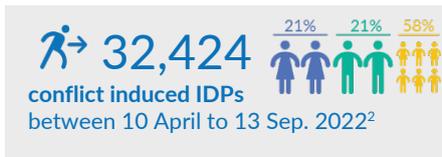
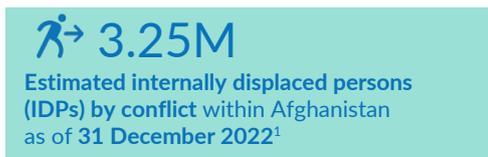


KEY DISPLACEMENT FIGURES



HIGHLIGHTS

- On 4 April, the UN was notified by the de facto authorities (DfA) in Afghanistan that, with immediate effect, no Afghan woman is permitted to work for the UN in Afghanistan. This decision extends the directive previously announced in late-December, banning Afghan women working for national and international non-governmental organizations. Women play an integral role in the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan and this latest order will result in more suffering and hardship for millions of Afghans, especially women and children who need this assistance. Since coming to power in August 2021, the DfA has also banned women and girls from attending school beyond year six, women from travelling more than 45 miles (72 km) without a male chaperone “mahram,” women and girls from public places such as parks, gyms and public baths, and women from attending universities.
- The latest ban has received widespread global condemnation, including from the [UN Secretary General](#) and [UN in Afghanistan](#), culminating in [UN Security Council \(UNSC\) Resolution 2681](#) adopted by the UNSC on 27 April 2023. Reiterating the indispensable role played by Afghan women in society, the Resolution called on the DfA to allow for their the full, equal, meaningful, and safe participation in public life and for the swift reversal of policies and practices that restrict their human rights and fundamental freedoms including related to women’s access to education, employment, and freedom of movement. The Resolution also noted that Afghanistan’s peace, security, and its long-term development could not be realized without participation of women who make up over half of the population. Similar sentiments were echoed in a [UNDP study](#) on the Afghanistan’s 2023 Socio-Economic Outlook which indicated that despite some improvements in 2022, prospects for the country’s recovery remain grim without continuity in girls’ education and women’s ability to work. While engaging the de facto authorities to seek an immediate reversal, the UN will endeavour to continue lifesaving, time-critical humanitarian activities in line with the humanitarian principles and criteria outlined by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in January 2023.



UNHCR’s PSN Programme is designed to respond to specific needs of persons of concern who are unable to access other services and who do not receive adequate assistance and protection from existing services and community mechanisms. © UNHCR/Caroline Gluck

- In March 2023, UNHCR and humanitarian partners [launched the 2023 Refugee Response Plan](#) (RRP) for the Afghanistan Situation with requirements of \$613 million to support 7.9 million people: 5.2 million Afghans and 2.7 million members of their local host communities in Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. As of mid-May, the plan is just 13 per cent funded. A separate [UN-wide plan](#) was also launched to respond to the growing humanitarian needs inside Afghanistan. That plan seeks \$4.62 billion for some 23.7 million Afghans in 2023. Against the backdrop of an ongoing funding crisis in Afghanistan, the HRP has received only \$331 million – just over 7 per cent – of the total funding required by mid-April. UNHCR’s 2023 response in Afghanistan is 27 per cent funded.
- RRP partners recently released the [RRP 2022 end-of-year report](#). Despite being only 52 per cent funded shortfall, UNHCR and some 40 partners joined efforts to provide protection services and multi-sectoral humanitarian assistance to some 6.2 million Afghans and their neighbouring host communities. Notable achievements include the construction or rehabilitation of 54 schools (17 of which were newly constructed) and 15 health facilities in Iran and verification of 1.3 million registered Afghan refugees residing in Pakistan by the Government of Pakistan in conjunction with UNHCR.
- Some 247,000 Afghan refugee families have been reached across Pakistan through a one-time cash assistance programme [launched in February 2023](#) with a total of PKR 4.78bn distributed. This assistance is being provided in collaboration with the Government of Pakistan and targets refugees who are not eligible to access the social safety nets offered to Pakistani citizens. Afghan refugees enrolled in the programme receive up to PKR 25,000 (approx. \$89), which is adjusted depending on the family size. The initiative is modelled on the Government’s emergency cash programme for vulnerable Pakistani families affected by the unprecedented monsoon rains. To ensure Afghan refugees receive sufficient information, support and guidance to access this assistance, UNHCR employed a wide range of physical and virtual outreach tools, including helpdesks, information materials published in English, Urdu, Pashtun and Dari, SMS alerts and social media. In addition, UNHCR released a video in English and Urdu as a way of amplifying this one-off assistance. This type of assistance is part of ongoing efforts by UNHCR to expand the systematic use of cash-based interventions across operations to support protection and solutions outcomes and service delivery – in line with [UNHCR’s Policy on Cash-Based Interventions 2022 – 2026](#) and [the Grand Bargain commitments](#) made during the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit. The remainder of this programme will be implemented by the end of May.



AFGHANISTAN



- In Afghanistan, an Inter-Agency Perception Survey was commissioned by UNHCR, the Accountability to Affected Populations Working Group, and the Gender in Humanitarian Actions Working Group to gather information from affected populations on access to humanitarian assistance following the introduction of a ban on female aid workers. The survey – which was conducted remotely over the phone by Awaaz Afghanistan across 33 provinces – revealed that 94 per cent of 728 respondents were unhappy with the ban. UNHCR remains committed to ensuring the meaningful participation of women in the humanitarian response and continues to negotiate for exemptions at the central, provincial and district levels.

- UNHCR's Assistant High Commissioner for Protection (AHC-P), [Gillian Triggs](#), began her four-day mission to Afghanistan on 30 April where she met with key stakeholders including Afghan refugees and members of host communities, senior UN officials including DSRSG/ Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator, [Ramiz Alakbarov](#), senior DfA officials, and members of the civil society. In her interaction with DfA officials, officials including the Minister for Economy as well as the two Deputy Ministers for Refugees and Repatriation, she urged them to reverse the bans on education for girls and women, and also the bans on Afghan women working for NGOs and UN aid agencies. She highlighted in the toll that these bans were having on communities, families and individuals in Afghanistan. The AHC-P also met with UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Afghanistan, [Richard Bennett](#), and the Chair of the UN Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, Dorothy Estrada-Tanck.
- Across Afghanistan, UNHCR has put in place mechanisms to receive formal and informal feedback. The Complaints and Feedback Mechanism (CFM), enables those enrolled in UNHCR's programmes to report protection risks and issues they face. It also helps UNHCR to learn about the effectiveness of its protection and other forms of assistance. Since January 2023, a total of 9,449 queries have been received. The main channels of communication used by respondents are emails (44 per cent), phone hotlines (40 per cent), in-person counselling (11 per cent), referrals (four per cent) and complaint box/others (one per cent). March has the highest number of queries followed by February (3,083 queries) and January (2,890 queries). The steady increase in queries is mainly attributed to the scale up of the call centers which became fully functional following the recruitment and training of new staff.
- Between 2021 and 2022, over 1.35 million IDPs have returned to their places of origin. Over 1.1 million IDPs have returned to their places of origin in 2021 and 247,000 in 2022. In 2023, some 366 have been recorded returning to their places of origin. These figures are sourced from 353,000 household-level rapid assessments conducted by UNHCR and partners from 10 October 2021 – 10 May 2023. Figures are expected to increase retroactively with ongoing assessments and are considered indicative rather than complete data of IDP returnees in Afghanistan. It is also important to note that figures may be underestimated due to recent downscaling of assessments undertaken in 2023.

REGIONAL

- On 10 April UNHCR Iran [handed over](#) essential medical equipment and medicines worth USD 10 million to the Ministry of Health and Medical Education (MoHME), in partnership with the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs (BAFIA). The equipment will be delivered to public hospitals and health posts in 27 provinces across the country in refugee-hosting areas and refugee settlements. UNHCR is currently procuring an additional USD 17 million worth of medical equipment, expected to arrive in the country during the first half of the year. This is part of UNHCR's efforts to support and complement the Government of Iran's inclusive health services to all populations regardless of documentation status at a similar level to Iranians.
- Continuing its resettlement scale up, UNHCR has submitted 2,443 individuals for resettlement from Pakistan and Iran in the first four months of 2023. Based on projections of available spaces, UNHCR had planned to submit 8,500 cases for resettlement from these two countries in 2023 although only 7,200 places have been committed to so far by receiving countries. Even with this scale up, the number of available spaces falls far short of UNHCR's estimation of required resettlement spaces for Afghans in Pakistan and Iran in 2023 (257,000). UNHCR operations in Asia and the Pacific seek to increase the number of resettlement submissions from the region in 2023 and beyond, though this goal remains dependent on continued commitments by resettlement States.
- The Government of Pakistan, UNHCR, and partners [held a briefing](#) to mark the release of the Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) for 2023, which has 56 partner in Pakistan including UN agencies and international and local NGOs. Opening remarks were provided by the Minister of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON), the UN Resident Coordinator/ Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC), and UNHCR's Representative, all of whom underscored the continued need to support Pakistan while underlining the considerable sectoral level consultation and close collaboration between the Government of Pakistan and the humanitarian community for the RRP's third iteration. The event brought together ambassadors of Canada and the Republic of Korea, as well as high level representation from Australia, the EU, Italy, Japan, Norway, Qatar, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, the US, as well as UN agencies and international and local NGO partners.

- As part of ongoing efforts to [enable green solutions](#) in displacement settings and enhance the preparedness and resilience of displaced people and host communities in the face of climate change, UNHCR and UNDP in Uzbekistan have launched a cash-for-work scheme targeting Afghan citizens and vulnerable people from the host communities to support afforestation activities. To date, 448 Afghans (56 women and 392 men) and 194 Uzbek nationals (62 women and 132 men) have been engaged in the project. This project is aligned with the nation-wide afforestation initiative launched by the government – Yashil Makon (Green Nation) – that seeks to increase climate resilience by planting 1 billion trees and shrubs across the country over the next five years.

CROSS BORDER SITUATION

- Afghans continue to arrive in Iran. In Sistan and Balochestan (S&B), BAFIA S&B has informed UNHCR of an increase in the number of families entering the country through Saravan (border with Pakistan) as compared to single males. UNHCR is following up with BAFIA to better understand the underlining reasons for this increase, which could relate to family visits, the relatively better economic situation in Iran, as well as worsening prospects for women’s education and employment opportunities in Afghanistan.
- According to UNHCR border monitors, from 1 – 30 April 2023, an estimated 45,500 undocumented Afghans were deported from Iran through the Islam Qala and Zaranj crossing points, a daily average of 1,516 people. This is a 27 per cent decline compared to an estimated 61,970 deportees recorded last month and 30 per cent lower than an estimated 65,100 recorded in April 2022. Across the border with Pakistan, an estimated 400 undocumented Afghans were deported in April mainly through Spin Boldak.
- As part of its support to refugees voluntarily returning home from countries of asylum, UNHCR offers a voluntary repatriation package consisting of a one-off cash grant of \$375 to cover transportation and immediate needs upon arrival for each individual. In addition, as of 1 January 2023, returning families receive a one-time supplemental reintegration support in their areas of return after three months of residence. The supplemental cash grant is USD 700 per family or USD 350 for individuals. In the medium to long term, UNHCR and partners continue to support returnees in 80 Priority Areas of Return and Reintegration (PARRs) with services such as shelter, education, health, energy, livelihoods, and community infrastructure.
- From January - April 2023, 1,631 Afghan refugees voluntarily returned to Afghanistan, eight times higher than during the same period in 2022 (90 per cent from Pakistan, eight per cent from Iran and two per cent from other countries). UNHCR provided a total of \$621,000 in cash assistance to these returnees at Encashment Centres. The total number of refugee returnees to Afghanistan in 2022 was 6,424, a significant increase from 1,363 in 2021. Between January and April 2023, UNHCR conducted 47,686 monitoring interviews with Afghans moving to/from Afghanistan at eight official border crossing points. These included 24,412 outflow and 23,120 inflow interviews. The main reasons that refugees’ give which inform their decision to voluntarily return from both Pakistan and Iran included economic challenges driven by the high cost of living, inflation, and lack of employment opportunities as well as strict immigration control measures.

DONOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to UNHCR’s response to the Afghanistan Situation in 2023 as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with [unearmarked funds](#) which allow us to respond in an agile manner where the needs are greatest:

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