UNHCR Afghanistan Voluntary Repatriation
MONTHLY REPORT, JUNE 2017

In June 2017, UNHCR facilitated the return to Afghanistan of a total of 2,207 Afghan refugees, including 2,161 from Pakistan, 27 from Iran and 19 from other countries. This figure is 89% lower than the total number of returnees in May, largely due to the Ramadan period, during which refugees are generally less inclined to return. The UNHCR facilitated return programme was temporarily suspended from 25-27 June 2017 due to Eid-ul-Fitr celebrations.

Returns are expected to increase in the month of July and onward.

Between January and June 2017, a total of 33,733 Afghan refugees returned to Afghanistan under UNHCR’s facilitated repatriation program, with the majority from Pakistan (33,325) followed by a smaller number from Iran (319) and other countries (89). This is higher (332%) in comparison to the 7,812 Afghans who returned during the same period in 2016, when the protection environment and asylum conditions in Pakistan were more favourable.

Between January and June 2017, 33,733 returnees overwhelmingly returned from Pakistan (99%). Of these returnees, 71% returned from KPK, 74% returned to 5 provinces: Kabul, Nangarhar, Logar, Kunduz and Paktia. A 332% increase compared to last year. Over 100% received a repatriation cash grant (an average of USD 200 per person) at 4 encashment centers, over 6.6 million USD. 15% of returnees interviewed, 978 household level interviews carried out at the ECs, representing 15% of the total returnees.
In 2017, almost 1,000 new returnees from Pakistan were interviewed during monitoring. The main reasons for leaving Pakistan include a lack of employment; harassment by the police and other State authorities; stricter border controls resulting in separation of families; fear of arrest/deportation; and high cost of living. Incentives for returning to Afghanistan include a perceived improvement in the security situation and a reduced fear of persecution (compared to the period of their initial flight); offers of land allocation, including government assurances of house/land through the Gul Watan campaign; reunification with family members; a perception of increased employment opportunities; and UNHCR assistance.
RETURN PROCESS

UNHCR’s Voluntary Repatriation Centres (VRCs) in the countries of asylum are processing refugees willing to return to Afghanistan and issue a Voluntary Repatriation Form (VRF) for each family. Two VRCs are located in Pakistan: Chamkani in Peshawar (KPK) and Baleli in Quetta (Baluchistan). Repatriation from Iran is facilitated through all UNHCR Offices, including the VRC in Soleimankhani and the UNHCR Office at Dogharoun.

Upon return to Afghanistan, returnees are assisted at four Encashment Centers (ECs) located in Kabul, Samarkhel (Nangarhar), Jamal Mayna (Kandahar) and Herat.

At the ECs all Afghan returnees with a valid VRF receive a grant of approximately USD 200 per person based on their area of origin to support returnees’ immediate humanitarian and re-integration needs.

Besides cash grants, a range of inter-agency services including basic health care and vaccinations (Ministry of Public Health supported by WHO and UNICEF), mine risk awareness (Danish Demining Group (DDG) supported by UNMAS, back to school campaign (UNICEF/Ministry of Education), hygiene kits (UNFPA) and a transit facility for overnight accommodation (UNHCR/MoRR) are also provided for returning refugees.

At the ECs, UNHCR and MoRR/DoRRs also conducts returnee monitoring (household level) and identify persons with specific needs to service providers for assessment and potential assistance.

Mine risk education is important as a protection intervention for awareness of the threats associated with mines, improvised explosive devices (IED) and unexploded ordnance to prevent injury and loss of life, particularly for those returning to rural areas; UNAMA has reported a sharp increase in associated child casualties in the first quarter of 2017.

ENCASHMENT CENTRE RETURNEE MONITORING

Between 1 January and 30 June 2017, a total of 978 households (958 with those returned from Pakistan and 20 from Iran) were interviewed including 60% (586) male and 40% (392) female respondents. This sample size representing 15% of returnee families from Pakistan and Iran who were assisted upon arrival at the 4 ECs managed by UNHCR/MoRR. Interviewees were selected either randomly from the returning families (890) or purposively based on reporting of protection concerns (88) at the ECs, being the first point of contact in Afghanistan.

This regular monitoring identifies return trends; an assessment of the voluntariness of return, reasons for the decision to return (in Pakistan/Iran to Afghanistan), the level of information that returnees received in countries of asylum to make a well-informed choice to return home, and conditions and respect for the basic rights in the country of asylum. It also assists to detect harassment and violations that should be brought to the attention of responsible authorities.

The small sample size among returnees from Iran is due to the small number of returns from Iran, the majority who are single - individual students.

Findings shows as follows:
**Interviewee Ethnicity (%) - returnees from Pakistan & Iran - 01 Jan - 30 Jun 2017**

- Pashtun: 86.6%
- Tajik: 8.2%
- Uzbek: 2.5%
- Hazara: 1.2%
- Other: 1.5%

**Interviewee age/sex (%) - returnees from Pakistan & Iran 01 Jan - 30 Jun 2017**

- **Male**:
  - 0-4: 16%
  - 5-11: 10.6%
  - 12-17: 5%
  - 18-59: 11%
  - 60+: 27%

- **Female**:
  - 0-4: 15.6%
  - 5-11: 10.6%
  - 12-17: 4.0%
  - 18-59: 4.0%
  - 60+: 11%

**Reasons for leaving Pakistan - by gender (03 Apr -30 Jun 2017)**

- No employment opportunities: 47.7% Male, 7.4% Female
- Abuse by police or state authorities: 15.6% Male, 4% Female
- Strict border entry requirements: 25% Male, 6.5% Female
- Fear of arrest and/or deportation: 11% Male, 3.2% Female
- High costs of living / high rent: 5% Male, 3% Female
- No added protection value of PoR card: 27% Male, 6% Female
- Discrimination and/or harassment: 11% Male, 3.3% Female
- Eviction notice by landlord, police, army: 11% Male, 3% Female
- Undocumented family members facing issues / troubles: 6.5% Male, 7.4% Female

**Reasons for leaving Pakistan (%) - 01 Jan - 30 Jun 2016**

- Economic factors*: 73.0%
- Harassment/Abuse by police or state authorities: 13.4%
- Fear of arrest and/or deportation: 7.9%
- Other*: 5.7%

**Incentive for return to Afghanistan - Returnees from Pakistan - by gender - 03 Apr - 30 Jun 2017**

- Improvement in security situation: 31.0% Male, 27% Female
- Land allocation scheme and/or shelter program: 25% Male, 10.3% Female
- Reunion with family / relatives in Afghanistan: 22% Male, 11.4% Female
- Afghan government assurances in the provision of house/land in Afghanistan (GoA Gul Watan campaign): 20.4% Male, 4% Female
- No longer have a fear of persecution: 9% Male, 9.5% Female
- Employment opportunities: 11.1% Male, 5% Female
- UNHCR’s assistance package: 6% Male, 5.6% Female
- Other*: 2% Male, 0.6% Female

*Other: Uncertainty related to the PoR cards extension, overall deterioration in security conditions, discrimination by local community, camp / settlement closures or relocation campaigns, denied access to school and health facilities, night raids, no agricultural activities, etc.

*During 2016 refugees witnessed increased pressure in Pakistan. Economic hardship linked to loss of access to job markets and the protection situation was regularly cited as the first factor influenced decision for return to Afghanistan.

* Other: Fear of land occupation in Afghanistan, improvement in health and education facilities, improved weather conditions for agriculture activities.
Incentive for return to Afghanistan - Returnees from Pakistan (%) - 01 Jan -30 Jun 2016

- Improvement in security situation: 54.3%
- UNHCR assistance package: 16.9%
- Reunion with the family/relatives in Afghanistan: 8.5%
- Employment opportunities: 8.4%
- No longer have a fear of persecution: 7.7%
- Land allocation scheme and/or shelter program: 3.6%
- Other: 0.5%

Sources of Information on Place of Origin & VolRep Program
Returnees from Pakistan and Iran - 2017

- From the Afghan community: 46.7%
- Visited Afghanistan: 10.9%
- Had no information: 5.7%
- Through Media: 0.8%
- Through UNHCR: 0.8%
- Other sources: 3.0%
- Place of Origin: 69.1%
- VolRep Operation: 37.1%

Purpose of visit to Afghanistan before return
Returnees from Pakistan and Iran - 2017

- Participated in a ceremony: 43.1%
- Family visit: 11.2%
- To assess the situation to make a decision for return: 5.5%
- For business purpose: 3.1%
- Other: 3.1%

Concerns after return to Afghanistan
01 Jan - 30 Jun 2017

- Lack of land: 18.6%
- Lack of job opportunities: 15.9%
- Have land but no shelter: 8.6%
- Security: 3.9%
- Other: 52.7%

Reasons for not returning to place of origin*
01 Jan - 30 Jun 2017

- Other: 4%
- Lack of basic services: 2%
- To re-unite with relatives: 4%
- Lack of income opportunities: 9%
- Lack of housing/shelter: 24%
- Lack of land: 26%
- Perceived insecurity: 31%

Professions of interviewed returnees (%) - Returnees from Pakistan - 2017

- Female
- Male

- House wife
- Daily wage labour
- Shop owner
- Tailoring
- Driver
- Agriculture
- Education profession
- Embroidery
- Construction
- Religious
- Bee Keeping
- Medical
- Other

Professions of interviewed returnees (%) - Returnees from Iran - 2017*

- Female
- Male

- Daily wage labour, 15%
- Construction, 5%
- Other, 20%
- Carpet Weaver, 5%
- House wife, 35%

* Male and female breakdown for the profession of returnees from Iran is not available.

* Out of 978 respondents, 427 returnees (44%) stated that they do not intend to return to their place of origin mainly due to insecurity, lack of housing/shelter, land and economic opportunities.
**Stay arrangement after return - 01 Jan - 30 Jun 2017**

- Relatives’ house: 35%
- Own House: 16%
- Rental house: 45%
- Other: 4%

**Years in Exile - 01 Jan - 30 Jun 2017**

- Pakistan: 67.3%
- Iran: 30.0%
- Other: 2.7%

**Awareness about cash grant**

- Male: Yes 73%, No 27%
- Female: Yes 40%, No 60%

**Plan, upon return, how to spend the cash grant**

- Paid transportation cost: 46%
- Buy food and other commodities: 21%
- Rent accommodation: 11%
- Build shelter: 9%
- Investment in livelihood: 5%
- Pay back loans: 4%
- Other: 4%

**After you spend your cash grant, how will you support your family?**

- Will rely on extended family: 9.2%
- Rely on daily wage work: 74.1%
- Borrow money from relatives to start up a small business: 6.1%
- Will join army/policing: 1.7%
- Other: 5.0%

**Did you, your family members or your relatives consider moving to Europe?**

- Male: Yes 6%, No 94%
- Female: Yes 11%, No 89%

**If yes, what made you change your decision?**

- Financial consideration: 50.2%
- Family issues: 15.6%
- Strict border management: 12.5%
- Risk of deportation: 6.3%
- Lower acceptance rate in the destination countries: 9.4%
- Long asylum process: 5.0%
- Other: 6.3%

**If yes, what made you change your decision?**

- Male
- Female
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CONTACTS
Donna Corcoran, External Relations Officer, Afghanistan, corcoran@unhcr.org, Tel: +93 202200381, Cell: +93 (0) 791990011

M. Nadir Farhad, Associate Public Information Officer, Afghanistan farhadm@unhcr.org Tel: +93 202200381, Cell: +93 (0) 791990018