

Afghanistan

September 2022

Afghanistan continues to face an unprecedented humanitarian crisis due to the severe economic situation, high levels of poverty, natural disasters (earthquakes, drought and floods) and the immediate aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some 24.4 million people – 59 per cent of Afghanistan’s estimated 42 million population needs humanitarian and protection assistance in 2022. This is largely

influenced by spiralling food insecurity, dangerous levels of malnutrition, eroded livelihood as well as displacement and increasingly complex protection risks and needs. In the last two years, over 1 million IDPs have returned to their places of origin with at least 974,220 in 2021 and 179,987 in 2022. This year alone by 1 October, 3,751 Afghan refugees returned to Afghanistan, already surpassing those who returned in 2020 and in 2021.

Also, the number of IDPs due to conflict countrywide is now estimated at 3.4 million. UNHCR remains engaged with partners to deliver life-saving assistance to those in need. So far in 2022, 2.7 million people including refugee returnees have benefitted from community-based interventions through an area-based approach in the Priority Areas of Return and Reintegration (PARRs).

KEY INDICATORS

UNHCR reached some **891,600** who received emergency assistance and another 2.7 million people benefiting from services in the 80 PARRs as of 30 September 2022

- **566,800** individuals
Provided with cash assistance

- **324,800** individuals
Provided with in-kind and other assistance

- **2.7 million** individuals
Benefited from services in the 80 PARRs

- **1.1 million** individuals Assessed

NOTE: The total number of persons supported may include multiple counting of beneficiaries receiving assistance through more than one activity during the reporting period.

POPULATION OF CONCERN AS OF 30 SEPTEMBER 2022

Refugees in Afghanistan	59,789
Internally displaced Afghans	3.4M*
Refugee returnees	3,776**
IDP returnees	168,096***

Estimates of IDPs in Afghanistan are provided by OCHA.

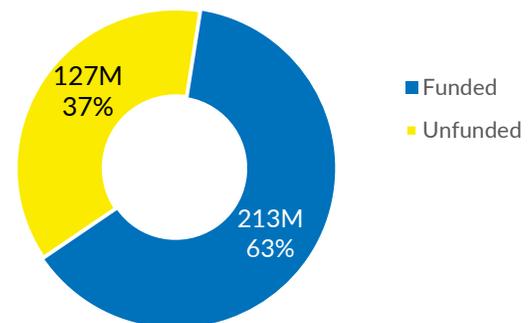
**Refugee returnees represent those who have returned from Jan 2021 to 2 Oct 2022 (Source: UNHCR Returnee Monitoring)

***IDP returnees are those who went back to their communities in 2022 (Source: UNHCR Rapid Assessment as of 28 Sept 2022)

FUNDING (AS OF 29 SEPTEMBER 2022)

USD 340.3 million

requested for the Afghanistan Operation



Afghan women under the project MADE15 - supported by UNHCR in Herat Province showcase their products. ©WADAN

Update on Achievements

Operational Context

The humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan remains overwhelming and the severity of the crisis has reached an unparalleled scale. The situation has been further exacerbated by the increasing insecurity levels as well as the continued political and economic uncertainties. Overall, 3.4 million people are estimated to be internally displaced countrywide, due to conflict while more than 2 million people are refugees in the neighboring countries. According to the 2022 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), about 24.4 million people of Afghanistan's estimated 42 million population will need humanitarian and protection assistance in 2022.

The already challenging humanitarian environment has been further compounded by series of natural disasters including the June 2022 earthquake in Paktika and Khost provinces and heavy floods affecting several provinces in Afghanistan. UNHCR and other agencies undertook assessments of the affected areas, and the findings indicated extensive damage to houses, absence of basic services such as water, education, health, electricity, access roads in the remote locations, and lack of viable livelihood opportunities.

As part of the inter-agency efforts, UNHCR has reinforced its operational presence on the ground, and continues to support affected communities through emergency activities such as the distribution of emergency shelter tents, non-food items and dignity kits for vulnerable women and girls. The epicenters of the recent flashfloods were in the provinces of Uruzgan, Kandahar, Zabul, Paktika, Ghazni, Logar, Khost, Paktya, Nangarhar, Laghman, Kunar and Nuristan.



Kutobzai Girls High School constructed by UNHCR in Mehteriam District, Laghman Province ©UNHCR

Key Developments



PROTECTION

To enhance the protection environment in Afghanistan, UNHCR is currently implementing Community-Based Protection interventions to inform its delivery of life-saving assistance to improve access to essential services. These interventions restore dignity, mitigate further protection risks, and provide support to foster resilient and peaceful communities. Promoting local integration and decreasing pressure on shared resources in communities is critical, particularly in the areas of high displacement and the areas of high returns, through interventions that strengthen UNHCR's area-based programming in the Priority Areas of Return and Reintegration (PARRs).

As the lead Protection agency, UNHCR monitors the overall protection environment in Afghanistan through inter-agency frameworks and through established community-based protection monitoring mechanisms. This approach ensures that protection risks are identified and mitigated, specific needs addressed, and that the people UNHCR serves including the most vulnerable individuals can meet their basic needs through financial support, in-kind (material) assistance and referral systems to appropriate services in response to the existing protection and socio-economic risks.

Achievements and Impact

- Between 01 January to 30 September 2022, UNHCR provided over **1.5** million individuals with protection support and assistance (ranging from protection monitoring in areas with refugee returnees and other locations) to interviews during border, household monitoring/assessments and assistance to vulnerable populations. As part of the key protection assistance and support, refugee returnees received voluntary repatriation grants and in-kind assistance as well as referrals for persons with specific needs (PSNs). Individuals including PSNs were provided with cash for their basic needs and other support while others received psycho-social support (PSS). Urban refugees were also supported to enhance access to higher education. Under the Communicating with Community (CwC) and Accountability to Affected People (AAP) approach, UNHCR Protection team also handled phone calls, responded to e-mails, and provided queries on the general information and queries requested. These interventions have significantly helped to reduce protection risks, restore the dignity of beneficiaries, and mitigate some of the gaps created by the ongoing socio-economic crisis in Afghanistan.
- Since the beginning of the year (1 January to 1 October), **3,751** individuals returned to Afghanistan from Pakistan (**3,467**), Iran (**279**), Azerbaijan (**4**) and the Russian Federation (**1**). The ratio of returnees from Pakistan among the overall returnees was higher compared to the ratio recorded in 2021 where 63% returned from Iran, 32% from Pakistan, and 5% from other countries and compared to 2020 where 48% returned from Iran, 48% from Pakistan and 4% from other countries. The level of return from Pakistan so far in 2022 stands around **93%**. In August, UNHCR equally increased the individual returnees cash grant from **\$250** to **\$375** to enable returnees cover high transportation fares and the increasing living costs in Afghanistan.
- Between January and September, **118,210** monitoring interviews were conducted with Afghans moving to/from Afghanistan at the eight official border crossing points with Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. **63,107** people were recorded to have left the country (outflow) while **54,689** persons returned into the country (inflow). 414 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were used to monitor movements through the approximately **20** unofficial border crossing-points with Iran, Pakistan, and Tajikistan.
- UNHCR also conducted **593** interviews with randomly selected refugee returnees (**323** M and **270** F) at encashment centres (ECs) in Kandahar (**230**), Herat (**107**), Kabul (**199**) and Jalalabad (**57**). Findings from the interviews suggested that economic challenges such as high cost of living and lack of employment opportunities in Iran and Pakistan remain the main push factors for return. UNHCR's assistance package and perceived improved security situation as well as re-unification with families in Afghanistan were also mentioned as some of the main reasons for return.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- To effectively respond to the growing protection needs of affected populations in Afghanistan, UNHCR had planned to assist about half a million individuals in 2022 under its community-based protection framework. In addition to the global economic impact of COVID-19, events in Afghanistan after August 2021 have severely affected the coping mechanisms of vulnerable population groups in the country and increased the protection risks of internally displaced people, refugee returnees, as well as some **59,787** refugees and asylum-seekers in the country. UNHCR will continue its efforts on advocacy and resource mobilization for all the targeted affected populations in need of protection services including those affected by natural disasters such as earthquakes and flash floods.



EDUCATION

UNHCR and other partners continue to advocate with relevant officials in Afghanistan, and as part of the broader international advocacy efforts to persuade the interim authorities to reconsider their decision of suspending secondary education for adolescent girls from Grades 7-12. In response to this decision by the Afghan authorities, critical donor partners such as the World Bank shelved projects worth about **\$600** million dollars. Despite these challenges, UNHCR Afghanistan's multi-faceted approach to education is benefiting affected communities through the construction of integrated schools to facilitate access to an inclusive learning environment including to groups with specific needs. These interventions focus on building on past achievements in the PARRs, which seek to build long-term solutions for affected communities.

Achievements and Impact

- With the support of UNHCR, and under the DAFI Scholarship (**Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative**), **50** eligible Afghan refugee returnee students at Kabul University continue to receive assistance since 2019. **50** per cent of students benefiting from the scholarships are female with several monthly cash grants covering a range of costs, including study materials, food, transportation, accommodation, and other expenses. This year, the programme has been expanded to other return areas to benefit **20** additional eligible returnee students through partnership with the Nangarhar University in Nangarhar Province and Balkh University in Balkh Province. In Nangarhar province 10 returnee students (6 female and 4 male) were selected to benefit from the programme while the selection process for another 10 slots in Balkh University continued. Meanwhile, The DAFI programme serves as a foundation for social and professional development, allowing its scholars to build careers in competitive fields of employment and thereby also contribute to the progress of their respective countries.
- In the PARRs, UNHCR is supporting communities as part of the broader efforts to link humanitarian and development investments to essential services in education. From January-September 2022, **21** schools were constructed by UNHCR to benefit **46,815** girls and boys in return areas.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Education for women and girls remains restricted since the change of political leadership in Afghanistan in August 2021. Girls above Grade 6 are not allowed to enrol in school. This requires continuous advocacy efforts to help the girls resume their learning. There is also a need to ensure that the existing education systems are fully-funded to include support towards teacher and staff salaries – and ensuring appropriate measures that guarantee service continuity. UNHCR will continue mobilizing resources to the extent possible, to address some of these gaps as part of its protection interventions.



HEALTH

Achievements and Impact

- By the end of September, UNHCR had provided **16,715** dignity and hygiene kits as part of life-saving assistance to women in need. In addition, UNHCR provided **33,076** persons with psycho-social support during the reporting period.
- From January - September, UNHCR also constructed **9** health centers in the PAARs benefiting some **151,786** women and men with improved maternity clinics, reproductive health facilities psychosocial

counseling. With the assistance, the physical, mental, and psychological wellbeing of individuals supported is enhanced to respond to post-conflict situations.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Risks associated with the economic collapse and the increase in humanitarian needs have been further compounded by sporadic armed attacks, climate change, insufficient health services and the COVID-19 pandemic impacts. These risks could potentially drive additional internal movements such as forcing Afghans to seek refuge outside the country.



WATER AND SANITATION

Achievements and Impact

- From January – September, UNHCR provided 22,045 pieces of jerry cans and 22,337 pieces of metallic buckets to beneficiary households in several affected communities to benefit some 224,836 individuals and enabling them to draw and store clean water to mitigate waterborne diseases mainly among children and other vulnerable populations.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- The shortages of safe water for drinking and handwashing have been causes of waterborne diseases such as watery diarrhoea outbreaks particularly among children.



SHELTER AND CORE RELIEF ITEMS (CRIS)

Shelter

- A core component of UNHCR's work in Afghanistan is ensuring access to adequate shelter to persons in need. In Afghanistan, UNHCR is responding to the shelter needs of affected communities through provision of emergency shelter kits, tent distribution and installation and shelter construction and repair. UNHCR also provides cash for shelter as support to refugee and IDP returnees to repair partially damaged homes in their areas of origin. UNHCR also ensures the repair of essential service infrastructure and public facilities in the PARRs.

Achievements and Impact

- From January – September, UNHCR provided 11,218 households with emergency shelter kits, cash for transitional/permanent shelters, and cash for rent and cash for minor and major shelter repairs. Those assisted during this period were able to address their shelter needs as part of UNHCR's broader humanitarian assistance to support affected communities in Afghanistan.
- UNHCR as part of its response to the June 2022 devastating earthquake, initiated the construction process of 1,300 earthquake resilient shelters, with 300 permanent shelters in Spera District, Khost Province and 1,000 permanent shelters in Barmal districts in Paktika Province.

Core Relief Items (CRIs)

- UNHCR provides non-food items to internally displaced persons, returnees and vulnerable host communities based on their prevailing needs. A standard family kit of CRIs is intended for an average household size of seven individuals and comprises high thermal blankets, jerry cans, plastic sheets, kitchen sets and solar lamps. Supplementary and seasonal items are also distributed and can include winter jackets and hygiene kits.

Achievements and Impact

- Between January and September, UNHCR distributed core relief items to 212,359 individuals, and hygiene and dignity kits to 16,715 women and girls. These items assisted to address the protection, basic and hygiene needs of the most vulnerable women and girls.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- UNHCR continues its advocacy and consultation both in Kabul and at the provincial level, bilaterally and with inter-agency approach to enhance female workers' participation in all UNHCR activities. Restriction on partner female staff including freedom of movement has affected community outreach including during the assessment phase, which affects access to vulnerable women/girls to enable them to articulate their needs and address the protection risks.



ACCESS TO ENERGY

Achievements and Impact

- From January – September, UNHCR provided **17,199** solar panels to enable about **248,590** people access clean energy, reliable lighting, facilitating home-based livelihood opportunities, children's education, and fostering safer environments. Additionally, this has helped to mitigate protection risks including cases of gender-based violence.



REINTEGRATION/COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND SELF RELIANCE

Fostering local integration as well as decreasing the pressure on shared resources in communities is important, particularly in the areas of high displacement and return. This is being pursued through interventions that support UNHCR's area-based programming in the PARRs. Under the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR), UNHCR supports refugees who voluntarily decide to repatriate and conducts returnee monitoring to collect real-time information on return trends, reasons for return, their protection situation during the return and reintegration.

UNHCR has expanded its Priority Areas of Return and Reintegration (PARRs) from **55 to 80** in Afghanistan (5 cities and **75** districts covering over **14,000** villages). In the PAARs, UNHCR and partners link community-based protection initiatives to medium-to-long-term development objectives to improve access to basic services and infrastructure in the areas where there are internally displaced persons (IDPs), and Afghan refugee returnees. The PARRs are at the heart of UNHCR's protection and solutions work in Afghanistan, facilitating access to durable solutions for refugee and IDP returnees and channeling multisectoral interventions by various partners that span the humanitarian-development nexus to help stabilize communities and promote resilience and self-reliance.

Achievements and Impact

- From January - September this year, UNHCR supported **229,971** individual IDPs with cash assistance for reintegration (CARE) and **3,760** persons with entrepreneurship and business support assistance. UNHCR continues to invest in crucial service delivery sectors such as health and education to support the sustainable reintegration of refugees and IDPs who previously returned to their areas of origin or may potentially do so in the future. The investments also benefit local communities and displaced people living in areas of return. By the end of September, **1,640,247** individuals had benefited from the schools and clinics constructed. **31,452** individuals were also provided with cash/vouchers for business start-ups. Additionally, **2.7** million people benefited from community infrastructure in the PAARs during the reporting period.



DURABLE SOLUTIONS

Achievements and Impact

- To leverage on the efforts being undertaken by humanitarian agencies aimed at strengthening sustainable reintegration, self-reliance, and durable solutions for returnees, refugees, and IDPs, UNHCR is strategically engaging with key donors and supporters of the Core Group of the SSAR Support Platform and other actors. They include the Asian Development Bank (ADB), World Bank, UN-Habitat, UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), BRAC, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Labor Organization (ILO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), World Health Organization (WHO) and various NGOs around key

thematic areas. UNHCR also continues to engage with the private sector, members of the host community and civil society organizations to promote inclusion and participation.

- UNHCR continues to engage on a regional level through the Quadripartite Steering Committee of the SSAR and through the One-UN and UN Transitional Engagement Framework (TEF) to support and provide life-saving assistance and facilitate access to basic services for people of concern, as well as identifying and providing support for durable solutions. In addition, UNHCR will continue to lead the Protection Cluster and the Emergency Shelter and Non-Food Items Cluster. UNHCR also leads the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Working Group, co-leads the Return and Reintegration Working Group with IOM, and co-chairs the Housing Land and Property (HLP) Task Force alongside UN-Habitat.



CASH BASED INTERVENTIONS (CBIs)

In Afghanistan, UNHCR is implementing cash-based intervention (CBI) activities across all 34 provinces, and in the 80 PARRs, while adopting a whole-of-community approach. This approach addresses the protection, assistance and solutions-related needs of refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, returnees, and members of the host community. Cash assistance is delivered primarily through contracted financial service providers from the private sector. A standardized vulnerability assessment tool is used to collect information on household vulnerability, capacities, and coping strategies. This assessment data is analysed against set indicators to determine eligibility to the different cash programmes. To ensure that cash assistance is used for the intended purposes and delivered in accordance with UNHCR standards, rigorous monitoring mechanisms are in place including a third-party post-distribution monitoring process. These are all to ensure quality programming, integrity of processes and accountability to affected populations.

Achievements and Impact

- From January-September, UNHCR provided cash assistance to **566,800** affected individuals. The assistance, which covered a wide range of services helped those who received the support address their protection and shelter needs, as well as other lifesaving and solution challenges.



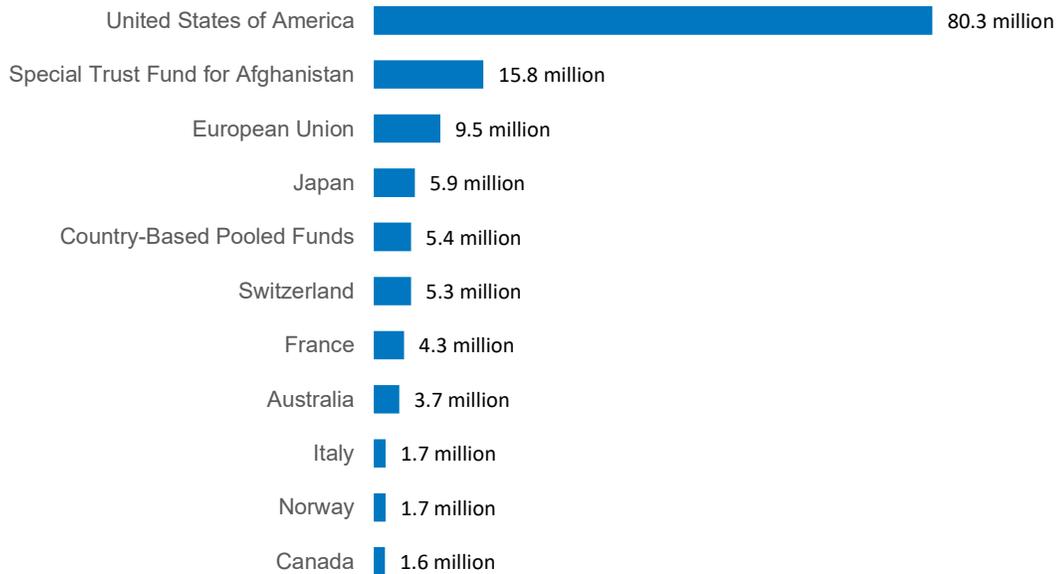
WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

- UNHCR is currently working with 20 partner agencies which include 3 international NGOs, 13 national NGOs, 3 UN agencies, and 1 government partner (the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR)).
- UNHCR has also expanded its partnerships with diverse actors in Afghanistan, including other UN agencies, the private sector, and international non-governmental organizations. Some of these partnerships with the UN agencies include United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UN-HABITAT, International Labour Organization (ILO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UN Women, International Organization for Migration (IOM), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Partnerships with the private sector include Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, (ACCI), Afghanistan Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AWCCI). Partnerships with the international non-governmental organizations include the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) and BRAC. The development actors include the World Bank (WB), Asian Development Bank (ADB) and German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ).
- UNHCR has equally signed Letters of Intent (LoIs) with UNDP, ILO, UN-Habitat, UN Women, FAO, UNODC, AKDN/Aga Khan Agency for Habitat (AKAH), BRAC, and AWCCI aimed at "strengthening cooperation among the organizations in addressing the complex challenges of displacement and achieving the collective objectives in the PARRs as well as other areas of origin and or areas of displacement". To operationalize these partnerships, corresponding action plans have been devised for each Letter of Intent, outlining key areas of complementarity and on-going joint programmes. UNHCR also engages with the interim authorities to ensure access and timely assistance to meet the needs of these affected populations.

Financial Information as of 29 September 2022

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to the **Afghanistan Operation**, as well as to those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with broadly earmarked and unearmarked funds.

Total contributions to **Afghanistan**, amount to **USD 213 million** as of 29 September 2022.



For more information on funding, please visit: [Afghanistan Funding Update - 2022 | Global Focus \(unhcr.org\)](#)

OTHER LINKS:

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UNHCR AFGHANISTAN OPERATIONAL MAP 2022

