

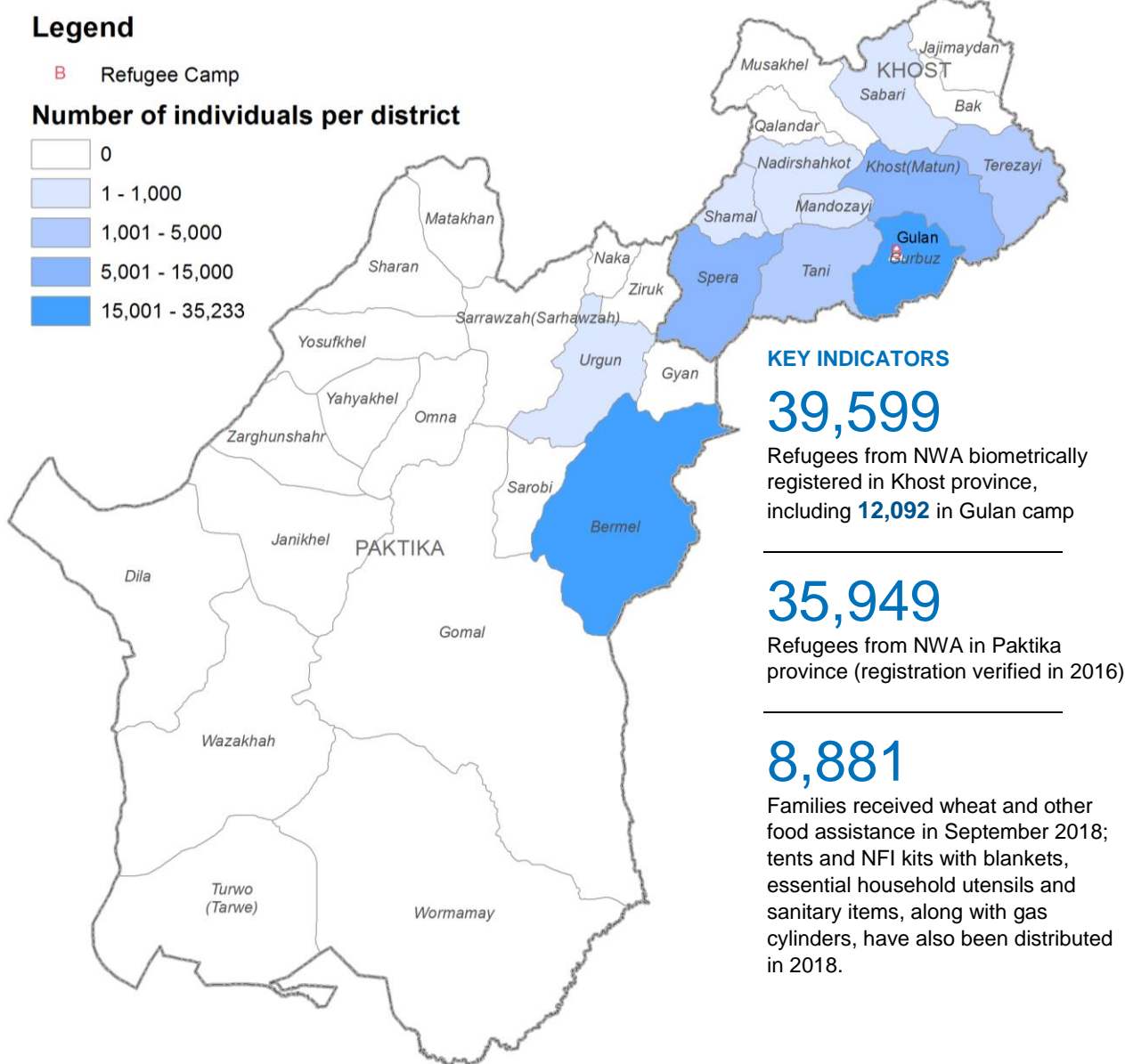
Afghanistan

December 2018

Afghanistan acceded to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol in 2005, but has not yet implemented a national asylum framework.

In 2014, Afghanistan received an influx of Pakistani refugees from North Waziristan. While some 75,548 are currently registered an estimated 100,000 remain in a protracted refugee-like situation.

Under its mandate, UNHCR has registered 527 asylum-seekers and refugees of various nationalities in Kabul and other urban centres.



Operational Context and Response

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan acceded to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol in 2005. UNHCR continues to advocate for the enactment of a National Refugee Law as a member of a taskforce comprised of the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), Ministry of Interior (MoI), and other government agencies, and provides technical support to enable the Government to meet its international commitments. At present, however, there is no national asylum framework to regulate issues of refugee protection in Afghanistan. On 27-28 October 2018, UNHCR and MoRR held a workshop aimed at further development of the draft law, which is currently being reviewed by the Ministry of Justice.

Under its mandate, UNHCR registers asylum-seekers in Afghanistan as a protection measure, with the aim of identifying and assisting persons with specific needs; supporting access to humanitarian assistance and essential services, including education and healthcare; ensuring freedom of movement and upholding basic rights; and providing minimum safeguards against refoulement. UNHCR conducts refugee status determination (RSD) where the formal recognition of an individual's refugee status would lead to a durable solution, such as resettlement.

Urban refugees and asylum-seekers



144 individual refugees and asylum-seekers receiving monthly cash-based assistance

Afghanistan currently hosts 527 refugees and asylum-seekers of various nationalities in Kabul, Herat, Kandahar, and other cities. Meaningful and effective local integration is

unattainable for the majority, particularly for those without valid national passports and other documents necessary to regularize their legal status in Afghanistan. As foreign nationals, they remain marginalized, with limited access to jobs in the informal economy. Voluntary return to the country of origin in safety and dignity is generally not possible, while resettlement opportunities are scarce as no resettlement country has allocated a specific quota for refugees in Afghanistan. Nonetheless, 9 refugees have been accepted for resettlement under emergency programmes in 2018.

UNHCR provides cash-based and in-kind assistance to the most vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers to help them pay for housing, food, utilities, and basic necessities. Additional financial assistance is provided during the winter months to mitigate heightened protection risks and reduce reliance on negative coping mechanisms, since informal daily-wage labour and other income-generating activities are even more limited during these months. UNHCR currently distributes monthly cash assistance to 144 refugees and asylum-seekers, while ensuring their inclusion in livelihoods projects that promote self-reliance.

Through agreements with public education and healthcare providers, UNHCR promotes access to these services for refugees and asylum-seekers. Meaningful access is undermined, however, by the same challenges faced by the general population, as education and healthcare facilities in Afghanistan rely substantially on international aid and development programmes. An increasingly volatile security environment and limited livelihood opportunities further contribute to a challenging protection environment in Afghanistan, particularly as the country struggles to meet the reintegration needs of Afghan refugees returning from neighbouring countries and internally displaced persons (IDPs) affected by natural disasters and armed conflict.

Pakistani Refugees from North Waziristan Agency

Afghanistan hosts a protracted population of Pakistani refugees who fled North Waziristan Agency (NWA) in 2014 as a result of military operations that displaced almost half a million civilians. Some 39,599 refugees in Khost province are currently biometrically registered with active cases (approximately 3,219 households in Khost are currently inactive or on hold, as they have not collected food distributions for at least 3 months). UNHCR has verified the registration of 35,949 refugees in Paktika province, where access remains a challenge due to insecurity as anti-government elements (AGEs) control or contest a substantial amount of territory.

Cultural barriers impact efforts to comprehensively register the refugee population, especially women, while verification of the registered population who remain in Afghanistan is affected by secondary displacement and access constraints in both Khost and Paktika provinces. Based on focus group discussions and key informant interviews, UNHCR estimates that at least 100,000 refugees from NWA remain in Afghanistan.



12,092 refugees receive shelter and other essential services in Gulan camp, Khost province

Some 12,092 refugees receive shelter and other essential services in the Gulan camp in Khost province, while most refugees live alongside Afghan host communities in

various urban and rural locations. NWA refugees benefit from the generous hospitality of provincial Afghan government authorities and the general population, due in part to tribal affiliations, as well as a shared understanding of the trauma of forced displacement. During participatory *shura* meetings and field visits, most refugees have stated they are currently unwilling to repatriate to Pakistan, including refugees who have undertaken independent visits to NWA to assess for themselves the conditions of return.

UNHCR does not have the permission of Pakistani military authorities to access and monitor refugee returns in NWA, or to support sustainable reintegration.

In Afghanistan, UNHCR coordinates with national and international humanitarian agencies to provide targeted assistance to persons with specific needs among the refugee population in Khost and Paktika provinces, and implements community-based protection measures to build the resilience of refugees as well as the host population, promoting peaceful co-existence through livelihoods initiatives, shelter, education, healthcare, nutrition, WASH projects, and NFI distributions. The primary source of income among refugees is non-agricultural daily-wage labour, while some refugees benefit from remittances from relatives working abroad.



PROTECTION

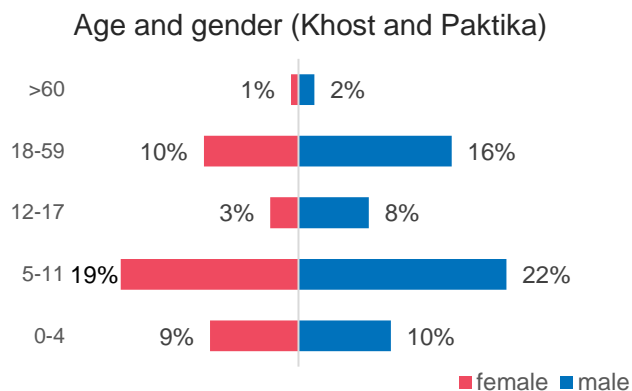
In Khost province, UNHCR concluded biometric registration of refugees from NWA in April 2018 in collaboration with its partner, Afghan Planning Agency (APA), and in close coordination with local authorities and refugees. During this exercise UNHCR registered 3,937 individuals from NWA (including families who have been forced to move from Paktika to Khost due to insecurity). The Office continued to verify population data, and to facilitate freedom of movement and ensure access to humanitarian assistance and basic services.



Biometric registration conducted in Khost / © UNHCR

Under its Persons with Specific Needs (PSN) programme, UNHCR and its partners identify, refer, and assist some of the most vulnerable individuals and families, including persons with disabilities or serious medical conditions, single parents, women and children at risk, elderly persons, and survivors of gender based violence. In 2018, UNHCR and its partners have directly assisted **122** cases among the refugee population in Khost and Paktika.

UNHCR envisages a gradual transfer of responsibility to Afghan authorities for the registration of asylum-seekers and refugees, including the NWA refugee population. The lack of birth registration for refugee children is a significant protection concern due to the risk of statelessness. As a protection measure, NGO partners such as Health Net International (HNI), International Medical Corps (IMC), Afghanistan Center for Training and Development (ACTD), and the Organization for Health Promotion and Management (OHPM) mitigate risks by issuing birth notifications to refugee mothers. This facilitates the registration of new-born children with UNHCR and future birth registration with government authorities in the country of origin.



Note: Paktika data for age and gender are extrapolated based on age and gender of the registered population in Khost.

Regular community *shura* meetings with men and women are organized by UNHCR and partners to promote awareness on issues such as education, vaccination programmes, hygiene and sanitation.

UNHCR and its partner, ORCD, conduct protection monitoring to address the protection needs of refugees in Paktika and Khost provinces. Through community based approaches teams regularly meet with refugees, dialogue with male and female shuras, and collect information on protection needs among the community.



With one clinic and one mobile medical team, ACTD provides primary healthcare services to refugees in the Gulan camp including pre- and post-natal care, vaccinations, and therapeutic feeding for infant children to meet their immediate nutritional needs. HNI is implementing a primary healthcare programme for refugees in Alishir (Terezayi), Tani, Spera, and Matun districts of Khost, including two mobile teams and one fixed clinic. The HNI project includes pre- and post-natal care, family planning, vaccinations, and infant nutrition, as well as psychosocial counselling and medical treatment for trauma (including GBV and CMR services), mental illness, and tuberculosis. OHPM also provides medical treatment, pre- and post-natal care, and vaccinations to refugee and host community patients in Khost province.

IMC constructed a well-equipped emergency room in Urgon District Hospital and renovated its operation theatre. The emergency room was equipped with medical equipment and medical supplies. IMC provided emergency primary healthcare services through two mobile health teams with psychosocial support services in Urgon district of Paktika province.

Under CHF 1st Standard Allocation 2018, IMC established 3 first aid trauma posts (FATPs) in 3 hard to reach districts of Paktika province (Barmel, Janikhel and Ziruk) to stabilize injured persons and refer them to the nearest

hospital for advanced care, while 3 ambulances were provided (one for each FATP) equipped and supplied with all necessary items to provide first aid and basic life support. Thus far some 4,023 patients have received emergency trauma care services.

The impact of health interventions by humanitarian agencies is life-saving and essential for the refugee community due to the limited resources of public healthcare providers in Khost and Paktika provinces.



WATER AND SANITATION

To address protection risks for the refugee population arising from a lack of potable water and sanitation, UNHCR and its partners have implemented WASH projects in Khost province including the construction of wells and latrines. NCA and CoAR continue to implement WASH projects in Tani and Alishir (Terezayi) districts including construction of a gravity pipe network, latrines, bathing facilities, bore wells, chlorination of water points, and hygiene awareness programmes. In 2018, UNHCR distributed 1,609 hygiene kits, while IMC constructed 18 boreholes and 100 latrines in Urgon district of Paktika province. IMC also established 2 WASH committees and trained 28 community hygiene promoters.



SHELTER AND NFIS

UNHCR, in coordination with APA, conducts regular monitoring visit to assess the needs and provide shelter assistance, and in 2018 NFIs have been provided to 1,760 of the most vulnerable families. UNHCR also provided tents and shelter assistance to meet the shelter needs of 400 refugee families in Khost province.

To reduce vulnerability during the winter months, which traditionally bring a heightened risk of infant mortality and limited livelihood opportunities, refugee and host community families were assisted in Khost and Paktika provinces through cash-based interventions and in-kind assistance such as firewood, blankets and warm clothing.

In 2018, UNICEF has provided 2,000 mosquito nets to ACTD for distribution to refugees in Gulan Camp, and to refugees in other locations, along with 2,880 packs of Oral Rehydration Salts (ORS) and zinc to reduce the incidence of childhood diarrhoea, which is one of the leading causes of infant mortality and malnutrition.



EDUCATION



40,091 school-age children (5-17 years of age) are registered with UNHCR



14.2% school attendance rate in Khost province

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) is providing primary education to boys and girls in the Gulan camp and other locations in Khost province, ensuring minimal disruption to their learning and promoting their development during displacement. UNHCR and CoAR provide secondary education to refugees in Khost province.

Outside of Gulan camp, school-age refugee children are significantly less likely to be attending school than Afghan children among host communities. Girls are more likely to be out of school than boys. The leading causes for children to be out of school include language barriers, lack of physical access, lack of female teachers, and

parents not allowing their daughters to attend school. The low rates of school attendance represent a critical need to mobilize resources, raise community awareness about the right to education, and empower parents with income-generating activities so as to reduce reliance on child labour and other negative coping mechanisms.

Access to education, particularly for girls, has significant protection dividends for the safety and well-being of refugee children and their ability to exercise economic, social, and cultural rights in the longer term. Integrating refugee children in Afghan schools is often not viable due to limited classroom and teaching capacity, as well as differences in language and curriculum as compared to Pakistani schools. There are 339 government schools in Paktika province, however, several schools in Barmal district where the majority of registered refugees are hosted have closed due to insecurity.



FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

Refugees in Khost and Paktika continue to rely on food assistance from the World Food Programme (WFP) to meet their immediate needs for food security in light of limited livelihood opportunities. Food security remains the main concern of refugees raised in community consultations. The beneficiaries of food assistance include malnourished children as well as pregnant and lactating women.



7,118 families in Khost province received food assistance from WFP in 2018

Under tri-partite agreements with UNHCR and WFP, APA and ORCD distribute food packages to NWA refugees in Khost and Paktika provinces. Supply channels are adversely affected by the conflict.



DURABLE SOLUTIONS

UNHCR consults closely with government counterparts at the national level and with provincial authorities in Khost and Paktika, including the Office of the Governor and the Directorate of Refugees and Repatriation (DoRR) and other relevant authorities, with the goal to gradually transfer responsibility for refugee protection to the Government of Afghanistan.

Most refugees in Khost and Paktika have no formal education, which undermines their prospects of a durable solution.

Ensuring participation is a core protection principle, and UNHCR and partners conduct regular *shura* meetings with tribal elders, women, and youth from the refugee community, to design an inclusive and solutions-oriented protection strategy. UNHCR is increasingly seeking to engage development actors in the refugee response and advocates for the inclusion of refugees in Afghanistan’s national development programmes.



Shura meeting in Khost province, 2017 / © UNHCR

The right of refugees to return to their place of origin in NWA depends on the security situation on the other side of the border. Refugee families are reluctant to report their intentions for return to UNHCR. Moreover, the Office has no capacity to monitor cross-border movements but relies on return updates from Afghan local authorities and refugee elders. Since the reopening of the Ghulam Khan Border in February 2018, UNHCR has received reports from the Afghan border police that 704 refugee families (8,343 individuals) have crossed the border into NWA in 2018, though no confirmation of this information has been received from the Pakistani authorities.



COMMUNITY-BASED PROTECTION MEASURES (CPM)

In the context of limited funds and significant prospects for self-reliance among the refugee population, the assistance program has shifted to a needs-based and community-level approach, with a focus on self-reliance and durable solutions. Through community-based protection measures, UNHCR and its partners in Khost create labour and income generating opportunities for youth and adults from among both the refugee and host communities.

In this regard, UNHCR continues implementation of livelihoods projects that focus on vocational training, cash for work schemes, and small grants to support the establishment of small scale businesses for both men and women to utilize their skills in tailoring, carpet weaving, plumbing, motorcycle repair, electrician services, welding and masonry. Cash for work activities provide short term job opportunities particularly in construction projects, such as protection walls, culverts and rehabilitation of roads.

Working in Partnership

UNHCR coordinates with the Directorate of Refugees and Repatriation (DoRR) at the provincial level and with the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) at the national level, focusing on the fact that the responsibility for refugee protection rests primarily with the Government of Afghanistan as a signatory to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. Through ongoing dialogue with MoRR and DoRR, as well as with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Interior, UNHCR continues to advocate for protection space and for the passage of a National Refugee Law, while providing technical support to develop a government registration process for asylum-seekers and a mechanism for refugee status determination to maintain and enhance the asylum system in Afghanistan.

UNHCR's Partners in Khost and Paktika

- UN World Food Programme (WFP)
- Coordination of Afghan Relief (CoAR)
- International Medical Corps (IMC)
- Health Net International (HNI)
- The Liaison Office (TLO)
- Afghanistan Center for Training and Development (ACTD)
- Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DaCAAR)
- Solidarités International (SI)
- Mine Detection Center (MDC)
- Afghan Planning Agency (APA)
- Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)
- International Rescue Committee (IRC)
- Mission d'Aide au Developpement des Economic Rurales en Afghanistan (MADERA)
- Organization for Health Promotion and Management (OHPM)
- Organization for Research and Community Development (ORCD)
- UN Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- HALO Trust

Financial Information

UNHCR is grateful for the financial support provided by donors who have contributed with un-earmarked and broadly earmarked funds to refugees in Khost and Paktika (as at December 2018).

Australia | Denmark | European Union | Japan | Luxembourg | Mexico | Republic of Korea | United Kingdom | United States of America |
Private Donors

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