AFGHANISTAN Returnees Overview

Published on 23 August 2026

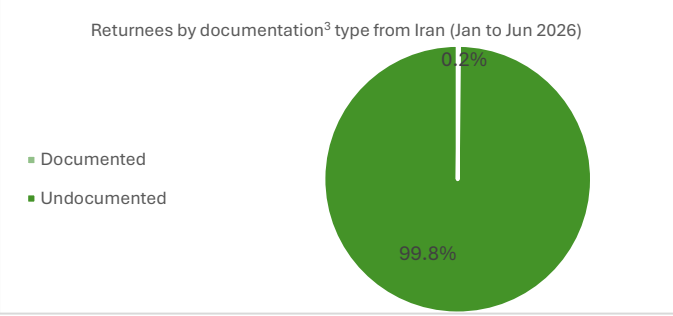
Reporting period 2nd Quarter (1April – 30 June) 2026

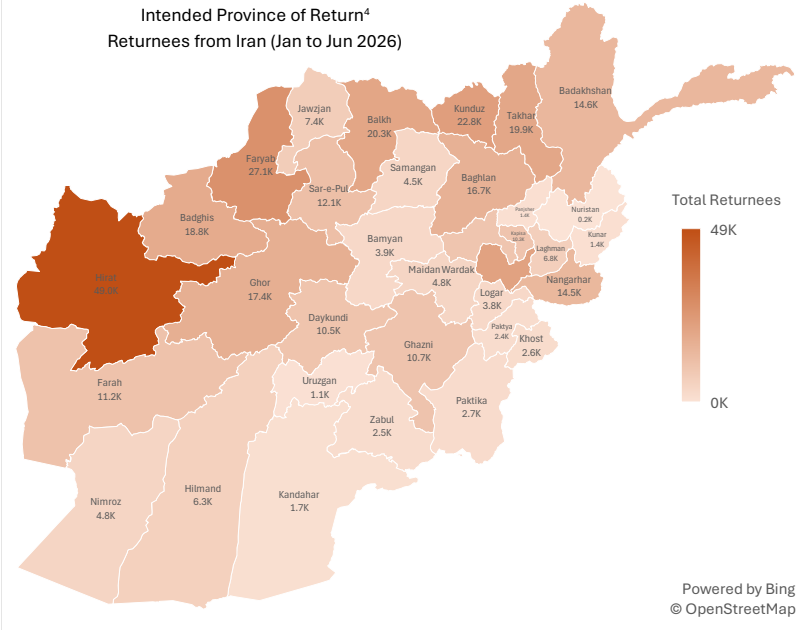
TOTAL RETURNS IN 2026	IRAN	PAKISTAN	DOCUMENTED	UNDOCUMENTED	DAILY AVERAGE RETURN RATE IN SECOND QUARTER 2026 (INDIVIDUALS)	
922K	366K	556K	267K	654K	IRAN: 2,354	PAKISTAN: 4,093

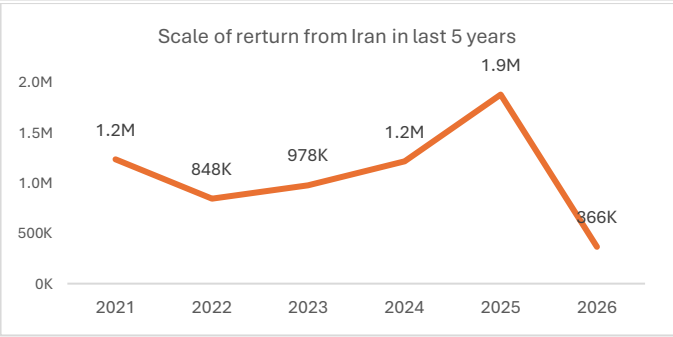
STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENTS AND CONTEXT

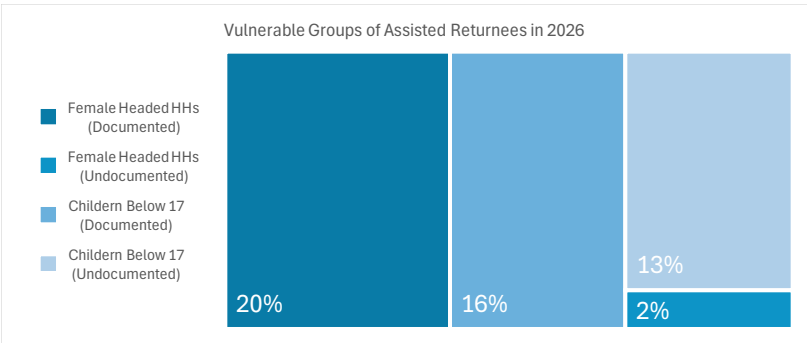
The second quarter of 2026 marked a pivotal strategic shift in Afghanistan's response to large-scale returns, as humanitarian and development partners transitioned from emergency border management toward a more integrated, area-based approach to (re-)integration[1] and community stabilization. Key developments included the formal launch of the ***2026 Response Plan for Afghan Returnees***, which established a coordinated framework requiring US$529.2 million to address both immediate border needs and medium-term support across 35 priority districts. Concurrently, the coordination architecture underwent significant reform with the closure of the eight Regional Durable Solutions Working Groups (R-DSWGs) and the establishment of the new ***Regional Teams (RTs)*** under the Area-Based Coordination (ABC) framework, enabling more field-oriented and integrated planning for Basic Human Needs and durable solutions. In a parallel policy track, engagement with de facto authorities advanced through the review of a draft ***Policy on Internally Displaced Persons***, offering an opportunity to embed protection safeguards and durable solutions principles into national frameworks. Collectively, these developments reflect a maturing response that recognizes the return crisis as a long-term (re-)integration and development challenge requiring sustained, whole-of-community engagement. Despite these developments, the quarter saw an ***intensification of returns***, driven by the persistent enforcement of Pakistan's "Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan" and stricter migration enforcement from Iran, placing immense strain on fragile Displacement Affected Communities (DACs)[2] and highlighting the urgent need for sustained, whole-of-community investment.

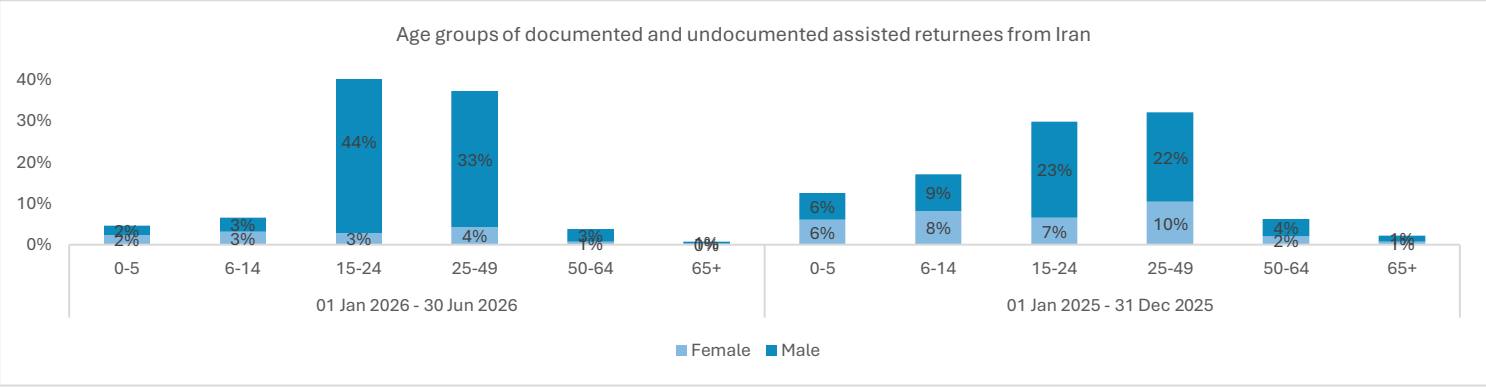
KEY RETURNEE DATA FROM IRAN



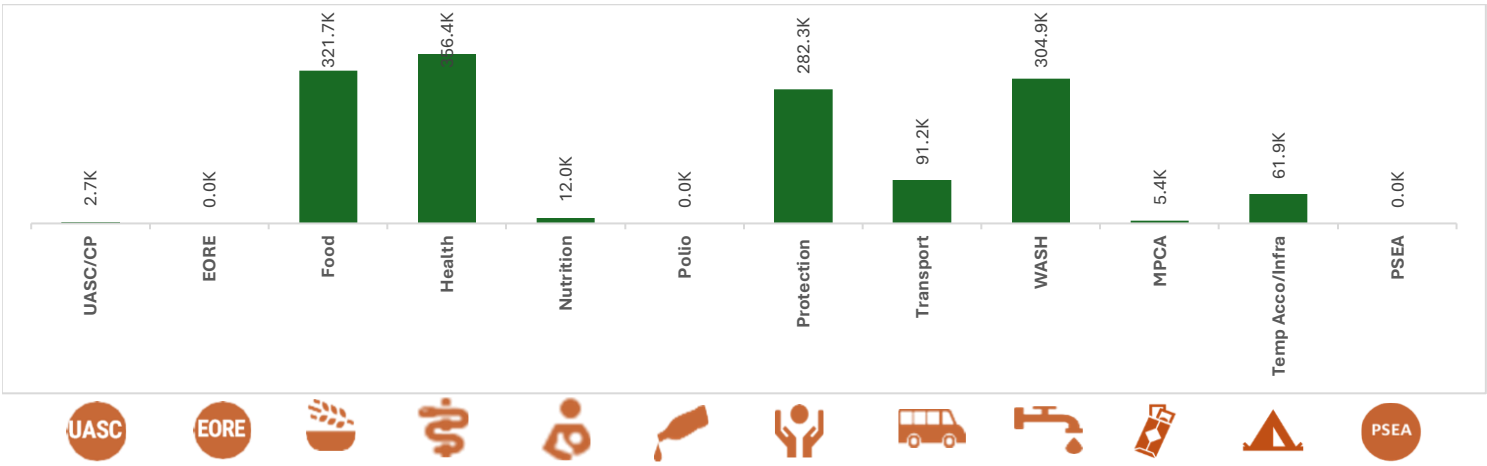








BORDER CONSORTIUM RESPONSE FOR RETURNEES FROM IRAN (SECOND QUARTER 2026)



HUMANITARIAN CLUSTERS RESPONSE IN AREAS OF RETURN (AOR) FOR RETURNEES FROM IRAN (SECOND QUARTER 2026)

EDUCATION

Partners supported 47,310 returnee children and parents through education help desks at the Islam Qala and Milak border crossing points, while 14,484 returnee children accessed catch-up and language support sessions through 490 TLS classes established across all regions except the Eastern Region.

PROTECTION

Partners reached 144,553 returnees across the West, North, Northeast, South and Kabul with emergency cash, protection information/ guidance and PSS. UASC received family tracing/reunification, family-based care, legal assistance, case management, PSS/emotional support, referrals and GBV awareness. EORE teams reached 181,033 returnees with safety messages, and distributed 62,223 EORE IEC materials, stationery items and Mine Action hotline cards.

HEALTH

Partners reached 257,213 returnees. Health services included 226,347 disease screenings, 8,926 priority disease detections, 54,983 PHC consultations, 4,738 reproductive health services, 55 skilled deliveries, 5,266 MHPSS consultations, 22,693 immunizations, and 1,443 emergency referrals.

WASH

Partners assisted 67 returnees with sanitation services, with 1,390 additional returnees reached with hygiene promotion and 4,740 benefitted from NFI distribution.

NUTRITION

Milak Border (Nimroz): screening of 678 children for acute malnutrition; 33 admitted for SAM/61 for MAM treatment, and 11 HRM cases managed. RUTF reached 60 children, Vitamin A supplementation to 40, and deworming 36. 74 pregnant & 35 lactating women screened for malnutrition. 397 caregivers reached with IYCF counselling, 102 women with Multiple Micronutrient Supplements & 462 children with Micronutrient Powders.

ES/NFI

1,077 returnee HHs (6,916 individuals) received emergency & transitional shelter, winterization and NFI assistance in Kunduz, Nimroz, Bamiyan and Herat.

FSAC

Partners provided cash transfers for food to 7,409 households, each HH received AFN 2,900 per month for three months, equivalent to 50% of the standard ration.

DURABLE SOLUTIONS/BHN ASSISTANCE IN AREAS OF RETURN (AOR) FOR RETURNEES FROM IRAN (SECOND QUARTER 2026)

Long Term Safety and Security

Mine Action & Risk Education: Partners reached 21,296 returnees in Nimroz with Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) at Milak Zero Point, and 39,659 returnees in Herat at Islam Qala Zero Point, at the Transit Centres, and in host communities in Herat and Farah Provinces. Disaster Risk Reduction: 91 returnees in Pushtrod, Farah benefited from DRM kits distributed to three community-based Disaster Risk Management Committees.

Access to Documentation

Legal Aid: In Herat, Badghis, Farah, 1,992 returnees received legal awareness on civil documentation, and 2,563 individuals received support to obtain legal identity documentation. ***Registrations:*** A partner's Community Resource Centre in the North registered 3,315 Iranian returnees since September 2024 whereas female service assistants have been deployed at the Milak Border Reception Centre, facilitating registration for 2,924 families and biometric registration for 3,932 women. ***Cash Assistance for Documentation:*** In the Northeast, legal aid supported 335 households (902 individuals) in Kunduz, Takhar, and Baghlan with financial assistance for documentation fees.

Adequate Standard of Living

Health & Nutrition: 5,978 health consultations were conducted at Milak border crossing, including treatment for 861 children under five, 406 women received antenatal care and 257 received postnatal care. Nutrition screenings for 1,864 children under five and 317 pregnant/lactating women were conducted, identifying and treating cases of acute malnutrition. ***Education:*** 3,000 returnee children were enrolled in Temporary Learning Spaces (TLSs) in Nimroz, with plans for an additional 6,000 next quarter. ***WASH:*** Water supply systems strengthened in Nimroz and Helmand; hygiene supplies distributed to over 70,000 returnees; hygiene promotion reached over 116,000. ***Protection:*** 7,096 children (3,614 boys, 3,482 girls) received psychosocial support services in Nimroz. ***Health Services:*** 351 health facilities across 5 northern provinces provide services, with IMHNTs reaching 5,668 returnees in Mazar settlements; two Basic Health Centres in Nimroz (Masoom Abad and Transit Centre) are under construction; and an 8-bed MHPSS unit at Zaranj Provincial Hospital is improving access to specialized mental health care for returnees. ***Social and Behaviour Change:*** 56,369 returnees in Nimroz reached with integrated awareness sessions on health, nutrition, WASH, education, and child protection. ***Infrastructure & Solar Power:*** A 100-kW solar power system at the reception centre in Nimroz is under installation.

Access to Livelihoods and Employment

Business Support & Training: 100 MSMEs are expected to receive business training and starter kits in Nimroz to strengthen local economic growth. Moreover, 2,026 livelihood interventions, targeting over 50% returnee participation, including support to 30 SMEs, 230 students in a Connected Learning Programme, and 80 cash-for-work opportunities in Nimroz. ***Women's Empowerment:*** 144 female returnees expected to receive training in carpet weaving, embroidery, and tailoring in Nimroz whereas the Zaranj Women Business Center in Nimroz is under construction. ***Community Development:*** Two Community Action Plans (CAPs) and Community-Led Initiative feedback sessions facilitated in Mahajir Abad and Masoom Abad, Nimroz. ***Vocational Training:*** 50 returnees in the North received vocational and life-skills training. ***Livestock & Agriculture:*** In the North, activities included greenhouse establishment, Cash-for-Work, and agricultural training in Faryab.

Access to HLP Rights

Legal Assistance: 123 individuals (100/Herat, 23/Badghis) received legal assistance and counselling on HLP matters.

Family Reunification

Reunification Support: 1,236 unaccompanied and separated children arriving through Islam Qala Border were successfully reunified with their families in western provinces, 476 in North (67 in Balkh, 341 in Faryab, 68 in Samangan), and 1,058 children in South (Nimroz) received interim care, family tracing, and reunification services.

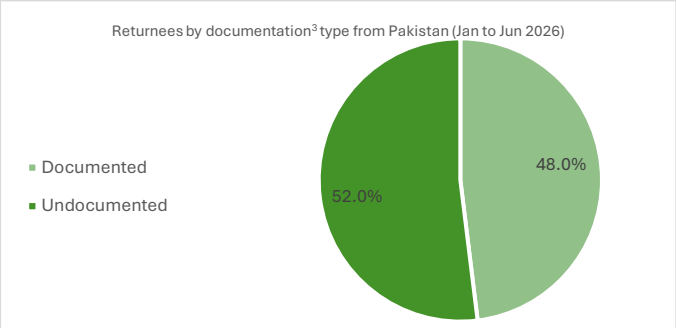
Access to Justice and Remedies

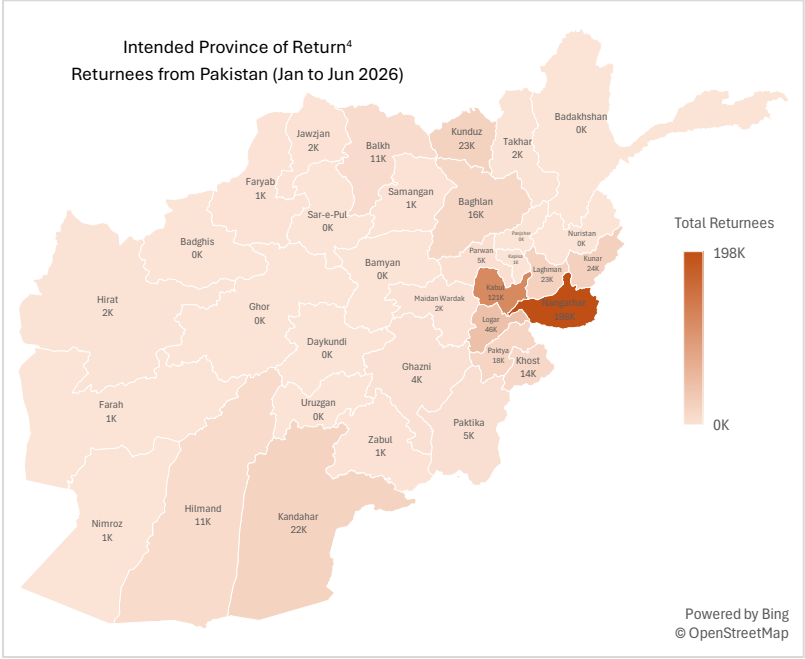
Legal Assistance: In the South (Nimroz), 2,306 individuals received legal assistance to help address documentation and protection-related needs whereas 12 vulnerable returnees were assessed and supported through Protection Case Management (PCM) services in Nimroz.

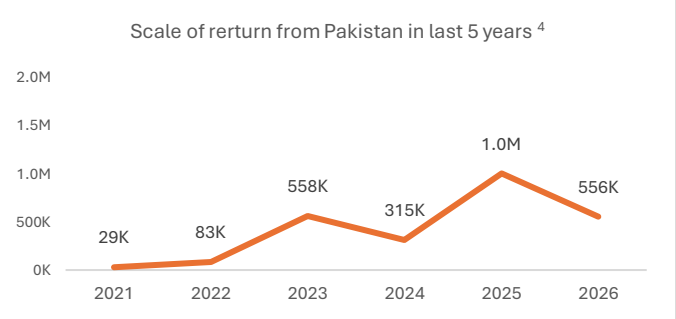
Participation in Public Affairs

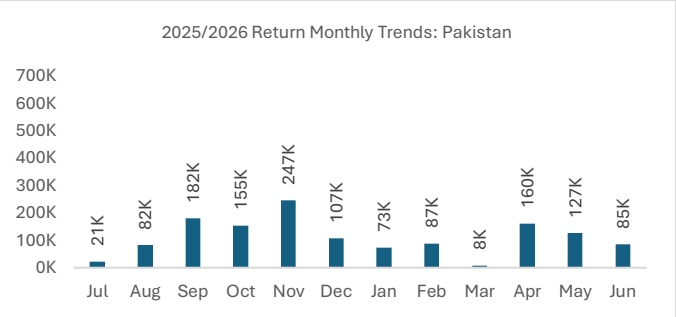
Community Engagement: In the North, community engagement sessions reached 170,895 returnees and public awareness activities reached 210,300 individuals, in West, 225 returnees participated in Integrated Community-Based Child Protection Committees (IICBPCs) across Herat and Ghor Provinces, whereas 439 feedback cases were collected and managed, and Help Desk services were provided to 1,373 returnees in Nimroz.

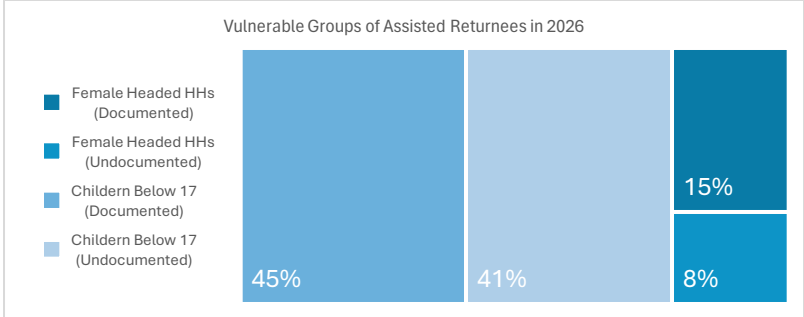
KEY RETURNEE DATA FROM PAKISTAN

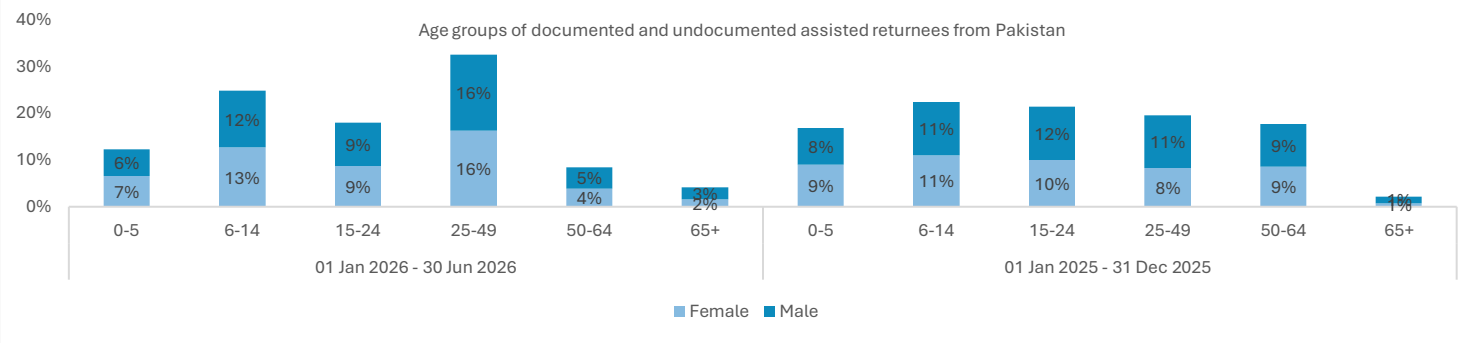




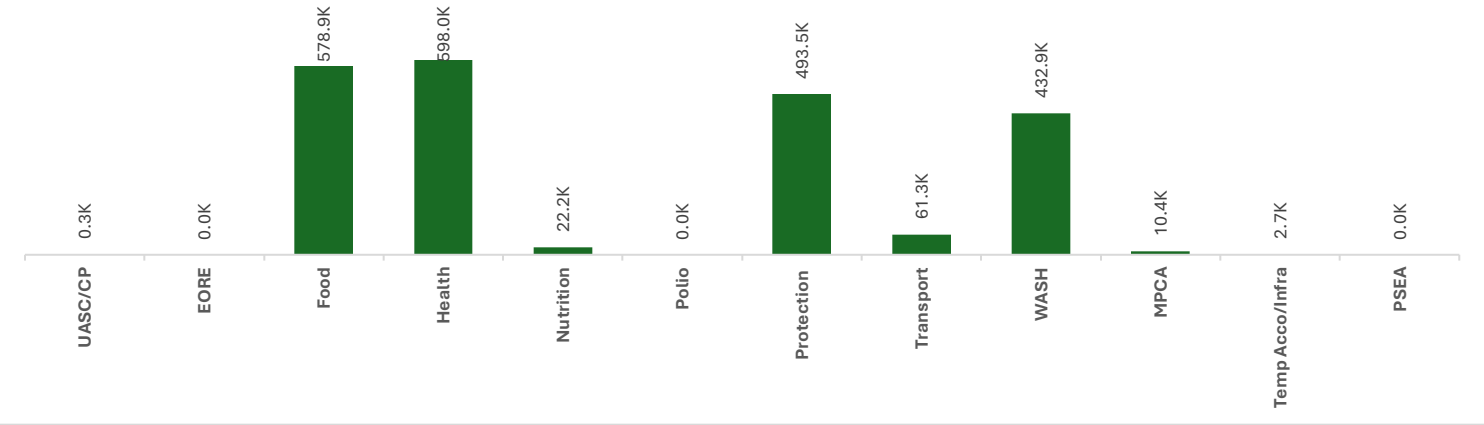








BORDER CONSORTIUM RESPONSE FOR RETURNEES FROM PAKISTAN (SECOND QUARTER 2026)



HUMANITARIAN CLUSTERS ASSISTANCE IN AREAS OF RETURN (AOR) FOR RETURNEES FROM PAKISTAN (SECOND QUARTER 2026)

EDUCATION

Education partners supported 63,670 returnee children and caregivers through education help desks at Torkham, Spin Boldak, Lewa Baba Jan and Maidan Wardak. Additionally, 17,553 returnee children accessed catch-up and language support through 593 TLS classes before successfully transitioning to hub schools by June 2026.

PROTECTION

Partners reached 180,007 returnees in the East, South, Southeast, Central, North and Northeast with PSS and emotional support, protection guidance, case management, GBV awareness, emergency cash, protection referrals, UASC family tracing/reunification, legal assistance and EORE. Additionally, EORE teams reached 110,046 returnees with safety messages and distributed 20,677 EORE IEC materials, including stationery and Mine Action hotline cards.

HEALTH

Partners reached 335,447 returnees. Health responses included 301,902 screenings, 11,624 priority disease detections, 71,606 PHC consultations, 6,170 reproductive health services, 72 skilled deliveries, 6,858 MHPSS consultations, 29,553 immunizations, and 1,879 emergency referrals.

WASH

WASH partners provided extensive support to returnees from Pakistan by supplying safe drinking water to 179 individuals, hygiene promotion activities reached 52,815 individuals reinforcing essential health and hygiene practices. Additionally, 43,603 people benefited from NFI distribution.

NUTRITION

Assistance reached Torkham, Spin Boldak, & Bahramcha. 27,412 children screened for malnutrition, 835 admitted for SAM, 1,096 for MAM, and 1,042 High-Risk MAM (HRM) cases. Response included 144 RUTF, 18,328 Vitamin A, 10,019 deworming, 3,377 pregnant and 1,732 lactating women screened for malnutrition. IYCF counselling reached 7,415 caregivers, Multiple Micronutrient Supplements to 4,695 women, and Micronutrient Powders to 17,164 children.

ES/NFI

Partners reached 499 returnee households (3,527 individuals) with emergency shelter kits, blankets and cash-based shelter repair assistance in Kunar, Nangarhar, Kabul and Kandahar

FSAC

No update to report.

DURABLE SOLUTIONS/BHN ASSISTANCE IN AREAS OF RETURN (AOR) FOR RETURNEES FROM PAKISTAN (SECOND QUARTER 2026)

Long Term Safety and Security

Mine Action & Clearance: In the Central Region, partner cleared 86,694 sqm of minefields and 210,249 sqm of battlefield and responded to 105 hotline calls. In the Northeast, 73,768 m² of hazardous land was cleared and 2,186 explosive hazards were safely destroyed. ***Risk Education:*** EORE teams in Central Region delivered 2,095 awareness sessions, reaching 67,934 beneficiaries and in the Northeast to 6,199 people, including returnees and IDPs. ***Climate Resilience & DRR:*** East Region: 30,000 trees planted across 18 hectares in Mehterlam, Laghman, for flood mitigation, benefiting ~24,000 people. South Region: Flood Early Warning Projects in Kandahar and Zabul, covering six districts and protecting 1-2 villages per district completed. Northeast Region: Construction of 3 flood protection walls (30% progress) and contracts awarded for 7 additional walls.

Family Reunification

Reunification & Child Protection: South Region: 102 unaccompanied and separated children (83 in Kandahar, 19 in Helmand) supported with family tracing and reunification services.

Adequate Standard of Living

Health: East Region: 57,750 primary healthcare consultations provided in Nangarhar; 20,000 litres of safe water provided daily at Torkham. South Region: 9,851 returnees received healthcare services through Community-Based Vaccination Centres. Northeast Region: Fixed Health Facility construction ongoing in Khan Abad, Dasht-e-Archi and Chahardara districts. ***Nutrition:*** South Region: cash assistance reached 1,593 HHs and High Energy Biscuits to 36,867 individuals. East Region: Nutrition awareness reached 300 women; 3,500 children through Community Based Education (CBE), 2,930 returnee/IDP children in TLS. Southern Region: 7,500+ children and 1,000+ pregnant and lactating women, screened and treated for acute malnutrition. Severe acute malnutrition (SAM) and moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) treatment continued across regions. However, the prevention programmes (BSFP) was not implemented due to supply shortages. ***WASH & Infrastructure:*** Central Region: Water supply systems, public toilets, and road rehabilitation in Kabul, benefiting 96,000+ people. East Region: Safe water systems for 1,200 returnee HHs, irrigation rehab for 2,800+ HHs. Northeast Region: 8 solar-powered water supply systems planned for 8,000+ people; 11 irrigation canals and 6 culverts procured.

Access to Justice and Remedies

Legal Assistance & Services: South Region: 52 returnees assisted through Protection Case Management services. Northeast Region: 21 individuals received legal representation for HLP disputes, inheritance claims, and land disputes.

Access to Livelihoods and Employment

Cash-for-Work & Job Creation: East Region: Cash-for-Work programmes generated thousands of labour opportunities; 350 workers participated in rockfall mitigation activities. South Region: cash assistance reached 1,593 HHs; 600+ cash-for-work opportunities created with another 98 in Northeast (78% returnees). ***Vocational Training & SME Support:*** Southeast: 170 enterprises (SMEs/MEs) supported; 24 enterprises (14%) returnee-owned/led. West Region: 303 returnee youth (261 female) received vocational training in Injil, Herat. South Region: vocational training reached 90 women (70% returnees) in Kandahar. Central Region: Preparations for vocational training for 300 female beneficiaries in Kabul completed. ***Agriculture & Livelihoods:*** East Region: 530 returnee farmers supported with maize seed, fertilizer, training. 83 returnees received dairy processing toolkits. South Region: support reached 60 SMEs of returnees, 140 cash-for-work, 15 greenhouses, and 80 value chains.

Participation in Public Affairs

Community Engagement: Central Region: Water Management Committees, including returnees established in Kabul for sustainable management. East Region: Community-based management structures established; 180 community members including returnees reached with awareness sessions. Northeast Region: 540 community members participated in Focus Group Discussions; 486 LIC members including returnees scheduled for capacity-building.

Access to HLP Rights

Permanent Housing Rehabilitation & Support: In the Northeast, shelter assessments were completed for 800 households in Dasht-e-Archi, Chahardara, and Baghlan-e-Jadid. 444 returnees in Archi District completed mason training on safer shelter construction. Permanent shelters for 270 HHs in the Northeast started construction, with first and second instalments provided. ***Legal Assistance:*** In the Northeast, 405 individuals received counselling on civil documentation and HLP, while 21 received legal representation for HLP disputes. Over 150 Local Integration Committee (LIC) members in Baghlan-e-Jadid received HLP training. South Region: shelter interventions planned for Kandahar (to commence) and provided non-food items to 50 women-headed households. ***HLP Rights Information:*** In Herat and Badghis: 35 individuals received information on HLP rights; 8 received legal assistance.

Access to Documentation

Legal Aid: South Region: 2,333 individuals received legal assistance to address documentation needs. In the Northeast, 1,501 individuals were assessed for civil documentation support; 104 legal awareness sessions were conducted, reaching 2,529 participants. Northeast Region: 1,778 HHs identified for tazkera (NID) support and received first cash instalment. ***Registration & Reception:*** In the South (Kandahar), female service assistants have been deployed at Takhtapul Reception Centre, facilitated registration for 1,113 families (4,738 individuals) and biometric registration for 12,665 women.

OTHER / OUTLIER TOPICS

1. Launch of the Response Plan for Afghan Returnees 2026

During the second quarter, the Response Plan for Afghan Returnees 2026 was formally launched by the UN and NGO partners to address the escalating crisis of large-scale returns from Pakistan and Iran. The plan projects approximately 2.7 million returnees between April and December 2026 (against which 586,631 have arrived between 1 April – 30 June) and outlines a coordinated framework requiring US$529.2 million—US$100.7 million for immediate border response and US$428.5 million for (re-)integration in areas of return. The plan prioritises a two-track approach: lifesaving assistance at border crossing points and delivering medium-term support in 35 priority districts where returnees and host communities face the greatest pressure. This launch underscored the evolving nature of the crisis—moving beyond a humanitarian border emergency to a significant (re-)integration and development challenge. The plan emphasizes a whole-of-community approach, recognizing that returnees are settling in areas already strained by poverty, weak services, limited livelihoods and overstretched infrastructure. Without adequate funding and coordinated implementation, both returnees and host communities face heightened risks of secondary displacement, protection concerns and social tension.

2. Closure of R-DSWGs and Launch of New Regional Teams

The second quarter marked a significant transition in Afghanistan's coordination architecture with the formal closure of the eight Regional Durable Solutions Working Groups (R-DSWGs) and the official launch of the Regional Teams (RTs). This transition, building on the expertise and field presence of the former R-DSWGs, establishes a more integrated and operational platform under the Area Based Coordination (ABC) framework for development assistance. The Regional Teams are mandated to coordinate broader Basic Human Needs (BHN) priorities, including durable solutions, through dedicated technical sub-group,. This new structure is designed to ensure durable solutions remain technically anchored within the regional coordination while strengthening linkages with area-based planning, returnee (re-)integration, IDP solutions, support to Displacement Affected Communities (DACs), service delivery, and local-level prioritization. The transition is particularly timely given the increasing scale of returns from Pakistan and Iran, and their needs that extend beyond immediate reception assistance and require sustained, community-focused follow-up in areas of return. By retaining the knowledge and membership base of the former R-DSWGs while adapting to current operational realities, the RTs are positioned to enable more coherent, evidence-based, and field-driven coordination across Afghanistan.

3. Review of Draft IDP Policy Shared by de facto MoRR

An important development during the quarter was the receipt of a draft Policy on Internally Displaced Persons from the de facto Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) for feedback from the Durable Solutions Secretariat, which disseminated the draft to members of the National Durable Solutions Working Group (N-DSWG), collated technical inputs, and consolidated feedback for submission to de facto MoRR. This process provides a critical opportunity for development partners to contribute to policy discussions on internal displacement and on durable solutions. The timing is particularly relevant given the overlap between internal displacement, refugee returns, secondary displacement, and (re-)integration pressures. The review allows partners to advocate for key safeguards, including protection, access to services, civil documentation, housing, land and property (HLP) rights, livelihood opportunities, and community participation. The consolidated feedback aims to ensure the international community speaks with a coordinated voice, grounded in evidence and field realities. A clear and protection-sensitive IDP policy is essential for improving planning, coordination, and accountability in the context of Afghanistan's large-scale displacement and return dynamics.

NOTES

1. *Displacement-Affected Communities (DACs)* encompass groups impacted by forced or voluntary displacement, including refugees, returnees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and host communities. This aligns with the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for IDPs (2010), which emphasizes addressing the needs of displaced populations and those in host areas to achieve sustainable (re-)integration. In this context, DACs include Afghan returnees from Pakistan who face heightened vulnerabilities in access to housing, livelihoods, and services, as also outlined in the UNHCR Solutions Framework for Afghan Refugees (2018). The term underscores the intersectional challenges these groups endure and the necessity for integrated humanitarian-development responses. Key References: IASC (2010). Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons and UNHCR (2018). Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR).
2. Aligned with historical patterns, over half of the total 6.2 million returnees (between 15 Sept 2023 – 30 June 2026) are women and children, many of whom were born and raised outside Afghanistan with weak or no familial, social or economic ties to their areas of return. This demographic reality transforms the challenge from a simple "return" into a complex "(re-) integration" process that requires sustained, tailored support for individuals who are effectively arriving as newcomers.
3. Undocumented Afghans from Iran lack valid legal status, encompassing those with expired Amayesh cards, invalid passports/visas, or no documents, including long-term residents and recent arrivals. Documented returnees are Amayesh cardholders which provide temporary Iranian residence, permitting work in designated areas and access to basic services, but it is subject to mobility restrictions and potential cancellation. Documented returnees from Pakistan hold Proof of Registration (PoR) cards, Asylum Seeker Certificates, or Slips. Undocumented returnees from Pakistan include Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) holders, individuals with expired passports/visas or other invalid official documentation, and Afghans who travelled and resided in Pakistan without any documentation or registration.
4. The maps data on 'intended' provinces of return is extrapolated from the assisted returnee numbers sourced from Border Consortium assistance records at border crossing points and reception centres. From 1 January till 30 June 2026, 152,057 individuals (42% of all returnees from Iran) and 283,573 individuals (51% of all returnees from Pakistan) were provided emergency assistance upon arrival in Afghanistan.

DATA/INFORMATION SOURCES

Returnee headcount data from Iran and Pakistan: undocumented IOM/documented UNHCR; Border Consortium Response figures: Border Consortium Sitrep/Dashboard/IOM; Humanitarian Response in AoR: Clusters inputs via OCHA; Durable Solutions data (BHN): Durable Solutions Secretariat and Regional Teams.

LINK OF THE PREVIOUS PUBLISHED RETURNEE OVERVIEW UPDATE

Afghanistan Returnees Overview 1 Feb - 31 March 2026 | United Nations in Afghanistan

CONTRIBUTING ORGANIZATIONS AND CLUSTERS TO THIS RETURNEE OVERVIEW UPDATE

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Northeast Region DSWG Contributors

Central Region DSWG Contributors

Southeast Region DSWG Contributors

East Region DSWG Contributors

South Region DSWG Contributors

North Region DSWG Contributors

West Region DSWG Contributors

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