

Afghanistan

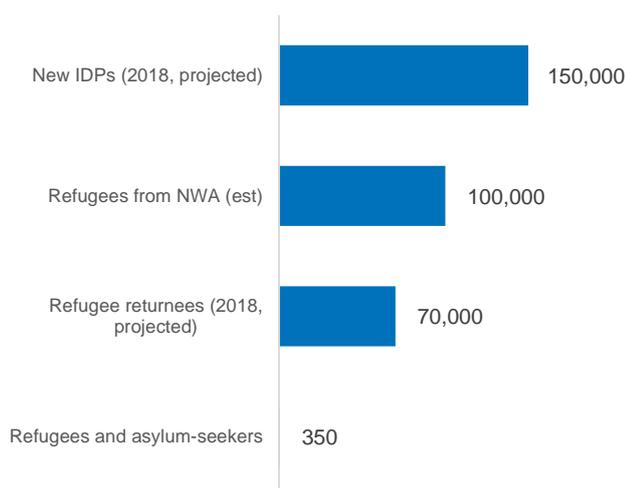
March 2018

As at 21 March, **1,052** refugees have returned to Afghanistan from neighboring and non-neighboring countries (**756** from Pakistan) in 2018.

34,381 individuals have been newly displaced by conflict since 1 January 2018 and profiled by OCHA as internally displaced persons (IDPs) in need.

76,000 Pakistani refugees from North-Waziristan Agency biometrically registered in Khost province and verified in Paktika province.

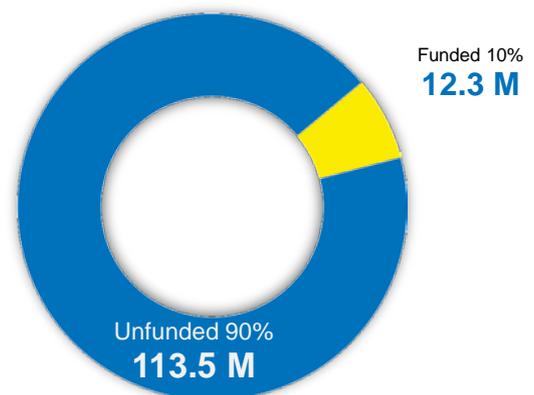
PROJECTED POPULATION OF CONCERN IN 2018



FUNDING (AS OF 19 MARCH 2018)

USD 125.8 M

requested for Afghanistan



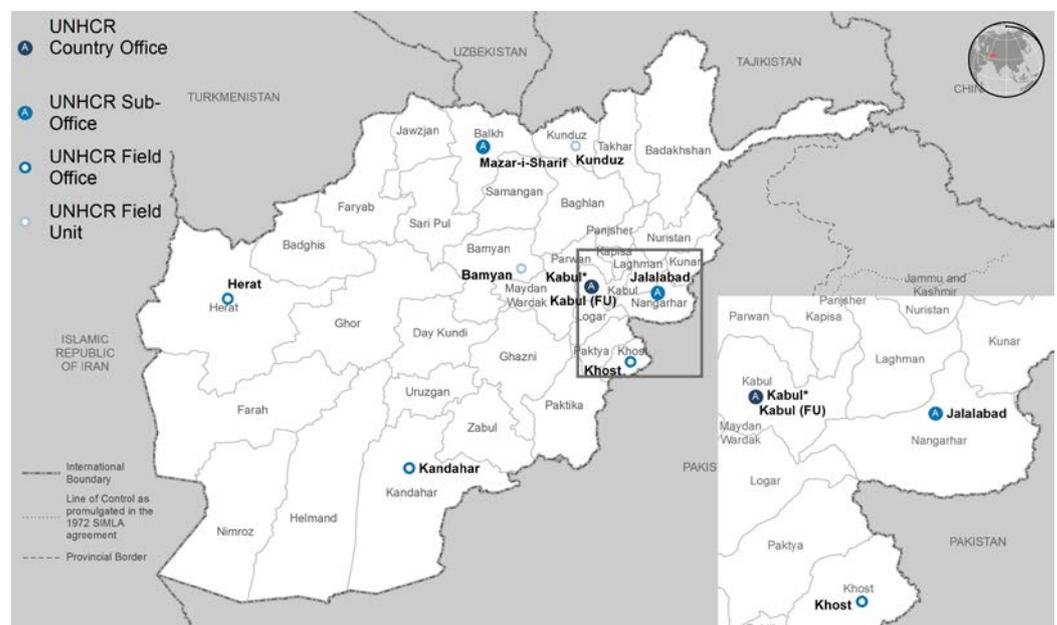
UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

207 National Staff
28 International Staff
16% female / 84% male

Offices:

- 1 Country Office in Kabul
- 2 Sub Offices in Jalalabad and Mazar
- 6 Field Offices in Kabul, Herat, Kandahar, Khost, Kunduz, Bamyan



Main Activities

Repatriation

UNHCR Facilitated Voluntary Repatriation (VolRep) Programme

UNHCR continues to facilitate voluntary repatriation of registered Afghan refugees from Pakistan and Iran in conditions of safety and dignity, under the Tripartite Agreements with the respective Governments and UNHCR. The Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) is the regional platform for Afghan refugees (Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan). In 2017, UNHCR facilitated the voluntary return of 58,817 individuals (98% from Pakistan, 2% from Iran and other countries).

UNHCR's facilitated Voluntary Repatriation programme from Pakistan resumed operations after a three-month winter break from 1 March 2018.

Cash Grant

UNHCR's unconditional cash grants to returnees are intended to prevent, reduce, and respond to protection risks and vulnerabilities. The cash grant remains a key component of UNHCR's Protection Strategy to assist returnees to meet their immediate humanitarian needs, as well as transport to their place of origin or destination, and lasts one to three months according to phone interviews with returnees (3-5 months after they have passed through the Encashment Centres. UNHCR provides cash assistance of an average of US\$200 per person through its four Encashment Centres. An independent evaluation of the cash grant is currently being conducted, to better understand the impact of the repatriation cash grant and inform UNHCR's programming on the use of the cash grant as an important protection tool.

- In 2018, UNHCR assisted **1,052** individuals who returned to Afghanistan with cash grants (756 from Pakistan, 247 from Iran, 35 from Tajikistan, and 14 from India), as of 21 March.

Management of Encashment Centres

UNHCR in coordination with the Ministry/Department of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR/DoRR) and its partners manage four Encashment Centres, located in Jalalabad, Kandahar, Herat and Kabul. In addition to cash grants, a range of services – including basic health screening, referrals to emergency services and vaccinations for children (implemented by Ministry of Public Health with support from WHO and UNICEF), mine risk awareness (coordinated by UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and implemented by the Danish Demining Group, educational information, referral for information and legal assistance to obtain civil documentation (*tazkira*), child friendly spaces and a transit facility for overnight accommodation – is provided by the Ministry of Public Health supported by WHO and UNICEF.

At the Centres, UNHCR also conducts household level interviews to assess the voluntary nature of return, return trends and protection risks in asylum and during return. During interviews persons with specific needs are identified by UNHCR and DoRR/MoRR and referred to service providers for assessment and potential assistance.

Refugee Returnees and IDPs



UNHCR and partner WSTA staff speak with Bibi Alia, an internally displaced female by conflict from Aliabad district of northern Kunduz province, on her family's protection needs outside their home in Kabul.
 ©UNHCR/ S. Rich

Protection Monitoring

UNHCR systematically and regularly collects, verifies and analyses information over an extended period of time to identify violations of rights and protection risks for IDPs, returnees and host communities for the purpose of informing effective responses. Protection risk analysis helps to inform the overall humanitarian response and uphold the Centrality of Protection. UNHCR's protection monitoring is the basis to plan interventions for persons with specific needs and community based interventions; and assists UNHCR and partners in overall programme

planning and response, as well as supplies evidence for advocacy efforts.

UNHCR, in collaboration with Orange Door Research and Viamo, is using mobile data collection to enhance the analysis of the data collected through protection monitoring, its better categorisation and most importantly – systematisation of the evidence to inform advocacy and interventions. Analysis of the collected data is key to its effective usage: UNHCR is in the process of developing a new analytical framework that will inform the key priorities and areas of work.

Returnee Monitoring

Returnee monitoring is an integral part of the protection monitoring system in Afghanistan: it consists of three components: monitoring upon arrival at the Encashment Centre; regular phone surveys of the representative sample upon settlement of returnees in communities and monitoring of returnees in their communities using a community based approach.

UNHCR has also signed a project partnership agreement on 'Vox-Af', an inter-agency information centre (implemented by UNOPS, and funded by UNHCR and WFP) in December 2017. The centre will serve the purpose of providing information to persons of concern on the available services in their geographical area, allow feedback from communities (including concerns and complaints) to be consolidated and shared back to respective agencies including UNHCR, as a self-reporting mechanism of the needs; this will further provide a basis for a feedback mechanism to the Government.

Persons with Specific Needs (PSN)

In mid-March 2018, UNHCR Afghanistan has launched the **online PSN database** which will help the operation to enhance PSN beneficiary case management: from identification of beneficiaries to the provision of appropriate assistance (including referrals).

UNHCR's People with Specific Needs (PSN) programme provides targeted assistance on an individual basis to people with acute vulnerabilities and protection risks amongst UNHCR persons of concern: documented returnees, refugees, conflict-induced IDPs. Extremely vulnerable individuals from the local communities and undocumented returnees are also considered as beneficiaries under the PSN programme. The main objective of the program is to mitigate and respond to the individual emergency protection risks putting in place the self-reliance of each individual when designing a response. UNHCR aims to link the PSN programme with Community based Protection Measures for enhanced, sustainable comprehensive assistance for PSNs.

Community based Protection Measures

UNHCR supports community based protection measures, to reduce protection risks and vulnerabilities while fostering peaceful coexistence and reintegration of returnees and IDPs with local/host communities. These measures include: community support infrastructure facilities, in-cash and in-kind support for subsistence, promoting representation in community decision-making structures, and skills development for employment, particularly focused on women and youth.

The measures focus on community empowerment in line with the existing job market demand and include: (i) innovative approaches such as UNHCR's Global MADE51 for artisans' development and Graduation approach for the most vulnerable; and (ii) establishing/promoting linkages with the Afghanistan Government's National Priority Programmes, development agencies initiatives (including the World Bank), and fostering partnerships with the local and international private sector to link to medium and longer term interventions for sustainability.



Community members displaced by conflict plant vegetables in the Herat green house established with UNHCR support. The successful Community based Protection project utilises skills of the community and links them with the market needs. ©UNHCR/ S. Rich

- In 2017, 23 high return/displacement communities were targeted with community protection measures, which has benefitted nearly 50,000 persons of concern, including 350,000 local community members indirectly.
- In 2018, UNHCR plans to reach over 100 communities, benefitting nearly 2 million Afghans.

Winterisation

As lead Agency of the Emergency Shelter/NFI Cluster, UNHCR participates in year-end inter-agency efforts to address seasonal vulnerability. For the 2017/18 winter, UNHCR distributed unconditional cash assistance (approximately US\$200) for assessed/selected vulnerable persons of concern in all 34 provinces. The distribution of cash supports local markets, as beneficiaries purchased items such as heating fuel, warm clothing, household goods, and food. Winter blankets and clothes (from UNIQLO) were additionally distributed for the identified most vulnerable families.

- From November 2017 to January 2018, UNHCR and partners distributed winter assistance to **54,315** families (**339,293** individuals) of which 49 per cent were IDP families, 23 per cent refugees, 21 per cent returnees and 7 per cent vulnerable host and other populations.



UNHCR staff speaks with Gull Andam, an internally displaced female head of household in Mazar, whom UNHCR provided with winterization assistance. ©UNHCR/S. Rich



Khadija with UNHCR's winterization assistance, she and her family received in the background. ©UNHCR/ S. Rich

Protection Cluster and Emergency Shelter/Non Food Items Cluster

UNHCR's presence and active involvement in the inter-agency humanitarian coordination mechanisms and leadership of the Protection Cluster (including co-leadership of the Housing, Land and Property Task Force) and the Emergency Shelter and Non-Food Items (ES/NFI) Cluster remains crucial to promote efficiency in coordination and response. UNHCR promotes protection mainstreaming in all sectors of the Humanitarian Response Plan, to ensure that protection principles are incorporated and meaningful access, safety and dignity in humanitarian aid are promoted.

Efforts are directed towards action oriented and cross cutting coordination. To that aim, UNHCR is leading a review process of protection priorities for the Afghanistan Protection Cluster strategy, to refocus on the protection of civilians and displacement related protection concerns, as well as mobilizing relevant stakeholders for longer term interventions to strengthen the protective environment. UNHCR is also reinforcing coordination between regional and national levels by documenting protection concerns and engaging in advocacy to ensure response.

- UNHCR is hosting the mission of ProCap Senior Protection Advisor who is on a three-month mission to develop the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) Protection Strategy.
- In 2018, **34,381** individuals are reported by UNAMA to be newly displaced by conflict, as of 2 March.

AFG Protection Cluster:

38 Cluster partners
1.1M people targeted
67M funding request

AFG ES/NFI Cluster:

31 Cluster partners
0.7M people targeted
53M funding request

Durable Solutions

Tripartite Commission and Quadripartite Steering Committee meetings

The **29th Tripartite Commission** (Afghanistan, Pakistan and UNHCR) and **20th Tripartite Commission meetings** (Afghanistan, Iran and UNHCR) – hosted by the Government of Afghanistan – took place on 30 November 2017 in Istanbul. All parties reaffirmed their commitment to work together to ensure the voluntary return of Afghan refugees in safety and dignity, and to joint resource mobilisation to support solutions and host communities in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The **5th Quadripartite Steering Committee meeting** (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and UNHCR) – hosted by the Government of Afghanistan – also took place on 1 December 2017 in Istanbul. The Governments of the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan (GoIRA), Pakistan, Iran, and UNHCR reaffirmed the significance and relevant of the SSAR to continue to implement reintegration and lasting solutions for Afghan refugees in the region and committed to a continuation of the SSAR, although it has not yet been endorsed by the Governments of Pakistan and Iran.

UNHCR Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran offices have worked together on the 2018-19 UNHCR regional strategy under the umbrella of the SSAR for enhancing resilience and co-existence through greater responsibility-sharing, including strengthened partnership with development stakeholders.

In March 2018, the Government of Afghanistan has officially expressed its interest to be part of the **Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF)** – which will be a component of the global compact on refugees, as foreseen in the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants; UNHCR will support the Government and jointly explore the next steps.

DiREC and national policy framework support

As an active member of the DiREC Technical and Finance Working Groups and co-chair of the DiREC Policy Working Group, UNHCR supports the Government of Afghanistan to implement the Policy Framework for Return and Displacement and the related national Action Plan and provincial Action Plans. UNHCR advocates with Government ministries and development actors for the needs of returnees and IDPs to be part of the national policy frameworks, development plans (Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF)) and priority programmes and mainstreaming of protection issues. UNHCR also advocates for the implementation of the National IDP Policy (2013) and Policy Framework for Return and Displacement (2016).

The Humanitarian and Development Nexus

UNHCR works to strengthen the link between humanitarian and development through partnerships with development actors (mainly the World Bank) and the private sector to ensure access to documentation, livelihoods and essential services and to facilitate the representation of women in community decision making. In November 2017, UNHCR and the World Bank Group signed a data sharing agreement to better support reintegration of Afghan refugee returnees through strengthened data collection and analysis.

Herat and Jalalabad

To implement policy into action, UNHCR spearheaded two inter-agency initiatives on [durable solutions in Herat](#) and Nangarhar provinces with national and provincial ministries and Agencies (UNICEF, WHO, IOM, UNDP, UN Habitat, WFP and FAO). These initiatives translate national plans into provincial planning and joint programming in areas of high return and displacement. In Herat, UNHCR and partners contributed with construction of shelter, a clinic and a school, in Jalalabad UNHCR and partners, with line departments and Agencies, are conducting a joint market assessment and designing sustainable livelihoods programmes through strengthened partnerships with development actors and the private sector. In February 2018, the proposed site in Jalalabad has been approved/selected by the provincial DiREC.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Khost and Paktika

Afghanistan hosts Pakistani refugees who fled North Waziristan Agency in 2014 in Khost and Paktika. UNHCR leads camp management and coordination in Gulan refugee camp which hosts over 11,000 Pakistani refugees but many have settled in host communities and benefit from UNHCR and partner's community based protection measures. With the emergency phase of displacement over, UNHCR is transitioning to a protection strategy built

on targeted assistance to PSN's and designed to build capacity, self-reliance and resilience, while coordinating with partners and advocating with donors to ensure continuity of essential services for the refugee population; including basic health care, WASH, and education among others.

In 2018, UNHCR Khost is in the process of conducting biometric registration at Gulan refugee camp for the un-registered populations in Khost and Paktika. Due to cultural barriers and the reluctance of some to share biometric information, some refugee families did not register during the biometric registration in Khost in 2016-17 and the verification exercise in Paktika in 2017. Access in Paktika remains limited due to insecurity. The total population is estimated to be approximately 100,000.

- As of mid-March 2018, some **1,760** individuals (out of which 1,270 are residing in Khost, and the remaining in Paktika) have been biometrically registered in 2018 during the ongoing biometric registration exercise.



Pakistani refugee children in Gulan refugee camp of Khost province. ©UNHCR/S. Rich

Urban Refugees and Asylum Seekers

UNHCR prioritizes interim solutions for urban asylum-seekers and refugees pending the passage of a national refugee law and implementation of a national asylum framework. UNHCR conducts registration and, in some cases, refugee status determination, as a protection tool. Local integration is currently unattainable for legal, social, economic and other reasons, and resettlement opportunities are scarce, while the nature of certain refugee claims will continue to prevent their return to the country of origin in conditions of safety and dignity. The provision of targeted subsistence allowance and assistance to PSNs (cash-based and in-kind) aims to reduce their vulnerability. Through advocacy with the Government of Afghanistan, UNHCR mitigates protection risks, including detention and refoulement and has developed agreements with line ministries to ensure that asylum-seekers and refugees have access to basic services such as education and health care.

Working with Partners and Coordination

- UNHCR's direct counterpart in the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is the MoRR. UNHCR is also working with numerous line ministries.
- Within the HCT and UN Country Team, UNHCR is working with UN agencies. UNHCR also works with international and national NGOs, the World Bank and the private sector.
- UNHCR is part of the Tripartite/Quadrupartite mechanisms established with the Governments of the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran to plan coordinate and undertake repatriation of Afghan refugees and the implementation of the SSAR.
- In line with the regional framework of the SSAR, UNHCR is an active member of the GoIRA's Displacement and Return Executive Committee (DiREC), co-chairs the related Policy Working Group and is a member of the Technical and Finance Working Groups.
- UNHCR Afghanistan works closely with UNHCR Iran and Pakistan for a regional approach to anticipate challenges and align efforts including advocacy and fundraising and share best practices and lessons learned; as well as on cross-border programming for livelihoods.
- UNHCR advocates and works with development actors to support the Government's policies and national priority programmes for interim and longer term solutions.
- UNHCR is co-leading the Durable Solutions Working Group with the Government, at the national and sub-national levels to strengthen the links between humanitarian and development for reintegration of returnees and IDPs.
- UNHCR works with 24 implementing partners across the country.

- UNHCR leads the Protection and the Emergency Shelter and NFI Clusters. The two Clusters are co-chaired: Protection with NRC and ES/NFI Cluster with IOM.
- UNHCR is working closely with the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and UNMAS to prevent risks related to IED/Mine/UXO as well as to promote respect of International Humanitarian Law by parties to the conflict.
- UNHCR also leads coordination of the Pakistani refugee response in Khost and Paktika provinces.
- UNHCR maintains close relationships with the donor community through donor briefings, consultations and regular dialogue and coordinating visits, among others.
- UNHCR is working to harmonize data and strengthen information management to enhance protection outcomes. Through an inclusive and participatory approach UNHCR is engaging with persons of concern to to generate data and evidence-based results to demonstrate the impact of UNHCR programmes, identify gaps for strategic direction and programming, and inform the wider humanitarian community.

UNHCR is very grateful for the financial support provided by donors who have contributed with unearmarked and broadly earmarked funds as well as for those who have contributed regionally and directly to the operation (as at 19 March 2018).

Algeria | Argentina | Australia | Bosnia and Herzegovina | Canada | China | Denmark | Estonia | Finland | Germany | Iceland | Indonesia | Italy | Kuwait | Lithuania | Luxembourg | Monaco | Montenegro | Netherlands | New Zealand | Norway | Qatar | Republic of Korea | Russian Federation | Serbia | Singapore | Sri Lanka | Sweden | Switzerland | Thailand | Turkey | United Kingdom | United Arab Emirates | Uruguay | Private Donors |

1. All financial information contained in this update is indicative and does not constitute official UNHCR financial reporting.
2. Unrestricted and regional funds mentioned above include all sub-regional and regional contributions worldwide.

CONTACTS

Donna Corcoran, External Relations Officer, Afghanistan,
corcoran@unhcr.org, Tel: +93 202200381, Cell: +93 (0) 791990011

M. Nadir Farhad, Associate Public Information Officer, Afghanistan
farhadm@unhcr.org Tel: +93 202200381, Cell: + 93 (0) 791990018

Operational data portal: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/afg>