



AFGHANISTAN REFUGEE & RETURNEE CHAPTER RESPONSE STRATEGY



2017 ASSISTANCE REQUIRED	PEOPLE TARGETED	REQUIREMENTS (US\$)
 1.6M	 1.2M	 240M
R&R OBJECTIVE 1: 1 Protection interventions provided to NWA refugees. RELATES TO SO1 	R&R OBJECTIVE 2: 2 Essential services delivered to returnees while pursuing durable solutions. RELATES TO SO1  , SO3 	R&R OBJECTIVE 3: 3 Immediate humanitarian needs for vulnerable refugee returnees, undocumented returnees, and deportees are met. RELATES TO SO1 

CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP LIST

UNHCR, IOM, UNICEF, WFP, UNHABITAT, WHO, UNMAS, UNFPA, Relief International (RI), AfghanAID, Terre des Hommes, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Afghan Planning Agency (APA), ACTED-REACH, TLO, ICRC, Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS), Danish Refugee Council-Danish Demining Group (DRC) (DDG), ACTD/Johanniter, DACAAR, ACBAR, Solidarities International (SI), Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), Health Net TPO, International Medical Corps (IMC), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Save the Children (SCI)

LEAD AGENCIES



CHAPTER CONTACT INFORMATION

Donna Corcoran, External Relations Officer, UNHCR
corcoran@unhcr.org

Nicholas Bishop, Emergency Coordinator, IOM nbishop@iom.int

Table of Contents

1. <i>Strategic Direction of R&R Chapter</i>	2
2. <i>Context</i>	3
3. <i>Background of the R&R Chapter</i>	4
4. <i>Government/UN Coordination Structures</i>	4
5. <i>Chapter Strategic Objectives in 2017</i>	5
6. <i>Populations of Concern:</i>	
<i>Khost and Paktika Pakistani Refugees</i>	6
<i>Afghan Refugees</i>	6
<i>Undocumented Returnees and Deportees</i>	7-8
<i>Defining the Undocumented...</i>	
<i>Outflows to Europe>Returns from Europe</i>	9
7. <i>Member Thematic Interventions</i>	10
8. <i>Planning Scenarios for 2017</i>	12
<i>Data Collection and Ongoing Assessments</i>	12
<i>Humanitarian Assistance and Harmonization</i>	13
<i>Application of Vulnerability Criteria</i>	14
<i>Regularizing Registration Documentation</i>	15
9. <i>Consequences of Failure to Respond in 2017</i>	16

1. Strategic Direction of Refugee and Returnee Chapter

The main focus of the Refugee and Returnee Chapter Response Strategy for 2017 is to coordinate the efforts of the operational actors delivering humanitarian assistance to address the immediate needs, and reinforce effective coping mechanisms going forward for refugees from Pakistan and Afghan refugees and returnees from Pakistan and Iran. The needs of refugees and returnees are most acute immediately after arrival, but also continue to evolve over time, as savings are exhausted and livelihood/income generating opportunities are limited. Interventions focus on promoting self-sufficiency. 2017 will see a particular emphasis on refugee and returnee reintegration into host communities. Priority interventions will be in the areas of protection (including child protection), food, shelter, health, education, nutrition and WASH.

The majority of the Afghan caseload returning from Pakistan (both registered refugees and undocumented Afghans) are second and third generation born in Pakistan and therefore have limited ties with their habitual communities in Afghanistan. The loss of socio-economic networks results in a lack of protection and employment opportunities that are often based on kinship and reciprocity. High levels of pressure imposed by authorities and local host communities in the second half of 2016 resulted in an increasing rate of return among registered refugee returnees, undocumented Afghan returnees as well as a higher rate of deportation. In this context, returning families are not able to make necessary arrangements prior to their return which makes them more vulnerable upon arrival during the initial phases of return. Interventions will include immediate humanitarian assistance to address the challenges faced upon arrival and during the initial stages of return and establish a foundation for sustainable reintegration. At the same time, response efforts will aim to expand referral mechanisms and provide assistance to address specific vulnerabilities, particularly in the areas of protection, food, shelter, education and health.



Afghan returnees at the Spin Boldak border in Kandahar in November 2016.

2. Context

Return and displacement is a well-established phenomenon in Afghanistan primarily driven by insecurity and conflict with as much as 25% of the total population having experienced displacement at one point in their lives. This means that approximately **six million Afghans have returned home from abroad over the past twelve years with over one million refugee and undocumented returns from Pakistan and Iran in 2016 alone**, placing acute pressures on host communities, national governance structures, and the returnees themselves. For these reasons, there are questions and concerns around the extent to which Afghans have been able to reintegrate back into society; as well as the absorption capacity of host communities, often faced with high levels of return.

Millions of Afghans continue to live in severe poverty and struggle to meet their basic needs (Humanitarian Response Plan 2017 targets 5.7 million Afghans for assistance with acute needs) resulting in chronic malnutrition, severe food insecurity and one of the highest infant and maternal mortality rates globally. **More than 70 per cent of the population live on less than two dollars a day.**

Afghanistan remains one of the most dangerous, and violent countries in the world. **In 2016, conflict-induced displacement affected over 650,000 people scattered across all 34 provinces** – with approximately 20% located in non-government controlled areas. **56% of the displaced are children** that face particular risk of abuse, and exploitation, as well as interrupted school attendance and the harmful effects of child labour. Multiple forms of gender based violence (GBV), particularly early and forced marriage, domestic, psychological, and sexual abuse are reported, affecting individuals in host and displaced communities alike.

As of 2017, there are an estimated 1.1 million undocumented and 1.3 million registered refugee Afghans in Pakistan. Iran is also hosting as many as 900,000 Afghan refugees and 1.4 million undocumented Afghans, some of whom migrate to the country for employment or are in transit to Turkey and Europe. There are now more than **800,000 Afghans residing in European Union Member States**. While a number of these Afghans will receive international protection,

several thousand will return to Afghanistan every year and there have now been 5 charter flights since December 2016 from EU Member States returning over 100 Afghans.

3. Background of the R&R Chapter

The cluster system was established in Afghanistan in 2008. There are currently six clusters- Emergency Shelter and Non-Food Items (ES-NFI), Food Security and Agriculture (FSAC), Health, Nutrition, Protection and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) in addition to the Refugee and Returnee (R&R) Chapter (formerly the Multi-sector Cluster until 2014) co-chaired by UNHCR and IOM.

As with the Clusters, the R&R Chapter meets every two weeks at the national level and is coordinated by UNHCR and IOM. Similarly there is a sub-national coordination structure, led by UNHCR, at the provincial level in Khost where the R&R chapter members meets every two weeks and an additional body is under development in Jalalabad dealing with the issues of return, response and reintegration. Meetings are attended by Chapter members (UN agencies and NGOs) and observers including donors and aim to provide a reporting mechanism for coordinators and members on multi-thematic response activities dealing specifically with Afghan returnees and Pakistani refugees. Members strategize and coordinate humanitarian activities and share information on challenges and bottlenecks faced at the operational level. The Chapter is a strategic advisory body that informs high level strategy and the overarching response across the Cluster system. Chapter coordinators also exist as technical experts and are well integrated into overall response bodies advising both the government, UN agencies and donor partners with frequent participation in other coordination forums and ad hoc refugee and returnee response meetings.

4. Government/UN Coordination structures

Since October 2016, the Government of Afghanistan led by the Offices of the President, the CEO and the Ministry for Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) have initiated several different variations of a response coordination structure with the involvement of core government ministries/agencies and the main operational UN agencies- UNHCR, IOM and OCHA. Presently, the primary decision making body is the Displacement and Return Executive Committee (DiREC), under which sit three working groups- policy, technical and finance- to deliberate on core issues of concern and provide information to the DiREC. Meeting are held regularly and a policy document in addition to a full scale implementation Action Plan which addresses 6 key response areas including land allocation, documentation, access to services and longer term integration/reintegration efforts has been endorsed by DiREC and the National Cabinet as of mid-March 2017. A costing exercise is now ongoing within the Finance Working Group. A housing model, beneficiary selection criteria for land allocations and revision of Presidential Decree 104 are also underway.



Afghan returnee sisters at the Torkham border crossing.

5. Refugee & Returnee Chapter's objectives in 2017

The objectives of the Refugee and Returnee Chapter consist of a) protection interventions for Pakistani refugees and vulnerable deportees from Iran; b) provision of immediate post-arrival humanitarian assistance for returnees from Pakistan and Iran including registered refugees and undocumented Afghans; and c) provision of essential services for Afghan returnees while pursuing durable solutions.

Identified priorities

1. The main priority for returnees in 2017 is the provision of immediate humanitarian assistance including cash grants, basic services (i.e. mine awareness, protection monitoring, identification of persons with specific needs, basic health including vaccination, referral to schools) upon arrival as well as shelter and winter assistance during the winter months. UNHCR and IOM's post return monitoring, multiple HEAT and other needs assessments conducted in areas of high return since autumn 2016 demonstrate that the main priorities for returnees are land, shelter, food, access to basic services and livelihoods. In addition to shelter, the resolution of existing land allocation issues, partially through the issuance of civil documentation remains a major outstanding concern and is being addressed through the R&R Chapter's involvement in the Housing, Land and Property Task Force, DiREC's Technical Working Group and the Reintegration Working Group.
2. Many returnees have specific needs that are currently going unmet due to the lack of targeted referral services including healthcare, psychosocial support, legal and GBV related counseling. The R&R Chapter will aim to direct partners to underserved areas of high return in 2017 as a priority action in order to expand the number of agencies providing core referral services.
3. Expansion of existing basic services in communities with high rates of returnee settlement is the third key priority. To ensure increased absorption capacity, existing schools and hospitals should be expanded and resourced. A greater number of teachers and other teaching resources are needed for schools. WASH, as well as WASH

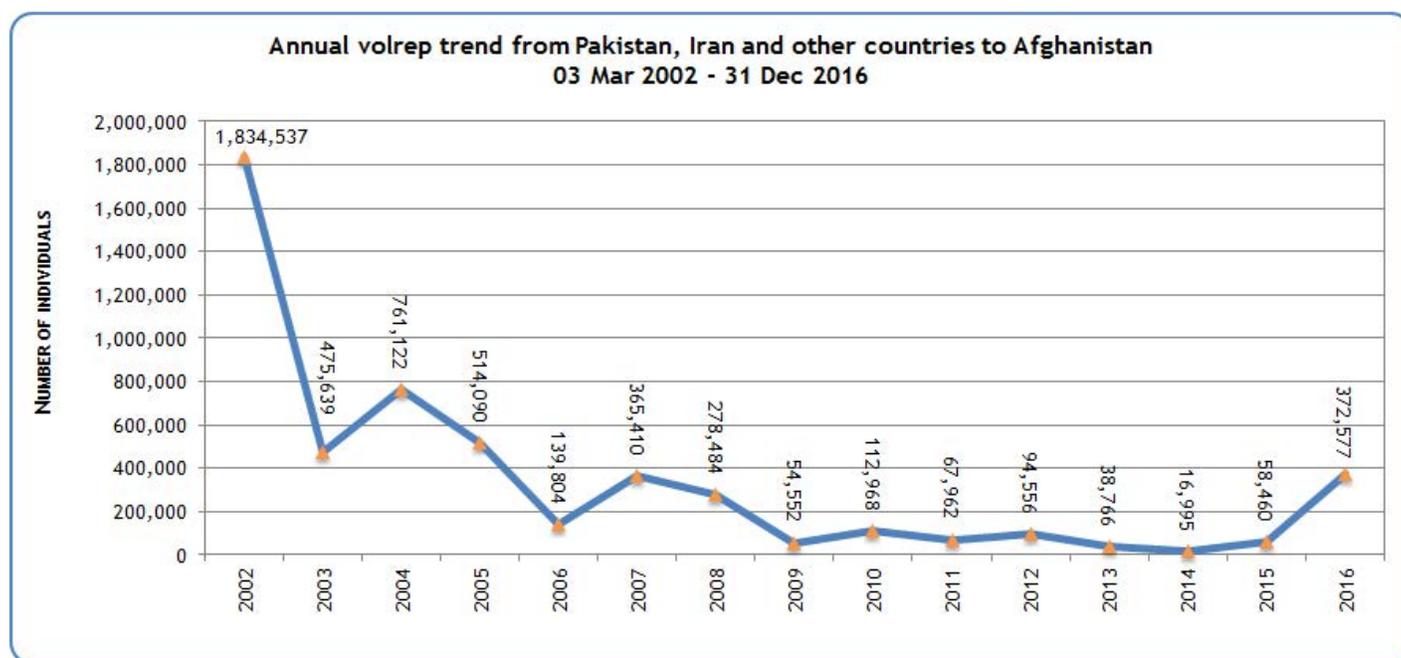
integrated with health services, is an immediate priority, including access to clean water, sanitation facilities, and hygiene education.

6. Populations of Concern

Pakistani Refugees in Khost and Paktika: Following military operations in Pakistan’s North Waziristan Agency in June 2014¹, an estimated 225,000 Pakistani nationals crossed into the Khost and Paktika provinces of Afghanistan. Initially the influx was anticipated to be short-lived, however as military operations expanded and were extended throughout 2015, the situation has become protracted. In 2016, Afghanistan continued to host significant numbers of refugees from Pakistan. However, by year end 2015, the number of refugees who fled military operations in North Waziristan in 2014 was revised from an estimated 200,000 to 125,000, pending the completion of a second round of biometric registration started in January 2017 in Khost and a simple reverification exercise in Paktika. Most refugees in both provinces reside in host communities due to tribal affinities, although one camp for approximately 20,000 individuals was established in Gulan, Khost province. Humanitarian partners focused interventions on promoting self-sufficiency, addressing the needs of the most vulnerable and providing limited support to host communities. In early 2017, an agreement reached between refugee elders and representatives of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) resulted in the return to Pakistan of small numbers of refugees. The authorities in Pakistan have to date refused to enter into tripartite negotiations on the terms of a potential voluntary repatriation exercise with the Government of Afghanistan and UNHCR. The majority of Pakistani refugees have informed UNHCR of their intention to remain in Afghanistan in the coming year, pending further assurance of their protection and reintegration assistance in areas of origin in Pakistan.

Afghan Refugees: Following years of civil war, insecurity and destruction, over a quarter of Afghanistan’s population has sought refuge and safety in neighboring countries – primarily the Islamic Republics of Pakistan and Iran. Since 2002 Afghanistan has witnessed the world’s largest refugee repatriation. The era of mass return between 2002 and 2007 has not been comparable with figures in recent years and voluntary repatriation remained low in the first 6 months of 2016 with only 7,804 refugee returns.

Return to Afghanistan soared in the latter half of 2016, as more than 365,000 registered refugees came home after prolonged stays in neighboring countries, predominantly Pakistan. The significant spike in return in mid-2016 coincided with a deterioration of the protection environment for Afghans in several areas of Pakistan, particularly Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab provinces, with decreased acceptance by host communities and local authorities, loss of economic opportunities and uncertainty regarding the renewal of Proof of Registration (PoR) cards beyond March 2017. Loss of livelihood opportunities owing to the prevailing protection situation facing Afghans, harassment and



¹ Federally Administrative Tribal Area (FATA), Pakistan

intimidation, arbitrary arrest, night raids on homes, and extortion and bribery, were reported as the primary push factors influencing refugees' decision to return. At the same time, Afghanistan's absorption capacity remains limited. Despite progress in the areas of health, education, construction, trade and agriculture sectors, Afghanistan remains one of the poorest countries in the world. The deteriorating security situation, high levels of unemployment, issues with land tenure and limited basic services will continue to present impediments to reintegration. Currently there are some 1.3 million registered Afghan refugees holding Proof of Registration Cards (PoR) in Pakistan and around 900,000 registered Afghan refugees in Iran holding Amayesh cards. Since 2002, over 6.2 million Afghans have returned to Afghanistan including over 5.1 million assisted by UNHCR.



Afghan returnee family in their rented truck returning from Pakistan in late September 2016.

Defining the Undocumented...

In 2005-06, the Government of Pakistan and its National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) carried out a census/registration of Afghans residing in Pakistan. Those persons registered were issued with proof of registration cards (PoR cards). Based on the issuance of PoR cards UNHCR recognized card holders as prima facie refugees. For a variety of reasons many Afghans in Pakistan were unable to register. Recent return intention surveys carried out by IOM in Peshawar and Haripur have shown that 64% of undocumented Afghans residing in Pakistan did attempt to register for a PoR card but were unsuccessful due to distance to registration point, technical issues and the overall length of the registration process.

The definition of the undocumented does not refer to the possession of other forms of documentation including civil documentation in Afghanistan including tazkera and/or passports.

In terms of status, the undocumented show similar forms of vulnerability as registered Afghan refugees both in Pakistan and upon return to Afghanistan where many are now second and third generation born in Pakistan. At the most recent round of the Tripartite talks held in Islamabad on 15 February 2017, the governments of Pakistan, Afghanistan and UNHCR reached an agreement to register all undocumented Afghans in Pakistan by NADRA pending their repatriation. The process is estimated to take between 6-9 months to complete.

Undocumented Afghan Returnees and Deportees:

The number of undocumented returnees and deportees increased dramatically in 2016- more than doubling from 2015- to just above 248,000 returns from Pakistan and staying on level with previous years at 440,000 returns from Iran (50% of whom are deportees). Since 1 January 2016, over 739,000 undocumented Afghans have returned driven by a range of complex, interrelated factors, including an increase in harassment and arrests by police and military authorities; the imposition of strict border controls following clashes at the Torkham gate in June 2016; growing uncertainty over the viability of further stay in Pakistan; shifting regional geo-strategic realities between India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran; a perceived deterioration of longstanding relations within host communities; deportations of undocumented Afghans; and promises of land and shelter in Afghanistan made by the Government of Afghanistan in a promotional repatriation campaign. This confluence of factors has disrupted longstanding economic and family ties on both sides of the border.

Pakistan

Returnees from Pakistan are predominately low skilled subsistence farmers or daily wage earning family groups who are coming back to Afghanistan after many decades in exile. Second and third generation children who were born in Pakistan sometimes have few if any links to their homeland and will face significant challenges in order to reintegrate from the standpoint of access to basic services, civil documentation, safety and security and employment.

As of winter/spring 2017, forced returns from Pakistan have declined with an extension of refugee PoR cards to 31 December 2017, UNHCR's three month winter pause, and a proposal from SAFRON before the Pakistani cabinet to register all undocumented Afghans in Pakistan ahead of a phased return. However a surge in numbers is projected for April 2017 with a projected returnee caseload of 495,000, 100% of whom will require immediate and sustained humanitarian assistance.

Iran

From Iran the vast majority of the caseload are single males (90-95%) where families make up the remainder. Unlike Pakistan, 44% of returns from Iran are deportees and it is estimated that only 10% of the returnee population are in need of humanitarian assistance.

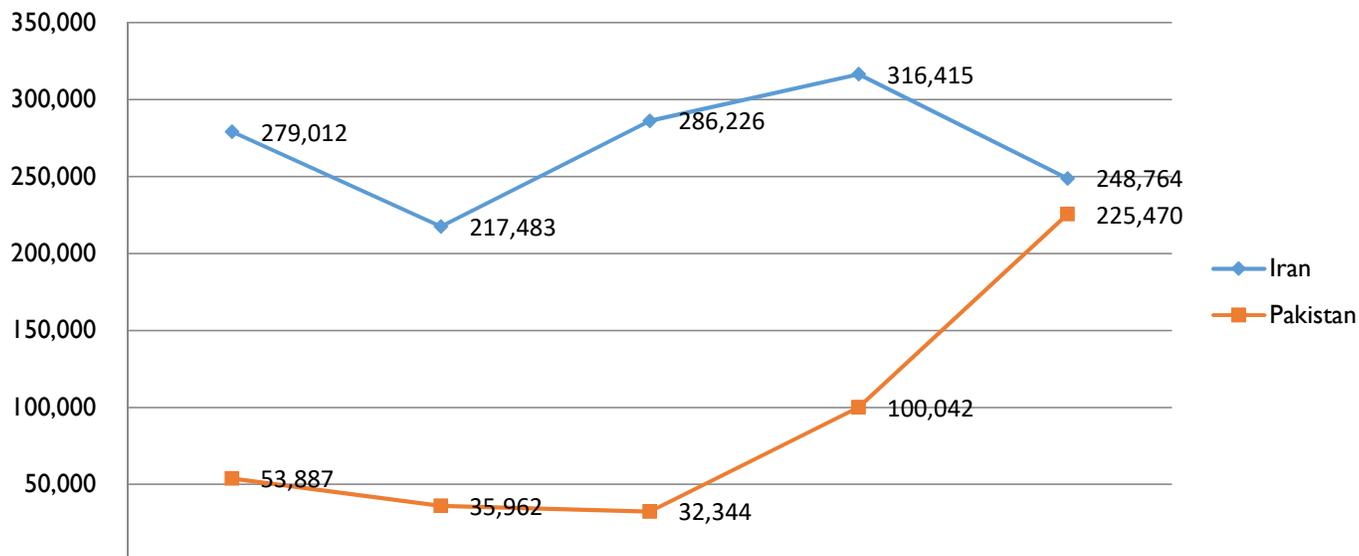
A vast people smuggling network is in operation in the western provinces of Afghanistan and many deportees make further attempts to cross into Iran. Approximately 1,400,000 undocumented Afghans live in Iran although this number fluctuates.

Although generally perceived as economic migrants, serious human rights/protection concerns for Afghans kept in detention before being deported are growing based on interviews with IOM beneficiaries and media reports.

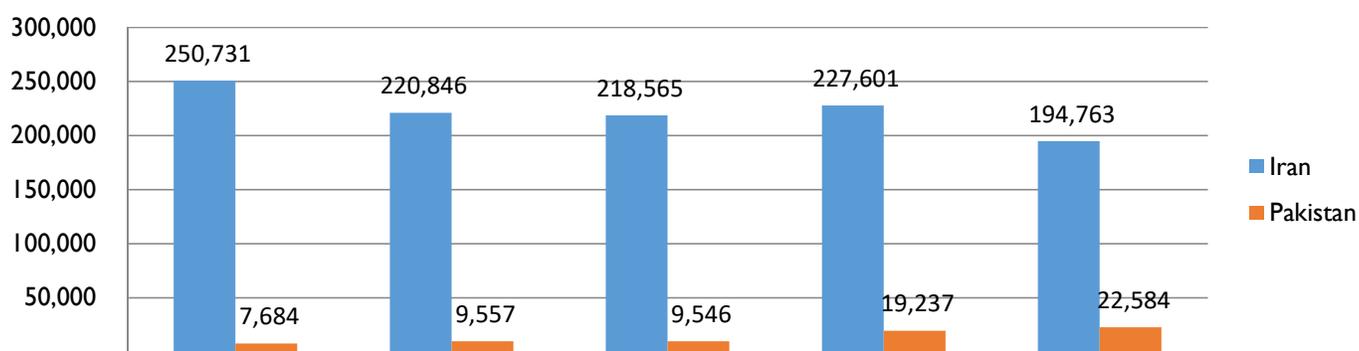
Based on the high numbers of returns and limited government staffing capacity, registration is not carried out on the Iranian frontier thus the potential for recycling is very high. Under the Humanitarian Response Plan for 2017, IOM includes only 10% of the Iranian caseload as in need of humanitarian assistance (typically the family caseload and other cases that meet the PSN criteria). In 2017, IOM anticipates over 440,000 returns from Iran, a population which is of growing interest to the international donor community given its perceived links with migratory flows to Europe and beyond.

While returns declined in line with seasonal trends during the winter of 2016, previous surges in returns have been unpredictable and an estimated 1.1 million undocumented Afghans still remain in Pakistan. IOM and other humanitarian partners are prepared to respond to the increasing needs and are appealing for additional funding to continue emergency response programming. In 2016, this situation coupled with continued high levels of deportees from Iran, resulted in the number of vulnerable returnees far outstripping the resources available for post-arrival humanitarian assistance. At the same time, there is an ongoing need to integrate long term reintegration support within humanitarian assistance, in particular, for PSN groups of returnees with high protection risks including unaccompanied minors/children and single females.

Spontaneous Returnees from Iran & Pakistan 2012 – 2016



Deportees from Iran & Pakistan 2012 - 2016



Outflows to Europe

In 2016, some 352,000 people risked their lives crossing the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe. Approximately 42,000 were Afghans, accounting for 12 per cent of arrivals. Of those arriving by sea in Greece, Afghans represented some 24 per cent of arrivals. Together with Syrians and Iraqis, they collectively accounted for approximately 86 per cent of arrivals by sea in Greece.

Returns from Europe

In 2016, overall returnee numbers significantly increased, with 6,864 returnees assisted by IOM, compared with 1,419 during 2016. The International Organization for Migration assisted 672 voluntary returnees from Europe, of whom 542 were men and 130 women, between 01 November and 31 December 2016, compared with 376 for the same period in 2015. Almost half of the returnees came from Germany (3,159), and increasing numbers were reported from Greece (1,257) and Turkey (577). Returns from Europe are set to rise rapidly in 2017 as return charter flights began in December 2016 under the “Joint Way Forward Agreement” signed by the Government of Afghanistan and Member States of the European Union, and 5 have arrived as of early February 2017.

7. Chapter Members' Thematic interventions related to Refugees/Returnees:

Health 		
Agency	Location	Activity
UNFPA	Torkham zero point (Nangarhar)	Health support including sexual and reproductive health services to returnees
	Nangarhar hospital	Returnees benefited from sexual and reproductive health services through provision of reproductive health kits
	Jalalabad district (Nangarhar)	Provision of dignity kits to returnee families
	Nangarhar	Supply of emergency reproductive health kits to different health facilities and the University hospital
International Medical Corp (IMC)	Urgon and Barmal districts in Paktika	Provision of primary health care service (MCH, OPD and EPI and health education) to Pakistani refugees.

FSAC 	
Agency	Activity/location
FSAC Cluster	Food assistance to refugees in Gurbaz and Matun districts in Khost province and Barmal district in Paktika province.
	Food and cash assistance to returnees at the Torkham border as well as Jalalabad, Mohmanddara, Rodat, Kuz Kunar, Kama, Behsud and Sarkharoud districts (Nangarhar province).
SI	Under the Emergency Response Mechanism (ERM) partners, provision of cash for food to undocumented returnees in Khost- Matun, Gurbuz, Tani and Mandozai districts and undocumented returnees in Maidan Shahr, the provincial capital of Wardak.
DRC	Under FSAC and through the use of HEAT assessments, provision of cash for food to undocumented households in Kama and Behsud districts in Nangarhar and in Kabul city as well as Bagrami Chahar Asyab, Dehsabz and Paghman districts (Kabul province). The provision of emergency cash for food assistance has been complemented with several livelihoods activities such as basic literacy and numeracy foundation training, vocational and business development training and support for SME and individual farmers.

WASH 	
Agency	Activities/location
NCA/CoAR	WASH needs assessments of Pakistani refugees in eight villages of Tani and nine villages of Gurbuz districts (Khost province) and WASH assistance to refugees and host communities in Gurbuz and Tani districts.
	Rapid WASH needs assessment of Afghan returnees from Pakistan in Mihtarlam and Qarghayi districts (Laghman province) following which NCA will distribute Hygiene kits.
SI	Provision of WASH services (water supply, latrines/bathing facilities, hygiene promotion, and solid waste management to Pakistani refugees in Gulam camp (Khost province).
	Under ERM, construction of emergency latrines to undocumented Afghan returnees in Gurbuz, Matun and Mandozi districts (Khost)
IMC	
	Construction of VIP latrines and boreholes, distribution of hygiene kits and hygiene education to the refugee population in Barmal and Urgon districts (Paktika). In addition, IMC has established WASH committees and trained volunteers from the refugee community as community hygiene promoters. IMC also established a water quality testing facility as well as provide awareness on hygiene promotion.

	WASH support to refugees, returnees and IDPs in Nangarhar, Kunar and Nuristan as well as Paktika provinces. Services include rapid assessments of humanitarian WASH needs, increasing access to clean water, toilets, hand-washing facilities and provision of hygiene kits and hygiene related information.
--	--

Emergency Shelter/Non-Food Items 	
Agency	Activity/location
SCI	Emergency NFIs and cash to returnees in Pachiragam district (Nangarhar)
	Delivery of assistance following assessments to returnee families in Rodat and Kuz Kunar districts in Nangarhar
SI	Under ERM, provision of emergency shelter support (including an all-weather family tent, tarpaulins, a stove, blankets and mattresses) to vulnerable returnee families in Gurbuz, Matun and Mandozai districts (Khost province)
	Under ERM, provision of winter kit (cash grant) for vulnerable returnee families in Maidan Shahr district of Wardak province.
DRC	Provision of NFIs (both in kind and cash) to returnees in Kama and Behsud districts (Nangarhar province) as well as Kabul city, Bagrami, Chahar Asyab, Dehsabz, Paghman districts (Kabul province). In addition, provision of tents to needy families in the above areas. Assessments are on-going to identify vulnerable returnees in Shinwar and Momandara districts (Nangarhar province)
RI	Provision of emergency shelter repair kits and sealing off kits (in kind or cash); provision of training on use of kits; Cash for rent. Nangarhar Province (Batikot, Muhmand Dara, Rodat, Kuzkunar) and Kunar Province (Chawkay, Dara-e-Pech, Shigal Wa Sheltan, Watapur)

Protection 	
Agency	Activity/location
DDG/DRC	The Danish Demining Group (DDG) provides Mines and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) risk education to returnees at the UNHCR and IOM reception facilities. DDG has cleared 299,567 sqm through mine clearance and 1,301,630 sqm through battle area clearance activities. Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) teams remove or destroy explosive ordnance benefiting returnees in settlement areas. In 2016, DDG worked with beneficiaries from high-return communities in Herat and Kabul to start armed violence reduction activities, primarily through provision conflict mediation training and building capacities amongst local communities.
TdH	Terre des Hommes (TDH) has interventions in Jalalabad, Kunar and Kabul for refugees and returnees. The Ishtema Project operates in 8 districts of Nangarhar and 3 districts of Kunar providing Mine Risk Education, child friendly spaces and psychosocial training for vulnerable children. Through a community-based approach, a protection-conducive environment is expanded for vulnerable undocumented returnees and conflict-affected populations. This environment mitigates the risks of violation of children's rights, concerns for their psycho-social well-being and protection.
RI	CFS targeting children in pre-school age; this action also provides PSS and child protection training for volunteers (100% female) working in CFSs. Youth clubs, targeting youth from 13 to 19 years of age; providing PSS and child protection training to youth clubs animators. PSS consultations, case management and referrals by PSS experts. PSS training to primary school teachers. Activities will take place in Nangarhar Province (Batikot, Muhmand Dara, Rodat, Kuzkunar) and Kunar Province (Chawkay, Dara-e-Pech, Shigal Wa Sheltan, Watapur)

Education in Emergency Working Group (EiE) ²	
Agency	Activity
SCI	Rapid needs assessments of returnees and IDPs in Nangarhar (Behsud, Kama, Khewa, Surkhrood and Jalalabad city) and Kandahar (Kandahar city and Daman). The highlights of the rapid assessment showed 66% of assessed children were not attending school. 43% of the respondents mentioned that schools are situated more than 3kms from their settlement, creating a major barrier to regular attendance. Schools are overcrowded with children being exposed to forced marriage, forced entry in Armed Opposition Groups, and other forms of exploitation.

8. Planning scenarios for 2017

Although difficult to project given the nature of pull and push factors affecting Afghans in Pakistan and Iran as demonstrated by the extended month-long Pakistani border closure from 17 February well into mid-March 2017 and the results of the Tripartite Commission meeting in Islamabad on 15 February which further postponed the start of the voluntary repatriation to 01 April while extending the validity of the PoR cards to 31 December 2017, UNHCR and IOM are closely monitoring the situation and have provided the below low and high case scenarios for 2017. Even at the lower end more than half a million Afghans are likely to return in 2017 and will require substantial assistance to restart their lives.

Arrival projections for 2017	Low case scenario	High case scenario	Targeted for assistance
Documented Afghan refugees from Pakistan	300,000	630,000	100%
Undocumented Afghan returnees from Pakistan	682,200 (288,540 in need)	938,560 (539,327)	100% from Pakistan and 10% from Iran
Total	1,402,200	2,218,560	588,540 - 1,169,327

Data Collection and Ongoing Assessments

One of the major constraints of the returnee response in 2016 was data collection linked to the better understanding of needs in communities. To overcome this key challenge, IOM is rolling out the **Displacement Tracking Matrix**. DTM is a unique IOM data collection mechanism now used in over 40 countries including Syria, Iraq and Yemen. In Afghanistan a baseline district level assessment in 3 eastern provinces- Nangarhar, Kunar and Laghman- was completed on 08 February 2017 as part of an initial pilot project. Village level assessments are ongoing and a formal report on findings will be issued in early April. The pilot will be expanded to Kabul, Kunduz, Baghlan, Takhar, Paktya and Balkh provinces in March/April and a larger proposal has been presented to the Government of Afghanistan via DiREC.

In order to directly engage with beneficiaries, IOM has also launched the **Community Response Map (CRM)** (<http://afghanistan.communityresponsemap.org/>) – an online platform, to ensure beneficiary feedback is captured and the assistance provided is timely and responsive to persons in need.

Similarly, UNHCR protection and return monitoring targets registered Afghan refugees and IOM post return monitoring targets returnees through systematic phone and home visit interviews. This monitoring is aimed to assess the voluntariness of return, reasons for the decision to return, and the level of information returnees received to make an informed decision to return. In addition, the monitoring helps UNHCR and IOM to get in touch with returnees in areas of origin/destination/displacement to a) assess the effectiveness of assistance provided to them, b) understand re-

² Re-activated in August 2016 following mass return from Pakistan. The WG is co-lead by UNICEF and MoE. EiE activities were included into the humanitarian response plan for 2017/under protection cluster and allocated 2.5M for EiE response in first allocation for 2017.

integration progress, and c) key protection and re-integration challenges/needs. Interviews are conducted using standardized forms and data is collated in an online system.

UNHCR and IOM will continue monitoring the situation of returnees in 2017 to better understand population dynamics, impact of assistance, secondary movements, the reintegration process, challenges, gaps and needs which could be used by stakeholders for targeted assistance delivery and for advocating for the inclusion of returnees in government and development partner programming.

The REACH Initiative's (<http://www.reach-initiative.org/afghanistan>) Informal settlements project launched in 2016 aims to identify, assess and monitor informal settlements throughout Afghanistan to better understand the location of vulnerable groups including returnees and refugees. The project will produce factsheets for each informal settlement with basic demographic, displacement history, and basic mapping. Informal settlement data in Nangarhar and Kabul was also used to launch a food security specific assessment, exploring key demographic and socio-economic characteristics of those living in informal settlements, and specific food security indicators. As well, REACH ran a nationwide assessment of prolonged IDPs (displaced between 01 January 2014 - 01 March 2016). The study focused on IDPs, but found a proportion of those internally displaced were originally returnees. In 2017 REACH will also produce a report examining the socio-economic profile, motivations and influences of Afghans returning from Europe and investigate how their situation manifests itself once home.

At the request of the Office of the President, IOM is also carrying out socio-economic surveys at all major border crossing points to assess skill sets, wages, intentions in Afghanistan, and education and debt levels which will feed into longer term reintegration and skills building programmes.

A series of inter-agency needs assessments including the Household (level) Emergency Assessment (HEAT) completed in areas of high return in Nangarhar, Kunar, and Laghman and Kabul in 2016, demonstrate and reinforce serious and manifold gaps in shelter, food security, livelihoods, access to basic services like healthcare and education, access to clean water and WASH facilities. These assessments also highlight the fact that returnee families remain mobile after initial settlement in that the influx has driven up rental prices in and around Jalalabad city for instance and some returnees are now seeking housing and livelihoods in less crowded rural areas (secondary movements). A paucity of humanitarian actors and limited financial resources to target compounding numbers of vulnerable persons is the primary challenge in effective aid delivery.

As of March 2017, IOM, UNHCR, Mobile Network Operators and a number of government ministries are exploring options to distribute SIM cards to returnees from Pakistan as a further means of tracking and tracing their movements post-arrival in Afghanistan. As tazkeras and other forms of official civil documentation are required to register new SIM cards, alternative forms of ID are being vetted with government, including the UNHCR Voluntary Repatriation Form, IOM's beneficiary card and WFP's SCOPE card for use upon initial registration pending issuance of a national ID.

Humanitarian Assistance and Harmonization

2016 witnessed an unprecedented level of displacement and return in Afghanistan. More than 600,000 refugees and undocumented Afghans returned from Pakistan and more than 440,000 undocumented Afghans returned from Iran. This is in addition to more than 650,000 conflict induced Internally Displaced Persons in 34 provinces driven by record levels of conflict between the Government of Afghanistan and Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs).

Although UNHCR was able to provide assistance to 100% of refugee returnees, the unexpected levels of return from Pakistan saw the need to put in place a 3-month winter pause from Pakistan between 01 December 2016 and 01 March 2017 (extended by an additional month at the Tripartite Commission). Return from Iran and other countries continued while return from Pakistan will resume on 01 April 2017.

For undocumented returnees, IOM and partners engaged in response activities, however they were only able to reach 30% of the undocumented during peak levels of return. Since the summer/autumn of 2016, new funding as a result of the Humanitarian Country Team Flash Appeal, launched in early September, has meant that a higher percentage of undocumented returnees can receive basic services and assistance upon return.

In December 2016 the Humanitarian Coordinator tasked cluster representatives with developing harmonized approaches to address the needs of populations affected by forced displacement and sudden, unanticipated return. The HC requested cluster leads to examine ways that status-based discrepancies could be reduced in favor of a more comprehensive needs-based approach – including duration, type and monetary value – to ensure that population groups exhibiting similar vulnerabilities and levels of hardship are treated fairly and transparently. While complete harmonization of approach will be difficult to achieve given the different mandates of agencies and modes of assistance delivery in place, there was widespread agreement that considerable scope exists to ensure greater equity and fairness in the existing system. Specifically, the HC asked the Inter-Cluster Coordination Team to focus on securing greater coherence within the following three areas: i) the development and application of vulnerability criteria; ii) the registration and documentation process and iii) the provision of humanitarian assistance.



Torkham border crossing with Pakistan.

Application of Vulnerability Criteria

In 2012, IOM and UNHCR in close collaboration with the Ministry for Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) developed 11 categories of Persons with Specific Needs (PSNs) in order to identify particular vulnerabilities within return populations that require enhanced levels of assistance and in some cases referrals. These categories include- single females, single parents, unaccompanied minors, unaccompanied elderly, physically disabled, mentally ill, chronically ill, drug addicts, poor families (with more than 5 children), medical needs cases, and special cases including families that may have been robbed in transit or families transporting a dead relative.

In 2016/17, cluster representatives are working on the development of draft household-level vulnerability criteria with a weighted scorecard (See below from FSAC cluster) which are more nuanced to reflect the need to focus in greater details on returnees who are the most vulnerable regardless of legal status.

Criteria	Description
Women headed HHs	Includes widows without adult male children who can earn money and women who are the main breadwinner if the male head is away for long time
Large HHs with only one able-bodied working age male	This includes large HHs with 9 members or more with only one income earner
HHs with no able-bodied male of working age	HH with no male member of working age and due to cultural reason women cannot work to earn money or there is no work for women available.

Child or young headed HHs	HH headed by a male under 18 years of age.
Disable headed HHs	This includes those persons who are incapable to earn money or have limited ability to work
HH with poor asset holding	HHs lacking basic assets, like mattress, blanket and other basic items.
HHs stay with relatives	HHs residing with their relatives due to lack of financial capacity
HHs living in temporary shelter	Temporary shelter including tents, or mud brick houses with poor roofing materials constructed on land not owned by the family
HH with no income that rely on borrowing and begging	HHs with no current income that rely on borrowing, charity, begging and support from others.
Casual laborers	HHs that earn money from casual labor considered in the context where availability of work is scarce.
Access to water source	No access to drinking water source within 500m from the settlement
Malnourishment	Visible signs of malnutrition in children and pregnant and lactating women

Regularizing Registration and Documentation

Currently four different agencies are registering/collecting data and providing returnee populations with documentation: UNHCR and MoRR collect data³ (at the family level) of the assisted refugee returnees upon arrival at the Encashment centers; MoRR with the support of IOM register undocumented Afghans (at Torkham /Afghan Returnee Information System-ARIS) and the WFP SCOPE card.

UNHCR in coordination with MoRR manage four Encashment Centers located in Nangarhar, Kabul, Kandahar and Herat⁴ provinces. These centers are the first point of contact with returning refugees in Afghanistan where they are provided with a cash grant and other services (mine risk education, basic health care, vaccination and transit facilities provided by UNHCR and other partners). UNHCR collects data from assisted refugee returnees after cash grant distribution and conducts return monitoring to assess voluntariness of return, return trends including push and pull factors to identify persons with specific needs. Similarly, IOM manages four Transit Centers are Torkham in Nangarhar, Spin Boldak in Kandahar, Milak in Nimroz and Islam Qala in Herat providing a range of post-arrival services to undocumented returnees from Pakistan and Iran.

MoRR-led e-registration for registered refugees and undocumented returnees commenced at the Torkham border in early November 2016 via the Afghan Returnee Information System (ARIS) - the government's new central database – with biometric registration (finger-printing) set to start in the spring of 2017 – as well as the introduction of a more secure returnee certificate to avoid fraud. Possible integration of systems is under review to ensure that the UNHCR, MoRR and WFP SCOPE systems speak to one another and avoid duplication.

With UNHCR set to retain the cash grant in 2017, albeit at a lower level of USD 200 per person, providing blanket assistance to all registered refugee returnees, humanitarian assistance to both documented and undocumented returnees will continue to be provided through a combination of criteria. The humanitarian community's efforts to harmonize assistance must therefore focus on practical ways of scaling up assistance packages to undocumented returnees and conflict induced IDPs through a vulnerability based approach with the inclusion of host communities. Based on limited humanitarian financing for Afghanistan, given the number of ongoing and new and emerging crises globally, locating, assessing and targeting the most vulnerable through innovative methods like DTM and SIM card distribution will be foundation elements in distribution of assistance in 2017. A shift away from one-off post-arrival assistance at border crossing points to include in community assistance by IOM and other humanitarian partners based on needs assessments reflects the above issues.

³ UNHCR in cooperation with authorities in countries of asylum, deregister returning refugees from the registration database i.e. Proof of Registration Cards (in Pakistan) and Amayesh cards (in Iran) databases and issue them with voluntary repatriation forms (VRFs), based on which they receive the repatriation cash grant in the ECs in Afghanistan

⁴ Kabul, Nangarhar and Kandahar ECs are serving returnees from Pakistan while Herat EC serve returnees from Iran

9. Consequences of failure to respond

The immediate consequences of a failure to respond to the projected influx of more than one million registered refugees and undocumented Afghan returnees in 2017, into what is already a fragile humanitarian context, are manifold. These include but are not limited to lack of access to basic services and a lack of civil documentation precluding access to services; potential for vector borne disease outbreaks as a result of limited WASH and health care facilities; higher rates of unemployment due to the fact that a majority of returnees are low skilled and unskilled workers; potential for an associated rise in instability; and secondary movements from urban centers where jobs and services are scarce to rural areas plagued by conflict. All of these consequences are compounded by the high levels of conflict-induced displacement as witnessed across Afghanistan in 2016 and the beginning of 2017.