



Support Platform for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR)

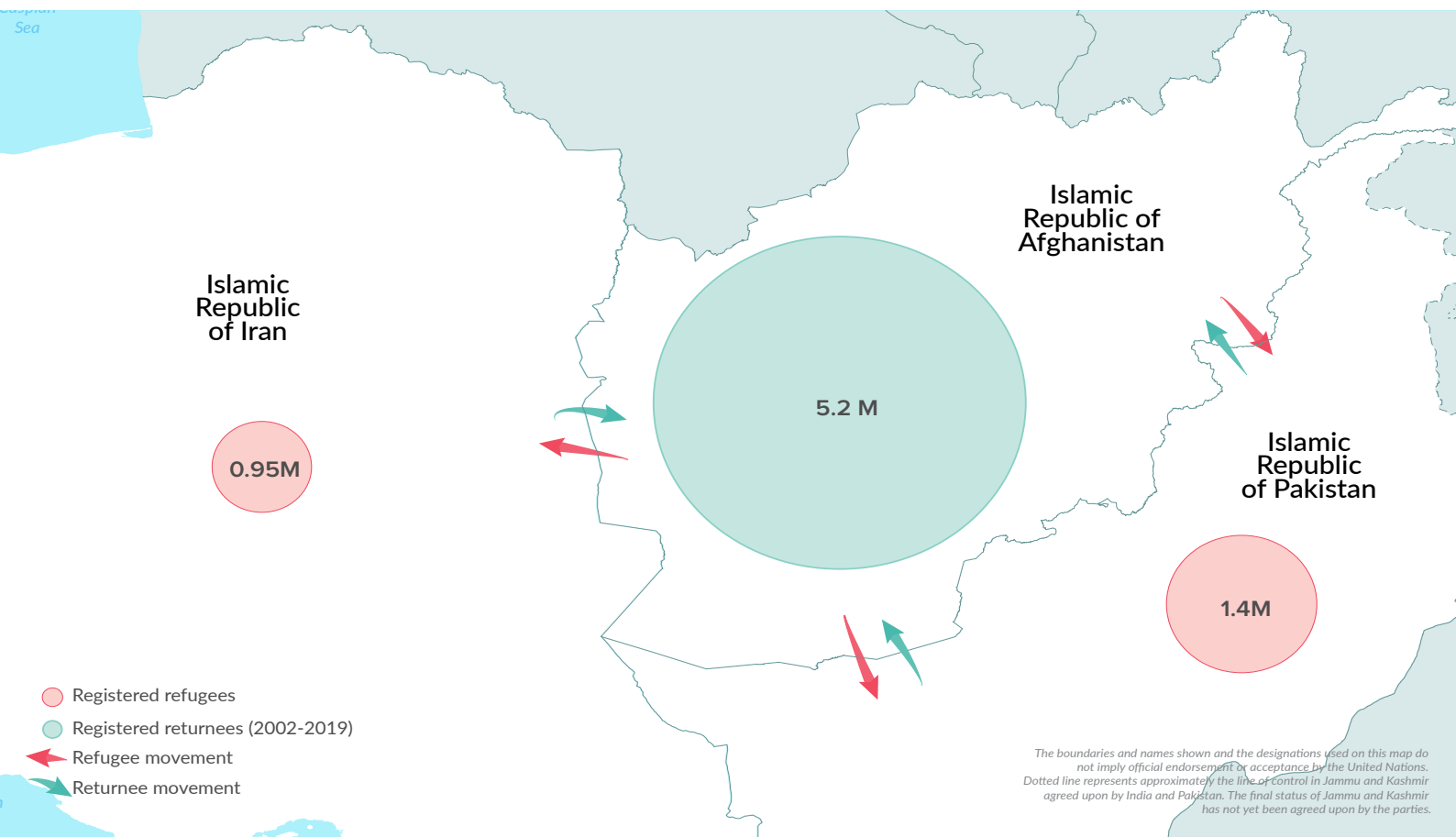
Support Platform for the SSAR

What is the Support Platform for the SSAR?

Displacement from and within Afghanistan is entering its fifth decade. It remains the second largest refugee situation in the world, with nearly 5 million individuals affected internally and across borders. The vast majority of Afghan refugees -- some 90 percent -- are hosted by just two countries, the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan. Since its launch in 2012, the three governments have progressively pursued the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) as a regional approach to create an environment conducive to voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration inside Afghanistan, while also easing pressure on the host communities. Over the last 18 years, more than 5 million Afghan refugees have been able to return home with UNHCR's support.

The international community's affirmation of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) was driven by the imperative to find solutions for the benefit of refugees and host communities alike by translating the long-standing principles of international cooperation and burden and responsibility-sharing into practice. With the GCR's vision of support platforms as a key means to support these goals, the three Governments launched the SSAR Support Platform in the context of the first Global Refugee Forum in December 2019. This document provides an initial overview of the priority areas for intervention for which we are seeking support for in each country to directly support the objectives of the SSAR.

Population of concern and core areas of support



Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Overview

The Government of Afghanistan has made the return and reintegration of its nationals a top priority. It is implementing the Displacement and Return Executive Committee's Policy Framework and Action Plan on Returnees and IDPs and included returnees and displaced persons in its National Peace and Development Framework and the Citizens' Charter. Implementation of the Presidential Decree on Land Allocation to Returnees will further the potential for sustainable return.

In alignment with these initiatives, the Government of Afghanistan, UNHCR and other partners have jointly identified 20 Priority Areas of Return and Reintegration (PARRs) where absorption capacity can be enhanced for the benefit of returnees, the internally displaced, and the local community. These areas have been selected with attention to the high number of returnees that they have received, assessed needs, and suitability for coordinated efforts by a range of humanitarian and development actors. With over 350,000 beneficiaries reached in 2019, more than 1 million people living in these priority areas could benefit from scalable interventions in seven key sectors in 2020, including those below.

Core Areas of Support

Education

Continuing the education of their children is a primary concern among refugees considering return. Priority projects include the construction and furnishing of new school facilities and rehabilitation of road networks.

Health

Priority projects include the construction of basic health clinics and community health centres, including primary health, in-patient, maternity and out-patient services.

Livelihoods

Priority projects include technical training and skills development as well as support with start-up capital and tools or other inputs for small and home-based businesses.

Infrastructure and services

Priority projects address water supply (construction of wells, reservoirs and delivery networks); energy (construction of micro hydroelectric power plants, provision of solar power packages and other forms of renewable energy); and the construction of youth community centres and sports facilities.



Islamic Republic of Iran

Overview

Nearly one million registered Afghan refugees live in Iran, alongside an estimated 1.5-2 million Afghans without documentation. The vast majority (97%) live alongside their hosts in urban areas. The Government of Iran's progressive policies allow all Afghan children access to free education within the national system, regardless of their status or documentation. The transformative impact of such policies is clear: the Government of Iran reports that the literacy of Afghans has grown from just 6 to 65 percent during their 40 years of exile. Afghan refugees also have broad access to healthcare, and the Government of Iran is placing an increasing emphasis on livelihoods and self-reliance.

In a socio-economic context that is increasingly challenging, UNHCR and partners support the Government of Iran to maintain these inclusive policies. Guided by the SSAR, focus is placed on three key sectors – health, education and livelihoods – with an emphasis on support to national public service delivery systems. Toward these ends, UNHCR aims to bring together a broad base of stakeholders in the spirit of enhanced international responsibility- and burden-sharing with host communities that is at the heart of the GCR.

Core Areas of Support

Education

Priority projects support the construction and rehabilitation of schools to increase capacity in areas hosting large numbers of refugees, equally benefiting the community. A further focus of education interventions is to increase enrolment and reduce dropouts, including through accelerated learning programmes that enable out-of-school and over-aged children to access formal education.

Health

Afghan refugees have access to primary healthcare on the same basis as nationals, as well as subsidized access to secondary and tertiary health care through Universal Public Health Insurance, consistent with the 6th Five-Year National Development Plan. Priority projects include support for the most vulnerable refugees to access the public health insurance and support to the primary health care system, especially in areas that host large number of refugees.

Livelihoods

When refugees access vocational training and develop marketable skills, their enhanced self-reliance not only contributes to the local community, but also better prepares them for successful and sustainable reintegration upon voluntary return. Today Afghan refugees are allowed to work in 87 occupations, and male refugees can obtain temporary work permits. Refugees also have access to certified vocational education within the national system. Priority projects include skills development and vocational training, as well as small grants to enable refugees to establish small and home-based businesses. A further priority is cross-border collaboration to match refugees' skills, education and capacities with market-based assessments of needs and opportunities inside Afghanistan.



Islamic Republic of Pakistan

Overview

For the majority of these 40 years, Pakistan has been the largest refugee hosting country. Pakistan today hosts some 3 million Afghans, including 1.4 million Afghan refugees holding proof of registration cards (POR), some 879,000 Afghans holding Afghan Citizen Cards (ACC cards), and other undocumented Afghans. Today most Afghan refugees live in urban and rural areas alongside their Pakistani hosts, with access to local services including health and education. Despite the impact on infrastructure and public service delivery, the Government of Pakistan has continued to support inclusion, most recently allowing refugees to open bank accounts.

To alleviate the burden on local communities and strengthen social cohesion, ten years ago the Government of Pakistan and partners, including UNHCR and UNDP, launched the Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas (RAHA) programme. Having benefitted 12.4 million people in the decade of its existence, the RAHA programme forms the cornerstone of the SSAR in Pakistan. It provides a responsibility-sharing platform that links vital humanitarian and development interventions in affected areas, for the benefit of refugees and their hosts.

Core Areas of Support

Education

The Government of Pakistan continues to provide refugee children with access to national education institutions, even as 23 million Pakistani children remain out of school. In this context, priority projects include construction and rehabilitation of school buildings and teacher training, to expand access to primary and secondary education for Afghan and Pakistani children.

Health

Afghan refugees can access national health systems on par with nationals, and the Government of Pakistan has taken steps to include refugees in its health plans and programmes. Priority projects include targeted interventions to strengthen services for cancer, gynaecology, tuberculosis, and maternity and neonatal care.

Livelihoods

To build the social, human and financial capital of refugees, the Government of Pakistan encourages their inclusion in public vocational skills training. In order to build transferrable skills and create income-generating opportunities for all, priority projects include the construction of technical and vocational training institutes, enhancement of women's protection centres, and support for the poverty graduation approach.

Energy

Priority projects will provide alternative energy solutions for health and educational facilities in rural areas.

Water

In some communities, water scarcity has affected the provincial economy and limited the availability of potable water, leading to tensions between refugees and local communities. Priority projects will develop new water supply sources and construct water reservoirs.



The SSAR Support Platform was launched by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Governments of the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan on 16 December 2019. In line with the Global Compact on Refugees, the SSAR Support Platform seeks “to achieve more equitable and predictable burden and responsibility-sharing with host countries and communities, and to support the search for solutions, including, where appropriate, through assistance to countries of origin.”

The Platform is led by the founding Governments, with Secretariat support from UNHCR. It seeks to engage committed States and other actors, including multi-lateral and bi-lateral development actors, UN agencies, and the private sector.



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