



UNHCR
The UN
Refugee Agency

VOLREP AND BORDER MONITORING MONTHLY UPDATE



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UNHCR AFGHANISTAN

OCTOBER 2014

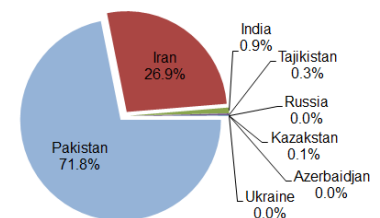
From the start of UNHCR's assisted voluntary repatriation operation in March 2002 to the end of October 2014, over 5.8 million Afghan refugees have returned home, out of which over 4.7 million repatriated with assistance from the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) and UNHCR. Today, about a quarter of Afghanistan's population consists of returnees.

VOLUNTARY RETURN TO AFGHANISTAN

1 – 31 October 2014: In October 2014, a total of 1,403 Afghan refugees voluntarily repatriated to Afghanistan. Of this, 1,036 came from Pakistan, 361 from Iran and 6 from India. The volrep process was temporarily stopped (between 04 - 08 October 14) due to Eid holidays.

1 January – 31 October 2014: During the first ten-months of 2014, a total of 15,248 Afghan refugees (averaging 50 individuals/day) voluntarily repatriated to Afghanistan. The rate of return so far this year is 58% lower compared to the 35,906 Afghans who returned during the same period in 2013.

Total returns 01 Jan - 31 Oct 2014



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	15,035	86	94,556
2013	30,388	8,247	131	38,766
2014	10,954	4,095	199	15,248
Total	3,817,560	919,499	16,079	4,753,138

The lower rate of return so far this year is believed to be attributed to the extension of Proof of Registration (PoR) cards until 31 December 2015 in Pakistan, uncertainty and concerns about security during the transitional period.

Overall return trends is depending on socio-economic and political developments in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran. It is also assumed that the result of this year election will impact decision making among Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran for return. In addition, limited absorption capacity to gather with limited access to basic services, lack of livelihood opportunities, lack of shelter and land could be other obstacles which may discourage Afghans to make a decision for return.

Difficult economic conditions, deteriorating security conditions (in Pakistan) alleged harassment by authorities and fear of arrest and deportation constituted key push factors in the decision to return so far this year. On a more positive note, improved security in some parts of Afghanistan, the Government land allocation scheme and/or UNHCR shelter program, UNHCR's assistance pack-

age, improved employment opportunities in Afghanistan and reunion with the family/relatives in Afghanistan were cited by many returnees as important pull factors in their decision to return.

RETURN PROCESS

A refugee wishing to return to Afghanistan with the assistance of UNHCR must approach UNHCR's Voluntary Repatriation Centres (VRCs) in the country of asylum to register for return and sign a Voluntary Repatriation Form (VRF).

Repatriation from Pakistan is facilitated through two VRCs: Chamkani located in Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baleli located in Quetta, 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 to Afghanistan, returnees are assisted at five encashment centres (ECs): Mohmand Dara (Nangarhar), Kabul (Kabul), Gardez (Paktya), Jamal Mayna (Kandahar) and Herat (Herat).

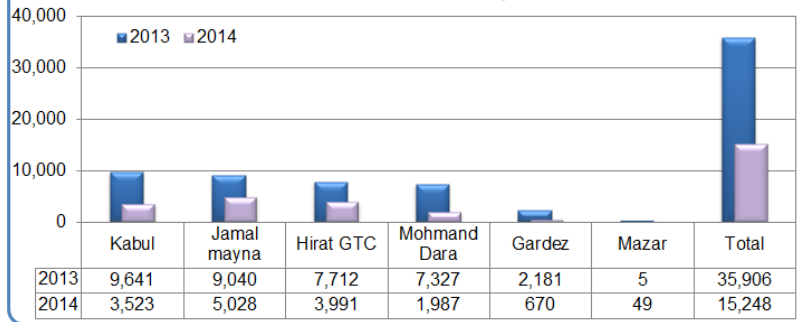
At the ECs, depending on the province of origin, all Afghan returnees with VRFs received approximately US\$ 200 per person (between US\$30 - US\$70 for transport and US\$150 as a short-term assistance grant). The transportation grant varies according to the distance from the areas of asylum to the areas of origin. Returning refugees are also briefed on mine awareness and education procedures in Afghanistan at the EC. They can benefit from transit facilities for overnight stay and basic health services. All children under the age of five are vaccinated for polio and measles. Returnees are briefed also on how to access legal aid, if required.

In view of rising commodities and transportations costs in Afghanistan, UNHCR, in 2014, increased the cash grant from US\$ 150 to US\$ 200 per person.

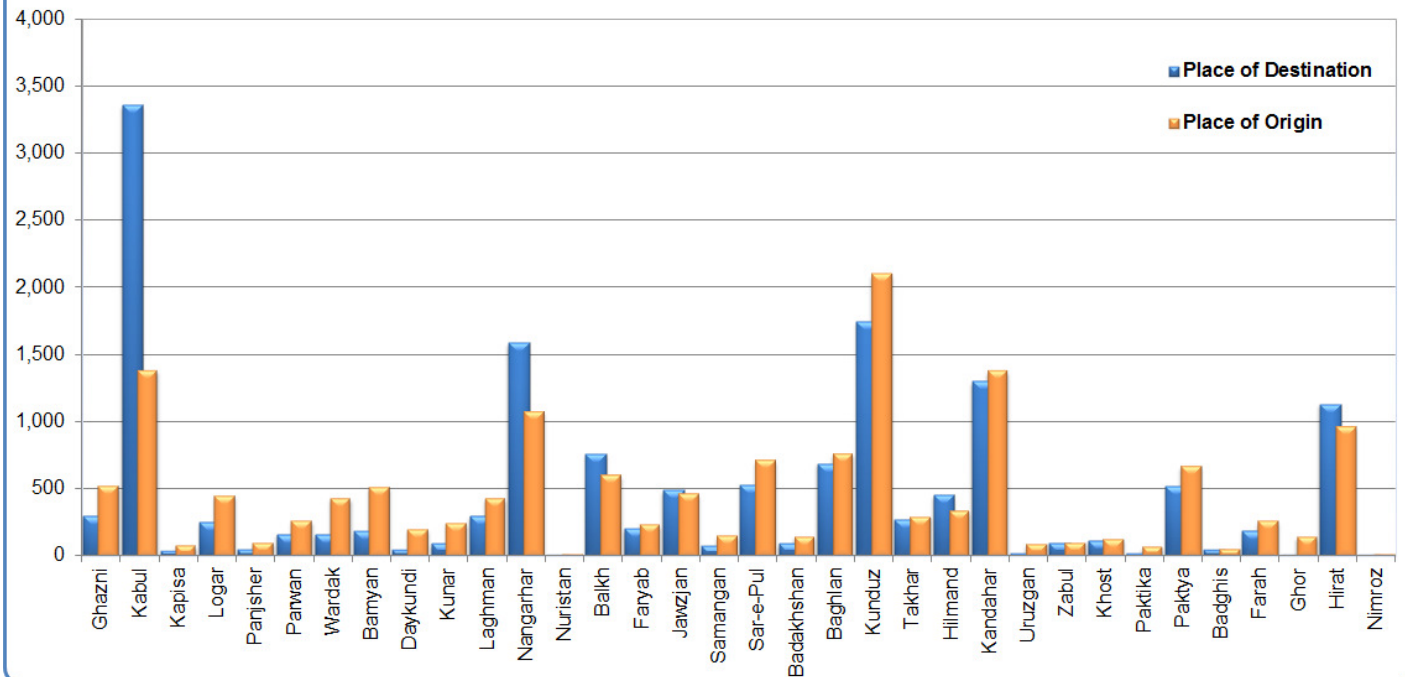
Assisted returns by region of destination in Afghanistan 2014 & 2013

Region	No. of individuals returned - Comparison by year			
	Jan - Oct 2014		Jan - Oct 2013	
	No.	%	No.	%
Central	4,305	28.2%	10,366	28.9%
Northeast	2,796	18.3%	6,393	17.8%
North	2,052	13.5%	3,109	8.7%
East	1,970	12.9%	7,047	19.6%
South	1,870	12.3%	3,996	11.1%
West	1,375	9.0%	2,719	7.6%
Southeast	653	4.3%	2,119	5.9%
Central Highlands	227	1.5%	157	0.4%
Total	15,248	100.0%	35,906	100.0%

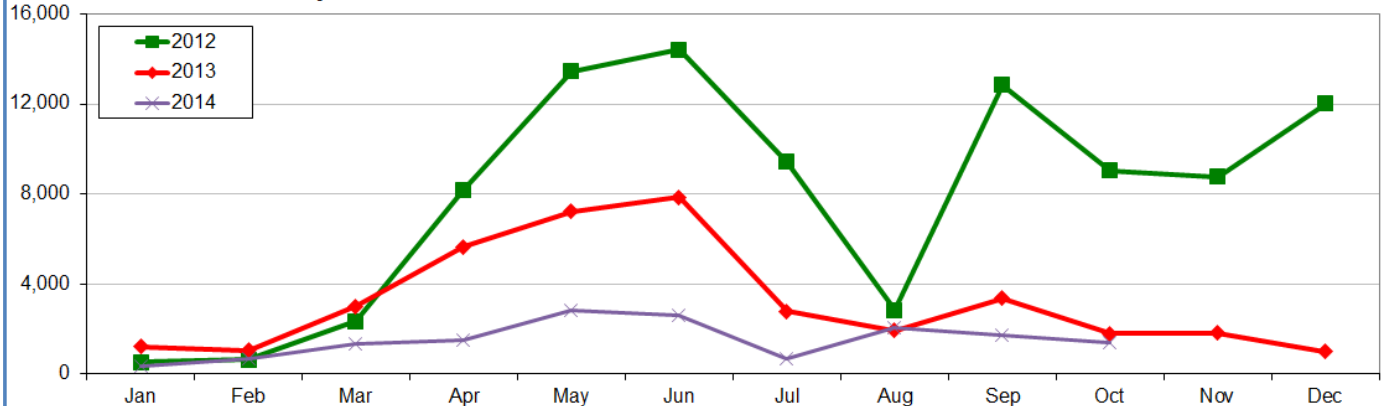
Total returnees assisted at ECs - comparison of 2013 & 2014



2014 VolRep - Comparison of Place of Origin with Place of Destination in Afghanistan (Individuals)



Monthly Return Trends from Pakistan and Iran - 01 Jan 2012 - 31 October 2014

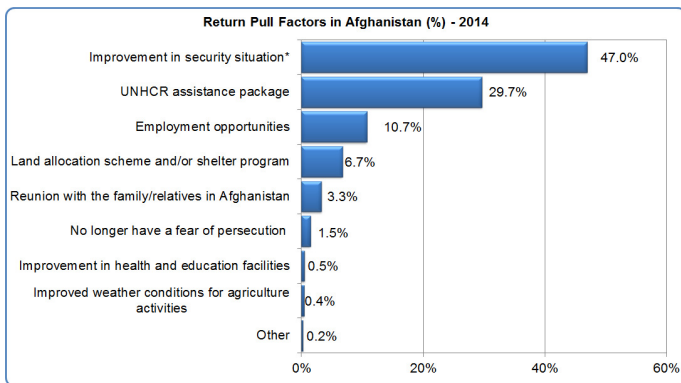
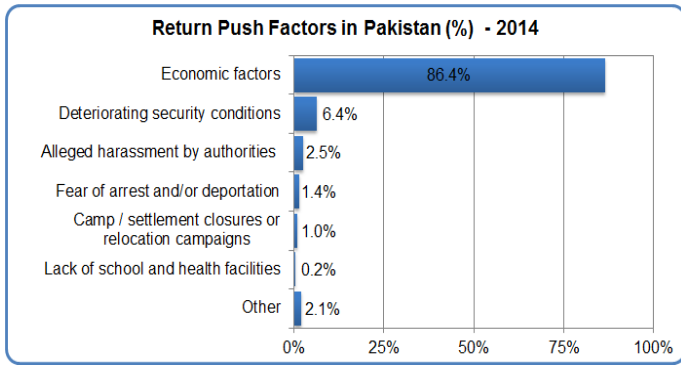
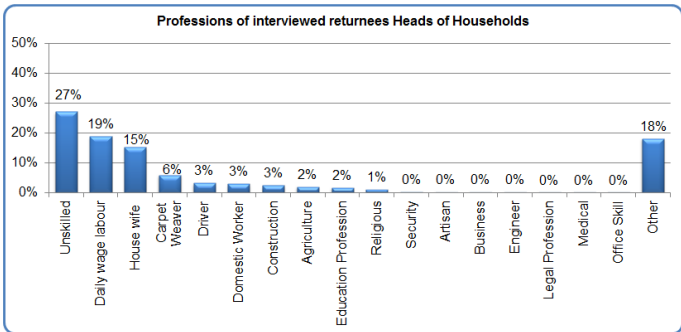
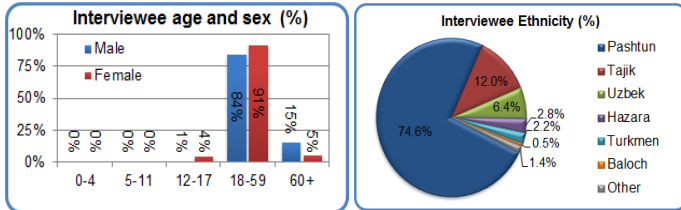


ENCASHMENT CENTRE RETURNEE MONITORING

Between 1 January and 31 October 2014, a total of 1,715 interviews were conducted with returning refugees from Pakistan and Iran. Interviewees were selected in two ways: at random (1,633) and from those with obvious protection concerns (82) at the first point of contact in Afghanistan, the UNHCR Transit/Encashment Centres in Kabul, Jalalabad (Mohmand Dara), Kandahar (Jamal Mayna), Gardez and Herat (GTC). This monitoring exercise helps UNHCR to identify return trends, push/pull factors and check on the level of information returnees received to make an informed choice to return home.

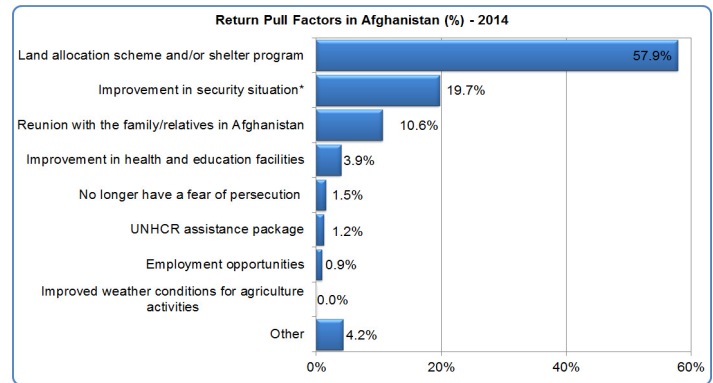
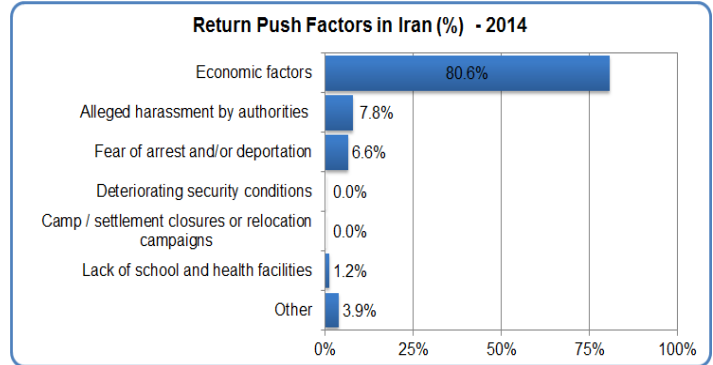
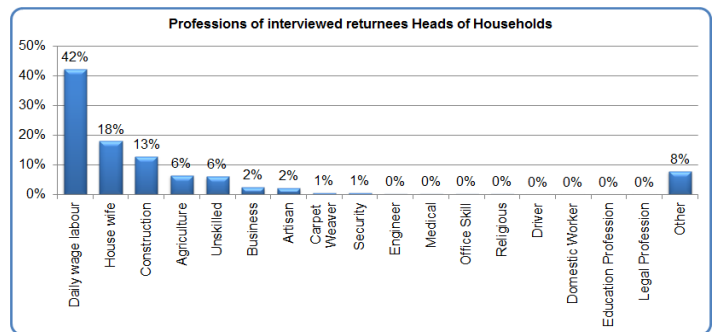
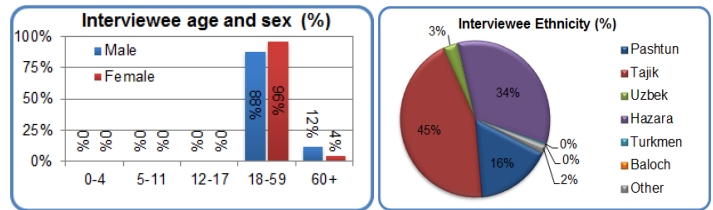
RETURNS FROM PAKISTAN

During Jan and October, a total of 1,385 interviews were conducted at Kabul, Mohmand Dara, Knadahar and Gardez ECs with newly arrived returnees from Pakistan.



RETURNS FROM IRAN

During Jan and October, a total of 330 interviews were conducted at Herat EC with newly arrived returnees from Iran.

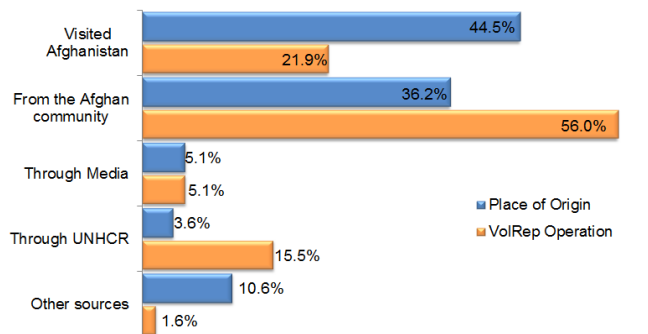


*Of those who cited the improvement of security situation in some parts of Afghanistan as primary pull factor of their return, some 81% returned to relatively secure provinces such as Kabul, Takhar, Balkh, Nangarhar, Herat, Samangan, Sari Pul, Parwan, Kapisa, Panjshir, Jawzjan, Baghlan and Kunduz (mainly Kunduz city). While 19% returned to insecure provinces such as Kandahar (mainly Kandahar city), Logar, Helmand (mainly Lashkargah), Wardak, Paktya, Ghazni, Farah (Farah city), Uruzgan and Zabul).

RETURNS FROM PAKISTAN

Sources of Information on Place of Origin and VolRep Program

All of the interviewed returnees from Pakistan said that they had received adequate information to make an informed decision to return. Information on place of origin and UNHCR's repatriation operation were obtained from the following sources:



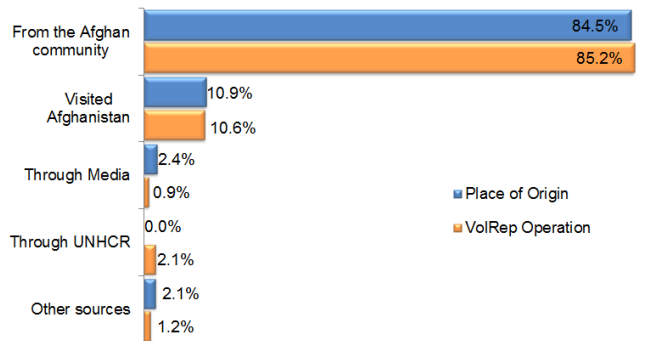
Among those who mentioned that they obtained information through visits to Afghanistan, all of them stated they travelled to Afghanistan on their own; 57% said they had visited Afghanistan few months ago, 27% said they had visited Afghanistan one year ago, 11% said two years ago, 4% said three years ago and 1% said five years ago. When they were asked about the purpose of their visit; 43% said they came to Afghanistan to visit their relatives, 32% said they participated in a ceremony, 19% said they visited Afghanistan in order to assess the situation to make an informed decision prior to the return and 6% said they visited Afghanistan for business purpose.

***It is been noted that returnees from Iran, compared to returnees from Pakistan, did not have the chance or opportunity to visit their places of origin recently. Majority of the returnees from Iran mentioned that they had visited Afghanistan five years ago. While majority (over 50%) of the interviewed returnees from Pakistan mentioned they had visited Afghanistan recently. This might be the case with returnees from Iran mainly due to strict border control, long distance and probably changes in the security situation in Afghanistan.*

RETURNS FROM IRAN

Sources of Information on Place of Origin and VolRep Program

All of the interviewed returnees from Iran said that they had received adequate information to make an informed decision to return. Information on place of origin and UNHCR's repatriation operation were obtained from the following sources:



Among those who mentioned that they obtained information through visits to Afghanistan, all of them stated they travelled to Afghanistan on their own; 72% said they had visited Afghanistan five years ago, 14% said they had visited Afghanistan more than five years ago, 10% said they had visited Afghanistan three years ago and only 4% said that they had visited Afghanistan few months ago. When they were asked about the purpose of their visit; 62% said they came to Afghanistan to visit their relatives, 28% said they visited Afghanistan in order to assess the situation to make an informed decision prior to the return, 7% said they participated in a ceremony and 3% said they visited Afghanistan for business purpose.

Reasons for not returning to place of origin

Out of a total of 1,385 respondents, 451 returnees stated that they do not intend to repatriate to their place of origin due to the following reasons:

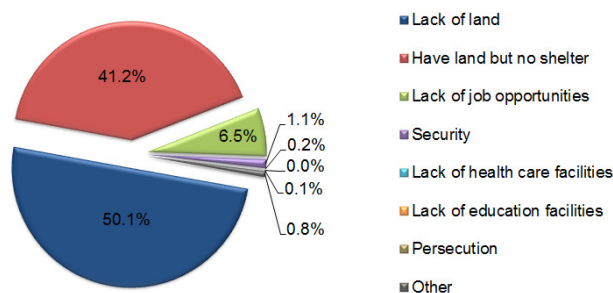
- Lack of housing (42%)
- Lack of land (26%)
- Insecurity (18%)
- Lack of income generation opportunities (7%)
- Lack of public services (5%) and
- Other reasons (2%)

Reasons for not returning to place of origin

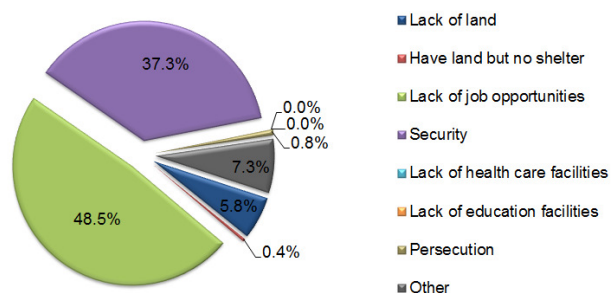
Out of a total of 330 respondents, 115 returnees stated that they do not intend to repatriate to their area of origin due to the following reasons:

- Lack of housing (38%)
- Lack of income generation opportunities (29%)
- Lack of public services (23%)
- Insecurity (8%)
- Lack of land (1%) and
- Other reasons (1%).

When asked "Do you have any concerns about your return to Afghanistan?" 91% of the interviewed returnees said "Yes":



When asked "Do you have any concerns about your return to Afghanistan?" nearly 78% of the interviewed returnees said "Yes":



The primary obstacles discouraging Afghan refugees to make a decision for return have been lack of land, employment and shelter.

Alleged arrests/detentions and intimidations in Pakistan

Nearly 1% of the interviewed returnees alleged that they had been arrested and/or detained during their stay in Pakistan due to unknown reasons e.g. PoR cards validity date etc. Money extortion/bribery, by the Pakistani police, which was a challenge for returnees in the past has been decreased (over 80% compared to 2013) since September 2013 when UNHCR Offices/VRCs in Pakistan started issuing complain collection form. Returning families are provided with a form and hotline number to report any problem (bribery, transportation tax, theft cases on the road, losing belonging, traffic incident and, etc.) to the UNHCR border monitors based at Torkham and Spin Boldak crossing points. However, it is still remains a concern. **Some 12%** of interviewed returnees stated that they faced problems (e.g. extortion by police) while traveling from the VRC to Torkham crossing point. Most of those faced problems alleged that they were asked by the Police to pay bribes because they were carrying livestock, construction material (used beams), or to avoid a search of the trucks.

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 coordination with other protection actors monitors their protection situation to ascertain that registered refugees are not deported.

IRAN:

1 - 31 October 2014: A total of 15,076 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported (via Islam Qala: 59% and Zaranj: 41% border points) from Iran. This figure is 23% lower compared to 19,649 deportees in September 2014.

1 January - 31 October 2014: The total number of deportees during the ten months of 2014 is 168,267 individuals which is 9% lower compared to the same period last year when 184,091 Afghans were deported (via Zaranj) from Iran.

A total number of 222,710 Afghans were deported from Iran in 2013, averaging 610 persons per day.

The vast majority of deportees (98%) were single males who entered Iran illegally, to look 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 assists with their transportation costs from the cities of Herat and Zaranj to their final destinations.

Deportations from Iran											
Reporting Period	Entry Point	Family Groups				Single				Total	Total Individuals
		Families	Individuals			Male		Female			
			M	F	Total	Adult	UAM	Adult	UAM		
01 - 31 Oct 2014	Zaranj	166	325	360	685	5,449	48	0	0	5,497	6,182
	Islam Qala	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	8,894
Total		166	325	360	685	5,449	48	0	0	5,497	15,076
01 Jan -31 Oct 2014	Zaranj	1,423	2,995	3,337	6,332	50,865	312	0	0	51,177	57,509
	Islam Qala	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	110,758
Total		1,423	2,995	3,337	6,332	50,865	312	0	0	51,177	168,267

PAKISTAN:

1 - 31 October 2014: A total of 848 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham (515) and Spin Boldak (333) border points. This figure is 11% lower compared to 948 deportees in September 2014.

1 January - 31 October 2014: During the ten months of 2014, a total of 2,825 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham Border. This figure is 39% higher compared to 1,720 deportees during the same period in 2013.

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, 4,411 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Spin Boldak (SB). This figure is 27% lower compared to the 6,050 deportees during the same period in 2013.

Deportations from Pakistan											
Reporting Period	Entry Point	Family Groups				Single				Total	Total Individuals
		Families	Individuals			Male		Female			
			M	F	Total	Adult	UAM	Adult	UAM		
01 -31 Oct 2014	Torkham	0	0	0	0	515	0	0	0	515	515
	Spin Boldak	0	0	0	0	333	0	0	0	333	333
Total		0	0	0	0	848	0	0	0	848	848
01 Jan - 31 Oct 2014	Torkham	0	0	0	0	2,825	0	0	0	2,825	2,825
	Spin Boldak	2	6	5	11	4,400	0	0	0	4,400	4,411
Total		2	6	5	11	7,225	0	0	0	7,225	7,236

UNHCR would like to extend its deep appreciation for the continuing support and generous contributions of donors to its operation in Afghanistan.

