

MULTI-YEAR STRATEGY 2022 - 2024

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF PAKISTAN



1. Strategy

- 1.1 Executive Summary
- 1.2 Situation Analysis
- 1.3 Vision and Strategic Orientation
- 1.4 Age, gender and diversity

2. Impact Statements

1. Strategy

1.1 Executive Summary

As Afghan refugees enter a third generation of exile, the situation in Afghanistan remains unpredictable. Although the 2021-2023 verification exercise carried out by the Government of Pakistan and UNHCR continues to support planning and response strategies, UNHCR will advocate for the development of a national legal and administrative refugee framework in 2024 that would enable a more structured management of the asylum process. UNHCR will continue to advance efforts to collect disaggregated data on forcibly displaced and stateless people through national statistical systems to ensure responses are better tailored to needs. UNHCR will also address legal, cultural and socio-economic barriers that hinder refugees and asylum-seekers from fully exercising their rights. UNHCR will bolster public health, education and water and sanitation services for refugees and their host communities, expand their access to public social protection services, support their livelihoods and self-reliance, provide access to green energy, and strengthen gender-based violence and child protection programming. In tandem, UNHCR will pursue solutions for stateless people, including ensuring access to civil registration and legal assistance. Pakistan will also be a pilot country for the UNHCR Flagship Socio-Economic Survey, supported by the UNHCR-World Bank Joint Data Center with preliminary results planned for 2024.

In alignment with the longstanding Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR), there will be investment in host communities and community-based structures, with specific measures to advance gender equality. Recognizing the unpredictable situation in Afghanistan, a flexible approach will be pursued. In 2024, UNHCR will continue to advocate for the protection of all vulnerable Afghans who have sought safety in Pakistan and could be at imminent risk if forced to return. Returns must be voluntary, safe and dignified — without any pressure, to ensure protection for those seeking safety.

The SSAR and its Support Platform are central to a whole-of-society approach,

engaging a variety of actors with complementary expertise to forge a nexus between humanitarian assistance and long-term development. The multi-year 2024 Regional Refugee Response Plan for the Afghanistan situation will reinforce this nexus through partners, in line with the SSAR. UNHCR will work with the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions, the Chief Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees and provincial commissioners, adapting this enduring partnership to maximize existing opportunities. UNHCR will seek to pursue any pledges secured in the 2023 Global Refugee Forum and collaborate with the Ministry of Interior on asylum-related matters, including registration and documentation. A whole-of-Government approach underpins this strategy.

With Pakistan on the frontline of the climate emergency and vulnerable to flooding and droughts, including in refugee hosting areas, emergency and recovery responses will incorporate prevention and preparedness measures to avert and minimize the effects of extreme weather. Environmental sustainability remains central to UNHCR's work in the country. Connecting schools, water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, as well as health centers, to renewable energy sources will be integrated into rehabilitation efforts as standard. In 2024, UNHCR will remain agile in its response to future emergencies, including potential new displacement.

1.2 Situation analysis

Conditions in Afghanistan remain unpredictable as the population are confronted with human rights violations, notably restrictions imposed on women and girls, widespread economic challenges, a humanitarian crisis of unprecedented proportions and chronic food insecurity. While the prospects for Pakistan's stability cannot be viewed solely through the prism of neighboring Afghanistan, the implications of regional instability on the country's domestic security and foreign relations are anticipated to continue.

Moreover, the operational context in Pakistan is also expected to become harder to navigate in view of the political uncertainty domestically. A caretaker Government is in place and elections are due in January 2024. This political instability has been compounded by an economic crisis marked by soaring inflation and cost of basic foods, goods and necessities, sluggish economic growth and high unemployment. A looming threat of food insecurity and a potential public health crisis due to climate-induced extreme weather is also having a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable Pakistanis. A deteriorating security situation is another challenge, with attacks on military and police forces expected to continue in 2024.

Pakistan has largely upheld fundamental rights for registered Afghan refugees and granted them access to public health and education facilities. However, its approach to refugee management was challenged from mid-August 2021 as Afghans fled conflict and political turmoil in Afghanistan. Access to Pakistan territory by Afghans who did not have valid travel documents but may have needed international protection remains considerably constrained and is expected to further diminish. A

noticeable spike in the arrest, detention and deportation of undocumented Afghans in 2023 also contributed to the overall shrinking of protection space for Afghans in need, including women and girls. In October 2023, the Government of Pakistan announced plans to repatriate undocumented Afghan nationals back to Afghanistan. UNHCR urges that Pakistan continues to protect all vulnerable Afghans who have sought safety in the country, calling for the suspension of the forcible return of Afghan nationals. Any possible returns to the country must take place in a safe, dignified and voluntary manner.

The search for solutions for some registered refugees, people in a refugee-like situation, and asylum-seekers will remain priorities for UNHCR. The timing of achieving certain durable solutions will vary depending on the availability of places outside Pakistan, as well as opportunities to return to the refugees' country of origin. Voluntary repatriation – a key objective for the Government of Pakistan – will continue to be linked with sustainable reintegration support in Afghanistan. However, all returns to Afghanistan must be voluntary and without any pressure to ensure protection for those seeking safety.

In 2024, UNHCR will advocate on behalf of Pakistan with the international community, in the spirit of global responsibility sharing. It will seek to ensure the country receives the required and sustained support for its local communities and refugees until a more durable solution is found. UNHCR will build on efforts to boost links in a humanitarian– development– peace nexus, notably through strategic activities and engagements under the SSAR Support Platform and the 2023-2027 UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Pakistan.

1.3 Vision and strategic orientation

In 2024, UNHCR will focus on solutions for Afghan refugees entering a third generation of exile. The main solution remains voluntary return, if conditions are conducive and that any possible returns to the country take place in a safe, dignified and voluntary manner. Due to the economic challenges facing sustainable reintegration in Afghanistan, a reinforced approach to livelihoods will include a component enabling voluntary returns for skilled refugees. Cross-border mechanisms to systematically link skilled refugees with employment options in the Priority Areas of Return and Reintegration in Afghanistan will continue. Efforts to include refugees within Afghan peace and stabilization processes will be established. UNHCR will also explore options for complementary pathways and step-up efforts to meet increased resettlement quotas.

Simultaneously, UNHCR remains committed to investing in national health, including mental health, psychological and social support, and education facilities to which refugees have access. By the end of 2024, remaining duplicative services are expected to be discontinued in close consultation with the Government of Pakistan. Prospects for sustainable models in these situations continue to be assessed, and UNHCR will explore options to expand refugees' access to social protection and

health insurance schemes with the Government.

UNHCR will continue to systematize its approach to data collection and evidence-based advocacy and programming. It will work with key Government bodies to provide support in developing a comprehensive and sustainable mechanism to register and manage Afghan nationals, including those who may be in need of international protection, and to obtain disaggregated refugee data that can be used to ensure no one is left behind when reporting against the UN sustainable development goals. The results of a forced displacement survey, delivered in close cooperation with the Government, are expected in 2024.

UNHCR's approach will be grounded in the protection of respect for refugees' rights and their fair and equitable access to resources and services. Community-based protection structures remain at the core of UNHCR's outreach activities. UNHCR will focus on increasing women's access to health and education facilities and community decision-making processes. Attention to disabilities, mental health and psychological and social needs will also be factored into programming. A more systematized approach to partnership will be woven through efforts to tackle low school attendance, child protection risks and mental and physical health care. With bilateral development and humanitarian partners, UNHCR strives to foster more equitable international solidarity towards Afghan refugees, including breaking into new areas such as trade.

Private sector engagement will expand in 2024. UNHCR will build its cooperation with the World Bank, the UN country team and the humanitarian response cluster, aligning its planning as much as possible with the 2023– 2027 United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and 2024 Afghanistan Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan.

UNHCR will work with the Government of Pakistan and existing partners to maximize opportunities to respond to the changing demographics and socio-economic realities of the refugee population and their hosts, particularly following the devastating floods of 2022 and economic challenges of 2023. This will include working with the local Core Group of the SSAR Support Platform.

With partners, UNHCR will provide legal assistance and outreach to the stateless community to access identity documentation that improves their rights, while continuing to support the Government to strengthen civil registration systems that prevent statelessness.

Deteriorating security, climate change-induced disasters and the prospect of shrinking implementation access for UNHCR and its partners will require an agile and adaptable response in 2024.

1.4 Age, gender and diversity

UNHCR is strengthening age, gender and diversity-inclusive programming in

Pakistan. The Documentation Renewal and Information Verification Exercise of registered Afghan refugees, undertaken by the Government of Pakistan with UNHCR's support, will help update the existing database of around 1.3 million Proof of Registration (PoR) card holders. It will include key information regarding specific needs, family composition, ethnicity, intentions to return, as well as education and livelihoods. This will contribute to ensuring refugee programmes are evidence-based and reflect the changing demographic profile and living patterns of this population. It will also reinforce advocacy efforts to promote the realization of their rights and seek durable solutions. Building on this data, in late 2023 UNHCR will implement a forced displacement survey, with results in 2024 providing detailed data and understanding about the socio-economic status and living conditions of refugees and host communities.

The updated information on PoR card holders will allow UNHCR to target refugees in specific sectoral programmes. For example, its livelihoods strategy has laid the groundwork for building young Afghan people's self-reliance. UNHCR assessments to identify projects and their participants will use an age, gender and diversity approach and refer to the needs identified during the participatory assessments, as well as the outcomes from ongoing community consultations.

Addressing gender inequality is crucial to improving low education and skill levels among refugee women and reducing the risk of gender-based violence, which remains under-reported. Limited personal freedom of movement for refugee women can affect their access to skills development and income generation. UNHCR's annual participatory assessments highlight women's limited engagement with community structures. In this regard, UNHCR will work with key stakeholders through regular consultations, including with male community leaders, to ensure strategies are taken forward that promote the inclusion of refugee women's needs in UNHCR programmes.

Data related to people with disabilities, captured through the Afghan National Registration system, is less than 1%. Improved data will support greater targeting and tailored support for other diverse groups. In 2024, UNHCR will prioritize individual case management and identification of solutions for diverse groups.

2. Impact statements

Refugees and asylum-seekers can realize their rights in line with international protection standards.

Impact area: Attaining favourable protection environments

Outcome statements

Refugees in Pakistan have access to registration and identity documentation.

Outcome area: Access to territory, registration and documentation

Refugees have access to asylum procedures which uphold procedural standards.

Outcome area: Refugee status determination

Refugees' rights are strengthened under the national legal/policy framework.

Outcome area: Protection policy and law

Protection interventions are implemented to ensure the prevention of refoulement and access to justice is ensured for refugees and asylum-seekers.

Outcome area: Safety and access to justice

Stateless populations can realize their rights in line with international protection standards.

Impact area: Attaining favourable protection environments

Outcome statements

Stateless persons have access to civil registration systems to improve prospects for acquiring nationality and ensuring their rights are realized

Outcome area: Protection policy and law

Refugees (of all age, gender, and diversity groups) can exercise their freedoms and rights and make use of access to public services leading to greater levels of gender equality and self-reliance.

Impact area: Empowering communities and achieving gender equality

Outcome statements

People with whom UNHCR works receive cash transfers and/or in-kind assistance.

Outcome area: Well-being and basic needs

Proportion of refugees who have sustainable and affordable access to energy and adequate water systems and sanitation.

Outcome area: Sustainable housing and settlements

People with and for whom UNHCR works have access to health care facilities and services leading to improvements in their health status.

Outcome area: Healthy lives

People with and for whom UNHCR works have access to education facilities – primary, secondary, and tertiary – leading to higher education status among the persons we serve.

Outcome area: Education

Refugees and asylum seekers have increased access to livelihood opportunities leading to higher number of self-reliant refugees and asylum-seekers.

Outcome area: Self-reliance, economic inclusion and livelihoods

Women and child refugees and asylum seekers are safe from violence, exploitation, harmful practices and other forms of rights violations.

Impact area: Empowering communities and achieving gender equality

Outcome statements

GBV risks are reduced and all survivors have adequate and timely access to quality services to effectively address root causes of GBV.

Outcome area: Gender-based violence

Children are protected from violence, abuse, exploitation and discrimination (in reference to baseline data) and have access to child friendly procedures and services.

Outcome area: Child protection

People with and for whom UNHCR works (of all age, gender and diversity groups) have enhanced participation in programme design, implementation and evaluation thereby ensuring the full engagement of women, children and vulnerable groups at the decision making level.

Outcome area: Community engagement and women's empowerment

Options for solutions for refugees in Pakistan will be expanded to include resettlement and complementary pathways alongside voluntary repatriation.

Impact area: Securing solutions

Outcome statements

Refugees are able to make informed decisions to return to their country of origin and may avail themselves of the facilitated volrep programme.

Outcome area: Voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration

Resettlement is used as protection tool to ensure the most vulnerable are able to achieve solutions and complementary pathway opportunities are expanded.

Outcome area: Resettlement and complementary pathways