

Pakistan

Multi-year Strategy 2025 – 2027



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1.1 Executive Summary

For more than four decades, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan has provided refuge to millions of Afghans. However, as the country grapples with economic and security challenges, its long-standing tradition of hosting refugees has come under strain. Since the introduction of the Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan (IFRP) in 2023, which targets undocumented Afghan nationals in its first phase, the safety, rights and wellbeing of forcibly displaced Afghans in Pakistan have become increasingly constricted.

In this dynamic operating environment, UNHCR will work closely with the Government of Pakistan to enhance the protection of forcibly displaced and stateless people while seeking international solidarity and solutions aligned with the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR). Central to this effort is the pursuit of a national legal framework to establish an asylum process, with UNHCR advocating for coordinated efforts and policies to protect, assist, and support refugees, ensuring they receive the humanitarian aid, legal protection and opportunities needed to rebuild their lives.

UNHCR will also work with partners to enhance sustainable access to education and healthcare for refugees and host communities alike. It will advocate for greater access to social protection services for forcibly displaced and stateless people, support for their livelihoods and self-reliance, access to clean and affordable energy, and stronger prevention and response measures to gender-based violence and children protection.

Efforts will continue to strengthen coordination with development partners to support national services and Pakistani communities in refugee-hosting areas. Through close collaboration with the Government, UN agencies, NGOs and other stakeholders, UNHCR will seek to address the needs of communities hosting refugees and supporting displaced people to access national and provincial planning and programming, with careful consideration given to climate concerns. Refugee voices will remain integral to the planning and design of UNHCR's programmes in Pakistan.

Building on previous achievements, UNHCR will work with the Government of Pakistan to refocus efforts to strengthen protection, enable solutions and promote self-reliance for forcibly displaced and stateless people. UNHCR is committed to fostering international cooperation and support to address the challenges faced by forcibly displaced people in the country. Efforts will focus on expanding their access to sustainable solutions, including voluntary repatriation in safety and dignity, resettlement and complementary pathways. UNHCR will also continue working towards identifying

effective, long-term solutions for Afghans. In parallel, UNHCR will advocate for secure legal status for stateless people, supporting their access to civil registration and legal assistance.

Amid a complex and evolving environment exacerbated by climate-induced challenges, UNHCR will remain agile, leveraging partnerships and adapting its strategy as required to meet the changing needs of affected people in Pakistan.

1.2 Situation Analysis

Pakistan has hosted one of the largest refugee populations in the world for more than four decades. However, the country faces a compounding array of socioeconomic challenges magnified by the aftermath of the devastating 2022 floods, rising inflation and ongoing security concerns. These multifaceted crises will continue to test Pakistan's long-lasting tradition of hospitality towards refugees.

As of October 2024, Pakistan hosts some 1.5 million Afghan refugees and asylum-seekers, alongside more than 1.5 million Afghans of different legal statuses. Most Afghan refugees reside in the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (54%) and Balochistan (24%), both of which border Afghanistan. Around 30% of Afghans live in rural refugee settlements, while the remaining 70% reside in urban and peri-urban areas.

Despite the ongoing efforts of UNHCR and partners to deliver multi-sectorial assistance, along with support from the Government of Pakistan in facilitating refugees' access to national service delivery systems, particularly in health and education, the situation remains dire. In 2024, Pakistan's Prime Minister declared an education emergency, with some 26 million children out of school, including nearly half a million refugee children. Addressing the education needs of disadvantaged, over-age and out-of-school children and young people, particularly girls, who have missed or had their education interrupted, will require collective action. At the same time, while refugees benefit from access to public health services, more investment in healthcare infrastructure is needed to improve health outcomes, including for host communities.

Protecting the safety, rights and wellbeing of forcibly displaced and stateless people in Pakistan is challenging. Since the implementation of the Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan (IFRP), around 750,000 people returned to Afghanistan from September 2023 to October 2024, with approximately 258,000 people returning in 2024, most of whom were undocumented. Since 2023, UNHCR has facilitated the return of around 48,000 refugees through voluntary repatriation centres. The rate of detention, deportation and returns decreased considerably between January and June 2024. Registered Afghan refugees gained some degree of stability in mid-2024 when the Government of Pakistan extended proof of registration cards for one year until 30 June 2025.

Given that the protection environment is likely to remain precarious, comprehensive advocacy efforts are needed in 2025 to secure the safety, rights and wellbeing of forcibly displaced people, along with enhanced protection interventions and assistance to those who require international protection, regardless of their documentation status. UNHCR will collaborate with the Government to develop a comprehensive asylum policy. It will seek to identify potential longer-term solutions for those in need of international protection and for Afghans of other statuses, while bolstering support for host communities. With partners, UNHCR will aim to secure States' support for this effort, emphasizing the importance of multilateral engagement to achieve sustainable outcomes.

Moreover, Pakistan's vulnerability to climate change, coupled with the lasting effects of the 2022 flooding and increased frequency of extreme weather events, are expected to put even more pressure on host communities as well as forcibly displaced and stateless people. UNHCR will work to protect and strengthen the resilience of forcibly displaced and stateless people from the current and future impacts of climate change, while reducing its own environmental footprint.

1.3 Vision and Strategic Orientation

UNHCR's vision for 2025 and beyond is to contribute to an environment that enables forcibly displaced and stateless people, along with host communities in Pakistan, to enjoy their fundamental rights and actively participate in building inclusive and resilient societies for a sustainable future.

The following five strategic priorities will be central to this vision:

- Advocating for the development of a comprehensive legal and policy framework to protect, assist and support refugees, ensuring they receive the humanitarian aid, legal protection and opportunities needed to rebuild their lives
- Engaging with the Government to address and overcome documentation barriers
- Advancing the humanitarian development nexus and promoting the inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless people in national and provincial planning and programming, with particular attention to climate concerns
- Engaging all segments of the community to fully access their rights and investing in people's skills, knowledge, health and abilities to enhance their potential
- Accessing sustainable solutions for forcibly displaced and stateless people, including voluntary repatriation in safety and dignity, resettlement and complementary pathways, as well as exploring any applicable local options

Developing a comprehensive legal and policy framework to support, assist and protect refugees in Pakistan will build on the country's generous and progressive history, while

acknowledging current challenges. By strongly advocating for the protection of vulnerable groups and discouraging forced returns, UNHCR aims to help the Government of Pakistan build a more reliable and comprehensive refugee management system. UNHCR remains resolute in engaging and supporting the Government to identify, address and overcome barriers to civil and refugee status documentation for refugees and asylum-seekers. Such documentation not only provides proof of legal stay but remains a prerequisite for forcibly displaced people to enjoy their fundamental rights and access essential services. The first step in this approach involves exploring opportunities to work with the Government to identify people with international protection.

From 2025 to 2027, UNHCR will support sustainable responses to strengthen the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, enhancing services for refugees and host communities and promoting inclusive planning at national and provincial levels. This includes advancing gender equality, building human capital and strengthening community participation.

Securing sustainable solutions, including voluntary repatriation, resettlement and complementary pathways, as well as local options where applicable for forcibly displaced and stateless people, remains a priority. Ensuring that forcibly displaced and stateless people can pursue and access solutions in safety and dignity will also be paramount.

In light of the socioeconomic, political, security, and climate-induced challenges facing the country, UNHCR will adopt a cautious and agile approach to pursuing these five priorities. While the pause in the IFRP in 2024 has introduced new challenges to an already complex refugee protection landscape, UNHCR will continue working with the Government and enhance collaboration with international partners, development agencies, NGOs and civil society organizations to enable their active participation in the refugee response.

1.4 Fair Access and Representation

UNHCR employs a range of measures to ensure the protection, inclusion and rights of forcibly displaced and stateless communities, recognising their specific age, gender, and diversity (AGD) characteristics across all areas of support. A key initiative in this effort was the documentation renewal and information verification exercise of registered Afghan refugees undertaken by the Government of Pakistan with UNHCR's support. This exercise updated the existing database of around 1.3 million proof of registration card holders. UNHCR ProGres data relating to new arrivals, which includes verified data, also captures key information on specific needs, family composition, ethnicity, intentions to return, education, and the livelihoods of households seeking international protection. These data sets will contribute to ensuring refugee programmes are

evidence-based and reinforce efforts to promote the realization of their rights and pursuit of durable solutions. In 2024, UNHCR will build on these data insights by conducting a forced displacement survey. This survey will deepen understanding of the socioeconomic status of both refugees and host communities and inform programming with a focus on AGD considerations.

To strengthen women's participation within community structures and support toward women and girls, UNHCR will build on successful initiatives that promote gender balance in protection activities. Gender considerations will be weaved into all aspects of UNHCR's work, from policy development and programme design to implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This includes recruiting female outreach volunteers and staff and increasing women's representation on UNHCR helpline teams. The diverse needs, priorities, and capacities of women, men, girls and boys will be considered and gender-based disparities and discrimination will be addressed through targeted interventions.

To promote diversity, inclusion and non-discrimination, UNHCR will create safe and inclusive spaces where everyone feels respected, valued and empowered to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives. It will build on its work to advance the inclusion of marginalized communities and people with disabilities by partnering with local civil society organizations. Participatory assessments will also be conducted for different AGD groups, including older people, children and people with disabilities, as well as stateless communities, to tailor programmes and projects that address their varied needs.

Building the capacity of Government officials, humanitarian actors, community leaders and UNHCR staff to mainstream AGD considerations into their work will be a priority in 2024. To support this, UNHCR will provide training, guidance and resources on AGD-responsive programming, gender equality and inclusion.

2. Impact Statements

Impact statement

Forcibly displaced and stateless people can realize their rights in line with international protection standards

Impact area: Attaining favourable protection environments

Outcome statements

Refugees, asylum seekers and stateless persons in Pakistan have access to registration and identity documentation

Outcome area: Access to territory, registration and documentation

Refugees have access to asylum procedures in line with international standards

Outcome area: Refugee status determination

National legal/policy framework is established to uphold the rights of refugees and stateless persons

Outcome area: Protection policy and law

Refugees and asylum seekers enjoy access to justice, are aware of their rights, and are safe from refoulment

Outcome area: Safety and access to justice

Impact statement

Women, children and vulnerable groups actively participate in society, are safe from violence, exploitation, abuse and harmful practices, and have equal access to quality public services

Impact area: Empowering communities and achieving gender equality

Outcome statements

GBV risks are reduced, root causes of GBV are addressed, and survivors receive quality services

Outcome area: Gender-based violence

Children have access to quality child protection services to prevent and respond to violence, abuse and exploitation

Outcome area: Child protection

Communities, especially women, children and vulnerable groups, meaningfully participate in decision making through inclusive approaches

Outcome area: Community engagement and women's empowerment

Refugees and asylum seekers have access to sustainable housing, and clean and affordable energy

Outcome area: Sustainable housing and settlements

Refugees and host communities have access to quality health services

Outcome area: Healthy lives

Refugees and asylum seekers have access to equitable, inclusive, safe, and quality education

Outcome area: Education

Refugees and asylum seekers have increased access to sustainable livelihoods opportunities and economic inclusion

Outcome area: Self-reliance, economic inclusion and livelihoods

Impact statement

Sustainable solutions in safety and dignity continue to expand while local solutions opportunities are available to forcibly displaced and stateless persons

Impact area: Securing solutions

Outcome statements

Refugees are able to make informed decisions to return to their country of origin in safety and dignity through facilitated voluntary repatriation

Outcome area: Voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration

Refugees have access to resettlement and complementary pathways solutions

Outcome area: Resettlement and complementary pathways

Forcibly displaced and stateless persons have increased access to durable legal status and civil registration, to improve prospects for acquiring nationality

Outcome area: Local integration and other local solutions

3. Pakistan 2025 Indicators and Targets

Country	Results Level	Result Area	Indicator	Population Type	Baseline	Target 2025
Pakistan	Impact	IA1: Protect	1.1 Proportion of people seeking international protection who are able to access asylum procedures	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	84%	Not applicable
Pakistan	Impact	IA1: Protect	1.2 Proportion of people who are able to move freely within the country of habitual residence	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	96%	Not applicable
Pakistan	Impact	IA2: Respond	2.2 Proportion of people residing in physically safe and secure settlements with access to basic facilities	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	To be confirmed	Not applicable
Pakistan	Impact	IA2: Respond	2.3 Proportion of people with access to health services	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	82%	Not applicable
Pakistan	Impact	IA3: Empower	3.1 Proportion of people who have the right to decent work	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0%	Not applicable

Pakistan	Impact	IA3: Empower	3.2a Proportion of children and young people enrolled in primary education	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	20%	Not applicable
Pakistan	Impact	IA3: Empower	3.2b Proportion of children and young people enrolled in secondary education	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	4%	Not applicable
Pakistan	Impact	IA3: Empower	3.3 Proportion of people feeling safe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	To be confirmed	Not applicable
Pakistan	Impact	IA4: Solve	4.1 Number of refugees who voluntarily return in safety and dignity to their country of origin	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	36,337	Not applicable
Pakistan	Impact	IA4: Solve	4.2a Number of people who departed on resettlement	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	346	Not applicable
Pakistan	Impact	IA4: Solve	4.2b Number of people who departed through complementary pathways	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	106	Not applicable
Pakistan	Impact	IA4: Solve	4.3a Number of stateless people for whom nationality is granted or confirmed	Stateless Persons	1,104	Not applicable
Pakistan	Impact	IA4: Solve	4.3b Number of refugees for whom residency status is granted or confirmed	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	Not applicable
Pakistan	Outcome	OA1: Access/Doc	1.1 Proportion of refugees and asylum seekers registered on an individual basis	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	77%	100%
Pakistan	Outcome	OA1: Access/Doc	1.2 Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	16%	100%
Pakistan	Outcome	OA1: Access/Doc	1.3 Proportion of people with legally recognized identity documents or credentials	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	68%	100%
Pakistan	Outcome	OA2: Status	2.1 Average processing time (in days) from registration to first instance asylum decision	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	368	365
Pakistan	Outcome	OA3: Policy/Law	3.1 Extent national legal framework is in line with the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol	None	Not yet aligned: ≤69 points	To be confirmed

Pakistan	Outcome	OA3: Policy/Law	3.2 Extent national legal framework is in line with the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness	None	Not yet aligned: ≤69 points	To be confirmed
Pakistan	Outcome	OA4: GBV	4.1 Proportion of people who know where to access available GBV services	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	To be confirmed	To be confirmed
Pakistan	Outcome	OA4: GBV	4.2 Proportion of people who do not accept violence against women	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	To be confirmed	To be confirmed
Pakistan	Outcome	OA4: GBV	4.3 Proportion of survivors who are satisfied with GBV case management services	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	73%	100%
Pakistan	Outcome	OA5: Children	5.1 Proportion of children at heightened risk who are supported by a Best Interests Procedure	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	34%	50%
Pakistan	Outcome	OA5: Children	5.2 Proportion of children who participate in community-based child protection programmes	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	2%	5%
Pakistan	Outcome	OA5: Children	5.3 Proportion of unaccompanied and separated children who are in an alternative care arrangement	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	97%	100%
Pakistan	Outcome	OA7: Community	7.1 Extent participation of displaced and stateless people across programme phases is supported.	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Moderate: 40-69 points	To be confirmed
Pakistan	Outcome	OA7: Community	7.2 Proportion of people who have access to safe feedback and response mechanisms	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	To be confirmed	40%
Pakistan	Outcome	OA7: Community	7.3 Proportion of women participating in leadership/management structures	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	37%	50%
Pakistan	Outcome	OA9: Housing	9.1 Proportion of people living in habitable and affordable housing	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	To be confirmed	To be confirmed
Pakistan	Outcome	OA9: Housing	9.2 Proportion of people that have energy to ensure lighting	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	30%	30%

Pakistan	Outcome	OA10: Health	10.1 Proportion of children aged 9 months to five years who have received measles vaccination	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	84%	95%
Pakistan	Outcome	OA10: Health	10.2. Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	96%	95%
Pakistan	Outcome	OA11: Education	11.1 Proportion of young people enrolled in tertiary and higher education	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	To be confirmed	5%
Pakistan	Outcome	OA11: Education	11.2 Proportion of children and young people enrolled in the national education system	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	14%	15%
Pakistan	Outcome	OA13: Livelihood	13.1. Proportion of people with an account at a bank or other financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	12%	15%
Pakistan	Outcome	OA13: Livelihood	13.2. Proportion of people who self-report positive changes in their income compared to previous year	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	To be confirmed	To be confirmed
Pakistan	Outcome	OA13: Livelihood	13.3 Proportion of people (working age) who are unemployed	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	To be confirmed	To be confirmed
Pakistan	Outcome	OA15: Resettle	15.1 Number of refugees submitted by UNHCR for resettlement	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	4,197	6,500
Pakistan	Outcome	OA16: Integrate	16.1 Proportion of people with secure tenure rights to housing and/or land	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	To be confirmed	To be confirmed
Pakistan	Outcome	OA16: Integrate	16.1 Proportion of people with secure tenure rights to housing and/or land	Stateless Persons	To be confirmed	To be confirmed
Pakistan	Outcome	OA16: Integrate	16.2 Proportion of people covered by national social protection systems	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	To be confirmed	To be confirmed
Pakistan	Outcome	OA16: Integrate	16.2 Proportion of people covered by national social protection systems	Stateless Persons	To be confirmed	To be confirmed