



Permanent homes for returning and displaced Afghans through UNHCR project funded by the Republic of Korea

KABUL, Afghanistan (16 September 2020) – The Republic of Korea and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) have joined hands to construct permanent houses for 253 families in the priority return areas of Afghanistan.

The generous contribution from the Government of the Republic of Korea will be channeled towards UNHCR’s cash for shelter project in Afghanistan. Through the project, families are provided with US\$3,300 cash grant and technical assistance to construct a two-room shelter that also includes a bathroom. The cash is provided in three installments as building progresses.

The letter of understanding for the project was signed today by the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea in Afghanistan and the UNHCR Representative in Afghanistan at a ceremony held in the Embassy of the Republic of Korea.

“The Korean government has been playing its own part in the international community’s efforts to support Afghan refugees,” said Zha Hyoung Rhee, the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea in Afghanistan. “The support, which is in line with our long-time support for returning and displaced Afghans, is expected to help our Afghan friends who are especially affected by COVID-19 by providing them with decent housing,” Ambassador Rhee added.

Since 2002, more than 5.3 million Afghan refugees have been assisted to return home. Despite the ongoing insecurity in Afghanistan, compounded by the economic impact of COVID-19, more than 860 Afghan refugees have returned so far in 2020. Some 2.6 million Afghans have also been displaced by conflict and natural disasters.

The project is part of UNHCR’s efforts to support the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan with strengthening essential facilities and services in communities where Afghan refugees are returning to. Up to 20 priority areas for return and reintegration have been identified jointly by the Afghan Government and UNHCR, where returnees and displaced people are living among local communities.

“Shelter is one of the most pressing needs for returnees and internally displaced people, second only to food.” says the UNHCR Representative in Afghanistan Caroline Van Buren. “The contribution of the Republic of Korea towards building homes for Afghans will not only help improve the living conditions of the families benefitting from the project but also bring them a strong sense of hope for the future.”

UNHCR piloted the Cash for Shelter project with 600 vulnerable displaced and returnee households starting last year. The project is being expanded further in 2020 with the support of the Government of the Republic of Korea. The spread of COVID-19 in Afghanistan has amplified the need for people to have shelters with adequate space, running water and toilets. The Cash for Shelter project is providing those benefits while the cash component provides some help to families faced with the financial fallout of lockdown.

The projects fall within the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees and its support platform, a regional initiative, which envisages a future in which displaced Afghans might finally return to their homeland permanently and prosper. Today, there are some 4.6 million Afghans outside Afghanistan, of whom 2.7 million are registered refugees. Collectively, they represent one of the longest-displaced, longest-dispossessed populations worldwide.

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