

AFGHANISTAN

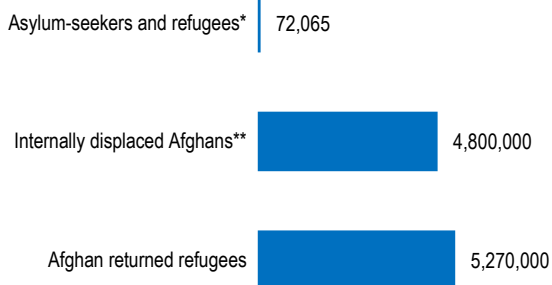
March 2021

The operational context in Afghanistan was marked by armed conflict, natural hazards and COVID-19.

As a result, around **52,500 persons** have been newly internally displaced due to armed conflict so far in 2021.

Around 550,00 internally displaced persons, 786,000 Afghan returnees, refugees and asylum-seekers will require humanitarian assistance in 2021, reported the Humanitarian Country Team.

POPULATION OF CONCERN

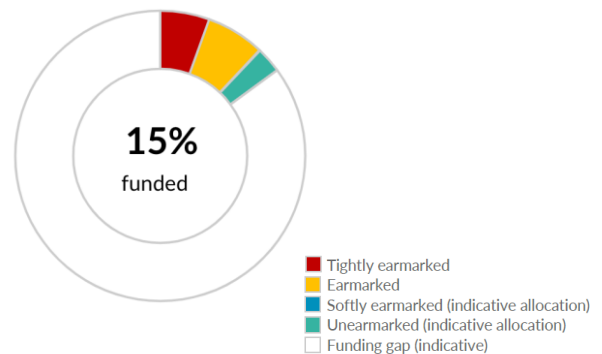


* Registration in some locations is suspended due to insecurity.
** Source: 2021 Humanitarian Needs Overview.

FUNDING (AS OF 16 MARCH)

USD 123.5 million

requested for the Afghanistan situation



UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

182 national staff

24 international staff

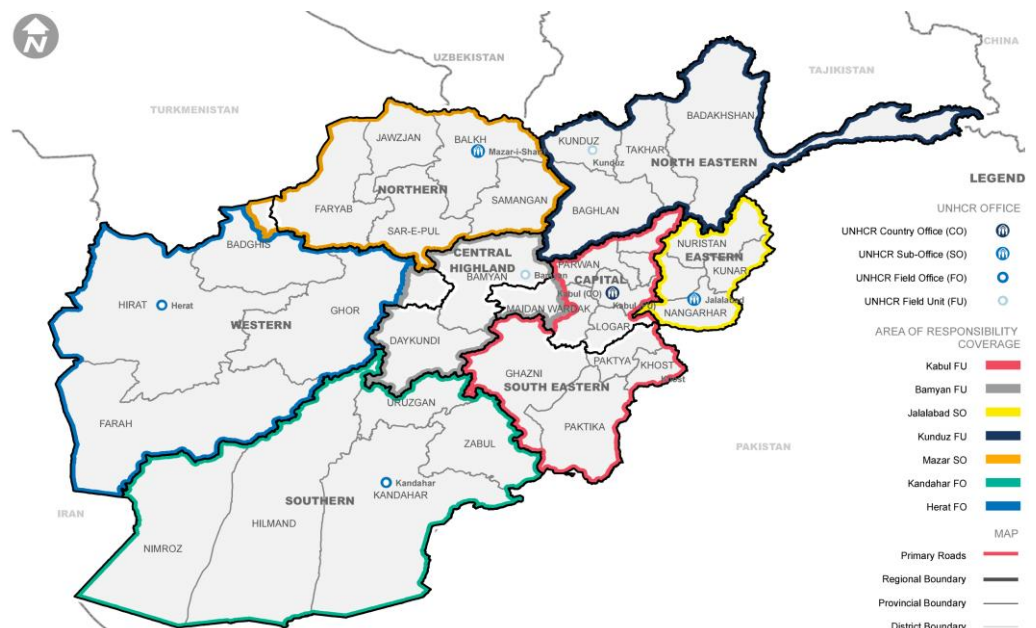
Offices:

1 Country Office in Kabul

2 Sub Offices in Jalalabad and Mazar-i-Sharif

2 Field Offices in Herat and Kandahar

3 Field Units in Bamyan, Kabul and Kunduz



COVID-19 RESPONSE



Children washed their hands to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Laghman province. © BEST, Ulfat Kazemi

- UNHCR continue working closely with Afghanistan to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 pandemic by focusing on three key areas: (1) helping the Government's ability to respond towards curbing the spread of COVID-19; (2) increase awareness among persons of concern about how to protect themselves from the spread of COVID-19 and provide hygiene items; and (3) coordinate with the Government and humanitarian community to ensure that all Afghans are reached through activities to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- UNHCR has so far provided incentives to 29 staff of the Department of Refugees and Repatriation (DORR) and 50 partner staff to facilitate registration, provided 20 electronic tables to facilitate information sharing between the DORR and health workers; renovated the reception facility at Islam Qala border to enhance space for registration and health screening; provided 14,897 personal protective equipment to the Government and partner staff working on the frontlines; distributed 8,740 hygiene kits to the most vulnerable members; distributed soap to 3,500 refugees, asylum-seekers and the members of host community in Khost province; installed 102 refugee housing units and 100 tents to improve health facilities and screening serving to around 440 persons daily; installed 79 hand washing stations to improve hygiene conditions of around 20,000 persons per day; and conducted awareness raising on response and prevention to COVID-19.

REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

- UNHCR continues to support the Government with the coordination of the response to **72,065 refugees and asylum-seekers** Khost, Paktika and Kabul.
- Majority of refugees and asylum-seekers require birth certificate, access to education, livelihoods, water, sanitation and health. UNHCR also strives to find the interim solutions for **407 refugees and asylum-seekers** in Kabul pending the adoption of a National Asylum Law.

VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION

- Since 2002 over **5.2 million Afghan refugees have repatriated** through the voluntary repatriation programme. The number of Afghan refugee returnees have significantly decreased in the recent years due to the deteriorating security situation, dire economic conditions and COVID-19 pandemic.

- As at 23 March, 499 Afghan refugees have returned to Afghanistan: 392 persons from Iran, 101 persons from Pakistan and 6 persons from other countries of asylum.
- Afghan refugee returnees who make an informed and voluntary decision to repatriate through the voluntary repatriation programme are provided with a cash grant of an average of US\$ 250 per person to meet basic needs and transportation costs to their location of origin or final destination.

REINTEGRATION OF REFUGEE RETURNEES

- The Ministry of Refugees and Reintegration and UNHCR identified and [endorsed additional 20 locations for the Priority Areas of Return and Reintegration \(PARR\)](#) bringing the total to 40 areas of the PARR located in 23 (out of 34) provinces. An estimated 1,800,000 Afghan refugee returnees currently reside in the 40 locations. A total of 839,042 Afghan refugees are originating from the 20 new locations, however, not all Afghan refugee returnees return to their location of origin.
- UNHCR continue supporting the government in establishing essential public facilities and enabling access to basic services in education, health and livelihood sectors to create conducive conditions for sustainable reintegration, through an area-based multisectoral humanitarian-development-peace investments and inclusive partnerships in line with the [Support Platform for the Solutions for Afghan Refugees](#), supported by the international community and affirmed in the [Global Compact on Refugees](#). UNHCR estimates that 60,000 Afghan refugees may opt for the voluntary repatriation through the voluntary repatriation programme in 2021.



UNHCR Representative in Afghanistan Van Buren (left) and High Commissioner for Refugees Grandi (middle) handing over a school to the Minister of Refugees and Repatriation Rahman (right) in Bamyān. Around 800 students will benefit from newly constructed school.

INTER-AGENCY HUMANITARIAN COORDINATION

- The [Humanitarian Country Team](#) for Afghanistan targets 13.8 million persons including [786,000 refugees and returnees and 450,000 internally displaced persons](#) for provision of humanitarian assistance in 2021. The impact of COVID-19 will likely remain throughout 2021 with an overwhelmed health system and interrupted primary health care services for non-COVID-19 patients.
- UNHCR as the lead agency for the [Protection Cluster and the Emergency Shelter and Non-Food Items Cluster](#), works closely with the Government and partners to coordinate the inter-agency response to internally displaced persons. Both clusters are playing a key role in the UN's assistance to support the Government with the prevention of and response to COVID-19.
- The Protection Cluster, led by UNHCR, has so far [reached 263,899 persons through activities](#) by providing assistance in the following sectors: child protection, gender-based violence, housing, land and property, and mine action.
- The Emergency Shelter and NFIs Cluster, led by UNHCR, has so far reached [266,697 persons with shelter and NFI assistance](#) by providing non-food item kits, emergency shelter kits, insulation package, support to construct transitional shelter or improve current shelter.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO NEWLY INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS


179,369

newly internally displaced persons


94,866

NFI beneficiaries


77,600

persons benefited from hygiene kits


11,155

persons benefited from family tents


6,020

cash beneficiaries


3,678

women benefited from sanitary materials



Over 4,000 families displaced by armed conflict received family tents. © Z.A., J.N, Kandahar

- On 11 October 2020, fighting between the Afghanistan National Defense and Security Forces and a non-state armed actor near Lashkargah city in Hilmand province resulted into new internal displacements. As at 18 March 2021, 179,369 persons have been newly internally displaced.
- As at 18 March 2021, UNHCR has provided life-saving assistance persons by distributing non-food items to 94,866 persons, hygiene kits to 77,600 persons, tents to 11,155 persons, cash assistance to 6,020 persons with specific needs, and sanitary material to 3,678 women of reproductive age. Cash assistance has been provided to vulnerable individuals, such as the elderly, children and women at risk, persons with disabilities, and those with serious medical conditions.
- Majority of displaced persons lack basic items including water, food, clothing and live in inadequate shelters. A number of public infrastructures such as schools, health clinics and telecommunication network have been damaged are require reconstruction. Humanitarian access continues being affected due to ongoing armed conflict and improvised explosive devices (IED) on main roads.

CONTACTS

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UNHCR is grateful for contributions by:

