



UPDATE ON RETURN OF AFGHAN REFUGEES FROM PAKISTAN

Update no. 5: 17 October - 24 October 2016

OVERVIEW

- The scale and pace of Afghan returns from Pakistan has accelerated to unprecedented levels and, moreover, is happening in winter. The total number of Afghan refugee returns could reach 360,000 by end-2016, 60% higher than initial projections. The high numbers of return to areas with limited absorption capacity is outstripping international capacity to assist. In addition to repatriation grants for returnees, UNHCR also plans to support targeted vulnerable households to prepare for winter. These households will include returnees, internally displaced people and host community families. The assistance will include a combination of cash assistance and non-food relief items.
- Due to these increasing needs, UNHCR is revising its Supplementary Appeal of 19 September to support repatriation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan and provide winter support for vulnerable households.

TRENDS

- More than 4,000 Afghan refugees are crossing the border from Pakistan each day. Some 29,000 returns were recorded during the past week, bringing the total number to 92,000 in the first three weeks of October. This is the highest rate of return in a single month since 2010.
- So far this year, 262,928 Afghan refugees have returned from Pakistan. This is more than four times the total number of returns recorded in 2015. Up to 74% of the returns are taking place to five provinces: Nangarhar, Kabul, Baghlan, Kunduz and Logar.¹
- An average of 4,700 people are registering at the Voluntary Repatriation Centres (VRCs) in Pakistan each day. Around 80% are from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province followed by 11% from Punjab, mainly returning via the Torkham border crossing.
- The return trend through Spin Boldak/Jamal Mayna Encashment Centre in Kandahar² significantly increased this month, compared to August and September.
- It is likely that return trends will remain high, given the fact that families may opt to return before the start of winter. At the same time, families originating from the coldest climate areas in Afghanistan may decide to remain in Pakistan during the winter.

KEY FIGURES

(as of 22 October 2016)

265,189

Refugees already returned in 2016

- 262,928 (99.15%) from Pakistan
- 2,123 (0.8%) from the Islamic Republic of Iran
- 138 (0.05%) from other countries

More than

360,000

refugees expected to return in 2016

\$400

Repatriation cash grant per person as of 25 June

MOST URGENT FINANCIAL NEEDS

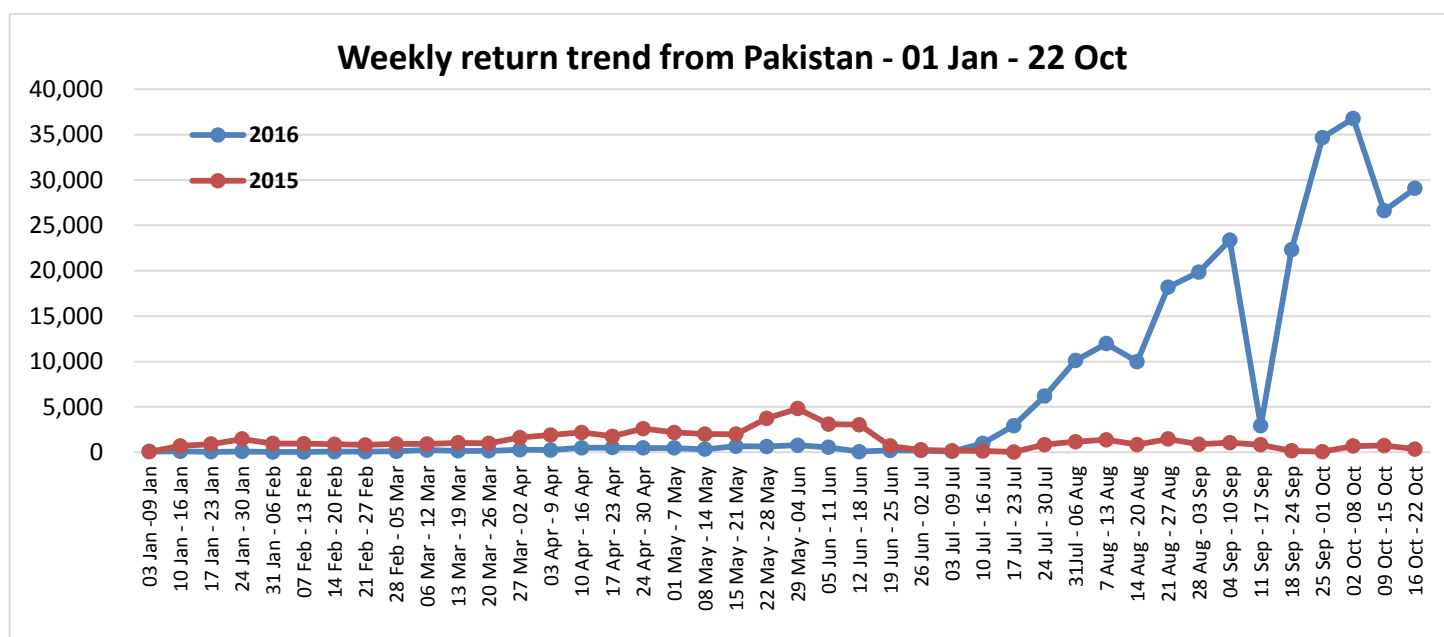
\$104.7 million

Required to support the repatriation and reintegration of Afghan refugees from Pakistan

¹ The numbers for October 2016 are as of 22 October. The numbers for 2014 and 2015 are for the entire month.

² Returnees from Baluchistan and parts of Sindh are mainly returning via Spin Boldak. However, reportedly a number of refugees from KPK and Punjab are coming via Baluchistan due to the overcrowded situation in the VRCs in KPK.

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS



- Afghan refugees who have returned in the last two weeks are cited that the level of harassment has reduced compared to July – September. However, some families still report that their decision to return was driven by the fear of possible arrest or intimidation similar to the reported experiences of Afghans over the last three months.
- UNHCR is scaling up the capacity of reception and processing at the Encashment Centres in Jalalabad and Kabul to meet the needs of growing numbers of Afghan refugees returning from Pakistan. In total there are four Encashment Centres in Afghanistan, located in Herat, Jalalabad, Kabul and Kandahar. These centres serve as the first point of contact with returnees, where they are provided with a cash grant of approximately \$ 400. The cash grant aims to cover transport costs, expenses upon return and facilitate the initial stages of reintegration. Furthermore, operational partners provide emergency health services, vaccines, mine risk awareness and legal advice to the returnees. In addition, transit facilities for overnight stays are available and UNHCR staff conducts protection monitoring to determine return trends, push/pull factors and specific needs for vulnerable individuals.
- In Pakistan, VRC Chamkani in Pakistan processed 1,044 families (5,396 people) on 22 October – the highest recorded number processed in a single day since 2003.
- The recommendations of the All Party Conference (APC) convened by Pakistan’s Minister of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) on Afghan refugee management issues in Islamabad on 21 September were submitted to the Federal Government. The APC called for the Government to set a viable and realistic timeline for the return of Afghan refugees and further suggested the extension of Proof of Registration cards until the end of 2021. The APC also condemned any harassment, exploitation and extortion from refugees and called Afghan refugees who wish to return to be allowed sufficient time to sort out property issues and wind up their businesses.

