Achievements

➢ In 2022, **UNHCR initiated construction of 12 schools,** all off which completed in 2023.

In 2023, **UNHCR initiated the construction of 40 schools.** 21 of these schools have been completed between 2023 and October 2024, with 19 projects ongoing.

➢ In 2024, **UNHCR has completed construction of 4 schools**.

➢ These education assistance programs represent a sustainable approach to the delivery of education services as they compliment other interventions and work to strengthen the overall education sector in Afghanistan.

➢ Since 2022, **UNHCR's education assistance programs has benefitted an estimated 96,891** persons, including returnees, IDPs, and vulnerable host communities.

52 % of those assisted are **women and girls.**

Female students in a school built by UNHCR in Afghanistan. © UNHCR/ Oxygen Impire Media

Education approach

The 2024 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP) for Afghanistan estimates that eight million people will be in need of education assistance within the same year, with natural disasters contributing to gaps in essential services, and poverty driving families to deprioritise schooling. Afghanistan's education sector further faces pervasive gaps in accessible and quality education infrastructure, particularly in remote and underserved areas. The restrictive policies on girls' access to education compound this issue, creating a gender disparity in educational opportunities. The shortage of qualified teachers, especially female educators, and the high student-teacher ratio are significant concerns that undermine the effectiveness of education.

UNHCR's Afghanistan Education Strategy (2024 - 2027) is based on a multifaceted approach that aims to address core gaps in services, policies and opportunities that likely increase protection risks and result in barriers to durable solutions. To this end, UNHCR is:

1. Supporting advocacy aimed at ensuring safe and equitable access to education for all, especially through lifting of the ban on women and girls' education and the inclusion of all population groups in national education policies;
2. Continuing the construction and rehabilitation of educational facilities where it provides a clear protection dividend, creating space for protection programming;
3. Promoting self-reliance through access to vocational training, higher education opportunities and scholarships; and
4. Enhancing the quality of education through teacher training and curriculum development, among others.

Interventions are based on consultations with key local stakeholders to accurately identify and address gaps in essential services, and integrate gender considerations and variances in needs and protection risks faced by girls and boys. Education interventions are delivered through UNHCR's Priority Areas for Return and Reintegration (PARRs) area-based approach, ensuring that activities lead to sustained essential education services benefitting IDPs, returnees, and host communities, contributing to strengthened community resilience, self-reliance and social cohesion. Under this framework, UNHCR delivers essential education infrastructure, including equipping facilities, training of new staff, and close coordination with key education stakeholders for complimentary programming and operationalization of facilities for sustainable outcomes.

Post-construction, UNHCR supports a two-year transition phase, covering key aspects like stipends for volunteer teachers and sustaining internet services. The holistic approach, combining education infrastructure, financial planning, and resource management, is structured as a multi-year commitment, ensuring that these educational initiatives have a sustainable impact on target communities. In line with strategic objectives, UNHCR has been linking protection activities with education programming through different initiatives, including through delivery of GBV awareness sessions to volunteer teachers, as well as psychosocial support and recreational activities for children at child-friendly spaces that are integrated in schools. UNHCR further supports tertiary education opportunities through the DAFI scholarship program.

UNHCR further implements SMART HUBs in feasible locations, an innovative provision of educational experiences for youth. The SMART HUB initiative aligns with UNHCR's Global Strategy on Digital Inclusion, recognizing digital inclusion as an equal right to fully take part in a connected society, and supporting youth in developing digital literacy skills and technological proficiency. UNHCR's experience rolling out programs like code4fun and training in Microsoft packages adds a valuable dimension to this initiative, as coding education fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills, while Microsoft Office training provides practical, highly sought-after competencies.

Construction of schools:

UNHCR's schools are equipped with classrooms, playgrounds, dedicated computer labs, and solar panels to ensure lower running costs and a reliable electricity supply, a crucial element given power requirements of SMART hubs. Measures are taken to insulate the schools effectively, safeguarding against extreme weather conditions, and fans are installed in classrooms to provide a comfortable learning environment. All UNHCR constructed schools are designed to be fully accessible to children with disabilities.

Working with partners:

UNHCR coordinates closely with key partners like UNICEF, UNESCO and Save the Children to facilitate access to education. UNHCR is actively engaged within the education cluster and is currently discussions with various education stakeholders to further fortify our collective interventions within the PARRs. For instance, UNHCR is working with UNICEF for the delivery of teacher training programs, and is further engaging with UNICEF, UNESCO, and Save the Children to assess potential synergies and collaboration, especially in development of online educationalfocusing on computer literacy and coding, to enrich the educational package and ensure a diverse array of learning materials is available.

Where are we supporting?

UNHCR | Afghanistan
The UN Refugee Agency

AFGHANISTAN
UNHCR's areas of intervention in Afghanistan on Education, Oct 2024
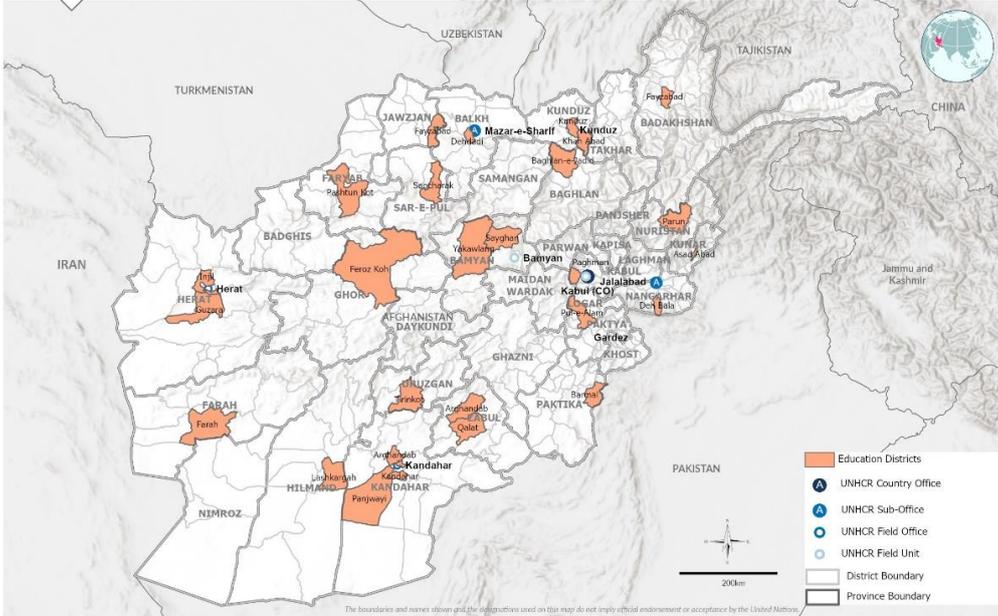
Printing date: 29 Oct 2024 Sources: UNCS, UNHCR Feedback: afgkaimu@unhcr.org Filename: PAAR Analysis Author: UNHCR IMU

Priority Areas for Return and Reintegration:

In line with the regional Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) and its Community-Based Protection and Solutions Programme Response (Co-PROSPER), UNHCR is undertaking interventions to create conducive solutions for returns, improving health services and facilities, or rehabilitating community infrastructures in Priority Areas of Return and Reintegration (PARRs) across Afghanistan. These activities aim to support the sustainable return and reintegration of forcibly displaced Afghans (refugees returnees and IDPs) and strengthen community resilience within the areas of return.

UNHCR's Volunteer Teacher Program

UNHCR's volunteer teacher program stands as a testament to the Agency's commitment to enhancing the quality of education in Afghanistan.

The volunteer teacher program supports female teachers from local communities, providing training opportunities, resources and tools to facilitate their participation as teacher volunteers, fostering local investment in the schools' success and contributing to reduced teacher-student ratios. After two years, the volunteer teachers are integrated into the acting Ministry of Education's teacher pool, ensuring a sustainable income and augmenting the teaching workforce in Afghanistan. The process of selecting the volunteer teachers is inclusive and transparent, with a focus on selecting candidates from local communities.

In terms of teacher training, comprehensive programs are provided to the volunteer educators, ensuring they receive training in specific subjects relevant to their roles, and stipends are offered to ensure inclusive approaches.

In Jalalabad, UNHCR has rolled out a digital literacy pilot through the teacher program, in which volunteer teachers deliver computer literacy classes to female students for development of digital skillsets. This program provides trainings on basic computer operations, internet navigation, and various software applications through established computer labs, promoting development of sought-after skillsets and encouraging digital inclusion.

UNHCR constructed the Sheickh Mesri School in Surkhrod district, inclusive of a computer lab with internet facilities, a science lab, baby care center, solar system, playground, flash latrines, as well as relevant equipment. The school is benefitting approximately 1,800 female and 3,000 male students. One of the volunteer teachers, Salma, providing computer classes to support students in developing digital literacy skillsets, says that she "firmly believes that the computer skills and knowledge of English can help girls continue their education online, even at home". © UNHCR/Ulfat Kazemi

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