



**Islamic Republic of Afghanistan**

**Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation**

**Return and Reintegration Response Plan - 2018**

*This plan was prepared by the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR), concerned government entities and the UN, as recommended by H.E. the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan during the High Commission for Migration, held at the Presidential Palace on 27/1/2018*

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## 1. Background

Historically, Afghans have always been on the move. More than 12 million, or more than one in three Afghans have been displaced internally or abroad during the last four decades due to conflict, natural hazards, disasters and the resulting socio-economic challenges.

Since 2002 over 7 million Afghans returned to Afghanistan including over 5.2 million assisted under UNHCR's facilitated return program. In 2017 alone over 619,000 Afghans returned from the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan. This includes almost 60,000 registered refugees that returned from Pakistan and Iran, 100,000 undocumented returnees from Pakistan, and over 450,000 undocumented returnees from the Islamic Republic of Iran.

### Returns from Pakistan and Iran – 01 January 2014 – 31 December 2017

Country of Asylum	Year	UNDOCUMENTED			DOCUMENTED	TOTAL
		Spontaneous	Deportations	Total	Refugees	
Pakistan	2014	32,344	9,546	41,890	12,257	54,147
	2015	100,042	19,237	119,279	55,422	174,701
	2016	225,470	22,584	248,054	370,102	618,156
	2017	94,060	4,131	98,191	57,411	155,602
Iran	2014	286,226	218,565	504,791	4,512	509,303
	2015	316,415	227,601	544,016	2,881	546,897
	2016	248,764	194,763	443,527	2,290	445,817
	2017	189,511	272,850	462,361	1,202	463,563
Pakistan and Iran	2014	318,570	228,111	546,681	16,769	563,450
	2015	416,457	246,838	663,295	58,303	721,598
	2016	474,234	217,347	691,581	372,392	1,063,973
	2017	283,571	276,981	560,552	58,613	619,165

Sources: Afghanistan Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation Border Monitoring Unit, IOM and UNHCR Afghanistan.

Once back in country, with the over-stretched absorption capacity of host communities, reintegration challenges are daunting. Primary challenges include food insecurity, access to land, long-term sustainable shelter, access to services including health, education and legal assistance; and livelihoods opportunities that enable returnees to support themselves and their families.

Returns are taking place against a backdrop of increased internal displacement and high civilian casualties due to persisting instability in several regions of Afghanistan. During 2017, over 500,000 individuals were newly displaced, while over 674,000 individuals were displaced in 2016. The continuing insecurity and limited capacity to absorb returning Afghans and those displaced within Afghanistan could lead to secondary displacement and onward movement.

The establishment of the Displacement and Return Executive Committee (DiREC) to ensure inclusion of returnees and IDPs in the national development programmes is a key step taken by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GoIRA). Additional efforts are required to ensure accountability of returnee response activities and longer term durable solutions at the provincial levels.

## 1.1 Returnee Profile - Iran and Pakistan

### Islamic Republic of Iran

Based on the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation report, there are currently over 950,000 registered Afghan refugees with 'Amayesh' identification cards issued by the government of Iran living in Iran. 450,000 Afghan passport holders with Iranian and finally an estimated 1,000,000 million undocumented Afghans in Iran.

According to IOM socio-economic surveys conducted in Afghanistan, the vast majority of the caseload (mainly undocumented returnees) from Iran is composed of single males (90-95 per cent), with families making up only about 5 per cent. Unlike returns from Pakistan, 30-40 per cent of returnees from Iran are deportees. Although generally perceived as economic migrants, interviews with returnees and media reports have highlighted protection concerns for Afghans in detention or during their (often irregular) employment experience in Iran before their deportation to Afghanistan. IOM statistics indicated that as many as 90 per cent of Afghans returned from Iran because of the alleged police harassment, and 4 per cent due to lack of livelihood opportunities.<sup>[6]</sup>

A particular group of concern among returnees from Iran are Unaccompanied Migrant Children (UMCs). Children as young as 12 years old up to 17 who are traveling without a guardian. Out of returnees from Iran assisted by IOM, UMCs make up the largest group amongst those with reported vulnerabilities. In 2016-17, IOM assisted over 8,000 UMCs at its Transit Centres in Herat and Nimroz. Further augmentation of specific protection assistance is necessary to ensure service provision to this population.

The GoIRA, IOM and other humanitarian partners currently target families and vulnerable persons such as single females, UMCs and emergency medical cases or about 10 per cent of the Iranian undocumented returnee caseload for humanitarian assistance. However, as screening and registration services are scaled up this percentage is expected to grow to upwards of 20 per cent. Based on the trends of the last five years, it is anticipated that over 400,000 Afghans will return from Iran in 2018, a population which is of growing interest to the international donor community given its perceived links with migratory flows to Europe.

### Islamic Republic of Pakistan

According to IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix Flow Monitoring,<sup>[4]</sup> returnees from Pakistan are evenly divided between male and female, with 64 per cent of the returnees below 18 years of age. IOM socio-economic surveys show that as many as 75 per cent of undocumented Afghan returnees from Pakistan are low skilled subsistence farmers or daily wage earning family groups returning to Afghanistan after many decades in exile. 60 per cent of the respondents to the IOM Return Intentions Survey<sup>[5]</sup> (RIS) indicated that they moved to Pakistan between 1980 and 2000; the same percentage plan to return to their place of origin in Afghanistan.

The returnees from Pakistan expect to encounter many challenges upon their return, and notably indicated lack of shelter, lack of education, access to health care, limited income opportunities and security challenges as major concerns.

The vast majority of returnees from Pakistan continue to require immediate humanitarian assistance as well as sustained forms of reintegration assistance, particularly given that the majority of the undocumented returnees are children with an average family size of 7-10 persons.

## 2. Situation analysis

Currently there are more than **5 million Afghans** living in Pakistan and Iran:

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<sup>[6]</sup> IOM Afghanistan monitoring of returnees from Iran and Pakistan

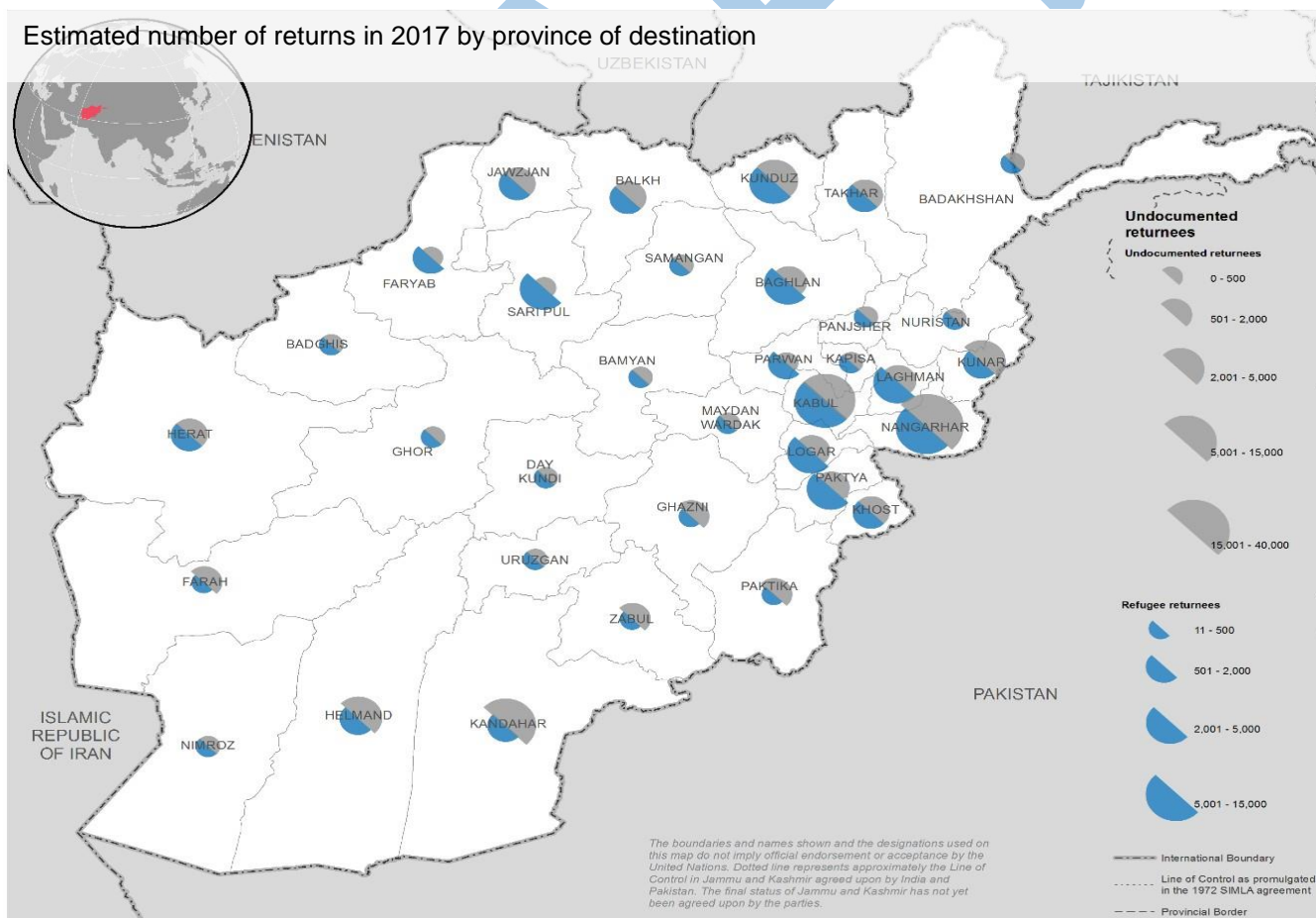
<sup>[4]</sup> Flow Monitoring of Undocumented Afghan Returnees from Pakistan

<sup>[5]</sup> Pilot Return Intentions Survey, February 2017, IOM Pakistan

- a) **Registered Afghan refugees:** Around 2.4 million registered Afghan refugees are living in Pakistan (around 1.4 million) and in Iran (around 951,000)<sup>1</sup>.
- b) **Undocumented Afghans:** More than 2.4 million undocumented Afghans are living in Pakistan (estimated 1.2m Afghans; 878,000 Afghan Citizen Card holders in addition to 300,000-400,000 undocumented Afghans) and Iran (1 million according to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran)<sup>2</sup>. 450,000 Afghan with short term visa are also stay in I.R of Iran

As of 28 February 2018- the end of the 6-month registration exercise, over 878,000 undocumented Afghans had applied to receive an Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) which will act as a form of ID, however unlike the Proof of Registration (PoR) cards, they do not entitle the bearer to the formal right to remain or access services and the requirement for all undocumented Afghans in Pakistan to return to Afghanistan. Undocumented Afghans who are not registered or fail to register face expulsion under the 1946 Pakistan Foreigners Act. As of 22 April 2018, over 350,000 ACCs have been issued to applicants. Unfortunately, an estimated 300,000-400,000 Afghans were unable to participate in the ACC registration process and remain undocumented. In discussions between IOM and the Chief Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees (CCAR) in Pakistan it is likely that this population will face deportation within 2018.

In January 2018, the Pakistan Federal Cabinet approved a one-month extension to 30 January for both documented and undocumented Afghans to leave Pakistan. The Pakistan Ministry of States and the Frontier (SAFRON) return plan was presented to the Inter-Ministerial Committee on 20 January and voted on by the Cabinet on 31 January. The result of the Cabinet discussion on the plan remains inconclusive with a temporary extension for PoR cards to 30 June 2018. A final decision on the matter is likely to be issued after Pakistan’s federal elections are held in the summer in 2018.



<sup>1</sup> Registered refugees in Pakistan are holding Proof of Registration Cards (PoR) and registered refugees in Iran are holding Amayesh cards. The registration cards legalization Afghan refugees stay in Pakistan and Iran.

<sup>2</sup> 'Undocumented' in Pakistan refers to Afghans who do not hold PoR card. In the Islamic Republic of Iran undocumented refers to Afghans who reside irregularly in the country, i.e. without Amayesh cards or valid visa. The designation as 'Undocumented' does not refer to the possession of civil documentation in Afghanistan such as Tazkera and/or passports.

### 3. Key Objectives

Between 01 January and 22 April 2018 nearly 4,000 Afghan refugees returned under the UNHCR facilitated return programme. This figure is substantially lower than the 12,004 refugees who returned during the same period in 2017. Similarly over 9,800 undocumented Afghans returned from Pakistan in the first four months of 2018, representing a 60% decline compared to 2017. From Iran, more than 200,000 undocumented Afghans have crossed the border at Islam Qala and Nimroz, an increase of more than 100,000 persons over 2017.

While the current return trends from Pakistan remains low due to improvements in protection environment in Pakistan, in view of the continuing short term extension of PoR and ACCs combined with the likely deportation of the remaining undocumented Afghans significant uncertainty remains post-June 2018 and as a result the GoIRA in consultation with partners has deemed it necessary to ensure adequate response and contingency planning is in place in case of a potential mass return.

Finally, the recent conclusion of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity (APAPPS) on 06 April in Kabul between Pakistani Prime Minister Abbasi and H.E. President Ghani and H.E Chief Executive Abdullah will lead to the establishment of a bilateral working group on returns where the MoRR and SAFRON return plans will be further discussed and elaborated on to the mutual satisfaction of both states and in alignment with the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) whereby all returns will be voluntary, phased and take place in safety and dignity. Considering the above mentioned situation, this plan is developed and has more focus on the following objectives.

- Ensuring that humanitarian assistance is extended to all population of returnees – including returning refugees (from Pakistan and Iran), undocumented Afghans forced to return, and other conflict-affected and host communities with the principles of equity and accountability.
- Promoting Durable Solutions for all population of returnees including returning refugees (from Pakistan and Iran), undocumented Afghans forced to return, and other conflict-affected and host communities by focusing on the whole community approach and implementation of the Policy Framework for Returnees and IDPs of the Afghanistan Government.
- Advocating for voluntary, gradual and dignified repatriation of Afghan refugees and undocumented Afghan citizens to Afghanistan.

#### 1. Border management and assistance delivery

The MoRR with support from IOM has successfully established the Afghan Returnee Information System (ARIS), to register all returning Afghans irrespective of their documentation upon arrival. ARIS is operated at the central level and has been operationalized at the Torkham and Spin Boldak border crossing points with Pakistan and the Islam Qala and Milak border crossings with Iran. ARIS has eliminated ineffective paper based registration processes and put an emphasis on efficient and secure data management. The implementation has seen the roll out of technical equipment to DoRR offices in 12 provinces of high return as well as training for staff members. ARIS registration will be the first action undertaken by MoRR upon arrival in country of returning Afghans. The registration process is also supported by the Afghan Border Police.

The overarching goal remains firm to help facilitate the repatriation and sustainable reintegration of all returnees back into their places of origin. Nevertheless, the majority (67% of interviewed returnees in 2017 and 77% of interviewed returnees in 2016 confirms they are currently living in the same destination they indicated to UNHCR as their preferred destination when registered at an Encashment Center. The 12 top provinces of high returns include: Nangarhar, Laghman, Kunar, Kabul, Heart, Ghor, Baghlan, Kunduz, Kandahar, Takhar, Faryab and Khost.

- 1.1. **Identification and Registration:** Ministry of refugees and repatriation welcomes returnees and register them at the border while border police officials help identify them in from security and nationality standpoint.
- 1.2. The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) together with its humanitarian partners receive returnees and provide them with the necessary documents to receive assistance and support.
- 1.3. Registered refugee returnees at Encashment Centres in Afghanistan are provided with an average of USD 200, vaccination against polio and measles, basic health care, mine awareness risks, information on back to school programme and getting Tazkira as well as support for persons with specific needs (PSN). The undocumented Afghans at zero points or screening centres receive medical check-up and vaccination along with information on different aspects of life in Afghanistan such as risk mitigation of mine, education rights, getting Tazkira and legal protection.
- 1.4. Next step is to cross check and ensure that returnee is supported well and eligible to move forward and go for next destination

### 1.5. Target population

This plan will cover 1.1 million returnees from both Pakistan (700,000 including PoR, ACC holders and undocumented Afghans) and Iran (400,000 undocumented Afghans) in 2018 but only 740,000 persons will be in need of humanitarian assistance (100% from Pakistan and 10 – 20 percent from Iran who are families and vulnerable Persons with Specific Needs (PSN) cases).

This planning figure was agreed during an ad hoc meeting of the DiREC in early February 2018.

### 1.6. Registered refugee returns

Based on 2017 return trends, UNHCR has budgeted for the return of 70,000 refugee returnees in 2018. In case of additional returns UNHCR will launch an appeal for a supplementary budget.

UNHCR in close collaboration with the Governments of the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran supports the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees from the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan, under the Tripartite and Quadripartite Agreements as the legal frameworks legalizing the stay of Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran as well as voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees in safety and dignity. The conclusions of the December 2017 Tripartite and Quadripartite meetings between the Governments of the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and UNHCR reaffirmed the commitment to the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees, in safety and dignity. It also stressed the need to create a conducive environment for voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration in Afghanistan, by integrating returnee needs within national development planning processes across line Ministries.

#### 4.2.1 Return process in Pakistan

UNHCR in close collaboration with the Governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan facilitates the voluntary return of Afghans registered and in possession of valid PoR cards. All registered Afghan refugees residing in Pakistan holding a valid Proof of Registration (PoR) card with an expiry date of 31 December 2015 are eligible to repatriate with UNHCR's assistance.

As has been the process since 2001, registered Afghan refugees with valid PoR cards wishing to return with UNHCR assistance should continue to approach either UNHCR Voluntary Repatriation Centres (VRC): Azakhail in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and Baleli in Quetta, Baluchistan. At the VRCs, returning Afghans are de-registered in the NADRA Registration Database, their PoR cards are checked and they are issued with Voluntary Repatriation Forms (VRF) based on which they will receive the voluntary repatriation cash grant and other services available in the Encashment Centres in Afghanistan.

#### 4.2.2 Return process in Iran

Repatriation from Iran begins with de-registration at the BAFIA Office in the province where refugees have been registered. This coincides with receiving a temporary exit permit (Laissez-Passer), to which all Afghans are entitled if they have valid *Amayesh* cards/valid LPs or can otherwise prove registration. After that, refugees must approach UNHCR offices in Iran including the VRC in Soleimankhani, and the UNHCR office at Dogharoun to receive a VRF based on which they will receive the voluntary repatriation cash grant and other services available in the Encashment Centres in Afghanistan.

### 4.2.3 Return process in Afghanistan

UNHCR in coordination with the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) and partners manages four Encashment Centres (ECs) where it provides a cash grant of an average USD 200 to each registered refugee returnee. The cash grant is a protection tool that provides the means to basic needs in the first phase upon return and the freedom of choice to determine family priorities. It also gives direction to future re-integration prospects. Besides cash grants, services include basic health care and vaccinations (delivered by Ministry of Public Health supported by WHO and UNICEF), mine risk awareness (coordinated by UNMAS, delivered by the Danish Demining Group), educational information, a transit facility for overnight accommodation provided by UNHCR and MoRR. At the ECs, UNHCR and MoRR/DoRR also conducts household level interviews to assess the voluntary nature of return as well as return trends, including reasons for return and protection risks in countries of asylum and during return. During the interviews, persons with specific needs are jointly identified by UNHCR and the DoRR and referred to service providers for assessment and potential assistance (See annex I).

### 4.3 Return of undocumented Afghans:

IOM is projecting a return in 2018 from Pakistan of 300,000-400,000 undocumented Afghans, all of whom are in need of humanitarian assistance as well as transitional and recovery support to achieve sustainable reintegration. In addition, IOM is projecting a return of 400,000 undocumented Afghans from Islamic Republic of Iran. IOM estimates that 10 – 20 percent of returnees from the Islamic Republic of Iran need assistance.

MoRR together with IOM leads the humanitarian undocumented returnee response at four border crossing points with the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan. In the screening centres and at all zero points, IOM and DoRR jointly identify, screen and register PSN. IOM then conducts assessments and provides immediate humanitarian post-arrival assistance in the IOM Transit Centres. This includes meals, accommodation, seasonal clothes, psychosocial assistance, basic medical and tuberculosis screening, vaccinations, food and non-food items, referrals to specialised services, onward transportation for special cases including deceased persons and multi-purpose cash grants for transportation and in-kind assistance. IOM provides PSNs with tailored protection-sensitive post arrival humanitarian assistance according to their specific needs. As part of the protection program, IOM provides comprehensive case management and protection assistance including reunification of vulnerable returnees in 15 destination areas, unconditional cash, in-kind assistance and referrals to protection actors for unaccompanied children, single females, female headed households, medical cases and victims of human rights violations (See annex II).

### Annex I – return assistance process for refugee returnees at Encashment Centres

Activity	Responsible Agency	When	Description
Cash grant distribution An average of USD 200 per person	MoRR/UNHCR	Upon arrival	Verification, cash calculation and data entry is carried out jointly by UNHCR / UNHCR partner and DoRR. This assistance is a medium to prevent, reduce, and respond to protection risks and vulnerabilities. The cash grant is a protection tool that provides the means to basic needs (e.g. transportation, food, NFIs and other basic commodities) in the first phase upon return and the freedom of choice to determine family priorities. It also gives direction to future re-integration prospects.
Returnee monitoring (Household level interview)	DoRR and UNHCR/UNHCR partner	Upon arrival	Monitoring at the Encashment Centres presents returnees with a number of questions that help DoRR and UNHCR to understand the nature of return, return trends, factors impacting return and protection problems faced by returnees in exile and during return.
Mine risk education	UNMAS through partners (Danish Demining Group/DDG)	Upon arrival	Mine risk education is an important protection tool and consists of a short briefing about the presence of mines and other unexploded ordnance in areas of return, along with assistance in identifying and avoiding potential mine risks.
Back to School Campaign	Ministry of Education (MoE) with the support of UNICEF	Upon arrival	Back-to-School and Getting Tazkira campaign provides returnees with information about the process of enrolling children in schools in Afghanistan, including procedures for transferring school credits earned in exile and how receive Tazkira
Polio and measles vaccination	Ministry of Public Health supported by WHO and UNICEF	Upon arrival	All returnee children under five years of age receive vaccinations against polio and measles.
Basic health care	UNHCR through partners with the support of WHO	Upon arrival	Returnees in need of immediate health care interventions are assisted at the ECs or, if necessary, transferred to the provincial hospitals.



<b>Identification of persons with specific needs (PSN)</b>	<b>DoRR and UNHCR/UNHCR partner</b>	Upon arrival	Vulnerable families and individuals (including disabled, female headed households, unaccompanied or separated children, and others) are identified and referred to relevant service providers for necessary follow-up and potential assistance.
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## Annex II – return assistance process for undocumented returnees at zero points/screening centres

Activity	Responsible Agency	When	Description
<b>Registration -ARIS</b>	DoRR	Upon arrival	Afghan Returnee Information System (ARIS) is managed by MoRR/DoRR to register all returning Afghans upon arrival
<b>Screening</b>	DoRR	Upon arrival	DoRR staff screen to identify vulnerable cases (persons with specific needs) for necessary assistance who are then given a referral form to IOM reception/transit centres.
<b>Registration at IOM Transit Centres and provision of services</b>	IOM	Upon arrival	Beneficiary cards are provided to those meeting the PSN criteria and services are extended including provision of hot meals, overnight accommodation for vulnerable families, health screening, Mine Risk Education from DRC-DDG, and other referral services.
<b>Food and NFIs distribution at IOM transit centres</b>	IOM	Upon arrival	All vulnerable cases are provided with one-time food rations of 2 months from WFP and NFI packages- either in-kind or in cash. NFI packages include family and blanket modules and are supplied by IOM and UNICEF with hygiene kits provision by UNFPA.
<b>Basic health screening and referrals at reception/transit centres</b>	IOM	Upon arrival	Those returnees in need of basic health care interventions are seen to by medical staff at IOM Transit Centre clinics and screened for infectious diseases. Cases with urgent medical needs are placed in ambulances and taken to the closest district or provincial health facility. Essential medicines are also provided to returnees for treatment of minor illnesses.
<b>Family tracing and reunification</b>	CPAN/Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA), partners	Upon arrival	Unaccompanied minors among the undocumented returnees and deportees are referred to social service providers for family tracing and reunification.
<b>Transportation assistance</b>	IOM	Upon arrival	Vulnerable undocumented returnees and deportees from Pakistan and Iran are provided with a transportation grant.
<b>Referral system for reintegration services</b>	DoRR with partners	Upon arrival	Through the ARIS registration system undocumented returnees have access to DoRR's Reintegration Information Centres at the provincial level to receive further information and referrals for reintegration assistance and other social services.

## 2. Linking return to reintegration

Since 2002, millions of Afghans have returned home. In addition, Afghanistan is facing one of the fastest growing urbanization societies in the world with more than 400,000 people entering the labour market each year. The high number of returnees has created demands for additional livelihoods opportunities, expanded basic services, resolution of legal disputes, allocation of land, and inclusion of returnees in political and social structures. Looking forward, it is necessary to carefully consider the availability of all resources essential to reintegration as part of the return planning process in order to ensure the sustainability of return and reintegration. The pace of return must be matched by the capacity of the areas of intended return to absorb and integrate returnees. More importantly, programme interventions and extension of social services should align with the expressed concerns of returnees, and allow for different approaches and prioritization of activities in rural or urban environments. Lastly, to foster continued interest in return to Afghanistan, reintegration needs must be included in the larger development agenda and planning processes such as the Citizens' Charter, with due regard given to well-documented vulnerabilities as a result of prolonged residence in neighbouring countries.

Despite the many challenges and deteriorating security environment within Afghanistan, the situation of IDPs and returnees demonstrated mixed challenges and opportunities over time. The 2017 UNHCR returnee monitoring report<sup>3</sup>, carried out through household level phone interviews, shows that 2016 returnees tend to skip a meal more frequently compared to 2017 returnees (38.8% versus 26.5%); children under the age of 14

<sup>3</sup> UNHCR return and IDP monitoring report 2017

work in times of need slightly more often than among 2016 interviewed returnees. In contrast, 11% more boys and 14% more girls are in schools when compared to 2016 and 2017 returnees.

The monitoring findings further indicate that overall 61% of 2017 returnees and 64% of 2016 returnees are currently living in their provinces of origin. However, they are facing difficult conditions in communities they have returned to. Challenges include a lack of economic opportunities, limited access to basic services, insecurity, and lack of land and adequate housing options which limits the potential of returnees and IDPs to re-establish their families and make future investments, essential for the sustainability of their reintegration.

The monitoring findings also shows that the host communities have a positive view about returnees and IDPs. However, the general solidarity between returnees, IDPs and host communities demonstrates strains after continuing large scale return and displacement, which is heightened by the slow pace of development or at times even the reversal in tackling widespread poverty and ensuring basic social services. The report underscores that nearly 60% of the interviewed returnees and 71% of interviewed IDPs reported difficulties with host communities, related to the lack of job opportunities rather than discrimination or inter/intra communal tensions

Considering the above challenges, the eventual voluntary return of millions of Afghans currently in the region will inevitably place additional challenges on already over-stretched social services that will require coordinated efforts among Afghanistan's government ministries with the development and humanitarian actors. In addition, the limited availability of humanitarian and development funding will require strategic prioritization of initiatives to address concerns of Afghans in exile with the alignment of existing development frameworks to avoid duplication and maximize potential impact. The following conditions remains a *sine qua non* for a gradual and sustainable return to happen from the neighbouring countries:<sup>4</sup>

- Peace and security in the areas of return;
- An improvement in political, economic and social absorption capacities in key sectors and areas;
- An implementation plan with clear priorities and a strong coordination platform among concerned government ministries and departments (DiREC);
- Continued support of Afghan refugee/undocumented-hosting countries to ensure that all return remains voluntary and to maintain asylum space until refugees themselves decide to return in conditions of safety and dignity.
- Land distribution in order to construct shelters
- To provide Job and livelihood opportunities

## **5.1 Governing Bodies/Structures**

### **5.1.1 Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR)**

Recognizing the complexity and challenges faced by registered refugees affecting the region as a whole, the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, with the support of UNHCR, initiated a quadripartite consultative process in 2011. These consultations resulted in the development of the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees to support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries, which was endorsed by the international community at a conference in May 2012. Taking a regional approach, the Solutions Strategy acknowledges the cross-border linkages of the Afghan displacement situation and seeks to design comprehensive solutions. Gaining recognition in the region and beyond, the SSAR is the primary (regional) framework providing policy guidance on the issue of voluntary return and reintegration for Afghan refugees and serves as the foundation for the GoIRA's national repatriation and reintegration strategy<sup>5</sup>.

During the fifth quadripartite meeting held in Turkey in December 2017, the Governments of the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan and UNHCR, reaffirmed the significance of the relevance of the SSAR to identify and implement lasting solutions for Afghan refugees in the region. All parties agreed to continue to support voluntary repatriation in safety and dignity of Afghan refugees under the SSAR framework beyond 2017, particularly enhancing self-reliance and promoting peaceful co-existence of Afghan refugees and their host

<sup>4</sup> MoRR Comprehensive Voluntary Repatriation and Reintegration Strategy endorsed in August 2015

<sup>5</sup> MoRR Comprehensive Voluntary Repatriation and Reintegration Strategy endorsed in August 2015

communities, and advocating for greater, more equitable and predictable burden- and responsibility-sharing by the international community<sup>6</sup>.

### **5.1.2 Displacement and Return Executive Committee (DiREC)**

In late 2016, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan; based on the instructions of H.E the president and H.E the chief executive under co-chair of MoRR, CEO and the UN, the Displacement and Return Executive Committee (DiREC) was established, which acts as a platform and overall coordination body to address all returnee and IDP issues. Stemming from this group, three working groups (Policy; Technical and Finance) were created to work on a DiREC Action Plan. The Action Plan, referred to in the below matrices, summarizes improved access to land and housing, basic services and livelihoods provision. For more information please see Annex 3-5 - DiREC Action Plans.

### **5.2 Livelihoods**

Afghanistan has a deeply impoverished rural population, many of whom face food insecurity, without decent work or the means to secure it. The ability to earn a living and support one's family are universal priorities. In the context of returnee decision-making, access to livelihoods is a key consideration regarding the choice of where to (re)settle. Access to land remains a higher priority—which is intrinsically related to re-establishment of livelihoods, while access to skills training or micro-credit to start a business may be of greater importance for returnees to urban areas.

Livelihoods are a key concern and major factor in decisions regarding return. Afghans in exile have reported their inability to find employment matching their skill set in Afghanistan as one of the main obstacles to return and sustainable reintegration.<sup>7</sup> At present, unemployment rates are worsening in many areas of Afghanistan particularly for unskilled labour, especially in those areas affected by large scale returns and displacement due to conflict. In other cases, Afghans in exile may have acquired education or specific skills that do not match the available work opportunities in Afghanistan, often leading to high levels of personal and/or household debt resulting often in negative coping strategies (e.g. child labour, early marriage, labour exploitation, debt etc.). The demographic profile of Afghanistan, characterized by a disproportionately large population of youth, compound the existing challenges and underscore the urgency of addressing the legitimate aspirations of Afghanistan's young people.

#### **Way forward:**

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<sup>6</sup> Conclusions of the 5<sup>th</sup> quadripartite meeting, November 2017, Istanbul, Turkey

<sup>7</sup> *Livelihoods, Basic Services, and Protection in Afghanistan*. Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit. June 2012

### Annex 3 – DiREC Action Plan

#### Improve access to livelihood opportunities and jobs

Objectives	Required action	Timeframe	Responsible /supporting Institutions and relevant NPPs	Financial Resources/ Source of funding
<p>Improve existing information gaps on livelihoods and food security programming</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conduct socio-economic and vulnerability assessments, and skills profiling of returnees and IDPs.</li> <li>- Conduct market assessment studies, including value chain analysis of productive and economic sectors.</li> </ul>	<p>Short to Mid-term</p>	<p>DiREC  <b>Lead:</b>                      MoLSAMD  <b>Support:</b>                      MRRD                      MAIL                      MoPH,                      IDLG                      MoRR</p> <p>UNHCR, IOM, ILO, FAO,                      UNDP, IFAD, WFP,                      UNODC</p>	<p>HRP/HNO                      (NPP/National budget)</p>
<p>Create short-term jobs through labour-intensive and productive public work schemes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish/rehabilitate productive and economic infrastructure (e.g., factories, serviced land) through linkage with the Jobs for Peace/Citizens' Charter activities such as, Maintenance Cash Grants, Kabul Municipal Development Program, Urban Intensive Works Program</li> <li>- Target alternative activities or cash grants for highly vulnerable groups unable to join labour intensive programs.</li> </ul>	<p>Mid-term  Short-term</p>	<p>DiREC  <b>Lead:</b>                      MRRD                      MoPW  <b>Support:</b>                      MUDH                      MoRR                      MoLSAMD                      MAIL                      MoPW,                      IDLG</p> <p>UNHCR, IOM, ILO, FAO,                      UNDP, IFAD, WFP,                      UNODC</p> <p><b>NPP:</b>                      Citizens' Charter                      Urban Development Program</p>	<p>(NPP/ national budget)</p>

<p>Improve access to formal/informal labour market.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improve urban transport to increase labour mobility and facilitate job searching.</li> <li>- Provide access to information on market demands.</li> </ul>	<p>Mid to long-term</p>	<p><b>DiREC</b>  <b>Lead:</b>  MoLASMD  <b>Support:</b>  MRRD  MoPW  World Bank  UN Agencies</p>	<p>(NPP/ national budget)</p>
<p>Diversify livelihoods, improve access to economic opportunities, and strengthen sustainable income generation (with special attention to youth, women, and People with Specific Needs (PSN))</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish groups/associations/cooperatives (with specific attention to women and youth) linked to productive and economic sectors.</li> <li>- Improve employable capacities and job competency through market-based skill development and Technical Education and Vocational trainings (TEVT), including internship and apprenticeship trainings in public services and through private sector partnerships</li> <li>- Provide farm and non-farm tools</li> <li>- Promote entrepreneurship and self-employment among returnees and IDPs, including through business development support</li> <li>- Support community-based Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). Develop required entrepreneurship capacities and financial literacy to enable access to productive and economic sectors</li> <li>- Facilitate access to formal and sustainable financial services (Banks and MFIs) as well as group schemes (microfinance and credit).</li> <li>- Use technology to facilitate the provision of formal financial services and channelling of social benefits and cash transfers.</li> <li>- Establish partnerships with (respective sectoral) private sector businesses and associations to improve market linkages</li> </ul>	<p>Mid to long-term</p>	<p><b>DiREC,</b>  <b>Lead:</b>  MoLSAMD  <b>Support:</b>  MoRR  MRRD  MAIL  Ministries of Public Works, Education, Women Affairs, and Information and Culture, IDLG  UNHCR, IOM, ILO, FAO, UNDP, IFAD, WFP, UNODC  <b>NPPs</b>  Women Economic Empowerment  Human Capital Development</p>	<p>(NPP/National budget)</p>

### 5.3 Housing, land and property

Access to land, security of tenure and property rights remain a serious concern for prospective returnees. Landlessness is almost five times higher among returnees as compared to the general population, as a result of land grabbing, improper/non-existent documentation and inheritance issues. The new Executive Decree on Land Allocation that will replace Presidential Decree 104, guarantees the eligibility of returnees and IDPs for allocation of land preferably in their province of origin. A new Land Bank to be established by ARAZI- the Independent Land Authority- will hold state land for allocation after land clearance is conducted by ARAZI's enhanced *tasfiyeh* (clearance) team which has benefited from a new injection of funding and has been able to increase its staff count from 8 to 107. One pilot site has been selected in Nangarhar province with 4,000 plots of land and an additional 8,500 plots have been allocated in Herat. A beneficiary selection consortium with the involvement of relevant GoIRA line ministries and the United Nations will be established to verify the identities of potential beneficiaries and pair them with plots of land where they will be responsible for building their own homes. Additional elements including facilities and services such as education, health, sanitation as well as livelihood opportunities will be provided with support from the international community. This issue of land reform—and the provision of viable land for settlement to returning refugees—is complex and will require a concerted effort and commitment across various line ministries.

Afghans living in exile as well as those who have returned have cited lack of shelter as a serious concern. Immediately after their return, many returnees have no choice but to live with relatives, often in overcrowded conditions. Others are compelled to live in sub-standard public buildings that often lack basic facilities.

Shelter/housing interventions not only provide dignity and improved quality of life in displacement or after return, but also pave the way for durable solutions and sustainable reintegration. However, shelter cannot be dissociated from more difficult issues related to land and security of tenure, where challenges still persist, as noted above. Considering returnees and IDPs' tendency to move to urban/semi-urban areas in search of livelihoods where shelter/housing options are limited and or rental cost is high, shelter interventions need to be extensive, largely conceived in the form of social housing schemes that require resources and expertise which are beyond humanitarian partners' capacity. Considering the importance of shelter on one hand and a lack of comprehensive shelter intervention, the potential return of over 1 million Afghans in 2018 will create protection risks among newly arrived returnees. Therefore additional support is required to enhance existing legal pathways to ensure transparent land allocation and beneficiary selection through the Government's land allocation scheme for landless returnees as well as concrete shelter/housing interventions in the return areas.

#### Way forward:

## Annex 4 – DiREC Action Plan

### Improve access to land and adequate housing

Objectives	Required action	Timeframe	Responsible Institution/ relevant NPP	Financial Resources/ Source of funding
Enabling policy environment for durable solutions for displaced households and landless Afghans, taking into account the current limitations of the land administration system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presidential Decree to facilitate the acquisition and distribution of land in appropriate locations (in keeping with the requirements of the 'Minimum Standards for Site Selection Guidance Note', including access to appropriate livelihood opportunities and eligibility criteria for beneficiary selection) to supersede PD 104.</li> </ul>	Short-term	DiREC <b>Lead:</b> ARAZI <b>Support:</b> Office of the President MoRR MUDH UN-Habitat UNHCR IOM	TBD
Affordable/social housing options in urban areas to ensure access for People of Concern (PoCs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Range of affordable housing options constructed</li> <li>- A relevant affordable financing scheme established for PoCs</li> </ul>	Mid to long-term	DiREC <b>Lead :</b> CRIDA MUDH <b>Support:</b> MoRR UN-Habitat UNHCR Relevant Municipalities	TBD
Durable solutions to displacement in urban areas for returnees, IDPs and the urban poor, including the regularization of selected informal settlements. Improved tenure security (through interim measures such as temporary occupancy certificates that can eventually be upgraded into title deeds). Reduced threat of eviction and removal of restrictions on development interventions to enable improvements to basic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Detailed profiling of returnee/protracted IDP hosting sites</li> <li>- Identify viable urban/peri-urban sites with the potential to be upgraded based on the 'Minimum Standards for Site Selection Guidance Note' including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Proximity to appropriate livelihood opportunities (typically located in the urban informal economy)</li> <li>o Access to basic services, including water/potential for those services to be established on site</li> <li>o Fit for human habitation; no undue hazards, including mines and explosive remnant of war, to occupants' health</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Acquisition of selected sites; if applicable, ownership of Identified site transferred to the relevant entity authorized by the Government</li> </ul>	Short – mid term	DiREC <b>Lead:</b> CRIDA MUDH ARAZI <b>Support:</b> MoRR DMAC UNMAS UN-Habitat UNHCR Relevant Municipalities  <b>NPP:</b>	TBD based on the number of beneficiaries, 125,000 households (approx. 1 million individuals) approx. 400 million USD

services and shelter in identified durable solutions sites.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Providing tenure security for occupants (non-transferable 'Permission to Stay' documents, Occupancy Certificates etc. with ownership remaining with the relevant entity authorized by the Government)</li> <li>- Rapid site planning and basic preparation prior to occupation (i.e. water, basic sanitation)</li> <li>- Improvement of basic services to the standards outlined in the Citizens' Charter</li> <li>- Sites subsequently incorporated into municipalities (where appropriate) and integrated into urban development plans</li> </ul>	Urban Development Programme
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### 6.3 Access to other basic services

The challenges in lack of economic opportunities, landlessness, adequate housing, access to education, health, water and sanitation, transportation, infrastructure and legal services make it difficult for returnees to re-establish themselves in Afghanistan and rebuild their lives. In many instances, difficulties in accessing these basic services may also lead to secondary movements or even return to neighbouring countries. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) ranked Afghanistan 169 out of 187 countries in its 2014 *Human Development Report*, underscoring the challenges facing the Afghan government in extending services to returnees in an already difficult environment. To increase the ability of communities to absorb new arrivals, the government and international partners will have to carefully track patterns of return and target services accordingly<sup>8</sup>.

#### Way forward:

#### Annex 5 - DiREC Action Plan

#### Facilitate access to basic services for returnees, IDPs and host communities

Objectives	Required action	Timeframe	Responsible Institution/ relevant NPP	Financial Resources/ Source of funding
<b>Ensure the inclusion, representation and (re)-integration of IDPs and returnees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Map existing CDCs in areas of high return.</li> <li>- Expand Citizens' Charter in Nahias and districts with high influx of IDPs/returnees</li> <li>- Ensure the representation of IDPs/returnee families in existing CDCs</li> <li>- Improve the understanding of IDP and returnee durable solutions needs through enhanced collection, management and availability of data (i.e. community profiling, Multi-Dimensional Integration Index, and Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM))</li> </ul>	Ongoing  Medium term	DiREC <b>Lead:</b> MRRD IDLG MoRR <b>Support:</b> CSO World Bank UNHCR IOM	(NPP/ national budget)

<sup>8</sup> MoRR Comprehensive Voluntary Repatriation and Reintegration Strategy endorsed in August 2015



			UNHABITAT <b>NPP:</b> Citizen's Charter	
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<p><b>Provide access to basic services</b></p>	<p><b>Education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure that returnees and IDP school age children have access to education and conducive learning environments including through recognition of certifications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Conduct needs assessment and identify gaps</li> <li>o Provide additional resources (teaching and learning materials, recruitment of contract teachers and provision of learning space)</li> <li>o Provide interim curriculum for returnees from Pakistan who have not been brought up in the Afghan education system</li> <li>o Address constraints to education access (develop school integration guidelines, establish language and catch-up classes, monitoring/waving the certification process fee in the country of asylum, recognize the equivalency of diplomas obtained outside of Afghanistan;</li> <li>o Expedite certification and school registration/enrolment in areas of return and displacement)</li> <li>o Strengthen institutional capacity and community mobilization to enhance the integration of IDP and returnee children into the education system</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Health</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure that returnees and IDPs have access to health assistance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Increase reception capacity in districts of high return and displacement (including female staff) of health facilities</li> <li>o Establish new health facilities or provide mobile/outreach clinics in the areas where IDPs and returnees have challenges accessing the existing health facilities</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Water and Sanitation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure that returnees and IDPs have access to clean drinking water</li> <li>- Strengthen water and sanitation infrastructure</li> <li>- Promote hygiene education</li> </ul>	<p>Mid to long-term</p>	<p>DiREC  <b>Lead:</b>  MRRD  IDLG  MoRR  <b>Support:</b>  MoE  MoPH  MoRR  UNICEF</p> <p><b>NPP:</b>  Citizens' Charter  (EQUIP and SEHAT in areas not covered by Citizens' Charter)</p>	<p>(NPP/ national budget)</p>
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### 3. Budget:

An initial analysis of the financial outlook of the plan compiled the humanitarian activities and indicated a total budget of USD \$237.5 million (43%), of which \$45 million is available (18%) and faces a gap of \$192 million (82%). Regarding the development activities, a total budget of USD \$291 million (57%) was calculated with available funding of \$151 million (51%) and a gap of \$140 million (49%).

The budget analysis indicates a strong precedent to take specific measures to alleviate these gaps, resulting in a recent objective introduced by the Government of Afghanistan to include the reintegration of returnees and IDPs as a top priority of the national budget. The Technical and Financial Working Groups will work with MoF's budget specialists on compiling an economic evaluation, which will illustrate the existing resources available, immediate activities which require support and a detailed submission for the annual budget on how the migration portfolio will be implemented across the next four years.

The joint working group will present a progress report to the DiREC Co-chairs and members as amendments are formulated. MoE's EIE Working Group calculated a gap of USD \$7.5 million, which would be needed to cover the costs of activities such as: the procurement and prepositioning of education kits in high returnee areas, gathering baseline information on existing school facilities/absorption capacity in high returnee areas, establishment of temporary and child-friendly learning spaces in informal settlements/camp like settings, mobilization of available psycho-social support for teachers and students and the provision of textbooks and teaching materials.

MoPH's contingency plan outlines how a gap of USD 3.8 million in funding negates their ability to support emergency primary healthcare delivery at Zero Points, disease surveillance and control and the ability to strengthen the capacity of regional health facilities in coordination with WHO and BPHS implementers across the high-returnee provinces. A commitment of USD \$30 million by the Saudi Arabian Government to the areas of both Education and Health will also be considered within the budget of the Action Plan as the funding has been made available

UN's contingency plan for 2018 with a planning assumption of 700,000 returnees, estimates a current funding gap of USD \$109 million. UN's sectoral activities include Education in Emergencies, Emergency Shelter & NFIs, Food Security & Agriculture, Health/Nutrition, Protection, WASH and Multi-Purpose Cash Grants. (A breakdown of the current response capacity, projected cost/gaps are indicated in the Action Plan Matrix.)

As per the motion that was passed during the March 13<sup>th</sup> meeting of DiREC, approximately USD \$11 million will be allocated to MoE and MoPH, aiming to improve and expand delivery of services across twelve high returnee provinces, including: Nangarhar, Laghman, Kunar, Kabul, Herat, Ghor, Baghlan, Kunduz, Kandahar, Takhar, Faryab and Khost. Section IV: "Core Focus Areas" of the DiREC Policy Framework indicates access to both education and health services as a prime response mechanism and an "integral" aspect of the reintegration process.

The 2018 action is not static and can be revised if situations on the ground require specific revisions or further discussion. The plan is based on a series of planning assumptions and will be complimented by a Comprehensive Reintegration Plan within the next three months. Significant development assistance has been committed by a range of international actors and the purpose of this CRP will be to facilitate the discussion on where the Government of Afghanistan requires continued financing and assistance.

For costing information refer to Annex 6 Costed 2018 DiREC Action Plans prepared in 2018. This include prioritised areas, actives and required budget for education (MoE), health (MoPH), land (ARAZI), and Community mobilization, CDC/GA election (IDLG and MRRD).

Ministry/Directorates	Budget Forecast (\$)	Available Budget (\$)	Gaps (\$)
MoE	20,671,900	0	20,671,900
MoPH	8,567,742	5,949,855	2,776,582
IDLG	10,000,000	10,000,000	0
MRRD	80,000,000	80,000,000	0
ARAZI	500,000	500,000	0
MUDH	57,000,000	25,000,000	32,000,000
MOLSAMD	0	0	0
MoPW	0	0	0
MoRR	886,400	0	886,400
	177,626,042	121,449,855	56,334,882

Since refugees is a cross cutting issue of all government departments and UN agencies, so all stakeholder are responsible to come with specific budget and plan of action to response to the demands of returnees and in some cases IDPs too. In DIREC plan of action 2016, MOLSAMD and Arazi have big role on reintegration and sustainable job creation, livelihood and vocational trainings.

Similarly

Off Budget	On Budget (508MUSD)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU: 167 M€</li> <li>• UNHCR: 42MUSD</li> <li>• IOM:</li> <li>• INDIAN: 125MUSD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU: 86MUSD (69M€)</li> <li>• WB/IDA: 250 MUSD</li> <li>• WB/ARTF: 172MUSD</li> </ul>

Note: breakdown of budget for all target provinces are attached as annex to this plan!

Similarly the following table demonstrate to budge for humanitarian and development forecast.

HUMANITERIAN	DEVELOPMENT (12 Provinces)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ESNFI: 27MUSD</li> <li>• FSAC: 35.6 MUSD</li> <li>• HEALTH: 19.5 MUSD</li> <li>• WASH: 17.7MUSD</li> <li>• IOM: 46MUSD</li> <li>• UNHCR: 42MUSD</li> <li>• PROTECTION: 0.31MUSD</li> <li>• TOTAL BUDGET: 237.5 (43%)</li> <li>• AVAILABLE: 45MUSD (18%)</li> <li>• GAP: 192MUSD (82%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BASIC SERVICES: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ HEALTH: 8.6MUSD</li> <li>○ EDUCATION: 15.5MUSD</li> <li>○ CC: 90MUSD</li> </ul> </li> <li>• LAND: 0.5MUSD</li> <li>• HOUSING: 57MUSD</li> <li>• JOB/LIVELIHOOD: 30MUSD</li> <li>• TOTAL BUDGET: 291MUSD (57%)</li> <li>• AVAILABLE: 151MUSD (51%)</li> <li>• GAP: 140MUSD (49%)</li> </ul>

#### **4. Implementation of the return and reintegration response plan:**

MoRR in close collaboration with line ministries, DiREC, High Commission for Migration, Sub-committee for ministers' counsel for refugees, UNHCR, IOM and other stakeholders will monitor return trends/conditions, collecting information from returnees upon return, beginning at the Encashment Centres and continuing through the first year of their reintegration in Afghanistan. This information will enable MoRR to continue to tailor and refine its interventions to address the most serious obstacles to return and reintegration, ensuring that returnees are able to successfully rebuild their lives as citizens of Afghanistan.

Note: In the above table, each line ministry or independent directorates have clear task on response and reintegration of returnees. Thus, their individual plan and budget allocation including projects on provincial wise is need to be presented to DIREC and get approval. Their individual plan will be part of this plan as annex.

#### **5. Challenges:**

1. Insecurity and instability
2. Lack of enhanced coordination among government stakeholders on refugees/returnees management
3. Insufficient budget for sustainable reintegration and humanitarian support
4. Unwillingness of Afghan refugees to return because of the land distribution issues
5. Lack of job and livelihood opportunities and transfer of fabrication assets and tools by the Afghan business developer to Afghanistan.
6. Social conflict between host communities and the returnees primarily due to lack of resources.