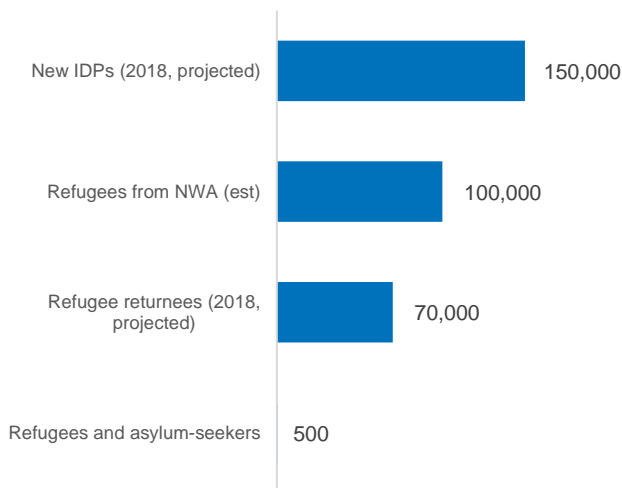# Afghanistan

April 2018

As at 24 April, **4,040** registered refugees have returned to Afghanistan from neighboring and non-neighboring countries (**3,640** from Pakistan).

As at 15 April, **72,851** individuals have been newly displaced by conflict in 2018 and profiled by OCHA as internally displaced persons (IDPs)in need.

As at 31 March, **76,925** Pakistani refugees from North-Waziristan Agency have been biometrically registered in Khost province and verified in Paktika province.
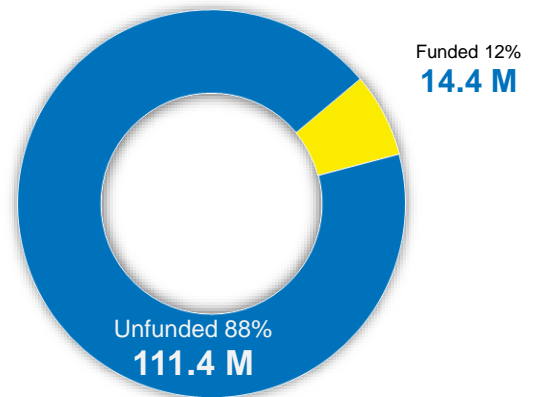
PROJECTED POPULATION OF CONCERN IN 2018

Category	Value
New IDPs (2018, projected)	150,000
Refugees from NWA (est)	100,000
Refugee returnees (2018, projected)	70,000
Refugees and asylum-seekers	500

FUNDING (AS OF 10 APRIL 2018)

USD 125.8 M

requested for Afghanistan
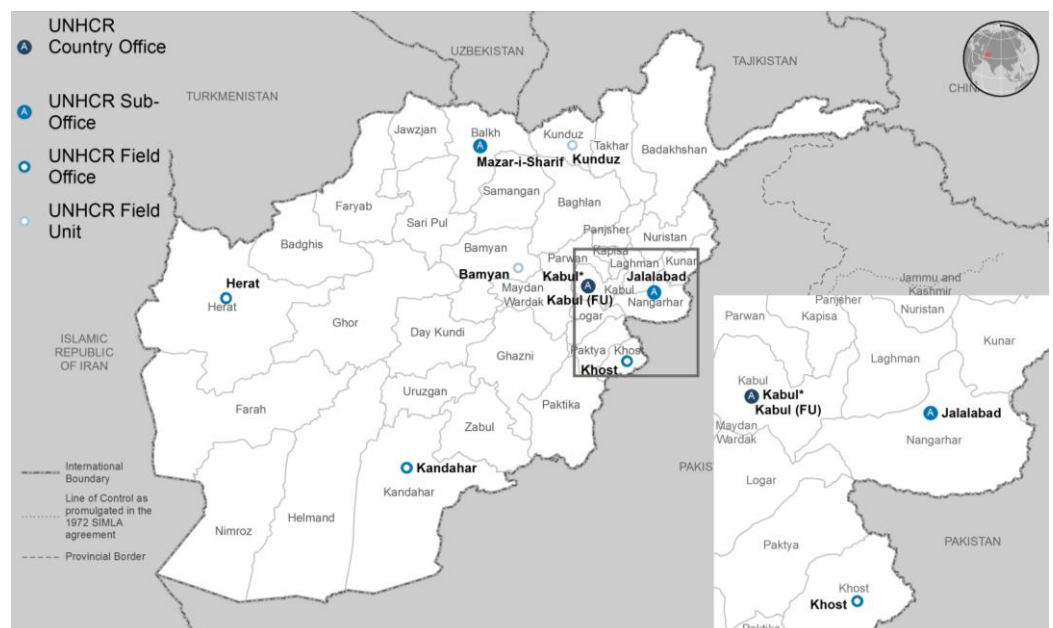
Funded 12%
14.4 M

Unfunded 88%
111.4 M

UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:
209 National Staff
29 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, Iran and other countries in conditions of safety and dignity. The VolRep of Afghan refugees from Pakistan and Iran is taking place under the Tripartite Agreements with the respective Governments and UNHCR. The Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) remains the regional framework for Afghan refugees (Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan). More than 5.2 million Afghan refugees repatriated with UNHCR assistance since 2002. In 2017, UNHCR facilitated the voluntary return of **58,817** refugees (98% from Pakistan, 2% from Iran and other countries).

> In 2018, UNHCR assisted **4,040** refugees to return to Afghanistan (3,640 from Pakistan, 332 from Iran, 48 from Tajikistan and 20 from India), as of 24 April.

- In 2018, the main areas of return are **Kabul**, followed by **Nanagarhar** (eastern region), **Kunduz** (northern region), **Kandahar** (southern region) and **Sar-e-Pul** (northern region).

Cash Grant

UNHCR provides cash assistance of an average of US$200 per person through its four Encashment Centres. UNHCR's repatriation cash grants to refugee returnees are intended to prevent, reduce, and respond to immediate protection risks and vulnerabilities upon return to Afghanistan. The cash grant is a key protection tool that provides returnees with the means to meet their immediate humanitarian needs, as well as transportation costs to their places of origin or destination. The cash grant provides returnees in the first phase of post-return a sense of dignity and freedom to decide how the grant is to be used according to family priorities. It also gives an indication of the reintegration prospects as according to phone interviewes with returnees (1-6 months after they have passed through the Encashment Centres), the cash grant received from UNHCR lasts between one to three months.

- On 9-10 April, UNHCR hosted a **two-day workshop on Cash Based Interventions** (CBI) in Kabul, reinforcing the capacity of UNHCR and partners to implement CBIs effectively in Afghanistan.

- In 2018 (as of 24 April), **4,040** returnees received UNHCR's cash grant; **169** individuals who returned with their family members did not receive the cash grant as they have received the assistance in the past and were returning for a second time.

Refugee returnees at the Kabul Encashment Centre, April 2018 ©UNHCR/F. Sattar

Management of Encashment Centres (EC)

UNHCR in close coordination with the Ministry/Department of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR/DoRR) and its partners manage four ECs located in Herat, Jalalabad, Kabul and Kandahar. In addition to cash grants, a wide range of inter-agency services – including basic health care, referrals of emergency health cases to hospitals 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), back to school campaign (provided by the Ministry of Education and UNICEF), referral for information and legal assistance to obtain civil documentation (*tazkira*) through Norwegian Refugee Council's Information, Counseling and Legal Assistance (ICLA programme), child friendly spaces (provided by UNICEF) and a transit facility for overnight accommodation.

At the EC, UNHCR also conducts household level interviews to assess the voluntary nature of return, return trends and protection risks in asylum and during return. During these interviews, persons

with specific needs (PSN) are identified by UNHCR and DoRR/MoRR and referred to service providers for assessment and response (linking with existing service providers through referrals or direct response).

▪ **2%** of the total returnees were identified as extremely vulnerable individuals matching the PSN criteria.

Refugee Returnees and IDPs

Protection Monitoring

UNHCR systematically and regularly collects, verifies and analyses information over a period of time to assess the protection situation of the IDPs, returnees and host communities in order to plan effective responses. Protection risk analysis helps to inform the overall humanitarian response and uphold the Centrality of Protection. UNHCR's community-based protection monitoring is the basis to plan interventions for PSN and community based interventions; and assists UNHCR and partners in their overall programme planning and response, as well as provides evidence-base for advocacy efforts.

To further enhance the analysis of the data collected through protection monitoring and to improve profiling through evidence to better inform advocacy and interventions, UNHCR contracted Orange Door Research and Viamo to collect real-time data through mobile phone surveys. Analysis of the collected data is key to its effective usage: UNHCR is in the process of piloting the new analytical framework that will inform key priorities and areas of work.

▪ During January – March 2018, UNHCR and partners have conducted **162** protection monitoring missions focused on Baghdis, Farah, Ghor and Herat provinces and consulted **37,620** individuals, out of which 50% were women, 7% elderly and 53% adolescents.

Return Monitoring

Return monitoring constitutes an integral part of the protection monitoring system in Afghanistan. It consists of three components: monitoring upon arrival at the EC; monitoring on their settlement back in communities through regular phone surveys of the representative sample; and community based protection monitoring.

UNHCR has signed a **data sharing agreement with the World Bank** to strengthen existing data collection processes and enhance technical capacity for a comprehensive analysis of the return process and how best to support the reintegration of returnees over time.

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, and allow feedback (including concerns and complaints) from communities to be consolidated and shared back to respective agencies including UNHCR; this will further provide a basis for a feedback mechanism to the Government.

The cover page of the joint UNHCR-IOM summary report which can be accessed at UNHCR Afghanistan's data portal.

▪ In mid-April 2018, UNHCR and IOM released the **joint summary report on returns to Afghanistan in 2017** – UNHCR continues to work closely with IOM to coordinate on return monitoring and share findings.

▪ From mid-April 2018, UNHCR has begun the **distribution of SIM cards to returnees** through the Afghan Wireless Communication Company at all four EC, to enhance return monitoring – i.e. identify and address protection risks, gather information on the situation and services available in areas of return etc.

Persons with Specific Needs (PSN)

UNHCR's PSN programme provides targeted assistance on an individual basis to people with acute vulnerabilities and protection risks amongst UNHCR's 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 PSN programme is to mitigate and respond to the individual emergency protection risks putting in place the self-reliance of each individual when

designing a response. PSN partners conduct protection assessments and refer or assist each case on an individual basis taking into account the protection risk analysis. UNHCR aims to link the PSN programme with Community-based Protection Measures for enhanced, sustainable comprehensive assistance for PSNs. In 2017, UNHCR assisted **7,401** PSN cases.

▪ In 2018, UNHCR and partners have assisted **243** PSN cases (73% female, 27% male), out of which three were refered for services and 240 were provided with direct assistance through the PSN programme.

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.

▪ In 2018, UNHCR plans to reach **over 100 communities**, benefitting nearly 2 million Afghans.

▪

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 humanitarian response. UNHCR promotes protection mainstreaming in all sectors of the humanitarian response, to ensure that protection principles are incorporated and meaningful access, safety and dignity in humanitarian aid are promoted.

> **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

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.

Zulikha, with her daughter Asma - their family have been displaced from Faryab province to Mazar-i-Sharif in mid-2017. UNHCR provided the family with Non-Food Items. ©UNHCR/S. Rich

▪ UNHCR is hosting the **mission of ProCap Senior Protection Advisor** who is on a three-month mission until June 2018 to develop the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) Protection Strategy.

▪ In 2018 (as of 6 April), **68,860** individuals / **10,066** families are reported by UNOCHA to be newly displaced by conflict.

▪ In 2018 as part of **emergency assistance**, UNHCR has provided **3,411** NFI kits to **21,196** individuals, out of which 20,923 are IDPs and 273 returnees – as well as **2,076** sanitary kits to **2,438** individuals, out of which 2,436 are IDPs and 2 are returnees.

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 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 to 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.

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 the principle of voluntary repatriation, in safety and dignity; and urged enhanced joint efforts to create an environment conducive for a voluntary gradual return and sustainable reintegration inside Afghanistan, as well as to continue to provide assistance to host communities in Iran and Pakistan, under the SSAR framework.

The **5th Quadripartite Steering Committee meeting** (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and UNHCR) – hosted by the Government of Afghanistan – took place on 1 December 2017 in Istanbul. The Governments of the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, and UNHCR reaffirmed the significance and relevance of the SSAR, acknowledging the critical need to include Afghan refugees and returnees in development initiatives as well as to foster effective linkages between humanitarian and development action for the long-term sustainable reintegration of all returnees while recognizing the constructive partnerships being formed with development actors such as the World Bank in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

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.

DiREC and national policy framework support

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

Herat and Jalalabad

To implement the policy, UNHCR spearheaded two inter-agency initiatives on durable solutions in Herat and Nangarhar provinces with national and provincial ministries and UN 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 by the provincial DiREC.

> **Executive Decree on Land**
>
> UNHCR is expected to be part of the beneficiary selection consortium on land allocation and will continue to support the Government, as co-chair of the Housing, Land and Property taskforce on land allocation issues including with technical advice and data-sharing – and to advocate for the inclusion of returnees and IDPs.

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 sectors 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.

UNHCR is working with the World Bank to assess socio-economic characteristics, employment and livelihoods of post-2014 Afghan returnees (both refugee returnees and undocumented) through a phone survey, randomly identifying returnees among all population and then following up with detailed interview. This will lead to better understanding on the situation of returnees, to compare documented refugees and undocumented returnees upon return.

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. Many have also settled in host communities and benefit from UNHCR and partners' community-based protection measures. With the emergency phase of displacement over, UNHCR is transitioning to a protection strategy built on targeted assistance to PSNs which is designed to build capacity, self-reliance and resilience. UNHCR is coordinating its efforts with partners and advocating with donors to ensure continuity of essential services (basic health care, WASH, education) for the refugee population.

Pakistani refugee youth learning English in a make-shift tented school at Gulan refugee camp. ©UNHCR/S. Rich

In 2018, UNHCR Khost continues to conduct 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. Participation of women in the biometric registration in Khost remains uneven. Access in Paktika remains limited due to insecurity.

■   In 2018 (as of 31 March), **2,832** individuals have been biometrically registered in Khost province.

Urban Refugees and Asylum Seekers

UNHCR prioritizes interim solutions for the approximately 505 urban asylum-seekers and refugees pending the adoption of a national refugee law and implementation of a national asylum framework. UNHCR conducts registration and, in some cases, refugee status determination under its mandate, as a protection tool. Local integration is currently unattainable for legal, social, economic and other reasons while resettlement opportunities remained limited. The likelihood of refugees opting to voluntary return to their country of origin in safety and dignity is not possible. 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.

> As of mid-April 2018, UNHCR has contracted a local NGO to **increase access to asylum seekers in detention facilities and prisons** in Herat, Kabul and Parwan provinces. Through regular monitoring visits, UNHCR's partner will be able to identify persons of concern to UNHCR, provide advice on available legal services and increase awareness of UNHCR's mandate (and rights to seek asvlum).

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. 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 is part of the Tripartite/Quadripartite 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.

- 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.

- 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.

- Within the HCT and UN Country Team, UNHCR is working closely with other UN agencies, inparticular, with IOM to ensure sustainable return and reintegration in Afghanistan. UNHCR also works with international and national NGOs, the World Bank and the private sectors.

- UNHCR advocates and works with development actors to support the Government's policies and national priority programmes for interim and longer term solutions.

- UNHCR works with 24 implementing partners across the country.

- UNHCR leads the Protection and the Emergency Shelter/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 (UNAMA) 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 has signed a data sharing agreement with WFP to ensure food assistance to vulnerable returnees through WFP's SCOPE program.

- UNHCR also leads coordination of the Pakistani refugee response in Khost and Paktika provinces.

- UNHCR maintains close relationships with the donor community through, among others, donor briefings, consultations and regular dialogue and coordinating field visits.

- 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 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.

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