Since 2002, nearly 5.3 million Afghan refugees have returned to Afghanistan under UNHCR’s facilitated Voluntary Repatriation programme. During the first quarter of 2021, a total of 573 Afghans have returned, this is 106% more than in the similar period of 2020. This increase in the number of returnees, compared to 2020, was largely due to the temporary suspension of UNHCR’s facilitated voluntary repatriation linked to COVID-19 in 2020, while worsening security and economic situation across Afghanistan remain unchanged. Voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees through Torkham crossing point remain suspended as a result of customs formalities imposed by the Pakistan authorities since November 2020. UNHCR Office in Pakistan is following up on this issue.

At Encashment Centres in Afghanistan, returning refugees receive a cash grant of approximately USD 250 per individual, as well as a range of services to support their reintegration.

**RETURNS PROCESSED AT ENCASHMENT CENTRES IN AFGHANISTAN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Returns from</th>
<th>573 from Iran</th>
<th>433 from Pakistan</th>
<th>278 Returns in</th>
<th>228 from Iran</th>
<th>16 from Pakistan</th>
<th>Jan-Mar 2021*</th>
<th>Jan-Mar 2020</th>
<th>34 from other Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**RETURNEE DEMOGRAPHICS**

- 0 - 5: 6%
- 6 - 17: 8%
- 18 - 59: 34%
- 60+: 2%

**ASSISTANCE AT ENCASHMENT CENTRES (ECs) IN AFGHANISTAN**

**USD $141,816** was provided in cash assistance to returnees at ECs in Q1 of 2021. A total of **$57,905** was provided in the same period of 2020. Beside cash grants, a range of inter-agency services are provided for returnee refugees, including basic health and malnutrition screening and vaccination, mine risk awareness, information on school enrolment, and overnight accommodation, if needed. In addition, UNHCR, in line with the measures recommended by MoPH and WHO, adopted a new SOP in all ECs, aiming to prevent the spread and transmission of COVID-19.

**PROVINCE OF DESTINATION**

(Figures reflect returns processed at encashment centers in Afghanistan)

- 6 returns from other Countries
- 433 returns from Iran
- 134 returns from Pakistan

The data has not been independently verified and is subject to error or omission, deliberation or otherwise by the various sources. Arrows reflected in the map do not reflect the routes but only indicate return movement.

*The number of returnees processed for return in Pakistan and Iran may sometimes be higher than those processed at encashment centres in Afghanistan. This is due to the presence of recycled cases applying for voluntary repatriation a second time and also persons not presenting to collect the cash grant in Afghanistan.*
REASONS AND INTENTIONS RELATED TO RETURN

Reasons for leaving Pakistan and Iran

- High costs of living/rent: 35%
- No employment opportunities: 34%
- Fear of COVID-19: 20%
- Denial of access to basic services: 7%
- Fear of arrest and/or deportation: 2%
- Other: 3%

Upon return, how do you plan to spend the cash grant?

- Paying transportation cost: 38%
- Buy food and other commodities: 27%
- Rent accommodation: 13%
- Investment in livelihoods: 9%
- Other: 5%
- Don’t know/ won’t say: 7%

Reasons for return to Afghanistan (pull factors)

- UNHCR assistance package: 35%
- Reunion with family/relatives in Afghanistan: 29%
- Land allocation scheme and/or shelter program: 17%
- Employment opportunities: 15%
- Other: 3%

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

- 85% of the respondents were aware of the cash grants prior to the return. However, only 41% had information regarding the amount.

Reasons for not returning to Province of Origin

- To re-unite with relatives: 46%
- Lack of employment opportunities: 10%
- Perceived insecurity: 10%
- Lack of basic services: 8%
- Other: 6%

Interviewed returnees’ skills/qualifications

- No skill: 32%
- Tailoring: 28%
- Shop keeper: 7%
- Unskilled daily wage labour: 7%
- Agriculture (Farming): 3%
- Other: 24%

Concerns related to the return to Afghanistan

- 86% of the respondents have information regarding the situation in their place of origin while in the country of asylum, of which 88% receive such information from the Afghan community.

What will be your living arrangements after return?

- Rent a house: 28%
- Own house: 25%
- Rent an apartment: 24%
- Rent a room: 19%
- Other: 3%

REGISTERED VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION TO AFGHANISTAN 2002-2021

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