

Pakistan

December 2025

Over **1.9 million Afghans** have returned to Afghanistan since September 2023, including holders of PoR cards, ACC and undocumented people.

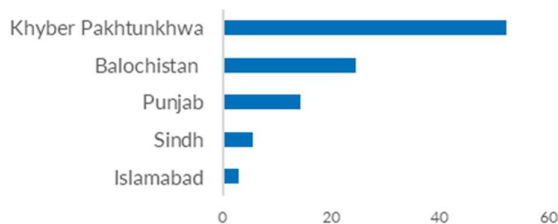
There are currently about **2 million** Afghans in Pakistan.

In **December alone**, **105,011** Afghans returned to Afghanistan, with **13,394** deported through the Chaman, Torkham, and Barabcha borders.

In **December 2025**, over **24,118** Afghan PoR card holders were facilitated to return through UNHCR's repatriation centres.

REGISTERED REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS IN PAKISTAN: 1 MILLION (99% AFGHANS, 1% OTHERS)

Per province



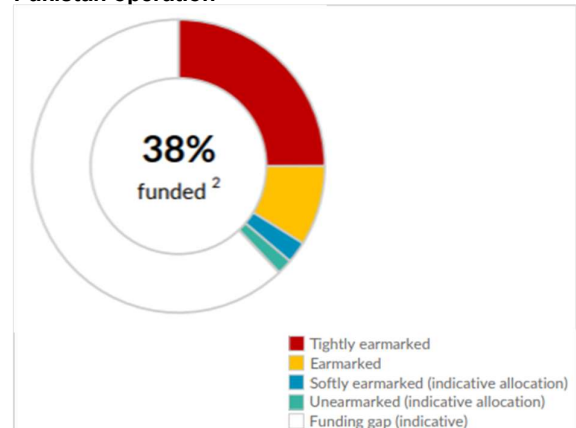
- **65%** of Afghan refugees live in urban/semi-urban localities
- **35%** reside in refugee villages

* Data source: UNHCR Operational Data Portal, Oct 2025
<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/pak>

FUNDING (AS OF 31 DECEMBER 2025)

USD 120.2 million

Pakistan operation



Afghan families are returning to Afghanistan through UNHCR led repatriation centre in Azakhel, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. UNHCR / © mercury transformation.

Key Highlights:

- In 2025, more than 1.1 million people returned to Afghanistan, with more than 154,000 of them deported.
- Afghans in Islamabad, Rawalpindi and surrounding districts like Attock reported increased incidents of evictions, police harassment, arrests and deportations. Movement restrictions have negatively impacted access to services and livelihoods, resulting serious financial crises for many households.
- In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), the handover of Refugee Villages' (RV) infrastructure was accelerated during the reporting period. Facilities for education, health, water, and community resources in RVs were transferred to district and provincial authorities, significantly reshaping the humanitarian operating landscape in KP.
- Implementation of Illegal Foreign Repatriation Plan (IFRP) in Balochistan continued at a relatively slower pace, with deportations and spontaneous returns ongoing through Chaman and Barab Cha. Winter conditions impacted the movements, while underlying protection concerns remain. In KP, pressure continued to mount for Afghans to return, resulting in high numbers opting to return to Afghanistan, including through the Voluntary Repatriation Centre (VRC) Azakhel, KP, in marked contrast to returns registered at a much lower number in VRC Baleli in Baluchistan.

Operational Context

A deteriorating security context continues to be a concern in the country, largely contributing to a challenging protection space. Despite the tense security environment, UNHCR and partners continue to deliver support to displaced people, in close coordination with the authorities.

UNHCR has continued to deliver protection in Pakistan for over 40 years, providing support and assistance in one of the world's most protracted refugee situations. Over the years, the country has been home to over 3 million Afghan refugees and other undocumented Afghans.

The Government of Pakistan's *Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan (IFRP)* implemented since September 2023 has seen large-scale returns of Afghans holding different categories of documentation including Afghan Citizenship Cards (ACC), Proof of Registration (PoR) cardholders as well as the undocumented individuals. Over one million Afghans have returned since the initiation of the Plan.

In 2025, the government de-notified all 54 refugee villages (RV) in Pakistan, across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Balochistan, and Punjab provinces and continues to urge Afghans to return home, while arrests, harassment and deportations continue to be observed.

So far, seven RVs have been vacated: two in Balochistan (Chagai and Killa Saifullah), four in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Chitral, Mansehra, Nowshera, and Upper Dir), and one in Punjab (Mianwali).

UNHCR is advocating with the Government of Pakistan to establish protection mechanisms for different categories of Afghans in Pakistan, including those with international protection needs, who may face persecution on return, such as journalists, activists, ethnic and religious minorities, female-headed households and trans-gender people. A viable visa regime is also proposed for categories with strong ties with Pakistan including those married to Pakistani nationals, students enrolled in universities and colleagues, people undergoing medical treatment and business people.

UNHCR successfully engaged with the Government to advocate for the exemption of students enrolled in higher education institutions from IFRP. As a result, the Government

has allowed enrolled university students to continue their studies, with the majority remaining in education and only a limited number of deportation cases reported. In parallel, the government has notified the students to regularize their stay by obtaining student visas.

In December, authorities increased pressure on refugees across multiple RVs and urban areas in KP, issuing short-notice, evacuation orders, closing schools and health facilities, removing basic services and assets, and directing landlords to evict Afghan tenants. Despite Afghans requesting an extension of the IFRP deadline due to winter and school terms, repatriation continued, including rapid departures (in few hours' notice) from Turkmen RV and government-facilitated returns of urban refugees from Upper Chitral to Torkham border.

In Balochistan, the political context continued to be defined by security-centric governance and counter-insurgency priorities, alongside efforts to consolidate provincial authority. Nevertheless, implementation of IFRP remained relatively low scale as compared to previous months, with a reduced operational tempo, and fewer large-scale or highly public actions generally due to the winter conditions. Number of persons returning through the VRC in Baluchistan was in sharp contrast to the situation at the VRC in KP, which continued to register high numbers of returns¹. However, policies in Baluchistan remained unchanged, and Afghans continued to fear arrest and deportation, contributing to protection risks, persistent anxiety, despite the calmer environment.

Sector responses



PROTECTION

Afghans in Pakistan face a deteriorating protection environment characterized by raids, forced deportations, extortion, document confiscation, and detentions, amid heightened border tensions with Afghanistan. Refugees are facing increased living costs and are relying on loans or selling their assets to meet their basic needs. Many families are experiencing severe financial strain, leading them to compromise on housing, food, and healthcare, with women and children increasingly contributing to household income. Refugees are also struggling with blocked SIM cards, frozen bank accounts, and limited access to education and healthcare, while child protection and gender-based violence (GBV) risks continue to rise. Growing uncertainty has contributed to mental health distress and an increase in desperation-driven or aggressive behaviour among affected communities.

In December, UNHCR, in collaboration with NUST Law School and other leading academic institutions in Pakistan, held a three-day workshop, on “*Teaching Refugee Law in Pakistan*,” to strengthen the capacity of law educators and practitioners to integrate refugee law into the legal curricula, promote informed discourse on refugee protection and support the development of national protection mechanisms for people in need of international protection. The participants agreed to establish a Pakistan Academic Consortium on Refugee law and Migration (PACRAM) working on refugee law and migration issues to promote, inter-alia well-coordinated development of a high-quality consistent and constantly updated curriculum, tailored for Pakistan.

At the [Chaman border](#), security issues continued to impact cross-border movements and trade with Afghanistan. Throughout December, the [Torkham border](#) crossing point remained open exclusively for returnees and deportations to Afghanistan.

¹ In December, 5,769 families (24,118 individuals) were processed for repatriation through the Azakhel VRC in KP and Baleli, in Balochistan.

In KP, a Steering Committee meeting on IFRP, chaired by the Additional Chief Secretary (ACS), (Home & TA) with all Deputy Commissioners was held on 3 December to review the slow repatriation progress in KP and directed the immediate discontinuation of services in refugee villages to accelerate returns. Following the directives, authorities closed facilities and withdrew services in RVs, disconnected electricity, removed infrastructure, and increased eviction notices, warning Afghans of arrest or deportation for non-compliance. On 24 December, the Peshawar High Court granted interim relief on electricity disconnections in some RVs, and partial reconnections followed. The ACS also directed the handover of RVs to district administrations by 31 December 2025.

Repatriation update: The Voluntary Repatriation Centre (VRC) in Lahore closed on 31 December 2025 since there were no longer Afghans visiting the VRC.

In December, 5,769 families (24,118 individuals) were processed for repatriation through the Azakhel VRC in KP and Baleli, in Balochistan. This brings the cumulative total number of returnees assisted through VRCs between 1 January and 31 December to 45,473 families (187,547 individuals). Compared to November 2025, the number of individuals assisted in December decreased by 24% primarily due to winter conditions.

Legal Assistance: UNHCR and legal partners, SHARP, SEHER and IMKAAN Welfare Organization (IWO) continue to provide protection and legal aid to refugees and asylum-seekers across the country. Legal aid, awareness, documentation support, and access to justice services were extended to vulnerable Afghans amid heightened enforcement of repatriation and deportation. UNHCR and legal partners continue to support refugees and asylum-seekers in instances of arrests/detentions striving to secure their release and prevent *refoulement*, despite the increasingly challenging protection landscape.

In December, UNHCR partner Society for Empowering Human Resources (SEHER) conducted four legal awareness sessions in urban and rural areas in Quetta, reaching 55 refugees and asylum-seekers. The sessions shared information on IFRP-III, free legal support through ALAC for vulnerable Afghans facing deportation, and UNHCR's Repatriation programme. In addition, two one-day capacity-building training sessions on international refugee protection were held in Chaman. Two radio programmes in Pashto and Dari were aired on 30–31 December in Quetta and Loralai, highlighting free ALAC services and UNHCR's VolRep programme.

Community-based Protection: UNHCR held virtual engagements with Afghan elders from Islamabad and Rawalpindi to discuss their issues due to IFRP, including return movements, rising living costs, increased vulnerability, and community requests for protection and support. The elders reported that some deported families have returned to Pakistan, either legally or through irregular means. The elders requested support in facilitating visa processes, ensuring protection from deportation and police harassment, increasing UNHCR's repatriation grants, and expanding assistance for vulnerable groups. In Islamabad, a separate meeting was held with the **Somali** community to explain the community-based complaints mechanism and the different channels available for contacting UNHCR to raise concerns. Participants highlighted issues related to resettlement, access to primary and tertiary education for non-visa holders, and delays in voluntary repatriation assistance.

Participant members of the advisory committee for Persons with Disabilities in Rawalpindi and Islamabad were informed that, based on engagement and recommendations of the community, physiotherapy services for children with physical disabilities would be included in the 2026 programming, alongside the provision of assistive devices. Currently, these services are available for forcibly displaced persons in twin cities. In addition, awareness sessions on health and hygiene, prevention of general and seasonal medical conditions and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) will remain key focus areas in 2026.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV): UNHCR and partners provided comprehensive GBV prevention, response, and awareness services to Afghan communities and their hosts across Pakistan. Community consultations and helpline reports indicate mounting protection concerns for Afghans, including arrests, harassment, evictions, and widespread misinformation.

During the reporting month, GBV response in Balochistan remained active despite a difficult operating environment. Reported cases required significant multi-sectoral support, including psychosocial, financial, and medical assistance, indicating the severity and complexity of survivors' needs. Awareness and prevention activities continued across refugee villages and urban settings, with a strong focus on women, adolescent girls, and caregivers. However, participation was constrained by anxiety and uncertainty linked to IFRP, highlighting how displacement pressures and fear of deportation are undermining community engagement.

Overall, efforts showed positive impact at the individual and community level, particularly among girls, but access and outreach remain challenging. In KP, IFRP implementation disrupted GBV activities, leading to the closure of all Women and Girls' Safe Spaces (WGSS) in de-notified RVs, seizure of assets, and restricted access for partners. Adapting to the realities on the ground, planned GBV safety audits and Focus Group Discussions (FDG) were implemented, taking into account safety considerations, access constraints, and community engagement. GBV safety audits and FGDs were successfully conducted in refugee villages, while activities in other locations could not proceed due to restrictions imposed by district authorities and limited willingness of host community leaders to engage.

Resettlement: In December, 41 cases / 118 refugees were submitted to resettlement countries. In 2025, a total of 386 cases / 1386 refugees were submitted, meeting the targets for the year. 31 refugees departed to resettlement countries. For 2025, 1,542 refugees departed to Australia (793), Canada (645), Italy (69), United States of America (33) and the United Kingdom (2). On 15 December, UNHCR was informed by the German authorities that the Proposal to the German Ministry of Interior for Alternative Solutions for refugees in Pakistan was positively considered. Germany plans to fund the resettlement of 200 refugees to Brazil through the Brazilian Community Sponsorship Programme.

In 2026, UNHCR completed 59 BIP cases impacting 145 children undergoing complementary pathway or resettlement process. In total, 43 cases comprising of 245 individuals have been approved for visas under Australia's Community Sponsorship Programme.

EDUCATION

Due to de-notification of Refugee Villages (RVs), refugee education was disrupted in 55 RV schools out of 139 schools. UNHCR education team continued to monitor and review the situation in RV schools, developed key guidelines and messages to support coordinated engagement with government and partners, ensuring continuity of education services for children amid IFRP-related disruptions.

UNHCR donated six desktop computers to the Child Protection Institute (CPI) in Islamabad to strengthen collaboration and support Afghan child protection cases. The equipment will help refugee children at CPI build computer skills while receiving care and case management support.

Education services were provided in 27 Refugee Village schools in Balochistan for both refugees and host communities while only one school remained functional in Punjab out of eight schools. To support girls' education at higher grades (9-12), conveyance

allowances were disbursed to 256 students out of 301 in Balochistan. In addition, the education partner, Society for Community Support for Primary Education in Balochistan (SCSPEB) conducted a Post-Training Teacher Assessment for 129 teachers in nine RVs across four districts of Balochistan. The assessment showed improved teaching skills, especially in pedagogy and multi-grade teaching, helping schools align with the national curriculum. In KP, all 24 Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) Primary centers successfully completed Package B examinations, with 625 learners participating. ALP Package B covers accelerated learning up to Grade 8, while Package E corresponds to Grades 9–10 (secondary level).

All 20 ALP Secondary centers conducted end-line assessments under the supervision of the Elementary and Secondary Education Foundation (ESEF), with 430 students appearing for Package E exams, of whom 379 passed. A total of 1,010 ALP learners received cash assistance of PKR 20,000 each. Mid Term examinations were conducted in all 96 RV schools in KP.

UNHCR facilitated a session at a workshop on School Safety Framework Policy Review, organized by UNICEF, Save the Children, and Pakistan Institute of Education (PIE) Islamabad (PIE), bringing together provincial education departments and development partners to review school safety policies and develop Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)-focused recommendations. The initiative contributes to improving Education in Emergencies (EiE) and reducing disaster risks at school level.

UNHCR also engaged in consultations with partners including UNESCO, JICA, and Right to Learning Afghanistan (RLTA) to advance flexible learning options for refugee children affected by IFRP. Discussions focused on radio-based learning (UNESCO), scaling ALP where needed (JICA), and online learning solutions (RLTA) to ensure continuity of education and skills development for refugee children and teachers. The consultations will inform refugee education programme planning 2026.



HEALTH

The ongoing IFRP implementation has increased the demand for health services as many Afghan families are seeking care before departure to Afghanistan. In Balochistan, the mobile health clinic provided outpatient services to 1,749 patients (1,158 women, 591 men). Maternal health services supported 316 women, including 178 first antenatal care visits, 94 follow-up antenatal visits, 33 first postnatal care visits, and 11 follow-up postnatal visits. A total of 110 household visits and 210 health awareness sessions were conducted in several RVs reaching 1,196 Afghans.

Most health facilities in RVs including BHUs have been relocated to nearby government health facilities, where services continue to be provided. Furthermore, 26 health facilities supported by UNHCR and partners assisted 7,739 patients, maternity support with 494 deliveries, and antenatal and postnatal care for 1,804 individuals. In addition, 450 patients were referred for advanced treatment, while health education and mental health services reached hundreds through regular Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) follow-ups, awareness sessions, and coordination meetings, strengthening access to both physical and psychosocial care.



LIVELIHOODS AND SELF RELIANCE

Across Balochistan and KP, livelihood initiatives focused on skills development, entrepreneurship, and climate-resilient income generation for Afghan refugees and host communities. In Balochistan, the livelihood training activities at the Urban Cohesion Hub have been successfully completed. A total of 50 beneficiaries in Quetta Urban received in-kind support to start small businesses. This included training in mobile repair (14 men),

tailoring (14 men and 11 women), and dress designing (11 women). In-kind materials were provided to help participants begin earning an income and become more self-reliant.

Separately, a two-day training on e-commerce, digital marketing, and entrepreneurship was held at Pakistan Industrial Technical Assistance Centre (PITAC) in Quetta for 25 beneficiaries under the Safe from the Start (SfS) project. The training aimed to build digital skills and help participants explore online business opportunities. In KP, UNHCR partner Hashoo Foundation completed livelihoods and enterprise training in financial literacy. The Trade Testing Board conducted examinations for 45 successful participants. Toolkits and stipends were distributed to the trainees. UNHCR livelihood partner Secure Islamic Finance (SIF) supported 45 beneficiaries to start small businesses through cash grants and in-kind support across various districts of KP.

Financial Information – as of 31 December 2025

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to this operation as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with broadly earmarked and unearmarked funds.

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