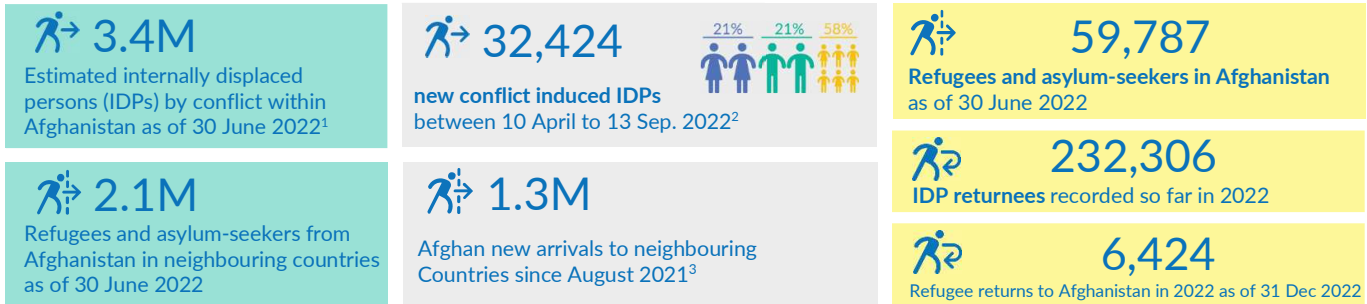


KEY DISPLACEMENT FIGURES



HIGHLIGHTS

- On 24 December, Afghanistan's *de facto* authorities issued a decree banning women from working for non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This follows an indefinite ban introduced by the Ministry of Higher Education on 20 December preventing women from attending university. Several agencies, including NRC, CARE, IRC, and Save the Children paused their programmes following the announcement. The [UN Secretary-General](#), [UN Security Council](#), [UNHCR](#), [OCHA](#), [OHCHR](#), and [UNICEF](#) as well as the [Organization of Islamic Cooperation](#) issued public statements condemning the ban. The Foreign Ministers of Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the United States and the High Representative of the EU issued a [joint statement](#) calling for the ban's immediate reversal.
- On 28 December, the Principals of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) [released a statement](#) condemning the ban because of its life-threatening consequences on all Afghans and negative impact on the full implementation of some activities where women play an important role. More than 500 women staff work with UNHCR's 19 NGO partners in Afghanistan, representing a significant and irreplaceable part of UNHCR's partner workforce in the country. In 2022, UNHCR and partners were able to jointly reach over 860,000 women and girls in the country thanks to this [critical workforce](#). While some exemptions have created space for humanitarian assistance to continue, this has been limited to few sectors, activities, and provinces.
- From 17 January, UN Deputy Secretary-General (DSG) Amina Mohammed visited Afghanistan and Pakistan as part of a four-day tour. The UN DSG was accompanied by the UN Women Executive Director, Sima Sami Bahous, and UN Assistant Secretary-General for UN for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, Khaled Khiari. In Afghanistan, the delegation met with the *de facto* authorities to advocate for the ban's reversal and full, safe and unhindered access for all aid workers as well as UN staff, aid groups and Afghan women to take stock of the situation, convey solidarity, and discuss ways to promote and protect women and girls' rights. In Pakistan, the DSG participated in a consultation with Afghan women organized by UN Women and met with several government officials to thank Pakistan for their long-standing hospitality to Afghan refugees.
- From 22 to 25 January, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) Martin Griffiths led a high-level inter-agency delegation to Afghanistan – which included Omar Abdi, UNICEF's Deputy Executive Director for Programmes, Sofia Sprechmann Sineiro, Secretary General of Care International, and Janti Soeripto, President and CEO of Save the Children US. During his visit, the ERC met with *de facto* authorities, UN agencies, international and national NGOs. In meetings, he noted that while it was uncertain whether *de facto* authorities would rescind or nullify the decree, humanitarian partners should continue to seize all opportunities in the interim to expand operational exemptions across all sectors via local agreements and negotiations. In the meantime, the UN – under the leadership of the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative in Afghanistan – is continuing to step up its advocacy with *de facto* authorities to reverse the ban and ensure women's full participation in the humanitarian response.
- The Government of Pakistan, with the support of UNHCR, [opened 11 Proof of Registration \(PoR\) card modification \(PCM\) centres](#) in Peshawar, Quetta, Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Nowshera, Mianwali, Lower Dir, Haripur and Kohat. These centres – which are run by Pakistan's National Database and Registration Authority – are responsible for issuing, updating, correcting, and replacing PoR cards. PoR cards are identity documents that give Afghan refugees the right to reside in Pakistan, open bank accounts, rent homes and obtain SIM cards. To date, close to one million new smart identity cards have been issued.
- Following the conclusion of the "head count" exercise of undocumented Afghan nationals in The Islamic Republic of Iran, including those who newly arrived following events in Afghanistan in 2021, the total number of Afghans in the country currently stands at 4.5 million – an increase from the previously recorded 3.6 million. Of this figure, 2.6 million have been "head counted", providing them with temporary protection from deportation. UNHCR is continuing to follow up with the

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¹ This figure comprises the 2021 year-end figure of 3.5M (Source: UNHCR), the total estimated conflict induced IDPs within Afghanistan in 2022 (Source: OCHA), excluding the recorded number of IDPs which have returned to their places of origin (Source: UNHCR), with the inclusion of the underestimated number of newly displaced IDPs during first half of 2022.

² Source OCHA. <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/afghanistan/idps>

³ In Iran, UNHCR is using an average figure according to various government estimates and continues to follow-up with authorities to receive updated and disaggregated data as well as an estimate of how many presently remain in Iran. Of the average 1 million new arrivals, some 57,000 Afghans have approached UNHCR. Of the 204,000 new arrivals reported by the Government of Pakistan, some 251,000 have approached UNHCR. According to Government of Uzbekistan sources, some 13,020 Afghan citizens arrived in the country since January 2021. The majority arrived before August 15 with valid visas issued by the Uzbek consulate in Mazar-i-Sharif.

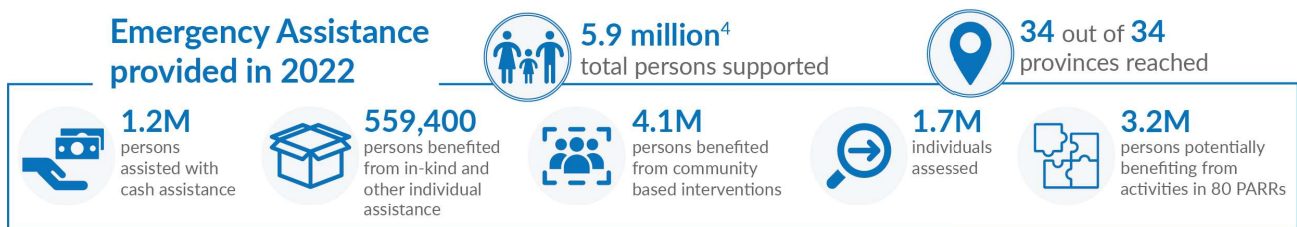
Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs on the issuance of regularized documentation for all “headcount” participants. Iran has also extended its inclusive health and education policies to this previously undocumented group.

- UNHCR distributed blanket cash assistance to 9,975 refugees and asylum seeker households residing in Tajikistan between November and December. This assistance totaled \$700,000 and is part of ongoing efforts to expand the systematic use of cash based interventions across operations to support protection and solutions outcomes and service delivery – in line with [UNHCR’s Policy on Cash-Based Interventions 2022 – 2026](#) and [the Grand Bargain commitments](#) made during the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit.



REGIONAL

- In 2022, UNHCR provided the following assistance in Afghanistan:



- On 20 December, UNHCR Pakistan and the Balochistan Institute of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences signed a Memorandum of Understanding to enhance cooperation and improve Afghan refugees’ access to mental health and psycho-social support and drug rehabilitation. Plans are also underway to expand professional learning opportunities for qualified Afghan refugee graduates and health workers in primary care contexts.
- To improve access to livelihoods, the Government of Tajikistan issued a decree approving the disbursement of a one-off lump-sum cash grant amounting to one month’s minimum wage (600 SM which is equivalent to \$67) to vulnerable groups, including over 530 refugees. This programme will offer protection to the most vulnerable and assist them in meeting their basic needs with dignity.

⁴ These indicators include progress in January that was funded by both 2021 and 2022.

CROSS BORDER SITUATION

- Between 2021 and 2022, over 1.3 million IDPs returned to their places of origin – over 1 million IDPs in 2021 and 232,306 in 2022. The source of these figures are the 337,000 household-level rapid assessments conducted by UNHCR and partners in 2022.
- By year end, 6,424 individuals returned from neighboring countries to Afghanistan – over four times more than the overall number of returns in 2021. Of this figure, 94 per cent of returnees were from Pakistan while the rest returned from Iran, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan and Russia. The main reasons cited by returnees for leaving include high living costs and lack of employment opportunities in host countries as well as a desire to be reunited with family and the perceived improved security situation in Afghanistan. In addition, UNHCR provided some \$2.28 million in cash assistance to returnees at Encashment Centres in Kabul, Jalalabad, and Kandahar for returnees from Pakistan and other countries, and in Herat for those returning from Iran. Returning refugees receive a cash grant of \$375 to help support them with the rising living costs and are able to access programmes implemented by UNHCR in the 80 Priority Areas of Return and Reintegration.
- With the borders to Central Asian States open to only those with valid visas, no mass influx of new arrivals from Afghanistan into Turkmenistan or Uzbekistan has been reported. Nevertheless, UNHCR and partners continue to focus on preparedness efforts and supporting governments to meet the critical international protection needs of Afghan citizens already in country while also advocating for safe access to territory.

DONOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to UNHCR's response to the Afghanistan Situation as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with [broadly earmarked and unearmarked funds](#) which allow us to respond in an agile manner where the needs are greatest:

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