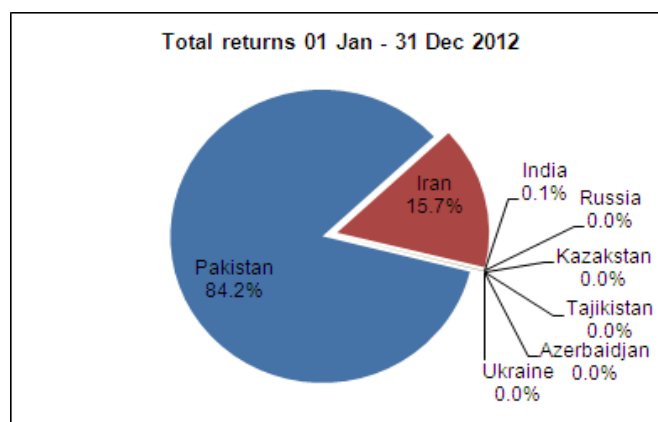




December 2012

VOLUNTARY RETURN TO AFGHANISTAN

1 – 31 December 2012: A total of 12,011 Afghans voluntarily repatriated from Pakistan (11,801) and Iran (210). This reflects an increase of 37% compared to returns in November of 8,774 persons and a dramatic increase compared to just 1,405 Afghans who returned in December 2011. The increase may be attributed to the expected expiration of the PoR (Proof of Registration) cards as of 31 December 2012 in Pakistan, other increased push factors and enhanced assistance package given by UNHCR Pakistan between November and December 2012 to help those choosing to return home.



1 January – 31 December 2012: A total of 94,316 Afghans voluntary repatriated in 2012. An average of 258 refugees returned to Afghanistan every day, an increase of 39% increase compared to last year when the daily average was 186 individuals. 79,435 returned from Pakistan, a 62% increase from 2011 when 48,998 Afghans returned home. The rate of return from Iran is 14,795 individuals which is 27% lower compared to the total returns recorded in 2011 (18,851). Another 86 persons returned from non-neighbouring countries (NNCs): India: 52, the Russian Federation: 12, Ukraine: 10, Kazakstan: 7, Tajikistan: 3 and Azerbaijan: 2.

Many returnees from Pakistan attributed the higher numbers to running the repatriation programme throughout the year, instead of stopping during the winter months as in previous years. Push factors include a rise in food and fuel prices, increased competition with locals for jobs, the escalating security situation in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where most of the 1.7 million registered Afghan refugees live and the expected expiration of PoR cards as of 31 December 2012. UNHCR's Pakistan enhanced assistance package for voluntary repatriation also contributed to increased returns.

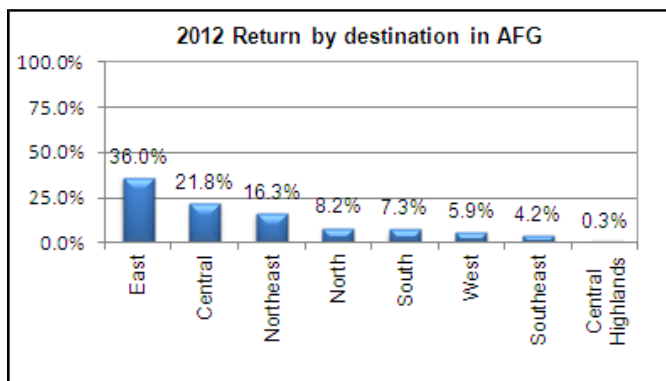
The level of return from Iran, where nearly 1 million Afghan refugees still live, remains stable which appears to be due to better living conditions there compared to Afghanistan.

Repatriation from Pakistan is facilitated through three Voluntary Repatriation Centers (VRCs) located in Khyber Pakhtonkhuwa: Chamkani (Peshawar), Timergara (Dir), Bannu (Banu Township) and Baleli (Quetta) VRC in Baluchistan: Repatriation from Iran is facilitated through Soleimankhani, Esfahan, Shiraz, and Mashhad VRCs, the Sub-Offices, or directly through the Border Crossing Station (BCS) at Dogharoun. Upon return in Afghanistan, returnees were assisted at five encashment centres: Mohmmand Dara (Nangarhar), Kabul (Kabul), Gardez (Paktya), Jamal Mayna (Kandahar) and Herat (Herat).

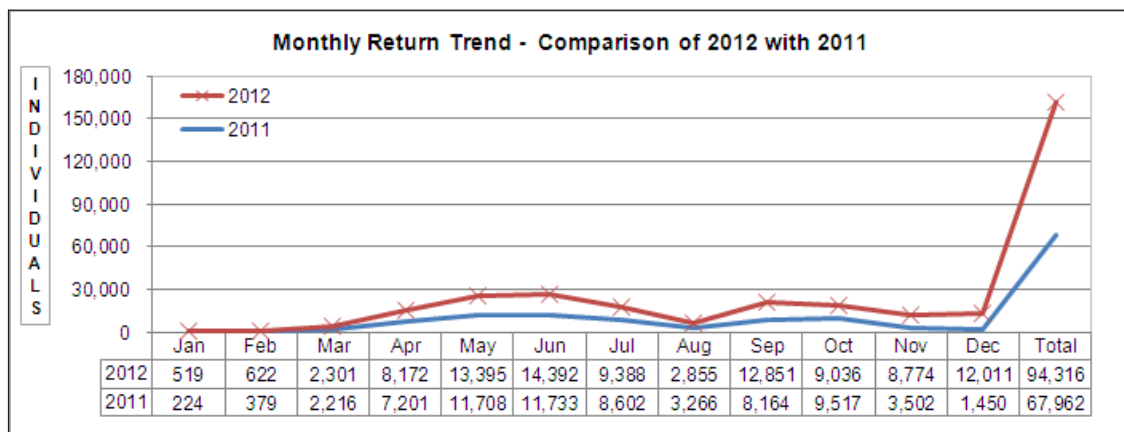
From the start of UNHCR's assisted VolRep operation in March 2002 to the end of December 2012, over 5.7 million Afghan refugees have returned home, out of which over 4.6 million repatriated with assistance from the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) and UNHCR through the voluntary repatriation (VolRep) programme. Today, returnees represent about a quarter of the country's estimated population.

| Year | Returns from Pakistan | Returns from Iran | Returns from Other countries | Total |
|--------------|-----------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|------------------|
| 2002 | 1,565,066 | 259,792 | 9,679 | 1,834,537 |
| 2003 | 332,183 | 142,280 | 1,176 | 475,639 |
| 2004 | 383,321 | 377,151 | 650 | 761,122 |
| 2005 | 449,391 | 63,559 | 1,140 | 514,090 |
| 2006 | 133,338 | 5,264 | 1,202 | 139,804 |
| 2007 | 357,635 | 7,054 | 721 | 365,410 |
| 2008 | 274,200 | 3,656 | 628 | 278,484 |
| 2009 | 48,320 | 6,028 | 204 | 54,552 |
| 2010 | 104,331 | 8,487 | 150 | 112,968 |
| 2011 | 48,998 | 18,851 | 113 | 67,962 |
| 2012 | 79,435 | 14,795 | 86 | 94,316 |
| Total | 3,776,218 | 906,917 | 15,749 | 4,698,884 |

As stated on the voluntary repatriation forms (VRFs) in 2012, returning Afghans went to the **Eastern region (36%)**, mainly to the provinces of Nangarhar (23%) and Kunar (8%), **Northern and North-Eastern region (25%)**, mainly to the provinces of Kunduz (10%), Baghlan (5%) and Balkh (4%), **Central region (22%)**, mainly to the provinces of Kabul (15%), Logar (3%), and Parwan (2%). Afghans who returned to the Southern, Western, South-Eastern and Central Highlands regions constituted **17%** of the total returns. Since 2002, most have returned to the **Central region (37%)**, mainly to Kabul (26%), and Ghazni (4%) provinces, **Eastern region (25%)**, mainly to Nangarhar (20%) and Laghman (3%), **Northern and North-eastern regions (21%)**, mainly to Kunduz (6%), Baghlan (5%), Balkh (3%) and Jawzjan (3%) provinces. The remaining **17%** returned to Southern (6%), Western (6%), South-eastern (4%) and Central Highland (1%) regions.



| Region | No. of individuals returned - Comparison by year | | | |
|-------------------|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | 2012 | | 2011 | |
| | No. | % | No. | % |
| East | 33,915 | 36.0% | 16,366 | 24.1% |
| Central | 20,519 | 21.8% | 22,035 | 32.4% |
| Northeast | 15,407 | 16.3% | 8,253 | 12.1% |
| North | 7,709 | 8.2% | 5,339 | 7.9% |
| South | 6,918 | 7.3% | 6,182 | 9.1% |
| West | 5,523 | 5.9% | 6,529 | 9.6% |
| Southeast | 4,001 | 4.2% | 2,746 | 4.0% |
| Central Highlands | 324 | 0.3% | 512 | 0.8% |
| Total | 94,316 | 100.0% | 67,962 | 100.0% |



| CoA | Province | % |
|----------|--------------------------|-------|
| PAKISTAN | KPK | 66.9% |
| | Balochistan | 18.9% |
| | Punjab | 8.9% |
| | Sindh | 4.1% |
| | Islamabad | 0.9% |
| | AJK | 0.3% |
| | Unknown | 0.1% |
| IRAN | Tehran | 18.7% |
| | Hormozgan | 17.0% |
| | Kerman | 16.0% |
| | Esfahan | 11.4% |
| | Fars | 10.3% |
| | Qom | 6.0% |
| | Khorasan | 5.5% |
| | Mazandaran | 4.5% |
| | Yazd | 3.4% |
| | Markazi | 2.1% |
| | Semnan | 1.7% |
| | Khuzestan | 1.0% |
| | Bushehr | 0.9% |
| | Qazvin | 0.9% |
| | Golestan | 0.6% |
| | Sistan va Baluchestan | 0.1% |
| | Kohgiluyeh va Boyerahmad | 0.0% |
| Lorestan | 0.0% | |
| Unknown | 0.1% | |



| Top five refugee settlements in Pakistan from where refugees returned in 2012 | | Top five districts in Pakistan from where refugees returned in 2012 | |
|---|-------------|---|-------------|
| Settlements | Individuals | Districts/outside settlements | Individuals |
| Toor | 4,022 | Quetta | 8,797 |
| Badaber | 3,040 | Peshawar | 5,564 |
| Panian | 2,885 | Karachi | 2,200 |
| Timer | 2,821 | Attock | 1,975 |
| Chakdara | 2,488 | Lower Dir | 1,891 |

During November and December 2012, UNHCR has enhanced its assistance package to returning refugees who opted to repatriate from Pakistan. This assistance included support for transportation costs and provision of NFIs kits.

ENCASHMENT CENTRE RETURNEE MONITORING

Between 1 January and 31 December 2012, a total of 4,536 interviews were conducted with returning refugees from Pakistan (4,271) and Iran (265). Interviewees were selected in two ways: at random (3,652) and from those with obvious protection concerns (884) at the first point of contact in Afghanistan, the UNHCR Transit/Encashment Centres in Kabul, Jalalabad (Mohmand Dara), Kandahar (Jamal Mayna), Gardez and Hirat (GTC). This monitoring exercise helps UNHCR identify return trends, push/pull factors and check on the level of information returnees received to make an informed choice to return home.

Returns from Pakistan

Push factors

Among returnees from Pakistan, 66% cited economic factors as a primary reason for their return followed by alleged harassment by authorities (12%), the deteriorating security conditions in the country (9%), fear of arrest and/or deportation (2%), lack of school and health facilities (1%), and other reasons (10%).

Pull factors

47% of returnees cited improvement of the security situation in some parts of Afghanistan as the primary reason influencing their decision to return followed by none or reduced fear of persecution (18%), UNHCR's assistance package (13%), employment opportunities (10%), the land allocation scheme and/or UNHCR shelter program (7%), improvements in health and education facilities (2%), improved weather conditions for agricultural activities (1%), and other reasons (2%).

Information on the Voluntary Repatriation Program

98% of interviewed returnees from Pakistan said that they had received adequate information to make an informed decision to return. Information was mainly obtained through the Afghan community (57%), visits to Afghanistan (29%), through the media (5%), from UNHCR (3%) and from other sources (4%). Only 2% said they had no information. Regarding information on UNHCR's repatriation operation, 61% of the interviewed returnees explained that they had been informed about UNHCR's repatriation operation by members of the Afghan community, 17% reported that they obtained information directly from UNHCR, 11% stated that they had visited Afghanistan, and 11% were informed through the media (TV, Radio and Newspaper).

Alleged arrests/detentions and intimidations in Pakistan

Nearly 2% of the interviewed returnees alleged that they had been arrested and/or detained during their stay in Pakistan. Some 22% of interviewed returnees stated that they faced problems while traveling from the VRC to Torkham border point. Among these, 95% alleged that they had paid bribes at different check points in Pakistan because they were carrying livestock, construction material (used beams), or to avoid a search of the trucks. The extortion incidents which were reported during the course of volrep in 2012 went down by 50% in the last quarter of the year, particularly in November and December which is the outcome of the continuous efforts made by the UNHCR offices in Pakistan.

Reasons for not returning to place of origin

Out of a total of 4,271 respondents, 1,461 returnees stated that they do not intend to repatriate to their place of origin due to the following reasons: lack of housing (51%), insecurity (27%), lack of land (11%), lack of livelihood/income generation opportunities (4%), lack of public services (2%), personal disputes (1%) and other reasons (4%).

On accommodation, 44% of those who returned from Pakistan said that they plan to stay with relatives, 33% indicated that they will rent accommodation and 20% said that they own a house in Afghanistan.

Returns from Iran

Push factors

Among the 265 returnees from Iran interviewed, 89% stated economic factors in Iran as the primary reason for return followed by fear of arrest and or deportation (6%) and alleged harassment by the authorities (5%).

Pull factors

93% indicated improvements of the security situation in some parts of Afghanistan as the primary reason

influencing their decision to return, followed by none or reduced fear of persecution (2%), employment opportunities (2%) and other reasons (3%).

Information on the Voluntary Repatriation Program

85% of the interviewed returnees from Iran reported that they had received adequate information to make an informed decision to return. Information was mainly obtained through the Afghan community (81%), directly from UNHCR (4%), through the media (3%), visits to Afghanistan (1%) and other sources (5%). Regarding information on UNHCR's repatriation operation, 76% of the interviewed returnees stated that they have been informed about UNHCR's repatriation operation by members of the Afghan community, 6% cited that they obtained information directly from UNHCR, through the media (4%), visits to Afghanistan (1%) and 6% from other sources.

Reasons for not returning to place of origin

Out of a total of 265 respondents, 79 interviewed returnees stated that they do not intend to repatriate to their area of origin due to the following reasons: lack of public services (70%), lack of housing (13%), lack of livelihoods / income generation opportunities (10%), personal disputes (4%), fear of persecution (2%) and insecurity (1%).

On accommodation, 65% of those who returned from Iran said that they will rent accommodation, 31% indicated that they will stay with relatives and 3% said that they own a house.

BORDER MONITORING

Deportation of undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees)

Afghan nationals returning from Iran or Pakistan due to eviction, conflict, military operations, natural disasters, or other reasons do not fall under UNHCR's mandate, and all international response to their needs will be led by IOM. However, UNHCR in co-ordination with other protection actors monitors their protection situation to ascertain that registered refugees are not deported.

IRAN

1 - 31 December 2012: A total of 23,995 (averaging 774 persons /day) undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Islam Qala (77%) and Zaranj (23%) border points. This figure is 33% higher compared to 18,069 deportees recorded in November 2012.

1 January – 31 December 2012: A total of 258,146 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) deported. This is an increase of 22% compared to the 211,023 Afghans who were deported in 2011. The average number of deportees per day in 2012 stands at 705 compared to 578/ day in 2011.

The vast majority of deportees (98%) were single men who entered Iran illegally looking for work.

Since April 2009, IOM has been present in Islam Qala and Zaranj border crossing points and has procedures in place to screen and identify Persons with Special Needs (PSNs) among the deported undocumented Afghans (non-refugees).

IOM provides PSNs with transportation, transit and health services at the border and to assist with their transportation costs from Herat and Zaranj cities to their final destination.

| Deportations from Iran | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|-----------|-----------|----------------|-------------------|
| Reporting Period | Entry Point | Family Groups | | | | Single | | | | | Total Individuals |
| | | Families | Individuals | | | Male | | Female | | Total | |
| | | | M | F | Total | Adult | UAM | Adult | UAM | | |
| 01 - 31 Dec 2012 | Zaranj | 157 | 353 | 405 | 758 | 4,631 | 80 | 0 | 0 | 4,711 | 5,469 |
| | Islam Qala | 187 | 367 | 216 | 583 | 16,994 | 946 | 1 | 2 | 17,943 | 18,526 |
| Total | | 344 | 720 | 621 | 1,341 | 21,625 | 1,026 | 1 | 2 | 22,654 | 23,995 |
| 01 Jan - 31 Dec 2012 | Zaranj | 2,097 | 5,407 | 5,823 | 11,230 | 67,593 | 430 | 0 | 0 | 68,023 | 79,253 |
| | Islam Qala | 1,523 | 3,368 | 2,699 | 6,067 | 167,942 | 4,777 | 91 | 16 | 172,826 | 178,893 |
| Total | | 3,620 | 8,775 | 8,522 | 17,297 | 235,535 | 5,207 | 91 | 16 | 240,849 | 258,146 |

PAKISTAN

1 - 31 December 2012: A total of 570 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham (249) and Spin Boldak (321) border points. This figure shows a slight decrease compared to 586 deportees recorded in November 2012.

1 January - 31 December 2012: A total of 1,950 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) - including 14 families/54 individuals and 25 Unaccompanied Minors (UAMs) - were deported via Torkham Border. This figure is 31% higher compared to the 1,353 deportees recorded in 2011. Only six persons among the deported claimed to hold a Proof of Registration (PoR) card. These cases are being followed up by UNHCR Jalalabad.

Since November 2012, IOM has established a transit centre in Torkham to screen, identify and assist PSNs

among deported undocumented Afghans (non-refugees). IOM provides PSNs with NFIs and free transportation from Torkham to their final destination.

In addition, 5,734 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Spin Boldak (SB). The deportation figure for March to December this year (4,695) shows a decrease of 66% compared to the 7,838 Afghans deported between March and December 2011. Border monitoring activities resumed in Spin Boldak in March 2011.

During 2012, a total of 7,684 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported, which represents a decrease of 20% compared to the 9,191 Afghans who have been deported in 2011.

| Deportations from Pakistan | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|-----------|----------|----------|--------------|-------------------|
| Reporting Period | Entry Point | Family Groups | | | | Single | | | | | Total Individuals |
| | | Families | Individuals | | | Male | | Female | | Total | |
| | | | M | F | Total | Adult | UAM | Adult | UAM | | |
| 01 - 31 Dec 2012 | Torkham | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 249 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 249 | 249 |
| | Spin Boldak | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 321 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 321 | 321 |
| Total | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 570 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 570 | 570 |
| 01 Jan - 31 Dec 2012 | Torkham | 14 | 28 | 26 | 54 | 1,871 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 1,896 | 1,950 |
| | Spin Boldak | 4 | 6 | 6 | 12 | 5,722 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5,722 | 5,734 |
| Total | | 18 | 34 | 32 | 66 | 7,593 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 7,618 | 7,684 |

UNHCR would like to extend its deep appreciation for the support and generous contribution of the following donors to its operation in Afghanistan 2012

