

AFGHANISTAN SITUATION

REGIONAL REFUGEE RESPONSE PLAN

2021 Final Report



Cover photograph:

Afghanistan. Seven-year-old Farhanaz* and her brother Najeebullah*, 5, near their home in Kabul. The children's grandfather Gul Khan*, 53, has five sons, two daughters and two grandchildren. In total, the family has 14 members. They fled their home in Nangarhar province three years ago. All the children are now in school, and Gul Khan and his 26-year-old son work as day labourers. Life is a struggle and winter is the hardest time. "In summer we only have to worry about food," said Gul Khan. "But in winter we have to worry about finding fuel to burn, fixing the heating system, falling down on the ice when collecting water.". © UNHCR/Andrew McConnell

**Names changed for protection reasons*

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RRP 2021 RESPONSE IN NUMBERS



158,350

NEWLY ARRIVED
AFGHANS AS
OF 31 DECEMBER 2021

*The number of new arrivals in need of international protection is likely much higher.



58%
FUNDED

USD 299,210,282

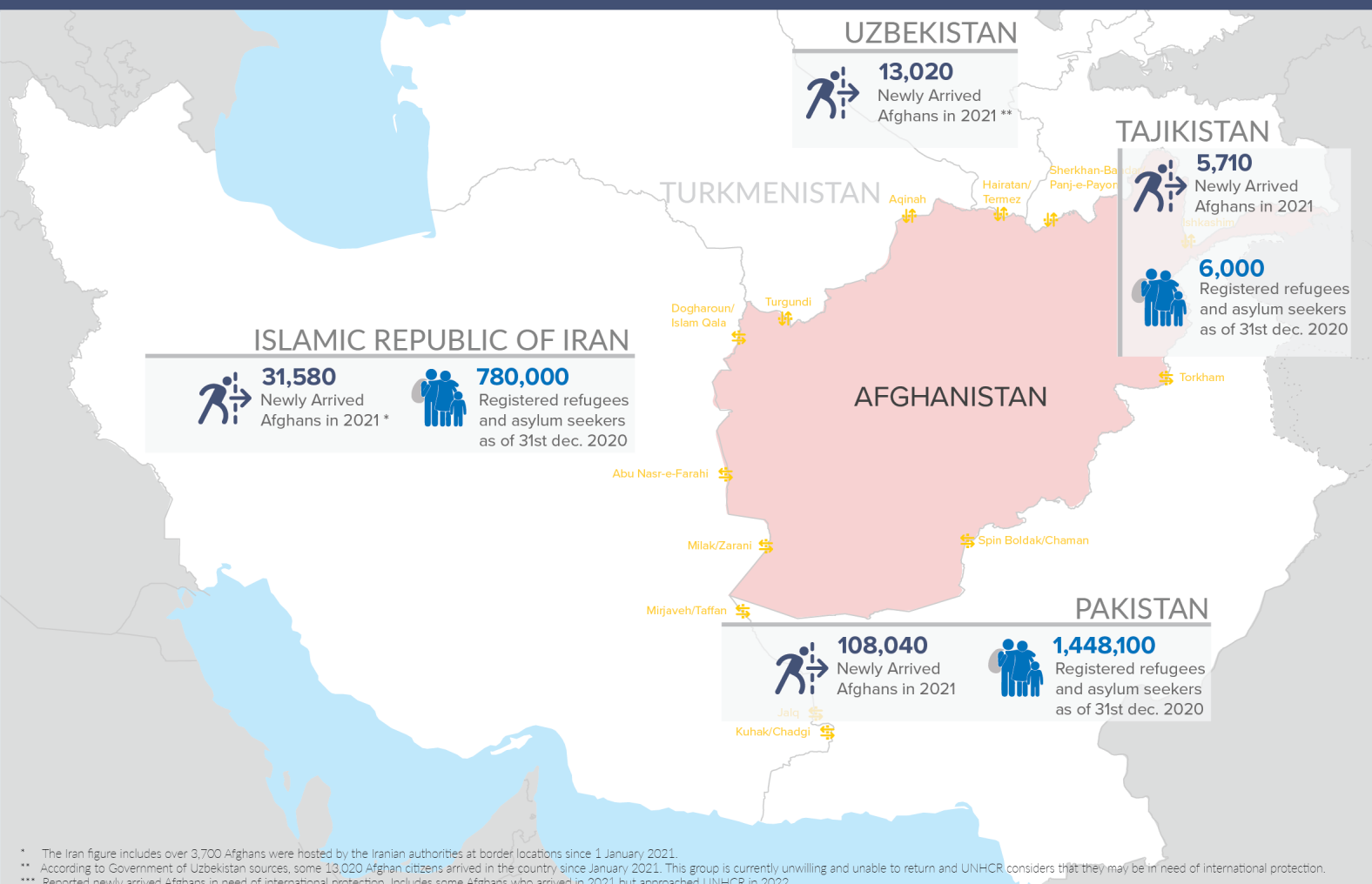
FUNDING REQUESTED
IN 2021

USD 174,471,670

FUNDING RECEIVED
BY 31 DECEMBER 2021



11
PARTNERS
INVOLVED

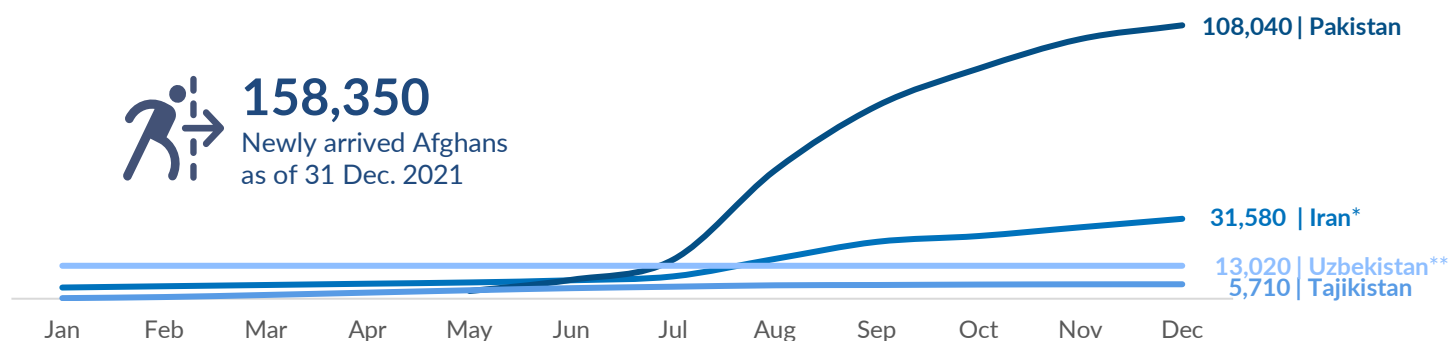


Reported newly arrived Afghans in need of international protection to neighbouring countries since 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021



158,350

Newly arrived Afghans
as of 31 Dec. 2021



UNHCR utilises multiple data collection methodologies, including border monitoring, cross-border movement tracking through Refugee Key Informant and Household interviews, individual protection assessments and various forms of mandate registration. The overall number of Afghans with international refugee protection needs is likely to be much higher.

* The Iran figure includes over 3,700 Afghans who were hosted by the Iranian authorities at border locations since 1 January 2021.

** According to Government of Uzbekistan sources, some 13,020 Afghan citizens arrived in the country since January 2021. This group is currently unwilling and unable to return and UNHCR considers that they may be in need of international protection.

Regional Overview

The drastic deterioration of the situation in Afghanistan in 2021, resulting in forced displacement, required the activation of the Refugee Coordination Model and the rapid scale-up of interagency preparedness in neighbouring countries. In August, UNHCR led the development of the interagency Regional Refugee Preparedness and Response Plan (RRP), which outlined the humanitarian preparedness and priority interventions by 11 participating partners in Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. As a new outflow had not been witnessed in 20 years, the RRP was developed to put in place adequate preparedness and response measures to support governments, in coordination with partners. RRP 2021 covered the emergency period from July to December 2021, including contingency efforts that were put in place in July. The interagency planning process was aligned with contingency planning efforts inside and outside Afghanistan and projections coordinated with the UN Country Team inside Afghanistan. While emergency preparedness and response efforts for the potential new influx were ongoing, interagency partners continued programmes to support the existing 2.2 million registered Afghan refugees in Pakistan, Iran, and other countries in the region which were critically underfunded. As such, RRP 2021 integrated preparedness and response to new influxes with critically underfunded elements of existing programmes for in-situ Afghans in neighbouring countries in one plan.

The upsurge of violence and human rights violations across the country in 2021, combined with hardships caused by political uncertainty and the economic and food security situation, resulted in significant forced displacement, both internally and across borders. Some 700,000 people (59 per cent women; 21 per cent children)¹ were internally displaced by conflict in Afghanistan in 2021, bringing to 3.4 million the number who remain internally displaced by conflict inside the country. Afghans who fled the country faced different border management practices across the region (covered in detail in country chapters). In general borders were tightly regulated, limiting the ability of Afghans to exercise their right to seek asylum and resulting in much irregular movement. This increased vulnerabilities and protection risks, including exploitation and abuse of those without documentation. Nonetheless, 158,370 Afghans in need of international protection are reported to have arrived in neighbouring countries in 2021. However, as there are several impediments to accessing UNHCR and/or government asylum systems in host countries, it is believed that the number of Afghans in need of international protection is significantly higher.

UNHCR released a non-return advisory for Afghanistan² in August 2021 calling on all countries to allow civilians fleeing Afghanistan access to their territories, to asylum, and to respect the principle of non-refoulement at all times. Non-refoulement includes rejection of individuals seeking international protection at the frontier. Nonetheless, reports of forced returns to Afghanistan continued throughout 2021. The non-return advisory was reiterated by the subsequent issuing of the “UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Afghanistan” in February 2022.³ The guidance renews calls on all countries to allow civilians fleeing Afghanistan access to their territories, to guarantee the right to seek asylum, suspend deportations (including of Afghans whose asylum claims have been rejected) and to ensure respect for the principle of non-refoulement at all times. It calls on States to register all arrivals who seek international protection and to issue documentary proof of registration to all individuals concerned, as well as to facilitate and expedite family reunification procedures for Afghans whose families are left behind in Afghanistan or who have been displaced across the region.

According to OHCHR, although the decline in hostilities has seen a sharp decrease in civilian casualties in Afghanistan, the human rights situation for many Afghans remains of profound concern, including the situation of human rights defenders, media workers, ethnic minorities, and women.⁴ Since August 2021, women have largely been excluded from the workforce both as a result of the economic crisis and restrictions imposed by the *de facto* authorities. In the public sector, exceptions are made in some cases for women working in healthcare, primary schools, as well as for a very small number of female civil servants. Limitations on women’s freedom of movement have negatively impacted several aspects of women’s lives, including preventing them from accessing health services. The closure of many women’s protection shelters has also left women at risk while justice system mechanisms established to deal with cases of gender-based violence are largely non-functional. In addition, according to a UNDP report,⁵ 72 per cent of Afghans are already living below the poverty line, with a risk of this rising to 97 per cent in 2022. The situation will continue to have a significant impact on neighbouring countries, emphasizing the importance of an inclusive response in all countries. This Report outlines the response from July – December 2021, while in response to continuing requirements in host countries, RRP 2022 has been released.⁶

¹ <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/afghanistan/idps>

² <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/611a4c5c4.pdf>, reiterated by the subsequent advisory listed in the following footnote.

³ <https://www.refworld.org/docid/61d851cd4.html> [accessed 2 March 2022]

⁴ <https://www.ungeneva.org/en/news-media/meeting-summary/2022/03/conseil-des-droits-de-lhomme-la-situation-des-droits-de-lhomme>

⁵ <https://www.undp.org/press-releases/97-percent-afghans-could-plunge-poverty-mid-2022-says-undp>

⁶ <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/afghanistan-situation-regional-response-plan-rrp-january-december-2022>

The Islamic Republic of Iran

2021 RESPONSE IN NUMBERS



31,580

NEWLY ARRIVED
AFGHANS AS
OF 31 DECEMBER 2021



USD 135,856,299

FUNDING REQUESTED
IN 2021

USD 33,425,098

FUNDING RECEIVED
BY 31 DECEMBER 2021



10

PARTNERS
INVOLVED

Situation Overview

The Islamic Republic of Iran has hosted millions of Afghan refugees since war first broke out in Afghanistan in 1979. Over more than four decades the Government has continued to support inclusive and progressive policies towards refugees, who face severe challenges in meeting basic needs. In 2021, Iran hosted almost 4 million Afghans, including 780,000 Afghan refugees (Amayesh card holders), almost 600,000 Afghans holding Afghan passports with Iranian visas, and some 2.1 million undocumented Afghans. With the humanitarian crisis building up in Afghanistan since mid-2021, there was an outflow of Afghans into neighbouring countries, including Iran. Throughout the year, UNHCR witnessed an increased number of Afghans approaching its reception centres requesting urgent assistance and seeking assurances of protection, including guidance on accessing the asylum system. UNHCR is aware of at least 31,574 Afghan new arrivals in Iran in 2021 who are in need of international protection. This includes 27,816 persons who approached UNHCR and 3,758 reported by BAFIA. However, according to statements provided by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran (GIRI), some 500,000 Afghans are estimated to have arrived in the country since August 2021 and are largely residing in urban areas. As such, the overall number in need of international protection is likely to be much higher. Data gathered from new arrivals indicates that 80 per cent are of Hazara or Tajik ethnicity, with 23 per cent single, 77 per cent families, and 22 per cent of all new arrivals being female headed households.

Since July 2021, with border closures and non-issuance of visa's, irregular border crossings increased, sometimes using smugglers, leading to additional protection risks, including detention and arbitrary arrests. Key drivers for cross-border movements included insecurity and persecution, discriminatory treatment of women and girls, targeted violence against persons with specific risk profiles by state and non-state actors, increasing levels of food insecurity, and poverty in Afghanistan. In response to reports of forced returns to Afghanistan, UNHCR released a non-return advisory for Afghanistan in August 2021. It is estimated that 66 per cent of Afghans who have crossed into Iran will be or have been deported despite the non-return advisory. Government asylum procedures to assess individual protection needs are not systematic, transparent, and accessible to all asylum seekers, which may result in persons being held in transit/deportation centres not receiving information on access to international protection nor being screened for these purposes. The lack of unhindered humanitarian access to asylum-seekers and refugees, including those in detention, is also a significant challenge.

Among Amayesh card holders, undocumented Afghans, and new arrivals there are several profiles who have specific needs, including female headed households, unaccompanied and single children (UASC), single men who may be forced to return, and persons with disabilities. With a lack of livelihoods options, and with the protracted socio-economic downturn in Iran, exacerbated by economic sanctions and the ongoing pandemic, households have struggled to make ends meet. In addition to the lack of livelihoods leading to greater risk of exploitation, major concerns reported by these population groups include lack of access to documentation, lack of access to health care services (including on sexual and reproductive health), refoulement, detention, and limited freedom of movement. The needs and vulnerabilities of host communities converge with those of Afghan populations, specifically the high levels of poverty and limited access to livelihoods.



**Of new arrivals screened
by UNHCR in Iran**

(17 Aug 2021 – 8 Jan 2022)*



100%

FLED DUE TO GENERAL SECURITY
SITUATION AND/OR SPECIFIC THREATS



24%

ARE FEMALE-HEADED
HOUSEHOLDS



66%

WILL BE OR HAVE BEEN DEPORTED
DUE TO THE NON-RETURN ADVISORY

Source: UNHCR Iran: New Arrivals from Afghanistan

Key Highlights

Scale up of prepositioning efforts across the response. Over the RRP planning period, partners significantly expanded stocks of emergency assistance to facilitate a swift and scalable response to any new arrivals. Consistent with the core planning scenario outlined under the Inter-Agency Contingency Plan (January 2021), stocks of core items have been increased to support a response to up to 150,000 new arrivals over a 3-month period. As elaborated below, this included prepositioning of NFIs in country for between 70,000 to 140,000 persons, tents for over 50,000 persons, and ready-to-eat food rations to support 21,500 individuals for their first six days upon arrival in Iran.

Expanding programmes in eastern-border provinces. With the vast majority of new Afghan arrivals entering Iran through informal routes/ crossing points in the eastern border provinces (Sistan and Baluchestan, South Khorasan, and Khorasan Razavi), RRP partners scaled up presence and preparedness/ response interventions in these areas. To facilitate a timely frontline response to new arrivals, emergency in-kind assistance has been prepositioned in advance field locations including the Niatak site, existing warehouses in border areas (including at the Dogharoun border-crossing in Khorasan Razavi) and in Government facilities hosting new arrivals. Furthermore, as part of efforts to bolster the humanitarian and protection response to new arrivals, RRP partners initiated preparations and construction works on a new site in Sistan and Baluchestan in collaboration with the Government of Iran. The Niatak site will host up to 7,500 vulnerable Afghans and be part of a proposed pilot project - launched in collaboration with GIRI - to implement joint registration and screening of new arrivals (as a pathway to expand access to documentation and regularize status). In addition, under the RRP, work on developing two transit centres near border-crossing points has been initiated (Mil 78 in South Khorasan and Dogharoun in Khorasan Razavi). These centres will facilitate initial screening of needs/ identification of vulnerable persons and provide refuge for new arrivals before other accommodation options are found.










Iran. Afghan and Iranian students receiving stationery kits from NRC in Kerman province. Photo: NRC.

Bolstering regular and pre-existing programmes. Under the RRP, partners augmented existing regular programmes targeting new arrivals, existing refugee communities in Iran, and host communities. With the majority of new Afghan arrivals settling in urban centres, putting additional strain on core social services in these areas, this assistance supports the continuation and expansion of inclusive policies related to the delivery of core social services, benefitting new and existing populations alike. These interventions include the construction/ rehabilitation of eight schools, the provision of education equipment and furniture to 30 schools (supporting 750 classrooms) and the construction of six health posts and two safe delivery posts.

Enhancing coordination arrangement under the newly activated Refugee Coordination Model. Following the activation of the Refugee Coordination Model (RCM) in July 2021, partners strengthened overall coordination capacity to support the implementation of the RRP. Technical surge staff were deployed to support ongoing preparedness and response efforts, while coordination capacity was also reinforced across agencies to enhance joint planning through the sector working groups. In the spirit of partnership, sector lead roles have been shared among key partners in the response according to their capacity and expertise.

2021 Achievements

Sector	Inter-Agency Achievement (July – Dec 2021)
Education 	3,030 education kits and material procured and prepositioned for new arrivals Construction of 8 schools with 12 -classrooms was initiated and is ongoing. Training conducted for 128 community volunteers
Food security 	2,500 ready-to-eat rations procured/ prepositioned for arrival phase 11,350 dry food rations procured/ prepositioned for settled phase 534 newly arrived households supported through multi-purpose cash to cover basic needs, including food needs.
Health & Nutrition 	11 health facilities constructed and rehabilitated (including health posts, safe delivery posts) 187 types of medical supplies prepositioned for new arrivals
Logistics & Telecoms 	3 warehouses opened in Tehran, Kerman & Mashad for immediate response to new arrivals. 15 trucks rented and dispatched with over 50 tonnes of core relief items, COVID-19 items and WASH items to field locations (e.g. border provinces).
Protection 	24,318 newly arrived individuals (5,980 families) counselled on assistance & asylum procedures 3,297 individuals provided with cash assistance for protection outcomes 2,455 women and girls, including those heading households, were supported with dignity kits and material support as well as services for protection services 282 children at risk identified, including unaccompanied and separated children (and supported with best interests procedures and psychosocial support)
Shelter & NFIs 	10,494 tents prepositioned and dispatched for response in Kerman, Tehran, Dogharoun, Sistan and Baluchestan and Niatak. 3 new or existing sites/ reception centres/ transit centres to process and host new arrivals identified and agreed with BAFIA for development 164,540 items prepositioned for new arrivals (including tarpaulin, blankets, kitchen sets, jerry cans, mosquito nets, sleeping mats, energy kits, reduced mobility kits, NFI kits, children's kits)
WASH 	7,000 hygiene kits prepositioned for new arrivals 75 water tanks prepositioned for new arrivals 25,800 bottles of water distributed to new arrivals

Gaps & Challenges

Restricted access to the border areas to monitor the situation and the lack of established facilities has hampered the identification of and support to new arrivals and those most vulnerable amongst them. Identifying those in need of international protection and establishing adequate referral pathways for them remains difficult as there are challenges to be registered and file asylum claims. Lack of access to reliable data from the government (including population figures) and analysis further complicated efforts to deliver a timely and evidence-based response. Data on and access to newly arrived Afghans was particularly lacking in urban settings, where most new arrivals were located, precluding efforts to provide targeted and tailored assistance to these groups. In some cases, new arrivals used informal routes, including using smugglers, which presented additional challenges in identifying them and exacerbated the protection risks they faced. While UNHCR issued a non-return advisory for Afghanistan, detention, and deportation of Afghans, particularly single men, continued without clear indications that assessment of these groups for vulnerabilities or international protection needs was systematically being conducted. Iranian borders also remain closed for those arriving without documentation. Meanwhile, unaccompanied, and separated children (UASC), women and girls and other extremely vulnerable persons continued to be at high risk of violence, exploitation, and abuse, which are aggravated by socio-economic and cultural barriers and risks. A lack of access to these groups hampered the provision of assistance to them.

The inflow of Afghan refugees, in the middle of the fifth COVID-19 wave, required a swift increase in resources, including logistical, human, and financial resources which took time to mobilize. Limited access to new arrivals contributed to the inability to conduct distribution activities in some situations.

The ongoing economic sanctions against Iran also created an impediment during the repositioning of stock in country. The high inflation rates, a result of the long running sanctions, affected costing of products. This led to low supplier responses limiting competitiveness in the sourcing process. This challenge was addressed by engaging in a mixed approach of both local and international sourcing to obtain best value for money through undertaking a cost benefit analysis. The sanctions also contributed to delays in delivering international shipments for over two months as most service providers were unwilling to engage with Iran. This was resolved to some extent through the opening of the Termez cargo centre, which is a logistical base intended to keep buffer stock by UNHCR. Delivery time from Termez to Iran is between 2-4 weeks which improved overall efficiency and effectiveness in preparedness and response.

Despite the challenges, much progress has been made in the overall response and preparedness work. While simultaneously preparing for the new arrivals, the RRP 2021 allowed partners to continue implementing existing programmes, in close coordination with the Government, including on education and health, for all population groups, in the camps and in urban areas. The Government facilitated inclusive services for health that remained accessible for all regardless of status of documentation (including COVID-19 response and vaccination) similar to nationals countrywide. Similarly, the Government maintained a fully inclusive approach to refugee education, including refugees being able to access tertiary education and national literacy training programmes. Strong preparedness work was undertaken through the prepositioning of stocks during the reporting period. There have also been several collaborations initiated to address the emergency situation, including UNICEF's forthcoming partnership cooperation agreements with INGO's and local NGOs to boost implementation capacity of education programmes targeting refugees and host community populations.

To ensure that stocks prepositioned for new arrivals but not distributed, as the number of new arrivals was lower than anticipated, address other gaps, a distribution plan (being negotiated with BAFIA) has been developed, to include Amayesh holders, undocumented persons, and new arrivals, who are mostly moving to urban centres, staying in overcrowded conditions and dependent on relatives or known persons from the Afghan community. This is also in line with the focus on the area and needs based approach highlighted in the RRP, as well as an urban response strategy for refugees and new arrivals that is being developed by UNHCR. To ensure preparedness, stocks of 150,000 will also be maintained as a minimum contingency plan in case of a sudden influx.

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan

2021 RESPONSE IN NUMBERS



108,040

NEWLY ARRIVED
AFGHANS AS
OF 31 DECEMBER 2021



39%
FUNDED

USD 132,560,000

FUNDING REQUESTED
IN 2021

USD 51,783,885

FUNDING RECEIVED
BY 31 DECEMBER 2021



5

PARTNERS
INVOLVED

Situation Overview

The worst-case scenario of a new influx of up to 300,000 Afghan refugees into Pakistan did not occur. However, with the withdrawal of the international military forces and the Taliban takeover of the country, an increasing number of Afghans fled to Pakistan seeking asylum. In 2021, more than 100,000 Afghans (75 per cent women and children) approached UNHCR. The majority of these Afghans, 80 percent, arrived after the full withdrawal of troops in mid-August. As part of a longstanding activity due to the lack of national legislation on the right to seek asylum in Pakistan, UNHCR screened these individuals to identify protection needs.

In response to the escalating number of newly arrived Afghans, UNHCR increased its advocacy with the Government of Pakistan to respect the right to seek asylum and the principle of non-refoulement. While maintaining its position to not accept newly arrived Afghans, the Government of Pakistan eased border restrictions in October 2021 through the adoption of a favourable visa policy for Afghans. This policy provided for a free e-visa facility. Afghans from bordering provinces continued to enter with their national identity card (Tazkira). Afghans seeking medical care in Pakistan also continued to be favourably granted access to Pakistan. Nonetheless, these Afghans' legal status to remain in Pakistan was tenuous.

Afghan new arrivals faced multi-faceted protection challenges. Most notably, access to registration and documentation which would enable them to enjoy basic rights, facilitate access to services, and mitigate the risk of arrest and detention. Moreover, such access would protect against refoulement. Between September and November, 1,800 Afghans - predominantly undocumented Afghans, including some new arrivals - were reportedly deported. Among new arrivals: approximately 20 per cent reported a specific need and of this subset: 29 per cent had serious medical needs; 16 per cent had disabilities; 14 per cent were women-at-risk; 11 per cent were single parents; and 8 per cent were children-at-risk. The top concerns for the new arrivals residing in Pakistan were access to shelter (87 per cent), livelihoods (82 per cent), food (78 per cent) and medical assistance (42 per cent).

This was against a backdrop of a range of protection risks within the existing refugee population. Violence against children and gender-based violence is largely unreported. Access to justice for refugee girls and women is often impeded by the lack of family/community support. Children without documentation, including those whose births are not registered, are particularly vulnerable to trafficking, exploitation, exclusion from basic services and being detained and prosecuted as adults. Child marriage and child labour are prevalent. Access to education remains one of the most critical issues disproportionately affecting girls. Overall gender inequalities result in lower levels of education, fewer work opportunities and lower levels of participation in decision-making processes and community-based planning for females. Limited services exist for children with specific needs, and those with mental health and psychosocial needs. Medical needs are high, particularly related to maternal, new-born and child health, as well as reproductive health. Refugees also do not have the right to work, impeding access to livelihoods which is essential to ensure self-reliance.



**Of new arrivals who
approached UNHCR in
Pakistan in 2021:**



96%

FLED DUE TO VIOLENCE AND
INSECURITY



75%

ARE WOMEN AND CHILDREN



40%

HAVE NO DOCUMENTATION

Source: [UNHCR Pakistan: New Arrivals from Afghanistan](#)

Key Highlights

Scale-up of support to national health systems

As the Government of Pakistan allows all Afghans to access their public health facilities, health sector actors, led by WHO, scaled up support for the government response to meet increasing demands, exacerbated by the pressures of dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. Awareness raising was conducted on available healthcare services and positive health-seeking behaviour, including by strengthening the community referral system. The capacity of existing public healthcare facilities was strengthened to provide comprehensive quality essential services and establish new temporary and/or mobile health facilities with adequately trained medical staff and recruited community health workers with necessary staffing, equipment, medicines, and medical supplies. Availability and access to basic and comprehensive emergency obstetric care was enhanced and weekly disease occurrence data from health facilities in refugee hosting areas of Balochistan was collected and shared to inform the response.

Upscale of Interagency Coordination and Preparedness

As a major refugee influx had not occurred for 20 years, Inter-Agency efforts moved to a state of preparedness in the last four months of 2021. Stocks are now prepositioned in the country with replenishing arrangements made. RRP 2021 has been followed by RRP 2022, involving 32 partners in Pakistan, to enhance protection space for the protracted Afghan refugee population and open space for asylum seekers in Pakistan. The existing humanitarian coordination structure grew to include a Refugee Protection Working Group and a Pakistan Refugee Consultative Forum at the federal and provincial levels (Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa). UNHCR and the Government co-chair these groups thereby building the Government's engagement with the humanitarian community on refugee matters. Alongside preparedness, concerted efforts were made to build the protracted refugee populations' resilience and to reduce pressure placed on resources and public systems by decades of hosting displaced populations.



Pakistan: Afghan refugee and Pakistani students wait for their class teacher at the Government Primary School for Girls in Kohat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. There are a total of 186 primary students in the school, including 12 Afghan refugee girls. © UNHCR/Asif Shahzad

2021 Achievements

Sector

Inter-Agency Achievement (July – Dec 2021)

Education











Education was strengthened for **4,381** students (women/girls 1,940) in informal education; **107,994** students (women/girls **51,308**) in primary education: **378** students (girls 1924) in secondary education.

1,413 individuals reached with awareness activities on the importance education and **7** teachers recruited

Food security



Contingency food stocks procured and prepositioned in preparedness to meet the needs of **150,000** beneficiaries.

<p>Health</p>  <p>Nutrition</p> 	<p>14 mini-Ambulances procured by WHO for refugee hosting districts to support the safe and quick referral of 2,500 pregnant women requiring comprehensive emergency obstetric care (CEmONC) at tertiary care hospital and case investigation in the community</p> <p>COVID emergency wards and intensive care units were provided with beds, cardiac monitors, oxygen supply equipment, dialysis machines, mobile x-rays. High impact equipment like CT scan machines generators etc also provided.</p> <p>Procurement of equipment for Nutrition Stabilization Centre for the care of malnourished children and infants admitted at three hospitals, which will benefit some 17,300 children per year in total 25,005 severely acutely malnourished girls and boys (6-59 months) without complications and 1,675 with complications were treated in border areas and refugee hosting districts</p> <p>38,351 moderately acutely malnourished boys and girls (6-59 months) and 52,130 moderately acutely malnourished PLWs were successfully treated.</p>
<p>Logistics & Telecoms</p> 	<p>5 prefabricated warehouses with a total capacity of 1,500 sqm were established in Peshawar to expand existing warehousing.</p> <p>19 trucks carrying some 500 metric tonnes of core relief items dispatched through border crossing points Chaman and Torkham to assist affected population in Afghanistan.</p>
<p>Livelihoods and Resilience</p> 	<p>3,289 host community & Afghan individuals reached with technical & vocational training & tool kits. 484,941 host community and Afghan individuals received skills training including activities aimed at enhancing food security</p> <p>3,049 host community and Afghan individuals trained in agriculture, livestock, poultry management, enterprises, accompanied by productive assets.</p>
<p>Protection</p> 	<p>35,643 women and girls accessed safe spaces and programming including mental health counselling, information on sexual and reproductive health, family planning and GBV services</p> <p>26,387 individuals received psycho-social support services</p> <p>2,981 individuals reached with cash including cash for protection and multi-purpose cash</p> <p>Child protection supplies prepositioned for 15,000 children (50% boys; 50% girls), including Protective Learning & Community Emergency Services (PLACES)/ psychosocial support kits</p>
<p>Shelter & NFIs</p> 	<p>13,000 core relief item kits prepositioned and ready to assist 13,000 families</p> <p>13,000 emergency shelter kits prepositioned and ready to assist 13,000 families</p>
<p>WASH</p> 	<p>65,000 beneficiaries reached by WASH sector interventions (20,000 with access to safe drinking water, 5,500 with gender appropriate toilet facilities and 65,250 with WASH non-food items).</p> <p>WASH related supplies (non-food items) prepositioned for up to 150,000 people</p>
<p>Energy and Environment</p> 	<p>Feasibility study carried out to inform energy needs against current practices and prospects shifting to sustainable energy from renewable sources.</p> <p>80,000 energy-efficient cookers and 80,000 solar lanterns procured for distribution in 2022.</p> <p>1,500 refugees received vocational training on clean cooking and renewable energy activities.</p> <p>500 refugees and host community individuals received environmental education training.</p>

Gaps & Challenges

The short timeframe of the RRP 2021 created challenges to implement all planned activities in 2021. With funding received towards the end of 2021, some activities have been carried over for implementation in 2022 to complement the RRP 2022. The flexibility of donors in this respect greatly supported partners. The 2022 plan adopts an area-based approach and is inclusive of government registered Afghan refugees, Afghans of other status and host communities to address longstanding grievance that there has been inadequate global solidarity in responding to the protracted Afghan refugee situation. While significant preparedness measures were put in place, planned interventions were based on scenario-planning that did not eventuate, namely the establishment of camps. Moreover, the Government's position remained firm to not accept new Afghan refugees into Pakistan. This position impeded provision of assistance to new arrivals, except for access to health and nutrition support. Given the government position on the delivery of assistance to new arrivals, the imperative to deliver assistance had to be balanced with the principle of "do no harm" in respect of safeguarding the protection space for all populations, both new arrivals and the existing populations (some 2.8 million Afghans of all statuses).

Tajikistan

2021 RESPONSE IN NUMBERS



5,710

NEWLY ARRIVED
AFGHANS AS
OF 31 DECEMBER 2021



17%
FUNDED

USD 24,326,327

FUNDING REQUESTED
IN 2021

USD 4,222,467

FUNDING RECEIVED
BY 31 DECEMBER 2021



7

PARTNERS
INVOLVED

Situation Overview

Following the deterioration of the situation in Afghanistan in 2021, Tajikistan witnessed a steadily increased number of asylum seekers, with an average of 662 individuals per month since January 2021. The peak of arrivals was recorded in August, before the full takeover by the Taliban on 15 August. The majority of Afghan nationals arrived in Tajikistan formally, with valid documents, and obtained Tajik visas. Since January 2021, 5,710 individuals have arrived and sought Asylum, thus making the total number of refugees and asylum seekers in the country some 12,000 as of December 2021. The Government of Tajikistan, while openly not recognizing the Taliban government, continues to view all population movements, including for asylum purposes, through a national security lens, thus maintaining a closed border policy. The situation is even aggravated by the COVID 19 pandemic, due to which access of asylum seekers, even with valid visas, to Tajikistan through land border has been seriously challenged.

Protection space is continuously shrinking and access to territory continues to be restricted or not possible due to existing inconsistencies between the Refugee Law and Criminal Code. Despite the non-penalisation clause for asylum seekers for illegal border crossing, border authorities still apply a restrictive approach on access to territory guided by the Criminal Code, which envisages detention and subsequent deportation for illegal border crossing.

UNHCR has repeatedly raised its concerns about the creation of obstacles for Afghan citizens seeking safety in Tajikistan to access asylum procedures and protection. In July 2021, local authorities suspended the issuance of residence permits to all newly arrived Afghans, even though such documentation is a pre-requisite for applying for asylum. From around mid-August 2021, the consular missions of Tajikistan in Afghanistan also received informal guidance to stop issuing visas for citizens of Afghanistan. In addition, the State refugee status determination (RSD) Commission has suspended its work on considering asylum applications for refugee status. As such, all Afghan nationals who did not register their residence locally before these developments do not have access to asylum procedures and are subject to fines, possible arrest, and forced returns. Although UNHCR issued a non-return advisory for Afghanistan, which has been shared with the Government of Tajikistan, there have been several cases of deportations from Tajikistan to Afghanistan. UNHCR is aware of at least five separate incidents of forced return to Afghanistan during the month of November 2021, involving a total of 37 people. A group of 80 Afghans were reportedly returned voluntarily to Afghanistan in October 2021 after spending two months in a border river island in Tajikistan and being denied further entry by Tajikistan. Such return may put asylum seekers at risk of persecution in their country of origin and constitutes refoulement, in serious violation of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1984 Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The Republic of Tajikistan is a State party to both Conventions.

The socio-economic situation in Tajikistan will continue to be affected and further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, with a significant impact on business and livelihood opportunities not only for refugees but also for the local population. The situation is dire for newly arrived asylum seekers who do not enjoy the socio-economic rights due to lack of access to asylum procedures. The Government of Tajikistan currently faces a shortfall in revenue to fulfil its budget commitments, especially in the social services sector. As such, state-based programmes to mitigate the effects of economic decline on the population are insufficient. Against such background, refugees, asylum seekers and other people of concern continue to be heavily affected and dependent on humanitarian assistance, increasing the need for cash-based interventions and other forms of humanitarian assistance as part of the interagency response.

Key Highlights







Activation of the Refugee Coordination Model

The Refugee Coordination Model (RCM) was established in Tajikistan with the activation of seven sectors of response to ensure preparedness for a possible refugee influx from Afghanistan. The Inter-Agency Coordination Platform co-chaired by UNHCR and the Ministry of Interior, the main state entity in charge of refugee emergency response, united all the key ministries, humanitarian and development actors, and donor community. Seven sector lead agencies under the RCM worked on prepositioning of food, tents, non-food items (NFIs), medical kits, nutrition items, and other essential assistance required for immediate response in case influx occurs.

Establishment of temporary refugee accommodation sites

In close coordination with the government Committee for Emergency Situations (CoES), the WASH sector, led by UNICEF, and the Shelter sector, led by UNHCR, started construction works on a temporary accommodation site for refugees in Jaloliddin Balkhi district of Khatlon region. A two-phase project will be carried out by humanitarian agencies, with the second phase focusing on development and enhancing the capacities of existing services in a neighbouring community to absorb the increased demands on social services. Setting up of reception facilities at border crossing points for short-term accommodation, screening and preliminary registration purposes is also under consideration.

2021 Achievements

Sector	Inter-Agency Achievement (July – Dec 2021)
Education 	<p>Technical needs assessment of 12 public schools in Vahdat hosting the highest number of refugee children (follow-up work, predominantly WASH, will be conducted in 2022.)</p> <p>693 refugee children have received cash for education to meet their schooling needs, including school uniforms and textbooks.</p> <p>500 education kits provided to refugee children.</p>
Food security 	<p>Procurement and delivery of mixed food commodities to meet the needs of 10,000 new refugees for a period of three months in government designated locations.</p> <p>Market Assessment conducted at the Jaloliddin Balkhi Food and NFI market.</p> <p>Field scoping, logistics assessment, and operational partnerships initiated to facilitate logistics coordination and information sharing among responding partners.</p>
Health & Nutrition 	<p>1,180 refugees received free medical consultation</p> <p>957 refugees referred to specialist care</p> <p>327 persons of concern with disabilities received financial support with reimbursement or procurement of medicines; 317 received reimbursement for medical expenses.</p> <p>Prior to the policy to stop processing asylum applications, an estimated 4,375 new arrivals were able to approach and be registered by the Government of Tajikistan.</p> <p>Free legal counselling has been received by 4,627 individuals through UNHCR partners</p> <p>21 legal representations have been made to prevent immediate deportation</p> <p>Discussions to establish two sub-working groups to be functional early 2022 (notably child protection and gender-based violence) have taken place within Protection Working Group (PWG).</p> <p>Mapping of protection capacity among protection actors conducted to ensure coverage.</p> <p>3 Border Monitoring visits have been undertaken</p>
Protection 	<p>Setting up of a temporary refugee settlement in Balkhi district, south Tajikistan agreed with the Government, to meet refugees' emergency shelter needs in the event of refugee influx from AFG.</p> <p>Inter-agency technical assessments of the site carried out to identify necessary works. The non-encampment policy agreed with the Government will allow potential refugee influx to benefit from services (health, education, livelihoods) available with the host communities.</p> <p>Core relief items were prepositioned for 5,000 persons assumed to arrive in first wave of influx.</p>
Shelter & NFIs 	<p>Setting up of a temporary refugee settlement in Balkhi district, south Tajikistan agreed with the Government, to meet refugees' emergency shelter needs in the event of refugee influx from AFG.</p> <p>Inter-agency technical assessments of the site carried out to identify necessary works. The non-encampment policy agreed with the Government will allow potential refugee influx to benefit from services (health, education, livelihoods) available with the host communities.</p> <p>Core relief items were prepositioned for 5,000 persons assumed to arrive in first wave of influx.</p>
WASH 	<p>WASH technical site assessment at a facility in Jalaluddin Balkhi was conducted to ensure consideration of water supply, sanitation, and hygiene at the selected site. Work initiated and planned to be completed by end March 2022.</p> <p>WASH in Emergencies training for six government entities conducted in December</p>



Tajikistan. Host and refugee communities celebrate World Refugee Day © UNHCR/Didor Sadulloev

Gaps & Challenges

Lack of coordination among state authorities presented difficulties for collective interaction between the state structures and international community in refugee emergency preparedness and response processes. Under the Refugee Coordination Model, UNHCR engaged the Government and the humanitarian/development community, including international financial institutions (IFIs), under the Inter-Agency Coordination platform to jointly formulate preparedness measures, mobilize resources, and secure the required level of readiness to address possible refugee influx.

Government designation of locations for temporary refugee accommodation took longer than expected. Only one site was endorsed as a refugee settlement by the end of the year, the site is located in the compound of a state-managed centre in Jaloliddin Balkhi district of Khatlon province. The government planned to establish a closed refugee camp in this location, requiring international support. Following consultations, this resulted in the agreement with the state entity CoES to set up a refugee settlement with the agreement that refugees would have freedom of movement and the right to access local social services. Delays in obtaining these agreements prevented the construction of the refugee settlement from being completed by the end of 2021, but completion is expected in the first quarter of 2022.

Identification and approval of additional locations for refugee settlements have been pending for several months. In the meantime, the focus is being made on construction activities for the one agreed site detailed above. Formal endorsement of the government to initiate works for establishing a reception centre and necessary facilities at the “Panji Poyon” border crossing point (BCP) has also not been received yet, although, a proposed layout for the reception centre was accepted by border authorities. Pending the approval, sector partners continue to work to endure coordinated activities at the BCP.

Uzbekistan

2021 RESPONSE IN NUMBERS



13,020

NEWLY ARRIVED
AFGHANS AS
OF 31 DECEMBER 2021 *



2%
FUNDED

USD 6,467,656

FUNDING REQUESTED
IN 2021

USD 134,000

FUNDING RECEIVED
BY 31 DECEMBER 2021



6

PARTNERS
INVOLVED

Situation Overview

In this preparedness phase, RRP partners focused on monitoring the unfolding situation and coordinating with the Government of Uzbekistan to ensure access to territory and positive protection space. Prior to mid-August 2021, Afghan passport holders could officially enter Uzbekistan on a tourist visa. Since then, however, access has become increasingly limited, with only holders of education, business, or diplomatic visas now permitted to enter Uzbekistan from Afghanistan. In areas of Uzbekistan bordering Afghanistan, land degradation, water scarcity, and frequent natural disasters exacerbated by climate change continue to suppress livelihoods, drive migration, and worsen vulnerabilities faced by local communities.

Immediately following the takeover in Afghanistan on 15 August, Uzbekistan permitted planes evacuating at-risk Afghans to transit through Tashkent airport. The country temporarily hosted 585 Afghan pilots and their families who had fled Afghanistan after the Taliban took over Mazar-i-Sharif on August 14, and then moved on to third countries based on their special relocation programmes. However, on 20 August 2021, it was reported that Uzbekistan returned 150 Afghan people to Afghanistan, based on an agreement with the de facto authorities in Afghanistan. Uzbekistan government officials informed that the return was voluntary and facilitated by both sides but UN partners on either side of the border did not have access to this group. No mass influx of people from Afghanistan to Uzbekistan has been witnessed between July and December 2021. RRP partners continue to advocate with the Government of Uzbekistan – and all Central Asia countries – to enable safe and unhindered access to territory.

The aim of this plan was to ensure preparedness and response capacities among humanitarian partners in Uzbekistan to meet the immediate critical needs of the displaced population at the onset of the Afghanistan emergency. The response sought to apply innovative, cost-effective, and sustainable approaches to deliver basic needs and essential services, including life-saving assistance. In support of relevant authorities, UNHCR led inter-agency preparedness and response efforts, in collaboration with the UN Country Team. In the context of a coordinated humanitarian response, partners focused their efforts on areas where they have the greatest operational impact based on their respective expertise and experience. UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO took the lead in sectors according to their mandate and capacity and mobilized resources for and in collaboration with partners. Activities delivered to date were implemented in accordance with core protection principles – maintaining an Age, Gender and Diversity approach, considering the vulnerabilities of the population, and ensuring equal access to protection and assistance.

Key Highlights

Establishment of Termez Humanitarian and Logistics Hub

At the invitation of the Government of Uzbekistan, UNHCR established a Humanitarian and Logistics Hub in the town of Termez, bordering Afghanistan, offering it also for use by other humanitarian agencies. Serving the entire region affected by the situation, the hub enhances pre-positioning and rapid delivery of Core Relief Items/ Non-Food Items to Afghanistan. The hub opens a second delivery corridor to Afghanistan, enabling rapid replenishment of local supplies, and increasing agility in UNHCR's response, while reducing costs and risks associated with carrying large inventory in each operation.

* According to Government of Uzbekistan sources. In light of the conditions in Afghanistan, these people cannot return and UNHCR considers them to be in a refugee-like situation

Advocacy and awareness raising

In partnership with the National Human Rights Centre of Uzbekistan, UNHCR translated and distributed the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol into Uzbek. Ensuring the availability of these key legal documents in the official language of the country helps to promote the general principles of international refugee law, as well as the rights and freedoms of refugees. The UNHCR and Inter-Parliamentary Union Guide to international refugee protection and building state asylum systems was also translated into Uzbek and presented to Members of Parliament in a high-level launch event.

2021 Achievements

Sector	Inter-Agency Achievement (July – Dec 2021)
Education 	Supplies to be able to support the education needs of refugee and host community children prepositioned in Uzbekistan, including 'school-in-a-box' kits.
Food security 	Initiation of a programme to target refugee households with a one-off grant of emergency cash assistance to help mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Top expenditures included food, utilities, and bills.
Health & Nutrition 	Procurement of an 'IEHK 2017' (Interagency Emergency Health Kit) – a standardised kit of essential medicines, supplies and equipment, for "life-saving" purposes, meeting the priority health needs of 10,000 people, for approximately three months. Supplies to be able to support the health needs of refugees and members of the host community prepositioned in Uzbekistan, including digital thermometers, surgical masks, infant scales.
Livelihoods and Resilience 	Planning initiated together with national partners, the Governor of Surkhandarya region, the Agency for Public Services, mahalla (neighbourhoods or local communities), Youth Affairs Agency, business associations and others for entry points to support resilience and livelihoods of local communities and Afghans in Uzbekistan, including at the Education Centre in Termez.
Logistics & Telecoms 	Establishment of logistics and emergency response hub in Termez – near the Uzbek-Afghan border – to enhance pre-positioning and rapid delivery of Core Relief Items/ Non-Food Items to Afghanistan. Dispatch of 31 shipments by road transport to Afghanistan from October – December 2021.
Protection 	From July to December 2021, UNHCR's hotline responded to 327 households/ 794 Afghan citizens in Uzbekistan through email, telephone and a messaging app. The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol were translated into Uzbek and, and the UNHCR Position on Returns to Afghanistan into Russian, for use in government consultations. Strategic advocacy conducted in coordination with Government and other partners, on issues related to safe and unhindered access to territory, relevant procedures, and solutions, including non-return of Afghan citizens and establishment of a protection framework. Standard Operating Procedures on child protection, including in emergencies, developed for use during consultations with key stakeholders in Surkhandarya Region - bordering Afghanistan to the south. To be followed in 2022 by training of some 400 social service professionals.
Shelter & NFIs 	Between October and December 2021, three airlifts of Non-Food Items/ Core Relief Items from UNHCR's Global Stock, and 31 shipments by road transport, were prepositioned in the Termez Cargo Centre.
WASH 	Supplies to be able to respond to the basic WASH needs of up to 10,000 refugees and members of the host community prepositioned in Uzbekistan, including Acute Watery Diarrhoea community kits which includes buckets, water purification tablets, gloves, soap, and scrubbing brushes. with buckets, water purification tablets, gloves, soap, and scrubbing brushes. An assessment of 17 health facilities in Termez and Surkhandarya region is being planned for WASH interventions in coordination with the Ministry of Health.



Uzbekistan. Arrival of humanitarian aid in Termez Supply Hub for transport to Afghanistan.. © UNHCR/Elyor Nemat

Gaps & Challenges

Uzbekistan remains the only country in Central Asia that has not yet acceded to the 1951 Refugee Convention and does not yet have a national asylum system. The only avenue to seek asylum is the 2017 Presidential Decree on Political Asylum. While the definition of a political asylee is similar to the refugee definition, the procedure is not in line with international standards, and implementation of the political asylum procedure is unclear. Assisting Uzbekistan to accede to the 1951 Convention, and develop the required legislation, institutions, and expertise to implement its provisions, continues to be a priority. Uzbekistan remains officially closed to Afghan citizens who do not hold an education, business, or diplomatic visas. In addition to supporting the development of required expertise to establish a national asylum system, RRP partners in Uzbekistan continue to advocate for access to territory, non-refoulement, and access for recognized refugees to basic rights.

A lack of economic opportunities across the sub-region keeps large numbers of people in subsistence-level agricultural employment, driving labour migration, weakening social cohesion, and limiting opportunities for women and youth. Economic opportunities are further constrained by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which have contributed to an increase in inter-personal and gender-based violence. It is therefore important to align support provided to refugees with support for communities, addressing critical needs through holistic programmes.

Turkmenistan

Situation Overview

Turkmenistan is party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol and is the only country in Central Asia having acceded to both Statelessness Conventions. While no new asylum applications have been registered in Turkmenistan in the last 15 years, ensuring unhindered access to the territory and quality asylum procedures, including adequate referral mechanisms, remain priorities. Turkmenistan was included in RRP 2021 without any budget, with the possibility to amend the plan in the event of an influx. In parallel, as the 2021 RRP was being developed, inter-agency partners in Turkmenistan were in discussions with authorities to facilitate preparedness measures and offer support should it be needed. In a September 2021, via a Note Verbale shared with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator in Turkmenistan presented a matrix outlining support that the UN system in Turkmenistan would be able to offer in case of an influx of up to 500 refugees from Afghanistan. The matrix included technical support, in-kind contributions, and financial contributions for activities to be implemented with national authorities and the National Red Crescent Society across Protection, Education, Health, Nutrition, WASH, Livelihoods and Resilience, Logistics and Telecommunications sectors. Depending on the numbers and needs of the refugees, it was envisioned that support could have been scaled up in close coordination with the responsible authorities.

To enable an efficient and effective response, the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator in Turkmenistan recommended that refugee emergency coordination mechanisms be strengthened, if possible, for example through a workshop on UN-Government cooperation. It was also requested that UN entities be able to access the location where refugees would be settled. This aimed to ensure that humanitarian partners in Turkmenistan had the preparedness and response capacities required to meet the immediate critical needs of the displaced population at the onset of the Afghanistan emergency. The proposal and recommendations were well received, with the Government of Turkmenistan expressing willingness to work with the UN in case of a refugee emergency.

Between July and December 2021 no refugee influx was reported in Turkmenistan and as such, no response was required from the humanitarian community. However, following the above preparedness activities and consultation with Government authorities and interagency partners, Turkmenistan is included fully in the RRP 2022 plan.

Funding & Partnerships

Importance of Flexible Funding

Overall the RRP 2021 response was 58 per cent funded. The response was best funded in Pakistan (39 per cent, with USD 51.8 million received out of USD 132.6 million requirements) followed by Iran (25 per cent, with USD 33.4 million received out of USD 135.9 million requirements). The response in Central Asia fared worse, with Tajikistan 17 per cent funded (USD 4.2 million received out of USD 24.3 million requirements) and Uzbekistan only two per cent funded (USD 134,000 received out of USD 6.5 million requirements). Nonetheless, donors responded to the ask on the importance of flexible funding and around 30 per cent of the overall funding recorded was at the situation level, meaning that the partners could prioritise the most pressing needs across the region. Without flexible funding this would not have been possible.

Refugee Funding Tracker

In 2021, the RRP utilized the Refugee Funding Tracker⁸ to track interagency funding for the response. It was the first time it had been used in these countries. With the scale up to include 40 partners in the response in 2022, further training will be provided to partners at country level on the use of the RFT to ensure that funding tracking is as up to date as possible.

Partnership

RRP 2021 had 11 partners across the countries covered under the plan, listed below. However, the RRP is an inclusive and participatory planning process. The availability of more time for the RRP 2022 planning process has allowed the expansion to include all partners interested in participating in the response. In each country, UNHCR has worked with UN agencies and NGO partners during the development of the plan, in consultation with host governments through the relevant line ministries. For RRP 2022, some 40 partners are participating in the response across the 5 countries (16 UN agencies and 24 NGOs), a significant increase from 11 partners for RRP 2021.

RRP 2021 Partners: Médecins Sans Frontières | Norwegian Refugee Council | Relief International | UN - International Organization for Migration | UN - United Nations Children's Fund | UN - United Nations Development Programme | UN - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization | UN - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees | UN - United Nations Population Fund | UN - World Food Programme | UN - World Health Organization

Donors

The work of RRP partners would not have been possible without the extremely generous support of Donors. The following contributors during 2021 are gratefully acknowledged. RRP Partners are also grateful to private donors, charities and other organizations for their contributions, as well as other government donors whose flexible funding at a global, regional, or sub-regional level has contributed to the response.

RRP 2021 donors: Australia | Austria | Canada | Czech Republic | Denmark | European Union | France | Germany | Iceland | Ireland | Italy | Japan | Luxembourg | Netherlands | New Zealand | Norway | Poland | Private Donors | Republic Of Korea | Slovakia | Slovenia | Spain | Sweden | United Kingdom | United States Of America

⁸ <http://refugee-funding-tracker.org/>

