



UPDATE ON RETURN OF AFGHAN REFUGEES FROM PAKISTAN

5 SEPTEMBER 2016

KEY FIGURES

(as of 4 September 2016)

90,573
Refugees already returned in 2016

- 88,645 (97.9 %) from Pakistan
- 1,814 (2.0 %) from Iran
- 114 (0.1 %) from other countries

More than
220,000
 refugees expected to return in total in 2016

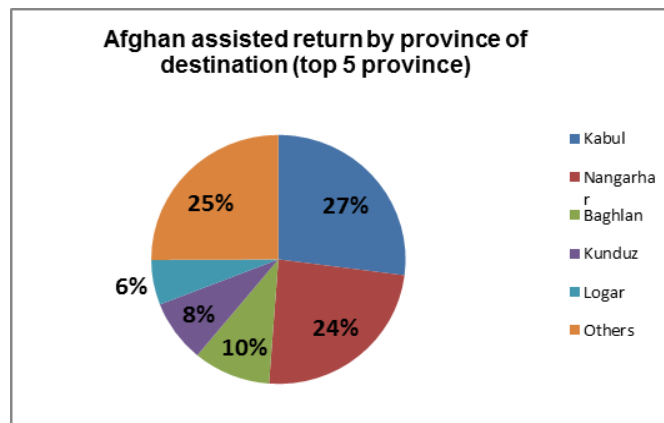
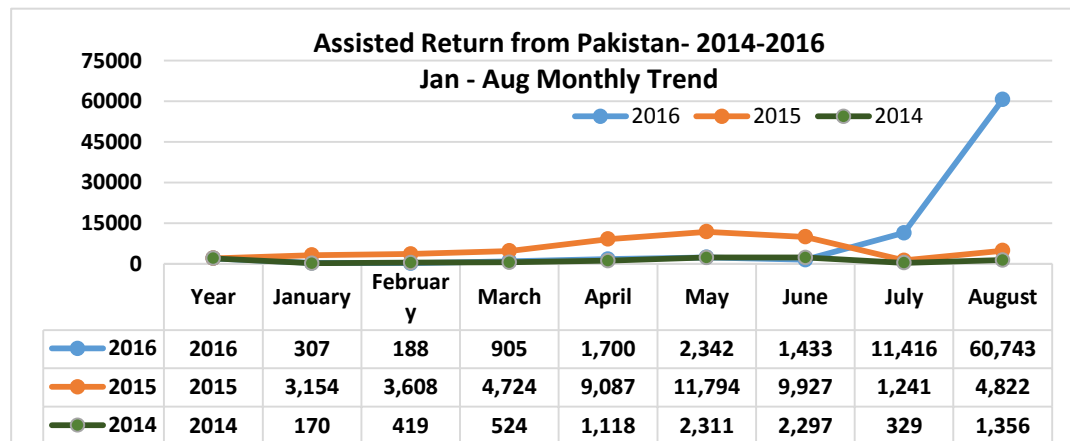
USD 400
 Repatriation cash grant per person as of 25 June

MOST URGENT FINANCIAL NEEDS

USD 90.5 million
 Required to fund the repatriation cash grants

TRENDS

- The rate of return of Afghan refugees continues to increase. The week between 21 and 27 August witnessed the highest rate of return for 2016 with 18,283 Afghan refugees returning. This represents a 82% increase in comparison with the previous week. Overall in August, the number of returnees increased by 413% compared to the returns in July.
- The majority of returnees – 76% - came from Pakistan’s Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, followed by 14% from Punjab province.
- Repatriation figures for 2016 have already surpassed those at the end of 2015 that saw more than 58,000 returnees and it is expected to peak after the Eid festivities 12-13 September.
- The Afghanistan Humanitarian Country Team estimates that in 2016 there will be more than one million people on the move, including new IDPs and returning Afghans, both registered refugees and undocumented people.



NEW DEVELOPMENTS

- On 31st August, President Ghani called a Jirga with 120 Afghan elders where the Government discussed challenges, needs and opportunities to return. Chief Executive Abdullah hosted a similar meeting the following day.
- The Chaman border crossing, which had been closed since 19 August after a demonstration by Afghans at the Baba-e-Dosti (Fridenship) Gate, reopened on 1st September.

RESPONSE

- In Afghanistan, in addition to supporting returnees with cash grants, UNHCR continues enhanced interviews with them to identify protection concerns and focus group discussions with returnees by groups (men/women, boys/girls), the results of which help inform UNHCR's monitoring activities in Pakistan. All returning PoR card holders undergo biometric verification during the de-registration process in Pakistan.
- UNHCR Pakistan is in the process of upgrading the facilities in the two Voluntary Repatriation Centres (VRCs) it operates in Peshawar and Quetta in order to improve the processing times. Sanitary facilities are being upgraded and expanded, parking lots for the trucks have been extended, further waiting areas constructed and child friendly spaces provided. The capacity of these VRCs has also been increased by extending operational hours to six days a week and adding a second daily shift. A new VRC in Peshawar will be opened by mid-September.
- UNHCR Pakistan is also conducting a mass information and media campaign regarding the increased cash grant and modalities for voluntary repatriation. These activities are being complemented by ten telephone hotlines (increased from two) and the establishment of information/grievance desks at the VRCs that can immediately provide refugees with information on repatriation.
- UNHCR and the Government of Pakistan continue to make the necessary interventions to prevent the harassment and intimidation of PoR card holders by local authorities and the police, and to monitor and follow up on reports received. The Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON), responsible for refugee matters, has continuously intervened with the provincial police, reminding them of the status and rights of PoR card holders as refugees. The police in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa set up free hotlines for refugees to call in case of incidents, complementing UNHCR's ten hotlines. UNHCR and its partners in the ten Advice and Legal Aid Centers (ALAC) operational in the country have also intervened on behalf of individual refugees wrongfully detained, advocating for their release and securing documentation for them.
- The sharp increase in returns and internal displacement with subsequent growing humanitarian needs have necessitated the Humanitarian Country Team to develop an inter-agency flash appeal to respond to returns of refugees and undocumented Afghans and internal displacement. The flash appeal will be launched shortly.
- UNHCR will shortly issue a supplementary appeal for the additional needs in Afghanistan and Pakistan required until the end of the year to support the repatriation. The supplementary requirements will also be part of the inter-agency flash appeal in Afghanistan.

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