



AFGHANISTAN

PRIORITY AREAS OF RETURN AND REINTEGRATION

June 2024 | SUMMARY & ACHIEVEMENTS

This document covers the activities and achievements from January 2022 to April 2024 aligned with the period of UNHCR Afghanistan's current Multi-Year Strategy (2022-2024)

The Priority Areas of Return and Reintegration are a key component of UNHCR's work to strengthen essential facilities and services in communities where internally displaced persons (IDPs) and Afghan refugee returnee are living.

UNHCR has developed PARRs programmes under the umbrella of the regional Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR), the framework for protection and solutions for Afghan refugees to support voluntary repatriation, sustainable reintegration, and assistance to host countries. They are fully aligned with and embedded in the 2023- 2025 United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan and promote collaboration and synergy among humanitarian and basic human needs actors, bridging the gap and ensuring a more effective and sustainable solution to displacement challenges.

Through their inclusive, "whole-of-community" focused design, the PARRs are also an example of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) in action. By applying an area-based, "whole-of-community" approach and supporting the entire population in an area, including host communities, their ability to welcome forcibly displaced people and returnees is strengthened.

PARR selection criteria

Areas of origin: locations where forcibly displaced people are originating from

Areas of high return and displacement: locations where forcibly displaced people returning to and or living in displacement

Access: secured environment for presence programmes implementation

Cohesion: Benefits all people (*Whole of Society, Leaving No One Behind*) and promotes peace and strengthen social cohesion

Sustainability: key elements for reintegration present (land, basic services, proximity to population centers and markets, livelihoods)

Decisions of the Secretary General, 25 March 2020 meeting of the Executive Committee:

Decision 2020/20 AFGHANISTAN: "As a concrete confidence-building effort in support of the peace process, ensure coordinated and targeted area-based humanitarian-development-peace investments in Priority Areas of Return and Reintegration (PARRs), identified by the Government of Afghanistan and UNHCR".

UNHCR has identified 80 PARRs where returnees are living side by side with displaced people and local communities. The objective is to strengthen essential services and facilities in the PARRs through an **area-based, multi-sectoral, and multi-stakeholder humanitarian-development-peace investment to support durable solutions and create conducive conditions for the sustainable reintegration of returnees** by working with diverse actors, including government, development actors, private sector, civil society organizations, community-based organizations, etc.) for Collective Outcomes and in the spirit of *Delivering as One*.

INTERVENTIONS IN PARRS CONTRIBUTE TO ACHIEVING 2030 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS)



In PARR areas, projects aim to enhance access to education, healthcare, shelter, key community-based projects, protection, and social cohesion to facilitate access to public services and livelihoods' opportunities, provide cash assistance and in-kind support to vulnerable families. UNHCR's programmes also facilitate access to documentation, social services, self-reliance, and inclusion in decision-making structures. Through this holistic approach, interventions improve the lives of Afghans, building resilience and self-sufficiency.

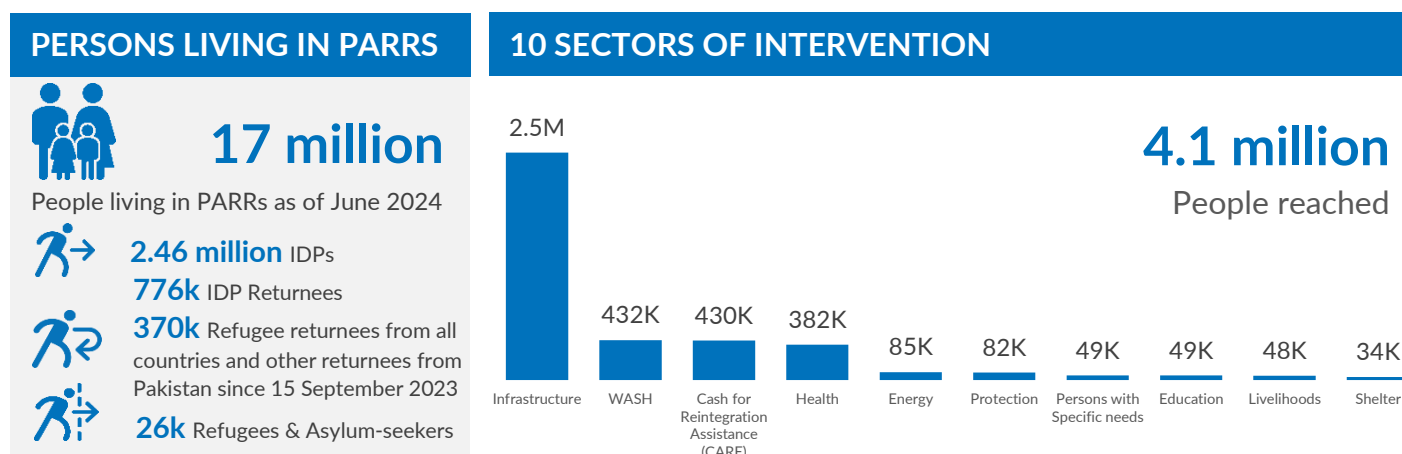
Protection is at the core in the PARRs, ensuring that every intervention is guided by the fundamental principle of safeguarding the rights and dignity of forcibly displaced populations and host communities. In February 2024, UNHCR made the strategic decision to analyse how best to reprioritize its interventions in the PARRs. This analysis focuses on evolving socio-economic conditions, levels of self-reliance and outcomes of existing investments. The exercise is expected to conclude by July 2024.

However, UNHCR programmes in the PARRs have been under immense pressure since the introduction of the "Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan" by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in October 2023, which resulted in over 600,000 Afghans returning to Afghanistan. While the pace of returns has slowed considerably since the peak in November and December 2023, returns have been steadily increasing since March this year, with some 40,000 returns in May. This upward trend highlights the need for additional support to expand programmes and address the growing needs and gaps in the PARRs.

Evolution of PARRs: Promoting Sustainable Return and Reintegration



PARRs KEY FIGURES (January 2022 – June 2024)



KEY AREAS OF FOCUS IN PARRs

In line with SSAR and Co-PROSPER strategies, activities in the following sectors are implemented in PARRs.

EDUCATION SDG 4

A recent survey conducted by UNICEF in April this year found that that 7.8 million children are out of school in Afghanistan. Approximately half of children of primary school-aged are enrolled and only one-fifth of secondary school age are enrolled¹. A recent survey conducted by UNICEF in April this year found that that 7.8 million children are out of school in Afghanistan. Approximately half of children of primary school-aged are enrolled and only one-fifth of secondary school age are impediments². Many returnee children and youth who accessed education in host countries are unable to continue their studie upon return due to the shortage of schools. The portfolio of projects in the PARRs aims to increase access to formal education, especially for girls, through the construction of additional schools.

HEALTH SDG 3

Afghanistan is grappling with a precarious health situation characterized by a fragile healthcare system and unequal access to services, particularly in rural areas, where 17.9 million people are in need of healthcare services³. The challenges are multifaceted, including insufficient funding, inadequate transportation, a shortage of healthcare professionals, and limited access to quality healthcare. The repercussions are profound, with ongoing communicable disease outbreaks, unmet maternal and child health needs, and high rates of malnutrition

¹ UNESCO. (2023, September). [250 million children out of school](#).

² UNICEF, Education - [providing quality education for all](#).

³ Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan Afghanistan (Humanitarian Programme Cycle 2024)

contributing to substantial mortality and morbidity. Compounding these challenges are humanitarian crises and shocks, particularly in areas with inadequate infrastructure and a scarcity of qualified healthcare workers. The proposed projects would improve access to and quality of healthcare in the PARRs through construction of health clinics and the enhancement of existing health facilities, focusing on women and rural populations. UNHCR has also been supporting midwifery training to enhance community-based reproductive healthcare and provide employment opportunities for women. This work will be further expanded.

 **LIVELIHOODS**
SDG 4 & 8

Amidst soaring unemployment, lack of formal livelihoods and limited private sector opportunities, many households depend upon daily-wage labour, particularly in the agriculture and construction sectors, to meet their needs. To increase self-reliance and build human capital, with particular focus on women and girls, the portfolio of projects in the PARRs prioritizes vocational training and entrepreneurship. Additional efforts will enhance the quality of national social protection services.

 **SHELTER & ENERGY**
SDG 7

Shelter remains one of the most pressing needs for IDPs and returnees in Afghanistan. Through UNHCR's cash-for-shelter project, vulnerable households receive a cash grant that enables them to build their own shelter and sanitation facilities, with technical support from UNHCR and partners. This innovative approach aims to ensure safe, dignified and sustainable housing; empower households and communities while reducing their dependency on humanitarian assistance; address protection concerns; and inject investment into the local economy. Additional projects will improve access to clean, sustainable and renewable energy through the provision of solar packages and the extension of power networks.

 **WASH & INFRASTRUCTURE**
SDG 6

Particularly in the current context, infrastructure interventions will improve access to potable water, construct WASH facilities, and build irrigation networks and roads.

 **VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION**
SDG 10 & 16

UNHCR and partners continue to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of registered Afghan refugees through services and support provided at four Encashment Centres located in Jalalabad, Kandahar, Herat and Kabul. Returnees receive a cash grant averaging USD 375 per person to facilitate their reintegration by addressing immediate needs such as transportation. Returnees also benefit from services basic health screening, vaccinations for children, mine risk awareness.

 **PROTECTION**
SDG 10 & 16

Considering the dissolution of many civil society organizations and community structures across the country, including in the PARRs following years of conflict and displacement, it is crucial to invest in communities and empower displaced and returnee populations to become agents of their own protection. Continued community-based protection monitoring, alongside enhanced protection efforts within displaced and host communities, including returnees, will contribute to the sustainability of interventions and peaceful coexistence. Strengthening community-based protection programmes and direct protection assistance to at-risk populations are essential to ensuring that vulnerable returnees and host communities, especially women and girls, have access to services, information, and assistance, thereby building community resilience.

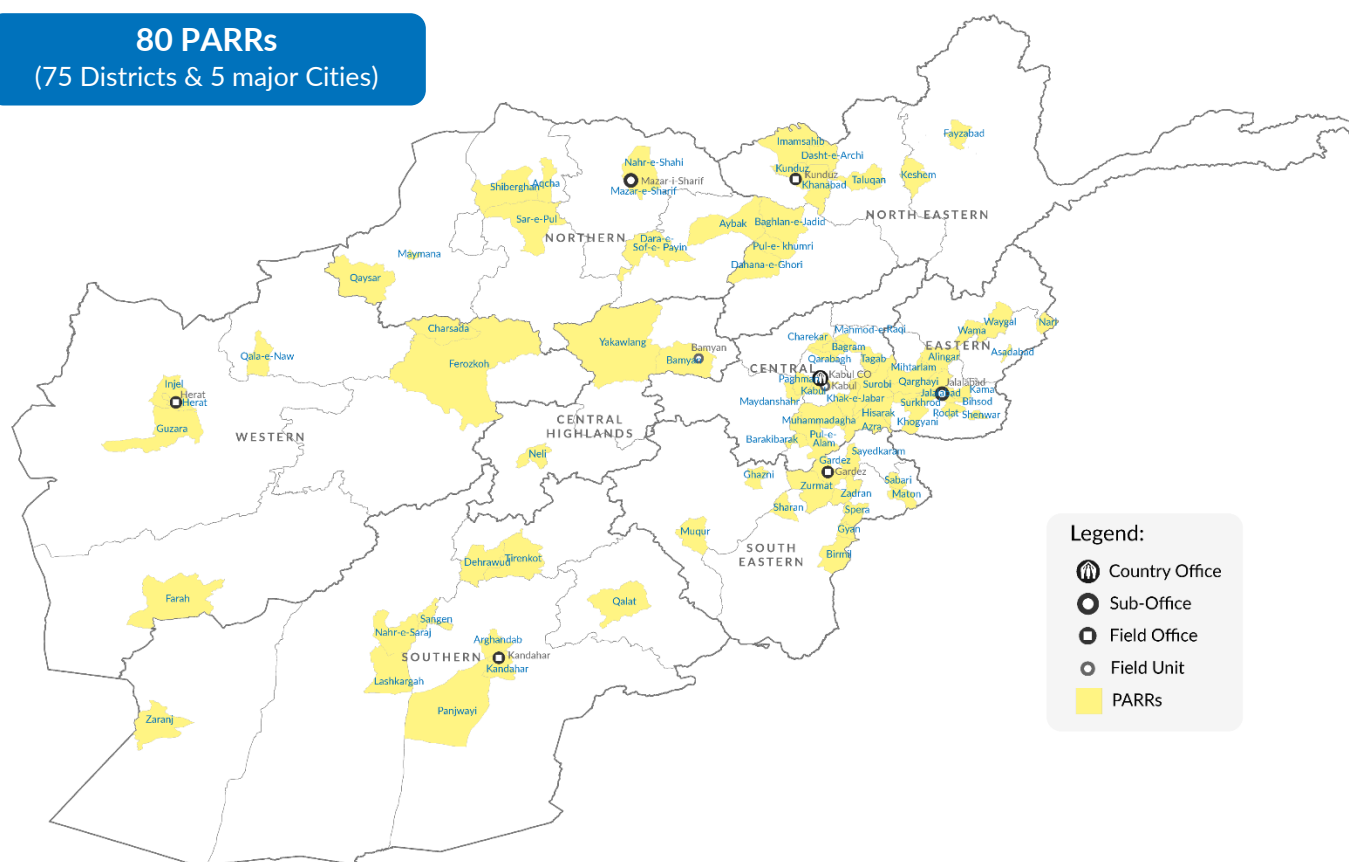
 **CARE**
SDG 11

To support the voluntary, safe, and dignified return of IDPs and returnees and their sustainable reintegration, UNHCR's strategic response incorporates existing initiatives to ensure access to services through ongoing programming in PARRs, while also providing immediate cash assistance to meet the basic needs of returnees and IDPs.

AFGHANISTAN: PRIORITY AREAS OF RETURN & REINTEGRATION

80 PARRs

(75 Districts & 5 major Cities)



CHALLENGES

Lack of clear graduation approach: UNHCR has been delivering assistance to the People we Serve and investing significantly in the PARRs for several years. However, there is no clear guidance yet on graduating PARRs to the development agencies/actors for long-term development programmes and investment, which will help returnees and internally displaced to sustainably reintegrate and deliver durable solutions.

Life cycle of a PARR location – it's important to understand the life cycle of PARR location – how long a location/district can be considered a PARR for. This will also help with PARRs graduation approach.

Balance between PARR investment and emergency response: Afghanistan has been hit by several emergencies in the last few years and requires more emergency response though, however, it's key to balance between the PARR investment and emergency response.

High returns: Despite the end of major hostilities, high levels of returns from Pakistan and Iran continue, making reintegration more challenging for returnees in the PARRs.

Strengthening Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus – effective and impactful coordination and collaboration among the UN agencies/organizations to ensure HDP nexus, leveraging complementarities and synergies in the PARRs.

PARR SECTORS | KEY ACHIEVEMENTS (January 2022 – June 2024)



EDUCATION

- **50 schools** (high, secondary, primary) **constructed or rehabilitated benefitting 49,300** (24,400 boys and 24,900 girls)
- **22 schools are under construction.**
- **20,500 students** (11,700 boys & 8,800 girls) **have benefited.**



HEALTH

- **17 health centers**, including basic healthcare centers, (BHCs), community healthcare centers (CHCs) and maternity clinics) **constructed, benefitting 318,900 people (212,500 and 169,400)**
- **10 health clinics** equipped with furniture, **benefitting 8,900 people.**
- **16 health centers** (BHC, CHC, NHC) **are being constructed with 367,00 people** (177,000 men and 190,000 women) **benefitting.**



LIVELIHOODS

- **22,800 people** (10,000 women and 12,800 men) **received self-employment support** through small- and medium-enterprises, entrepreneurship, microfinance, MADE51, livestock and poultry assistance programmes and the provision of temporary employment (cash for work interventions)
- **25,300 people** (23,800 women and 1,500 men) **received technical and vocational education and training and life skills support.**
- **8 communal greenhouses constructed.**



WASH

- **99 WASH projects** completed benefitting **432,200 people.**
- **Eight WASH/Water projects** being implemented to provide clean drinking water to **81,100 individuals** (46,300 men and 34,800 women).



CASH FOR REINTEGRATION ASSISTANCE (CARE)

- **61,400 households** (429,700 individuals) **received cash and reintegration assistance** to help them voluntarily return to their places of origin.



ENERGY

- **10,300 solar packages** distributed and installed.
- **85,300 people** (43,700 men and 41,600 females) **benefitting.**



INFRASTRUCTURE

- **23 community centres constructed, 20 protection/retaining walls and 2 boundary walls built**, a carpet weaving centre and a carpet processing centre established.
- **20 shops for women empowerment and one women-integrated services centre** (women market).
- **47 ditches, culverts, roads constructed/rehabilitated.**
- Construction of community food storage (cold storage and dairy plant).
- **2.4 million people benefiting.**



PEOPLE WITH SPECIFIC NEEDS (PSN)

- **49,300 People with Specific Needs** directly benefited from cash and/or in-kind assistance.

WHAT CAN WE ACHIEVE TOGETHER IN PARRs



USD 600

One family receives a solar package and has access to clean energy.



USD 1,000 + USD 1,100

One person receives vocational training and business start-up assets, improving the well-being of the whole family.



USD 5,800

One family receives cash for shelter and has a place to call home.



USD 25,000

Access to WASH facilities, improving their health & hygiene.



USD 100,000

An entire community has access to solar-powered potable water.



USD 245,000

Construction of 8-classroom school – improving access to education to returnees and IDPs' children.



USD 395,000

Construction of a 12-classroom school – improving access to education to returnees and IDPs' children.



USD 390,000

Construction of New Comprehensive Health Centre – people can access basic healthcare.