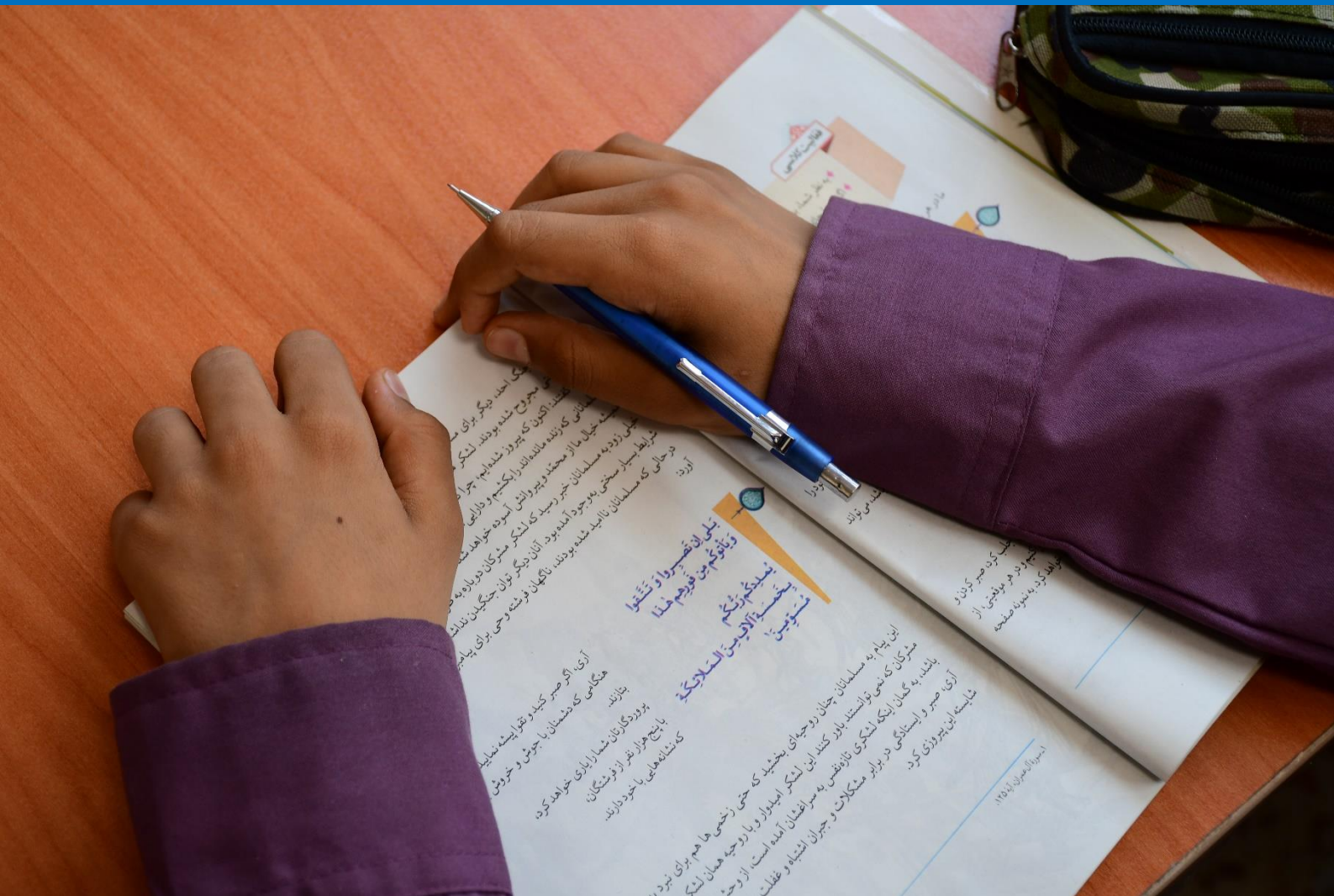




# Education Away from Home

Supporting education for Afghan refugee children and youth in the Islamic Republic of Iran

Education Brief 2024



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## **Cover photo**

Refugee students benefit from education in Iran.  
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# Overview

For over 40 years, the Islamic Republic of Iran has provided refuge to Afghans fleeing violence, insecurity, repression, and deprivation in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. In 2024, as of the latest UNHCR Global Trends Report, **Iran hosted 3.8 million forcibly displaced persons, making it the largest refugee-hosting country in the world.**<sup>1</sup> With Afghanistan experiencing an unprecedented convergence of crises,<sup>2</sup> including climate change and disasters, entrenched poverty and the exclusion of women and girls from society, the likelihood of sustained cross-border movements into Iran remains significant, adding to existing pressures.

The Government of Iran's generous inclusive education policies have given hundreds of thousands of children access to the national education system on par with their Iranian peers. This approach is in line with Iran's legal commitments to international standards, including the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, which address the right to education.

However, the increase in the Afghan population in Iran since 2021 has put an unprecedented strain on Iran's generous hosting policies. As a result, the national education system in the country has become overwhelmed, especially in refugee-hosting areas and many children are unable to enrol in schools. While the Government of Iran continues enrolling foreign children in schools, the lack of school capacity and the costs imposed on the country have **resulted in limitations on education access.**

At the same time, many Afghan families in Iran face financial challenges in supporting their children to attend school, with affordability being a key obstacle for students. Undocumented children encounter even greater challenges to register in schools.

Afghan students often require extra support to overcome learning gaps, transition to formal education, improve their mental and physical well-being, and pursue higher education opportunities. Ensuring access to a quality education that nurtures children in a protective and safe learning environment is likely to become more

challenging as demand for education services increases.

Non- and sub-optimal participation in education have far-reaching consequences. In the immediate term, education provides an entry point to address cross-sectoral needs that can shape a child's physical and mental well-being. Over the longer-term, education also has implications on living standards and community resilience, with level of education being a key determinant of employment prospects and future earnings, as well as a key enabler in facilitating voluntary returns. Further, education for girls benefits the whole society, helping to support communities, enhancing well-being at the household level, strengthening the economy, and reducing systemic inequalities. Moreover, investment in education can contribute to social cohesion and co-existence between communities, benefitting Afghans and Iranian host communities alike, and ultimately will make refugees more prepared to rebuild their lives in Afghanistan, once the conditions allow for their safe, voluntary, and durable returns.

**There is a pressing need to significantly expand assistance to ensure all Afghan children and youth in Iran have access to education.** In addition, more measures are required to support students in achieving their learning goals once they are enrolled.

This updated Education Brief provides a detailed analysis of **education-related needs among refugees and their host communities in Iran.** In defining the gaps and challenges to education in Iran, international aid organizations call on increased responsibility-sharing to ensure that Afghan children and youth do not become a lost generation. This highlights that, as the largest host of Afghan refugees, Iran's education policies ensure that hundreds of thousands of children, who might otherwise be out of school<sup>3</sup> can access education. As such, **Iran provides an alternative in ensuring continued education for Afghan children and youth, especially for women and girls.**

Building on the momentum of the second Global Refugee Forum (GRF)<sup>4</sup> in December 2023 and the ReSolve multi-stakeholder pledges<sup>5</sup>, scaled-up support is required to (I)

revive the previous comprehensive inclusive approach to education based on the inclusion of all children regardless of their documentation status in the national education system; (ii) assist the most marginalized who are at great risk of being left behind, through assistance that addresses all facets of their physical and mental well-being; (iii) promote pathways for life-long learning that spans early childhood to adulthood, also recognizing that education for Afghan's youth is the only means to achieve durable solutions and self-reliance.

**To advance progress towards these objectives, seven international aid organizations actively engaged in supporting education responses to Afghan refugees and Iranian host communities are appealing for USD 119.3 M for education** under the Regional Refugee Response Plan for Afghanistan Situation (RRP) 2024-2025<sup>6</sup>.

This coordinated and needs-based inter-agency strategy supports education for Afghan refugees and Iranian host communities alike, prioritizing efforts to:

1. Improve access to equitable, safe, and inclusive education for Afghans youth and their Iranian host communities, with a particular emphasis on reducing barriers to education for girls.
2. Enhance the quality of education opportunities available through the development of a safe and protective learning environment that improves overall learning outcomes and enhances resilience, with an emphasis on life-long learning.

These organizations bring a wealth of experience and expertise with their complementary yet diverse programmes that seek to mitigate the multiple dimensions and drivers of education-related needs in close partnership with the Government of Iran. Together, they adopt an integrated approach, with partners' interventions in education also contributing to a variety of multi-sectoral outcomes, particularly in relation to protection (child protection), WASH, health and nutrition; that support the overall physical and mental well-being of young persons.

Afghan and Iranian girls attend school together in Malard, Tehran Province.  
© Hossein Eidizadeh/ UNHCR



# The Afghanistan Crisis and its Impact on Iran

Afghanistan faces a profound convergence of humanitarian, human rights, and education crises. Public services have collapsed, poverty is widespread, and human rights violations, particularly against women and girls, are escalating. The de facto authorities continue to impose severe restrictions, including barring women and girls from schools, universities, workplaces and public spaces.

## The Challenges in Afghanistan and Displacement to Iran

Restrictive policies, coupled with mounting economic instability, acute food insecurity, frequent natural disasters and limited donor funding, have intensified the plight of Afghans, particularly women and girls, pushing millions into displacement.

The ban on secondary and higher education for girls has upended the lives of 1.4 million girls,

with severe consequences for Afghanistan's future. Parents seeking to secure education for their daughters often feel compelled to leave the country, while women, including former activists, judges, and journalists, flee in search of safety.

This exodus has increased cross-border movements into Iran, placing immense pressure on host communities. In 2024, Iran provided refuge to 3.8 million Afghans, becoming the largest refugee-hosting nation globally. However, accommodating such numbers comes with significant challenges.

## Iran's Role and Need for Support

Iran has shown remarkable generosity by hosting millions of refugees, granting access to healthcare and education. Policies like the 2022 Government-led headcount exercise that saw 2.6 million new arrivals and previously undocumented Afghans receive headcount slips have allowed undocumented Afghans to access essential services. These slips are intended to prevent refoulement and facilitate access to essential services, such as primary healthcare and education. As a result, the number of refugees and persons in a "refugee-like" situation<sup>7</sup> hosted in Iran increased to approximately 3.8 million, resulting in Iran becoming the largest refugee hosting country globally, according to the UNHCR Global Trends report released in June 2024.<sup>8</sup>

With limited resources, Iran's ability to provide adequate education and services to refugees is

strained. Many Afghan children face barriers to education, while newly arrived female university students, many of whom are highly vulnerable, require targeted assistance.

Supporting Iran's education initiatives for Afghan refugees is essential – not only to address immediate needs but to also equip Afghans with the skills required to rebuild their country when conditions improve.

Greater investments in education, health, and social services for refugees in Iran are required to promote stability and address the long-term impacts of displacement. To support responsibility sharing, enhanced collaboration and increased funding from the global community is needed to support Iran's humanitarian efforts and to empower millions of Afghan refugees.

Afghan students attend school together with Iranians in Malard, Tehran Province.  
© Hossein Eidizadeh/ UNHCR



*Twelve-year-old Hazratollah, an Afghan refugee in Iran, is thriving in school, where he eagerly learns and has made many friends. Iran, which hosts around 3.8 million refugees and refugee-like population, has offered refuge to Afghans fleeing violence for over 40 years, implementing one of the world's most progressive education policies by allowing refugee children, regardless of documentation status, to access the national education system. Hazratollah, who dreams of becoming an engineer, recalls the challenges his family faced navigating the enrolment process after fleeing Afghanistan in 2021. With help from Iranian friends and officials, he secured the necessary paperwork. While RRP partners support Iran's education policy, more international aid is needed to sustain educational access for refugee children like Hazratollah.*

# Education Needs Overview

Thanks to the inclusive education policies of Iran, hundreds of thousands of Afghan children have equal access to schools alongside their Iranian peers. Although this exceptional humanitarian effort has provided education to Afghans for decades, it has also placed significant strain on Iran's national education system. The surge in the number of Afghan students since 2021 has exacerbated these challenges, leading to increasingly restrictive policies on the education of undocumented children, leaving many of them unable to enrol in schools. The lack of physical school spaces creates barriers for enrolling new students. At the same time, many Afghan families in Iran struggle financially to support their children's education while also facing institutional and administrative challenges and socio-cultural barriers that reduce access to education.

## Shifts in Iran's Refugee-Education Policies

Iran is a signatory to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. Under Article 22, Iran is obligated to provide refugees with the same access to elementary education as its nationals and to treat refugees as favourably as possible and offer other forms of education. The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants<sup>9</sup> and Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) emphasize the importance of ensuring all refugee children have access to quality primary and secondary education in safe learning environments within a few months of their arrival in host countries. To sustain such policies, the GCR also **underlines the need for continued investment and international community support to help shoulder the financial costs of inclusion.**

Iran has shown an exemplary approach to the right to education, enabling foreign children to learn side by side with Iranian children in public schools. While the Government of Iran continues to enrol refugee children in schools in line with its inclusive policies, limited school capacity and financial pressures have created access barriers.

Over the years, Iran's policies and decisions regarding foreign children's access to education have seen many changes. Currently, only foreign students with a *Yekta* code<sup>10</sup> can register in schools, and even then, enrolment depends on the availability of spaces. This ultimately restricts access to education for undocumented foreign children.

In 2015, the Supreme Leader issued a decree formalizing access to primary and secondary education for all Afghan children, regardless of their documentation status. Since then, the Government of Iran has issued annual guidelines detailing the enrolment procedures for foreign students in schools. However, these guidelines have increasingly imposed more restrictions on undocumented children's access to education, likely due to limited financial and human resources.

**The latest guideline issued in September 2024 explicitly prohibits the enrolment of students who do not hold valid documents** and are irregularly present in the country. As a result, many children are now expected to face significant challenges in accessing education. In parallel, Afghan students already enrolled in schools often require additional assistance to support their physical and mental well-being, including addressing their trauma of displacement and mitigating the impacts of learning loss.

# Challenges in Accessing Education

## Overburdened Infrastructure and Physical Capacity Barriers

According to the latest data from the Ministry of Education<sup>11</sup>, some 16.3 million students are enrolled in Iran's formal education system for the 2023-2024 school year. Student enrolment has been on the rise in recent years, with an increase of around 3 million compared to the mid-2010s. This growth has placed significant pressure on the education system.

**Around 610,000 Afghan and Iraqi children are enrolled in primary and secondary schools** for the 2024-2025 academic year, according to the Ministry of Education. The increasing number of Afghan children in need of education in Iran has also contributed to school overcrowding, with reports of up to 50 students per classroom in some densely populated refugee-hosting areas, far exceeding the national standard of 20 students per classroom.<sup>12</sup> Most schools in these areas operate in two shifts to accommodate demand.

Overcrowded classrooms have a negative impact on students' academic performance, as teachers have less time to engage with each student individually. This situation can also lead to social friction, with **some Iranian parents perceiving a negative correlation between their children's declining school performance and the growing number of Afghan students**. Overcrowding can also detrimentally impact learning outcomes and school retention, particularly in highly vulnerable households where education is often deprioritized in favour of other basic needs.

**The Government of Iran has indicated that at least 2,000 new schools are needed** at both primary and secondary levels to accommodate all school-age children and reduce overcrowding in the most densely refugee-populated areas. Moreover, many partially rehabilitated schools require completion or further expansion to reduce overcrowding. However, the capacity of Iran to shoulder these costs alone is limited, as entrenched economic challenges linked to sanctions and inflation, continue to reduce Government revenues.

## Human Resource Constraints

In addition to the overwhelmed physical education infrastructure, Iran's national education system faces a shortage of teachers to support both host community and Afghan students. **The Government estimates that an additional 176,000 trained teaching personnel are required** for the 2024-2025 school year.

Teacher shortages can increase the number of classrooms without assigned teachers, leading to overcrowded classrooms, or teachers being assigned to subjects outside their expertise.

These challenges negatively impact teachers' motivation, the quality of education and, ultimately, learning outcomes. Increasing the numbers of female teachers is vital to reducing the overall deficit. For girls, especially in conservative Afghan communities, a lack of female teachers can spell the end of their secondary education, as some parents may not allow their daughters to be taught by male teachers. **Female teachers also act as important role models, who can inspire and support girls to complete their studies** – and potentially pursue careers as teachers themselves.





NRC Remedial courses for Afghan children.  
© Zahra Choopankareh/ NRC

## Financial Challenges

Although education is free for all children in Iran, as emphasized in the Afghan Children Registration Circular for 2024-2025, the cost of education, including assistance to schools, stationery and supplies, uniforms and transportation, has risen in line with inflation. **Afghan students face similar financial difficulties, compounded by their exclusion from the national protection system,** which often prevents them from continuing their education.

At the tertiary level, many university-aged Afghans, including female students who fled Afghanistan after being banned from pursuing education, have had to prioritize meeting their immediate needs, such as livelihood, shelter, and food, despite their interest in continuing their studies. This situation has been exacerbated by rising university tuition fees and living expenses.

After completing university, **these students often struggle to secure employment due to labour regulations and restrictions on work permits,** particularly for women. As a result, many are confined a small number of low-skilled jobs, forcing them to work irregularly and in fields unrelated to their qualifications, all of which heighten the risk of exploitation and abuse.

## Institutional and Administrative Challenges, including Documentation

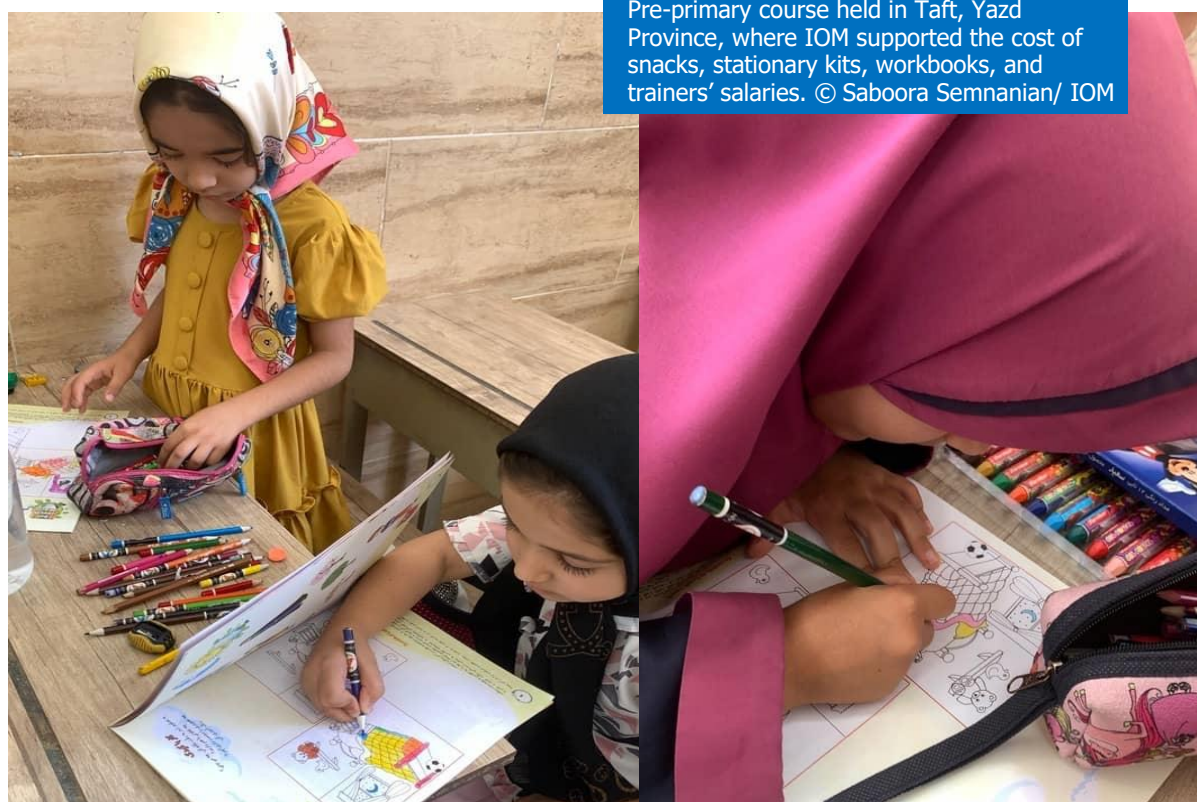
Afghan children's access to protection and essential services has been largely governed by their documentation status, regulated through several new Government-led schemes. In May 2023, Iran announced plans to issue a new unified smart ID card to consolidate the various forms of documentation held by foreign nationals in the country. This initiative aimed to replace *Amayesh* cards for long-stay Afghans, *Hoviat* cards for Iraqi refugees, 2022 headcount slips, special residence permits and family passports, with gradual access to banking, judicial and administrative services, as well as SIM cards. **Although the issuance of smart cards began in early 2024, it was halted in July, and as of the end of December 2024, no clear timeline for resumption** had been provided.

Several bureaucratic hurdles further limit opportunities for Afghan children to be enrolled in school. The Afghan Children Registration Circular is routinely issued annually before the start of the school year. However, for the 2024–2025 academic year, delays in issuing the circular, restrictions on the registration of

undocumented Afghan children unable to obtain *Yekta* codes, and the prioritization of headcounted groups over children of *Amayesh* cardholders and passport holders have further limited Afghan children's access to formal education.

Reports to UNHCR from refugees approaching its offices indicate that some families have faced difficulties enrolling children without proper documentation, with only those possessing *Yekta* codes being able to register in schools. Field reports also suggest that **quotas on the registration of Afghan students are applied in some provinces**, driven by a lack of space and growing anti-Afghan sentiment.

Afghan university students similarly face complex and restrictive pathways regarding their legal status in Iran. For example, Afghan students with *Amayesh* cards must give up their *Amayesh* status, obtain an Afghan passport, and apply for a student visa either at an Iranian consulate in Afghanistan or on Kish Island in the southern part of Iran to enrol in universities. The EUR 30 (some IRR 15,000,000) visa fee, coupled with transport, accommodation and other related expenses, are significant financial barriers for Afghan students seeking to enrol in tertiary education.



Pre-primary course held in Taft, Yazd Province, where IOM supported the cost of snacks, stationary kits, workbooks, and trainers' salaries. © Saboora Semnianian/ IOM

## Socio-Cultural Issues Related to Girls Education

The combination of financial challenges, prevailing patriarchal attitudes, and a lack of awareness among some Afghan parents about the importance of education, presents considerable barriers to school enrolment. These obstacles are particularly pronounced for girls and children with disabilities. As a result, boys' education is often prioritised, and in some cases, girls are prevented from attending school, particularly in low-income communities.

School retention and enrolment rates are notably lower in poorer provinces, such as Sistan-and-Baluchistan and Kerman. In these areas, more conservative norms intersect with higher levels of deprivation. Due to their marginalization from education, girls are also

likely to face an increased risk of exploitation and abuse, including forced and child marriage, gender-based violence, and other forms of abuse and sexual exploitation. This creates a vicious cycle where a lack of education for girls perpetuates poverty, further entrenching inequalities.

Moreover, the psychological impact on those at risk of missing out on education or facing marginalization is significant, often leading to heightened anxiety, depression, and a sense of hopelessness. This effect is particularly profound for women and girls, who, having already experienced limited access to education in Afghanistan and deeply entrenched patriarchal attitudes, are often the most excluded in community and household decisions regarding enrolment. This exacerbates the emotional and psychosocial well-being of Afghan women and girls.



Provision of school readiness programme for Afghan and Iranian children in Sistan and Baluchistan in September 2024  
© Golazin Hemmaty/ UNICEF

# 360° Approach to Education

In addition to barriers to access, Afghan children often have specific needs, which if not addressed, can impact learning outcomes and potentially compromise school retention and continued learning. In the long-term, this can undermine household and community resilience by limiting livelihood opportunities.

Simply 'being in school' is not enough: refugee children and youth need to have access to quality early childhood development and education (ECDE) programmes, inclusive formal primary and secondary education, non-formal education to support the transition to formal education, and increased opportunities for continuous learning, whether through technical and vocational education and training (TVET) or higher education.

## Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE)

ECDE programmes for Afghan refugee children and the most vulnerable host community children in Iran is largely unavailable. ECDE is foundational to a child's development, advancing key outcomes that help realize a child's potential. It prioritizes support to children from birth to five years of age, providing integrated and multi-sectoral support in these critical formative years.

ECDE is particularly important for young refugee children, who often contend with the developmental and psychological consequences of displacement and may face challenges adapting to new surroundings. Although pre-school is not universal or mandatory in Iran, **it is generally recommended that children whose mother tongue is not Farsi are**

**enrolled in pre-school to facilitate their transition into formal primary education.**

However, for Afghan families, the costs associated with ECDE are sometimes prohibitive. As a result, Afghan children often enter primary schools without basic skills, placing them at a disadvantage compared to peers who have gone through ECDE, particularly where they do not speak Farsi as their mother tongue. These challenges increase the risk of grade repetition and dropout, which imposes additional burdens on families and the education system.

To address these gaps, **further efforts are needed to enhance access to pre-primary education for Afghan children and Iranians in dual language areas.** This includes expanding early childhood development and education programmes many UN agencies and INGOs provide to promote more inclusive and equitable access.

## Crucial Support to Teaching Personnel

Teachers are instrumental in shaping a children's learning pathways. In Iran, many teachers lack the training needed to effectively include Afghan children in formal education settings. **Refugee children often face learning barriers due to the absence of teachers trained to manage multi-cultural classrooms** or fluent in Pashto or Dari. This not only undermines learning outcomes but also risks reducing school enrolment and

retention rates, as families may question the value of education and whether the opportunity cost of schooling is justified.

These challenges highlight the critical need for whole-of-society approaches to education, involving all key stakeholders in a child's schooling – teachers, parents, and primary caregivers. This is particularly important in addressing gender-related barriers to education, as decisions around schooling and education are still shaped by discriminatory gender norms – especially at the secondary level.

Tailored approaches are also required to ensure the **equitable participation of marginalized groups and persons with specific needs** in formal education, including students with disabilities, who are at particular risk of non-enrolment or dropping out of school. Additional investments are required to

accommodate these specific learning requirements, including recruiting specialized teaching staff, expanding teacher training programmes, enhancing classroom support, and providing targeted learning resources to ensure full accessibility for students with mobility challenges.

## Non-Formal and Off-Site Education

Afghan children often face significant challenges in transitioning to formal education. Effective inclusion and retention in formal education requires increased non-formal and accelerated learning opportunities. Non-formal education, including the establishment of Community Learning Centres, can also help nurture transferrable life skills, which can be applied to support both formal learning and access to livelihood opportunities.

To facilitate inclusion, the provision of Farsi language classes is essential, particularly for Pashtun children in public schools. Without dedicated language classes for non-Farsi speakers, retention rates will remain low and learning outcomes will continue to be compromised. At the same time, elective language classes are required to maintain first language skills, as this loss could likely hinder future opportunities for voluntary repatriation when the situation in Afghanistan improves.

To address disproportionately low retention rates in formal education systems among refugee children, shorter-duration catch-up classes to enable formal school enrolment and

remedial literacy and numeracy classes or tutoring are also required. Such interventions are particularly critical for Afghan refugee children who arrived after 2021 and likely experienced significant disruptions to their education. Currently, many NGOs in Tehran and across the country are providing support for out-of-school children, particularly recent arrivals, by preparing them for integration into the formal education system through placement tests. Several UN agencies and INGOs are also collaborating with local NGOs to provide support in non-formal settings.

**The Government of Iran has expressed willingness to enhance virtual education in light of the growing number of school-aged Afghan children.** Ensuring access to digital connectivity, resources, and developing universal digital literacy for teachers and students is essential in equipping young people with the skills needed to thrive.

In line with this forward-looking approach, fostering environmental literacy and consciousness is equally important, enabling young people to contribute to greener, more sustainable societies, particularly given the multiple environmental and climate-related challenges the Islamic Republics of Iran and Afghanistan face.

## Continuous learning – Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Higher Education

For Afghan students, cost remains the primary barrier to accessing tertiary education. Higher education costs include tuition fees, stationery, textbooks, and equipment, all of which must be self-funded. Students must also cover their living expenses, such as accommodation, food expenses, and transport. Furthermore,

**restrictions on obtaining work permits for Afghan university graduates, especially in Iran's saturated job market, hinder and discourage young Afghans** from pursuing higher education. Despite this, tertiary education opportunities play a vital role in fostering self-reliance and resilience among refugee communities, while also laying the groundwork for sustainable voluntary returns when conditions become viable.

At the same time, many refugee adolescents and youth lack the skills needed to facilitate the transition from secondary to tertiary education. Currently, there are no dedicated post-

secondary education learning opportunities to support this transition. While access to tertiary education remains limited, post-secondary learning opportunities — such as language training, IT and digital literacy courses, and catch-up or bridging programmes — can serve as a foundation to broaden access to higher education for Afghan youth in Iran, including through complementary pathways and third-country solutions.

Greater consideration is also required to expand access to TVET programmes at the secondary, post-secondary and tertiary levels. Afghan students face quotas limiting their access to TVET programmes at upper secondary schools, resulting in significantly low enrolment rates. Moreover, access to non-formal TVET programmes is also costly and out of reach for many youths. **Expanding formal and non-formal TVET programmes for Afghan adolescents and youth, with a focus on green and market-driven skills could increase Afghan youth's employability and competitiveness in the labour market.** TVET programmes not only

offer a pathway for lifelong learning but can also contribute to more durable solutions.

Refugees, particularly youth, however, continue to face significant barriers to TVET programmes. These include transportation challenges, conflicting work schedules, lack of diverse or advanced training courses, and obstacles accessing job opportunities after graduation. Women face additional obstacles, such as cultural barriers, childcare duties, and elder care responsibilities.

To address these challenges, more efforts are needed to enhance access to higher education (undergraduate level) and TVET programmes for Afghan youth in Iran. This includes expanding UNHCR's support through the DAFI<sup>13</sup> (Albert Einstein German Academic Initiative) scholarship programme, which provides financial assistance to help cover tuition fees and living costs. Moreover, many UN agencies and INGOs also provide different free TVET programmes designed to enhance job-specific and soft skills, supporting Afghan adolescents and youth to succeed in Iran's labour market and prepare for potential return to Afghanistan or second migration to other countries.

## Social Emotion Learning (SEL) and Loss of Potential

The absence of a protective learning environment increases the risk of child protection-related issues, such as exploitation, abuse, and child labour. **A lack of education can also deeply impact children's mental well-being, often leading to despair and disengagement,** and an increased likelihood of psychological problems, such as depression, self-harm, and suicide. The marginalization and denial of fundamental rights (including the right to education) is likely to have a particular impact on the mental health of Afghan women and girls.

In light of this, psychosocial and social and emotional learning (SEL) is critical to facilitating education access and retention in both formal and non-formal education programmes. Efforts

to strengthen and scale-up teacher training on SEL, positive discipline, and trauma-informed approaches, are essential to these efforts. Employing counsellors and psychologists can provide early intervention and treatment for children showing signs of distress, while supporting extracurricular activities fosters self-expression and builds social connections.

In addition to helping refugee children cope with the often-traumatic experiences that brought them to Iran, SEL enhances educational success, employment prospects, and overall life satisfaction. These interventions are especially vital for at-risk children, including Afghan children living in street situations. More generally, improving alternative care options and family tracing and reunification for unaccompanied and separated children is critical in enabling appropriate responses.

# Call to Action

In view of the increased strain on the education system in Iran, greater and sustained international responsibility-sharing is urgently needed to support the Government of Iran in maintaining inclusive education for Afghan children, while ensuring quality education for both refugees and host communities. Without such support, Afghan refugee children — particularly girls — risk being left behind, creating a lost generation.

## Sharing the Responsibility to Provide Quality Education

Building on the situational and needs analysis presented in this Education Brief, the case for scaled-up and sustained support for education in Iran, consistent with the commitment to responsibility-sharing, is undeniable:

- Since 2021, there has been a substantial increase in the number of Afghan students in Iran who require education and multi-sector assistance to ensure their well-being, maintain living standards, and avoid a lost generation.
- The ongoing instability in Afghanistan is expected to significantly impact children's access to safe and protective learning environments within their home country and drive more displacement to Iran in the foreseeable future. This particularly impacts women and girls, whose right to education in Afghanistan has been denied, making Iran their best opportunity to continue learning. Newly arrived children join millions of Afghan students living in protracted displacement, for whom education is a lifeline that allows them to learn and develop, while offering the hope of a better future.
- Against this backdrop, the overburdened education system in Iran is put under further strain, compromising access to education, and potentially eroding the scope of the Government's policies. Over time, as and when conditions in Afghanistan become conducive for return, gaps in education

will compromise the ability of Afghan youth to meaningfully contribute to the development and future of their country.

To support all stakeholders in pledging assistance for education in Iran, **seven international aid organizations are appealing for a combined USD 113.2 million for education under the Regional RRP for the Afghanistan Situation 2024-2025.**

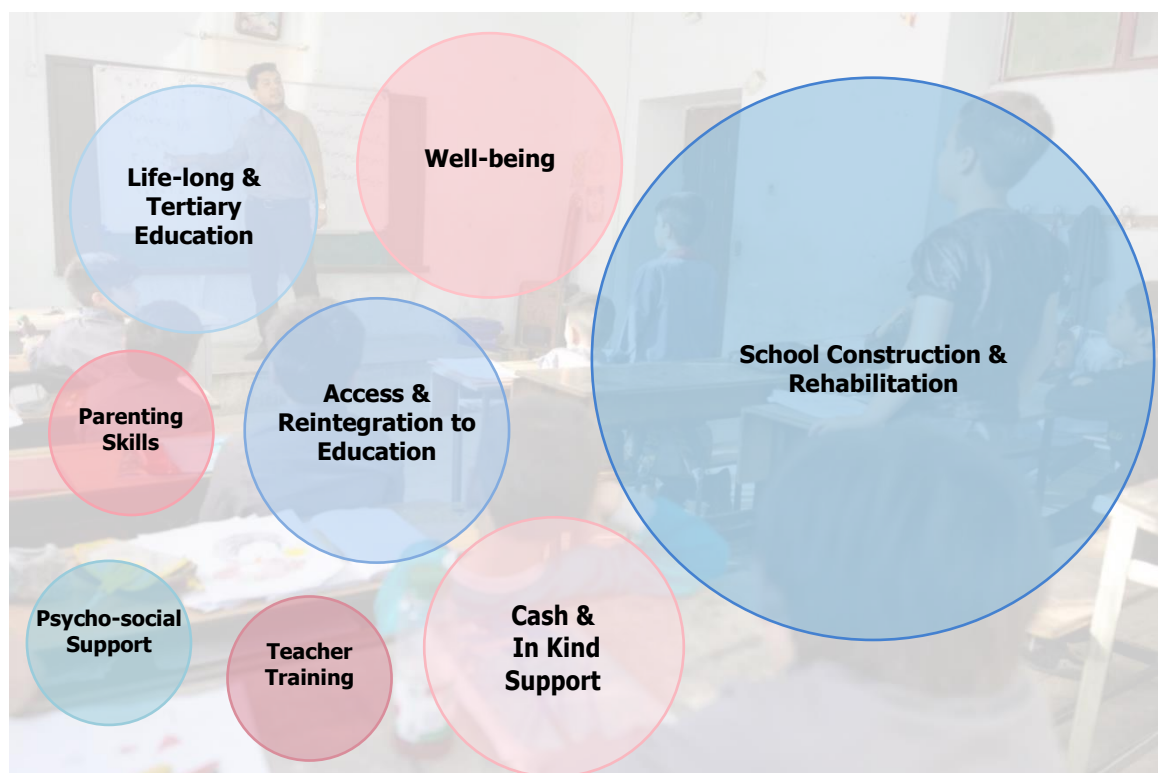
This coordinated and needs-based inter-agency strategy supports education for Afghan refugees and Iranian host communities alike, prioritizing efforts to:

1. Improve access to equitable, safe, and inclusive education for Afghan refugees and their host communities, with a particular emphasis on reducing barriers to education for girls.
2. Enhance the quality of education opportunities available through the development of a safe and protective learning environment that improves overall learning outcomes and enhances resilience, with an emphasis on life-long learning.

## USD 113.2 million for Refugee Education

In contributing to these objectives, RRP partners plan to undertake a range of activities:

Activities	Budget
Enhance schools and education facilities environment through construction, rehabilitation, renovation, and provision of classroom equipment	\$ 96,200,000
Support access, reintegration, and retention in formal education to Afghan children and adolescents, particularly girls	\$ 4,380,000
Students/prospective tertiary education students are provided with opportunities for life-long learning through increased access to higher education, as well as technical vocational education/ training programmes. This includes through the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) Scholarship Programme	\$ 4,200,000
Targeted support to Afghan students and their families, specifically those from the most economically disadvantaged backgrounds to enable them to access education (awareness raising, cash and in-kind support)	\$ 3,260,000
Support the well-being of students, particularly students with disabilities	\$ 3,100,000
Parents and caregivers of Afghan children are equipped with the basic skills to identify specialized needs and provide support	\$ 801,000
Support teachers in their professional development and equip them with the skills required to provide tailored support to students	\$ 796,000
Support Afghan children, particularly girls, with specialized services that address risks and negative coping mechanisms, including those resulting from psychosocial distress	\$ 500,000



### Budget Requirement



## An Opportunity to Contribute to Afghanistan's Future

This 2024-2025 Education Brief under the RRP seeks to capitalize on the momentum of the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) to advance the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR).

In line with this, the "Multi-Stakeholder Pledge for Resilience and Solutions: ReSolve" provides.

an opportunity for all stakeholders to contribute to Afghanistan's future by pledging support for Iran, including through financing the 2024-25 RRP. This also builds on the priorities of the Government of Iran, which continues to see access to education and retention in schooling for Afghan refugees as a primary objective. It also recognizes the reality that **Iran presents the best opportunity to invest in education for Afghans, particularly women and girls.**



Provision of remedial classes for Afghan children in Khorasan Razavi- September 2024  
© Mehdi Sayyari/ UNICEF

## End notes

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<sup>1</sup> [UNHCR Mid-Year Trends 2024](#).

<sup>2</sup> [Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2024](#)  
– OCHA

<sup>3</sup> [Afghanistan: 1.4 million girls still banned from school by de facto authorities](#)  
(UNESCO, Sep. 24).

<sup>4</sup> [Summary of the key discussions and outcomes from the Global Refugee Forum 2023](#).

<sup>5</sup> [Multi-stakeholder Pledge: ReSolve - for Resilience and Solutions](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Document - Regional Refugee Response Plan 2024-2025 - Afghanistan Situation](#)

<sup>7</sup> People in [refugee-like situation](#) refers to a category of people who are outside their country or territory of origin and who face

protection risks similar to those of refugees, but for who do not hold refugee status has.

<sup>8</sup> For more details on Afghan refugee population in Iran, please see [UNHCR Iran's Operational Data Portal](#)

<sup>9</sup> [New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants | UNHCR](#)

<sup>10</sup> Yekta code is a unique 10-digit code issued to foreign nationals with valid residence status, this code is used by the government and service providers to identify and provide services to foreign nationals as well as keep a record of them in their database.

<sup>11</sup> [Iranian Ministry of Education Website](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Islamic Parliament Research Centre \(IPRC\)](#)

<sup>13</sup> [DAFI \(Albert Einstein German Academic Initiative\)](#)