

OPERATIONAL UPDATE

Afghanistan

February 2025

UNHCR has assisted over **119,000** Afghan returnees from Pakistan, including **75,900** Proof of Registration (PoR) Card holders, since September 2023. Approximately **50 percent** of the assisted individuals are women and girls, and **2.5 percent** of the total assisted beneficiaries have disabilities.

Between 15 September 2023 and 28 February 2025, over **843,400** Afghans have returned to Afghanistan. Of households assisted, at least one in four are headed by women, and approximately **33 percent** of returnees intend to return to five provincial capitals (Kabul, Jalalabad, Kandahar, Kunduz, and Mazar-i-Sharif).

Out of **843,400**, over **36,000** returned in 2025, out of which some **1,000** were deported in January and 1,417 in February.

KEY INDICATORS FOR 2025

9,530

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

51 percent

of all individuals assisted in 2025 are women and girls.

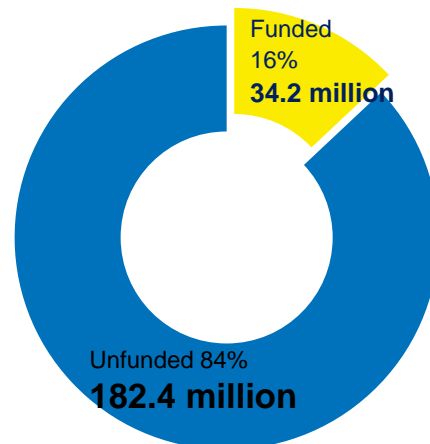
9,583

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

FUNDING (As of 28 February 2025)

USD 216.6 million

requested for Afghanistan



Women attending a legal counselling and assistance session in Herat province, Afghanistan
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Update on Achievements

Operational Context

Afghanistan has an estimated **3.22 million conflict-induced** internally displaced persons (IDPs), **1.65 million IDP returnees**, and hosts around **20,900 refugees**¹, requiring immediate protection and humanitarian assistance, as well as medium to long-term support². UNHCR has assisted **1,129** people in refugee or refugee-like situations who returned (from Pakistan, Iran and other countries) in 2025. Additionally, in 2025, an estimated **22.9 million** people – almost half of Afghanistan’s population – are projected to require humanitarian assistance³.

UNHCR is currently preparing for the anticipated second wave of the Illegal Foreign Repatriation Plan (IFRP) which may result in more than **1.35 million persons** returning to Afghanistan from Pakistan. There are currently **2.8 million Afghans**⁴ living in Pakistan who are either refugees or are in refugee-like situations. To prepare for this new wave of returns, UNHCR is working in an interagency constellation, through the Border Consortium, to prepare for assistance both at the borders/zero-point and at the encashment centres.

UNHCR is also expecting a wave of returns from Iran following the confirmation that Headcount slips will expire on 20 March 2025 with no extensions. This was accompanied by the announcement of plans to return holders of to Afghanistan after Nowruz with some exemptions still under discussion. UNHCR is continuing advocacy efforts with the government of Iran and Pakistan.

Achievements



UNHCR Assistance to Returnees: UNHCR assisted a total of 831 individuals (374 females and 457 males) in refugee or refugee-like situations who returned to Afghanistan in February 2025 and 1,520 individuals including 684 females returned during January and February 2025. The assistance provided included cash and protection services such as basic health care, vaccination, mine risk awareness, child friendly space, overnight accommodation for transit, awareness raising on civil documentation, and protection counselling. These services were provided after a thorough verification and biometric registration process in the encashment centers.

Those assisted include Voluntary Repatriation Form (VRF) holders, PoR card holders, Amayesh card holders, Gorizah/refugee card holders (Tajikistan), UNHCR slip holders, UNHCR certificate holders, and undocumented family members, with the majority returning from Pakistan.

The Torkham border was closed on 22 February following the commencement of military post construction at the zero point by the DfA, a project contested by Pakistani border guards. Despite the closure of the border, 1,417 Afghans were deported in February (through Torkham and Spin Boldak crossings). This marked a 44 percent increase compared to the previous month (January), which saw close to 1,000 deportees. This represents the highest number of deportations since the IFRP peak in November-December 2023. The increased deportations in February are linked to heightened search operations and the arrest of Afghans in Islamabad Capital Territory and Rawalpindi.

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](#)

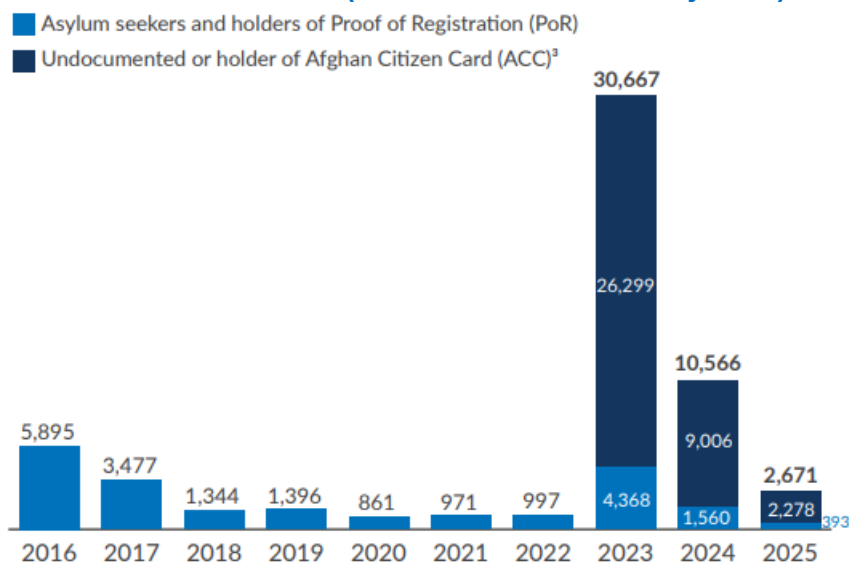
⁴ [Afghanistan Situation Operational Data Portal](#)

In February 2025, the return figures from Iran (164 returns), and Tajikistan (47 returns) are three times higher, compared to the 56 refugee returnees from Iran and 11 refugee returnees from Tajikistan in February 2024. The increase in return figures from Iran is linked to the rising anti-Afghan sentiment reported since June/July 2024. In Tajikistan, based on information provided by the local UNHCR Office and by UNHCR Afghanistan's border monitoring partner, the government of Tajikistan has intensified the arrest of Afghans, including refugees, since early December 2024.

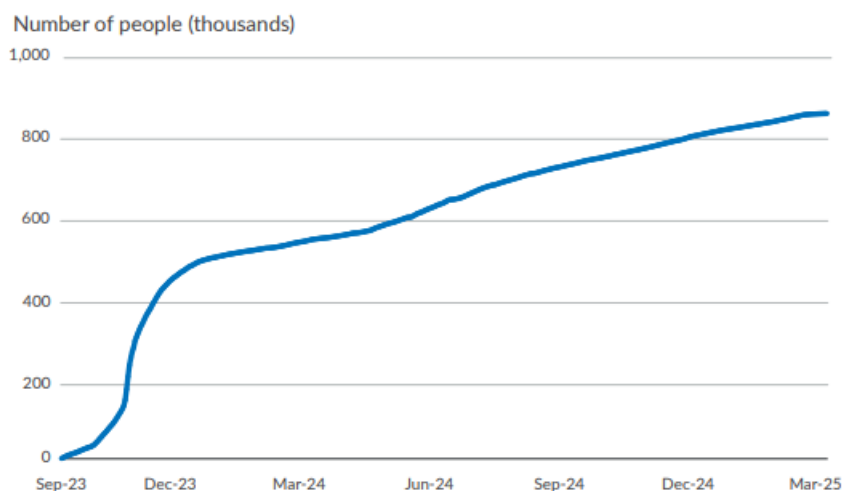
UNHCR Afghanistan recorded the deportation of a total of 79 Afghans in 2024, including refugees and those in refugee-like situations in December 2024 and a total of three deportees in November 2024. So far in 2025, 56 Afghans were deported from Tajikistan.

In January and February 2025, a total of 189 interviews consisting of 105 males and 84 females, were conducted (including 98 interviews in February) by UNHCR protection teams with newly arrived returnees from Iran, Pakistan and other countries, 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 fear of arrest and/or deportation, alleged abuse by police or state authorities, and strict border entry requirements, which limits the ability to commute to Afghanistan for temporary reasons.

Arrests and detentions (from 2016 to 28 February 2025)



Total Returns from Pakistan since September 2023



Border Monitoring: In January and February 2025, UNHCR border monitoring teams conducted 20,149 household/individual (11,055 interviews in February alone) level protection border monitoring interviews (inflow and outflow) with Afghans at seven official crossing points with Iran, Pakistan, and Tajikistan. Border monitoring activities at Aqina (border with Turkmenistan) and Hairatan (border with Uzbekistan) have not yet begun. During the same period, a total of 112 Key Informant Interviews including 51 Key Informant interviews in February were conducted at unofficial crossing points.

In January and February 2025, an estimated 187,000 Afghan (including 69,000 in February) passport holders departed for Iran via Islam Qala, Zaranj and Abo Nasri Farahi. While an estimated 233,400 individuals (including 99,000 Afghan in February) crossed to Pakistan via the Torkham and Spin Boldak crossing points and an estimated 233,200 returned (including 150,200 Afghan in February) via the Torkham and Spin Boldak crossing points to Afghanistan in the same period. 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).

Dak unofficial crossing point in Nimroz province remains closed since 18 January, to ensure the implementation of the [decree](#) issued by the DfA Supreme Leader to prevent illegal movement/trafficking of Afghans abroad facilitated by smugglers. According to border monitors, the DfA has fully sealed the crossing point to prevent pedestrian irregular outflow movements. However, the crossing point remained open for the movement of commercial goods.

UNHCR continued to biometrically process and provide cash assistance, reaching a total of 314 families composed of 730 Afghans in refugee and refugee-like situations returned/deported from Pakistan, Iran and Tajikistan in 2025. The categories include PoR card holders and their nuclear family members, UNHCR slip holders, asylum-seeker certificate holders, Amayesh card holders (from Iran), Gorizah/refugee card holders (from Tajikistan) and other protection referrals.

Mixed-gender UNHCR teams are stationed at Spin Boldak and Torkham border crossing points, conducting protection interviews with the newly arrived Afghans from Pakistan, including women. Help desks are available to identify people with sensitive protection profiles 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 during this period. The same procedure has been established in the borders with Iran to assess and assist deported refugees (Amayesh card holders) and persons with protection profiles.

Complaints and Feedback Mechanism (CFM): In February 2025, UNHCR and its partners received a total of 2,392 questions, feedback, suggestions, and complaints through the Complaint and Feedback Mechanism (CFM). The gender breakdown remained similar to the previous month, with 28 percent of queries originating from women and girls.

As in the previous month, refugee returnees remained the most frequent users of the CFM, accounting for 62 percent of the total queries. This was followed by host community members at 14 percent, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) at 10 percent.

Email was the preferred communication channel in February 2025 (76 percent of all queries), with 1,815 email queries received. This was followed by hotlines, which accounted for 22 percent of the queries.

The queries included requests for assistance or intervention on issues such as Persons with Specific Needs (PSN), multi-purpose cash, CARE, shelter, livelihood, food, and health. Other common queries involved requests for information on assistance, employment, partnership, follow-up on individual cases, as well as general feedback and complaints.

In response to these queries, a total of 488 referrals were made to relevant UNHCR offices and

partners for tailored follow-up. Notably, around 93 percent of the queries recorded in February have already been closed.

Child Protection: In February 2025, UNHCR convened a meeting with colleagues from UNICEF and UNFPA to thoroughly discuss the recent developments in the cross-border case management standard operating procedure (SOP). The meeting also explored ways to expedite the SOP in anticipation of the second wave of the Illegal Foreign Repatriation Plan (IFRP), with the number of possible deported children expected to increase in the coming weeks and months.

In this period, UNHCR has also developed a comprehensive training package for newly onboarded UNHCR child protection partners. The training delivery plan has been finalized, and preparations are underway to conduct the sessions in March. Furthermore, the PSEA Network has requested to be involved in the review of the cross-border case management SOPs, which will be shared with the PSEA Coordinator upon receiving feedback from UNICEF Pakistan.

To strengthen child protection response during the anticipated return of refugees from Pakistan, child protection partner staff stationed at UNHCR encashment centers have been integrated into the Border Consortium Contingency Plan to ensure child protection concerns are addressed through the provision of dedicated child protection services.



Cash Based Interventions (CBI)

UNHCR delivered cash assistance to 21,620 individuals (11,675 females and 9,945 males) in February 2025, through various CBI programs, including FARE, VolRep, cash for basic needs, cash for seasonal support, cash for permanent shelter and CARE for refugee returnees. 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.



LIVELIHOODS

UNHCR conducted thematic discussions on livelihoods interventions for 2025 including Small Medium Enterprise (SME), Code4Fun and Value Chains. The purpose of these thematic discussions was to further capacitate the Sub/Field Offices in implementing the livelihoods interventions in a more effective manner including addressing any specific requests from the relevant donors.

Acknowledgements

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LINKS

Data portal – X (Twitter) - Facebook