



ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN

MINISTRY OF REFUGEES AND REPATRIATION

**COMPREHENSIVE VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION AND REINTEGRATION
STRATEGY**

AUGUST 2015

1. Background

Following years of civil war, insecurity and destruction in Afghanistan, over a quarter of Afghanistan's population sought refuge and safety in neighboring countries – primarily the Islamic Republics of Pakistan (GoP) and Iran (GIRI). With peace gradually returning to large parts of the country, since 2002 Afghanistan has witnessed the world's largest repatriation. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GoIRA) has welcomed back over 5.8 million refugee returnees from Pakistan, Iran and other host countries further afield. Representing an important segment of society and contributing to the growth of Afghanistan's economy with skills gained abroad, targeted interventions for returnees can facilitate and expedite their return and successful reintegration into local communities and markets.

In his inaugural address, His Excellency President Ashraf Ghani highlighted the need for balanced and inclusive development across the country as a prerequisite for ending the 'national refugee problem,' noting that unless all refugees returned home, the Afghan nation would remain incomplete. Central to this effort, he noted, was the need to place vulnerable and marginalized groups, including women and children, at the core of development planning and engagement. He expressed his aspiration to eliminate the word 'displacement' from Afghanistan's vocabulary within five years. He has noted on several occasions, including in discussions with neighboring hosting countries, that voluntary repatriation and reintegration of Afghan refugees is an important priority for the new government at the highest levels, which was fully reflected in the joint communique following the London Conference on Afghanistan in December 2014. Similarly, the Chief Executive of the National Unity Government of Afghanistan, His Excellency Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, has on several occasions, including regular cabinet meetings, expressed the Unity Government's intention to strengthen interventions on behalf of returnees, including the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees, to end the protracted situation of Afghan refugees in exile.

Despite the relative success of the voluntary repatriation operation over the past 13 years, millions of refugees remain in regional hosting countries, including an estimated 1.5 million registered Afghan refugees in Pakistan and nearly one million registered Afghan refugees in Iran. In addition to the refugee population, an estimated 2.4 million Afghans are thought to reside in neighboring countries, including approximately one million in Pakistan and some 1.4 million in Iran.¹ The majority of those remaining in neighboring host countries have been displaced for thirty years or more, with second and third generations of children born in exile with few links to their ancestral country and extremely weak support networks and coping mechanisms in place to facilitate their successful reintegration in Afghanistan. Moreover, the urban character of asylum in Iran and Pakistan, and subsequent changes in livelihood strategies and aspirations for the future, make return to rural areas of origin unrealistic for many families and will require a balanced approach in the provision of reintegration assistance and support in both urban and rural areas of return. While the development challenges for urban and rural return are often distinct, there is little doubt that returnee families face unique obstacles in settling in new communities and accessing services. **Irrespective of their legal status in neighboring host countries, the Government is fully committed to creating the conditions conducive to the safe return and sustainable reintegration of all Afghans currently abroad. Addressing the unique vulnerabilities of returnees in a coordinated and comprehensive manner is at the heart of this proposed strategy. The Government of Afghanistan's Comprehensive Voluntary Repatriation and Reintegration Strategy foresees a special status of returnees for a period of two years, during which they will receive preferential access to social services and priority inclusion in individual and community-based**

¹ The GoIRI, in cooperation with the GoIRA issued the 1.4 million Afghans with passports and visas, while the estimated one million in Pakistan are not in possession of legal identity documents.

development initiatives. The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation will advocate for this status, based on the Voluntary Repatriation Form (VRF), with all relevant government entities.²

Notwithstanding improvements in some areas, the overall security situation in Afghanistan remains volatile and unpredictable. Ongoing military actions, fighting among anti-government elements (AGEs), or the sustained influence of AGEs in certain parts of the country will likely impact return decisions and prospects for reintegration. In addition, the secondary effects of insecurity must be taken into account: some areas currently experiencing some degree of population displacement may, as a result, have more limited absorption capacity for returnees. In order to avoid the possibility of secondary displacement, therefore, it is necessary to carefully consider overall numbers and patterns of return. MoRR plans to work closely with the governments of both Pakistan and Iran in order to collect data regarding the profile and intended places of return for the refugee population, in order to formulate a plan for return that targets places of return where returnees are most likely to be successfully reintegrated. MoRR will also continue to advocate with relevant line ministries to channel needed services to areas of high return and with the neighboring host countries for preservation of asylum until security conditions permit safe, sustainable and voluntary return.

The voluntary return of nearly twenty percent of the known population over the past thirteen years has placed unprecedented stress on Afghanistan's natural resources, economic opportunities, and urban environments. Monitoring of refugee returnees has shown that a significant percentage of returnees who initially return to their villages of origin end up migrating to larger cities within two years of their arrival in Afghanistan, due to economic factors, lack of services, or a resurgence of conflict. The eventual voluntary return of millions of Afghans currently in the region will place added stress on already over-stretched social services and will require a coordinated effort among Afghanistan's government ministries and development and humanitarian actors. The limited availability of humanitarian and development funding will require strategic prioritization of initiatives, ideally based on the cascading concerns of refugees, and alignment of existing development frameworks to avoid duplication and maximize potential impact. Achieving the sustainable return for remaining Afghans who wish to voluntarily repatriate from the neighboring countries would ideally require the following:

- Peace and security in the areas of refugee origin;
- 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;
- Continued support of refugee-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.

During a Tripartite Commission meeting on Afghan refugees between the governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Islamabad in March 2015 as well as bilateral consultations between the two governments on undocumented Afghans, the GoIRA committed itself to developing a comprehensive voluntary repatriation and reintegration strategy. Following a year of complex transitions, 2015 presents an opportune moment for the development of a comprehensive return and reintegration strategy that will provide strategic vision and guidance to entities providing assistance and support to returnees in Afghanistan.

² Note: the GoIRA intends pursue an agreement to register and facilitate the return of undocumented Afghans with the Government of Pakistan. Identity documents provided under such an MOU could provide the basis for a special vulnerability status for the return of currently undocumented Afghans. The VRF applies only to returning registered refugees.

Outlining concrete solutions for returnees in Afghanistan, the strategy underscores the GoIRA's determination to end displacement from and within Afghanistan. Developed in alignment with existing national development and regional policy frameworks, this comprehensive voluntary repatriation and reintegration strategy aims primarily to facilitate the voluntary, safe, gradual and dignified repatriation of Afghan refugees and their sustainable reintegration into local communities in Afghanistan.

2. The policy framework: an integrated approach to voluntary repatriation and reintegration

Voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan and Iran is governed by Tripartite Agreements (TPA) between the Governments of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and UNHCR, as well as Afghanistan, Iran, and UNHCR. The 25th Tripartite Commission meeting between the Governments of the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan and Pakistan and UNHCR was held in Islamabad, Pakistan on 11 March 2015. The three parties reaffirmed their commitment to the principle of voluntary repatriation, in safety and dignity, to end the protracted Afghan refugee situation and urged that intensified efforts should be undertaken to create an enabling environment for voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration.

Recognizing the complexity of registered refugee issues still 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 (SSAR)***, 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 Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees 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 Government of Afghanistan's national repatriation and reintegration strategy.

The SSAR is structured around three main components: creating conditions conducive for voluntary repatriation through community-based investments in areas of high return; building livelihood opportunities in Afghanistan to facilitate return; and preserving asylum space in host countries including through enhanced support to refugee hosting communities, alternative and temporary stay arrangements for the residual caseload and resettlement in third countries.

As a regional framework with country-specific elements, the SSAR provides an entry point for the development of a national strategy for repatriation and reintegration. In particular, the SSAR provides a useful platform for exchange between the GoIRA, GIRI and GoP on return and reintegration issues at the sub-regional level. At the national level, the SSAR – through a provision in the Quadripartite Steering Committee³'s terms of references suggesting the establishment of National Steering Committees (NSC) in all three countries – provides a forum for exchange, as well as joint planning and programming between relevant line ministries to facilitate comprehensive planning of interventions. As the newly-established inter-governmental structures regulating repatriation and reintegration take shape, MORR will play a critical coordination role in ensuring national development initiatives fit within the regional SSAR.

2.1 National structures and strategies to address return and reintegration

³ The Quadripartite Steering Committee (QSC) consists of the GoIRA, GIRI, GoP and UNHCR.

High-Level Commission on Migration (HCM)

Following the MORR's recommendation, the President authorized the establishment of the High Commission for Migration (HCM). In April 2015 the Cabinet approved the HCM. The HCM is a high-level governmental entity headed by the President and responsible for decision-making on national policies and programmes in relation to refugees/migrants, returnees and IDPs. The HCM met for the first time on 22 June 2015. A Sub-committee of Ministers, headed by the Chief Executive and consisting of Minister and Directors-General of independent Directorates who are members of the HCM, is responsible for operationalizing the decisions approved by the HCM, Cabinet and council of Ministers on issues related to refugees/migrants.

Emphasizing the importance of a unified approach to finding lasting solutions for refugees, IDPs and returnees, the HCM signals the National Unity Government's resolve to end long-standing situations of displacement. By providing a forum for high-level inter-ministerial exchange on displacement, the HCM has already firmly placed displacement issues on the agenda of the Government. In the coming months, the HCM will act as the principal forum for the discussion of strategic, as well as practical, displacement-related issues.

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has developed **22 National Priority Programmes (NPPs)**. Many, if not the majority, of these NPPs are critical to the success of refugee return and reintegration, including education, health, water, rural development and institutional capacity-building. MoRR is working closely with the line ministries to ensure that the needs of returning refugees and of communities in high-return areas are prioritized and addressed within the relevant NPPs. MoRR has signed MOUs with each of the ministries involved, and in the future will also seek to raise issues relevant to the concerns of returnees in the context of the NPP clusters. Furthermore, MoRR will engage with development actors such as the World Bank, JICA, USAID, NGOs, INGOs, and UN agencies, who have complementary programmes that play major role in addressing the reintegration needs of returning refugees.

2.2 Translating the policy framework into concerted action

While the plethora of national development-related initiatives is both welcome and indicative of broad and high-level support, these initiatives are not yet harmonized with the Government of Afghanistan's reform priorities in relation to refugees/migrants and returnees. The strategy is based on the following broad objectives:

- Continuation of the voluntary repatriation mechanisms currently in place, which provide immediate cash assistance, vaccinations and health checks, the provision of vital information on services, and monitoring of destination intentions and expectations;
- An **Enhanced Voluntary Return and Reintegration Package (EVRRP)** to incentivize return and allow families to better re-establish themselves through the phased provision of cash over a six month period (to be complemented by other forms of reintegration assistance);
- Improved coordination and buy-in regarding returnee development needs through strengthened coordination with technical line ministries including, inter alia, the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, the Ministry of Urban Development, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Public Health, and the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled;
- Increased understanding of the unique vulnerabilities of returnee households and official recognition of returnees as entitled to priority programming and access to social services;
- Improved linkages to markets and livelihood programmes and opportunities that reflect the skills developed and resources accumulated by Afghans in exile;
- Integration of repatriation and reintegration needs in existing development platforms and strategies;

- Increased targeting of appropriate development assistance to areas of chosen settlement among returning refugees, whether urban settings or rural villages of origin;
- Prioritization of programme interventions based on the identified needs/concerns of returnees as well as refugees and undocumented Afghans remaining in neighboring countries;
- Increased flexibility to adjust programmes to reflect different beneficiary needs and priorities in urban and rural settings, which are likely to differ;
- Preservation of the rights of refugees and migrants to make their own decisions regarding repatriation in conditions of safety and dignity, based on objective information regarding conditions in areas of intended return.

3. Voluntary return

Voluntary repatriation planning figure for 2016: 100,000 – 150,000 refugees. During the Tripartite and Quadripartite meetings held in Islamabad and Tehran during the first half of 2015, the parties reaffirmed their commitments to the gradual return of refugees based on the absorption capacity in Afghanistan. The projected figure for 2016 is the return of 100,000 – 150,000 registered Afghan refugees from Pakistan and Iran. This projection, which represents a significant increase from the original projection for 2015 (which is likely to reach 100,000), is based on the following assumptions:

- Continued support for the Government of National Unity;
- Continued localized violence and insecurity due to conflict with anti-government elements in areas of refugee origin, including parts of the North, Northeast, and South, will continue to deter large numbers of refugees from returning;
- Successful implementation of the MoRR Strategy for Voluntary Repatriation and Reintegration, including increased access to services based on accepted vulnerability status of recent returnees, may lead to a modest increase in voluntary repatriation in 2016;
- Absorption capacity within Afghanistan will continue to be stretched in urban areas and areas of potential high return, necessitating the continuation of a relatively gradual voluntary repatriation exercise.

Assisted refugee return by province of destination – 01 Jan 2014 – 29 July 2015				
Expected refugee return during Aug and Dec 2015				
Province	Individuals 2014 (01 Jan - 31 Dec)	Individuals 2015 (01 Jan - 29 Jul)	Expected return (Individuals) 01 Aug – 31 Dec 2015 *	Total return including expected returnees by the end of 2015 *
A	B	C	D	C+D
Ghazni	321	276	300	576
Kabul	3,610	7,953	12,500	20,453
Kapisa	37	53	100	153
Logar	285	5,509	1,200	6,709
Panjsher	50	38	100	138
Parwan	165	692	500	1,192
Wardak	158	232	200	432
Bamyan	210	106	50	156
Daykundi	49	46	50	96
Kunar	111	607	5,000	5,607
Laghman	427	1,317	2,500	3,817

Nangarhar	1,826	6,882	11,000	17,882
Nuristan	1	0	30	30
Balkh	820	1,634	2,000	3,634
Faryab	252	743	400	1,143
Jawzjan	510	956	800	1,756
Samangan	76	344	200	544
Sar-e-Pul	623	688	600	1,288
Badakhshan	102	56	40	96
Baghlan	727	3,180	2,500	5,680
Kunduz	1,892	5,831	5,500	11,331
Takhar	313	817	700	1,517
Hilmand	651	341	1,500	1,841
Kandahar	1,513	977	2,200	3,177
Uruzgan	25	50	30	80
Zabul	111	102	150	252
Khost	114	771	300	1,071
Paktika	29	83	30	113
Paktya	519	3,340	1,500	4,840
Badghis	43	189	10	199
Farah	201	228	400	628
Ghor	10	3	30	33
Herat	1,208	1,032	2,400	3,430
Nimroz	6	56	50	106
Total	16,995	45,132	54,870	100,000

* This figure is based on an extrapolation of assisted refugee returnees between Aug and Dec 2012, which was similar to 2015 trends to date. Given the spontaneous nature of the return of undocumented Afghans, it is difficult to make accurate projections. However, based on recent trends, it is assumed that approximately 50,000 – 100,000 undocumented Afghans may voluntarily return from Iran and Pakistan.

3.1 Voluntary repatriation modalities

Facilitated individual return of registered refugees:

In accordance with the Tripartite Agreements with respective neighboring host countries, registered Afghan refugees wishing to return from Pakistan and Iran to Afghanistan under the voluntary repatriation programme approach UNHCR's Voluntary Repatriation Centers (VRCs) in the host country to register for return and sign a Voluntary Repatriation Form (VRF). An exit interview is carried out to record any protection and/or security concerns that the family might have faced or foresee, besides the main reason(s) for return. Information regarding persons with specific needs is noted in the VRF for the attention of staff in the Encashment Center. The VRCs offer overnight stay facilities and basic health services. Each returnee vehicle is provided with a complaint token to report any incident or problem faced by returnee families en route from the VRC to the border. This token has to be surrendered to the border monitors at the border crossing points and at the Voluntary Repatriation Centers. Information about the voluntary repatriation process and conditions in Afghanistan is disseminated through media campaigns, Shura (consultative) meetings and distribution of information leaflets in order to help refugees make an informed decision on return.

Upon return to Afghanistan, returnees are assisted through one of the five Encashment Centers (ECs) managed by MoRR/DoRR and UNHCR. At the ECs, returnees receive approximately USD 200 per person. This return cash assistance consists of a transportation grant (between USD 30 and 70, depending on the distance from the area of

departure in the host country to the area of origin in Afghanistan), and a short-term integration grant of USD 150. Returning refugees are further briefed on mine awareness, access to legal aid and education procedures in Afghanistan, and can benefit from transit facilities for overnight stay and basic health services. All children under the age of five are vaccinated against polio and measles. These services are described in more detail below.

Returnees from other neighboring and non-neighboring countries may benefit from transportation assistance (air ticket/terminal expenses) and reintegration grants paid in the ECs. Some host countries provide additional assistance, including educational grants, vocational training, and supplementary reintegration grants. MoRR will continue to negotiate with the host countries to ensure that, pending repatriation, refugees who plan to return voluntarily to Afghanistan benefit from such services in the host country that will help enable them to successfully reintegrate, given that they may have been out of the country for long periods of time and may lack close ties within Afghanistan.

MoRR, to promote livelihood-related pull-factors to cities and empower returnee decision-making regarding livelihood and sustainable settlement, is developing a pilot **Enhanced Voluntary Return and Reintegration Package (EVRRP), in collaboration with the neighboring governments and UNHCR**. Complementary to the broader efforts of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to create incentives for return and conditions conducive for sustainable reintegration, the EVRRP pilot will provide a significantly increased cash grant in two installments over a period of six months, to facilitate voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration which will help to:

- Incentivize return and anchor returnees by strengthening their coping mechanisms throughout the initial return period and kick-starting their reintegration process;
- Empower beneficiaries, who will have the needed flexibility to prioritize and self-direct the received financial assistance according to their individual needs, whether in rural or urban areas, i.e. to access basic services (land, housing, education, health), and/or in support of self-reliance upon return (business start-up, small entrepreneurial activities, purchase of productive/livelihood assets, etc.);
- Bring subsequent dividends for local economies and communities by injecting the received assistance into local markets. This can further facilitate greater interactions between returnees and local communities, increase economic ties and social cohesion and reduce tensions, especially during the early stages of return often marked by competition over meagre resources;

Services in the Encashment Centers (ECs): ECs are the first point of contact with returnees in Afghanistan. All the ECs are managed by the Department of Refugees and Repatriation (DoRR) and UNHCR and, as part of this strategy, a review of all services currently provided in the ECs will be conducted in 2015 by MoRR and UNHCR with a view to ensuring that all line ministries are actively engaged. Other partners are also present in the center providing a number of services:

Activity	Responsible Agency	Description
Cash grant distribution	MoRR/UNHCR	Verification, cash calculation and data entry are carried out jointly by DoRR and UNHCR or UNHCR partner. This assistance helps returnees to pay their transportation costs, and also provides a short-term reintegration grant to enable them to cover necessary household items, food or other pressing needs they may require upon arrival
Returnee monitoring	DoRR and UNHCR/UNHCR partner	Monitoring at the Encashment Centers 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	Mine risk education consists of a short briefing about the presence of mines and other unexploded ordinance 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	The back-to-school campaign provides returnees with information about the process of enrolling children in schools in Afghanistan, including procedures for transferring school credits earned in exile. <i>For effectiveness of the program it is also important to have MoE representatives specifically dealing with certification of education documents to record all returnees' children in a database. The database could be shared with all provincial departments on a weekly basis to help the education certification process.</i>
Polio and measles vaccination	Ministry of Public Health supported by WHO and UNICEF	All returnee children under five years of age receive vaccination against polio and measles.
Basic health care	UNHCR through partners	Returnees in need of immediate health care interventions are assisted at the EC or, if necessary, transferred to the provincial hospital
Identification of persons with specific needs (PSN)	DoRR and UNHCR/UNHCR partner	Vulnerable families and individuals (including disabled, female headed households, unaccompanied or separated children, and others) are identified and referred to relevant services provider for necessary assistance and follow-up.

Facilitated group return (FGR) of registered refugees:

In certain situations, groups of refugee families may wish to return together to the same location.⁴ At the 25th Tripartite Commission meeting, the Governments of Afghanistan, Pakistan and UNHCR agreed to jointly explore the modalities for facilitated group return. These group of returns generally fall into two categories:

- **Category A:** Those family groups who are currently living in settlements or rural areas, particularly in Pakistan. They may have specific concern about their province or district of origin, such as lack of land and shelter, access to drinking water, schools and health clinics. This group may also have concerns about lack of livelihoods in the long term.
- **Category B:** Groups who normally make up the urban refugee caseload in both Pakistan and Iran. The top priority for families in this category is livelihoods and access to land for shelter. Normally they prefer to return to urban and semi urban areas where absorption capacity is very limited or there is no space for new arrivals.

For both categories (A&B), the adoption of a more pro-active, solution-oriented approach of facilitated group return (FGR) may be suggested. FGR aims to support families to return based on the guarantees offered by the Afghan authorities, UNHCR and other concerned stakeholders. UNHCR offices in Pakistan have already identified nearly 20 groups this year who have expressed interest in group return if their requirements such as land, shelter, water and access to health and education services are met upon return in their areas of origin or destination.

⁴ There are approximately 12 groups (comprised of 20-600 families each) who originate primarily from Nangarhar and Kunar provinces in the East and are awaiting facilitated group repatriation, if specific reintegration conditions are met.

MoRR will coordinate the provision of immediate assistance and longer-term services with concerned entities and line ministries.

Creation of positive “pull factors”:

FGR can be implemented effectively through the creation of sustainable “pull factors” in Afghanistan. MoRR, together with line ministries and relevant UN Agencies under the auspices of the SSAR, will coordinate the following activities:

- Addressing protection concerns in areas where these are the main obstacles to return.
- Re-directing Government, UNHCR, and other NGO and development actors’ assistance (shelter, water, coexistence projects, etc.) to areas where refugee groups in the neighboring host countries have expressed an interest in returning.
- Job creation initiatives specifically including returnees, including in areas to which groups wish to return and linking them to development programmes, micro-finance institutions and vocation training initiatives.
- Addressing the problem of landlessness, by:
 - enlisting the support of central and provincial authorities for land distribution to returnees and revising the land allocation Decree 104 to enable land distribution for returnees who may choose not to return to their areas of origin;
 - finding solutions to the issue of land which has been previously allocated but is not being used by the owners;
 - Including land reform on the agenda of the HCM, to ensure an integrated approach to a complex policy issue.

3.2 Increased mass information campaigns for refugees – additional go-and-see / come-and-tell visits:

A cornerstone of voluntary repatriation is the ability to make an informed decision, based on accurate and, if possible, firsthand information on conditions in areas of origin or intended return, including; security, access to services, livelihood prospects, and available humanitarian assistance.

- One method through which information reaches the refugee communities is go-and-see visits, during which MoRR, in cooperation with UNHCR, facilitates representatives from a refugee community in travelling to their place of origin or intended return to observe for themselves if the conditions conducive to sustainable return are in place. The participating representatives also have the opportunity to meet with local governmental officials and other stakeholders in order to ask questions or convey requests for assistance on return. Following the visit, these representatives are able to convey this information to refugee communities in order to further the goal of informed, fully voluntary return. For general information regarding return, MoRR, in cooperation with relevant line ministries and UNHCR, produces information leaflets detailing the processes for enrolling children in schools, accessing health services, applying to MoRR’s land allocation scheme, finding job opportunities, and participating in UNHCR’s shelter programme, among other basic services. Given the difficulty faced by refugee communities with low literacy rates, MoRR also plans to produce brief television and radio segments containing key messages on return.

- MoRR, in cooperation with UNHCR, arranges come-and-tell visits, during which MoRR and UNHCR will facilitate visits to refugee communities by district or provincial authorities, Community Development Councils (CDCs) and local shura members and goodwill ambassadors to explain GoIRA's plans for return areas and to share success stories from other returnees.
- In addition to formally-arranged visits, there is a need for flexibility in the return process which would allow heads of household or individual family members to return to communities of origin or destination in Afghanistan for a trial period without surrendering Amayesh (Iran) or Proof of Registration (Pakistan) cards before making final decisions regarding return. MoRR recognizes that return is a dynamic process for families, and the policy framework will provide maximum flexibility to allow refugees to make difficult and highly personal decisions regarding return.
- Targeted mass information, with an increased regional or provincial focus, to highlight different circumstances in areas of potential return and settlement, will help refugees make informed decisions regarding repatriation. The flow of improved mass information will be facilitated through provincial DoRRs and their counterparts in refugee camps and areas of settlement in countries of asylum.

3.3 Comprehensive profiling of Afghan refugees:

For effective implementation of FGR, a more comprehensive and precise profiling of the Afghan refugee population in the host countries may be required.

- MoRR with the support of UNHCR will conduct a review of the existing Population Profiling, Verification and Response (PPVR) survey⁵ data on the Afghan populations in Pakistan and existing Amayesh data Iran, to determine whether additional surveys of refugee intentions are required. Any surveys to be undertaken should aim to capture information about return intentions, obstacles to return, places of origin, intended areas of return, education, vocational skills/livelihoods, and socio-economic profile.
- A better understanding of the population of potential returnees will help to facilitate creation of programmes and initiation of development activities likely to have the most substantial impact on return, as well as more targeted interventions that may create conditions which would allow FGR.

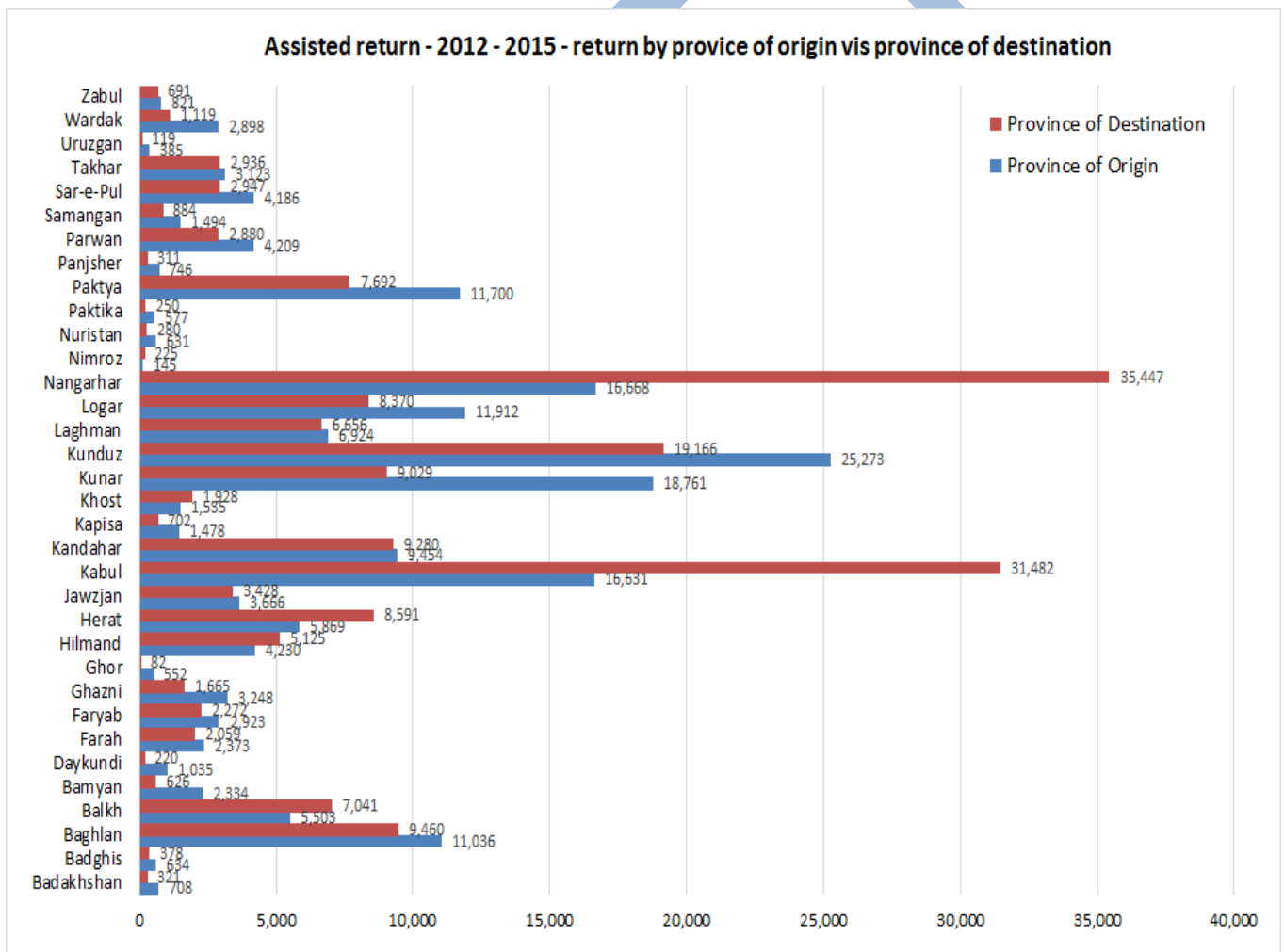
4. Respecting the settlement choices of returning refugees: urban vs. rural returns

Increased urbanization is by no means a phenomenon limited to Afghanistan, but rather a global trend with far-reaching consequences. Irrespective of efforts to improve access to services in rural areas, MoRR assumes that the urbanization trend among returnees will likely continue in the coming years. The Ministry therefore sees its engagement with entities active in urban areas as a key priority for the next 2-3 years, to ensure that the foundation for adequate and systematic assistance to returnees in urban areas is laid. MoRR is working with the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, Ministry for Urban Development, the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, the Independent Directorate of Arazi (land authority), the Independent Board for New Kabul, and the Independent Directorate for Local Governance to identify plots of unused land within townships which could be reactivated and to look at other innovative options including affordable housing (apartment buildings which could be distributed to returnees to pay the cost in installments) to support returnees. In parallel, MoRR is cooperating closely with UNHCR and international technical agencies to identify particularly vulnerable returnees in need of shelter assistance in urban areas.

⁵ Survey of Afghans in Pakistan undertaken in 2010 – 2011.

Although the vast majority of returnees originate from rural areas of Afghanistan, returnees have cited a range of reasons for not returning to their place of origin. Reasons include lack of housing (49%), perceived insecurity (32%), lack of land (16%), lack of job opportunities (38%) and lack of public/basic services (54%)⁶. Several studies cite severe difficulties faced by families attempting to reestablish themselves, with some estimates suggesting that about 40 per cent of returnees struggle to fully reintegrate upon return.⁷ Monitoring of refugee returnees has shown that a significant percentage of returnees who initially return to their villages of origin end up migrating to larger cities within two years of their arrival in Afghanistan. Other challenges experienced by returnees in rural areas include continued insecurity, conflict, drought, limited livelihood opportunities, rising food prices, limited access to basic services (water, health, education, electricity), inadequate shelter and challenges with land tenure.⁸

MoRR has noted that a large number of returns that have taken place between 2002 and late 2014 have been directed towards Kabul province, reflecting returnees' perceptions of their increased ability to address their needs in urban areas rather than their areas of origin.⁹ Protracted exile and residence in urban areas in the host country has in some cases meant that refugees have not only lost vital linkages back home, but also the necessary skills to make a sustainable living in a rural environment. Refugee returnees surveyed in 2013 indicated that while over 80



⁶ Please refer to the UNHCR Voluntary return and border monitoring monthly update covering the period 01 January 2015 – 30 April 2015.

⁷ See, for instance, *Livelihoods, Basic Services, and Protection in Afghanistan*. Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit. June 2012

⁸ Returnee monitoring is carried out by UNHCR across the country at community and family levels through phone interviews, home visits, focus group discussions and exit phone interviews with returnees randomly selected in the five Encashment Centers upon arrival in Afghanistan. This exercise helps to identify protection issues, assistance needs and gaps, coping mechanisms which provide a useful base for further interventions to ensure the sustainable return of refugees to their communities of origin or chosen settlement.

⁹ Please see the 'Assisted Voluntary Repatriation to Afghanistan: Return by Province of destination, 02 March 2002 - 31 December 2014' map produced by UNHCR Afghanistan for the figures and the geographical spread.

per cent originated from rural communities, 46 per cent have returned to urban areas – well over half the returning rural population.¹⁰ It is important to note that these figures represent only a small proportion of movements to urban areas – the actual figure including secondary movements to, or residence in urban areas (including district and province capitals as well as the national capital, Kabul) is likely to be much higher.

Despite considerable effort to strengthen access to services and livelihoods in rural areas, including through targeted advocacy with line ministries such as MRRD and the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, rural development initiatives have thus far failed to stem the tide of settlement in urban areas. Therefore, MoRR will develop and implement a reintegration strategy in order to address rural vs. urban settlement preferences through:

- Improved understanding of the different challenges facing urban and rural returnees and adjust program interventions according to priorities;
- Ensure that return to rural communities of origin is a viable option through improved development assistance (as outlined in the SSAR project portfolio for Afghanistan)¹¹ that reflects the concerns of returnees and potential returnees;
- Empower returnee decision-making and support local economies through the piloting of the EVRRP;
- Continued respect for the right of Afghan returnees to settle in areas of their choice.

5. Support for the return of undocumented Afghans in neighboring countries:

There are an estimated 2.4 million Afghans living in neighboring countries who do not have formal status and, in recent years, have constituted the largest group of returning Afghans, either through deportations or decisions to spontaneously return. Since 2007, there have been approximately 200,000-300,000 Afghans deported from Iran and Pakistan per year.

Border Crossing Points	Spontaneous Returnees	Deportees	Total	Returnees in Humanitarian Need (40% from Pakistan, 10% from Iran)
Nangarhar - Torkham Border	158,241	15,643	173,884	69,554
Kandahar - Spin Boldak Border	45,808	21,601	67,409	26,964
Herat - Islam Qala Border	342,110	536,339	878,449	87,845
Nimroz - Milak Border	81,919	268,386	350,305	35,031
Khost	21,000	-	21,000	21,000
Totals	628,078	841,969	1,470,047	219,393

Source: International Organization for Migration (IOM)

¹⁰ UNHCR Afghanistan voluntary repatriation statistics for 2013

¹¹ Currently being updated by MoRR and UNHCR

5.1 Trends

An examination of the undocumented returnee figures disaggregated by year and cross-border shows fluctuations from year to year at different border crossings in terms of both spontaneous returns and deportations. A common feature year-on-year is the significant gap between the number of returnees in need of humanitarian assistance and the number of people assisted by the government and international partners due to a lack of available resources. It is significant to note that, because of the amount of time they have generally spent outside of Afghanistan, spontaneous returnees and deportees largely find themselves in similar situations as refugee returnees immediately after return. They are not able to rely on familial or social ties and networks as these have been weakened over the decades the returnees have been living overseas and returnees require similar shelter, non-food items, food, and WASH support.

While the trends in the return of undocumented Afghans has remained fairly constant over time, there are periodic spikes in numbers, often the result of political considerations and events in the neighbouring countries. For instance, in the context of Pakistan's National Action Plan on Counter-Terrorism, there has been a significant and well-documented spike in the number of undocumented returns from Pakistan in late 2014 and the first 6 months of 2015. Over 81,500 undocumented Afghans returned or were deported from Pakistan through Torkham border crossing, which is almost triple the number of returns through the same border in all of 2014. Again, despite periodic spikes in numbers, the trends have remained relatively constant.

2015 Projections for undocumented Afghans			
BCPs	Spontaneous Returnees & Deportees Jan - Jun 2015	2015 HRP Figures of People in Need	Current Assistance Capacity in 2015
Nangarhar - Torkham Border	81,509	65,208	21,300
Kandahar - Spin Boldak Border	9,949	-	-
Herat - Islam Qala Border	166,376	33,275	3,982
Nimroz - Milak Border	76,731	15,347	1,320
Khost	-	14,000	8,049
Totals	334,565	127,830	34,651

Source: IOM

While the situation of the nearly 500,000 Afghans in Iran has improved following the issuance of passports and visa procedures in 2012, still some one million undocumented Afghans in Iran and around one million undocumented Afghans in Pakistan are ineligible for assistance normally accorded to refugees to facilitate repatriation and reintegration and are vulnerable to deportation, among other problems. The Government of Afghanistan has currently entered into negotiations with Pakistan to: 1. Register undocumented Afghans currently residing in Pakistan; 2. Issue passports and other travel documents based on the registration; and 3. Plan for their voluntary, gradual and safe return to Afghanistan.

The following services are provided at the reception and transit centers:

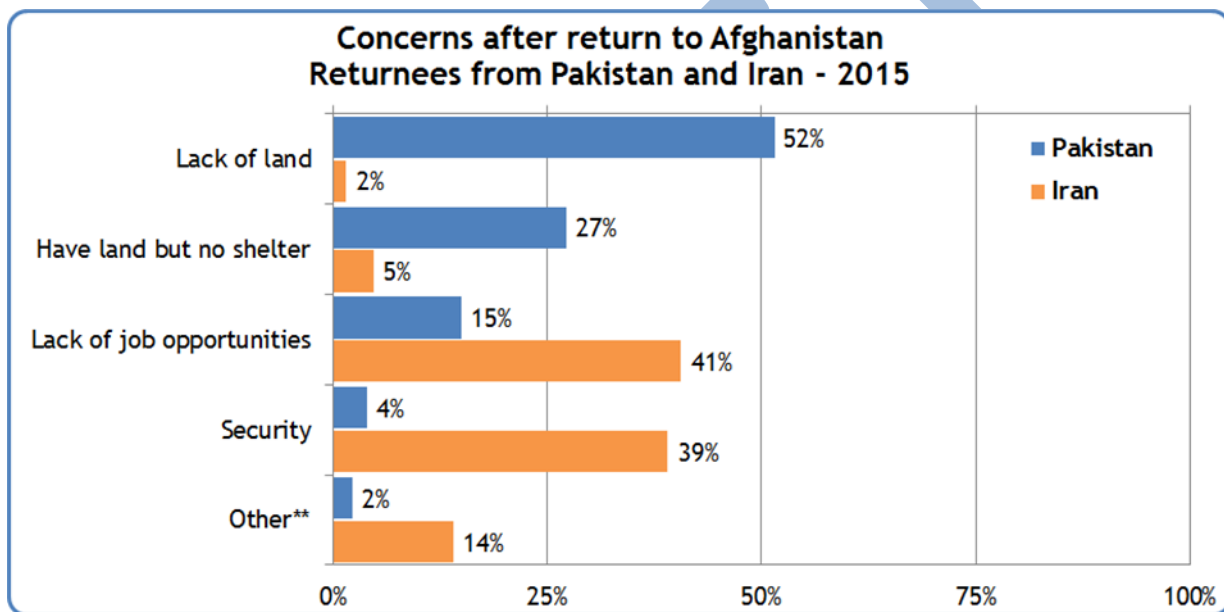
Activity	Responsible Agency	Description
Registration (at reception centers)	MoRR/DoRRs	All undocumented returnees and deportees are registered by DoRR staff <i>upon arrival at reception center in zero point (Torkham, Islam Qala and Zaranj)</i> . This registration aimed to identify vulnerable cases (persons with specific needs) for necessary assistance. Beneficiary cards are provided to those meeting the criteria. Transport of arrivals from the border to a transit center
Screening (at reception centers)	DoRR with partners	DoRR and partner organizations screen the registered undocumented returnees and deportees to identify persons with specific needs (PSN) for referral. ¹²
Food and NFIs distribution (at the transit center)	DoRR with partners	All vulnerable cases are provided with one-time food and NFIs.
Basic health screening (at the transit center)	IOM	Those in need of immediate health care interventions, particularly suspected tuberculosis cases, are assisted at the transit center or, if necessary, transported to the provincial hospital.
Family tracing and reunification	CPAN/Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA), partners	Unaccompanied minors among the undocumented returnees and deportees are referred to social service providers for family tracing and reunification
Transportation assistance	IOM	Vulnerable undocumented returnees and deportees from Iran are provided with a transportation grant (USD 20 – 48 per person). Those from Pakistan are referred to a transportation company to transport them up to their place of destination.
Referral system for reintegration services	DoRR with partners	Undocumented returnees and have access to the DoRR's Reintegration Information Centers to receive further information and referral for reintegration assistance and other social services.

All services which are required for reintegration will be provided for undocumented returnees. The experience of last years has demonstrated that undocumented deportees often attempt to immediately return to the country of deportation rather than remain in Afghanistan. Provision of housing and other services required for reintegration is not possible for undocumented deportees who lack documentation. Therefore, the GoIRA routinely advocates with host countries to reconsider their forced deportation policies, which have proven ineffective and a waste of human and financial resources.

¹² Persons with specific needs are defined by MoRR, IOM and UNHCR as: unaccompanied minors; unaccompanied elderly; medical cases; drug addicts; special cases; physically disabled; mentally ill or severely traumatized; single females; chronically ill; single parents; or poor families.

6. Respecting returnee decisions, fostering sustainable refugee return

Nearly six million Afghan refugees have returned voluntarily in the last 13 years. Though this repatriation process made an important political, economic and social contribution to the success of the Bonn Agreement, it simultaneously 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. The pace of return must be matched by the capacity of the areas of intended return to absorb and integrate returnees. Most importantly, programme interventions and extension of social services should align with the expressed concerns of refugees, and allow for different approaches and prioritization of activities in rural or urban environments. Lastly, to foment continued interest in voluntary repatriation to Afghanistan, returnee reintegration needs must be included in the larger development agenda and planning processes, with due regard given to the well-documented vulnerabilities as a result of prolonged displacement.



Graph 4: Concerns raised by refugee returnees after return – source: Returnee Monitoring in the Encashment Centers

6.1 Livelihoods: current situation

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. Distinctions can be found, however, in how livelihoods are prioritized among those intending to return to rural areas of origin versus those hoping to resettle in urban contexts, which will necessitate different prioritization strategies. For the former, 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 to returnees to urban areas.

Livelihoods are a key concern and major factor in decisions regarding voluntary return. Afghan refugees in exile have reported their inability to find employment matching their skill set in Afghanistan as one of the main obstacles of return and sustainable reintegration.¹³ At present, unemployment rates remain high in many areas of Afghanistan, particularly for unskilled labour. In other cases, refugees may have acquired education or specific skills

¹³ *Livelihoods, Basic Services, and Protection in Afghanistan*. Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit. June 2012

that do not match the available work opportunities in Afghanistan, often leading to high levels of personal and/or household debt. For instance, a recent study of returnee livelihoods in Nangarhar and Kunar provinces, found that approximately 75% of respondents could not meet their household needs on their current incomes.¹⁴ UNHCR returnee monitoring further supports these claims, with 51% of returnee families reporting that they were currently in debt. Faced with the comparatively high cost of living in Afghan towns and cities, coupled with the insecurity of the informal labour market, a huge majority of Afghan families resort to borrowing money just to be able to afford basic food consumption, let alone pursue investments in healthcare, small-enterprise creation and housing.¹⁵

Recent reintegration studies have highlighted the need for business/enterprise development training, access to credit, vocational training/skills development linked to labour market needs, public works employment programmes, and targeted support to vulnerable households. The GoIRA has announced an initiative to create one million jobs over the course of the next two years, and MoRR is advocating for the inclusion of job quotas for returnees within this programme. The GoIRA will extend its effort in linking with development actors as well as private sector to expand livelihood opportunities in the area of return.

Way forward:

Objectives	Actions	Targets	Timeframe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase self-reliance and sustainability of return through targeted livelihoods projects linked to markets or that fill existing gaps • Priority inclusion in livelihood and Income Generation Activities (IGA) programmes for returnees based on agreed special vulnerability status • MoRR to advocate for the inclusion of returnees into 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ MoRR to coordinate with relevant line ministries and development agencies to target return communities for inclusion in programmes and activities that provide IGA, vocational skills trainings, micro-credit and small enterprise development schemes on a priority basis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establishment of coordination mechanism whereby MoRR ensures inclusion of returnees into GoIRA and other development actors livelihood promotion programmes - Eligible returnees are included in the national priority and development programs in the return areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jan – Dec 2016 - Ongoing process during five years (2016-2020)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ MoRR to ensure that returnees are fully integrated within national development priorities and plans (i.e. UNDAF, NPPs, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of returnees referred to national skills development/vocational training entities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ongoing process during five years (2016-2020)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Piloting of EVRRP to facilitate the re-establishment of families in return areas and facilitate small enterprise development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provision of EVRRP for 100,000¹⁶ returnees/20,000 families in 2016 as pilot phase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jan – Dec 2016
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Continued provision of the repatriation grant (through Encashment Centers) as a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provision of repatriation and short-term integration grant (an average of USD 200 per person) for up 172,000¹⁷ projected returnees, upon arrival, in 2016. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jan – Dec 2016

¹⁴ *Livelihoods Needs Assessment at Returnee Settlements in Nangarhar and Kunar Provinces*. August 2014. International Medical Corps

¹⁵ *Urban Livelihoods in Afghanistan*. Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit. Synthesis Paper Series.

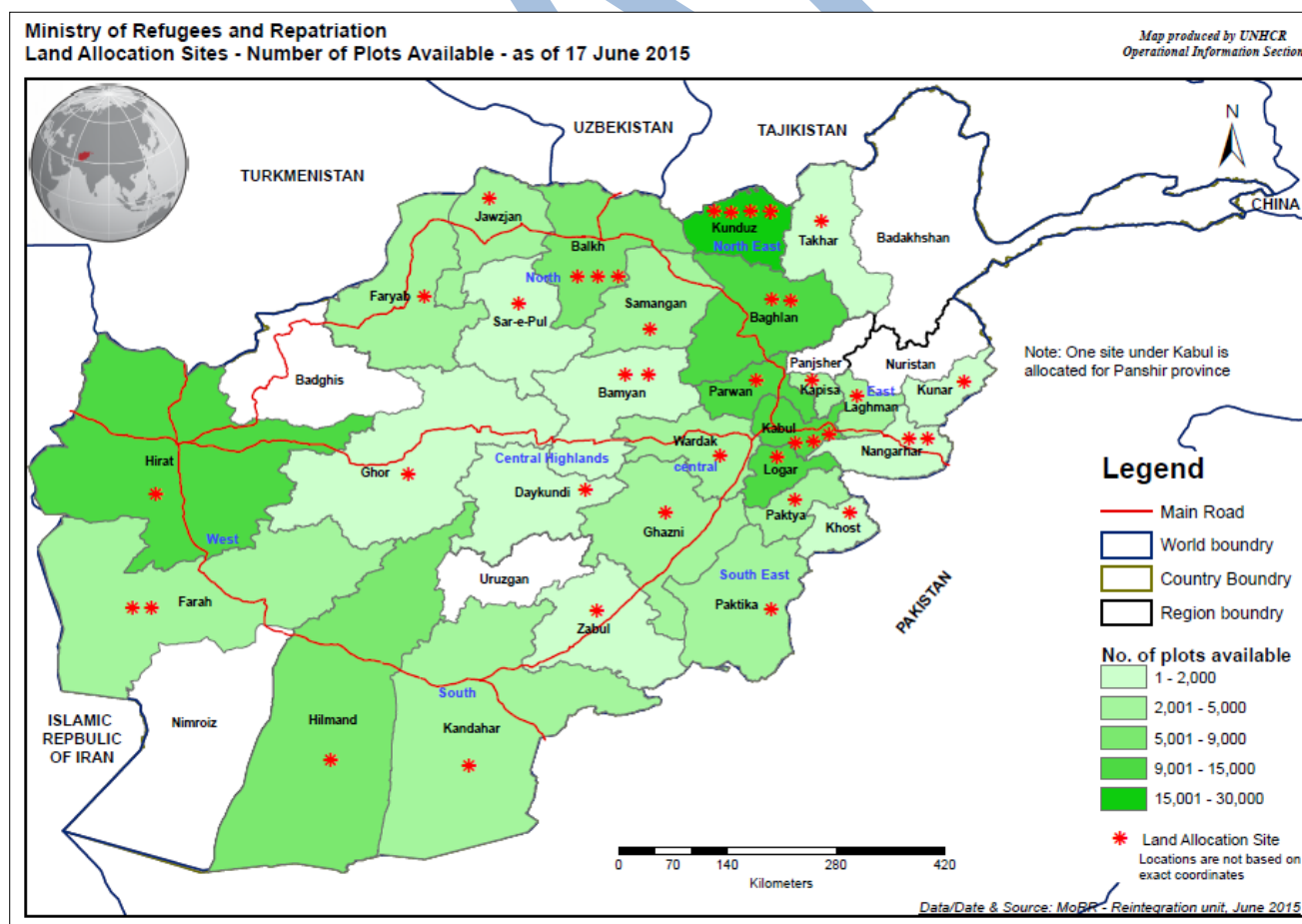
¹⁶ Provision of EVRRP for refugee returns depends on additional funding of this initiative. The Government of Afghanistan will lead a joint resource mobilization effort with the Government of Pakistan and UNHCR.

¹⁷ This figure is the projected number for 2016 from Pakistan, Iran and other countries. Actual return may vary depending on socio-economic /political situation and voluntary decision of refugees in hosting countries. Targeted returnee number for 2017 – 2020 will be discussed and agreed in the Tripartite Commissions.

GoIRA job creation programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link private sector companies with skilled refugee labour to facilitate recruitment through job fairs in host countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> contribution to immediate reintegration needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a mechanism to provide necessary information for returning refugees about the GoIRA job creation programme to enable them to understand about the process, criteria and application process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing process during five years (2016-2020)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work closely with MOLSDM to ensure inclusion of returnees in the Job Creation Program aimed at creating one million jobs in the next 5 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure up to 30,000¹⁸ eligible returnees, per year, are referred and absorbed in the job creation programming across the country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing process during five years (2016-2020)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MORR to coordinate with the Ministry of Education for inclusion of returnees into the Technical and vocational training program MORR to advocate for an expansion of the Employment Services Centers (Ministry of Labour) to facilitate job placement of returnees and potential returnees 		

6.2 Housing, land and property: current situation

Access to land, security of tenure, and property rights remain of serious concern for prospective returnees. Landlessness is almost five times higher among refugees and returnees as compared to the general population, as a result of land grabbing, improper/non-existent documentation, and inheritance issues. Decree 104 guarantees the eligibility of returnees for allocation of land in their place of origin, but in recent years



¹⁸ This figure is also a targeted number and is not a commitment.

allocations have become mired in lengthy administrative procedures that delay or prevent the process from moving forward. The National Unity Government has announced its intention to revise Decree 104 to allow returnees and IDPs to prove that they do not own land (a prerequisite to eligibility for land allocation) more readily, while streamlining the process to allow for allocation of land within three months of return to Afghanistan. GoIRA aims to continue with the land allocation scheme where additional elements including facilities and services such as education, health, sanitation as well as livelihood opportunities can be provided. 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. Therefore, MoRR has simplified the land distribution processes and has communicated these reforms and new procedures to its respective provincial directorates (DoRRs)

Afghans living in exile as well as those who have returned have cited lack of shelter as a serious concern. Although there is no accurate figure for the number of houses and buildings destroyed during three decades of conflict, it is estimated that more than 500,000 homes were either totally or partially damaged. Immediately after their return and many returnees have no choice but to live with their relatives or friends, often in overcrowded conditions. Others are compelled to live in sub-standard public buildings that often lack basic facilities. Since 2002, over 210,000 Afghan returnee families were supported by UNHCR and other humanitarian and development actors to construct homes, benefitting more than one million people.

Housing/Shelter after Return		
<i>Source – UNHCR Refugee Returnee Monitoring – Home Visit Interviews</i>		
Arrangement	Number	%
In a rented house shared with other households	197	33.5%
In owned house	55	9.4%
In a rented single house	109	18.5%
Living with family/relatives	111	18.9%
In owned house shared with other households	63	10.7%
Other	21	3.6%
In a temporary shelter	32	5.4%
Total	588	100.0%

However, shelter programs cannot be effectively utilized to support the sustainable reintegration of many recent returnees in the current context, given that most of the returnees do not have land on which shelters may be built, as noted above. In addition, many returnees opt to settle in urban areas, where land is not available. The majority of 2014 returnees and those returned so far this year opted to go to Kabul, Mazar, Jawzjan, Herat, Jalalabad, or Helmand provincial centers, with these trends continuing in 2015.

Way forward:

Objectives	Actions	Targets	Timeframe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for reform of existing Decree 104 on distribution of land and land tenure laws to facilitate greater inclusion Increase access to land for landless 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ MoRR in coordination and consultation with stakeholders to reform Decree 104 to allow for greater inclusion of returnees, irrespective of province of origin and streamlining of procedures to ensure prompt access to land for landless returnees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PD 104 revised - Land tenure policy developed/revised - Legal assistance in the Encashment Centers is enhanced and aimed to identify returnees with legal problems and referred to legal aid service providers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2016 - 2016 - Ongoing process during five years (2016-2020)

<p>returnees. Pursue new strategies for development of land allocation sites in urban and peri-urban settings particularly in the high return areas with better access to job market</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable returnees to construct or identify suitable, permanent shelter solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ MoRR, in consultation with the Ministry of Urban Development, the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, the Independent Directorate of Arazi (land authorities), the Independent Board for New Kabul, the Independent Directorate for Local Governance and UNHCR, will undertake a review of existing land allocation sites. ✓ MoRR with relevant technical expertise will support affordable housing options (i.e. high-rise apartments vs. traditional dwellings) in urban areas ✓ Continued advocacy is conducted with donors and international stakeholders to support the provision of and improvement to land allocated to returnees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information leaflets on land tenure and land ownership/rent procedures developed and disseminated among returnees and refugees. - Program for affordable housing is devised. - Affordable housing program implemented - Awareness on affordable housing program is promoted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ongoing process during five years (2016-2020) - 2016 - Ongoing process during five years (2016-2020)
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6.3 Access to other basic services: current situation

Lack of access to education, health, water and sanitation, transportation, infrastructure, and legal services make it difficult for returnees to reestablish themselves in Afghanistan and rebuild their lives; in some cases, difficulties in accessing these basic services may lead to secondary movements or even return to neighboring 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.

Way forward:

Objectives	Actions	Targets	Timeframe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved access to basic services, based on technical needs assessments and reflecting Community Development Councils (CDCs) priorities; • Inclusion of returnees in existing social services with preference given based on 'recent returnee' status, and possible waiver of any associated costs 	<p>a) WASH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ MoRR to coordinate/advocate with MRRD, MoPH and other concerned entities to improve access to WASH facilities in rural and urban areas of return (SSAR), including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Establishment of long term water management and irrigation systems in rural areas of return (NSP, rural water/sanitation-type approach; ○ Upgrading of water systems in informal urban environments to include returnees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provision of MoUs with line ministries materialized - Water management and irrigation system in rural areas of return established - Water/sanitation needs of 80% of returnees in rural areas addressed - Five water systems upgraded in each urban set-up (Kabul, Jalalabad, Herat, Mazar and Kandahar) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2016 - 2016 - 2016-2020 - 2016-2020

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted project implementation in communities of high return, in line with the overall SSAR strategy and portfolio of projects Establishment/reinforcement of procedures or structures to facilitate community-based planning and prioritization of needs 	<p>b) Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ MoRR in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Education will endeavor to waive school certification fees for returnee children , in Afghanistan’s diplomatic missions (Embassy/Consulate) based in neighboring hosting countries, upon returnees’ arrival in Afghanistan ✓ MoRR together with MoE to establish a mechanism in the Encashment Centers to record and refer returnee students to provincial education directorates ✓ MoRR to advocate for creating additional facilities to cater for the needs of returnees in high return areas ✓ MoRR in coordination with UNHCR and MoE to strengthen information dissemination about enrolment in education system and educational certificates in Afghanistan, in hosting countries and in the Encashment Centers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Returnee students are exempted from school certification fees - An effective mechanism and database in the Encashment Centers are established - 500¹⁹ new class rooms built - 5,000²⁰ new teachers recruited with preference to hire returnee teachers - Information leaflets updated and disseminated in the refugee communities in countries of asylum and in the Encashment Centers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2016-2020 - 2016-2020 - 2016-2020 - 2016-2020 - 2016-2020
	<p>Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ MoRR to advocate with the Ministry of Health to facilitate free access to primary health facilities, and special services based on recognized vulnerability returnee status ✓ MoRR in coordination with UNHCR and MoPH strengthens the information dissemination about health facilities/services in Afghanistan, in countries of asylum and in the Encashment Centers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to health care facilities/services promoted and ensured for all returnees in return areas - Information leaflets updated and disseminated in the refugee communities in countries of asylum and in the Encashment Centers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2016-2020 - 2016-2020

7. Conclusion

The National Unity Government has identified facilitation of the voluntary return and sustainable reintegration of Afghan citizens living abroad, both registered returnees and undocumented migrants, as one of its principal objectives. In order to achieve this goal, the government has reinforced regional cooperation and coordination in the context of the SSAR, while also re-examining internal structures, establishing the High Level Commission on Migration to facilitate cooperation among ministries responsible for effective programming and the Sub Committee of Council of Ministries to ensure the implementation of policies and plans to facilitate return. Efforts on behalf of returnees will take place on different levels and at different stages of return and reintegration, focusing on enhancing regional cooperation, creating “pull factors” to enable return and sustainable reintegration to safe areas, and streamlining programs to include returnees into larger development efforts that are flexible enough to respond to diverse needs in urban and rural settings.

MoRR, as part of these efforts, will remain focused on supporting informed, gradual, and voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees and undocumented Afghans in safety and dignity. This support will span the full cycle of return,

¹⁹ This is a targeted figure and is not a commitment

²⁰ This is a targeted figure and is not a commitment

beginning with the provision of accurate, up-to-date information about conditions in Afghanistan and the process of return to refugees in neighboring host countries. This information will be conveyed through leaflets, radio and television campaigns, and visits by Ministry personnel and returnees to refugee communities. MoRR will also, at this stage, work with groups who may wish to return to conduct go-and-see visits, identify possible locations for return, and address concerns or obstacles to return.

At the same time, the government of Afghanistan will actively seek to improve conditions for returnees by establishing conditions in which returnees can successfully and sustainably reintegrate. To this end, MoRR will work closely with key government interlocutors to achieve consensus on the unique vulnerabilities of returnee households and the special constraints they may face when attempting to access services and the general protection of the state. This strategy also recognizes that undocumented returnees often have different sets of reintegration needs than refugee returnees. At the same time, because of the length of time that undocumented Afghan returnees have often been away, they will have similar immediate livelihood and shelter reintegration needs as returning refugees do. IOM continues to work with MoRR to establish provincial-level referral services that will enable provincial DoRR offices to refer undocumented returnees to existing livelihood and shelter programs as well as schools and clinics where appropriate. Likewise, MoRR will work closely with ministries involved in development, and specifically the NPPs, to convey information regarding the profile and distribution of returnees to ensure that areas with high numbers of returnees are prioritized. MoRR will also advocate for inclusion of a specific quota of returnees in job creation initiatives, urban housing, land allocation, and other social welfare programs.

MoRR will monitor return trends/conditions, collecting information from returnees beginning at the Encashment Centers and continuing through the first year of their reintegration in Afghanistan. In the course of doing so, MoRR will follow return trends and identify incidences and causes of secondary displacement, challenges in the process of reintegration, and gaps in the assistance provided to returnees. 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.

Voluntary repatriation planning figure for 2016: 100,000 – 150,000 refugees. During the Tripartite and Quadripartite meetings held in Islamabad and Tehran during the first half of 2015, the parties reaffirmed their commitments to the gradual return of refugees based on the absorption capacity in Afghanistan. The projected figure for 2016 is the return of 100,000 – 150,000 registered Afghan refugees from Pakistan and Iran. This projection represents a significant increase from the original projection for 2015, which is likely to reach 100,000.

Assisted refugee return by province of destination – 01 Jan 2014 – 29 July 2015				
Expected refugee return during Aug and Dec 2015				
Province	Individuals 2014 (01 Jan - 31 Dec)	Individuals 2015 (01 Jan - 29 Jul)	Expected return (Individuals) 01 Aug – 31 Dec 2015 *	Total return including expected returnees by the end of 2015 *
A	B	C	D	C+D
Ghazni	321	276	300	576
Kabul	3,610	7,953	12,500	20,453
Kapisa	37	53	100	153
Logar	285	5,509	1,200	6,709
Panjsher	50	38	100	138
Parwan	165	692	500	1,192
Wardak	158	232	200	432
Bamyan	210	106	50	156
Daykundi	49	46	50	96
Kunar	111	607	5,000	5,607
Laghman	427	1,317	2,500	3,817
Nangarhar	1,826	6,882	11,000	17,882

Nuristan	1	0	30	30
Balkh	820	1,634	2,000	3,634
Faryab	252	743	400	1,143
Jawzjan	510	956	800	1,756
Samangan	76	344	200	544
Sar-e-Pul	623	688	600	1,288
Badakhshan	102	56	40	96
Baghlan	727	3,180	2,500	5,680
Kunduz	1,892	5,831	5,500	11,331
Takhar	313	817	700	1,517
Hilmand	651	341	1,500	1,841
Kandahar	1,513	977	2,200	3,177
Uruzgan	25	50	30	80
Zabul	111	102	150	252
Khost	114	771	300	1,071
Paktika	29	83	30	113
Paktya	519	3,340	1,500	4,840
Badghis	43	189	10	199
Farah	201	228	400	628
Ghor	10	3	30	33
Herat	1,208	1,032	2,400	3,430
Nimroz	6	56	50	106
Total	16,995	45,132	54,870	100,000

* This figure is based on an extrapolation of assisted refugee returnees between Aug and Dec 2012, which was similar to 2015 trends to date. Given the spontaneous nature of the return of undocumented Afghans, it is difficult to make accurate projections. However, based on recent trends, it is assumed that approximately 50,000 – 100,000 undocumented Afghans may return from Iran and Pakistan.

Projected figure of undocumented spontaneous returnees and deportees from Pakistan and Iran - 2016

Provinces	Monthly average – from January – June 2015			Projection of undocumented Afghans spontaneous return from Iran and Pakistan in 2016	Vulnerable people in 12 Months (10% from Iran) and (40% from Pakistan)	IOM's assistance capacity in 2016
	Deportees	Spontaneous returnees	Average figure of monthly total			
Herat	9.323	18.406	27.729	332.748	33.275	If budget is available
Nimroz	8.227	4.562	12.789	153.468	15.347	If budget is available
Nangarhar	1.285	12.300	13.585	163.020	65.208	If budget is available
Kandahar	379	1.610	1.989	23.868	9.547	If budget is available
Khost	0	1.167	1.167	14.004	14.004	If budget is available
Total	19.214	38.045	57.259	687.108	137.381	0

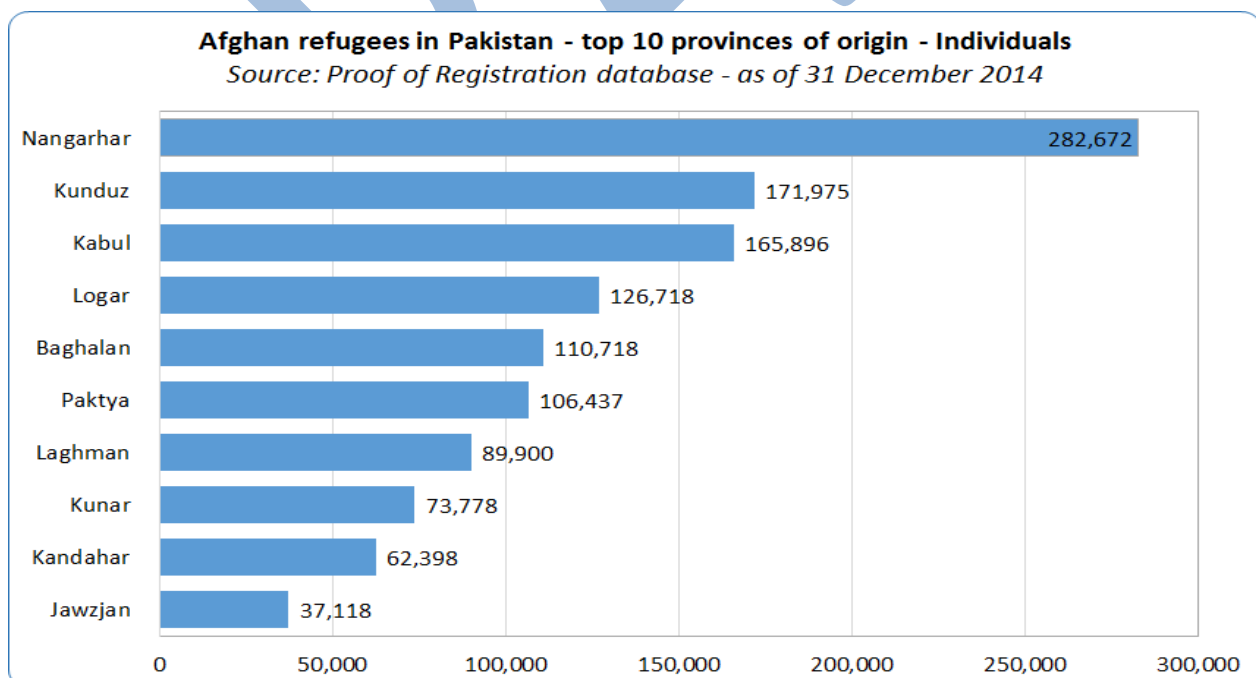
Annex 1

Current status and profiles of Afghans in host countries

The return trend so far in 2015, particularly from Pakistan, has substantially increased as compared to 2014. As of 8 August 2015, 46,754 Afghan refugees have returned, more than double the total number of returns in 2014. Among this group, nearly 39,000 returnees had been living in Pakistan, while most of the remainder were in Iran. The National Unity Government is committed to creating conditions that will continue this trend of increased return with an emphasis on pull factors in Afghanistan, including enhanced security, expanded economic opportunities, effective distribution of land, and improved access to basic services. In order to ensure that issues faced by returnees are addressed in a comprehensive, effective manner, the National Unity Government has established a National High Commission for Migration, led by H.E. the President and including all ministries and actors whose interventions are essential to guaranteeing the sustainability of return and reintegration.

Afghans in Pakistan

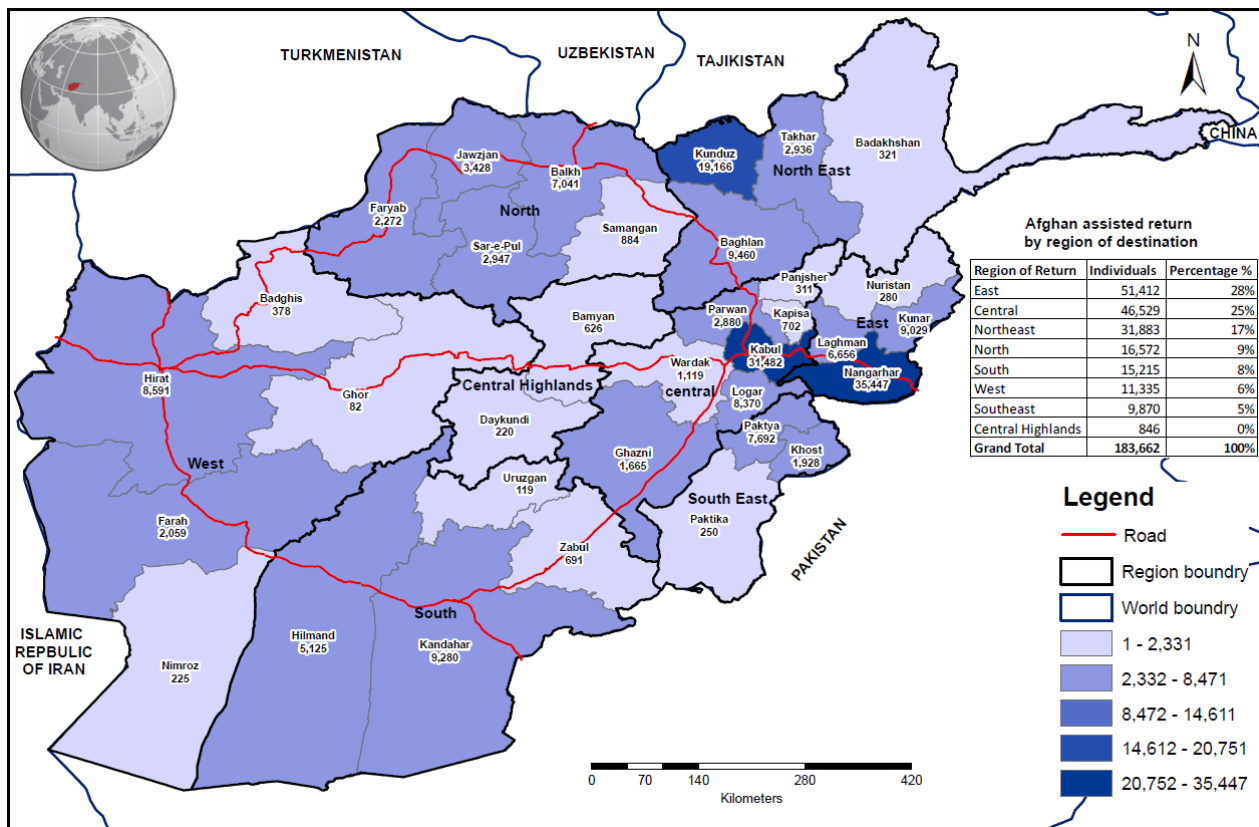
The Islamic Republic of Pakistan generously hosts approximately 1.5 million Afghan refugees²¹ holding Proof of Registration Cards (PoR), the largest protracted refugee-hosting nation. Over 60% of the Afghan refugee population in Pakistan are living in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), of whom approximately half are living in over 60 settlements/refugee villages, while the remaining population resides in urban areas. Baluchistan hosts nearly 20% of the total refugee population; the majority of whom (75%) are living in urban areas. The remainder of the refugee population in Pakistan are living in Punjab (11%), Sindh (4%), and Islamabad (2%). Smaller numbers of refugees are also living in FATA, Azad Kashmir and northern areas of Pakistan. The graph below shows the places from which Afghan refugees living in Pakistan fled, which generally mirrors the top provinces of return in Afghanistan, with Nangarhar, Kunduz, and Kabul at the top of both lists. In addition, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan host an estimated 1 million undocumented Afghans who are residing in different parts of Pakistan but in particular in KP.



Graph 1: These provinces are also among the top provinces where most of the refugees have returned to since 2002. In addition, refugees from other provinces are also choosing these provinces as their final destination due to relatively better basic services and job opportunities.

²¹ Source: Proof of Registration Card database

Map 1: Assisted refugee return province of destination in Afghanistan
 Source: Encashment Center database, 01 Jan 2012 – 31 May 2015

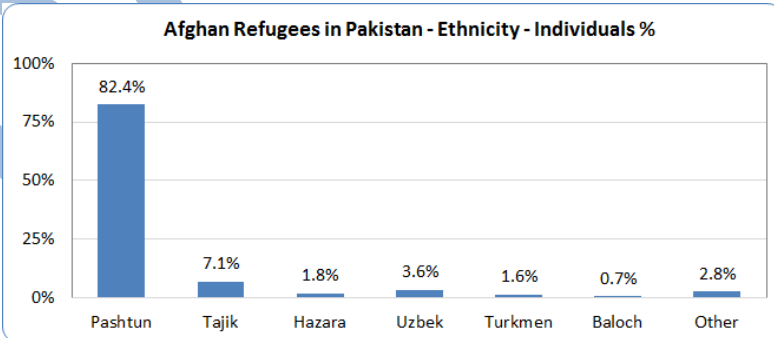


i) Age and sex:

The Afghan refugee population in Pakistan is 51% male and 49% female. Approximately half of the refugee population are between 5 and 24 years of age, while more than 25% is between 25 and 59, and 4% are over 60. Infants comprise roughly 18% of the population.

ii) Ethnicity:

The Population Profiling, Verification and Response (PPVR) survey²² indicated that 82% of Afghan PoR card holders are Pashtun. Other ethnicities include Tajiks (7.1%), Uzbeks (3.6%), Hazara (1.8%), Turkmen (1.6%), and Baloch (.7%). Pashtuns are scattered in sizable numbers over most of the districts with larger concentrations of refugees in KPI, particularly in Peshawar, while Uzbeks and Hazaras live mostly in Quetta.



Graph 2: Afghan refugees in Pakistan ethnicity – source PPVR

iii) Length of stay in Pakistan:

Large-scale population movements to Pakistan occurred during the Soviet invasion (1979 – 1985), Mujahedeen period (1991-1995), during the Taliban regime (1996 – 2001), and to a lesser extent during the transitional period (2001-2002). Most recent returnees (returning between 2012 and 2015) report having fled from Afghanistan during the Taliban and Mujahedeen regimes. The majority of the remaining refugee population, however, was born in Pakistan (74%).

²² Population Profiling, Verification and Response (PPVR) Survey of Afghans in Pakistan conducted in 2010 – 2011.

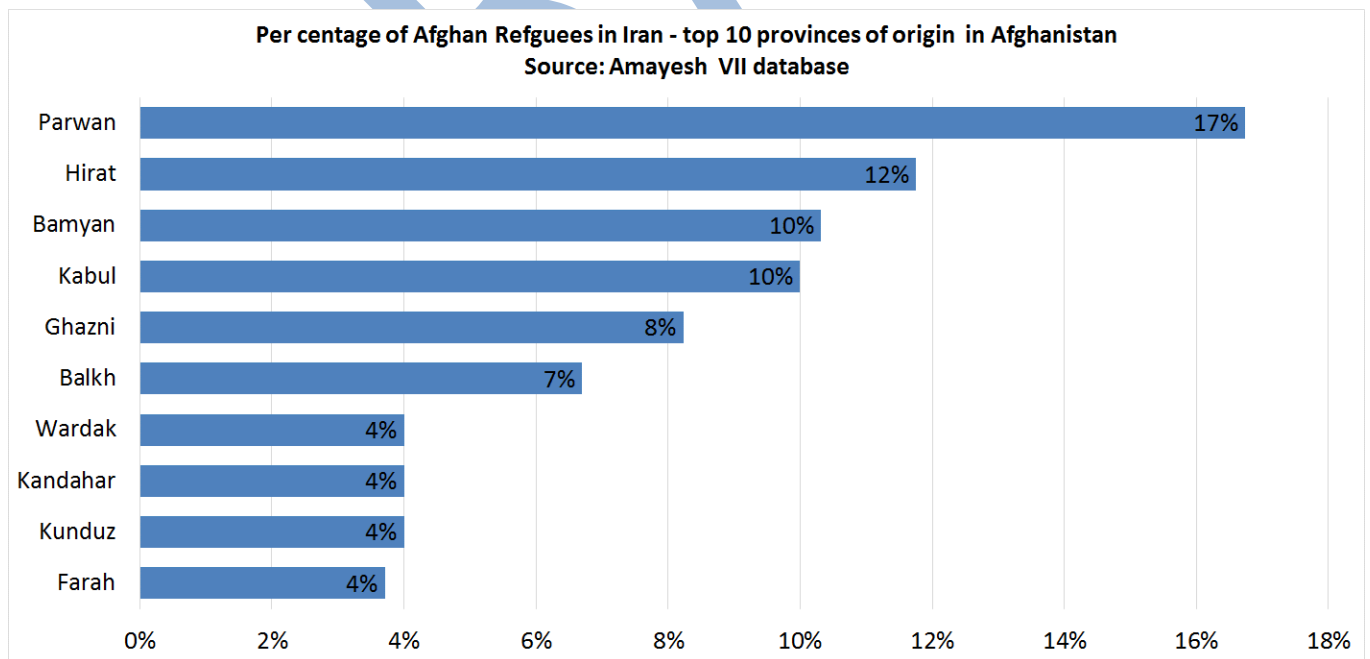
Afghans in Iran



The Islamic Republic of Iran also hosts nearly a million Afghan refugees (estimated 950,000), who hold Amayesh cards. The majority (over 70%) of the Afghan refugee population is concentrated in Tehran, Khorasan Razavi, Esfahan, Kerman, Qom and Fars provinces, with smaller numbers in Yazd, Markazi, Semnan, Qazvin, Golestan, Bushehr, and other provinces.

Roughly 79% of Afghan refugees living in Iran are originally from 10 provinces. These provinces are also among the top provinces of origin/destination for returning refugees from Iran since 2002. It should also be noted that these provinces are hosting the majority of Tajiks and Hazaras, who have traditionally moved to Iran due to cultural and language similarities in Iran. Similarly Iran also hosts around 1.4 million Afghan migrants, of whom 500,000 were provided with passports and visas in 2012, and around one million are undocumented.

Map 2: Areas of residence of Afghan refugees in Iran – source BAFIA – Amayesh VII



Graph 2: Afghan refugees' (in Iran) areas of origin in Afghanistan source: BAFIA – Amayesh VII

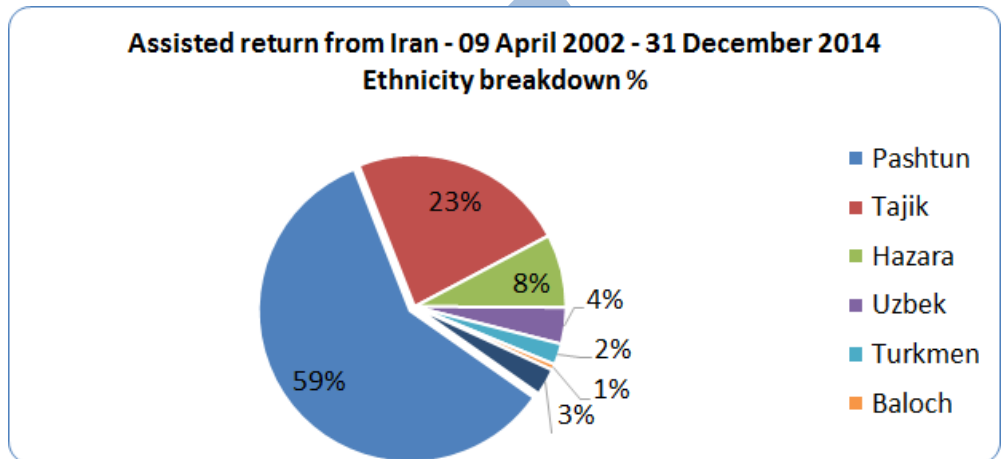
While complete data on the profile of Afghan refugees in Iran are not available, the below bio data has been extrapolated based on profiles of returnees from Iran (since 2002).

i) Age and Sex:

The Afghan refugee population in Iran is estimated to be 53% male and 47% female. While it is difficult to compile precise statistics on age, it is believed that much of the population in Iran, as in Pakistan, consists of children and youth who were born in Iran.

ii) Ethnicity:

Pashtuns make up nearly 60% of returnees followed by 23% Tajiks and 8% Hazaras. Given that most of the remaining population are originally from Parwan, Herat, Bamyan, Kabul and Ghazni provinces, it is estimated that Pashtun, Tajiks and Hazaras also comprise the major ethnicities of refugees remaining in Iran.



Graph 3: Assisted returnees from Iran – Ethnicity – source: VRF database, 09 Apr 2002 – 31 Dec 2014

iii) Length of stay in Iran :

Outflow of Afghans to Iran took place during the same period Afghans moved to Pakistan: the Soviet invasion (1979 – 1985), Mujahedeen period (1991-1995), Taliban regime (1996 – 2001), and to a lesser extent during the transitional period (2001-2002). Most recent returnees (2012-2015) report having fled from Afghanistan during the Taliban and Mujahedeen regimes.

Afghan refugees elsewhere

There are nearly 130,000 recognized Afghan refugees who are currently living in 63 different countries.²³ Nearly 50,000 of them are living in three industrialized countries (Germany, Austria and Sweden) followed by India, the UK, Australia, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, and other countries. In contrast to return from Pakistan and Iran, with the exception of 2002-2003, return from other countries has occurred at a much slower pace. MoRR, in consultation with UNHCR, is considering the revision of the existing Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with several European countries governing the return/deportation of Afghans. However, given the slower rate of return, smaller numbers, and the dispersal of the refugee population across a wide geographic area, the majority of interventions aimed at facilitating return will focus on Pakistan and Iran in this strategy paper.

²³ Source: UNHCR Population Statistics 2013

Annex 2: National structures and programs

MoRR is the ministry tasked with the coordination of the provision of assistance to refugees, IDPs and returnees. Supporting MoRR are additional coordination mechanisms, including inter-ministerial and non-governmental coordination support mechanisms. On refugee repatriation issues, MoRR's international partner is the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), while IOM provides support regarding undocumented returnees

i) Inter-Ministerial technical working group (National Steering Committee under the SSAR):

The National Steering Committee (NSC) to oversee the implementation of the Afghan component of the SSAR was established in Kabul on 10 August 2014. Consisting of 13 line ministries and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), the NSC has met thrice so far. As outlined in the 'Terms of reference [for the] Quadripartite Steering Committee and National Steering Committees for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees to Support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries', the NSC is meant to act as an inter-ministerial coordinating body overseeing specifically the development of the Solutions Strategy in Afghanistan. While ministerial working groups are yet to be formed under the NSC, the role of the NSC is to provide leadership and vision in terms of the development, implementation and evaluation of activities under the SSAR while also proactively feeding information on progress and challenges to the Quadripartite Steering Committee (QSC), made up of the GoIRA, GIRI, GoP and UNHCR. The NSC in particular has a communication function and acts as a link between the GoIRA and the Quadripartite Steering Committee, while also acting as a link between various line ministries.

ii) ACBAR – Liaison with NGOs/civil society:

In addition to the inter-ministerial coordination mechanism, MoRR, through UNHCR, has in the past utilized the ACBAR NGO Coordination mechanism to reach out to non-governmental and civil society organizations (CSOs). Established as an umbrella organization for the coordination of NGOs and CSOs in Afghanistan and based out of Kabul, ACBAR regularly holds thematic meetings, as well as general update meetings, that UNHCR has been able to attend to update participants on Government initiatives under the SSAR and to extend calls for proposals under the country portfolio.

iii) National Strategies for Development:

The Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS), finalized in 2008, is the overarching development framework for reintegration of Afghan refugees. It has been brought into accord with the outcome of the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF) Conference and further adjusted following the London Conference on Afghanistan. Going forward, MoRR will continue to advocate for the needs of returnees to be taken into account in all national development programming, ensuring that information on return trends is shared with MRRD in a timely manner so that returnees can be integrated in development programming at the earliest possible opportunity. The HCM will provide one forum for inter-ministerial cooperation on development issues impacting returnees, but MoRR will also seek regular bilateral meetings with MRRD to ensure the effective exchange of information between the two ministries.

iv) National Priority Programmes:

By operationalizing National Priority Programs (NPPs) as integral to the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS), the Afghan government and concerned nations forged a new partnership to carry Afghanistan into its future. These NPPs, borne from earlier ideas and more precise dialogue with donors preceding the London Conference, bring order, effectiveness, and assessment to Afghan strategies, aid management, and action to

improve utilization of resources and achieve medium- to long-term sustainability. The Afghan NPPs promote socio-economic, governance, and security advances with mutual accountability, specified activities, and measurable goals.

v) National Solidarity Programme:

The National Solidarity Program (NSP) was created in 2003 by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) to develop the ability of Afghan communities to identify, plan, manage and monitor their own development projects. Through the promotion of good local governance, the NSP works to empower rural communities to make decisions affecting their own lives and livelihoods. Empowered rural communities collectively contribute to increased human security. The program supports communities, with a focus on economically disadvantaged, returnees, and other vulnerable groups. NSP strongly promotes a unique development paradigm, whereby communities can make important decisions and participate in all stages of their development and contribute their own resources. With the support of Facilitating Partners (FPs), communities elect their leaders and representatives to form voluntary Community Development Councils (CDCs) through a transparent and democratic process.

vi) National Rural Access Programme (NRAP):

Executed by the Ministry of Public Works (MPW) and Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), the Ministry of Finance (MoF) acts as the coordinating ministry. NRAP aims to promote equitable economic growth by providing year-round access to basic services and facilities in rural Afghanistan. In the process the program will further strengthen and accelerate the strategies to empower the local capacities also through private-led development initiatives for rural infrastructure development and employment generation for the rural poor. This objective will be achieved by nationwide quality rehabilitation, construction and maintenance of essential, basic access and rural road infrastructure using appropriate labour-based approaches. It works through the private sector and to a lesser extent with the communities, which will be engaged through the Community Development Councils (CDCs) and District Development Assemblies (DDAs), thereby creating short-term employment opportunities.

vii) Afghanistan Rural Enterprise Development Programme (AREDP):

AREDP is a national government-led program that jump-starts and facilitates private sector growth in rural Afghanistan. The program strengthens the private sector through integrated, value chain, top-down knowledge-based interventions, alongside bottom-up community enterprise development and by addressing credit and capital needs on all levels and in all locations. The overall goal of AREDP is to increase employment, income of rural men and women, and the sustainability of targeted local enterprises. The key principles of the AREDP are supporting market orientation, sustainable businesses, improving coordination, building partnerships, facilitating client decisions, sharing best practices and vertical integration. AREDP has two program components and one functional or support component. The two Program components are Community-based Enterprise Development, which provides knowledge-based and financial services to community-based rural enterprises, and Small and Medium Enterprise Development (SME) that provides business advisory and financial services to rural SMEs.

viii) Comprehensive Agriculture and Rural Development:

Comprehensive Agriculture and Rural Development – Facility aims to increase employment, income and business opportunities for the rural population through the design, facilitation, and implementation of commercially viable value chains supplemented with rural infrastructure projects in the target provinces.

CARD-F provides needs-based services and support to create and sustain businesses in rural communities by providing alternative livelihood opportunities. As a model of cross-ministry collaboration, CARD-F works under the patronage of an Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) that consists of the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, the Ministry of Counter Narcotics, and the Ministry of Finance. The IMC is led by the Ministry of Counter Narcotics.

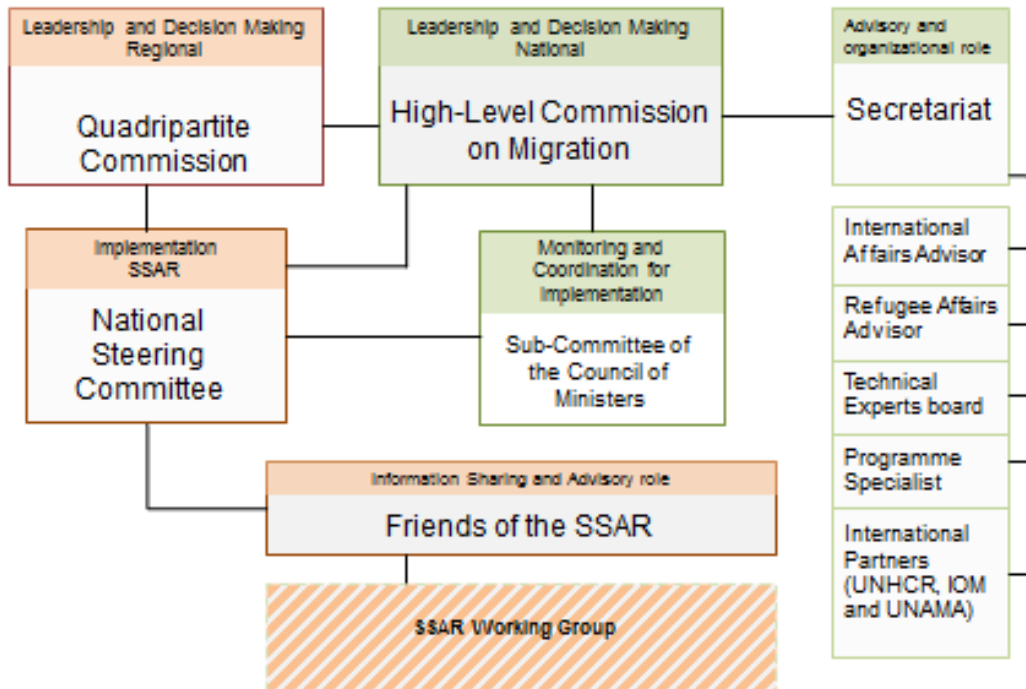
ix) Rural Water Supply, Sanitation & Irrigation Programme (Ru-WatSIP):

In line with Afghanistan National Rural Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Policy, the responsibilities of this programme include policy and strategy formulation, planning, coordination and implementation of rural water supply, sanitation and hygiene promotion activities undertaken by private sectors, NGOs and the rural communities namely Community Development Councils (CDCs) and District Development Assemblies (DDAs). The program seeks to improve the quality of life of Afghans through improved access to safe and sustainable water supplies and sanitation services and the adoption of hygienic best practices at the personal, household and community levels, resulting in (i) reduced morbidity and mortality rates (particularly for children under five years of age) and (ii) enhanced productivity and well-being.

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Annex 4 Coordination mechanisms

Coordination Mechanisms Migration Afghanistan – July 2015



Coordination Mechanisms Migration Afghanistan – July 2015 Regional Level



Coordination Mechanisms Migration Afghanistan – July 2015 National Level

High-Level Commission on Migration

- Chair: President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
- Co-chair: CEO
- Members: Line Ministries (ministerial level)
- Decision and ratification of refugee, IDP and returnee policies
- Decision on bi-lateral and multi-lateral agreements with international partners
- Determination of national budget for return and reintegration
- Provides guidance and oversight on national-level policies

Secretariat

- Consists of a Secretary General and six thematic departments
- International Organisations (UNAMA, UNHCR and IOM) have an advisory role to the Secretariat and a right of initiative for various proposals
- Preparation for HLCM meetings
- Information sharing on HLCM decisions between technical departments

Sub- Committee of the Council of Ministers

- Director: Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
- Members: Line ministries (ministerial level)
- Implement plans, national policies and decisions taken by the HLCM

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