



## AFGHANISTAN

### Protection Analysis Update | January-June 2024

BRIEF

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Many Afghan nationals including refugees and those in refugee like situation (e.g. UNHCR slip holders, asylum seeker certificate holders) have been pushed back from Pakistan and Iran to Afghanistan, with often little to no resources and face cumulative hardships. These exacerbate the vulnerabilities of the returnee population, impact their coping capacities, and increase their exposure to protection risks. In a shrinking protection environment, returnees struggle to meet their basic rights and to access services and opportunities in Afghanistan. The country is undergoing a complex and multifaceted humanitarian crisis, and the situation is more severe for returnees who lack essential documentation and, particularly women and girls, as their rights and freedoms are stringently constrained. Therefore, the current situation in Afghanistan poses significant concerns for the sustainable reintegration of returnees.

The protection risks specifically impacting returnees requiring immediate attention in the period covered by this analysis are:

1. **Discrimination and stigmatization – impediments to access opportunities, services and/or humanitarian access**
2. **Unlawful impediments and/or restrictions to freedom of movement, and threats of forced eviction**
3. **Impediments and/or restrictions to access legal identity, remedies and justice**
4. **Psychological/emotional abuse or inflicted distress**

#### URGENT ACTION NEEDED

Amidst the continued multifaceted protracted crisis in Afghanistan compounded by large scale cross-border return movements, urgent actions are needed to prevent and mitigate harmful coping strategies and exacerbated protection risks. It is of utmost importance to:

- Prioritize comprehensive (re)integration support for returnees from Pakistan and Iran, ensuring their sustainable reintegration to mitigate secondary movements and associated protection risks.
- Engage the DfA, to allow unimpeded access of humanitarian and development assistance to people in areas of return.

## CONTEXT

Returnee population  
+ 1.71M<sup>i</sup>

IDP population  
5.7M<sup>ii</sup>

Afghanistan has been facing large scale return movements from neighboring countries. Since the last quarter of 2023, there has been large cross-border returns of Afghan nationals to Afghanistan mostly from Pakistan. Cross-border mixed movements from Iran have continued to take place but have occurred more consistently over the year, noting however increasing numbers of deportations between 2023 and 2024. Areas hosting large returnee populations are facing high demands on limited local resources, straining public services and local economies. The returnee population also adds to the existing 5.7 million internally displaced Afghan nationals, who often reside in the same locations (fig 1). This hinders communities' capacity in areas of return to integrate returnees and exacerbates overall protection situation, further hindering the access to limited resources and services. Afghanistan

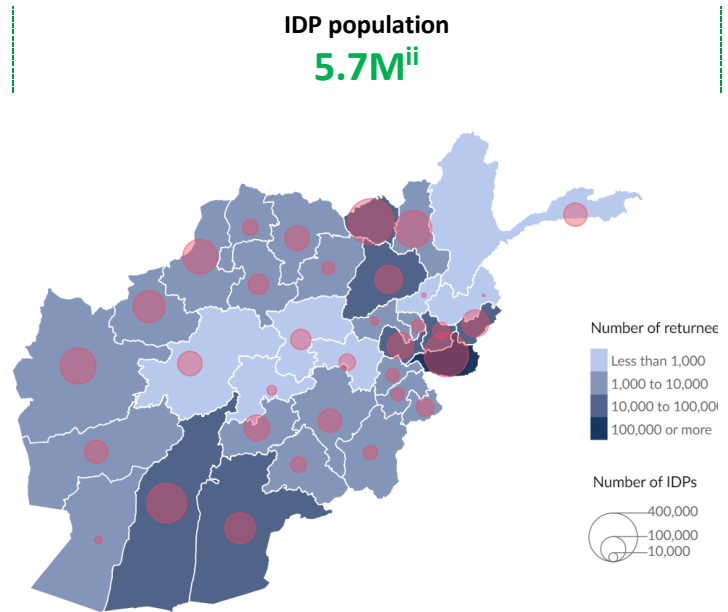


Figure 1: Locations of returnees and internally displaced people - Source: UNHCR

has one of the highest rates of maternal death in the world in 2023. There are also high percentages of children out-of-school, as many families prioritize other needs, leading to increasing rates of child labour and early and forced marriages. Three out of four recent returnees families in rural areas do not have suitable housing ([UNHCR, Returns to Pakistan, May 2024](#); [Save the Children, Afghanistan News, April 2024](#)).

### **Pakistan returns to Afghanistan:**

On 3 October 2023, Pakistan's national Apex Committee endorsed a plan to repatriate over a million foreigners without valid documents, largely Afghan nationals, requiring them to leave the country by 1 November 2023. Pakistan hosts nearly 3.2 million Afghan nationals, including 1.9 million Afghan refugee and refugee-like population and 1.1 million Afghan nationals of other status ([UNHCR, Regional refugee response plan 2024-2025- Afghanistan situation](#)). The plan is developed as a three-stages fold, starting first with a repatriation phase of undocumented Afghan nationals that started in November 2023, then Afghan Citizen Card (ACC), and ultimately Proof of Registration (PoR) card holders ([UNHCR, News, 2023](#)). Although Pakistan did not implement the second phase in mid-April 2024, new announcements for restarts were made at the end of June. Additionally, on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2024, the Prime Minister of Pakistan announced the visa extension of 1.3 million PoR card holders until June 2025. Nevertheless, the implementation of the IFRP will continue for undocumented foreigners ([UNHCR, Press Release, July 2024](#)). From 15 September 2023 to end of June 2024, more than 647,000 Afghans have returned from Pakistan, of which over 156,000 have returned in 2024, with many who have lived abroad for decades. Among the returnees, more than 32,000 were deported since September 2023 ([UNHCR, Pakistan – Afghanistan: Returns emergency Response #17](#); [IOM Dashboard, Returns from Pakistan](#)). Overall, it is estimated that almost 90% of the total returnees are undocumented. Of the total returnees, an estimated 59% are children (30% boys, 29% girls), and 50% are women ([UNHCR – Returns emergency Response #17](#); [IOM, UNHCR, the World Bank, Afghanistan Returnees Rapid Needs Assessment May 2024](#)). At least 16% are undocumented women headed households ([IOM Dashboard](#)) and 29% are women headed households holding documentation, either a Voluntary Repatriation Form, a Proof of Registration (PoR) card, a UNHCR slip form or an Asylum certificate ([UNHCR – Returns emergency Response #17](#)). Returnees tend to be mainly accompanied by their families. Among undocumented returnees and ACC card holders, 39% have serious medical conditions, 31% are older persons, 10% are persons with disabilities, 4% are pregnant women and more than half of returnees are children ([UNHCR-IOM Flash Update #23](#)). This is significant considering the current restrictions imposed on girls' access to education post-primary. Some 94% of returnees have no education and around 85% are low-skilled workers who mainly have worked in urban environments, suggesting significant vulnerability to poverty ([ARRNA 2024](#); [UNHCR Data story, May 2024, Returns to Afghanistan](#); [IOM Dashboard](#)). Most movements from Pakistan have occurred through the Torkham (419.9K) and Spin Boldak-Chaman (207.1K) official borders. Nevertheless, Ghulam Khan (16.1K) and Badini (1.6K) borders are also used ([IOM Dashboard](#)). The influx of return from Pakistan have been mainly localized geographically. The top five provinces of returns are Nangarhar,

Kabul, Kandahar, Kunduz, Kunar and Laghman ([UNHCR, Returns to Afghanistan, May 2024](#)). The population of the Nurgal district in Kunar province may have increased by more than 50%, while the populations of the Dara-e-Nur district in Nangarhar province and the Reg district in Kandahar province are predicted to expand by 20–30% and 30–40%, respectively.

The returns constrain the capacity of communities in areas of return, as these communities are also struggling due to the country's protracted crisis and they are predominately rural communities ([ARRNA 2024](#)). The primary reasons for returning to Afghanistan continue to be linked to protection challenges in Pakistan, such as fear of arrest or deportation, abuse by authorities, concerns over night raids PoR card validity, and economic hardships such as high living costs and lack of job opportunities. Additionally, returnees reported stringent border entry regulations, which impede their ability to travel to Afghanistan for short-term purposes ([UNHCR, Returns Emergency Response #19](#)). According to the [Multi-Sectoral Rapid Needs Assessment of Afghan returnees](#) (MRAT)<sup>iii</sup> the intentions among returnees to stay in their present location remains notably strong, averaging at 94%. However, this percentage dips to its lowest in the Southern region, with only 77% of respondents in Kandahar Province indicating their wish to remain in the current locations.

The reintegration of returnees is challenging as they now compete with host community members for job opportunities across Afghanistan where unemployment remains high, due to insufficient job opportunities and the employment restrictions imposed on women ([World Bank, Afghanistan Monitor November 2023](#)). They may also face difficulties when settling back in rural areas, as few have agricultural skill sets. Returnees are particularly vulnerable when arriving in Afghanistan, with few or no possessions. Women, girls, persons with disabilities, persons with sensitive profiles, journalists, human rights defenders, as well as ethnic and religious minorities are particularly vulnerable when returning to Afghanistan. Returnees therefore continue to be particularly vulnerable to harm due to their fragile situation and the constrained support available in areas of returns. ([UNHCR – Returns emergency Response #17](#)).

### **The Islamic Republic of Iran - Afghanistan cross-border mixed movements:**

The Islamic Republic of Iran is home of approximately 4.5 million Afghan nationals ([UNHCR Data Portal, Iran](#)). There have been increasing returns from Iran to Afghanistan, especially deportations of Afghan nationals between 2023 and 2024 pushed by officials in Iran since the end of 2023. In 2023, IOM registered nearly 1 million returns, with 70% being undocumented, out of which an estimated 690,400 Afghans forcibly returned through Islam Qala border crossing in Herat province and Zaranj border crossing in Nimroz province ([IOM, Afghanistan, stories, August 2024](#)). In 2024 an estimated 377,400 undocumented Afghans were deported from Iran. It represents an estimated 22% increase compared to the same reporting period in 2023 ([UNHCR, Border Monitoring report, January-June 2024](#)). Additionally, during the second quarter of 2024, IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) recorded 524,708 Afghan nationals returning to Afghanistan from Iran and 278,024 Afghan nationals going to Iran from Afghanistan. Inflows from Iran were consistently higher than outflows. Deportation declarations and bans against Afghan nationals in Iran have continued to influence movement reasons for incoming respondents in the second quarter of 2024, a trend similar to the first quarter. Among those returning, the majority are undocumented working-age males travelling alone, likely due to regular cross-border circular migration ([ARRNA 2024](#); [IOM, Flow Monitoring Q2 April- June 2024](#)).<sup>iv</sup> Deportation remains the primary reason for returning to Afghanistan (56%), followed by voluntary or spontaneous return (42%), and economic factors (39%). The primary destinations among surveyed returnees at border crossings are Herat, Kabul, Kunduz and Takhar provinces ([IOM, Flow Monitoring Q2 April- June 2024](#)). There are also reports of deportation without due process, where deportees do not have an opportunity to voice concerns about potential risks related to their protection in Afghanistan ([UNHCR, Border Monitoring report, January-June 2024](#)).

## **PROTECTION RISKS**

### **RISK 1**

**Discrimination and stigmatization – denial of resources, opportunities, services and/or humanitarian access**

After returning to Afghanistan, many returnees find themselves struggling with scarce resources, lack of information on services and humanitarian assistance, as well as challenges in fulfilling their basic needs and accessing services, such as healthcare, MHPSS, WASH, and legal aid. The Protection Monitoring tool indicates that returnee women, especially women headed households (15%), persons with disabilities (15%) and older person head of households (12%) are disproportionately affected. This is mainly due to the high costs of such services, which are mostly unaffordable for returnees. Additional barriers include lack of information on such services, the absence of essential documentation and DfA's restrictions and discriminatory norms. Across many areas of return e.g. Nangarhar, Kandahar, Kunduz, Kunar, women face difficulties to access humanitarian assistance due to a lack of access to information on assistance, a lack of humanitarian female staff and in some areas, women



are removed from beneficiary lists ([MRAT](#)). Returnees also face challenges in generating incomes to meet their basic needs. The majority of returnees from Pakistan are unemployed (43%) or are daily labourers (39%) and were mostly urban and semi-urban low-skilled workers in Pakistan. competition among economically at-risk host communities may increase the likelihood of social tensions amongst returnees and those communities. Women and women headed households are also more affected due to bans imposed on them ([Protection Monitoring Tool](#)).<sup>v</sup> **Resource scarcity has been identified as the primary cause of tensions between host communities and returnees. Households in Kabul (86%), Ghazni (75%), Kunduz (75%), and Kandahar (73%) frequently reported awareness of conflicts between returnees and existing residents.** In Kandahar, host communities voiced concerns about the strain from the sudden influx of returnees and the limited availability of resources. ([GiHA, Gender Alert: Returns from Iran and Pakistan, July 2024](#)).

Thousands of returnee children cannot enroll into school with families being unable to retrieve their educational records in Pakistan. To enroll in school in Afghanistan, both previous school documents and a Tazkira – the official national identity document issued in Afghanistan - are required but **47% of the assessed households do not possess essential documents for their children** ([Protection Monitoring Tool](#)). **Other barriers are the absence of educational facilities in areas of return, the high educational costs for returnee families and the fact that children must work instead e.g. in Nangarhar, Kandahar, Takhar, Kunduz.** Returnee girls are the most affected as they cannot enroll into school after grade six due to DfA's ban ([NRC, April 2024, Thousands of children of uprooted Afghan children struggle to access education; MRAT](#)).

Most households across regions expressed being exposed to multiple risks including physical violence, harassment, threats, service denial, limited rights, discrimination, early marriage, and abuses. The [MRAT](#) indicates that women and girls are perceived more susceptible to harm or adversity. The sense of vulnerability experienced by women and girls varied between 27% and 50.8% in different regions, while for men and boys, it varied between 5.3% and 21%. Physical violence and harassment were reported by returnees in Kandahar (43%), Takhar (24%) Nangarhar (20%), Khost (20%). Some returnees with debts fear for their safety when they cannot repay whom they borrowed money from and this may impede their return to a community.<sup>vi</sup> **Many families returning accumulate debts by borrowing money (33%), sell assets (13%), send children to work (12%), and skip meals.** There are alarming statistics on children returnees engaged into labour e.g. in Kandahar (22%) Nangarhar (16%), Faryab (15%), Takhar (13%). Child marriage is a concerning protection risk especially in Kandahar, in Faryab in Kunar and Kunduz ([MRAT](#)). In some areas, returnees may find themselves among the least likely to receive community assistance, due to the scarcity of resources and a prevailing feeling of disconnection from the community. Re-building organic social networks is particularly challenging for women and girls due to restrictions imposed on them.<sup>vii</sup>

## RISK 2

### Unlawful impediments and/or restrictions to freedom of movement, forced displacement including threats of forced evictions

Upon returning to Afghanistan, about 19% of returnees report rent disputes, and 16% face threats of forced eviction. These issues are worsened by conflicting land claims, land grabbing, and outdated or missing documents. The DfA has asserted its right to use government land for their own gain and future development projects. Women and female-headed households are particularly affected, with women's names on fewer than 5% of land documents.<sup>viii</sup> **Access to justice is limited by lack of information on legal assistance and procedures, and unavailability of such mechanisms across locations, with women less likely to engage in informal dispute resolution mechanisms due to lack of trust and lack of female representation.** ([Protection Monitoring Tool](#)). On average, nearly half of returnees reside in mud houses, followed by rental houses or living with relatives or host communities. Returnees face inadequate shelter conditions, with nearly half uncertain about future tenure and 64% reporting inadequate privacy for women ([MRAT](#)). This lack of safe spaces for sleeping and hygiene jeopardizes their safety. ([UNHCR, Protection Interventions for Afghan Returnees from Pakistan April 2024 to December 2025](#)).

**Some returnees settle in informal settlements with unclear and contested land ownership, facing eviction threats** (as in Jalalabad with eviction notices issued), poor living conditions, and unreliable income. Some have chosen urban areas such as Jalalabad, Behsud, and Samar Kahil for better job opportunities. On April 15, 2024, residents of Nasaji Bagrami ISET in Kabul's PD 8, including IDPs, returnees, economic migrants, and host communities, received a final eviction notice and by June 2024, authorities began enforcing the order, affecting around 640 families. Additionally, about 200 households in the nearby Kodakistan settlement face similar evictions. ([CCCM, HLP, GiHA, Eviction Update, June 2024, PD8, Kabul, Afghanistan](#)). Ineffective regulatory and institutional frameworks significantly impede the proper allocation of land and the equitable distribution and ownership. The widespread insecurity of land tenure results in frequent land disputes, threats and forced evictions.<sup>ix</sup>

The **presence of explosive ordnance from armed clashes and recent IED threats is one of the leading causes of death, affecting 34 provinces and 263 districts out of 401.** The most contaminated provinces are Helmand, Kandahar, Logar, Ghazni, and Maidan Wardak. Many returnees are living in these areas, especially in Kandahar and Helmand, which are hosting a high

number of returnees. Unexploded remnants of war (ERW) from past conflicts, not documented in the mine action database, may be present in any district. **Returnees are particularly vulnerable to the risks posed by explosive hazards due to their prolonged absence from Afghanistan, with many having been born outside the country.** This lack of familiarity with conflict-affected areas and explosive contamination, combined with their urgent need to resettle and resume critical livelihood activities, exacerbates their exposure to such hazards. The deteriorating economic situation and rising unemployment may also drive returnees and their children towards negative coping mechanisms, such as the scrap metal trade. A returnee boy was killed by an explosive ordnance in Zabul province in July 2024.

### RISK 3 Impediments and/or restrictions to access legal identity, remedies and justice

According to the Protection Monitoring Tool, **half of the returnee households have at least one family member without civil documentation** e.g. electronic Tazkira (32%), passport (20%), paper Tazkira (18%), birth certificate (11%) and marriage certificate (11%) with the majority having never managed to obtain it. The lack of essential documents disproportionately affects children (47%) girls (24%), boys (23%) and women (24%). Also, 70% of refugee returnee households do not possess civil documentation compared to 48% of undocumented returnee households. **The absence of civil documents represents a considerable barrier to access basic rights and essential services.**<sup>x</sup>

Four decades of conflict have disrupted governance, leading to irregularities in birth registrations and the issuance of civil documentation. Since August 2021, domestic laws, including those on civil registration, were suspended. Securing documentation is further hindered by high fees, long distances to registration offices and confusing processes, worsened by the ongoing humanitarian crisis, poverty, and displacement. Acquiring legal identity documentation is challenging for Afghans and even more for displaced populations such as returnees. To obtain a Tazkira, they must either return to their place of birth, or their host community leader may act as a witness for their application, and they often lack the financial resources. In some cases, if there is a generational lack of documentation in the family, it will be impossible for the returnee to obtain one. If the returnee has been away from the community for many years or if there is a change in leadership in the community, the community leaders might decline to authenticate the documents. This is more severe for women and girls' returnees, due to the DfA's restrictions, the mahram requirement and patriarchal norms and practices. Women's access to government offices is restricted and registration office jobs are occupied by men. Women headed households do not account for male family member and must seek representation through a community representative (malik) to request identity documents.<sup>xi</sup>

### RISK 4 Psychological/emotional abuse or inflicted distress

According to the protection monitoring, a staggering 45% of respondents reported experiencing stress that has negatively impacted their daily lives, compared to other populations groups accounting for 35% (including IDP, IDP returnees and host communities). Furthermore, refugee returnees and undocumented returnee respondents also report observing negative shifts in the behavior of family members, with 28% appearing sad, 24% feeling stressed, 16% showing changes in appetite and 14% withdrawing socially, 13% demonstrating aggressiveness, 4% resorting to self-harm, and 2% expressing suicidal thoughts. The returnee respondents indicate that main causes of stress are the lack of employment, and severe economic hardship (20%), food insecurity (17%), unavailability or lack of services (13%), being out of school (9%) and child labour (7%). **Healthcare services and MHPSS services continue to be the least accessible, due to unavailability of such services in areas of return, the inability of returnees to pay for such services, and the lack of transportation and related costs,** with women, women headed households, girls, and persons with disabilities also disproportionately impacted. ([Protection Monitoring Tool](#)).

Returnees at border points, including youth and children, report experiencing psychological distress during their journey. Many have been detained in Pakistan, witness the arrests of family members, have assets and possessions confiscated, and endured forced separations from their families. ([ADSP, Samuel Hall, May 2024](#)). **Nearly 34,000 returnees have been arrested and detained between 2023 and 2024. In some cases, 44% of returnees interviewed by UNHCR reported harassment and 4% physical violence at the Pakistani border** ([UNHCR – Returns emergency Response #17](#)). Anecdotal reports indicate that some deportees have faced ill-treatment during deportation. Also, many returnee families have conveyed their distress over being compelled to go back to a country where they have no home, no land, nor substantial support networks ([DRC, News \(story\), December 2023](#)). Also, some returnees were born in Pakistan and have never been to Afghanistan. The psychological distress is amplified for women and girl returnees due to harsh circumstances they face upon return due to the restrictions imposed on their rights and freedoms and the uncertainty of their future. This is further compounded for women headed households ([GIHA, 2023, Gender update #2 Forced returns from Pakistan](#) ; [ACAPS, Afghanistan, June 2024, Understanding resilience strategies and tools](#)).

Mental health services have limited financial resources and a shortage of personnel to address complex mental health disorders. The profession is not well known due to lack of awareness and the stigma around mental health. Consequently, seeking assistance for mental health issues is negatively impacted ([ACAPS, Thematic report, Afghanistan - Spotlight on social impact \(October 2023 to February 2024\)](#)). Analysis also highlights a continuous shortfall in support for the reintegration of children who have come back to Afghanistan, with a particular deficiency in addressing the psychological and social aspects essential for the sustainability of their reintegration.<sup>xii</sup>

## RESPONSE

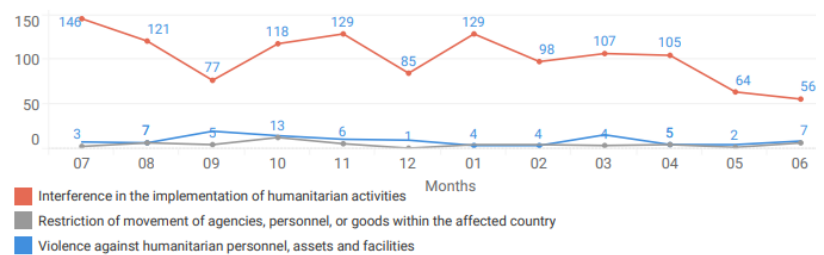
### PROGRESS MADE ON PROTECTION

Protection partners have significantly increased interventions including Community-Based Protection (CBP) to Afghanistan nationals returning from Pakistan and Iran, as well as providing civil documentation, legal assistance, psychosocial support, protection case management, cash for protection services for people with specific needs, providing dignity menstrual hygiene management kits. Protection partners under the leadership of the protection cluster have enhanced engagement with the DfA at national and provincial level. Coordination has been strengthened and operational guidelines have been developed as well as the enhancement of partners’ capacity through various approaches. Explosive ordnance risk education, victim assistance through psychotherapy and physiotherapy targeting returnees have been enhanced.

### ACCESS RELATED CHALLENGES AND ACTIONS

Access constraints are rampant with a total of 761 access incidents in the reporting period, challenging the provision of assistance. The majority of access incidents relates to interference in the implementation of humanitarian activities, including interference with programming, requests for staff lists and sensitive data, occupation of facilities or assets, requests for illegal taxation delays in the signature of memorandums of understanding (MoUs), interference or attempted interference into beneficiary selection, restriction on women humanitarian workers participation in humanitarian action, interference with staff recruitments, search operations, and interference with procurement. Violence against humanitarian personnel, assets, and facilities have also severely impacted the humanitarian response. 3 aid workers were killed, 3 were injured, 56 aid workers were arrested and 80 incidents with gender dynamics were reported, impacting safety and security of humanitarian aid workers. In May, flash floods significantly impeded humanitarian efforts, delaying or stopping aid workers from reaching those in need. Threats from ISKP (Islamic State-Khorasan Province) against humanitarian workers also resulted in movement restrictions and the suspension of activities in the Eastern region provinces. Engagements with authorities are ongoing and efforts continue at national and sub-national levels to address ongoing incidents, identify workarounds and negotiate resolutions.<sup>xiii</sup>

Interference, Restriction and Violence Incidents Trends



Retrieved from OCHA Humanitarian Access snapshots

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### RISK 1

Discrimination and stigmatization – impediments to access opportunities, services and/or humanitarian access

#### HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY

- Strengthen and sustain advocacy with the DfA at national and provincial level for all women and girls to access services without any legal and bureaucratic impediments.
- Increase community engagement leveraging local organizations, community leaders, religious leaders, women leaders to better understand the needs and preferences of different population groups as well as to foster trust and enhance identification of protection risks and focusing on the most vulnerable population by the end of 2024.
- Encourage volunteerism among returnees, which can enhance their social networks, skills and reduce reliance on negative coping strategies.
- Strengthen joint programming among clusters with more focus on integrating protection services especially GBV response to support the survivors into the existing programmes.
- Strengthen referral among the service providers to enable the most vulnerable groups effective access to services.

#### HC/HCT

- Strengthen joined up UN and INGO engagement with the DfA and advocate for increased acceptance of protection services all banned activities, the unimpeded access of protection responder to all communities and to ensure equitable and inclusive access for vulnerable populations, with a particular focus on returnee and host communities.
- Advocate with the DfA, in collaboration with humanitarian actors, to allow access to employment, livelihood opportunities, and justice, stop human rights violations, and find solutions that enable women to participate in all aspects of humanitarian work and have full and equitable access to services.
- Develop and implement a fundraising strategy to sustain funding.

#### DONORS

- Prioritize the implementation of multi-sectoral interventions for both returnees and host communities, including investment in expanding livelihood programmes and developing skill programs to prevent and mitigate protection risks, including the adoption of negative coping mechanisms.

### RISK 2

Unlawful impediments and/or restrictions to freedom of movement, and threats of forced eviction

#### HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY

- Humanitarian agencies should implement initiatives to raise awareness of communities, returnee population, local authorities and local leaders about land rights and legal protections.
- Identify/map landlords where most returnees have settled and engage with them for better rental terms.
- Facilitate the set up and or strengthen land dispute resolution committees that include representatives from local government, traditional leaders, returnee communities, and legal experts.
- Enhance programming to enable returning Afghan nationals access HLP and civil documents.
- Enhance dispute resolution mechanisms to enable vulnerable groups to overcome land conflicts.
- Support communal HLP initiatives in informal settlements and areas of return. Develop and implement HLP programmes that link humanitarian aims to longer-term outcomes, including climate resilience, enhanced livelihoods, and access to critical services.

#### HC/HCT

- Enhance high-level engagement with the DfA to stop evictions and ensure dignified, equitable and sustainable relocation of displaced persons and returning Afghans.

- Strengthen coordination mechanisms between the DfA and HLP partners on key programmatic areas to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of interventions. Engage with the DfA to allow humanitarian agencies to provide legal support to returning Afghan nationals especially women, to enable access to civil documentation, property and other rights.

**DONORS**

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- Sustain long-term HLP specific mechanisms for addressing humanitarian and development needs including enhancing livelihoods opportunities, housing, and climate resilience.

**RISK 3** Impediments and/or restrictions to access legal identity, remedies and justice

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**HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY**

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- Strengthen provision of legal aid services and implement public awareness campaigns to provide communities with necessary information about their rights and available legal resources.
- Provide cash assistance and support for the issuance of civil documents, including facilitation for the most vulnerable especially women, children, and children with disabilities

**HC/HCT**

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- Engage the DfA to reduce the cost of civil documents for the most vulnerable, including most vulnerable returnees.
- Work with the DfA to develop and implement a nationwide registration program that strengthens civil registration systems, ensuring comprehensive and accessible legal documentation for all individuals, particularly those in remote areas.

**DONORS**

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- Engage with the DfA to advocate for improved access to civil documentation including birth registration and civil registration for the most vulnerable as an affirmative action targeting women, children, and persons with disabilities.

**RISK 4** Psychological/emotional abuse or inflicted distress

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**HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY**

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- Provide training to local authorities on MHPSS to ensure they recognize its critical importance and can effectively integrate it into their community support.
- Enhance knowledge of community members in MHPSS through systematic awareness campaigns and strengthen referral mechanisms for people who need services.
- Establish and sustain a community-based peer support network for returnees, particularly focusing on women and children.
- Embed psychosocial support (PSS) into all aspects of programming, especially for women and girls and, and train community volunteers in Psychological First Aid (PFA) to provide immediate support to individuals in distress.
- Develop and implement rehabilitation programs that support the recovery and reintegration of survivors into their communities.
- Create digital platforms tailored to provide MHPSS for women, ensuring they have safe and accessible means to seek support and uphold survivor centered interventions

**HC/HCT**

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- Advocate with the DfA to enable female staff to return to work as a means to enable easy and safe provision of services to vulnerable groups, including women and girls, in need of MHPSS services.

**DONORS**

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- Engage with the DfA to allow the delivery of MHPSS services including integration in all programs in areas of return as a measure to aid sustainable returns and settlement.



## Endnotes

- <sup>i</sup> Total returnees from Pakistan (September 2023 to June 2024): 647,500. Total returnees from Iran (September 2023 to June 2024): 1,069,462 (source UNHCR and IOM).
- <sup>ii</sup> Total number of IDPs in Afghanistan at the end of 2023, [IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix](#)
- <sup>iii</sup> The MRAT assessment took place from 1st November 2023 to 29th February 2024, led by Operational Coordination Teams (OCTs) and the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group across the regions of Afghanistan.
- <sup>iv</sup> These trends monitored by IOM represent the flows at the ten assessed crossing points and do not include data from the entirety of Afghanistan's borders. As a result, the current data may not account for the entire outflow volume of Afghanistan.
- <sup>v</sup> UN and partners in Afghanistan May 2024, [Integrated Appeal for Afghan Returnees from Pakistan \(Border Response and Reintegration Response in Areas of Return\)](#)
- <sup>vi</sup> ADSP, Samuel Hall, [Briefing Note: Solutions for Afghan nationals ordered to return from Pakistan, May 2024](#)
- <sup>vii</sup> Ground Truth Solution and Salma Consulting, 2023, [Engaging women in the humanitarian response in Afghanistan](#); ACAPS, Afghanistan, June 2024, [Understanding resilience strategies and tools](#)
- <sup>viii</sup> NRC, UN-HABITAT, UNHCR, 2020, [A Brief Guide to Women's Land Rights in Afghanistan](#)
- <sup>ix</sup> UN and partners in Afghanistan May 2024, [Integrated Appeal for Afghan Returnees from Pakistan \(Border Response and Reintegration Response in Areas of Return\)](#)
- <sup>x</sup> Afghanistan Protection Cluster, Thematic Note, May 2024, [Legal Identity and Civil Documentation in Afghanistan](#); NRC, Samuel Hall, 2016, [Access to Tazkira and other civil documentation in Afghanistan](#)
- <sup>xi</sup> IOM, NRC, Samuel Hall, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, Research Report, 2023, [Documentation and Legal Identification in Afghanistan](#)
- <sup>xii</sup> Samuel Hall, UNICEF Innocenti Global office of Research and Foresight, August 2023, [As they move: Child and Youth Experiences of Migration, Displacement and Return in Afghanistan](#)
- <sup>xiii</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Access snapshots: January to June 2024

## Methodology

This publication was done in collaboration with ACAPS and thanks to the contribution of the Protection Cluster and some partners. The analysis is based on both quantitative and qualitative data from existing secondary data sources, protection assessments and reports covering events from January to June 2024, including data from key country-wide protection monitoring tools, e.g. the Afghanistan Protection Monitoring tool, and in consultation with AoRs, APC SAG members and sub-national coordinators. The Afghanistan Protection Cluster acknowledges the coordination and the links between this Protection Analysis Update on protection risks in areas of return and the ACAPS report on 'Understanding the key human safety and security issues that returnees to Afghanistan are facing'. This product has been possible by the generous support of the European Union, Directorate General for Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operation in Afghanistan.

## Limitations

Data collection and case management have proven to be challenging for humanitarian protection services due to ongoing interference and restrictions from the DfA, particularly regarding the hiring of women staff, the mahram requirement, and access to women community members. These operational constraints and challenges affect the level of protection data that can be collected and used in understanding protection risks. In addition, some issues are perceived highly sensitive, therefore the data gathered may not offer a definitive assessment of the extent of the protection risks.



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