

Afghanistan | Population Movement (Returnees)

Emergency appeal №: MDRAF018 Emergency appeal launched: 01/05/2025 Operational Strategy published: 24/05/2025	Glide №: CE-2025-00042-AFG
Operation updates #4 Date of issue: 14/01/2026	Timeframe covered by this update: From 01/05/2025 to 30/11/2025
Operation timeframe: 24 months (01/05/2025 – 30/04/2027)	Number of people being assisted: 205,637 ¹ Number of people reached with hot meal: 364,100
Funding requirements (CHF): CHF 20 million through the IFRC Emergency Appeal CHF 25 million Federation-wide	DREF amount initially allocated: CHF 1 million

To date, this IFRC Emergency Appeal, which seeks CHF 20,000,000, is 17 per cent funded. Further funding contributions are needed to enable the Afghan Red Crescent Society, with the support of the IFRC, to continue providing humanitarian assistance to the Afghan returnees arriving through different crossing points. This operation was made possible through the support of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Swiss Red Cross, the Canadian Red Cross Society, the Saudi Red Crescent Authority, the Netherlands Red Cross, the British Red Cross and FCDO, the Swedish Red Cross, as well as the in-country Partner National Societies, namely the Danish Red Cross, the Turkish Red Crescent, the Qatari Red Crescent, and the Norwegian Red Cross.



ARCS volunteers and returnees engaged in daily waste management at Torkham Camp. (Photo credit: IFRC)

¹ As of this operational update, figures for people reached through services are presented separately from those reached through hot meal distributions to prevent double counting.

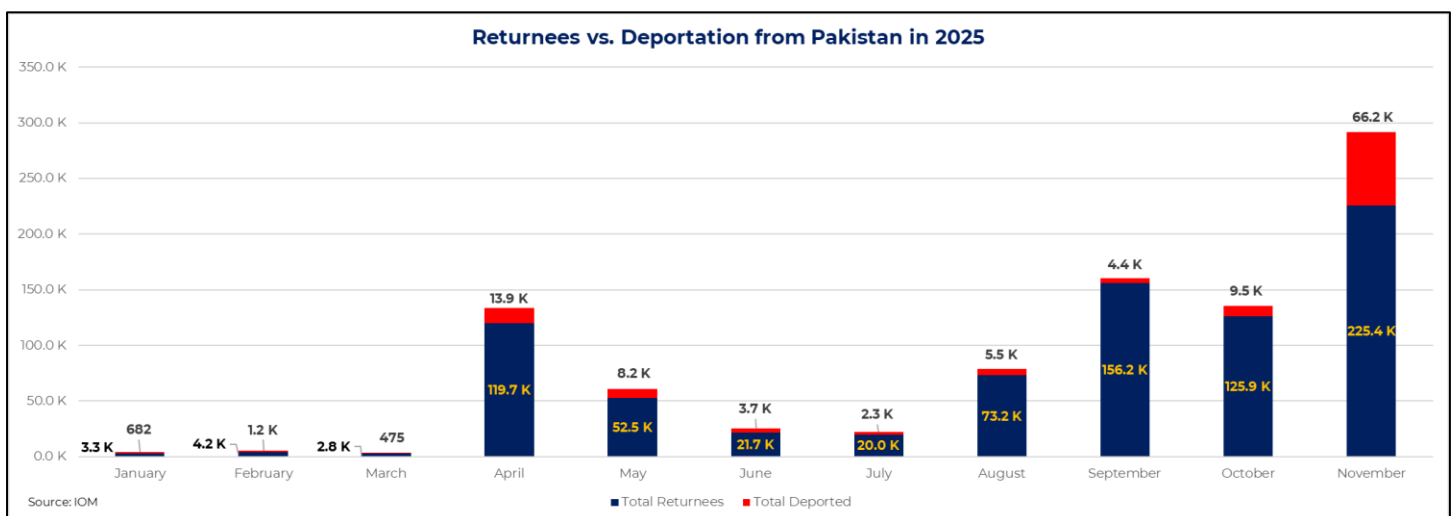
A. SITUATION ANALYSIS

Description of the crisis

Since the beginning of 2025 until the end of November 2025, Afghanistan has witnessed the return of over 5.2 million Afghans (deportees and returnees) from neighbouring Iran and Pakistan ² —an unprecedented movement that has further strained a country already grappling with a severe humanitarian crisis. More than 3.6 million have returned from Iran alone, of which 1.2 million were deported³. The bulk of returns began after 1 April, highlighting the intensity of recent developments in both host countries. Partners reported that, despite the onset of winter usually limiting population movement, returnee numbers remain relatively high. This is particularly evident in pushback cases from Iran, suggesting that protection concerns and policy-related pressures are currently outweighing seasonal constraints on mobility.

Returnees from Pakistan

Based on the IOM dashboard, between 1 January and 30 November 2025, an estimated 804,830 Afghans returned from Pakistan, of whom 116,100 (14%) were deported ⁴.



In Pakistan, the second phase of the 'Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan (IFRP) began in April 2025, targeting undocumented Afghans and holders of Afghan Citizen Cards (ACC). On 31 July, the Government expanded the plan to include Proof of Registration (PoR) card holders. The end of the grace period on 31 August has heightened uncertainty and fears among Afghans, as returns and deportations continue despite the protection risks.

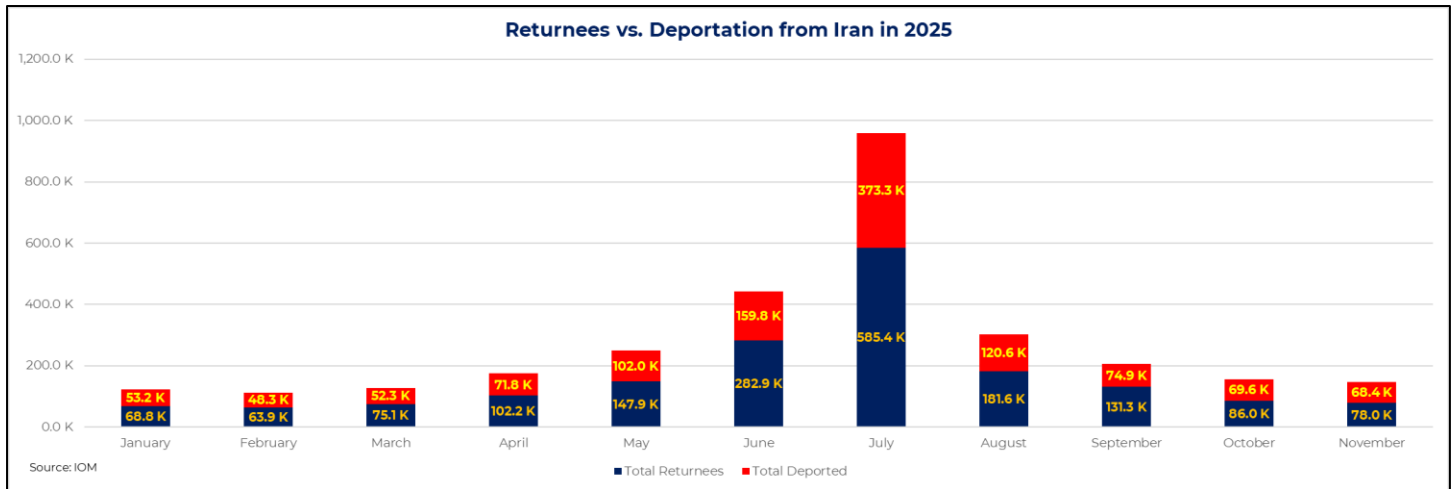
According to Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) data, the highest daily influx was recorded in November 2025. Most returnees cross through the official crossing points of Torkham (Nangarhar) and Spin Boldak (Kandahar), with smaller flows observed at Angur Ada (Paktika) and via unofficial routes in Helmand.

² [Microsoft Power BI](#)

³ <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/119948>

⁴ [Microsoft Power BI](#)

Returnees from Iran



Returns of Afghan nationals from Iran in 2025 have been substantial and sustained, reflecting shifts in policy enforcement and broader regional dynamics. According to operational data, over 1.8 million Afghans returned to Afghanistan from Iran in 2025, accounting for nearly 65% of all returnees recorded in the year. These movements encompassed both voluntary and forced returns, with significant numbers arriving at key border points including Islam Qala and Milak-Zaranj.⁵

The peak of return flows occurred mid-year, driven in part by the expiry of temporary residency arrangements and intensified enforcement actions in Iran. Prior reporting indicates tens of thousands of Afghans were crossing daily during earlier phases of the crisis. Returnees frequently arrived with limited belongings and resources, placing immediate pressure on reception systems and basic services along border provinces.

Although the daily rate of crossings from Iran declined after the mid-year peak, returns continued at scale through late 2025. The large volume of returnees has compounded existing humanitarian needs in Afghanistan, as communities receiving returnees struggle with economic hardship, limited access to shelter, food, health care, and protection support.⁶ Vulnerable groups, including women, children, unaccompanied minors, and those with specific protection needs, remain at heightened risk due to gaps in service coverage and constraints on movement and employment.

Returnees from Tajikistan

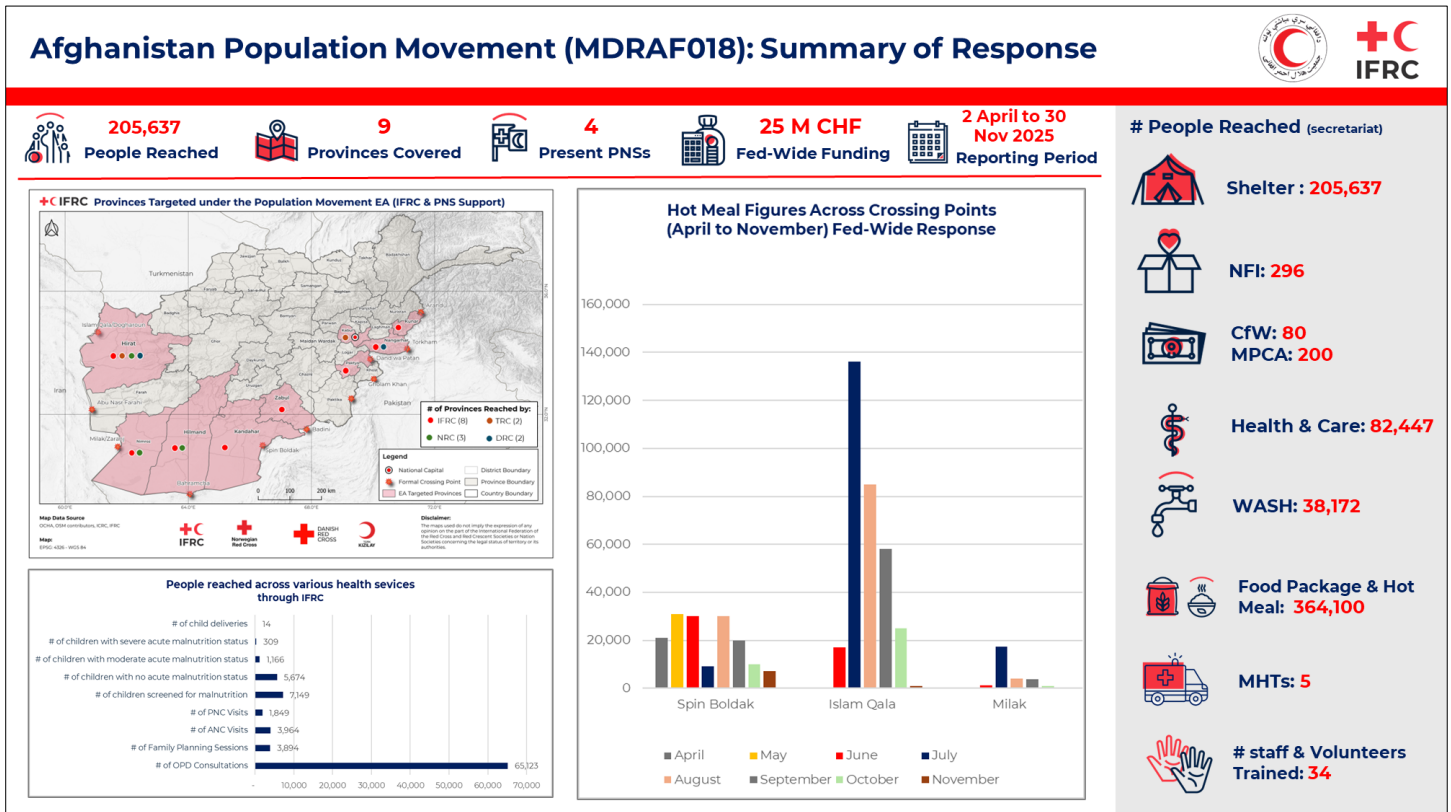
In Tajikistan, borders remain open only to those with valid passports and visas. At the same time, the Government continues to carry out arbitrary deportations, including of recognized refugees and asylum-seekers, generating deep anxiety and distress within the community. Recent announcements and media reports have heightened concerns about the safety and rights of those affected.⁷

⁵ [ODP Country Report on Afghanistan](#)

⁶ [Afghanistan Situation: Afghan Returns from Iran and Pakistan Emergency Update #17 \(19 December 2025\) - Afghanistan | ReliefWeb](#)

⁷ [Afghanistan Situation: Afghan Returns from Iran and Pakistan Emergency Update #16 - Afghanistan | ReliefWeb](#)

Summary of response



People reached across various health services through IFRC

Overview of the host National Society and ongoing response

During the reporting period from April to 30 November 2025, the ARCS with the support of IFRC and various Partner National Societies, made significant strides in delivering humanitarian assistance across nine provinces in Afghanistan.

One of the standout achievements during this period was the provision of shelter assistance, which reached 205,637 people. This critical support helped families regain a sense of safety and stability in the face of ongoing challenges. Additionally, dignity kits and hygiene kits were distributed to individuals, addressing urgent hygiene needs.

The Cash-for-Work initiative provided opportunities for 80 people, empowering them to contribute to their communities while earning a livelihood. In the health and care sector, ARCS successfully provided support, ensuring access to essential health services in underserved areas. Furthermore, 38,172 people benefited from WASH support ensuring access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene kits (WASH) facilities, through water distribution, the construction of the sanitation facilities and the distribution of MHM and Hygiene kits.

ARCS provided critical WASH support at border crossings to 38,172 people, ensuring access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene kits for affected communities.

Food security remained a top priority, with the distribution of food packages and hot meals supporting 364,100 people. Notably, the demand for hot meals at border crossing points surged, particularly at Islam Qala, where 140,000 meals were provided between April and July only. Between July and October, the Turkish Red Crescent provided 102,000 portions of hot meal. Additional support was extended at Torkham and Milak border points, addressing the needs of vulnerable populations in transit.

The ARCS initially deployed 11 Mobile Health Teams (MHTs) with the support of Danish Red Cross and Norwegian Red Cross to provide essential health care services as well as mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), underscoring the importance of addressing mental well-being in humanitarian responses. Out of 11, currently 5 are operational. To enhance the effectiveness of operations, 40 staff members and volunteers received CBHFA training, equipping them with vital skills to better serve affected communities.

Overall, the collaborative efforts of ARCS and its operational partners exemplify a robust response to humanitarian needs, demonstrating a commitment to supporting the Afghan population during these challenging times.

Needs analysis

Based on the rapid needs assessment conducted by ARCS in May 2025 at crossing points along the border with Pakistan, and the evolving situation at the Iran border at the end of June 2025, the Afghan returnees urgently need food, multipurpose cash assistance, primary healthcare, clean water, sanitation facilities, and safe temporary shelter for ensuring safety, dignity, and basic well-being upon arrival. According to UNHCR report in August 2025⁸, the top immediate needs reported by the Afghan returnees from Iran were documentation and legal assistance (66%), family reunification support (35%), and information on services and assistance (17%). The top three needs upon arrival were food (88%), housing or accommodation (81%) and financial support (79%). And the top protection needs for returnees from Pakistan were documentation and legal assistance (76%), protection services for children (35%), and information on services and assistance (35%). The top three needs upon arrival were food (82%), housing (82%), and financial support (80%). In the longer term, support for livelihoods such as vocational training and small-scale agriculture and permanent housing is critical to reduce secondary displacement and promote reintegration.

Shelter:

Returnees arriving from Pakistan and Iran are facing acute shelter challenges upon arrival, at a time when winter temperatures are beginning to drop and weather conditions are becoming increasingly harsh. Many families are temporarily accommodated in overcrowded tents, open areas, or public structures such as mosques and schools, which are poorly insulated and unsuitable for even short-term stays during cold weather. Inadequate shelter exposes returnees—particularly women, children, older persons, and people with disabilities to heightened risks of cold exposure, respiratory illness, and protection concerns.

While ARCS and other humanitarian partners have installed emergency tents, there is a significant gap in both quantity and availability of shelter materials. In northern provinces like Kunduz, land has been allocated for returnee housing, but no formal shelter construction is underway, and permanent housing solutions remain unplanned. Shelter remains one of the most visible and urgent unmet needs, requiring coordinated investment from both humanitarian and recovery actors.

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH):

WASH services remained inadequate and overstretched across all major crossings. At Spin Boldak, all 60 bathing and sanitation units have been installed, but they are designed for male only, excluding women and girls from hygiene access. Toilet maintenance and waste management were poor, and insect infestations were widespread due to lack of vector control. At Torkham, quality testing of water and cooling ice was not conducted, creating contamination risks. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) needs at the Torkham and Spin Boldak border crossings remain critical due to the high volume of daily cross-border movement, returnees, and displaced populations. These border points continued to experience significant strain on existing water supply and sanitation infrastructure, resulting in limited access to safe drinking water, inadequate latrines, poor waste management, and insufficient handwashing facilities. Overcrowding, especially during peak return periods, heightened the risk of waterborne diseases, acute watery diarrhoea, cholera, and other public health threats. There is an urgent need to strengthen WASH services through the provision of safe and reliable water sources, gender-segregated and disability-inclusive sanitation facilities, solid

⁸ [Document - Afghanistan Situation: Afghan Returns from Iran and Pakistan Emergency Update #4](#)

waste management, and sustained hygiene promotion. There is need to improve WASH conditions at Torkham and Spin Boldak is essential to protect public health, preserve dignity, and prevent disease transmission among mobile and vulnerable populations.

Similar issues are reported at the Islam Qala and Milak crossing points, where inadequate water trucking, limited latrine access, and insufficient hygiene supplies have heightened the risk of communicable disease outbreaks, especially among children and the elderly. Overcrowded conditions and freezing winter temperatures have further increased health risks, particularly for children, the elderly, and other vulnerable groups.

Health Services:

Health facilities at both crossing points are strained by high demand and shortages of essential medicines, equipment, and trained healthcare workers, especially female staff, which limits access to maternal and child health care and other gender-sensitive services. There are frequent cases of respiratory infections, acute diarrhoea, dehydration, and other communicable diseases, worsened by inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) conditions that increase the risk of outbreaks. Vaccination campaigns against polio and measles are ongoing, but isolation spaces for infectious cases and mental health and psychosocial support remain insufficient.

There is an urgent need to reinforce health services, including primary care, communicable disease control, maternal and child health, and referral systems. Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) are also highly needed, particularly among women and children arriving from prolonged detention or hardship in Iran.

Livelihoods and Income Support:

Returnees from both Pakistan and Iran are facing severe income insecurity. Most have returned with limited resources and few, if any, livelihood opportunities. The assessment and ongoing field monitoring highlight an urgent need for cash-based assistance, particularly cash-for-work programmes that provide immediate income options. Targeted livelihood support for women, such as vocational training and small business grants, to help them restore basic income sources and reduce household vulnerability. Without livelihood and income support interventions, returnee families remain heavily reliant on humanitarian assistance for survival.

Protection and Psychosocial Support:

While no widespread protection violations were identified during initial assessments in August 2025 through helpdesk and community engagement component, it was clear that the vulnerable groups, especially women, children, and persons with disabilities continue to face significant barriers to accessing services.

There is a growing need for the establishment of safe spaces for women, child-friendly spaces, and protection referral systems, particularly at Islam Qala, and Spin Boldak. ARCS and partners have also emphasized the importance of integrating PGI, including GBV prevention and response, child protection, and trauma support through Marastoons and MHPSS at crossing points.

Community Engagement and Feedback Mechanisms:

Over the past months, meaningful progress has been made in improving communication with affected families and addressing earlier information gaps. In Islam Qala border, a full feedback and information-sharing mechanism has been established, allowing returnees to receive clear guidance on assistance, registration steps, and eligibility criteria in real time. From October-November more than 850 community feedback have been collected and entered in the online Kobo form. Based on the ARCS observation, this has significantly reduced confusion and helped streamline support services.

In Chaman and Torkham border points, some of the earlier challenges are being partially addressed through strengthened coordination with field teams and partners, resulting in more consistent and timely delivery of unified messages to returnees. Although limitations in connectivity and access still persist, ongoing efforts have contributed

to better clarity on assistance-related information and health, hygiene, and psychosocial support messaging, helping reduce misinformation and uncertainty among affected families.

Operational risk assessment

The Afghanistan Population Movement response has faced significant contextual and programmatic risks during the reporting period, particularly following the surge in returns from Iran in late June and early July.

The following outlines the key operational risks currently affecting the response, based on ARCS's field observations and ongoing monitoring:

- **Funding shortfalls:** only 17 per cent of the funding ask of CHF 20 has been covered, which continues to constrain ARCS's capacity to sustain essential services, particularly food, shelter, WASH, and health interventions at high-volume crossing points such as Islam Qala, Milak, Torkham, and Spin Boldak.
- **Public health risks** are rising due to overcrowding, limited sanitation, and inadequate access to safe water in Spin Boldak and Milak borders. Sharp increases in waterborne diseases, respiratory infections, and child malnutrition were reported, underscoring the likelihood of localized disease outbreaks, particularly among unvaccinated children.
- **Protection risks** remain high, especially for women, children, and persons with disabilities, who face elevated risks of abuse, exploitation in congested and crowded settings. The lack of gender segregated facilities, safe spaces, and psychosocial support at several crossings especially in Iran crossing points further compound these vulnerabilities.
- The **onset of harsh winter conditions** is expected to significantly increase humanitarian needs, particularly for winterization assistance and essential non-food items (NFIs) such as blankets to protect affected populations from cold weather.
- **Access constraints**, including limited road connectivity and restricted air access during the winter months, are likely to impede the timely delivery of assistance to affected border areas.
- The **continued influx of returnees**, particularly along the Afghanistan–Pakistan border, is placing additional pressure on existing response capacities and necessitates the expansion of ongoing humanitarian operations.
- **Border closures** between Afghanistan and Pakistan have resulted in delays in the receipt of procured and donated relief items, consequently affecting the timely provision of assistance to affected communities.

B. OPERATIONAL STRATEGY

Update on the strategy

The IFRC Emergency Appeal, launched on 1 May 2025, contributes the ARCS-led response to the Afghanistan Population Movement crisis, addressing urgent humanitarian needs resulting from large-scale and ongoing returns from Iran, Pakistan, and other neighbouring countries. The [Operational Strategy](#) published on 24 May 2025, outlines a 24-month operation to respond to urgent humanitarian needs of returnees, and establish a pathway for early recovery and long-term reintegration into communities in areas of return. The operation addresses the scale and complexity of the needs of returnees and aims to reach 525,000 people through coordinated efforts of the IFRC Secretariat and participating Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies.

The response prioritizes life-saving assistance, including temporary shelter, basic health services including MHPSS, hot meals, cash support, and WASH, while also advancing early recovery efforts to restore livelihoods, ease pressure on host communities, and support vulnerable households to rebuild their lives and livelihoods with dignity.

ARCS, with support from the IFRC, conducted three planning meetings in June 2025 to review and plan both immediate response and early recovery activities in response to the high number of returnees. The meetings focused on ARCS sectoral priorities, cross-cutting components such as Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) and Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI), and outlined the budget requirements for each planned activity.


ARCS will scale up integrated sectoral interventions across all major border crossings, focusing on health, shelter, and livelihood to address urgent needs while initiating early recovery efforts. Planned early recovery actions include vocational training for income generation and permanent shelter support, alongside continued delivery of cash assistance to help returnees transition from emergency aid to self-reliance.

Given the substantial funding gap and the urgent needs of returnees at border crossing points, a decision was taken in July 2025 to reallocate resources from the Unified Plan to bolster the Emergency Appeal. Specifically, CHF 700,000 was redirected, including CHF 200,000 from the British Red Cross contribution and CHF 500,000 from the Finnish Red Cross contribution. This reallocation followed Federation-wide procedures, ensuring full transparency and accountability to donors. In coordination with partners, the Country Delegation and Asia Pacific Regional teams held partner calls on 26 May and 30 June 2025 to present the escalating returnee situation, particularly from Iran, and to advocate for increased and flexible funding to meet growing operational demands.

In addition to the overall appeal funding, an ECHO top-up fund of EUR 2 million has been approved, with initial activities already underway in coordination with ARCS, DRC, and NRC, under consortium approach, and Programme Grant Agreements drafted and reviewed by the partners.

C. DETAILED OPERATIONAL REPORT

STRATEGIC SECTORS OF INTERVENTION

 Shelter, Housing and Settlements		People Reached: 205,637	
		Female > 18: 50,865	Female < 18: 54,010
		Male > 18: 48,870	Male < 18: 51,892
Objective:	<i>Provide safe and secure shelter solutions for people who have returned to Afghanistan, enhancing their safety and well-being while supporting longer-term recovery and community integration.</i>		
Key indicators:	Indicator	Actual	Target
	<i>Number of people reached with shelter support</i>	205,637	3,500
	<i>Number of people taking part in cash-for-work (CFW) schemes related to shelter and settlement activities</i>	-	500
	<i>Number of households who received cash assistance (conditional cash for shelter construction-community-based)</i>	-	500
Emergency Shelter Assistance			


ARCS advanced its humanitarian response for families affected by delivering targeted assistance to those in the most vulnerable situations. From the start of the operation until the end of the reporting period, 300 temporary shelter support was provided to 205,637 number of people staying overnight or for short periods in camps near border crossing points, helping to meet immediate protection and accommodation needs. In addition, five large tents were erected within camp areas to host larger groups and support shared community activities, contributing to improved safety and stability for returnees and displaced families.

To further enhance living conditions, ARCS implemented infrastructure improvements in July. Two Rub Halls were installed; one in Islam Qala and one in Nimroz providing essential shelter for returnees while also serving as operational spaces for ARCS distribution and coordination activities. These structures have strengthened the organization’s capacity to deliver assistance effectively in high-need locations.

Through these interventions, ARCS continues to reinforce its commitment to supporting returnees and displaced populations by addressing urgent shelter needs and improving overall conditions in challenging environments.

- ARCS implemented a range of shelter and camp-support interventions at key border points and reception areas to respond to returnee movements and temporary accommodation needs. The assistance focused on strengthening immediate shelter availability, improving site functionality, and enhancing operational safety in areas of high population movements.
- At the Islam Qala border in Herat province, camp-level capacity was strengthened through the installation of two Rub halls tents to support storage and coordination functions. To enable safe night-time operations, one complete light tower set was installed and operated with 120 litres of diesel fuel. In addition, 10 family tents were erected to meet immediate temporary shelter needs of arriving families.
- Shelter support was also provided in Nangarhar and Kandahar provinces, where five large tents were installed to address urgent temporary accommodation needs. Three tents were set up in Nangarhar and two in Kandahar. In Nangarhar, one light tower was installed to improve visibility and safety within the site.
- Shelter capacity at major border crossings was further increased through the installation of 300 double-fly family tents. Of these, 200 tents were installed at the Torkham border and 100 tents at the Spin Boldak border, improving shelter coverage for returnees and displaced families.

Overall, the shelter assistance contributed to improved temporary accommodation, strengthened camp functionality, and enhanced operational readiness at priority border locations, supporting a timely and needs-based response to population movements.

 Livelihoods	People Reached: 364,180		
	Female > 18: 90,060	Female < 18: 95,630	
	Male > 18: 86,609	Male < 18: 91,881	
Objective:	<i>Communities, especially in disaster and crisis affected areas, restore and strengthen their livelihoods</i>		
Key indicators:	Indicator	Actual	Target
	<i>Number of people reached with livelihoods support</i>	80	4,000


<i>Number of people supported in starting or improving their income-generation activities</i>	-	2,000
<i>Number of people who have completed training or awareness-raising sessions on improved income-generation risk management practices</i>	-	2,000
<i>Number of people provided or supported with formal or informal technical, vocational or professional education or training opportunities</i>	-	2,000
<i>Number of volunteers and staff trained in livelihoods</i>	-	100
<i>Number of people reached with essential inputs, materials, or tools for income-generation</i>	-	2,000
<i>Number of households that received conditional cash to start income-generating activities</i>	-	2,000
<i>Number of households that received cash for tools and equipment under the CFW programme</i>	80	2,000

Hot Meal Distribution

As part of the ongoing response, hot meals are being distributed with the support of IFRC and the partner national societies, DRC and previously the TRC. Meals are prepared and distributed daily at all major crossing points, offering a nutritious and practical alternative to packaged food. These freshly cooked meals have been widely appreciated, particularly benefiting more vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly. A total of 364,100 people received food assistance through the National Society's response, compared to an initial target of 85,000 people.

Cash for Work for Waste Management

To enhance camp hygiene and provide short-term income, 80 returnees were engaged in daily waste management through a cash-for-work initiative at Omari Camp in Nangarhar and Takhta Pul in Kandahar. The daily amount is 400 AFN, equivalent to CHF 5. The programme was implemented to ensure clean and safe living conditions for returnees and was carried out over a five-months period of May-July and November-December.

 Multi-purpose Cash	People Reached: 200		
	Female > 18: 200	Female < 18:	
	Male > 18:	Male < 18:	
Objective:	<i>Households are provided with unconditional/multipurpose cash grants to address their basic needs</i>		
Key indicators:	Indicator	Actual	Target
	<i>Number of people provided with unconditional cash assistance</i>	200	5,000

As part of early recovery efforts, 200 female-headed returnee households arriving through the Spin Boldak and Torkham border crossing points received Multi-Purpose Cash Support (MPCS). Each woman was provided with AFN 36,900 (equivalent to CHF 400). Beneficiaries were selected based on vulnerability criteria, prioritising pregnant and lactating women.

 Health & Care <i>(Mental Health and psychosocial support / Community Health / Medical Services)</i>	People Reached: 82,447	
	Female > 18: 16,369	Female < 18: 22,606
	Male > 18: 18,258	Male < 18: 25,214

Objective: *Strengthening holistic individual and community health of the population impacted through community level interventions and health system strengthening*

Indicator	Actual	Target
<i>Number of people reached through primary health care by the National Society</i>	82,447	350,000
<i>Number of childbirths attended by a skilled health worker in a health facility operated by the National Society</i>	16	350
<i>Number of functional mobile health service units providing quality primary health care</i>	5	31
<i>Number of antenatal and postnatal care visits delivered by a skilled health worker in a health facility operated by the National Society</i>	7,912	22,400
<i>Number of people reached with immunization services</i>	4,061	67,200
<i>Number of people reached with mental health and psychosocial support services.</i>	3,255	35,000
<i>Number of volunteers trained in CBHFA, NCD, HP, ECV, nutrition screening, and RH+</i>	40	1,600

Primary Health Care

Between May and November (inclusive) 2025, ARCS, with IFRC support, provided primary health care services to 82,447 people, including 43,472 men and 38,975 women. In addition, participating National Societies (PNS) reached 26,083 people through Mobile Health Teams (MHTs) and health camps at key returnee locations across Nangarhar, Kandahar, Kunar, Zabul, Herat, Nimroz, and Helmand provinces. Of this, the Danish Red Cross (DRC) supported MHTs in Torkham and Islam Qala, serving 13,647 individuals (5,795 men and 7,852 women), while the Norwegian Red Cross (NRC) operated an MHT in Islam Qala and a health camp in Hilmand, reaching 12,436 people (5,537 men and 6,899 women). Altogether, ARCS and PNS health services collectively supported 108,530 people during this reporting period.

Mobile Health Teams

Since July, 5 out of 11 Mobile Health Teams (MHTs) remain operational. Initially, 11 MHTs were deployed to multiple locations to address urgent health needs during the peak of the crisis in May 2025. As the number of returnees

decreased, the number of active teams was gradually reduced, with locally based MHTs continuing service delivery on the ground.

Outpatient Care

From May to November, a total of 82,447 people received primary health services, comprising 43,472 men and 38,975 women. The consultations addressed various health conditions, including respiratory infections, dehydration, diarrhoea, pneumonia, conjunctivitis, and non-communicable diseases.

Reproductive Health

ARCS conducted 5,324 family planning education sessions, reaching women, which included 5,317 recipients of antenatal care and 2,595 recipients of postnatal care.

Nutrition Screening

In total, 8,467 children (4,039 girls and 4,428 boys) were screened for malnutrition. Out of these, 6,525 children had no acute malnutrition, 1,623 had moderate malnutrition, and 319 had severe acute malnutrition, requiring follow-up care. Some cases were directly treated by the ARCS health team with RUTF and RUCF and other acute cases are referred to other agencies.

Maternal and Child Health

Sixteen (16) normal deliveries were safely conducted at ARCS clinics in Nangarhar. Overall, 7,964 maternal, and child health services were provided to the women in the communities.

Health Education

ARCS conducted awareness sessions on hygiene, disease prevention, and health-seeking behaviour, reaching approximately 34,957 people.

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)

With support from the DRC, ARCS continues to provide MHPSS services at Torkham and Islam Qala, reaching a total of 13,000 people through its MHTs. These services included psychological first aid, counselling, emotional support, and stress management sessions, tailored to the needs of returnees facing trauma, distress, and uncertainty.

Most cases were related to acute stress, with both men and women experiencing symptoms such as fainting and seizures. The psychological toll is largely driven by the fear of restarting life in Afghanistan, particularly among those who have never previously lived in the country. Returnees highlighted uncertainty about the future, limited livelihood opportunities, and concerns for their children’s well-being as primary stressors. Men expressed deep anxiety over their inability to provide for their families, while women reported significant emotional strain from caring for children under extremely difficult conditions.



Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

People Reached: 38,172

Female > 18: 9,161	Female < 18: 9,925
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Male > 18: 8,779	Male < 18: 10,307
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Objective:

Ensure safe drinking water, proper sanitation, and adequate hygiene awareness of the communities during relief and recovery phases of the Emergency Operation, through community and organizational interventions

Key indicators:	Indicator	Actual	Target
	Number of people reached - Water, Sanitation and Hygiene	38,172	10,500
	Number of handwashing facilities constructed or rehabilitated	-	36
	Number of sanitation facilities constructed or rehabilitated	60	36
	Number of dignity kits distributed (MHM kits)	96	1,650
	Number of family hygiene kits distributed	200	1,260

There has been no change since the previous report, as DREF funding allocated to WASH activities has been fully utilized. Further funding allocations for WASH are planned and will be reflected in the next operational update.

To address critical water and sanitation needs at key border crossings, particularly at Islam Qala and Torkham, the ARCS, with support from the IFRC, has scaled up its WASH interventions.

Water Distribution through Water Tank: ARCS installed a 3,000-liter water storage tank with 10 portable handwashing facilities at the Islam Qala crossing point and Milak border, installed near the main gates as well as next to the toilets and ARCS blocks. In addition, daily trucking of 15,000 litres of water, reaching approximately 33,676 people (about 813 returnees per day). Furthermore, a bottle of drinking water was distributed daily alongside hot meals to support returnees facing dehydration, especially during extreme heat conditions.

Installation of Latrines: In Torkham (Omari Camp), 60 portable latrines were installed, each serving up to 50 people, providing sanitation coverage for approximately 3,000 people daily. However, the reduction in returnee arrivals at Islam Qala has eased pressure on sanitation facilities.

Family Hygiene Kits Distribution: To promote personal hygiene and support sanitation practices, ARCS distributed 200 family hygiene kits; 150 in Torkham and 50 in Islam Qala benefiting an estimated 1,400 returnees. Additionally, 96 dignity kits were distributed -80 in Islam Qala and 16 in Milak, benefitting 96 women by end of July 2025.

 Community Engagement and Accountability		People Reached: 11,240	
		Female > 18: 1000	Female < 18: 4000
Objective:	Communities in high-risk areas are prepared for and able to respond to disaster		
Key indicators:	Indicator	Actual	Target
	Number of staff, volunteers, and leadership trained on community engagement and accountability	65	100

<i>Number of methods established to communicate with communities about what is happening in the organization/programme/operation, including selection criteria, if these are being used</i>	3	3
<i>Number of methods used to enable communities to participate in planning and managing services, programmes, and operations</i>	3	3
<i>Number of community perception and feedback reports produced</i>	1	12
<i>Number of feedback comments collected, disaggregated by sex, age and disability, including sensitive feedback linked to SEA, fraud, corruption, or protection concerns</i>	850	500


ARCS, with the IFRC support, strengthened CEA by conducting a needs assessment in August in Islam Qala border point and developing a standardized [CEA plan](#) and [guidelines](#) for information desks. Findings from the assessment informed the design of the help desks, key messaging, and priority feedback categories. As part of these efforts, a total of 65 staff, volunteers, and leadership members have been trained on CEA, PGI and Safeguarding. The needs assessment is not planned to be repeated unless a significant change in context or operational needs requires an update.

ARCS volunteers continued responding to over 500 daily inquiries related to food, shelter, sanitation, transport, and other available services offered by ARCS and humanitarian partners. Currently, 40 ARCS volunteers (30 in Islam Qala, 10 in Nimroz) are supporting to address immediate questions, gathering verbal feedback, which has informed the need for more structured communication channels. To date, three communication methods have been established and are actively used to share information with communities on services, processes, and selection criteria, meeting the planned target.

To strengthen two-way communication with returnees, in October 2025, ARCS in collaboration with the IFRC, established formal information and help desks at border crossing points and returnee camp in Islam Qala border. These will be supported by a standardized checklist and FAQ forms via Kobo to ensure consistent information-sharing and systematic feedback collection, as part of ongoing efforts to digitise the feedback mechanism. In addition, three methods are currently being used to enable community participation in planning and managing services and operations, in line with the agreed target. Two trained volunteers are deployed at the Islam Qala crossing to support the rollout of this digital feedback system, specifically to collect feedback from returnees, document it and report findings to the relevant departments for further analysis and responses. To date, 850 community feedback were collected and addressed in timely manner.

ARCS information on providing services at border points was shared with the existing help desks of other international organizations to ensure that ARCS services are included in the information available to returnees. This coordinated approach avoids duplication of effort and ensures that returnees receive consistent and accurate information through a single, consolidated source rather than multiple, separate help desks. It also strengthens collaboration between ARCS and humanitarian partners operating at the border. Through these mechanisms, ARCS has produced one community perception and feedback report to date and collected over 850 feedback comments, disaggregated by sex, age, and disability, including sensitive feedback related to SEA, fraud, corruption, and protection concerns—exceeding the initial target of 500 feedback entries.

During the reporting period, a total of 11,240 people were reached through CEA activities, encompassing both individuals who provided feedback and those who participated in CEA-related initiatives, including consultation meetings, information-sharing sessions, and other community engagement activities.

	Protection, Gender, and Inclusion	People Reached: 364,100	
		Female > 18: -	Female < 18: -
		Male > 18: -	Male < 18: -

Objective: *Communities identify the needs of the most at risk and particularly disadvantaged and marginalized groups, due to inequality, discrimination and other non-respect of their human rights and address their distinct needs*

	Indicator	Actual	Target
Key indicators:	<i>Number of volunteers mobilised disaggregated by gender</i>	90	200
	<i>Number of people reached by information dissemination sessions on menstrual hygiene management (MHM)</i>	-	500
	<i>Number of people reached by protection, gender, and inclusion programming</i>	-	3,000
	<i>Number of National Society staff and volunteers trained in prevention and protection of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and all forms of child safeguarding</i>	34	300
	<i>The ARCS applies the IFRC minimum standards for PGI in emergencies</i>	Yes	Yes
	<i>The ARCS engages a PGI focal person</i>	Yes	Yes
	<i>The ARCS engages a safeguarding focal person</i>	Yes	Yes

Technical support and monitoring of the ARCS volunteers and staff continues. There is a technical PGI training planned in December, following the request of the NRC health team to train the staff and volunteers in PGI minimum standards. More updates will be provided in the next Operational Update.

Close coordination with ICRC and IFRC Geneva office and ARCS is ongoing regarding the unaccompanied children to support the ARCS on how best to support the children as well as discussions around better supporting people with disabilities.

With IFRC and Movement partners' support, ARCS has strengthened PGI measures across health and emergency services, prioritizing women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. A PGI assessment at Spin Boldak and Torkham, involving 90 volunteers (40 women, 50 men), highlighted urgent needs for gender-segregated hygiene facilities, enhanced psychosocial support for women, and expanded livelihood opportunities. To address these gaps, ARCS has recruited a female PGI Officer with the support from DRC and NRC and advanced plans for a joint protection assessment with the DRC.

In July 2025, two training sessions on CEA, PGI, Safeguarding, and the Code of Conduct trained 34 female staff and volunteers. Total 60 volunteers (10 in Kandahar, 20 in Torkham, 20 in Islam Qala and 10 in Nimroz) are currently deployed at crossing points, prioritizing vulnerable groups in assistance, facilitating child reunification, and distributing 96 dignity kits. Women and children at the crossing points are under severe psychological stress, often expressed through prolonged crying, physical symptoms, and fears about their families' ability to secure shelter. This underscores the urgent need for women-friendly spaces that offer a safe, calming, and supportive environment to help restore their sense of security and well-being.



Migration and Displacement

People Reached: -

Female > 18: -

Female < 18: -

Male > 18: -

Male < 18: -

Objective: *Communities support the needs of migrants and their families and those assisting migrants at all stages of migration (origin, transit and destination)*

	Indicator	Actual	Target
Key indicators:	<i>Number of Preparedness and Contingency Planning on Large-Scale Return</i>	-	1
	<i>National Society has undertaken any data collection, research, analysis or other information management initiatives to better assist and protect people on the move/returnees</i>	Yes	Yes
	<i>Number of staff and volunteers trained in Migration and Displacement</i>	-	100

From 01 January – 30 November 2025 an estimated 2.6 million Afghans have returned from Iran and Pakistan during the reporting period. Returns from Iran remained the dominant flow, accounting for roughly 1.8 million returnees, driven by continued enforcement of documentation requirements, the expiration of Headcount Slips, and sustained pressure on undocumented Afghans, including discrimination and reduced access to services. From Pakistan, over 800,000 returns were recorded during January-November 2025, including a significant proportion of deportations under the Pakistan government's repatriation and enforcement measures.

Return movements peaked during mid-year (June-July) and gradually declined toward the final quarter, though monthly returns remained well above 2024 levels. The expiry of Proof of Registration (PoR) cards at the end of June continued to influence movements throughout the year, with PoR holders representing a substantially higher share of returnees in the second half of 2025 compared to early-year trends. While returns from Iran showed clearer signs of stabilisation by late 2025, returns from Pakistan remained volatile, with periodic spikes linked to enforcement operations and deportations. Overall, return dynamics continued to place significant pressure on border provinces and areas of return within Afghanistan, exacerbating humanitarian and protection needs during the winter period.

Data collection was carried out in the field by the ARCS Disaster Management Department, which closely monitored returnee populations to plan activities based on immediate needs. Complementing this, ARCS maintains a comprehensive Health Management Information System (HMIS) that tracks medical services, immunization coverage, and maternal and child health.

To strengthen coordination, an Afghanistan Returns Technical Migration Cell was established, comprising colleagues from IFRC Afghanistan Delegation, IFRC Pakistan Delegation, and the IFRC Asia Pacific Regional Office, and Geneva was established. IFRC MENA Regional Office and Iran Delegation occasionally join the fortnightly meetings of the Technical Cell. During the initial phase of the crisis, the group met on a weekly basis which has since transitioned to fortnightly (bi-weekly) meetings as the response evolved. These meetings support cross-border coordination between the Afghanistan Emergency Appeal Operation and the Pakistan DREF-supported Operation, enabling responses aligned with the identified needs of returnees and ensuring continuity of care through health, PGI, and CEA interventions. A training module on the Movement’s principled approach to Migration and Displacement is under development, to strengthen ARCS capacity in supporting returnees with essential services and protection. In parallel, IFRC and ARCS actively participated in the inter-agency Border Consortium at both national and provincial levels, ensuring effective coordination and complementarity with the wider humanitarian system.

Enabling approaches



National Society Strengthening

Objective:	<i>Communities in high-risk areas are prepared for and able to respond to disaster</i>		
Key indicators:	Indicator	Actual	Target
	<i>Number of staff and volunteers reporting enhanced capacity for preparing and responding to emergencies</i>	-	310
	<i>Number of branches with strengthened mechanisms for responding to prioritized threats</i>	-	5
	<i>Number of branch warehouses optimized with required systems and supporting infrastructure for enhanced operations</i>	-	5
	<i>The National Society has a fully updated database, management structure, and the required institutional arrangements for recruitment, engagement, and retention of volunteers</i>	-	Yes
	<i>The National Society has an enhanced information management capacity to support its operations and strengthen accountability</i>	-	1

To strengthen preparedness and institutional readiness amid the rising number of returnees, ARCS, in coordination with IFRC, held focused discussions to identify operational gaps and priority actions, with particular emphasis on enhancing branch-level capacity at key response locations. As a result, the ARCS Multi-Hazard Contingency Plan has been finalized, translated into Pashto and Dari, and endorsed by senior leadership.

Advanced planning is also underway for a Logistics and Supply Chain Management (LSCM) Assessment, which will produce a Plan of Action to address logistics gaps. In parallel, ARCS continues to invest in its Digital Transformation, with a Digital Maturity Assessment set for rollout following leadership approval. Volunteer integration remains a

central focus, with structured discussions leading to a draft Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Strategy, updates to the Volunteer Database, and the expansion of the Volunteer Management System to strengthen volunteer rights, duty of care, and retention.



Coordination and Partnerships

Objective:

Communities in high-risk areas are prepared for and able to respond to disaster

Key indicators	Indicator	Actual	Target
		<i>Number of strategic partnerships the National Society is engaged in</i>	-
	<i>Number of ARCS Leadership and SMT HD engagements set to influence the diplomatic corps to continue to support Afghans on the move and influence positive humanitarian outcomes</i>	1	8
	<i>Partner engagement strategies are developed to maximize the ARCS' resources to be able to roll out key programmatic interventions</i>	-	Yes
	<i>Key HD messages and reactive lines are updated quarterly to reflect the ARCS' response operations in the crisis showcasing their value added as a leading local organization</i>	-	Yes
	<i>Number of formal interagency/international coordination platforms the IFRC network is a part of</i>	7	7

The ARCS, with IFRC support, continues to coordinate closely with Afghan authorities, UN agencies, and Movement partners to ensure a unified response to the ongoing population movements. ARCS actively participates in national coordination platforms, including the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), Inter-Cluster Coordination Team (ICCT), Cash Working Group, Shelter Cluster, and Food Security Cluster, as well as inter-agency forums led by IOM and the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR). These engagements enable aligned planning, collective action, and complementarity with the wider humanitarian system.

A high-level joint visit to Islam Qala took place from 27 June to 2 July by the ARCS President, Disaster Management team, and senior IFRC representatives to strengthen advocacy, visibility, and highlight urgent needs. In parallel, coordination was reinforced through regular Movement task force meetings with ICRC and a Federation-wide partners call on 21 July to review operational gaps and funding requirements. On the 17 December there was a partnership call between the ARCS, IFRC and PNSs, where there was thorough discussion of funding situation, updates on activities and upcoming plans.

A joint visit with the ECHO Regional Director was conducted to IFRC-supported activities in Islam Qala and Herat Province, where ARCS life-saving assistance to returnees was observed.

Partner National Societies (PNSs) continue supporting the operation, including Norwegian Red Cross with the three Mobile Health Teams (MHTs) and humanitarian caravans providing NFIs and winter kits; Danish Red Cross leads on MHPSS; Turkish Red Crescent and Qatari Red Crescent provide operational support at entry points, while the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation committed USD 1 million to strengthen polio eradication and primary healthcare near informal crossings. Ongoing discussions with the British, Norwegian, Danish, Turkish, and Qatari Red Cross/Red Crescent partners reaffirmed Afghanistan as a priority country, with commitments for continued support, alignment with ARCS's upcoming 2026–2030 Strategic Plan, and collaboration on health, livelihoods, women's empowerment, anticipatory action, and climate resilience programming. The plan will be finalized by the end of year 2025, with the aim to publish in Feb 2026.

To ensure internal transparency and external alignment, ARCS continues to share situation reports, operational updates, and funding information with in-country and international partners, including DRC, NRC, TRC, and QRC. These regular coordination and joint planning efforts are critical for mobilizing resources, avoiding duplication, and ensuring a coherent Movement-wide response that addresses both immediate returnee needs and longer-term reintegration challenges.



Secretariat Services

Objective:	<i>Communities in high-risk areas are prepared for and able to respond to disaster</i>		
Key indicators:	Indicator	Actual	Target
	<i>Number of technical and monitoring visits conducted</i>	3	20
	<i>Number of evaluations conducted (MTR and final evaluation)</i>	-	2
	<i>Number of surges profiles deployed</i>	10	2

The IFRC Country Delegation continues to provide strategic, operational, and technical support to the ARCS in strengthening the Population Movement (Returnees) Operation including coordination, planning, logistics, communications, PMER, security, and surge deployments, ensuring an integrated and effective response.

Communications and Humanitarian Diplomacy

IFRC has consistently raised visibility and advocacy for communications and humanitarian diplomacy. A wide range of materials—including photos, videos, human-interest stories, and TV interviews—have been collected and shared via [shaRED](#), IFRC X (Twitter), and LinkedIn. Stories of Afghan returnees from Pakistan were also shared to highlight the humanitarian efforts; [FB](#), [IG](#) (Nov 2025)

Links for stories shared:

- [Afghan returnees: A story of endurance amidst uncertainty](#)

With IFRC support, ARCS has scaled up its communications efforts to raise awareness, support advocacy, and strengthen stakeholder engagement around the returnee response. A wide range of content has been produced and disseminated, including stories, photographs, videos, social media updates, press releases, and television interviews. An exclusive interview was aired on Shamshad TV on 7 July 2025, while a [press release](#) highlighting ARCS's response at the Islam Qala border was published on the [IFRC website](#). In July, the Surge Communication Coordinator visited Spin Boldak and Herat to capture the evolving situation of returnees, producing stories, video

messages—including one from the IFRC Regional Director urging support for returnees—and live updates such as [Spaces](#) on X. These materials have been actively shared across IFRC platforms to enhance visibility and public engagement, with additional stories from Islam Qala to be published in the coming period.

Logistics

Logistics support has focused on the timely procurement and delivery of critical supplies to sustain ARCS operations at high-volume crossing points. By end of November 2025, this has included 184 family tents (international procurement), 5 refugee tents, 300 hygiene kits, 60 portable latrines, 650 sanitary kits (locally procured), 500 dignity kits, 5 radios, and 1 light tower, all handed over to ARCS. In the last week of June, an additional 10 family tents, 2 Rubb Halls (for Islam Qala and Milak), and a second light tower were dispatched. A repeat order of 27 international medical kits is underway with procurement still in process, to replenish ARCS stocks and ensure continuity of response.

Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting (PMER)

IFRC has supported the development and publication of three Operations Update, six Federation-wide Situation Reports and three Disaster Snapshots. Considering the changing context—particularly the surge in returnees from Iran—the plan and budget have been revised and shared with the operations team. Monitoring tools, including the M&E plan, implementation plan, and indicator tracking table, were also updated to reflect the evolving situation. Efforts continue to improve the quality, consistency, and timeliness of data collection at both IFRC and ARCS levels, in coordination with IM and HMIS teams, with a focus on harmonizing tools and processes across operational sites. The PMER team remains actively engaged in strengthening ARCS capacity through technical support on data verification, reporting standards, and real-time monitoring, ensuring evidence-based decision-making throughout the operation. A surge PMER Officer is in place until mid-January 2026, supporting the delegation with multiple emergencies, including the Population Movement.

Information Technology & Telecommunications (IT/Telecom)

The Information Technology and Telecommunications (IT/Telecom) team established a dedicated working station in Kabul for two Surge Operations Managers, PMER Officer and Communications Coordinator, providing operational and technical support for ongoing coordination and reporting.

Information Management (IM)

IFRC IM has produced and disseminated regular evidence-based information products, including maps, infographics, and analytical summaries, to strengthen coordination and situational awareness. These products have supported the development of Operational Updates and Federation-wide Situation Reports, with six SitReps and three Disaster Snapshots published to date. The [IFRC GO emergency page](#) continues to be actively maintained with timely and relevant updates, ensuring consistent information flow and situational awareness across the IFRC network and partners.

Safety & Security

All IFRC staff have completed the Stay Safe 2.0 e-learning course, with ARCS staff and volunteers actively encouraged to do the same to ensure adherence to minimum security standards. The IFRC security team has updated the security plan, contingency plans, and critical incident management protocols as part of the annual review, while maintaining close coordination with humanitarian actors, particularly at Islam Qala and Nimroz crossing points.

Security-related information and risk alerts, including updates on returnee flows and potential outbreaks of communicable diseases, are regularly shared with the operations team to inform preparedness and mitigation measures. All field missions and surge deployments have complied with established security protocols, supported by comprehensive pre-deployment briefings to ensure staff safety and operational continuity.

Rapid Response Personnel

By end of November 2025, 10 Rapid Response personnel have been deployed to support the operation, including 2 Operations Managers, and 2 Ops Coordinators responsible for managing multiple crises. Additionally, 2 PMER Officers, 1 PGI Coordinator, 1 Health in Emergencies Coordinator, 1 Shelter Coordinator, and 1 Security Coordinators. These deployments have strengthened operational management, planning, and communications, significantly enhancing ARCS's capacity to address the evolving needs at the crossing points. Some of the surge staff also extending their support to the earthquake operation.

D. FUNDING

IFRC Secretariat Coverage	Amount Raised (CHF)	Funding Gap (CHF)	Coverage %
Hard Pledges + In kind + Soft Pledges	3,479,448	16,840,427	17%
Federation-wide Coverage	Amount Raised (CHF)	Funding Gap (CHF)	Coverage %
ARCS domestic income + IFRC Secretariat + Bilateral support	4,260,070	20,739,930	17%

As of 30 November 2025, 17 per cent of the total funding requirement has been successfully pledged to the IFRC Secretariat Emergency Appeal. Despite the clear humanitarian imperative, the operation is still burdened by an abyssal funding gap, a shortfall so deep it threatens the continuity of even the most essential services.

The IFRC urgently calls on partners and donors to step forward and help bridge this gap. Your support is critical to reaching vulnerable communities in a timely and impactful way.

Note: It is anticipated that there may be **revisions to the final figures upon completion of the November books.*

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Reference documents

Click here for:

- [Previous Appeals and updates](#)
- [Emergency landing page](#)

How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere the **Code of Conduct** for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Disaster Relief, the **Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response (Sphere)** in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable, to **Principles of Humanitarian Action** and **IFRC policies and procedures**. The IFRC's vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.