

Afghanistan

October 2024

UNHCR has assisted close to **115,600** Afghan returnees from Pakistan, including **74,300** Proof of Registration (PoR) Card holders, since September 2023. Approximately **49%** of the assisted individuals are women and girls, and **2.5%** of the total assisted beneficiaries have disabilities.

Between 15 September 2023 and 31 October 2024, over **758,000** Afghans have returned to Afghanistan. Of households assisted, at least one in four are headed by women, and approximately **31%** of returnees intend to return to five provincial capitals (Kabul, Jalalabad, Kandahar, Kunduz, and Mazar-e-Sharif).

In 2024, an average of 23,000 have returned in each of the past two months. Some 6,800 individuals have been deported so far in 2024. Trends show a continuous decrease since July (970) however October (over 830) records an increase compared to September (580). Over 7,100 have been arrested or detained in Pakistan this year. October alone recorded some 800 arrests/detentions.

KEY INDICATORS FOR 2024

904,455

Individuals directly supported by UNHCR, receiving protection, cash, and in-kind assistance.

54%

of all individuals assisted in September are women and girls

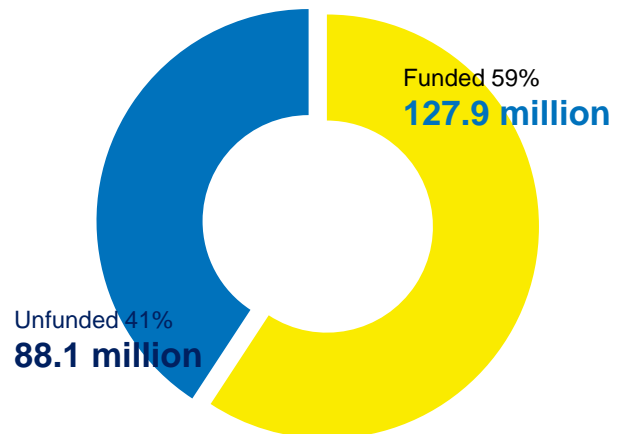
562,631

Individuals participated in assessments and monitoring exercises meant to understand gaps and inform targeted assistance.

FUNDING (AS OF 31 OCTOBER 2024)

USD 215.9 million

requested for Afghanistan



A new multi-purpose community centre built by UNHCR in Lashkargah, Helmand province. ©UNHCR/WAW

Update on Achievements

Operational Context

Afghanistan has an estimated **3.22 million conflict-induced** internally displaced persons (IDPs), **1.6 million IDP returnees**, and hosts around **35,000 refugees**¹, requiring immediate protection and humanitarian assistance, as well as medium to long-term support.² UNHCR has assisted **51,363 people** in refugee or refugee-like situations who returned (from Pakistan, Iran and other countries) in 2024. Additionally, in 2024, an estimated **23.7 million** people – more than half of Afghanistan’s population – are projected to require humanitarian assistance³.

Achievements



PROTECTION

UNHCR Voluntary Repatriation Update: UNHCR has assisted a total of 51,363 individuals (25,501 females and 25,862 males), including 3,025 (1,583 females and 1,442 males) in October alone, in refugee or refugee-like situations who returned to Afghanistan since 1 January 2024. Those assisted include Voluntary Repatriation Form (VRF) holders, PoR card holders, UNHCR slip holders, UNHCR certificate holders, and undocumented family members, with the majority returning from Pakistan.

To date in 2024, over 6,800 individuals have been deported from Pakistan. The month with the highest level of deportations in 2024 was May (1,300), reaching higher levels than October 2023 (960). Since the implementation of Illegal Foreigners’ Repatriation Plan (IFRP) phase 1 in October 2023, the months with highest recorded deportations are November (24,500) and December 2023 (3,500).

UNHCR observed that the overall voluntary repatriation figures from Iran recorded so far this year (809 individuals) represents a 92% increase compared to the same period in 2023. The increase could be due to an increase in anti-Afghan sentiment reported since July 2024, and statements through media by the Iranian government indicating that the Iranian government plan to deport some two million undocumented Afghans by end of March 2025. These developments continue to raise concerns with regards to the impact on Afghan nationals residing in the country.

A total of 2,907 (1,886 males and 1,021 females) interviews, including 355 in October, were conducted by UNHCR protection teams with newly arrived returnees in 2024 as part of return/protection monitoring activities. Based on the returnee monitoring findings, the primary reasons of return continue to be linked to protection concerns, including claim to fear of arrest and/or deportation, alleged abuse by police or state authorities, concerns related to PoR card validity and uncertainty related to its extension, concerns related to night raids, and strict border entry requirements, which limits the ability to commute to Afghanistan for temporary reasons.

However, many returnees who arrived in Afghanistan since June 2024 reported a decrease in protection issues in Pakistan, including police harassment, arrests, extortion, and night raids, with

¹ *Afghanistan Operational Data Portal*

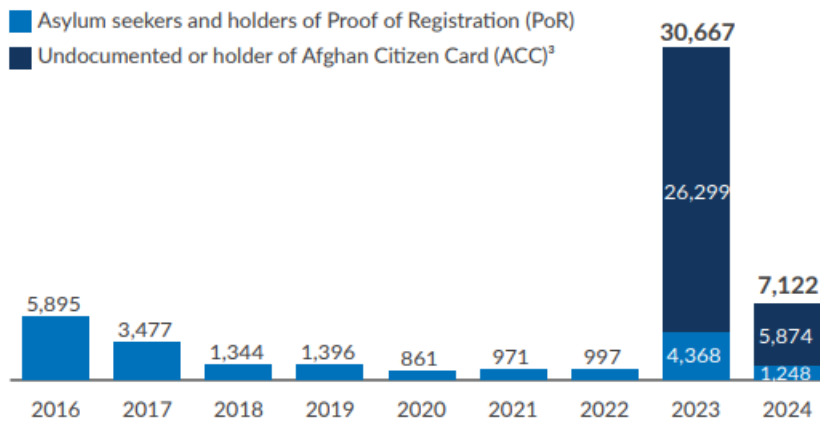
² *These figures are expected to increase retroactively with ongoing assessments and considered indicative rather than overall statistical data of IDP returnees in Afghanistan.*

³ *Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan*

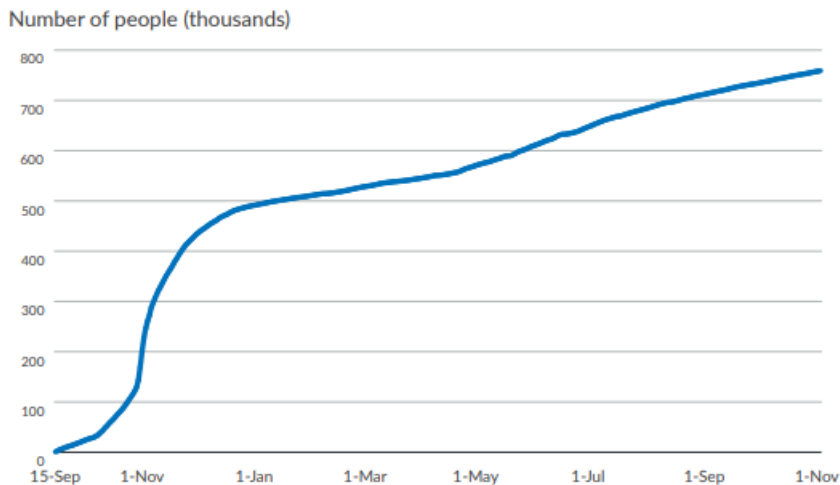
the exception of sporadic incidents in limited locations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan and Islamabad.

In contrast, returning refugees who returned from Iran since July 2024 and have been interviewed in Herat and other encashment centres reported a growing hostility vis-à-vis Afghans, including refugees. Refugee returnees reported that they are facing difficulties in receiving their salaries and in accessing education.

Arrests and detentions (from 2016 to 19 October 2024)



Total Returns from Pakistan since September 2023



Returnee Monitoring in Return Areas – Phone Survey

In July 2024, UNHCR initiated a phone-based returnee monitoring exercise, targeting refugee returnees that returned from Pakistan to Afghanistan between 1 September and 31 December 2023. Between 15 July and 1 September 2024, UNHCR conducted 4,220 household phone interviews with returnees across 31 provinces across 181 districts.

The data collection was conducted by 23 UNHCR protection/ field staff (12 female and 11 male). The survey team composition was inclusive. They were engaged with the returnee communities through conducting regular protection/ field activities, fully aware of the local context, including

protection and socio-economic dynamics and able to speak in local languages. The survey questionnaire covered a range of issues related to returnees' movement intentions after return, safety/security, psychosocial support (PSS) needs, vulnerability, access to basic services, livelihoods, housing, land and property rights, food security, access to phone, documentation. It also sought to assess the impact, efficiency, and effectiveness of the cash grant and the socio-economic situation of the returnees. These criteria can be used to assess the achievement of durable solutions in line with the IASC Durable Solutions Framework.

The [report](#) presenting the findings of the phone-based return monitoring survey was finalized and published on 30 October 2024. Work is ongoing with a newly selected contractor to start the second round of the phone survey which will target around 4,500 households that have returned in 2024.

Border Monitoring: Over 761,200 Afghans have returned from Pakistan since 15 September 2023, primarily through the Torkham and Spin Boldak border crossing points. The majority arrived in November 2023, following Pakistan's announcement of the IFRP in October 2023, setting a deadline of 1 November 2023 for undocumented foreigners to leave the country.

In October 2024, UNHCR conducted 13,091 household/individual level protection border monitoring interviews (inflow and outflow) with Afghans at eight official crossing points with Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. During the same period, a total of 52 interviews were conducted at unofficial crossing points. Between 1 January to 31 October 2024, a total of 122,347 inflow and outflow monitoring interviews were conducted at eight official crossing points and 831 interviews at around 50 unofficial crossing points. During 2024, an estimated 800,500 Afghan passport holders departed for Iran via Islam Qala and Zaranj, including an estimated 83,700 individuals during October.

Between 1 January and 31 October 2024, an estimated 801,500 individuals travelled to Pakistan via Torkham (606,200) and Spin Boldak (195,300) and 827,900 returned via Torkham (592,300) and Spin Boldak (235,600) to Afghanistan. In recent years, the majority of the in/outflow movements were reported via Spin Boldak. Angor Ada crossing point in Paktika province remains closed, while Dand-Aw-Patan crossing point in Paktia province, and Ghulam Khan crossing point in Khost province, are only open for commercial movements (trucks transporting goods either way).

According to key informants, the erection of a border wall by the Government of Iran is ongoing in the bordering areas, with media outlets reporting that over 10 kilometers of the Iran-Afghanistan border wall has been completed with plans to erect an additional 50 kilometers. The wall aims at preventing the irregular movements of Afghan nationals, smuggling of goods, livestock, and drugs to and from Iran. Meanwhile, UNHCR's border monitoring partner reported that since the beginning of September, the deportation of Afghans from Iran continues beyond official hours (up to 9 pm).

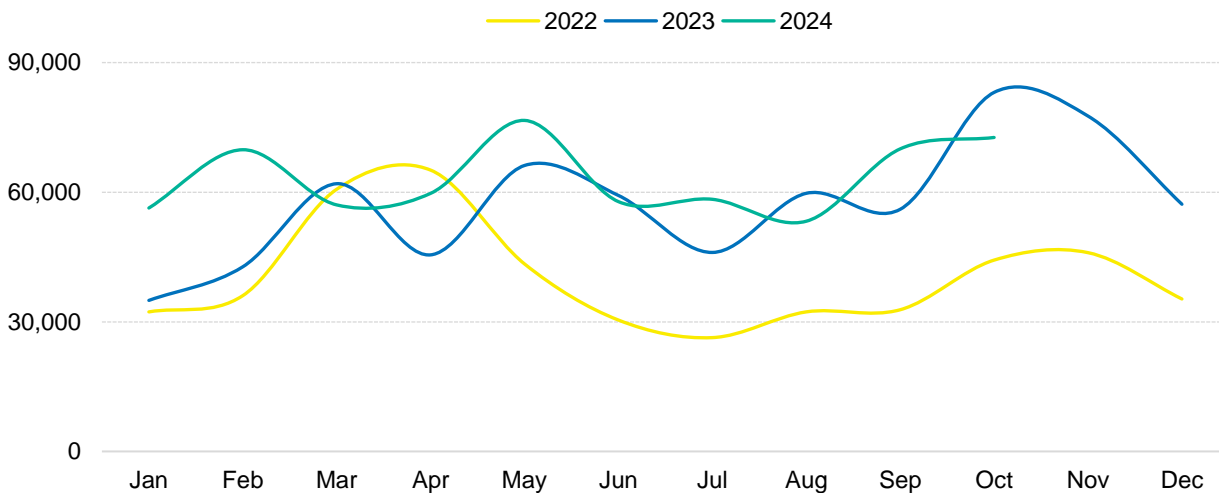
UNHCR continued to biometrically process and provide cash assistance, reaching a total of 6,583 families (including 331 families in October), composed of 26,584 persons (1,052 individuals in October), compelled to return from Pakistan in 2024. The categories include PoR card holders and their nuclear family members, UNHCR slip holders, asylum-seeker certificate holders, and other protection referrals.⁴ Based on the protection/border monitoring information, UNHCR observed that the number of people compelled to return has been decreasing since April 2024, which could be due to the advocacy efforts carried out by UNHCR offices in Pakistan as well as Pakistan's decision not to implement the second phase of IFRP.

UNHCR's mixed-gender teams are stationed at the Spin Boldak and Torkham border crossing points, conducting protection interviews with the newly arrived Afghans from Pakistan, including

⁴ This only includes the number of returnees assisted through FARE.

women returnees. Help desks are available to identify persons with sensitive protection backgrounds and to conduct referrals to available services, including to the UNHCR protection team for further assessment of protection concerns and needs. Shelter, livelihood, health, water, sanitation, and hygiene were identified as the most critical needs.

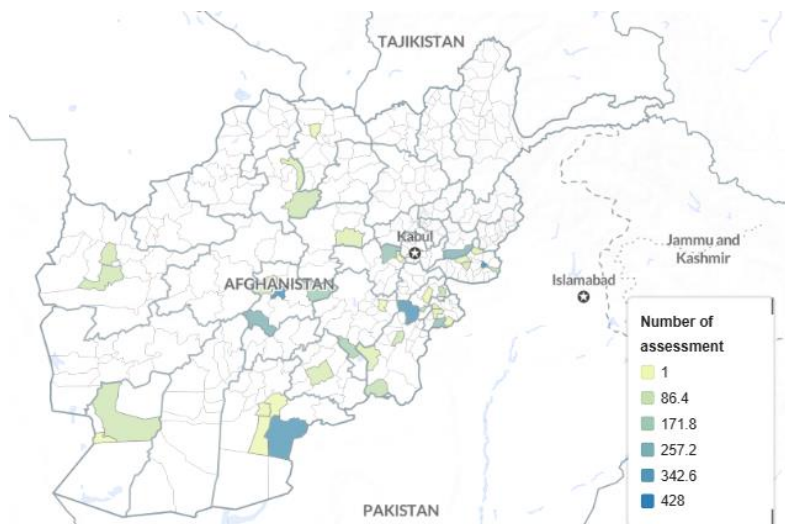
**Deportation of undocumented Afghans from Iran
(1 January 2022 to 31 October 2024)**



Rapid Household Needs Assessments: A total of 61,604 individuals were assessed through Rapid Household Assessments (RHAF) and Community-Based Protection Monitoring (CBPM) in October 2024.

Location of Assessments Conducted

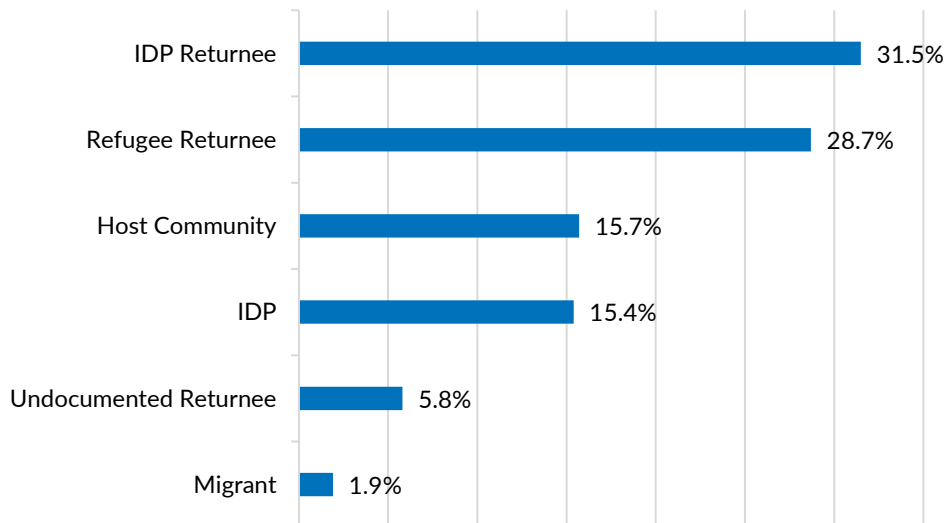
For RHAF assessments, in October, UNHCR completed a total of 6,574 assessments, across 76 districts in 21 provinces of Afghanistan, reaching 46,637 individuals (with children making up 60% of household of these, equivalent to 28,024 persons). Female-headed households accounted for around 27% of the assessments, which shows a slight increase compared to September (26%). Around 64% of these households (4,049) report facing more than one vulnerability.



Overall, 22% of respondents said that they have received assistance, while 78% mentioned that they have not yet received any assistance. Of those assisted, around 83.5% mentioned that they have received cash assistance, followed by food (12.1%), non-food items (9%), hygiene kits (5.6%) and shelter kits (3%).

The RHAF assessments encompassed a diverse mix of participants from the host community, IDPs, IDP returnees, migrants, undocumented returnees, and refugee returnees, providing a broad sample for the survey. In October, 31.5% of the returnees assessed were IDP returnees followed by refugee returnees making up 28.7%, and host community making up 15.7% of the respondents.

Household Status of the Respondents



Community Based Protection Monitoring (CBPM): As part of UNHCR’s community-based protection monitoring (CBPM), UNHCR used household surveys, key informant interviews and focus group discussions (FGD) to monitor protection risks and coping mechanisms of IDPs, returnees, host community members, refugees and asylum-seekers in October 2024. Some 677 male-headed households and 447 female-headed households were interviewed by UNHCR’s CBPM partners (1,124 household assessments total), representing 7,868 individuals. Assessments were conducted in 67 districts of 23 provinces to collect household-level data, indicating the broad geographic reach of UNHCR’s CBPM activities. Some 68% of the interviewees were from rural areas and 32% were from urban areas.

The fact that 40% of the households assessed were headed by women (in addition to 50% female key informants – see below) underlines UNHCR’s ability to reach women and girls as well as the operational commitment to ensure women’s voices are meaningfully reflected in assessments despite the restrictions in place. The age group of heads of households assessed includes 35-59 years (65%), 18-34 (29%), 60 and above (6%), and 14-17 (0.4%), underlining UNHCR’s commitment to ensuring an age, gender, and diversity (AGD) approach throughout its activities.

The lack of civil documentation continues to be a major issue for all population groups assessed. The lack of prerequisite documents, high fee, the inability to travel to places of origin as well as the lack of knowledge about procedures were among the key challenges mentioned that hamper community members’ access to documentation. Girls and women continue to be the group most affected by the lack of legal documentation. UNHCR continues to undertake legal assistance projects across the country to help address this problem.

The household members continue to report high levels of stress affecting their day-to-day life, the main reasons being lack of employment and severe economic hardship, food insecurity, lack of basic services, children being out of school and engaged in labour as well as physical health problems. Furthermore, 37% of heads of households have noticed negative changes in the last three months, such as stress, lack of appetite, aggressive behaviour and self-harm. Despite the high needs, 57% of households mentioned that they or their family members were not able to receive MHPSS within the last three months with women/girls amongst the most affected groups.

Moreover, 40% reported that they or their family members were not able to receive healthcare services in the last three months. Around 88% reported that they have not received food assistance in the last three months, and 47% do not have easy access to safe drinking water. Further, 45% of

respondents mentioned that there are places that women and girls do not feel comfortable visiting, including education centres, marketplaces, water points and clinics due to discrimination, harassment and intimidation, lack of IDs, no mahram, safety concerns, and socio-cultural barriers.

UNHCR also conducted 922 interviews with 458 male and 458 female key informants in 82 districts of 29 provinces. The findings of the key informant interviews with IDP returnees, host community members, IDPs, refugee returnees, refugees and asylum seekers and undocumented returnees indicate that more than half of the community members are unable to access services. The top five groups facing challenges to access services are female-headed households, older person-headed households, child-headed households, persons with physical disabilities, and persons with mental disabilities.

The respondents mentioned that livelihood support, electricity, food assistance, shelter repair, mental health and psychosocial support, healthcare, shelter, civil documentation, and education are the main services they do not have access to. This is due to their inability to pay for services, lack of information on services, lack of transportation or inability to pay for transportation, lack of identity documentation, accessibility challenges for persons with disabilities, family not allowing, movement restrictions, discrimination, and no mahram.

A total of 1,271 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with women, men, girls and boys of different age groups and displacement statuses in 90 districts of 31 provinces. The qualitative information collected through these FGDs complements the qualitative household-level data, indicating continued exposure to child protection risks, with reports of boys and girls engaged in different forms of dangerous work. At the same time, the community identified key gaps to include safe spaces and support mechanisms for children. The FGDs also highlight the variety of harmful coping mechanisms community members are required to adopt to cope with the difficult socioeconomic situation.

UNHCR has also developed a public version of its CBPM dashboards, available publicly. This will enhance transparency and accessibility for all stakeholders. The link can be accessed at [Microsoft Power BI](#).

Complaints and Feedback Mechanism (CFM): In October 2024, a total of 6,217 questions, feedback, suggestions, and complaints were received by UNHCR and partners via the CFM in line with the previous month. The use of the CFM by women and girls remained stable with 40% of queries originating from women and girls, as reported in September 2024. Host community members remained the category most frequently using the CFM (31% of all queries), followed by refugee returnees (28%) and IDPs (26 %).

Accounting for 36% of all queries, hotlines were the preferred communication channel (2,213), followed by emails (35%), and community outreach volunteers (COVs) and focal points (13%). This is consistent with the previous report when hotlines, emails and COVs were also the top channels.

CFM operators responded to all queries. For 1,560 cases requiring tailored follow-up, referrals were made to relevant UNHCR Offices and partners. Around 62% of the queries recorded in October are already closed. Looking back at all the queries received since the beginning of the year, 66% have been closed.

Persons with Specific Needs (PSN): UNHCR has revised its PSN case management dashboard ensuring all aspects of case management are reflected and tracked, enabling the organization to obtain real-time data. This dashboard provides information on the partners who initially identify cases, the number of PSN assessments conducted, types of vulnerabilities, assistance modalities, case referrals, follow-ups, and case closures. This updated dashboard will enhance UNHCR's ability to manage cases effectively and provide timely support.

During the reporting period, the PSN interventions, including assessments, case reviews, cash assistance, and referrals continued. A total of 1,599 new assessments (857 females and 742 males) were conducted and 644 PSN cases were reviewed by the case approval committee, of which 302 were deemed eligible for cash assistance. Additionally, 309 cases were referred to the PSN network, of which 133 cases were deemed eligible for both services (cash assistance and referrals). As part of its PSN case management, as of 31 October, UNHCR provided PSN cash assistance to a total of 4,818 individuals, including 2,890 females and 1,928 males (674 individuals in October only).

Community Engagement: As part of UNHCR's strategic objective to enhance its accountability to the affected people and strengthen its engagement and communication with communities, UNHCR has launched a country-wide pilot project establishing a network of community outreach volunteers, nearly 50% of whom are female. Placing communities at the centre of the response and empowering them to become agents of their own protection has significantly improved UNHCR's outreach to the most vulnerable population groups, establishing effective two-way communication and ensuring access to information and services for communities in remote areas.

As of October 2024, UNHCR's 154 community outreach volunteers and community outreach focal points have reached 118,838 community members through community dialogues, information desks and other outreach activities. A total of 97,648 individuals were informed about UNHCR's complaints and feedback mechanisms and 8,695 community members with protection risks were identified and referred for specialized services. To harmonize the approach across the country and ensure that the same messages are delivered to the community members, UNHCR developed a common set of messages on different subjects, including but not limited to general protection, women protection, child protection, fraud, SEA and free nature of humanitarian services and assistance.

The concept note for the 2024 Participatory Assessment (PA) has been developed which includes the key thematic areas that will be covered under the 2024 PA. FGDs and key informant interviews (KII) are the selected modalities.

Protection of Women: UNHCR and its implementing partners facilitated 134 dialogues with 618 female and male community leaders, aiming to engage them as active partners in preventing and responding to violence in their communities and facilitating referrals to services. A total of 1,753 women and girls received support through individual and group counselling to respond to the acute mental health needs of women and girls.

Over 4,063 women, girls, boys, and men were reached through information-sharing activities, empowering the community with the necessary knowledge and skills to overcome the negative impact of violence and harmful practices on individuals, families, and communities. Most importantly, these sessions aim to inform women and girls about available support, encouraging them to seek help and facilitating their safe access to multi-sectoral response services. A total of 41 women and girls were referred to different specialized services through interagency referral pathways. UNHCR's Women Community Centers provide a safe space for women and girls to engage in diverse wellbeing and capacity-building activities, receive information on available services and topics of concern to the community and seek support through direct interventions by UNHCR partners and referrals. Over 306 women and girls attended UNHCR's centers in October 2024. In the reporting period, 138 individuals (women and girls) received female hygiene kits under the Women Protection Projects in Herat and Bamyán provinces. Each individual received one kit. The partners also sensitized the beneficiaries of the hygiene kits on their components, benefits and use.

Child Protection: In October 2024, UNHCR and its implementing partners successfully conducted awareness-raising sessions on child protection, focusing on topics, such as the importance of education, hygiene, and the risks and adverse consequences of child labor. These sessions

informed parents, children, and communities about the legal and social implications of child labour while also providing access to alternative resources. The initiative engaged a diverse range of community members, with strong participation from women, girls, and persons with disabilities.

A total of 2,252 individuals (1,256 males and 996 females) attended the awareness-raising activities in Kandahar, Herat, Bamyan, and Jalalabad. Additionally, 949 new cases of children facing specific child protection risks were identified and registered for case management services (544 boys and 405 girls). Furthermore, 1,324 children (547 boys and 777 girls) benefited from mental health and psychosocial support and recreational activities provided in 12 Child-Friendly Spaces and after-school programs.

To complete the UNHCR-UNICEF Strategic Collaboration Framework in Afghanistan, UNHCR has prepared a data-sharing agreement, which has been submitted to UNICEF for review and approval. UNHCR will formally implement the Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS) for child protection case management. In the initial phase, UNHCR will roll out the CPIMS in two provinces where partners have already completed the required training.

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services (MHPSS): In October 2024, a total of 13,638 community members, including 5,230 women, 6,058 men, 1,154 girls, and 1,196 boys attended several MHPSS activities, including:

Non-focused Specialized Services: A total of 2,443 individuals (931 women, 94 girls, 1,284 men, 134 boys) received one-on-one psychosocial counselling services. These services are based on scalable brief psychological interventions, endorsed in Afghanistan.

Community and Family Support:

- Group psychosocial interventions were provided to the affected populations through UNHCR implementing partners. A total of 6,882 individuals (2,672 women, 680 girls, 2,832 men, and 698 boys) attended these activities.
- A total of 130 individuals (80 women, 50 men) received family-based interventions in the form of psychosocial sessions. These sessions are aimed at providing emotional support, active listening, and linking individuals to available services.

Psychoeducation: Psychoeducation and service orientation sessions were provided to community members. A total of 4,183 individuals (1,547 women, 380 girls, 1,892 men, 364 boys) attended these sessions, aimed to orient community members on mental health and psychosocial problems and available services.

Capacity Building: UNHCR provided on-spot technical supervision to psychosocial counsellors in 19 provinces. A total of three cases were discussed and support was extended to the psychosocial counsellors with their case management and healing plan.

Legal Assistance: UNHCR partners in Gardez, Herat, Jalalabad, Kunduz, Kabul, and Kandahar continued to provide legal assistance to refugees, IDPs, refugee and IDP returnees and host community members. In October, 127 legal awareness sessions were facilitated by partners, reaching 1,941 individuals, including 903 women. A total of 736 persons received legal counselling and 3,725 individuals accessed legal aid. The sessions addressed the importance of legal documentation accessing a wide range of services and provided practical guidance on documentation procedures in Afghanistan. As a result of this legal assistance, 1,552 documents (including 707 to females) were issued, including Tazkira and birth certificates.


SHELTER AND CORE RELIEF ITEMS

The construction of 800 permanent natural disaster resilient shelters through CBI modality is ongoing in the Giyan district of Paktika province, with an 87% progress by the end of October 2024. The beneficiary selection for 158 natural disaster resilient shelters in Herat province is finalized and the construction work is ongoing.

Out of 2,433 permanent shelters planned for 2024, 828 shelters are completed, and 1,363 shelters are currently ongoing with various completion rates. UNHCR anticipates all permanent shelters will be completed by the end of the year, and for 242 permanent shelters beneficiary selection is ongoing.

By the end of October 2024, UNHCR distributed 840 emergency shelters (tents) to flood-affected households in Kunduz, Baghlan and Herat provinces.


CBI

UNHCR delivered cash assistance to 6,061 individuals (3,152 females and 2,909 males) in October through various CBI programmes, including FARE, VolRep, cash for livelihoods (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises & job placement), CARE (for refugee returnees), PSN and cash for permanent shelter. The assistance, which covered a wide range of services, has also supported families in reintegrating, addressing protection and other lifesaving concerns, and contributing to durable solutions. UNHCR continues to provide cash assistance to refugees and persons in refugee-like situations to assist families in meeting basic needs and contributing to sustainable reintegration processes.

Acknowledgements

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



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