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of the High Commissioner's Programme
Geneva, Switzerland**



**Background
Document**

**High-level Segment on the
Afghan Refugee Situation
6-7 October 2015**





سوره های نورجانبان



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Introduction

With origins dating to 1979, the Afghan refugee situation is the largest protracted refugee situation that UNHCR has ever confronted. Three of every four Afghans have been forcibly displaced during their lives.¹ Moreover, with some 2.6 million people registered and dispersed to over 70 countries, the Afghan refugee population today is second in size only to Syrian refugees.

Afghan Displacement: Key Facts and Figures

- One of every five refugees worldwide is from Afghanistan.
- The Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan jointly host 95 per cent of the total 2.6 million registered Afghan refugees.
- Over 50 per cent of Afghan refugees are children, and they comprise the largest group of unaccompanied or separated children lodging claims in 2014.

The vast majority of Afghan refugees – approximately 95 per cent – are hosted by just two countries, the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan. With 1.5 million registered Afghan refugees in Pakistan, and over 950,000 registered Afghan refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran,² an additional two million undocumented Afghans are also estimated to reside in these neighbouring countries. Beyond the sub-region, Germany hosts the largest number of Afghan refugees.³

The recent establishment of the National Unity Government in Afghanistan marked an important turning point for the future of Afghan refugees. In his inaugural address in

September 2014, President Ashraf Ghani stated that until all refugees return home, the Afghan nation would remain incomplete, thereby elevating solutions to displacement to a top national priority. In parallel, regional coordination among the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan has been strengthened for a common approach towards solutions for the Afghan refugees. Throughout 2015, a series of tripartite and quadripartite discussions among the three governments succeeded in the development of mutually reinforcing and complementary plans that will support voluntary and sustainable return and reintegration, as well as ensure continued protection and management arrangements for Afghan refugees in host countries. These efforts are being undertaken with the support of UNHCR and within the framework of the *Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees to Support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance for Host Countries* (Solutions Strategy or SSAR).⁴ The commitment of the National Unity Government of Afghanistan in this regional context has been further reflected in the development of a national Comprehensive Voluntary Repatriation and Reintegration Plan and the establishment of executive-level coordination structures for its implementation.

It is against this background that the High Commissioner, in consultation with the Chairperson of the Executive Committee, is convening a high-level segment on the Afghan refugee situation during the Committee's sixty-sixth plenary session, with the over-arching objective of supporting reinvigorated coordinated action, by the Governments as well as the international community, in support of durable solutions through protection, assistance and development.

¹ ICRC, *Our World: Views from Afghanistan*, Opinion Survey 2009, Geneva, 2009.

² Numbers based on government figures.

³ UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Asylum Trends 2014*, available at www.unhcr.org/551128679.html

⁴ *The Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees to Support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance for Host Countries* (Solutions Strategy or SSAR), developed in 2011 by the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan with the support of UNHCR, offers a comprehensive and integrated regional framework for joint interventions to facilitate voluntary return and sustainable reintegration, while at the same time providing assistance to host countries. It is discussed in Section V below and is available at www.unhcr.org/afghanistan/solutions-strategy.pdf.

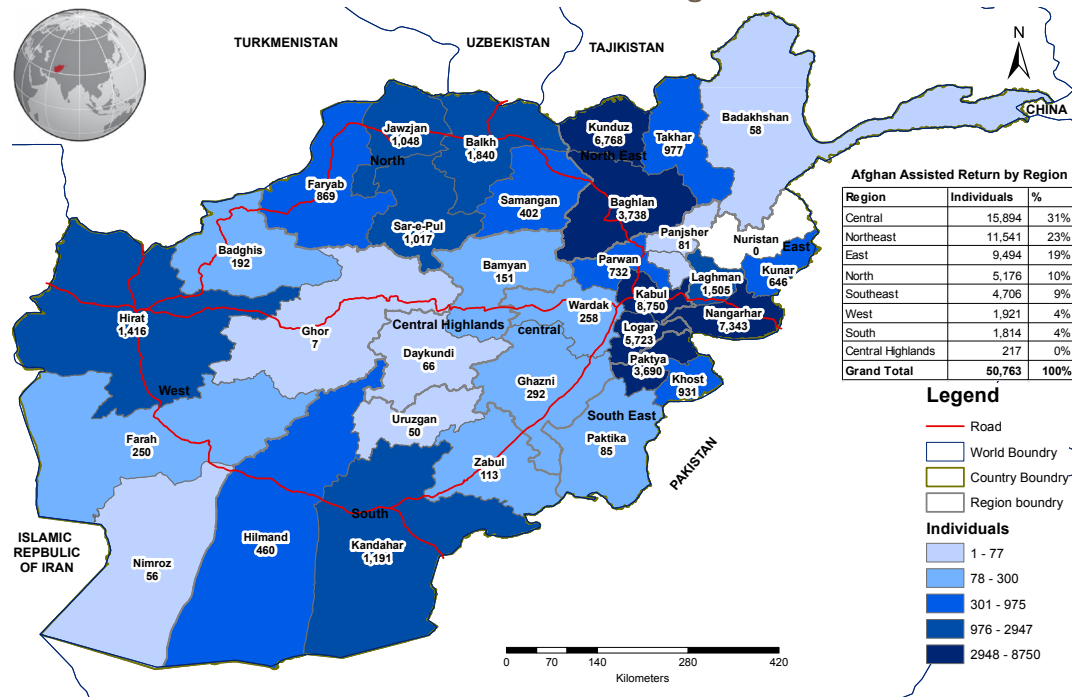
THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN

The context and demographics of return and reintegration

Returnees constitute approximately 20 per cent of the total population in Afghanistan. Since 2002, over 5.8 million Afghan refugees have returned home, more than 80 per cent of whom were individually assisted by UNHCR in the largest voluntary repatriation programme ever facilitated by the Office. The majority of these returns occurred in the years 2002-2006, and the rate of voluntary return had slowed in recent years, hitting a low in 2013 and 2014, with 39,000 and 17,000 returns respectively. A key reason for this decline – together with the “wait and see” approach taken by refugees during the transition – was growing insecurity in Afghanistan. This insecurity made humanitarian access – both to and by populations – increasingly difficult.⁵ A challenging socio-economic environment also contributed to a reduction in voluntary returns and further affected prospects for reintegration.

Today the overall situation for return remains complex. An intensification of the conflict in parts of the country this year has seen an increase in the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs)⁶ and a consequent rise in humanitarian needs. Moreover, thirty-six years into this protracted situation, new asylum applications continue to be filed: 73,500 such applications were filed in 2014, with a larger number expected this year, as new displacement continues. Yet it is notable that between the beginning of January and the end of August 2015, over 50,000 refugees voluntarily repatriated to Afghanistan, mainly from Pakistan – a marked increase over recent years. Indeed, the number of returns in 2015 to date has quadrupled in comparison to the same period in 2014, and UNHCR expects returns to continue until the onset of the winter.

Assisted voluntary repatriation to Afghanistan - Return by Province of Destination - March 2002 - August 2015



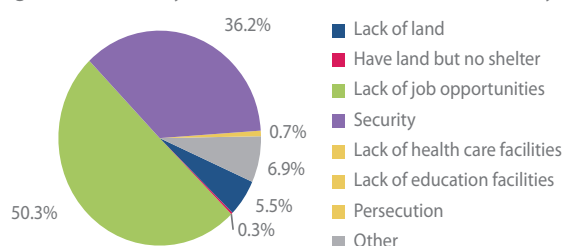
⁵ *Afghanistan, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, Annual Report, 2014*, United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Kabul, February 2015.

⁶ In the first seven months of 2015, nearly 135,000 individuals were recorded as newly internally displaced due to conflict – an increase of almost 70 per cent over the same period in 2014 – bringing the total number of IDPs to 980,000. In addition, natural disasters, including recurrent drought, seasonal flooding and earthquakes, often cause internal displacement and occasional movements across borders.

Looking to the future and the sustainability of return, several things are apparent. First, the voluntariness of return remains fundamental to its sustainability. The ability of both refugee and IDP returnees to safely re-establish themselves and rebuild lost livelihoods is also paramount, yet this ability may also be affected by insecurity in some areas. At the same time, the country is contending with a rapid and unplanned urbanization, including the growth of informal settlements, driven by factors that include secondary displacement and economic-driven migration to Kabul and the provincial capitals; a desire not to return to areas affected by insecurity; and a growing tendency to integrate locally after protracted periods of internal displacement. In this context, access to basic services, as well as to adequate and affordable housing in urban areas, remain fundamental concerns. Drawn from surveys conducted with returnees in late 2014, the charts below highlight their key preoccupations in relation to their successful reintegration in Afghanistan.⁷

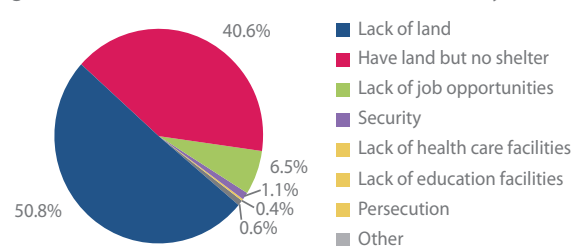
Interviews with returning refugees at Voluntary Repatriation Centres (VRCs) in the Islamic Republic of Iran, December 2014

When asked "Do you have any concerns about your return to Afghanistan?" Nearly 79% of the interviewed returnees said "yes".



Interviews with returning refugees at Voluntary Repatriation Centres (VRCs) in Pakistan, December 2014

When asked "Do you have any concerns about your return to Afghanistan?" 91% of the interviewed returnees said "yes".



Planning for return and reintegration

Over the last year, the Government of National Unity has significantly enhanced inter-ministerial and cross-sectorial coordination and support for return and reintegration. The High Commission for Migration (HCM) is a newly established executive decision-making body chaired by the President with participation of the ministers of all line ministries, providing a platform for decision-making on migration and displacement-related issues.

Under the leadership of the Minister of Refugees and Repatriation and with the oversight and support of the HCM, a *Comprehensive Voluntary Repatriation and Reintegration Plan* has been developed to address the vulnerabilities of returnees in a coordinated and comprehensive manner. The plan gives particular attention to the needs of returnees for a period of two years, during which they will have access to social services and benefit from priority inclusion in community-based development initiatives. Other key measures include strategies for redistribution of unused plots of land in urban and peri-urban areas and the inclusion of returning refugees in livelihood and income-generating activities.

Providing the overarching framework to address development needs in the country, the *Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS)*, finalized in 2008, also benefits reintegration of Afghan refugees. Aiming to enhance access to basic services, including health, education and livelihoods, the ANDS is implemented through National Priority Programmes (NPPs). In this context, UNHCR is assisting in aligning implementation of the *Solutions Strategy (SSAR)* and the NPPs, to ensure that gaps in areas of high return are addressed through development interventions. In order to embed the *Solutions Strategy (SSAR)* within the national development frameworks, including the NPPs, and to ensure that

⁷ UNHCR Afghanistan, Voluntary Repatriation and Border Minorings Monthly Update, January-December 2014, available at www.unhcr.org/UploadDocs/DocumentLibrary/VolRep_Border_Monitoring_Monthly_Update_Dec_2014_635568378140380467.pdf.

its five key outcomes⁸ are prioritized by those ministries involved in the implementation of the NPPs, the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) concluded 11 memoranda of understanding with relevant line ministries. A current revision of the NPPs provides further opportunity for mainstreaming returnees' rights into key national programmes.

It is anticipated that between 100,000 and 150,000 registered Afghans could voluntarily return from the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan in 2016. In order to ensure that these returns are sustainable, the speedy implementation of the *Comprehensive Voluntary Repatriation and Reintegration Plan* by the Government of Afghanistan is essential. Of particular importance in the initial period of return is the *Enhanced Voluntary Repatriation and Reintegration Package* (EVRRP), a grant that will help returnee families to bridge the period from the moment they return until they can benefit from the full realization of reintegration and development programmes being implemented by the Government. Moreover, planning figures must take into account that continued localized violence and insecurity will prevent large-scale return in the near future.

National IDP Policy

The implementation and success of refugee return and reintegration policies will be closely linked to the achievement of solutions for IDPs. Recognising the complexity of the phenomenon of internal displacement in Afghanistan – its multiple causes and contexts, from new emergencies to protracted situations – the Government formally launched the *National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons* in February 2014, also under the auspices of MoRR.⁹ The national IDP policy provides a comprehensive framework to address internal displacement through a rights-based approach, consistent with national and international standards, in particular the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*.¹⁰ It emphasizes the rights of displaced persons to enjoy livelihood opportunities, access to documentation, housing, land and property and services on par with other citizens. It also sets out the roles and functions of various government entities in protecting and assisting IDPs throughout the cycle of displacement, from the emergency phase to the facilitation of durable solutions, including with the support of the civil society and the international community. The national IDP policy creates a common platform for the development of action plans at national, provincial, and local levels, in the same vein as the reintegration plans for returning refugees.

⁸ See below, Section V.

⁹ *National IDP Policy on Internally Displaced Persons*, Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 25 November 2013.

¹⁰ *The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* were recognized by the Heads of State and Government, assembled in New York for the September 2005 World Summit, as an "important international framework for the protection of internally displaced persons." UN General Assembly Resolution A/60/L.1, para. 132. They are available at www.unhcr.org/43ce1cff2.html

THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

Overview of refugee demographics

The majority of Afghan refugees residing in the Islamic Republic of Iran arrived during the 1980s. Hazaras and Tajiks represent over 70 per cent of this population, while Pashtuns and other ethnic groups comprise the remainder. Based on statistics from 2011, it is estimated that 57 per cent of Afghan refugees live in the provinces of Tehran, Khorasan Razavi, or Esfahan; another 22 per cent live in Kerman, Fars, or Qom; eight per cent in Qazvin, South Khorasan, Khuzestan, Gilan, or Mazandaran; and three per cent in Alborz, Semnan, or Markazi.

About 97 per cent of the country's refugees live in urban areas, while only three per cent live in settlements. The majority of registered Afghan refugees have access to housing, education, healthcare and some form of employment.

As a particularly positive development, literacy among Afghan refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran has grown significantly, from just 6 per cent in 1979 to over 60 per cent today. In 2013-2014, nearly 330,000 refugee children were enrolled in the national education system, and in May 2015 the Supreme Leader announced that all foreign children of school age, regardless of documentation status, will have access to formal education. This decree has opened the way for the inclusion of almost 250,000 new students, most of whom are undocumented Afghan children.

Despite this very positive approach by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran towards registered refugees, the challenging economic situation has had a severe impact on the lives of refugees, and some struggle to meet costs for renewal of their Amayesh cards, costs related to temporary work permits, and tuition fees for their children. Targeted support for the most vulnerable, through programs like the health insurance scheme, discussed below, is crucial to maintain acceptable standards of protection for the many vulnerable refugees who are not able to access a durable solution in the near term. The recent signing of the *Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action* on the country's nuclear programme, and the prospect of the lifting of economic sanctions, offer hope for strengthened economic conditions. This, in turn, may ease the financial burden of the support and services provided to vulnerable refugees.

Between January 2002 and July 2015, more than 900,000 Afghans were assisted to voluntarily return home from the Islamic Republic of Iran. As noted above, however, the number who returned in 2013-2014 was substantially lower than previous years: 4,456 Afghan refugees repatriated with UNHCR assistance in 2014, a 54 per cent decrease over 2013.

Policy Framework

A longstanding party to the 1951 *Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*, in 2001 the Islamic Republic of Iran adopted the *Regulations Concerning Article 180 of the Act on the Third Plan of Economic, Social and Cultural Development*,¹¹ defining various categories of foreign nationals in the country. Afghan refugees have been registered and recognised on a prima facie basis since 2001 as "displaced persons" under this legislation.

The Government has expressed its intent to formulate a long-term strategy for documented Afghans residing in the country, and has offered registered refugees the possibility to voluntarily exchange their Amayesh cards for "temporary residence status", as an alternative stay arrangement. This status accords greater rights, in particular in relation to mobility and employment.

¹¹ Available at www.refworld.org/pdfid/3f4a222f8.pdf

Amayesh Cards

The Ministry of Interior's Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants' Affairs (BAFIA), which is responsible for refugee affairs in the country, undertakes the annual renewal of refugees' status. Afghan refugees are provided with Amayesh cards, which enable their access to basic services and facilitate the issuance of work permits. Amayesh card holders may live in urban areas and have freedom of movement within their province of registration.

In recent years, resettlement has been available for only a small number of Afghan refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran, mainly due to the low number of places being made available. UNHCR has set a target for the resettlement of 1,000 refugees in 2015, with priority given to the most vulnerable, including refugees with chronic medical conditions.

Health Insurance

The state-owned Medical Services Insurance Organization (MSIO), which is responsible for providing health coverage to Iranian nationals, includes registered refugees who suffer from the critical diseases of hemophilia, thalassemia and renal failure. In collaboration with BAFIA, UNHCR initiated a health insurance scheme with private insurance companies from 2011 to 2014, which enabled the provision of health insurance to more than 220,000 vulnerable refugees. To improve further this scheme, earlier this year the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare, and the Ministry of Health and Medical Education signed a memorandum of understanding to include refugees in the national health insurance scheme. All Amayesh card holders will benefit from health insurance services packages under the coverage of the Iran Health Insurance Organization (IHIO) in all hospitals affiliated with the Ministry of Health. Within this framework, UNHCR's support complements Government efforts.

THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF PAKISTAN

Overview of refugee demographics

Following recent verification during the renewal of Proof of Registration (PoR) cards,¹² Pakistan continues to host over 1.5 million Afghan refugees. The majority reside in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (62 per cent) and Balochistan (20 per cent), both provinces bordering Afghanistan, followed by Punjab (11 per cent), Sindh (4 per cent), Islamabad (2 per cent) and Azad Kashmir (less than 1 per cent). The majority of the refugees are ethnic Pashtun (85 per cent), with the remainder including Tajik, Uzbek, Turkmen and Hazara ethnic groups.

Children and youth constitute nearly 70 per cent of the Afghan refugee population. While relevant for the assessment of vulnerability and risks within refugee communities, this fact also points to the significant human capital that these generations could contribute to the development of Afghanistan. Because the vast majority of Afghan refugee households (90 per cent) moved to Pakistan in the years 1979-1985, three-quarters of registered refugee children and youth today are second or third generation. While they will bring skills and knowledge upon their eventual return to Afghanistan, their sustainable reintegration will nevertheless require strong support, including opportunities for education and livelihoods and access to adequate housing and services.

Over the last two decades, a significant number of Afghan refugees have moved out of established refugee villages and into urban and semi-urban areas: today, only one-third reside in the 54 refugee villages, while the remaining two-thirds live in urban or rural areas. While basic healthcare and education are provided in the refugee villages, refugees living outside of the villages encounter greater difficulty accessing essential services. Concerning their living conditions, Afghan refugee households have identified the following as primary concerns: access to income and livelihood opportunities (22 per cent); shelter (20 per cent); healthcare (15 per cent); and water (13 per cent).¹³

The increasingly urban profile of the refugee population – and consequent changes in their livelihoods options and future aspirations – do have a bearing upon Afghan refugees' return. Recognizing that many will not want to return to rural areas, the Governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan have agreed to a balanced approach, including not only reintegration support in both rural and urban areas of return, but also development of the skills and capacities of urban refugees in Pakistan, to enhance their contribution to the socio-economic development of Afghanistan upon return. The leadership and commitment by Afghanistan's National Unity Government to resolve the long-standing displacement situation has stimulated renewed optimism, credibility and space for constructive negotiations on solutions for refugees in the first half of 2015. Over 50,000 registered Afghan refugees have repatriated to Afghanistan in the first eight months of 2015.

Resettlement remains an appropriate durable solution and protection tool for those refugees who are unable to return and unable to stay in Pakistan. A total of 2,200 resettlement places – primarily to the United States of America, Australia, New Zealand and Canada – have been secured for 2015. A merged process for refugee status determination and resettlement for Afghan PoR card holders, initiated earlier this year, has significantly reduced processing time.

¹² The Proof of Registration (PoR) card is the official identity document for Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

¹³ Refugee Affected Hosting Areas Comprehensive Needs Assessment (Provinces of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), 2012.

Policy framework

Although Pakistan is not a signatory to the 1951 *Convention relating to the Status of Refugees* or its 1967 Protocol, it has generously hosted Afghan refugees for over 30 years in accordance with long-standing traditions of hospitality and solidarity, despite the significant socio-economic burden this has entailed. Pakistan's *National Policy on the Repatriation and Management of Afghan Refugees*, adopted in 2013, provides a framework for the continued temporary legal stay of Afghan refugees and further contemplates the elaboration of a national refugee law. The Government has extended the validity of Afghan refugees' PoR cards, which facilitates their legal stay in Pakistan through the end of 2015.

During Tripartite Commission meetings earlier this year, the Government of Pakistan reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring that Afghan refugees are protected in Pakistan until they can voluntarily return home in safety and dignity. Moreover, the Governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan agreed to develop mutually-reinforcing national policies on the way forward, including (i) a plan for voluntary return and reintegration of Afghan refugees, in a phased manner that is based upon Afghanistan's absorption capacity, and (ii) new management arrangements for Afghan refugees who remain in Pakistan beyond 2015. Consequently, in August 2015, the Government presented its draft *Comprehensive Policy on Voluntary Repatriation and Management of Afghan Nationals Beyond 2015*, which complements and reinforces the Afghan Government's *Comprehensive Voluntary Repatriation and Reintegration Plan* and seeks to promote lasting solutions for Afghan refugees in line with the regional *Solutions Strategy* (SSAR). Pending a final decision by the Government, the policy includes a proposal for the extension of the Tripartite Agreement and PoR cards until the end of 2017.

The Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas Programme

The Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas (RAHA) programme is a Government-led initiative within the framework of the UN's "Delivering as One" approach in Pakistan, launched in 2009 jointly with UNDP and UNHCR. Bringing together humanitarian and development actors for the benefit of Afghan refugees and their host communities, it aims to foster social cohesion, promote co-existence, and reduce economic and social vulnerability among the most disadvantaged communities in the refugee hosting areas. It is a cornerstone of the implementation of the *Solutions Strategy* (SSAR) in Pakistan and constitutes an effective burden-sharing mechanism.

Since the programme's inception, nearly 3,500 RAHA projects in the sectors of health, infrastructure, livelihoods, water and sanitation, education and social protection have benefitted over 10.6 million individuals among refugee and host communities alike. This work has been enabled by contributions totalling some USD 175 million from a number of donor governments.

A joint RAHA Management Information System (MIS), launched in December 2014, contains detailed information on RAHA projects, sectors, locations and donors. A revision and extension of RAHA to 2017, in line with the *Solutions Strategy* (SSAR), was endorsed in May 2015 by the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) and the Chief Commissioner for Afghan Refugees, as well as the Economic Affairs Division of the Ministry of Finance, UNDP and UNHCR. The revision seeks to improve linkages with the United Nations "Delivering as One" programme (Phase II), including cross-border projects and joint resource mobilization.

A REGIONAL SOLUTIONS STRATEGY FOR AFGHAN REFUGEES

The Solutions Strategy (SSAR), referenced in the introduction, was endorsed by the international community in 2012. Ever since, it has served as a multilateral platform for consensus-building, partnership and engaging new actors. Today it continues to provide the regional framework for comprehensive, integrated policy development and joint interventions in support of voluntary return and reintegration as well as support to host countries and communities.

Pillars of the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees

- Creating conditions conducive to voluntary repatriation through community-based investments in areas of high return;
- Building Afghan refugee capital based on livelihood opportunities in Afghanistan to enable sustainable reintegration; and
- Preserving protection space in host countries, including enhanced support for refugee-hosting communities and resettlement in third countries.

The *Solutions Strategy* (SSAR) is structured around five key outcomes to support its three overall Pillars:

- Support to voluntary repatriation;
- Access to shelter and essential social services for refugees, returnees and host communities;
- Improved and diversified livelihood opportunities and enhanced food security;
- Social and environmental protection of refugees and returnees, as well as assistance and support to host communities; and
- Capacity development of national authorities, associations, organizations and communities concerned with refugees, returnees and host communities.

The SSAR Country Project Portfolios

In 2014 in order to operationalise the *Solutions Strategy* (SSAR) and increase donor engagement, the three Governments developed country-specific portfolios of projects, targeted to achieve the five outcomes and involving more than fifty humanitarian, development and government partners, with a total amount of US\$ 700 million for the three countries concerned. The portfolios provide a platform for multilateral cooperation within each country. Government departments and line ministries, UN agencies, and international and non-governmental organizations all participated in the development of the portfolios, which encompass projects in sectors of education, health and livelihoods and prioritize the empowerment of young people through education and skills training.

A joint resource mobilization strategy adopted by the three Governments seeks to ensure predictable multi-year funding as well as to enhance partnerships with non-traditional donors and development actors.¹⁴ Following the launch of the portfolios for the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan in 2014, the portfolio in for Afghanistan will be launched by government Ministers and the Deputy High Commissioner during a side event to the high-level segment on 7 October.

National steering committees, composed of representatives of line ministries and UNHCR, have been established in all three countries to support implementation of the regional *Solutions Strategy*

¹⁴ Consistent with the strategy, reinvigorated efforts have been made to broaden the engagement of development partners, in particular in Afghanistan, with UNDP participating in the recent updating of the portfolio of projects.

(SSAR) and the related portfolios at the national level. The national committees review and endorse project proposals consistent with the goals and objectives of the *Solutions Strategy (SSAR)* and report to the regional Quadripartite Steering Committee (QSC), composed of the three Governments and UNHCR. Meanwhile the “Friends of the SSAR” group, established in Geneva in 2012, provides a forum for regular meetings among key donors and other partners, with similar national-level groups established in Afghanistan and Pakistan this year.

Enhanced Voluntary Return and Reintegration Package

During the recent QSC meeting in May 2015, the three Governments endorsed the Afghan led-initiative for an *Enhanced Voluntary Return and Reintegration Package (EVRRP)*. A multi-purpose cash grant, the EVRRP seeks to support the sustainability of return by strengthening returnees’ coping mechanisms and supporting reintegration at an individual level in the initial phase. The flexible grant would, for example, facilitate returnees’ access land and housing, enable them to purchase tools and equipment, and permit them to establish small entrepreneurial activities. The package will support individual returnee families pending the tangible impact of the government-led reintegration and development programmes. The Government of Afghanistan is leading a joint resource mobilization initiative for the *EVRRP*, supported by the Government of Pakistan and facilitated by UNHCR.

Resettlement contact groups on Afghan refugees, previously established in the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan to mobilize international support for the resettlement of Afghan refugees on a more predictable, multi-year basis, have also gradually been used to provide additional support to the *Solutions Strategy (SSAR)*.

THE WAY FORWARD

The Afghan refugee situation is at a critical juncture. The international community must re-double its efforts on behalf of the Afghan people, and in solidarity and support of the Iranian and Pakistani communities who have welcomed, hosted and supported them for so long.

For the vast majority of the 2.6 million registered Afghan refugees, solutions will be found within Afghanistan. The leadership of the Afghan National Unity Government, and the enhanced collaboration at the regional level among the Governments of the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, are providing a new opening and a coherent foundation for progress. But that progress cannot be achieved in isolation, without the solidarity of the international community. In order for return to be voluntary, and reintegration to be truly sustainable, the Solutions Strategy (SSAR) must be supported and the Comprehensive Voluntary Repatriation and Reintegration Plan must be implemented, including the EVRRP. The international community must not allow multiple other crises in the world to overshadow the imperative and the opportunity today, three decades on, to help resolve the protracted displacement of the Afghan refugees.

استمائی خوں





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