



Number of voluntary returns to Afghanistan this year tops 100,000

KABUL, Afghanistan, August 30 (UNHCR) – The number of people returning voluntarily to Afghanistan from Pakistan and Iran so far this year has exceeded 100,000, almost twice as many as last year. Some 95,000 of these are from Pakistan.

The Afghanistan voluntary repatriation programme remains UNHCR's largest worldwide, with some 4.5 million people having returned to Afghanistan since 2002. As the figures of the past few years show, the number of returns can vary significantly from



Packed up and Ready to Roll: An Afghan family heads off from a voluntary repatriation centre in Pakistan earlier this year. © UNHCR/R.Ali

year-to-year.

As part of its monitoring responsibilities, UNHCR conducts interviews with returning Afghans to assess the reasons for returns. This year, the most oft-cited factors have been economic reasons, difficulties in Pakistan, and local improvements in security in some parts of Afghanistan.

Overall, almost 70 per cent of the returnees come from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in the north-west, with the rest from Balochistan, Punjab and Sindh provinces. A third head to eastern Afghanistan, a further third to the central region and the rest mainly to the north-east.

Separately, in Pakistan, UNHCR is in discussion with the authorities to rehabilitate damaged refugee villages in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. So far, in flood hit areas, UNHCR has been able to assist around 700,000 people, representing a third of those the agency plans to help.

To speed assistance, UNHCR has set up additional distribution points in the worst-affected areas of Shangla, Swat, Peshawar, Charsadda and Kohistan. We are also in the



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process of establishing additional hubs and identifying partners to expand our outreach to flood victims in need of help.

Further south, in Sindh, 2,000 families have so far received UNHCR non-food item family kits. UNHCR tents have helped people in Sukkar, Shikarpur and Jacobabad.

According to government officials the number of displaced people in Balochistan has increased to 1.1 million people, including 700,000 from flood-affected parts of Sindh.