

AFGHANISTAN

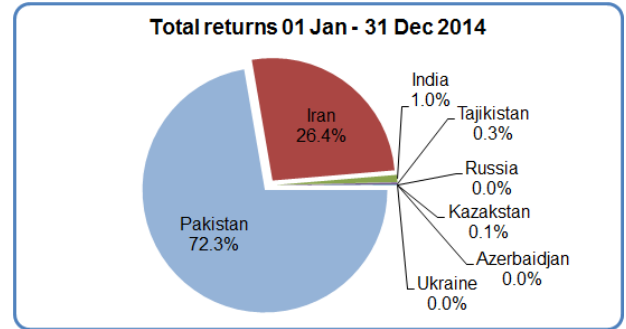
VOLREP AND BORDER MONITORING MONTHLY UPDATE

01 January – 31 December 2014

VOLUNTARY RETURN TO AFGHANISTAN

In December 2014, a total of 604 Afghan refugees voluntarily repatriated to Afghanistan. Of these, 446 came from Pakistan, 138 from Iran, 17 from India and 3 from Kazakhstan.

1 January – 31 December 2014: A total of 16,957 Afghan refugees (averaging 46 individuals per day) voluntarily repatriated to Afghanistan. The rate of return in 2014 is 56% lower compared to the 38,766 Afghans who returned in 2013. Of those returned in 2014, some 31.2% returned to Northern and Northeastern, 27.2% to Central, 13.9% to Eastern, 13.6% to Southern and the remainder to other regions.



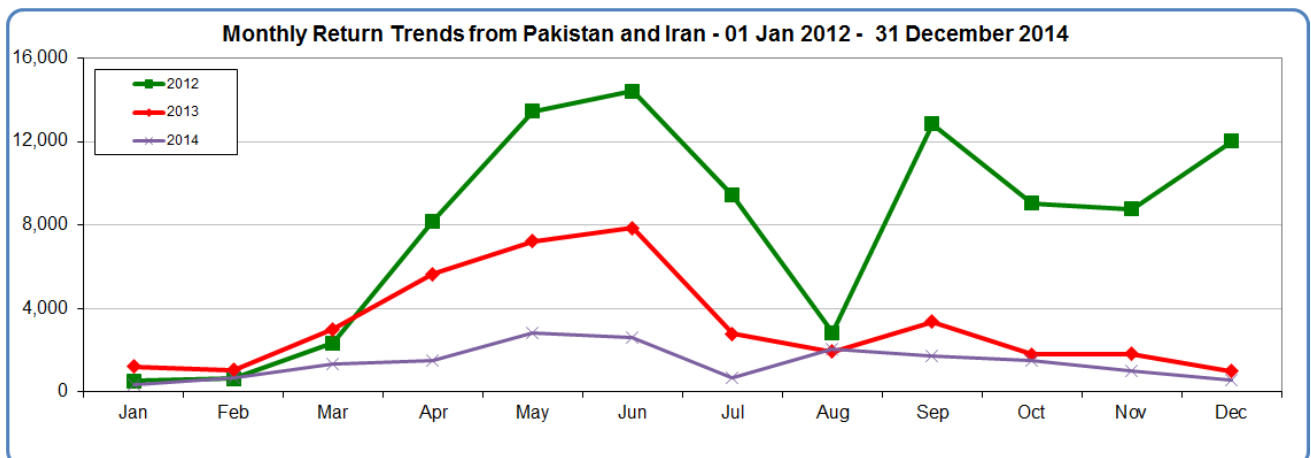
Region	No. of individuals returned - Comparison by year			
	Jan - Dec 2014		Jan - Dec 2013	
	No.	%	No.	%
Central	4,608	27.2%	10,689	27.6%
Northeast	3,027	17.9%	6,718	17.3%
East	2,365	13.9%	7,665	19.8%
South	2,300	13.6%	4,801	12.4%
North	2,270	13.4%	3,598	9.3%
West	1,467	8.7%	2,978	7.7%
Southeast	661	3.9%	2,154	5.6%
Central Highlands	259	1.5%	163	0.4%
Total	16,957	100.0%	38,766	100.0%

Trends: The lower rate of return in 2014 is believed to be attributed to the extension of Proof of Registration (PoR) cards until 31 December 2015 in Pakistan, uncertainty and concerns about security during the transitional period.

While uncertainty around the political transition in Afghanistan have undoubtedly played a role in the decisions made by some refugees not to return, it is believed that much of the hesitancy to return may be driven by economic conditions and limited absorption capacity in Afghanistan. In particular, lack of livelihoods, land, shelter and limited availability of basic services are the primary obstacles of return. This indicates that the return trend is depending on socio-economic and political developments in Afghanistan,

Pakistan and Iran. It is assumed that the establishment of new unity government in Afghanistan will have a positive impact on decision making among Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran.

Difficult economic conditions, deteriorating security conditions (in Pakistan) alleged harassment by authorities and fear of arrest and deportation constituted key push factors in the decision to return so far this year. On a more positive note, improved security in some parts of Afghanistan, the Government land allocation scheme and/or UNHCR shelter program, UNHCR's assistance package, improved employment opportunities in Afghanistan and reunion with the family/relatives in Afghanistan were cited by many returnees as important pull factors in their decision to return.



RETURN PROCESS

A refugee wishing to return to Afghanistan with the assistance of UNHCR must approach UNHCR's Voluntary Repatriation Centres (VRCs) in the country of asylum to register for return and sign a Voluntary Repatriation Form (VRF).

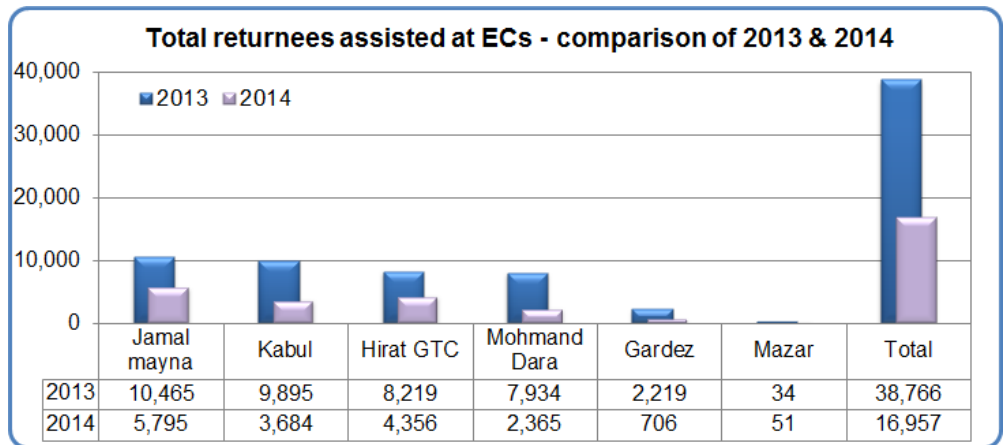
Repatriation from Pakistan is facilitated through two VRCs: Chamkani located in Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtonkhuwa and Baleli located in Quetta, Baluchistan.

Repatriation from Iran is facilitated through Soleimankhani, Esfahan, Shiraz, and Mashhad VRCs, the Sub-Offices, or directly through the Border Crossing Station (BCS) at Dogharoun.

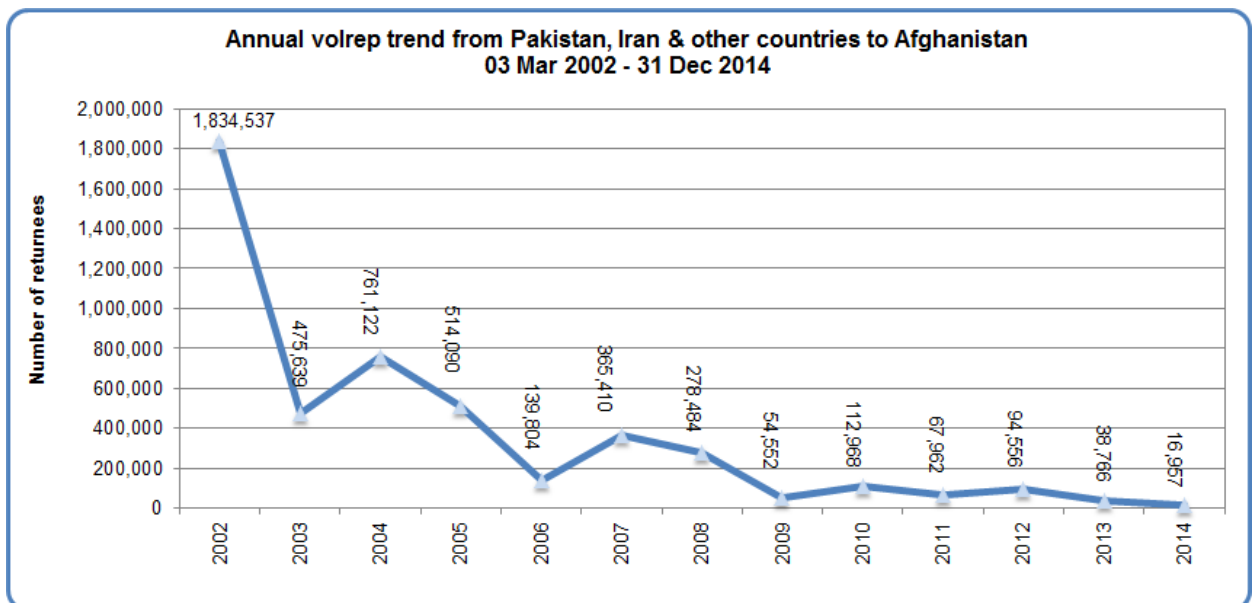
Upon return to Afghanistan, returnees are assisted at five Encashment Centers (ECs): Mohmand Dara (Nangarhar), Kabul (Kabul), Gardez (Paktya), Jamal Mayna (Kandahar) and Herat (Herat).

At the ECs, depending on the province of origin, all Afghan returnees with VRFs received approximately US\$ 200 per person (between US\$30 - US\$70 for transport and US\$150 as a short-term integration grant). The transportation grant varies according to the distance from the areas of asylum to the areas of origin. Returning refugees are also briefed on mine awareness and education procedures in Afghanistan at the EC. They can benefit from transit facilities for overnight stay and basic health services. All children under the age of five are vaccinated for polio and measles. Returnees are briefed also on how to access legal aid, if required.

In view of rising commodities and transportations costs in Afghanistan, UNHCR, in 2014, increased the cash grant from an average US\$ 150 to US\$ 200 per person.



From the start of UNHCR's assisted voluntary repatriation operation in March 2002 to the end of December 2014, over 5.8 million Afghan refugees have returned home, out of which over 4.7 million repatriated with assistance from the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) and UNHCR. In total, returnees comprise 20% of the Afghanistan's population.

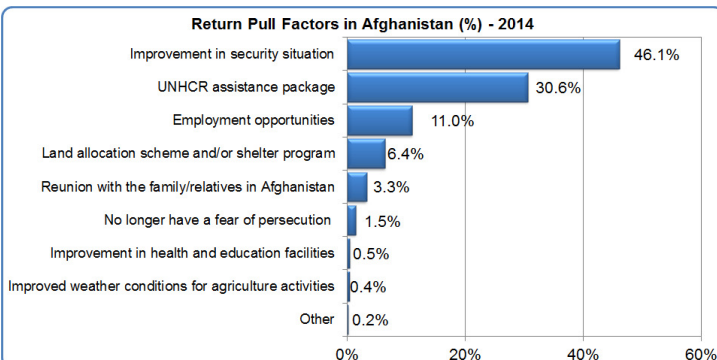
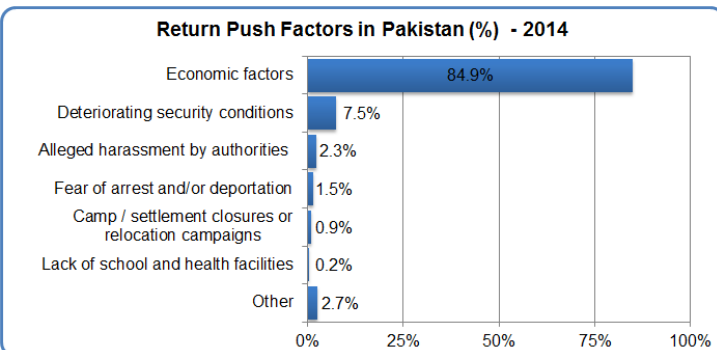
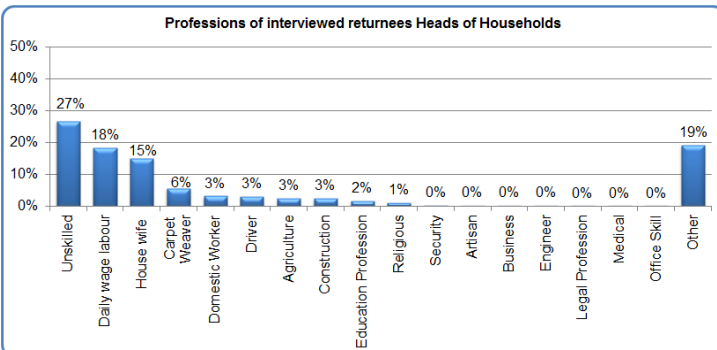
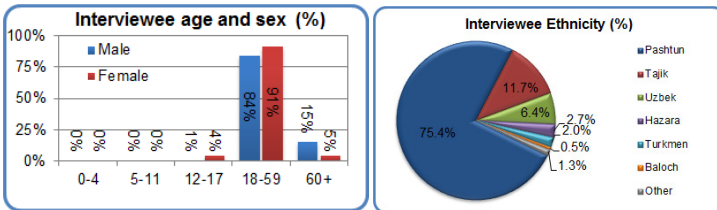


ENCASHMENT CENTRE RETURNEE MONITORING

Between 1 January and 31 December 2014, a total of 1,909 interviews were conducted with returning refugees from Pakistan and Iran. Interviewees were selected in two ways: at random (1,812) and from those with obvious protection concerns (97) at the first point of contact in Afghanistan, the UNHCR Transit/Encashment Centres in Kabul, Jalalabad (Mohmand Dara), Kandahar (Jamal Mayna), Gardez and Herat (GTC). This monitoring exercise helps UNHCR to identify return trends, push/pull factors and check on the level of information returnees received to make an informed choice to return home.

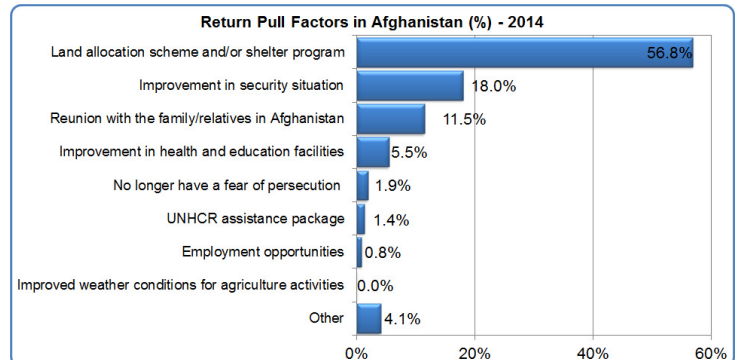
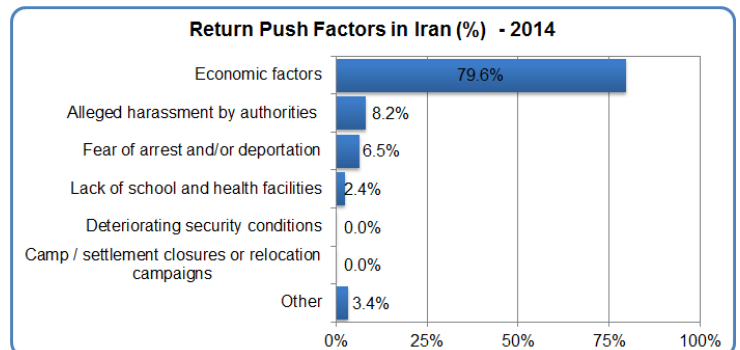
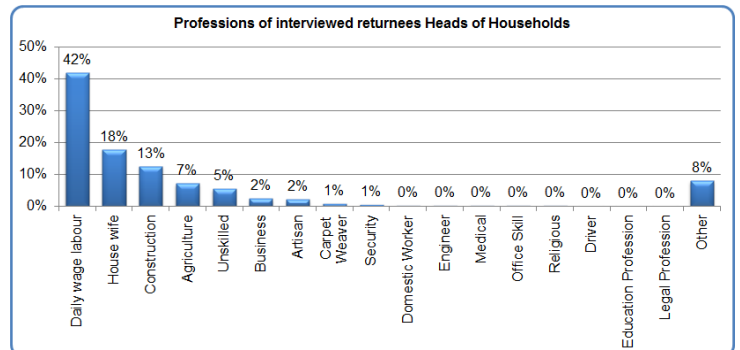
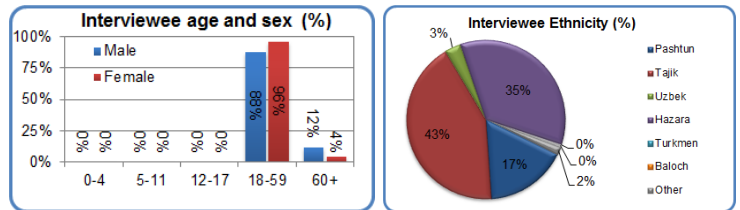
RETURNS FROM PAKISTAN

During Jan and Dec 2014, a total of 1,543 interviews were conducted at Kabul, Mohmand Dara, Kandahar and Gardez ECs with newly arrived returnees from Pakistan.



RETURNS FROM IRAN

During Jan and Dec 2014, a total of 366 interviews were conducted at Herat EC with newly arrived returnees from Iran.

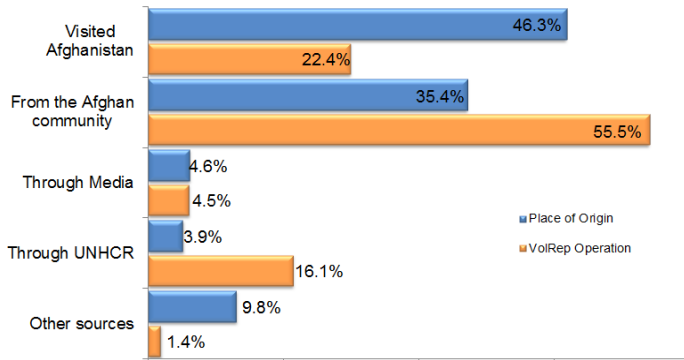


*Of those who cited the improvement of security situation in some parts of Afghanistan as primary pull factor of their return, some 81% returned to relatively secure provinces such as Kabul, Takhar, Balkh, Nangarhar, Herat, Samangan, Sari Pul, Parwan, Kapisa, Panjshir, Jawzjan, Baghlan and Kunduz (mainly Kunduz city). While 19% returned to insecure provinces such as Kandahar (mainly Kandahar city), Logar, Helmand (mainly Lashkargah), Wardak, Paktya, Ghazni, Farah (Farah city), Uruzgan and Zabul.

RETURNS FROM PAKISTAN

Sources of Information on Place of Origin and VolRep Program

All of the interviewed returnees from Pakistan said that they had received adequate information to make an informed decision to return. Information on place of origin and UNHCR's repatriation operation were obtained from the following sources:



Among those who mentioned that they obtained information through visits to Afghanistan, all of them stated they travelled to Afghanistan on their own; 57% said they had visited Afghanistan few months ago, 27% said they had visited Afghanistan one year ago, 10% said two years ago, 4% said three years ago and 2% said five years ago. When they were asked about the purpose of their visit; 41% said they came to Afghanistan to visit their relatives, 33% said they participated in a ceremony, 20% said they visited Afghanistan in order to assess the situation to make an informed decision prior to the return and 6% said they visited Afghanistan for business purpose.

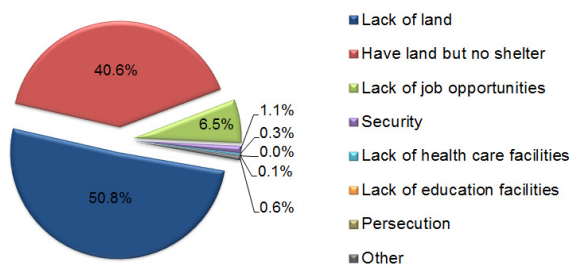
***It is been noted that returnees from Iran, compared to returnees from Pakistan, did not have the chance or opportunity to visit their places of origin recently. Majority of the returnees from Iran mentioned that they had visited Afghanistan five years ago. While majority (over 50%) of the interviewed returnees from Pakistan mentioned they had visited Afghanistan recently. This might be the case with returnees from Iran mainly due to strict border control, long distance and probably changes in the security situation in Afghanistan.*

Reasons for not returning to place of origin

Out of a total of 1,482 respondents, 487 returnees stated that they do not intend to repatriate to their place of origin due to the following reasons:

- Lack of housing (39%)
- Lack of land (27%)
- Insecurity (20%)
- Lack of income generation opportunities (6%)
- Lack of public services (5%) and
- Other reasons (3%)

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

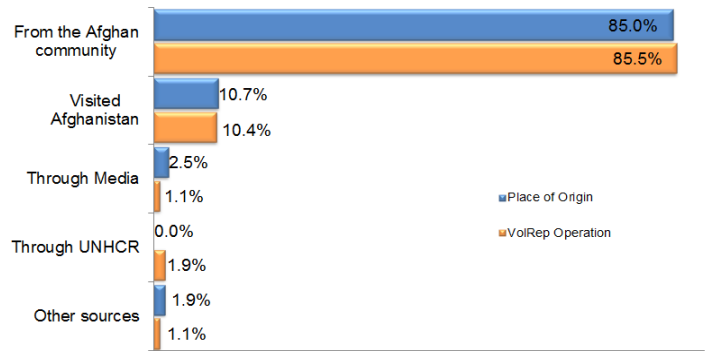


The primary obstacles discouraging Afghan refugees to make a decision for return have been lack of land, employment and shelter.

RETURNS FROM IRAN

Sources of Information on Place of Origin and VolRep Program

All of the interviewed returnees from Iran said that they had received adequate information to make an informed decision to return. Information on place of origin and UNHCR's repatriation operation were obtained from the following sources:



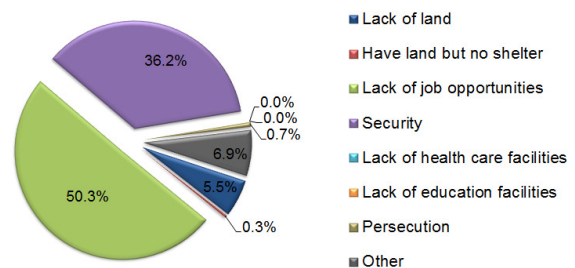
Among those who mentioned that they obtained information through visits to Afghanistan, all of them stated they travelled to Afghanistan on their own; 69% said they had visited Afghanistan five years ago, 13% said they had visited Afghanistan more than five years ago, 12% said they had visited Afghanistan three years ago, 3% said they had visited Afghanistan one year ago and 3% said that they had visited Afghanistan few months ago. When they were asked about the purpose of their visit; 56% said they came to Afghanistan to visit their relatives, 28% said they visited Afghanistan in order to assess the situation to make an informed decision prior to the return, 13% said they participated in a ceremony and 3% said they visited Afghanistan for business purpose.

Reasons for not returning to place of origin

Out of a total of 349 respondents, 125 returnees stated that they do not intend to repatriate to their area of origin due to the following reasons:

- Lack of housing (33%)
- Lack of income generation opportunities (29%)
- Lack of public services (29%)
- Insecurity (7%)
- Lack of land (1%) and
- Other reasons (1%).

When asked "Do you have any concerns about your return to Afghanistan?" nearly 79% of the interviewed returnees said "Yes":



Alleged arrests/detentions and intimidations in Pakistan

Nearly 1% of the interviewed returnees alleged that they had been arrested and/or detained during their stay in Pakistan due to unknown reasons e.g. PoR cards validity date etc. Money extortion/bribery, by the Pakistani police, which was a challenge for returnees in the past has been decreased (over 80% compared to 2013) since September 2013 when UNHCR Offices/VRCs in Pakistan started issuing complain collection form. Returning families are provided with a form and hotline number to report any problem (bribery, transportation tax, theft cases on the road, losing belonging, traffic incident and, etc.) to the UNHCR border monitors based at Torkham and Spin Boldak crossing points. However, it is still remains a concern. **Some 12%** of interviewed returnees stated that they faced problems (e.g. extortion by police) while traveling from the VRC to Torkham crossing point. Most of those faced problems alleged that they were asked by the Police to pay bribes because they were carrying livestock, construction material (used beams), or to avoid a search of the trucks.

BORDER MONITORING DEPORTATION OF UNDOCUMENTED AFGHAN NATIONALS (NON-REFUGEES)

Afghan nationals returning from Iran or Pakistan due to eviction, conflict, military operations, natural disasters, or other reasons do not fall under UNHCR's mandate, and all international response to their needs will be led by IOM. However, UNHCR in co-ordination with other protection actors monitors their protection situation to ascertain that registered refugees are not deported.

IRAN:

1 - 31 December 2014: A total of 17,250 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported (via Islam Qala: 63% and Zaranj: 37% border points) from Iran. This figure is 16% lower compared to 20,632 deportees in November 2014.

1 January - 31 December 2014: A total of 206,149 undocumented Afghans were deported from Iran. This is 7% lower compared 222,710 Afghans (averaging 610 per day) were deported from Iran in 2013.

The vast majority of deportees (98%) were single males who entered Iran illegally, to look for work.

Since April 2009, IOM has been present in Islam Qala and Zaranj border crossing points and has procedures in place to screen and identify Persons with Special Needs (PSNs) among the deported undocumented Afghans (non-refugees).

IOM provides PSNs with transportation, transit and health services at the border and assists with their transportation costs from the cities of Herat and Zaranj to their final destinations.

Deportations from Iran											
Reporting Period	Entry Point	Family Groups				Single				Total	Total Individuals
		Families	Individuals			Male		Female			
			M	F	Total	Adult	UAM	Adult	UAM		
01 - 31 Dec 2014	Zaranj	136	261	322	583	5,806	17	0	0	5,823	6,406
	Islam Qala	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	10,844
Total		136	261	322	583	5,806	17	0	0	5,823	17,250
01 Jan -31 Dec 2014	Zaranj	1,672	3,467	3,907	7,374	62,738	354	1	0	63,093	70,467
	Islam Qala	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	135,682
Total		1,672	3,467	3,907	7,374	62,738	354	1	0	63,093	206,149

PAKISTAN:

1 - 31 December 2014: A total of 1,329 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham (601) and Spin Boldak (728) border points. This figure is 29% higher compared to 1,027 deportees in November 2014.

1 January - 31 December 2014: A total of 3,800 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham Border. This figure is 41% higher compared to 2,228 deportees in 2013.

Since November 2012, IOM has established a transit centre in Torkham to screen, identify and assist PSNs among deported undocumented Afghans (non-refugees). IOM provides PSNs with NFIs and free transportation from Torkham to their final destination.

In addition, 5,792 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Spin Boldak (SB). This figure is 29% lower compared to the 8,178 deportees in 2013.

Deportations from Pakistan											
Reporting Period	Entry Point	Family Groups				Single				Total	Total Individuals
		Families	Individuals			Male		Female			
			M	F	Total	Adult	UAM	Adult	UAM		
01 - 31 Dec 2014	Torkham	0	0	0	0	599	0	2	0	601	601
	Spin Boldak	3	4	8	12	716	0	0	0	716	728
Total		3	4	8	12	1,315	0	2	0	1,317	1,329
01 Jan -31 Dec 2014	Torkham	0	0	0	0	3,798	0	2	0	3,800	3,800
	Spin Boldak	5	10	13	23	5,769	0	0	0	5,769	5,792
Total		5	10	13	23	9,567	0	2	0	9,569	9,592

UNHCR would like to extend its deep appreciation for the continuing support and generous contributions of donors to its operation in Afghanistan.

Assisted Voluntary Repatriation to Afghanistan

Return by Province of Destination - 02 March 2002- 31 December 2014

