Overview of Voluntary Repatriation from Pakistan to Afghanistan

UNHCR facilitates the Voluntary Repatriation of Afghan refugees as part of UNHCR’s mandate to provide comprehensive durable solution options.

UNHCR Pakistan operates three Voluntary Repatriation Centres (VRCs) one in Quetta and two in Peshawar. A second VRC in KP was opened in September in addition to VRC Chamkani to respond to the increased numbers of refugees wishing to return from KP and facilitate their return to Afghanistan in safety and dignity. Families who want to repatriate are de-registered at the VRC, and their Proof of Registration (PoR) card, an identity card for Afghan refugees that grants their temporary legal stay in Pakistan and protection against refoulement, is cut in the corner. Returnees receive a cash grant once they have reached one of the three UNHCR Encashment Centres in Afghanistan. The cash grant was increased at the end of June 2016, from an average 200 USD per family member to 400 USD per family member.

Up until the end of November 2016, 381,275 refugees repatriated, consisting of 58,981 families which is the highest recorded number of returns since 2006. 47,458 individuals repatriated between 1 November and 30 November 2016 alone which is also the highest number of returns in November since 2002. The daily average number of returnees in November was around 2,000.

Of the total number of returns, there were a total of 12,000 ‘recyclers’ (data is further reconciled by UNHCR Sub-Offices) who were not eligible for reintegration cash assistance although they were de-registered from the NADRA database.

During the month of November, only already scheduled families were processed at VRCs Chamkani and Azakhel (KP) and VRC Balesi in Balochistan was closed as of 7 November. VRC activities will remain suspended from 1 December 2016 to 28 February 2017 for the winter break. VRC Chamkani will be used as PoR Cards Modification (PCM) center for birth registration, PoR card modifications services during the winter pause in repatriation.

Since 2002, 4,301,171 Afghan refugees have repatriated from Pakistan with UNHCR’s assistance (see chart above). Interviews with refugees and returnees reveal a confluence of factors affecting the decision to return, including: (1) introduction of a tighter border management regime at the Torkham border which limits the previously free cross-border movements to persons with valid travel documents and visas; (2) short-term extensions of the validity of PoR cards resulting in heightened anxiety and lack of predictability; (3) enhanced implementation of the National Action Plan against Terrorism (NAP) and intensification of security operations against undocumented aliens, including Afghans; (4) deteriorating protection environment for Afghans in Pakistan, including intimidation and harassment by the authorities (particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and lesser acceptance of Afghans by local communities, with Afghanistan’s move towards India cited as one of the factors; (5) doubling of the voluntary repatriation and reintegration cash grant, and (6) strong appeal by President Ghani for refugees to return and the pro-active repatriation campaign by the Afghan Ambassador and the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) in Pakistan to that effect.

* The term ‘recyclers’ refers to those individuals who have who have availed of UNHCR repatriation assistance in the past and whose records are already enrolled in/recognized by the IRIS database.
Vulnerable families (%)*

- Serious Medical Condition (MED) 6%
- Older Person at Risk (OPR) 4%
- Single Parent (SP) 2%

Families with at least one member with a serious medical condition (%)*

- Stroke/Paralysis 2%
- Diabetes 2%
- Hepatitis 1%

Families with at least one member with functional disabilities (%) *

- Walking impairment 3%
- Sight impairment 1%
- Speaking impairment 0.5%

Reasons for staying in Pakistan
Percentage of family members who remained in Pakistan within repatriating families: 4%

School enrolment
Children of repatriating families that attended school in Pakistan:

- Overall: 16% attended, 84% did not
- Repatriating via KP: 17% attended, 83% did not
- Repatriating via Balochistan: 10% attended, 90% did not

Issues of concern as expressed by repatriating families (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concern</th>
<th>Pakistan</th>
<th>Afghanistan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recent arrests and detentions</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lease agreement problems with landlords</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bribery incidents on the way to the VRC</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement restricted outside of the refugee</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outstanding financial or legal problems</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to health</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal aid</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentation</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ethnicity (%)

- Pashtun: 5%
- Tajik: 1%
- Turkmen: 0.3%
- Others: 1%
- Baloch: 1%
- Uzbek: 90%

Sources of Information for returning refugees:

- About Place of Origin: 87% from Afghan Community, 8% from UNHCR/UNICEF, 5% had no information
- About UNHCR Repatriation Operations: 96% through UNHCR, 4% through other means

* Most common three

* Note that 10% of female headed households repatriated to join their husband in Afghanistan and 75% have a husband remaining in Pakistan.

More information available on http://www.unhcrpk.org
Comparison of intended place of return with place of origin (%)

- Nangarhar: 28%
- Kabul: 21%
- Kunduz: 8%
- Paktya: 6%
- Baghlan: 7%
- Logar: 6%
- Laghman: 7%
- Kunar: 3%
- Saripul: 2%
- Jawzjan: 2%
- Kandahar: 2%

32% of families did not intend to return to their place of origin for the following reasons:

- Lack of housing: 18%
- Lack of land: 7%
- Perceived insecurity: 6%
- Lack of income generation opportunities: 1%
- Lack of public services: 0.3%

Place of Residence in Pakistan and Intended Place of Return

TOTAL # OF AFGHANS REPATRIATED IN 2016 (JAN - NOV)
Families: 58,981
Individuals: 381,275

Families interviewed by Exit Questionnaire: 10,400

# of Individuals Repatriated
- 50001 and Above (1)
- 1000 to 5000 (9)
- 500 to 10000 (7)
- 1 to 5000 (13)

# of Individuals by Province of Intended Destination
- KABUL Province: 2
- 20000 to 50000: 5
- 50001 to 10000: 4
- 1 to 5000: 23

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