

# Pursuing Sustainable Reintegration in Afghanistan



**UNHCR**  
The UN  
Refugee Agency

## Background:

Out of 5.7 million Afghan refugees who have returned home since 2002, UNHCR has assisted 4.6 million. Assessments reveal that reintegration remains the greatest challenge, especially where livelihoods are concerned. Sixty percent of communities surveyed indicated that the living conditions of returnees are worse than those of local communities.

Around 15% of the returnee population have become secondary migrants moving to urban areas of the country, whilst many return to Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The primary motivation of this secondary migration is economic – the search for food security and sustainable livelihoods.

Around 2.7 million Afghan refugees still live in Pakistan and Iran. Most of them were born outside Afghanistan, and they have no key linkages or network with their places of origin, whilst a substantial number of them have become urbanised during their exile and / or have no property in Afghanistan. This makes finding work, or providing accommodation for their vastly increased family size, a major challenge.

Surveys of Afghan refugees in these two host countries highlight some obstacles for returning home: a need for capital or assets such as land or housing, or social assets such as education and vocational skills (Islamic Republic of Iran), and a lack of security combined with a lack of livelihoods (Pakistan).

## Main Objectives

- The Afghan Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) and UNHCR seek durable solutions to improve conditions of return for the millions of refugees who have returned to their country.
- By improving parity between the living conditions of returnees and other members of their communities, the MoRR and UNHCR aim to create a framework - bridging the gap between humanitarian relief and development assistance - for supporting an increase in the absorption capacity in areas of high return.
- By providing a more conducive environment for living, it is hoped that attract more Afghans will voluntarily return home.

## Sustainable Reintegration

Being reintegrated into society means re-establishing oneself into one's community and being able to effectively exercise one's social, economic, civil, political and cultural rights to the same extent as other members of that community.

This updated strategy is based on a comprehensive approach to interventions implemented through partnership amongst the Government, humanitarian and development actors. It also includes effective inter-agency partnerships with tailored area-specific interventions.

Activities would benefit returnees but also local communities with a strong component of national ownership and capacity development for the local government without which sustainable solutions cannot be fully achieved.



## Refugee returnee demographics

- Around 2.6 million of assisted returnees, between 16 to 59 years of age, could be considered eligible for employment;
- Approximately one quarter of the returnees are youth (16 to 25 years);
- A small proportion are under five (2%) or over 60 (4%).

It is presumed that the demographics of new returnees will be similar.

### Pilot Project

Since 2002, although development aid to Afghanistan has been considerable, the majority of returnees have not been able to benefit from it. Clearly a new paradigm was required. As with any operational change it is important to obtain lessons learned through pilot projects.

Therefore, the MoRR and UNHCR selected 48 sites throughout the country to implement a pilot reintegration project during the first three years of this six-year strategy. Undertaking reintegration in these pilot sites aims to demonstrate to the Government of Afghanistan and to the international community that an integrated community-based approach will have more impact and benefit for the people.

Utilizing lessons learned and identifying best practices, this methodology could then be replicated in other areas of Afghanistan.

To bring maximum benefit to as many Afghan returnees, and to improve the environment of those areas where the majority of future Afghans will return home, these sites (where around 600,000 individuals live) are located in 19 provinces of high return.

These sites range from a single village or neighborhood in an urban setting to a group of villages and thus vary in size. However, on average around 12,000 people live in any one site. They also vary in their proximity to urban centres, percentage of returnee inhabitants and access to means of production or markets.

### Methodology for Site Selection

Nineteen provinces of high-return were identified bearing in mind a need to ensure a balanced and diverse selection among ethnic and geographic lines.

It was also important to identify areas of future/potential high return based on demographic data from refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan.

Community leaders/elders, shura members and government officials were consulted to seek local endorsement and ownership of the proposed concept and location of sites.

Land Allocation Scheme (LAS) sites face many challenges such as relatively remote locations, limited access to livelihoods, and land which is generally of poor agricultural value. The Government needs to find ways to address the various challenges faced by these new townships to ensure *inter alia*

sustainable reintegration. Nevertheless, it was agreed that eight LAS would be included in the final selection of 48 pilot sites. The remaining 40 are all pre-existing sites, i.e. not new townships.

Other criteria for site selection included:

- Highest ratio of returning refugees to local communities;
- Accessibility in terms of location (security, presence of road, transportation network, etc);
- Availability of natural resources with a potential for further development, (e.g. water) and, if possible, suitability of soil/area for farming and other livelihood activities;
- Presence or easy access to existing health, education and other social services and market (if possible).

### Prioritization of Sites

Since it is not feasible to undertake interventions simultaneously in all 48 pilot sites, the MoRR and UNHCR formed a Joint Prioritization Committee to draw up criteria for prioritizing a phased approach to implementation, i.e.

- **Security:** the site should be secure and accessible for UN/ UNHCR and other partners;
- **High Return:** the proportion of returnees should be significant in the location;
- **Sustainability and Feasibility:** developing the site and providing social services should be technically feasible, and should offer livelihood prospects and sustainability;
- **Natural resources:** should be easily available, e.g. water, and development of other resources for livelihoods should be feasible;
- Proposed interventions by the community should be **cost-effective** and **realistic**.

Other considerations:

- **Geographic** and **ethnic** equity to be taken into account;
- A site may have more shortfalls in the **adequacy** of social services and infrastructures;
- **Coordination** between the needs of the site and related organizations should be factored into the Government's five-year development plans;
- **Other members of the community** should be able to benefit from infrastructure and services thereby promoting coexistence between return-

ees and their local counterparts.

The Committee, identified 18 sites as priority ‘A’ for immediate interventions; four as priority ‘B’; and the remaining 26 as priority ‘C’, i.e. one or more elements of those sites were not in full compliance with the established criteria.

Around 250,000 individuals live in the 22 sites in categories A and B.

### Interventions

These will aim to:

- raise the standard of living for returning refugees and other community members;
- improve access to basic services (education, health, water, etc.);
- increase livelihoods opportunities, provide shelter;
- offer free legal services to pursue access to land tenure; and
- improve the overall protection environment.

With the aim of reducing dependency and promoting self-reliance of returnees and other members of the communities, interventions will focus on the sectors of vocational training and business skills, basic services, protection, rural livelihoods, microfinance, environment, institutional capacity



building for decentralized governance, gender and social cohesion.

Promoting peaceful coexistence and boosting local economic development is critical to create more conducive environments for return, which will then encourage others to return. Therefore a certain amount of assistance, such as improved roads, schools, and clinics will also be provided to nearby

villages.

### Assistance for Vulnerable

The needs of the most vulnerable households will be addressed including promoting access to land and shelter assistance for land owners.

Those families with specific needs will be helped through the provision of basic assistance and thereafter by promoting access to support networks provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and similar entities.

### UNHCR and UNDP

Work has already begun on 16 of the reintegration sites, either through UNHCR, an implementing partner, or an operational partner.

UNHCR and the United Nations Development Programme signed a Global Memorandum of Understanding on the Transitional Solutions Initiative (TSI) which provides a framework for finding solutions that end dependency on humanitarian aid and advance human development. Within this framework, humanitarian and development actors coordinate efforts, capitalizing on their different areas of institutional expertise and mobilizing additional bilateral and multilateral assistance.

To this end, UNHCR and UNDP are developing a joint programme which will focus on these pilot sites.

Immediate objectives of this joint programme are to:

- provide access to essential services (based on needs assessments) such as health and sanitation, education, water, land and shelter for the overall population in the sites;
- increase local economic opportunities and enhance employability of male and female returnees and vulnerable youth in communities of return;
- stimulate peaceful coexistence and provide protection and social reintegration at local levels;
- develop capacities at national and local levels to effectively assist returnees.

It is anticipated that gradually other entities, other than governmental ones (see below), will recognize the added value derived from the synergy of working together, and identify—wherever feasible—to work in the same sites.

Other benefits could arise from studies or assess-

ments that support interventions in these sites, such as a Livelihood Assessment that International Labour Organization plans to undertake in mid-2012.

### Monitoring and Evaluation

Baseline data is being collected from each of the 48 sites by a competitively-selected implementing partner (United Nations Office for Project Service).

The data will include information about each community, such as access to services (water, health care, education, electricity) and livelihood, ethnic and geographic data as well as interviews with randomly selected households.

A wide range of community members, actors and local officials will be consulted, including Community Development Councils, shura, women's shura, elders, local community members and local officials.

The status of returnees versus other members in the community will be reviewed together with the protection and assistance challenges they face and the impact of reintegration activities on returnees. Contributing factors to successful reintegration will also be analyzed.

Monitoring of sites will be conducted before, during and after implementation of reintegration activities to ensure progress is according to identified objectives and activities and gaps are quickly addressed.

At the mid-term and final conclusion of interventions, UNOPS will evaluate the UNHCR—UNDP programme showing the impact of activities / interventions versus overall objectives, and analyze progress of activities and achievements regarding promoting parity among returning refugees and the host community.

Based on its evaluation, UNOPS will provide lessons-learned and make recommendations on the way forward.

### Alignment with National Objectives

It is vital that this sustainable reintegration paradigm is firmly embedded in national objectives and development plans. Not only to avoid a parallel structure being created but also to promote an Afghan-led process.

The international community pledged during the Kabul Process to progressively align their development assistance behind the National Priority Programmes (NPPs).

Thus MoRR and all relevant ministries have agreed to mainstream the needs of returned and returning

Afghans with specific reference to this reintegration paradigm in provinces of high return into the NPPs.

Out of 23 NPPs, there are 13 that are relevant to the sustainable reintegration of returnees:

- **Agriculture and Rural Development Cluster:**  
National Water and Natural Resource Development; National Comprehensive Agriculture Production; National Rural Access Programme; Strengthening of Local Institutions.
- **Infrastructure Development Cluster:**  
Urban Planning Technical Assistance Facility.
- **Human Resource Development Cluster:**  
Facilitation of Sustainable Decent Work through Skills Development and Market Friendly Labour Regulation; Education for All; Expanding Opportunities for Higher Education; Capacity Development to Accelerate the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA) Implementation; Human Resources for Health.
- **Governance Cluster:**  
National Programme for Law and Justice for All; Programme for Human Rights and Civic Responsibilities.
- **Security Cluster:**  
Afghanistan Peace and Reconciliation Programme.

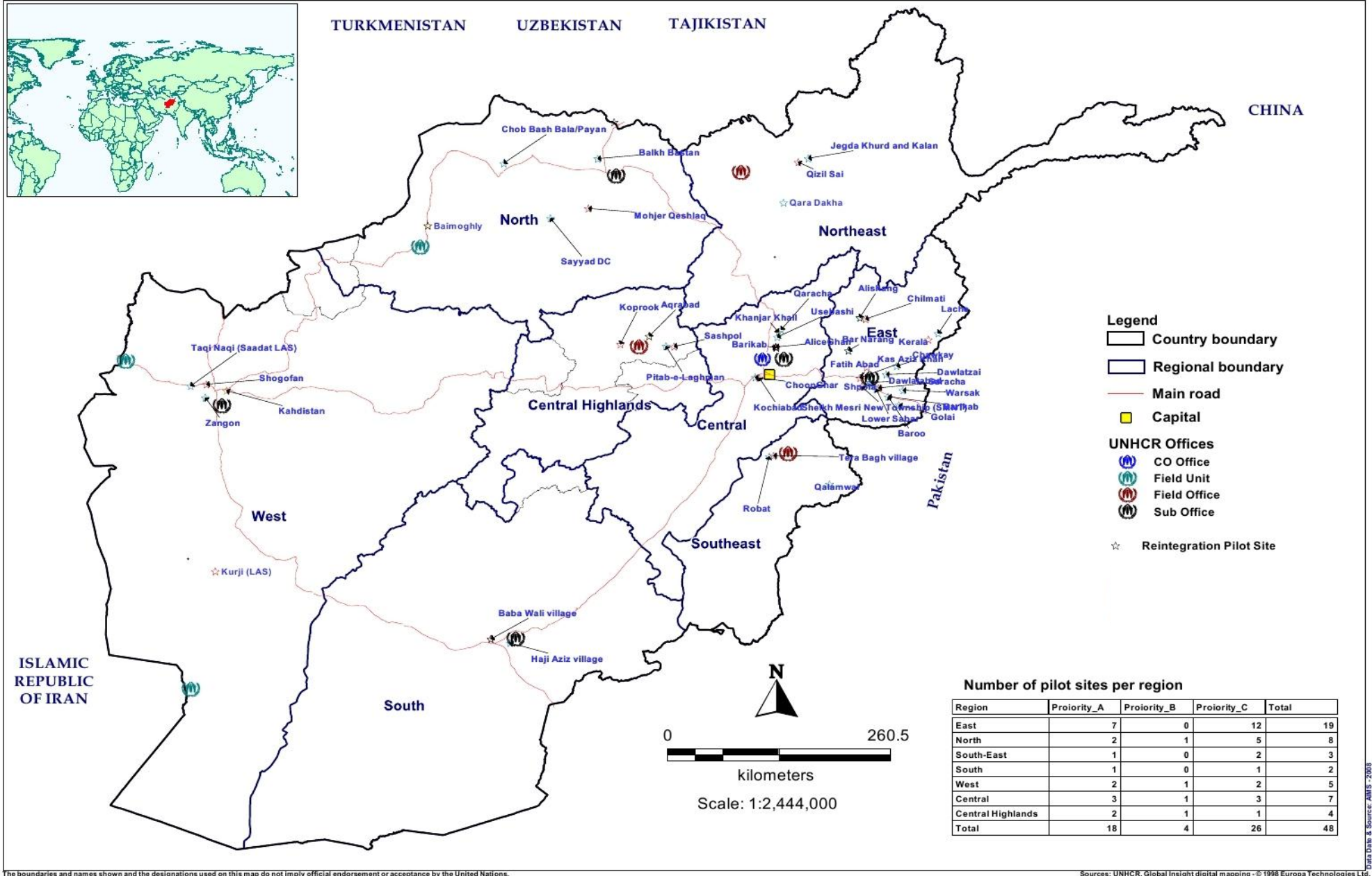
The MoRR is establishing Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with respective line ministries, including *inter alia*, the Ministries of Education, Public Health, Rehabilitation and Rural Development, and Housing and Urban Development to highlight the convergence of their NPPs with the sustainable reintegration strategy.

The First Vice President Fahim has committed his Office to provide national and regional oversight to support inter-ministerial coordination and cooperation to the return and reintegration process.

The MoRR will act as the policy, planning and coordinating ministry and it will establish an MoU with MRRD for the implementation of interventions over and above those carried out through NPPs.

### Synergy with Other Processes

- By being regional, the solutions strategy that encompasses this sustainable reintegration approach, compliments the Istanbul process;
- By being a multi-year intervention, it supports the Kabul process aimed at engaging long-term support from the international community;



- Legend**
- Country boundary
  - Regional boundary
  - Main road
  - Capital
- UNHCR Offices**
- Ⓜ CO Office
  - Ⓜ Field Unit
  - Ⓜ Field Office
  - Ⓜ Sub Office
- ☆ Reintegration Pilot Site

**Number of pilot sites per region**

Region	Priority_A	Priority_B	Priority_C	Total
East	7	0	12	19
North	2	1	5	8
South-East	1	0	2	3
South	1	0	1	2
West	2	1	2	5
Central	3	1	3	7
Central Highlands	2	1	1	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>48</b>

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

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## Reintegration Pilot Sites - First Batch 2011 and Second Batch 2012

Accessible+Rank I

No	Province	District	First Batch 2011	Second Batch 2012	Total	Accessibililty	Ranking
1	Kabul	Qarabagh	Barikab(LAS)		44,850.00	UNHCR	1
2		Qarabagh	AliceGhan(LAS)		7,200.00	UNHCR	1
3		PD 13 (urban)		Kochiabad	1,800.00	UNHCR	1
4	Bamyan	Bamyan	Sashpol		1,962.00	UNHCR	1
5		Bamyan		Koprook	1,536.00	UNHCR	1
6	Kandahar	Arghandab		Baba Wali village	7,800.00	UNHCR	1
7	Bulkh	Sholgara	Mohjer Qeshlaq(LAS)		2,709.00	UNHCR	1
8	Kundaz	Ali Abad		Qizil Sai	2,514.00	UNHCR	1
9	Herat	Enjil	Shogofan		6,777.00	UNHCR	1
10	Farah	Center		Kurji (LAS)	4,500.00	UNHCR	1
11	Nangarhar	Behsud	Saracha		33,600.00	UNHCR	1
12		Surkhrod		Sheikh Mesri New Township (SMNT)(LAS)	15,000.00	UNHCR	1
13		Surkhrod		Fatih Abad	30,000.00	UNHCR	1
14		Mohmandara		Gardighous	18,000.00	UNHCR	1
15	Laghman	Mihtarlam		Chilmati	17,010.00	UNHCR	1
16		Qarghai		Kas Aziz Khan	10,200.00	UNHCR	1
17	Kunar	Asadabad		Kerala	48,000.00	UNHCR	1
18	Paktya	Gardez		Tera Bagh Village	5,700.00	UNHCR	1
<b>Total</b>			<b>6</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>259,158.00</b>		

### Reintegration Pilot Sites - First Batch 2011 and Second Batch 2012

#### Accessible+Rank II

No	Province	District	First Batch 2011	Second Batch 2012	Total	Accessibililty	Ranking
1	Parwan	Bagram		Khanjar Khail	1,962.00	UNHCR	2
2	Bamyan	Bamyan		Aqrabad	2,154.00	UNHCR	2
3	Heart	Enjil		Kahdistan	8,100.00	UNHCR	2
4	Faryab	Khoja Sabz Posh		Baimoghly	6,790.00	UNHCR	2
<b>Total</b>			-	<b>4.00</b>	<b>19,006.00</b>		

### Reintegration Sites - 2012

No	Region location	Province	District	Second Batch 2012	Population (Persons)			
					Returnees	IDP returnees	Locals	Total
1	Central and Central highlands	Kabul	PD 13 (urban)	Kochiabad	1,800.00	0	0	1,800.00
2		Bamyan	Bamyan	Shashpol	672.00	0	210.00	882.00
3	South	Kandahar	Arghandab	Baba Wali village	7,800.00	0	0	7,800.00
4	North	Balkh	Sholgara	Mohjer Qeshlaq	1,325.00	0	1,384.00	2,709.00
5		Kunduz	Ali Abad	Qizil Sai	1,140.00	0	1,374.00	2,514.00
6		Faryab	Khoja Sabz Posh	Baimoghly	679.00	804.00	5,307.00	6,790.00
7	West	Herat	Enjil	Shogafan	6,777.00	1,200.00	0	6,777.00
8		Farah	Center	Kurji (LAS)	4,500.00	0	0	4,500.00
9	East	Nangrahar	Surkhrod	Sheikh Mesri New Township (SMNT)	10,800.00	0	4,200.00	15,000.00
10			Surkhrod	Fatih Abad	15,000.00	0	15,000.00	30,000.00
11			Qarghai	Kas Aziz Khan	3,990.00	0	6,210.00	10,200.00
12	Southeast	Paktya	Gardez	Tera Bagh village	3,705.00	0	1,995.00	5,700.00
<b>Total</b>				<b>12.00</b>	<b>58,188.00</b>	<b>2,004.00</b>	<b>35,680.00</b>	<b>94,672.00</b>