Action Contre la Faim (ACF), ActionAid, Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), Afghan Agency for Integrated Development, Afghan Amputee Bicyclist for Rehabilitation And Recreation (AABRAR), Afghan Bureau for Reconstruction, Afghan Community and Health Rehabilitation Organization (ACHRO), Afghan Community Rehabilitation Unit, Afghan Development Association (ADA), Afghan General Help Coordination Office (AGHCO), Afghan Mobile Reconstruction Association, Afghan Planning Agency (APA), Afghan Public Welfare Organization, Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS), Afghan Refugee and Repatriation Cell (ARCC), Afghan Society Relief and Care Organization, Afghan Technical Consultants (ATC), Afghan Unique Development Organization, Afghan Women Council (AWC), Afghan Women Right Organisation (AWRO), Afghan Women's Educational Center (AWEC), Afghan Women's Resource Center (AWRC), Afghanaid, Afghanistan Development and Education Organization (ADEO), Afghanistan Development and Welfare Services Organization (ADWSO), Afghanistan Development ORG for Afghans (ADOA), Afghanistan Independent Educational & Services Organization (AIESO), Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), Afghanistan National Construction Coordination, Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA), Afghanistan Reconstruction and Planning Department, Afghanistan Rehabilitation and Education Programme, Afghanistan's Children - A New Approach (ASCHIANA), Aga Khan Agency for Habitat (AKAH), Aga Khan Foundation, Agence d'Aide a la Coopération Technique et au Développement (ACTED), Agency Coordination For Afghan Relief (ACBAR), Agency for Assistance and Development of Afghanistan (AADA), Agency for Farming Support, Agency for Humanitarian and Development Assistance for Afghanistan, Agency for Rehabilitation and Energy Conservation, Afghanistan, Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED), Agency of Consultancy for Training, Aik Hunar Aik Nagar, Alborz Insurance Company, Alfalah Development Foundation, Alfalah Institute of Higher Education, Alisei – Italy, American Refugee Council (ARC), Ansari Rehabilitation Association for Afghanistan (ARAA), Ariana Construction and Rehabilitation Unit, ARZU, Afghanistan, Assistance For Health, Education And Development, Assisting Marsh Arabs & Refugees, Iran, Associate in Community Development, Association for Aid and Relief, Japan (AAR Japan), Association for Protection of Refugee Women and Children, Australia, Austria, AWAZ Welfare Organization, Azat Foundation Balochistan, Balochistan Forest and Wildlife Department (BFWD), Balochistan Rural Development and Research Society, Balochistan Rural Support Programme, Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences, Basic Education and Employable Skill Training (BEST), Basic Education and Employable Skill Training, Pakistan, Basic Education for Afghan Refugees, Behnam Daheshpour Charity Organization, Belgium, Bint-E-Fatima Shelter Home, Blue Veins, Blumont Global Development, BRAC International, Brazil, Bulgaria, Bureau of Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs (BAFIA), Ministry of Interior, Islamic Republic of Iran, Canada, CARE Afghanistan, Care International, Care of Afghan Families (CAF), Caritas Germany, Caritas Lahore, Catholic Organization for Relief and Development Aid, Catholic Relief Services, Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC), Center For Peace And Development, Central Afghanistan Welfare Committee (CAWCo), Centre of Excellence for Rural Development (CERO), CESVI, Chaghi Development Organization, Chain of Hope Charity Organization, Chief Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees (CCAR), Pakistan, Chief Provisonal Commission for Children (CPC), ChildFund, Children in Crisis (CIC), China, Christian Aid, Church World Service, Citizens' Commission for Human Development, Code Pakistan, Commissioner for Afghan Refugees (CAR) Baluchistan, Commissioner for Afghan Refugees (CAR) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Commissioner for Afghan Refugees (CAR) Punjab, Community Action for Healing Poverty Organization (CAHPO), Community Advancement and Rural Empowerment, Community Awareness and Development Society, Community Development and Social Affairs Charity Organization, Community World Service Asia (CWSA), Concern Worldwide, Cooperation Center for Afghanistan, Coordination for Afghanistan Relief (CoAR), Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (CHA), Coordination of Rehabilitation and Development Services for Afghanistan (CRDSA), Council for Community Development, Courage Development Foundation, Czech Republic, Danish Assistance to Afghan Rehabilitation and Technical Training (DAARTT), Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR), Danish Demining Group (DDG), Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Dastak Charitable Trust, De Laas Gul Welfare Programme, Demining agency for Afghanistan (DAFA), Denmark, Departments of Education (across the country), Afghanistan, Departments of Public Health (across the country), Afghanistan, Departments of Refugees & Repatriation (DORR) (across the country), Afghanistan, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Development and Ability Organisation (DAO), Development and Care Group (DCG), Development and Humanitarian Services for Afghanistan, Development of Afghan Women Organization, Disabled Welfare Association, Dost Welfare Foundation, Pakistan, Drugs & Narcotics Educational Services for Humanity (DANESH), EDHI Shelter, Education and Rights, Education Health Social Awareness & Rehabilitation Foundation (EHSAR), Educational & Training Center for Poor Girls and Women of Afghanistan (ETCPGWA), Educational Society Development Organization, Emerging Leaders Consulting Services, Empowerment and Development, Empowerment Center for Women (ECW), Engineering & Rehabilitation Services for Afghanistan, Entrepreneurship and Career Development Institute, Equal Access (EA), European Union, Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) Disaster Management Authority, Pakistan, Female Rehabilitation and Development Organization (FRDO), Finland, Forest, Rangelands, and Watershed Organisation (FRWO), Foundation for Rural Development, France, Frontier Primary Health Care (FPHC), Gender and Reproductive Health Organization, German Agro-Action (Deutsche Weltungerhilfe), Germany, Global Welfare, Green Way Organization, Greenstar, Gruppo Volontariato Civile (GVC), Halo Trust and Deming Agency for Afghanistan, Handicap International (HI), Hashoo Foundation, Health and Nutrition Development Society, Health Net International, Netherlands, Health, Education And Environment Programme Balochistan, Help The Afghan Children (HTAC), Helping Organization for People's Empowerment, HEWAD Reconstruction, Health and Humanitarian Assistance committee, High Afghanistan Rehabilitation Organization (HARO), Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe (HELP), Hujra Village Support Organization, Human Development & Relief Organization (HRDO), Human Development Organization, Human Dignity Society, Human Resource Development Agency (HRDA), Human Rights...
A Partnership for Solidarity and Resilience
The Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees is working for...

Resilience

livelihoods

Education

youth empowerment

SKILLS TRAINING

Voluntary Repatriation

health