

Afghanistan | Population Movement (Returnees)



An Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) volunteer delivers clean drinking water to children at the Omari camp in Torkham in April 2025.
(Photo Credit: ARCS)

Appeal No: MDRFAF018	To be assisted: Federation-wide: 525,000 people IFRC Secretariat: 350,000 people	Appeal launched: 01/05/2025
Glide No: CE-2025-000042-AFG	DREF allocated: CHF 1 million	Disaster Categorisation: Orange
Operation start date: 01/05/2025	Operation end date: 30/04/2027	Date: 24/05/2025

IFRC Secretariat Funding requirement: CHF 20 million
Federation-wide funding requirement: CHF 25 million¹

¹ The Federation-wide funding requirement encompasses all financial support to be directed to the Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) in response to the population movement crisis. It includes the ARCS's domestic funding requests and the appeals for support from National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (CHF 5 million), as well as the appeal funding requests of the IFRC secretariat (CHF 20 million). This comprehensive approach ensures that all available resources are mobilised to address the immediate, medium- and longer-term needs of the people and communities affected.

TIMELINE



In the face of uncertainty, resilience endures as Afghan families on the move receive critical support from the Red Crescent, ensuring dignity, safety, and hope at every step of their journey. (Photo Credit: IFRC)

September 2023: The Government of Pakistan announced the Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan (IFRP) mandating the return of all foreigners without legal status in Pakistan by 1 November 2023.

October 2023: Afghan nationals began returning en masse to Afghanistan from Iran and Pakistan, marking one of the largest cross-border population movements in the Asia-Pacific region in recent years.

November 2023: The Government of Pakistan set a deadline for undocumented Afghans to leave the country by 1 November 2023. Between 1-30 November, 24,506 Afghans were deported from Pakistan. The IFRC released CHF 750,000 from the Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) to support the ARCS in responding to the needs of returnees.

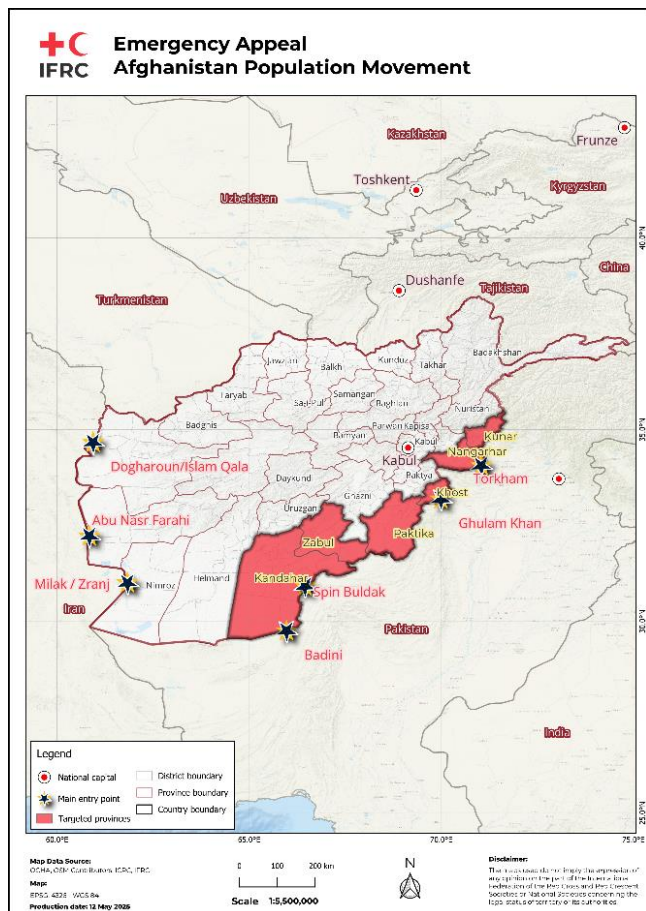
May 2024: During the six-month DREF-funded operation (MDRAF013), over 49,500 people were assisted by the ARCS. Humanitarian interventions focused on primary health care, mental health and psychosocial support, and cash-for-work initiatives.

Early 2025: Pakistan announced its intention to implement the second phase of the IFRP, with a deadline of 31 March for all undocumented Afghans and those holding Afghan Citizen cards to return or face deportation. An increase in returnees from Iran is also observed, driven by new policy shifts that restrict the rights of Afghan refugees to residency and access to essential services. This signals a second major wave of cross-border movements.

April 2025: The IFRC allocated an initial CHF 750,000 from the DREF to the ARCS to support the immediate humanitarian needs of returnees, including primary healthcare, temporary shelter, WASH, and hot meals.

May 2025: The IFRC launched a Federation-wide Emergency Appeal in response to escalating humanitarian needs, seeking CHF 25 million to scale-up multi-sectoral immediate and longer-term assistance, targeting over 525,000 affected people across key provinces by April 2027, bringing the total to CHF 1,00,000 in DREF loan funding allocated to support this operation.

DESCRIPTION OF THE EVENT



The humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, characterised by extreme poverty, widespread food insecurity, a strained health system, and the recent end of a prolonged conflict, has been further exacerbated by the mass influx of cross-border returns triggered by Pakistan's Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan (IFRP). This influx of Afghan nationals has put further strain on an already fragile infrastructure, complicating efforts to provide essential services to those in need.

Since 15 September 2023, nearly one million Afghans have returned or been forcibly deported from Pakistan, primarily through the four official border crossing points at Torkham, Spin Boldak, Ghulam Khan, and Badini, but also through unofficial crossing points along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

Over 144,500 people returned in April 2025 alone, including more than 29,900 who were deported.² During the month of April, an average of 4,000 to 6,000 people were arriving in Afghanistan each day, with many Afghan returnees suffering from multiple vulnerabilities and risks, including women, children, the elderly, people with disabilities, and those facing

chronic poverty and debt. The influx of returnees, amidst persistent drought, pre-existing internal displacements, and deteriorating economic conditions, is placing immense pressure on already overstretched services in border provinces such as Nangarhar, Kandahar, Khost, Helmand, Herat, and urban hubs like Kabul.

The scale and speed of this population movement has led to widespread disruption of services, overcrowding in shelters and informal settlements, and increased protection risks, disease outbreaks, and social tensions. With 80 per cent of the population living below the poverty line and many households resorting to negative coping strategies, the humanitarian consequences are severe.

For over 40 years, Pakistan has been hosting an estimated 3.7 million Afghans, and Iran, nearly six million Afghans. Over 600,000 Afghans fled to Pakistan following the change in government authorities in Afghanistan in August 2021. In September 2023, the Government of Pakistan announced the 'Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan' (IFRP), a phased policy requiring all foreigners without legal status in Pakistan to leave by 1 November 2023 or face deportation. The first phase of the plan was initiated in late 2023, affecting an estimated 1.3 million undocumented Afghans. Afghans holding Proof of Residence (PoR) and Afghan Citizenship cards (ACC) were temporarily exempted from deportation following a directive from the Pakistan Ministry for States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) until a later deadline for return.³

Afghans returning from Iran are also increasing in number, linked to policy shifts resulting in barriers to accessing legal protections or services in Iran. Between 20 March and 30 April 2025, a total of 170,200 Afghans arrived from Iran. The simultaneous returns from both Pakistan and Iran of over 300,000 people in the month of April 2025 is placing extreme pressure on Afghanistan's border provinces and urban areas, which lack the infrastructure to manage such large-scale population movements.⁴

² [Document - Pakistan-Afghanistan - Returns Emergency Response #32](#)

³ [UNHCR-IOM Flash Update #6](#)

⁴ [Document - Iran-Afghanistan - Returns Emergency Response #4](#)

Severity of humanitarian conditions

The scale and speed of the ongoing return of Afghans has significantly intensified humanitarian needs in a country already grappling with widespread poverty, limited infrastructure, and fragile governance systems. Upon arrival at the border and as they return to their provinces of origin, returnees face barriers to accessing sufficient food, clean water, shelter, essential healthcare, livelihoods, and education. With thousands of people arriving daily, essential services in border provinces and urban centres are overwhelmed. Overburdened systems cannot meet demand, leading to water shortages and waste accumulation which presents risks to health and increase the likelihood of disease outbreaks. Demand for primary health services cannot be met, power grids and transport networks are strained, and reception centres and transit camps are at full capacity.

1. Impact on physical and mental well-being

The physical and mental well-being of returnees is generally poor. Many are arriving dehydrated, malnourished, distressed, and with pre-existing illnesses and mental health conditions. There is a high risk of conditions rapidly deteriorating if left untreated. The forced return and loss of support systems have exacerbated distress and protection risks. Children, women, elderly people, persons with mental health conditions, and those with disabilities are at heightened risk of protection issues. Female-

headed households and unaccompanied children are especially exposed.

Many people have left their homes, livelihoods, and assets behind after decades in Pakistan. Without civil documentation, including the Afghan national identity card (Tazkira), many struggle to access even basic services or legal protections. Children's education is disrupted or halted entirely. Livelihood opportunities are limited in Afghanistan, and communities face economic precarity as labour markets collapse and prices of basic goods surge. Many people arrive in Afghanistan with debts incurred while leaving Pakistan and must borrow more to survive upon arrival.

System-wide disruptions further compound vulnerabilities. Health and education facilities are overstretched or have been repurposed. Already fragile social welfare systems are unable to provide the necessary support to communities living in destitution. Land disputes and social tensions are rising, increasing the risk of further displacement and insecurity.

2. Risks and vulnerabilities

The crisis threatens to reverse fragile peace and development gains, destabilise parts of Afghanistan, and potentially affect the wider region. Without urgent and coordinated humanitarian action, the prospects for sustainable reintegration and recovery are bleak, especially in a country where 80 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line and humanitarian funding continues to shrink.

CAPACITIES AND RESPONSE

1. National Society response capacity

1.1 National Society capacity and ongoing response

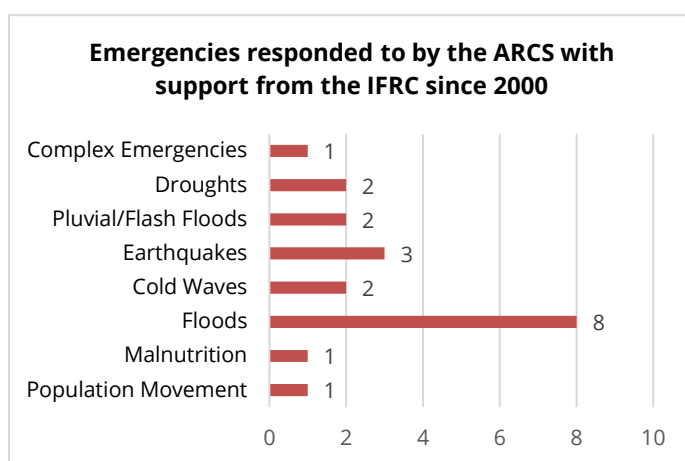
The Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) has a strong nationwide presence and local networks, enabling it to reach the most vulnerable people in need, including those in remote and underserved areas. The ARCS has extensive expertise across a range of humanitarian interventions and long-term programming, supported by the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement and other partners. These interventions include primary healthcare, disaster preparedness, response and management, youth development, community-based health and first aid (CBHFA), community resilience (including water, sanitation, and hygiene - WASH), livelihoods restoration, dissemination of international humanitarian law (IHL), physical rehabilitation for internally displaced persons (IDPs) with physical disabilities, and operationalising the Fundamental principles of the Movement in all of their work.

The ARCS is guided by its Strategic Plan 2021-2025, which was refreshed in May 2022 to realign priorities with the evolving country context. The ARCS Strategic Plan, themed “everywhere for everyone”, has four goals:

- **Goal 1:** Communities with strengthened life-saving resources and capacities to respond to and recover from natural hazards, health emergencies, and conflict-generated shocks.
- **Goal 2:** Communities with higher long-term resilience through risk reduction, improved health and livelihoods, and adaptation to climate change and migration.
- **Goal 3:** Communities respecting the Fundamental Principles, and promoting diversity, human dignity, tolerance, non-discrimination, social inclusion, and peace.
- **Goal 4:** The ARCS, a reformed National Society, is delivering impartial, neutral, effective, sustainable, relevant, and accountable humanitarian services.

The next five-year ARCS Strategic Plan for the period 2026-2030 is currently under development.

ARCS volunteers play a critical role throughout the programming period, conducting frequent assessments, identifying and registering the targeted population based on multiple vulnerability criteria, promoting hygiene and health, and mobilising communities. With 34 provincial branches and 24,000 community-based volunteers (6,700 females), the ARCS is well-equipped for large-scale, long-term preparedness and response programmes in coordination with national and local authorities. The ARCS has a history of lifesaving assistance across Afghanistan and is a leading local humanitarian actor in disaster preparedness and response.



Since 2000, the ARCS, with the support of the IFRC, has responded to 20 climate-related and geophysical emergencies, of which 10 were related to floods, as well as earthquakes, droughts, malnutrition, population movement, and cold waves. In addition, in November 2023, the ARCS received an allocation of CHF 750,000 from the IFRC-DREF to support a Population Movement (returnees) operation involving the large-scale return of Afghans from Pakistan. Through its network of 34 branches and thousands of community-based volunteers, the ARCS has an unparalleled presence at the local level across the country. ARCS branches have teams of volunteers, trusted and accepted by the communities they serve, who are trained in disaster preparedness and response. Through the ARCS’s extensive CBHFA programme, national and branch disaster response teams, mobile health teams, and community mobilisers have been established and stand ready to deploy at short notice.

The ARCS also provides access to healthcare services through a network of over 250 facilities, which includes a comprehensive hospital in Kabul, 46 fixed clinics, one comprehensive health centre (CHC), 23 health sub-centres, and over 150 mobile health teams (MHTs) and/or emergency MHTs active in all 34 provinces. These 168 facilities (71 fixed) are augmented by temporary facilities known as health camps. A total of 168 health camps and satellite camps have been operational since 2023, focusing on polio eradication. Additionally, the ARCS is the only organisation in Afghanistan that provides treatment for congenital heart defects (CHDs).

The IFRC Network Afghanistan Country Plan for 2025 provides an integrated overview of ongoing emergency responses and longer-term programming tailored to the needs in the country, as well as a Federation-wide view of the country’s actions. This approach aims to streamline activities under one plan while continuing to ensure that the needs of those affected by disasters and crises are met in a way that is both accountable and transparent.

In early April 2025, the IFRC allocated CHF 750,000 from the IFRC-DREF for the current Population Movement operation. The DREF allocation was subsequently increased to a total of CHF 1 million and has become a loan to this Emergency Appeal - [MDRAF018](#).

1.2 Capacity and response at the national level

A commission led by the Deputy Prime Minister and Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation has been established at the central level, with corresponding sub-commissions in 10 provinces bordering Pakistan, to coordinate the influx of returnees and the overall humanitarian response. The ARCS, as the country's leading humanitarian organisation, is an active member of both the central commission and all sub-commissions. Local authorities, in collaboration with the ARCS, IOM, and other partners, have arranged transportation for returnees and their household belongings from border areas to their respective destinations, including some cash assistance.

The ARCS, as the country's leading humanitarian organisation operating as an auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field, has unparalleled nationwide capacity in disaster management, covering disaster risk reduction, preparedness and response, and primary healthcare activities implemented at the local level through its 34 provincial branches. The National Society is supported by the IFRC's Country Delegation and works in coordination with the local authorities, UN agencies, and other (inter)national humanitarian actors at the national and sub-national levels.

2 International capacity and response

2.1 Red Cross Red Crescent Movement capacity and response

IFRC membership

The IFRC Afghanistan Country Delegation, established in 1990, supports the ARCS in the following areas: humanitarian operations related to disasters and crises caused by natural hazards; health services in hard-to-reach areas; longer-term resilience-building programmes; coordinating support by the IFRC membership to the ARCS; enhancing the organisational development of the ARCS; and representing the ARCS internationally.

Currently, four Participating National Societies (PNSs) support the ARCS with an in-country presence in Afghanistan, namely the Danish Red Cross (DRC), Norwegian Red Cross (NRC), Qatar Red Crescent (QRC), and Turkish Red Crescent (TRC). The Turkish Red Crescent is preparing the 11th Goodness Train shipment from Türkiye, an in-kind shipment of essential household items designed specifically to address the urgent needs of Afghan returnees. The Norwegian Red Cross is closely coordinating with both IFRC and ARCS health teams to address targeted support in primary healthcare interventions. The Danish Red Cross supports the ARCS's primary healthcare interventions and is currently planning to help provide livelihoods assistance for approximately 600 women, primarily returnees, though not exclusively, who will be targeted for vocational training. The Finnish Red Cross plays a crucial role as a close partner of the IFRC and ARCS, providing long-term support for critical community-based health and first aid initiatives, women-to-women services through the Marastoons safe shelters, and disaster management programs. Their dedication significantly enhances our collective impact on humanitarian assistance.

ICRC

The ICRC, with a continuous presence in Afghanistan since 1986, operates through its main delegation in Kabul, as well as through its field-based sub-delegations, offices, and Physical Rehabilitation Centres. The ICRC's key operating areas in responding to Afghanistan's protracted conflict include the promotion and respect of IHL; providing health services for the wounded and sick; strengthening resilience in essential services, particularly in water and energy, in rural and urban settings; ensuring physical rehabilitation and social reintegration; weapon contamination (WeC) awareness; monitoring the treatment of detainees across the country; and protecting family links. The ICRC also supports the ARCS's institutional and operational capacities, safer access, joint operational response, as well improvements in health and water sanitation conditions.

Thanks to the existing Movement Cooperation Agreement (MCA), the support provided by the IFRC and the ICRC is complementary and well-coordinated.

2.2 International Humanitarian Stakeholder capacity and response

In September 2023, the Border Consortium, a collaborative initiative led by IOM and comprised of humanitarian organisations, including the IFRC, was established to develop preparedness plans and actively respond to the needs of returnees aligned with the dynamic situation. At the provincial level, the ARCS closely coordinates with the Border Consortium in Nangahar and Kandahar by participating in Migration Health Working Groups.

At international border crossing points in Spin Boldak and Torkham, the Afghanistan Ministry of Repatriation and Refugees (MORR) registers all returnees over 15 years of age. The biometric data of male returnees are collected by the Afghan authorities, whereas the biodata of women is collected by UN Women. All data is logged in a central database. The ARCS's male and female volunteers support the smooth flow of returnees and facilitate the registration process in coordination with IOM.

In the temporary transit camps for returnees, a range of humanitarian services are provided by UN agencies, national and international NGOs, as well as the ARCS. Crucially, as its staff and volunteers include both women and men, the ARCS is able to offer gender-sensitive humanitarian assistance to returnees, including crowd control at border crossing points.

Additionally, the ARCS and IFRC are closely collaborating with the MORR at both the national and local levels. As auxiliary to the public authorities, the ARCS is an active member of various MORR committees focused on camp management, primary healthcare, WASH, and other essential services.

Inter-Agency Clusters are well established as sectoral coordination mechanisms at the national and regional levels. Among others, they clarify the roles and responsibilities of each partner, including non-governmental organisations, UN agencies, public authorities, and other stakeholders. Cluster meetings are held monthly at the national level, coordinated by the respective cluster lead agencies as well as UNOCHA, and cover education, food security and agriculture, health, nutrition, WASH, protection, and emergency household items and shelter. Meetings are attended by cluster partners, members, and observers to share information, coordinate humanitarian interventions at the cluster or multi-cluster levels, address operational challenges, and feed into funding instruments such as the Afghan Humanitarian Fund. This Operational Strategy has incorporated the priorities of the Revised Humanitarian Response Plan.

The IFRC supports external coordination in the humanitarian response as an observer to the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), which serves as a strategic, policy level and decision-making forum that guides principled humanitarian action in Afghanistan. The ARCS and IFRC are members of and participate in the national level monthly coordination meetings of the Food Security and Agriculture Cluster, Cash and Voucher Working Group, Emergency Shelter and Non-Food Items Cluster, Accountability to Affected Population Working Group, Health Cluster, WASH Cluster, and Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group. The IFRC Afghanistan Country Delegation Humanitarian Diplomacy team maintains regular communication with embassies based in Doha and Kabul to gather and cross-reference information regarding recent developments in the population movement crisis and to position the ARCS's evolving response operations. This close collaboration allows the IFRC to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges experienced on the ground and provide greater situational and contextual awareness to key partners.

Following the Khost and Paktika earthquake of June 2022 and Herat earthquake in 2023, the IFRC has improved its engagement with the Emergency Shelter and Non-Food Items Cluster to ensure that collective efforts are focused on areas where the needs are greatest and under the key principle of good coordination. The IFRC also engages actively in shelter technical working groups established to define technical specifications for safer construction practices.

3. Gaps in the response

The number of people arriving through border crossing points each day is unpredictable and fluctuates, with high numbers of returnees causing delays and longer wait times at the border. Exposed to harsh weather

conditions and after exhausting journeys, the limited supplies of food, water, sanitation, and health services are inadequate to meet the needs of returnees.

Beyond the immediate points of arrival, the limited resources in provinces of final destination are overwhelmed by the needs of existing communities, who themselves face complex and protracted humanitarian challenges, as well as by the needs of returnees. Gaps exist in almost all sectors, particularly in safe and durable shelter, health and WASH services, livelihoods and income-generating opportunities, education, and protection. The main gaps are summarised below:

Basic Needs and Livelihoods

The majority of returnees need support to fulfil their basic needs. The provision of essential household items, access to safe and dignified shelter to prevent homelessness, and both multi-purpose cash assistance for immediate needs and conditional cash to support livelihoods are key to safeguarding people's dignity while helping returnees avoid negative coping mechanisms. The ARCS has prioritised cash assistance for 200 women who have delivered in the transit camps, as well as pregnant women, and severely destitute female-headed households. Cash can be used to meet immediate needs such as food, healthcare, transport, temporary shelter, and medium to longer-term needs to support the stabilisation process of returnees in their economic situation while providing pathways to self-sufficiency.

The ARCS will prioritise returnees who are suffering from multiple vulnerabilities and risks, particularly female headed-households and those who are suffering from severe destitution. Through the ongoing ARCS flagship 'Marastoons' programme (in Pashtu, 'Marastoon' means 'Place of Hope'), selected widowed female returnees will be provided with safe shelter and focused support to reestablish livelihoods, including an allowance to purchase necessary tools or equipment and opportunities to engage in agricultural activities, all informed by market assessments carried out in eight provinces.

Health Services and Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)

Access to water and basic hygiene items continue to be in high demand. Water trucking and the distribution of jerry cans as well as repairs and maintenance of existing water sources and sanitation facilities are essential to ensuring access to safe and clean water, hygiene and sanitation services, and to prevent the outbreak of waterborne diseases. With pre-existing challenges in health systems in Afghanistan, access to and provision of essential health services remains a significant challenge, particularly for people affected with long-term health conditions. Many pregnant mothers, newborns, and children have not received essential maternal, neonatal, and child health services since the beginning of the large-scale return of Afghans from Pakistan, including vaccinations for diseases with high epidemic potential. The lack of access to food and nutritional services for malnourished children poses a significant risk, as many children have already been identified as malnourished. In addition, essential primary healthcare services and the supply of medicines remain inadequate and will come under further strain as the influx is predicted to increase in the coming month.

A rapid assessment by the ARCS and IFRC in the transit camp in Torkham revealed critical WASH and health vulnerabilities requiring immediate action both in the camps and in provinces where people will settle. Severe water shortages, inadequate sanitation, and poor hygiene practices, including open defecation, were observed in the transit camps. Specifically, the lack of menstrual hygiene management (MHM) kits and safe bathing facilities disproportionately impacts women and girls. Insufficient handwashing near latrines and a lack of hygiene education contribute to the spread of disease. Critically, safety and privacy are major concerns for women, girls, and persons with disabilities using latrines.

Mental Health and Psycho-social Support (MHPSS)

Many people are in need of mental health and psycho-social support (MHPSS) following traumatic experiences during their journey and anxiety about an uncertain future in Afghanistan. The MHPSS assessment revealed significant needs and gaps in the well-being of returnees. Many individuals, particularly young women and mothers, expressed anxiety about their futures, feeling lost and unsupported after returning to Afghanistan.

They reported difficulties sleeping, heightened anger, and feelings of hopelessness, largely stemming from experiences in Pakistan and the trauma of migration. A lack of information about available services in their provinces leaves returnees unsure of where to seek help. Teenage girls voiced fears of early marriage and concerns about education, while women struggled with bureaucratic processes for obtaining documents and enrolling children in school. Additionally, the absence of family support networks and the fear of joblessness contribute to their distress. Overall, inadequate access to information and services exacerbates the challenges returnees face, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive support and resources.

Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI)

Amongst people returning to Afghanistan are women, children (especially those who are unaccompanied), persons with disabilities, and the elderly. Incidences of family separation have been recorded, including as a result of arrests and detention of Afghans in Pakistan, with some children having been separated from their families during the return process. Security screening performed by authorities in Afghanistan upon arrival are ongoing, this includes ensuring that individuals crossing the borders do not pose a threat to themselves or others.

The provision of sexual and reproductive health services as well as access to safe and accessible accommodations and child-friendly spaces are likely to remain in demand, particularly for unaccompanied children and single-headed women households.

FEDERATION-WIDE APPROACH

The Emergency Appeal is part of a **Federation-wide approach**, based on the response priorities of the Operating National Society (Afghan Red Crescent Society) and in consultation with all Federation members contributing to the response. The approach, reflected in this Operational Strategy, will ensure linkages between all response activities (including bilateral activities and activities funded domestically) and will assist in leveraging the capacities of all members of the IFRC network in the country to maximise the collective humanitarian impact.

The Federation-wide funding requirement for this Emergency Appeal comprises all support and funding to be channelled to the Afghan Red Crescent Society (Operating National Society) in response to the emergency event. This includes the Operating National Society's domestic fundraising ask, the fundraising ask of supporting Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies, and the funding ask of the IFRC secretariat.

Movement Coordination

In 2024, Red Cross Red Crescent Movement partners signed a Movement Coordination Agreement, under which they collectively established mechanisms for coordination and cooperation. The ARCS, IFRC, and ICRC actively participate in tripartite Movement Strategic Platform (MSP) meetings bringing together ARCS leadership with ICRC and IFRC management to address strategic issues and jointly build holistic and informed solutions on challenges. Furthermore, Movement Operational Coordination (MOC) meetings bring together the ARCS, ICRC, IFRC and in-country Participating National Societies to address fluid operational issues, bottlenecks, and create shared understanding on operational strategies, including response approaches and delivery mechanisms. The partners also engage through technical coordination at the programmes level (particularly in Health, WASH, Protection/RFL, Relief and Communications) to ensure that support is complementary and to avoid duplication.

OPERATIONAL CONSTRAINTS

While access and safety to all parts of the country have improved since August 2021, security concerns remain due to rising criminality prompted by economic hardships and the presence of opposition non-state armed groups, which occasionally mount deadly attacks, while criminal networks have increased risks for those crossing the border, including returnees and aid workers. It is crucial that safety and security protocols are reinforced and followed by all personnel involved in the operation. Based on previous experience, border

closures may recur, posing a potential risk to operations and causing severe delays of goods into the country.

Despite UN Security Council Resolution (SCR) 2615, which provides an exception for humanitarian action, disruption of financial services and cash flow persist, with hurdles in making money transfers and payments or completing transactions occasionally causing operational delays. The IFRC continues to closely monitor and assess the situation to manage these risks, including in private meetings with various financial institutions. Furthermore, the IFRC has framework agreements with four financial service providers for cash-based assistance, enabling them to deliver cash assistance via over-the-counter services or direct cash distribution without delays caused by a lack of Know Your Customer (KYC) documentation from recipients.

Although there has been an improvement in the availability of supplies and services in the local market, some local vendors lack crucial documentation required for competing in tenders for supplies and services. The IFRC supply chain management team has undertaken a market assessment and is planning vendor orientation sessions to familiarise them with the IFRC procurement policy as well as the fraud and corruption prevention policy.

In addition, the IFRC compliance and risk management team, in coordination with the HR and Supply Chain Departments, ensures the screening of all vendors, consultants and employees. Operational flexibility is also maintained by keeping the option to deliver assistance through cash-based assistance or in-kind modalities, or a combination of both, depending on the contextual circumstances.

There are unpredictable and increasing restrictions on humanitarian actors, including limitations on the participation of female humanitarian workers. For now, the IFRC network's programmes and operations continue to engage female staff and volunteers. The IFRC network remains committed to alleviating human suffering wherever it is found, which means continuing to deliver services to as many people as possible, wherever feasible, and within available resources, while pragmatically finding solutions to ensure the inclusion of women and all groups in the process.

OPERATIONAL STRATEGY

Vision

This 24-month emergency operation aims to support the ARCS in responding to the urgent humanitarian needs of Afghan returnees, while also laying the foundation for early recovery and long-term reintegration. Targeting 525,000 people, the operation delivers a Federation-wide, phased response, addressing immediate survival needs, supporting early recovery, and enabling sustainable livelihoods.

In the emergency phase, interventions include the provision of temporary shelter, essential primary healthcare, food distribution, cash assistance (particularly for women with multiple vulnerabilities), camp waste management, and coordination on crowd control with UN partners. As the context stabilises, the operation will transition to recovery efforts, focusing on restoring self-reliance, easing pressure on fragile host communities and overstretched services, and supporting people with complex needs to rebuild their lives. This operation is strategically designed to complement ongoing and future efforts by Movement partners and other stakeholders, leveraging the unique access and trust of the ARCS to ensure locally grounded, needs-based assistance, maximising impact, while minimising duplication through close coordination and collaboration.

Anticipated climate-related risks and adjustments in the operation

Afghanistan is currently experiencing its fourth consecutive year of drought, with rainfall levels remaining significantly below the seasonal average. This ongoing climatic stress is intensifying water scarcity across the country, threatening both agricultural production and access to safe drinking water. The 2025 drought outlook indicates continued below-average precipitation and above-average temperatures, particularly in the central,

northern, and western regions.⁵ Recent assessments show that crop failures and depleted groundwater sources are affecting over half of the population, with many areas facing catastrophic drought conditions.⁶ In response, the United Nations has fast-tracked the release of USD 16.6 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to support anticipatory actions and urgent relief for the most vulnerable communities.⁷

Targeting

1. People to be assisted

The goal is to reach a total of **525,000** people through a coordinated Federation-wide response, including **350,000** people supported directly through the IFRC Secretariat over a two-year period.

The response prioritises actions to reach the most vulnerable among the returnee population and communities where they are settling, those facing multiple, overlapping vulnerabilities and risks. Multi-sector support will focus on Afghans impacted by destitution, women at risk (mostly widows and female-headed households) and their families, unaccompanied children and children screened with malnutrition, pregnant and lactating women, households returning from Pakistan and Iran with no shelter, elderly persons, people with disabilities, and marginalised groups. These groups are particularly exposed to compounded risks, including extreme poverty, gender-based violence, malnutrition, poor health, limited livelihood opportunities and exclusion from essential services.

The current situation in Afghanistan demands urgent attention to those arriving with limited assets and access to essential services. By prioritising these vulnerable groups, the operation aims to provide life-saving assistance and opportunities for Afghans to rebuild their lives by reaching those who are facing compounding risks with limited access to essential services such as shelter, food, healthcare, and legal documentation.

2. Considerations for protection, gender, and inclusion and community engagement and accountability

Selection criteria and targeting will be explained to both returnee and communities in provinces of return through inclusive and participatory approaches. The ARCS will engage men and women in dialogue sessions, focus group discussions (FGDs), and community meetings to co-define and validate selection criteria. Clear, accessible information will be shared using trusted channels such as religious or community leaders, mobile/WhatsApp, face-to-face, hotline/SMS, community focal points, and help desks at border crossing points, transit centres, and within communities in provinces of return. People will be encouraged to provide feedback and raise concerns through established mechanisms, ensuring transparency, trust-building, and alignment of support with identified needs.

To ensure a rights-based and inclusive approach throughout the humanitarian response, protection, gender, and inclusion (PGI) will be integrated into the needs analysis phase, guiding the identification of at-risk individuals and informing sectoral planning. PGI considerations will be mainstreamed across all sector interventions to promote inclusive access to services and reduce the risk of harm. Capacity building will be prioritised through targeted training for staff and volunteers on PGI in emergency settings, enhancing their ability to recognise and respond to protection concerns. A service mapping and referral pathway for people with disabilities will be developed and shared across all sectors to support timely and appropriate services and referrals. In parallel, strong child safeguarding mechanisms will be established and reinforced, with staff and volunteers sensitised to uphold these standards. Finally, the IFRC and ARCS will actively participate in relevant PGI sector coordination meetings such as GBV sub-cluster and Gender in Humanitarian Action working groups to align with inter-agency efforts, share information, and strengthen protection and gender outcomes.

⁵ UNOCHA – Afghanistan, Dry Monitoring Spell

⁶ <https://kabulnow.com/2025/05/un-allocates-16-6-million-to-support-drought-affected-communities-in-afghanistan/>

⁷ <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/afghanistan/devastating-drought-takes-hold-afghanistan-un-fast-tracks-us166-million-anticipatory-action>

PLANNED OPERATIONS

INTEGRATED ASSISTANCE

	Shelter, Housing, and Settlements	Female > 18: 500	Female < 18: 1,235	CHF 3,994,000
		Male > 18: 500	Male < 18: 1,265	Total target: 3,500
Objective:		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.		
Priority Actions:		Emergency Support Phase • Project kick-off meeting and orientation to the ARCS staff and volunteers. • Conduct a comprehensive assessment to determine the nature and scope of shelter and settlement needs for returnees. • Coordinate with relevant organisations, local authorities, and the Shelter Cluster to ensure a harmonised shelter and settlements response. • Provide housing, land, and property (HLP) orientation and awareness sessions to returnees at key border entry points. Facilitate engagement with authorities to obtain the necessary documentation for resettlement, property claims, and titles. • Support the transitional stay of returnees in camps managed by authorities and different organisations while establishing case management for more durable shelter and settlements solutions (i.e. return to areas of origin, family reunification, or resettlement).		
		Transition and Recovery Support Phase • Conduct detailed assessments to identify returnees who own a house/land, categorise the level of damage (minor, severe, destroyed, etc.) and assess access to basic services in the areas selected for return or resettlement (urban or rural). • Undertake surveys to identify households that will receive assistance, revalidate their eligibility, and register them. • Provide training for volunteers and ARCS staff on HLP, focusing on land demarcation, documentation, rights, etc. • Organise HLP orientation sessions for returnees, host communities, and community members, with specific attention to minors and female-headed households and their rights. • Address secondary occupation or damaged housing through community-led mediation and legal aid referrals. • Provide selected households with orientation on the intervention and the distribution process. • Distribute essential shelter and relevant household items. • Provide shelter construction/repair support (cash assistance or in-kind) following minimum quality standards (SPHERE, cluster guidance, shelter strategy, etc.) • Offer guidance on climate-smart building techniques and nature-based solutions, considering building back safer principles, to selected households as well as volunteers and ARCS staff. • Engage local construction specialists to advise on climate-smart, earthquake, and flood resilient building techniques. • Guide unaccompanied minors in identifying the most suitable shelter solutions together with protection/CEA teams (rental options may be considered notably in urban areas).		

	• Conduct post-distribution monitoring (PDM) for in-kind/cash distributions as well as satisfaction surveys with assisted households. • Implement watershed restoration and slope stabilisation, among other approaches, using different bio-engineering techniques. • Train returnees and host communities in participatory planning and safe shelter and settlements through PASSA methodology (training and rollouts) and ensure grants for community plans. • Coordinate closely with the Shelter Cluster and relevant stakeholders to ensure adherence to minimum quality standards.
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	Livelihoods	Female > 18: 4,000	Female < 18: 10,000	CHF 4,793,000
		Male > 18: 4,000	Male < 18: 10,000	Total target: 28,000
Objective:	Establish and enhance livelihood opportunities for returning Afghans through a community-based approach by promoting economic stability and community re-integration.			
Priority Actions:	• Conduct research on the livelihood activities of returnees to assess their adaptability and identify possible adjustments in new locations. • Conduct several project kick-off meetings on livelihood restoration interventions for ARCS staff, volunteers, and host community members. • Provide conditional cash to targeted households enabling them to invest in small businesses. • Provide soft skills business trainings and vocational trainings tailored to local job markets focusing on relevant skills leading to income generation activities. • Procure tools for Cash for Work activities in agriculture, based on the needs of relevant markets. • Conduct PDMs and lessons learned workshops.			

	Multi-purpose Cash	Female > 18: 5,000	Female < 18: 12,750	CHF 3,131,000
		Male > 18: 5,000	Male < 18: 12,250	Total target: 35,000
Objective:	Empower repatriated individuals at zero transition points and final destinations to securely access essential food, household items, and services through multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA) grants, ensuring their dignity and well-being.			
Priority Actions:	• Conduct a market assessment to verify the cash assistance needs in transit camps and final provincial destinations. • Train relevant staff and volunteers on standard operational procedures for cash voucher assistance. • Identify target households and individuals to receive assistance based on a vulnerability criteria at transit camps and final provincial destinations. • Provide multipurpose cash to selected households and individuals. • Establish community feedback and complaints mechanisms for the cash distribution. • Conduct satisfaction interviews for the targeted population, together with post-distribution monitoring.			

HEALTH AND CARE INCLUDING WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE (WASH)

PRIMARY HEALTH CARE, (MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT / COMMUNITY HEALTH)

	Health and Care <i>(Mental Health and Psychosocial Support/ Community Health/ Medical Services)</i>	Female > 18: 114,660	Female < 18: 158,340	CHF 5,304,000
		Male > 18: 105,840	Male < 18: 146,160	Total target: 350,000
Objective:	Returnees in priority provinces have improved health and well-being through access to comprehensive primary healthcare, including medical services, health literacy, WASH support, and capacity building, delivered through mobile teams and health camps strategically positioned along key transit and destination points.			
Priority Actions:	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) - Integrate MHPSS into 40 MHTs and three Health Camps as a core component of primary healthcare. - Enhance the capacity of existing health staff and dedicated MHPSS counsellors. - Provide psychosocial support services to vulnerable and affected returnees. Community Health - Train 1,000 volunteers in CBHFA, NCDs, psychological first aid (PFA), emergency control, nutrition screening, and reproductive health. These trainings will empower volunteers to mobilise, sensitise communities, and assess health and WASH needs. - Equip volunteers with first aid kits to support returnees and deliver service awareness sessions in their areas. Volunteers will conduct household visits, targeting approximately 105,000 people. - Mobilise volunteers to deliver integrated awareness raising sessions on health and WASH and assess community needs. These sessions will be held at border points and returnee settlement areas, each involving about 35 participants. Volunteers will share key messages on health, hygiene, NCDs, reproductive health, mental health, and nutrition, targeting approximately 35,000 people. - Establish 70 Community Health and Grandmother Committees for community health and WASH activities. Each committee will include about 15 respected male elders or grandmothers who will facilitate local health sessions. Members will receive a two-day orientation on the RCRC Movement, reproductive health, immunisation, nutrition, hygiene, and community health goals. - Regularly monitor community health and first aid activities through trainers, regional supervisors, and HQ staff. Primary Health Services - Deploy 40 MHTs across 13 provinces to deliver primary healthcare, including maternal and child health, vaccinations, nutrition, mental health, and health education. - Establish three Health Camps in Herat (24 months), and Kandahar and Nangarhar (18 months) to provide comprehensive medical services, including emergency care. - Support and equip all MHTs and Health Camps with essential medical supplies, equipment, and medicines. - Strengthen human resources by providing salaries, training, and technical support for medical, nursing, midwifery, pharmacy, nutrition, and MHPSS personnel.			

	• Offer capacity-building sessions to enhance staff skills in health management information systems (HMIS), nutrition, and mental health, training 105 health staff members. • Ensure operational and logistical support, including running costs, vehicle maintenance, fuel, and winterisation. • Implement monitoring and supervision systems, utilising HMIS data and regular field visits to track progress and ensure quality service delivery.
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	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene	Female > 18: 3,024	Female < 18: 2,016	CHF 1,544,000
		Male > 18: 3,276	Male < 18: 2,184	Total target: 10,500

Objective:	Reduce waterborne diseases, improve health and hygiene, and ensure dignified menstrual hygiene management (MHM) for returnees from Pakistan and Iran at border points, transit camps, and final destinations.
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Priority Actions:	• Conduct a technical assessment to identify water sources and solutions for safe drinking water systems at border points, addressing lack of water and salty groundwater issues. • Establish safe drinking water systems at border points, including chlorination after water quality testing. • Distribute 3,000 jerry cans (two per family) and install 2,000-litre HDPE water tanks for safe water storage. • Construct six solar-powered water supply systems in settlement areas to ensure sustainable water access. • Build 36 flush toilets equipped with septic tanks, menstrual hygiene management (MHM) rooms, ramps, and accessibility features for persons with disabilities. • Install 36 metal handwashing tanks to promote hygiene practices. • Train community-based health and first aid (CBHFA) volunteers on solid waste management and provide waste bins to enhance community cleanliness. • Conduct 72 vector control campaigns to reduce disease transmission risks. • Distribute soap (250g per person) and develop information, education, and communication (IEC) materials for hygiene promotion. • Conduct hygiene and MHM awareness sessions, including demonstrations on creating reusable menstrual pads at home. • Distribute 1,650 MHM kits comprising reusable and sanitary pads. • Strengthen the ARCS's WASH Department through advanced training on emergency response, water quality monitoring, sanitation system design, and hygiene promotion methodologies.
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PROTECTION AND PREVENTION

(PROTECTION, GENDER, AND INCLUSION (PGI), COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY (CEA), MIGRATION, RISK REDUCTION, CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND RECOVERY, ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY, EDUCATION)

	Protection, Gender, and Inclusion	Female > 18: 5,000	Female < 18: 5,000	CHF 41,000
		Male > 18: 5,000	Male < 18: 5,000	Total target: 20,000

Objective:	Ensure dignity, safety, and equitable access for all targeted populations by integrating PGI principles into all sectoral activities through gender, inclusion, protection, and accountability measures.
Priority Actions:	PGI Mainstreaming Across the Response - Review sectoral plans to ensure the inclusion of PGI principles and minimum standards. Develop sector-specific PGI guidance and checklists aligning with all response interventions. - Conduct joint planning sessions with sector leads to integrate PGI into all phases of programming. - Provide dignity, delivery, and newborn baby kits through a midwifery-led modality. - Create safe spaces for children, women, and people with disabilities. - Livelihoods assessments, mapping exercises, programmes are designed or adapted for all gender identities, ages, disabilities, and backgrounds to access appropriate income generating activities. Returnees are included in assessments to evaluate their existing skills, knowledge, and expertise, to further develop livelihood opportunities. - Conditional cash-based intervention criteria target people experiencing multiple vulnerabilities and risks. - Facilitate the mobilisation of female health workers and female volunteers. Staff and Volunteer Training on PGI in Emergencies - Organise PGI induction and refresher training. - Develop and distribute PGI training materials and job aids. - Monitor and evaluate training outcomes to improve content and delivery. Child Safeguarding and PSEA Mechanisms - Develop a safeguarding policy and update child safeguarding risk analysis. - Establish safe and confidential reporting channels. - Conduct regular awareness sessions for staff, volunteers, and community members. - Establish women and child friendly spaces. - Undertake child safeguarding risk analysis and develop an action plan. Participate in Protection Coordination Mechanisms - Attend national and local protection cluster or sector meetings. - Share updates and coordinate on cases and referral processes. - Contribute to joint protection assessments and advocacy efforts. Restoring Family Links (RFL) - Tracing intra and extra muros (allegations of arrest and detention and tracing requests. Cases are identified and collected by the ARCS and ICRC and/or referred from other protection actors such as UNICEF, UNHCR, etc.). IFRC APRO PGI Support - Develop and implement a PGI Implementation Plan for Emergency Operations. - Use PGI Markers to assess Operational Plans.



Community Engagement and Accountability

Female > 18: 1,000	Female < 18: 4,000	CHF 67,000
Male > 18: 1,000	Male < 18: 5,240	Total target: 11,240

Objective:	Ensure meaningful community engagement with returnees and host communities through inclusive feedback and communication mechanisms that support transparency, participation, and accountability.
Priority Actions:	CEA Integration Across the Response • Ensure that all staff and volunteers understand and apply CEA principles. • Build capacity to effectively engage with all community groups, including women, older people, and persons with disabilities. • Embed CEA in all sectors of the response operations. Understand Community Needs • Conduct participatory assessments to identify community priorities and vulnerabilities. • Use community-preferred channels and culturally appropriate methods for communication and engagement. Engage Communities in Planning and Implementation • Involve both men and women in setting selection criteria, identifying priority needs, and co-designing programmes. • Use FGDs, key informant interviews (KIIs), and inclusive dialogue sessions to gather input. Regular Community Communication • Share clear and timely information about the operations, intervention areas, selection criteria, activities, and distribution processes. • Use at least two trusted communication channels, including either face-to-face, hotline/SMS, and/or community focal points. • Openly communicate challenges, delays, and changes with communities. Accessible Feedback Mechanisms • Set up accessible feedback channels (help desks, suggestion boxes, hotlines) at key locations (zero points, transit centres, host communities). This will help to raise awareness of available services and safe referral pathways and establish case management and follow-up mechanisms for returnees (beyond those highlighted under the health and protection sections). • Ensure that mechanisms are inclusive, gender-sensitive, and appropriate for all groups.

	Migration and Displacement	Female > 18: 114,660	Female < 18: 158,30	CHF 160,000
		Male > 18: 105,840	Male < 18: 146,160	Total target: 350,000⁸
Objective	Support National Societies in addressing the specific vulnerabilities of people on the move with dedicated humanitarian assistance, protection, and humanitarian diplomacy interventions, in coordination with relevant stakeholders and sectors.			
Priority actions	• Provide training on the Movement's principled approach to Migration and Displacement, particularly the principles for assisting migrants in return, and support the ARCS in implementing the Movement's Migration Strategy by enabling access to essential services for returnees, including protection.			

⁸ As this is a population movement operation, the total target of the intervention is indicated, even though direct services are also reflected under the different technical areas.

- Map available services and raise awareness of safe referral pathways, including, if possible, case management and follow-up mechanisms for returnees (beyond those highlighted under the health and protection sections).
- Facilitate cross-border coordination with the Pakistan Red Crescent Society and Iranian Red Crescent Society to tailor responses to the anticipated and identified needs of returnees (linked to Health, PGI and CEA actions), and provide continuity of care to people on the move during their journey.
- Participate in the inter-agency Border Consortium at the national and provincial levels, ensuring coordination and complementarity with the wider humanitarian system.
- Determine durable solutions for returnees to enable effective integration by building resilience and promoting inclusion and social cohesion. Through an integrated approach, support for livelihoods, reconstruction, and rehabilitation will enhance access to safe housing for returnees and provide opportunities to rebuild their lives with dignity.
- Recruit an IFRC Afghanistan Migration and Displacement Officer to provide longer-term technical capacity strengthening support to the ARCS.
- Deploy APRO Migration and Displacement Lead technical support missions to Afghanistan.
- Support the ARCS's preparedness and contingency planning for future large-scale returns.

Enabling approaches

	National Society Strengthening	Female > 18: 200	Female < 18: 0	CHF 173,000
		Male > 18: 1,000	Male < 18: 0	Total target: 1,200
Objective:	Improve operational outcomes, overall effectiveness, and service delivery by supporting the National Society's ongoing capacity strengthening efforts.			
Priority Actions:	Preparedness and Response Capacity • Continue ongoing investments to strengthen preparedness and response capacity across the National Society's territory. • Build institutional capacity to ensure that staff and volunteers have the knowledge and skills needed to support operations and effectively coordinate with humanitarian partners. • Deliver targeted training sessions, including: ◦ Emergency Operations Centre training at both branch and national levels ◦ National Disaster Response Team training ◦ RFL training ◦ Emergency Needs Assessment training ◦ Shelter and Shelter Management training • Conduct Training of Trainers (ToTs) to sustain and scale capacity over the long-term. • Develop and implement tools, systems, structures, and standard operating procedures to promote preparedness and guide response execution. • Create local-level contingency plans to assess hazard and risk landscapes and outline any required actions aligned with available capacities and resources. Digital Transformation • Invest in strengthening digital infrastructure to improve efficiency and accountability.			

- Upgrade enterprise solutions covering finance, procurement, human resources, inventory management, and controls.
- Acquire the necessary hardware to support digital tools and systems.
- Provide training for staff and volunteers on the use of new digital tools and systems.
- Ensure business continuity and enhanced organisational connectedness through digital investments.

Volunteer Development and Management

- Expand volunteer capacity beyond the current estimated 26,000 volunteers and conduct campaigns to increase brand visibility and volunteer engagement.
- Develop systems and structures to enhance volunteer retention and management.
- Advance the rollout of the volunteer management database.
- Develop a volunteer development strategy.
- Establish a Volunteering Policy to safeguard volunteer welfare and define their rights and privileges.
- Procure visibility items to support volunteer recognition and identification.

Branch Development

- Strengthen warehousing operations by optimising processes and providing related training, linked to digitalisation efforts.
- Refresh, rebuild, and resource Branch Disaster Response Teams as needed.
- Establish and resource branch command centres to support field operations and facilitate information sharing at regional and headquarters levels.
- Conduct Finance Management training for branch staff.
Provide Information Management and Reporting training to improve branch-level data handling and communication.



Coordination, Partnerships, and Humanitarian Diplomacy

CHF 378,000

Objective:

Strengthen coordination and collaboration among Movement partners and key stakeholders to ensure timely and effective engagement on ARCS response efforts, address operational challenges and emerging risks, and facilitate information sharing with relevant coordination bodies and government authorities to streamline efforts, maximise impact, and avoid duplication. Humanitarian diplomacy and advocacy efforts will be critical in this response, aiming to contribute to more favourable policy outcomes for returnees by focusing on their humanitarian needs and vulnerabilities, in alignment with the Movement's Migration Policy.

Priority Actions:

Movement Coordination

- Regular information sharing between Movement components regarding humanitarian needs and collective support to the ARCS across all phases of the response operation.

Membership Coordination

- Set monthly meetings with all in-country partners (DRC, NRC, TRC, and QRC) led by the Operating National Society (ARCS), including the ICRC, in returnee response.

- Map out in-country partners' roles, geographic focus, and sectoral expertise, and update quarterly.
- Conduct joint field visits with partners, led by the ARCS, to visit border crossing points and transit camps to observe humanitarian needs and the National Society's service delivery.

Engagement with External Partners and Humanitarian Diplomacy

- The IFRC cooperates with other humanitarian organisations, UN agencies, and national and local authorities in Afghanistan. Joint assessments, coordinated response efforts, and information sharing are actively conducted to ensure a coherent and complementary approach. Collaboration has been pivotal in areas such as Protection, Health, WASH, Livelihoods, and Emergency Relief operations.
- The IFRC supports external coordination within the humanitarian situation as an Observer to the HCT. The IFRC, ARCS, and in-country PNSs cooperate and coordinate with other humanitarian organisations and key agencies as members of various Clusters. The IFRC and ARCS closely coordinate with key ministries such as the Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, and ANDMA on the ongoing support of response activities in-country.
- The IFRC and ARCS will continue advocating for the protection and assistance of those returning and settling in Afghanistan with partner governments, including the development of specific humanitarian diplomacy (HD) key messages to help guide ARCS leadership, SMT, RCRC Movement staff, and PNSs to speak with one voice when engaging key external stakeholders, partners, donors, and policymakers on the details of this slow-onset crisis in Afghanistan and the resulting humanitarian concerns.
- Prioritise visits to the capital to position the ARCS's humanitarian response efforts to address compounding crises, such as the influx of returnees, while demonstrating its unique ability to reach the most vulnerable communities through local and principled service delivery.
- Comprehensive trainings on the Red Cross Movement Fundamental Principles, the ARCS's auxiliary role, and IHL for key government authorities and bodies (i.e. Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of the Interior and Defence). These sessions provide a deep understanding of the humanitarian values and principles that guides the Movement's work, equipping all stakeholders to effectively collaborate with the Movement in times of crisis.
- Set quarterly meetings with Doha and Kabul-based embassies to provide a shared understanding of the current returnee situation and highlight the challenges faced by people on the move.
- Conduct quarterly and as-needed partner calls to share up-to-date information on the returnee situation.
- Briefings for the diplomatic corps in Geneva and New York are being considered.



**IFRC Secretariat
Services**

CHF 415,000

Objective:	The IFRC Secretariat ensures high-quality support services to the ARCS and in-country IFRC member societies.
Priority Actions:	Security • Maintain security assessments and plans in the operational areas of appeal including enhancement of security protocols in-country in coordination with all in-country partners. • Take adequate measures to ensure the safety and security of all IFRC personnel and those of its member societies involved in this operation. ○ All IFRC personnel must, and RCRC staff and volunteers are encouraged, to complete the IFRC Stay Safe 2.0 e-learning courses. ○ The IFRC Country Delegation security team is maintaining close coordination with external humanitarian actors in-country on the situation, particularly at the Torkham and Spin Boldak crossing points. ○ The security team will also be maintaining close coordination with ARCS units and local administrations in the operational areas. ○ The National Society's security framework will be applicable throughout the duration of the operation to their staff and volunteers. ○ For personnel under the IFRC security's responsibility, including surge support and integrated PNSs deployed to the area, the existing IFRC country security plan, including security regulations, contingency plans for medical emergencies, relocation, and critical incident management, will apply. ○ Any field missions undertaken by IFRC personnel will follow the current IFRC travel process. ○ Support improved financial management and implement financial audits. ○ Provide key services to integrated National Societies, including but not limited to procurement, transportation, accommodation, and security management. Communications • Develop an emergency communication strategy to document the ARCS's response activities and impact. • Coordinate with the HD team on evidence-based messaging which will be informed and guided by CEA activities, PMER evaluations, and programme impact. • Coordinate with the ARCS and ICRC on Movement messages and reactive lines. • Prioritise partner visibility collateral materials in close coordination with SPRM, Operations, and Programmes. • The IFRC and ICRC will support the development of Information-as-Aid materials to be disseminated to returnees at border crossing points. • Generate in-depth human-interest stories and relevant content to maintain attention on the slow on-set crisis. • Regularly promote the operational response on social media and relevant media outlets. • Consistently generate photos and videos to support the promotion and visibility of the operation. • Coordinate with the HD, Operations, and Programmes teams to include relevant angles in the communication materials planned for this operation. Supply Chain Management • Reorder household items locally if needed. The Delegation procurement team has already completed several local procurement of household items. Based on the urgency, a reorder may be processed to save time by avoiding new tender procedures. • Import and replenish household items through Global Humanitarian Services and Supply Chain Management, Asia Pacific, Kuala Lumpur, under the global FWA.

- Based on need, urgency, and available opportunities, PNS support and sourcing processes may take place under the signed agreement between the IFRC and PNSs.

Finance

- The finance unit supports planning and budgeting, account booking, coordination on procurement, and expense validation.
- Ensure the review of project proposals and financial compliance to support the audit process.
- Coordinate with the National Society finance team on fund transfers and acquittals.
- Ensure timely submission of pledge analysis and financial reports in accordance with donor and partner requirements.

Information Management (IM)

- Provide training and technical support on data collection, analysis, and visualisation.
- Maintain the IFRC GO emergency page and develop operational dashboards and infographics to ensure timely situational awareness across the IFRC network.
- Produce regular, evidence-based information outputs for internal coordination and external communication.
- Support the planning, implementation, and analysis of needs assessments and ongoing monitoring activities.

Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting (PMER)

- Support operational planning and establish a Federation-wide monitoring and reporting system aligned with IFRC and donor standards.
- Develop and maintain data collection tools and workflows.
- Conduct regular joint monitoring with the ARCS and partners; ensure the timely dissemination of findings to stakeholders.
- Enhance the ARCS's PMER capacities through continuous technical support and training.
- Conduct a Midterm Review within the first 12 months, followed by a Final Evaluation at the end of the operation to assess the impact and capture lessons learned.
- Use findings from assessments, reviews, and evaluations to refine the Operational Strategy and ensure responsiveness to evolving needs.

Surge Capacity

- Mobilise surge personnel, including an Operations Manager, PMER, and other profiles based on operational needs.

Risk management

The Risk Management Unit of the IFRC Afghanistan Country Delegation maintains a living risk register, which is regularly updated to capture strategic, operational, security, and safeguarding risks. The risk register review ensures that any developments are documented, with risks outside the risk appetite escalated to regional and global levels.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Restricted banking services in the country limit fund inflows and cause exchange rate	Medium	Low	International inward transfers were processed to IFRC and ARCS AIB AFN bank accounts through Crown Agenet Bank (intermediary bank). A few bidding agreements were concluded with financial service providers as a backup to

fluctuations that impact budgets			provide cash delivery services. Budget revisions were made to adjust budget lines, keeping contributors informed.
Limited airline services by local companies and few external airlines	Medium	Low	New airlines became operational, including Fly Dubai, Turkish Airways, Air Arabia, and Mahan Air. Kam Air commenced direct flights to Doha and New Delhi once a week effective 17 December 2024. Afghan carriers, excluding Kam Air, are red-flagged and require travellers to sign a risk acknowledgement form, with travel authorisation granted by the Head of Delegation.
Long lead time for international procurement	Medium	High	The supply chain unit develop a procurement plan to ensure that sufficient time is allocated for international procurements.
ARCS officials being on sanction lists and challenges in due diligence during staff and vendor screening	High	High	Ongoing due diligence and screening of ARCS staff continues. Costs related to individuals on sanctions lists are not covered, and these individuals are excluded from managing IFRC funds. Relevant clauses have been incorporated into the Funding Project Agreement with the ARCS to strengthen compliance. Comprehensive screening procedures were in place for vendors and suppliers to prevent listed companies from being awarded procurement contracts.
Restrictions on women participating in the field (ARCS female staff and volunteers)	High	High	The ARCS continues to engage with the MoPH and national and local authorities to advocate for the essential role of female health workers in the provision of health services. Projects budgets include allocations for Mahram accompaniment to enable female staff to travel. A PGI focal point within the IFRC collaborates with the ARCS Gender Department to facilitate training and build the capacity of relevant ARCS staff. Currently, only female ARCS health staff are permitted to work.
Decrease in funding trend from 2024 onward	Medium	Medium	Ensure that programming targets are met, demonstrate impact through quality reporting, and maintain regular communication with donors to support continued fundraising, all of which are among the key mitigating measures.
Centralised management system at the ARCS and high staff turnover	High	Low	Maintain ongoing communication with ARCS leadership and facilitate or unlock any strategic bottlenecks.
Impact of brain drain on staff retention and changes in ARCS staff and SMT	High	Medium	• Improve and speed up the recruitment process to ensure capable hires and the training of new staff. • Continue humanitarian diplomacy with the National Society's leadership on staff retention and support training programs for new staff. • Develop and maintain a database of suppliers categorised by their areas of specialty. • Restructure logistics and procurement teams to better align tasks within the team.

Supply chain challenges	High	Medium	Establish framework agreements with Movement partners to implement part of the plan based on their specific knowledge and expertise.
Misuse of resources by individuals and not being able to achieve value for money	Medium	Medium	- Recruit and deploy staff with proven high standards of integrity and ethical conduct. - Ensure 100 per cent completion rate of mandatory online training modules by staff, including “Corruption Prevention”, “Code of Conduct”, and “Building Integrity and Preventing Insider Dealing”. - Provide ongoing capacity building to reinforce ethical decision-making and financial accountability, with periodic refresher training integrated into performance management processes. - Promote a strong culture of transparency and accountability through leadership messaging and adherence to zero-tolerance policies on fraud and corruption.
Safeguarding and harassment	High	Medium	- Continue awareness sessions on safeguarding, ethics, and conduct policies. - Deliver training on Respectful Workplace standards, Safeguarding/Child Safeguarding, and the Whistleblower Protection Policy.
Security incidents such as explosions, armed conflict, and injury or loss of life among staff or volunteers	High	High	- Conduct real-time monitoring of the situation and advise staff and volunteers accordingly; maintain clear communication of activities and movements with all stakeholders; use the protective emblem; enforce critical incident management and emergency plans; and Movement monitoring. Ensure that first aid kits are in vehicles, staff are trained in first aid, maintain distance from potential targets, and avoid roads with IED threats. Always remain informed and alert. - Conduct security briefings for staff and volunteers, equipping them with discernible ARCS tools to increase visibility, and dissemination of the Fundamental Principles of the Movement. - Hold awareness sessions for staff and clearly communicate the organisation’s neutral, independent, and impartial humanitarian action (NIHA) to all stakeholders; monitor the evolving situation; maintain daily communication with all stakeholders; train staff and volunteers on appropriate actions in critical situations; avoid disputed areas; and ensure Movement monitoring.

			Maintain ongoing coordination and activities with Movement partners, including the ICRC, which is operating in the same areas or locations.
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Quality and accountability

In the ongoing population movement operation, proactive steps will be taken to ensure quality and accountability at every stage by clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of response teams, external partners, communities, and individuals. A structured hierarchy with designated leaders will streamline decision-making, supported by reliable communication systems for real-time information sharing. Stakeholders will receive regular updates on the progress of the response.

The IFRC will work closely with the ARCS PMER unit to strengthen PMER processes across the Federation. This includes providing training on data quality, ethics, management, planning, monitoring, and reporting. A range of reporting tools, such as ERF monitoring tools, situation reports, and operational updates, will be consistently used to promote transparency, document actions, inform decision-making, engage communities, and ensure accountability to donors and partners. Documentation, including reports and photos, will serve as evidence of aid distribution, community feedback, and support monitoring, evaluation, legal compliance, and advocacy. Additionally, the IFRC will conduct field visits and regular monitoring activities alongside ARCS colleagues at border crossing points (Torkham and Spin Boldak), in transit camps, and in the provinces of returnees' final destinations. The IFRC will publish regular updates on the operation, situation reports, including a final report, while dashboards (3W/5W) will be published on the IFRC's official GO platform.

To uphold quality and accountability, the PMER department (ARCS and IFRC) will conduct regular exit surveys, post-distribution monitoring, and lessons-learned workshops. Insights will be shared with programme teams to better optimise delivery service. Evaluation and learning will be further supported through a mid-term review and final evaluation assessing the operation's effectiveness, efficiency, impact, lessons learned, and areas to improve future initiatives.

The IFRC Country Delegation has established a Compliance, Risk Management, and Safeguarding Department, led by a manager and supported by specialised personnel. This team is dedicated to ensuring adherence to both internal and external compliance requirements. They focus on responding to issues of sexual exploitation and abuse, including child safeguarding misconduct, while actively identifying and mitigating potential risks. Through their efforts, the department promotes a safe and accountable operational environment, enhancing the integrity of the IFRC's mission.

The list of indicators for the operation is as follows (subject to change as the operation evolves):

SECTOR	INDICATOR	TARGET
Shelter	Number of people reached with shelter support	3,500 people (500 HHs)
	Number of people taking part in cash-for-work (CFW) schemes related to shelter and settlement activities	500
	Number of households who received cash assistance (conditional cash for shelter construction-community-based)	500
Health and Care	Number of people reached through primary health care, outreach services, mobile units, and clinics operated by the National Society	350,000
	Number of childbirths attended by a skilled health worker in a health facility operated by the National Society	350
	Number of functional mobile health service units providing quality primary health care	40
	Number of pregnancies where postnatal or antenatal care is delivered by a skilled health worker in a health facility operated by the National Society	9,625
	Number of people reached with immunisation services	21,000

WASH	Number of children under five years of age enrolled in supplementary feeding delivered by the National Society following assessments	4,375
	Number of people reached with psychosocial and mental health services	1,093
	Number of people reached - Water, Sanitation and Hygiene	10,500
	Number of handwashing facilities constructed or rehabilitated	36
	Number of sanitation facilities constructed or rehabilitated	36
	Number of dignity kits distributed (MHM kits)	1,650
	Number of volunteers trained in eCBHFA, NCD, HP, ECV, nutrition screening, and RH	1,080
	Number of family hygiene kits distributed	1,260
Relief and Recovery	Number of people who received food items through the National Society's response	85,000
Livelihoods	Number of people reached with livelihoods support	4,000
	Number of people supported in starting or improving their income-generation activities	2,000
	Number of people who have completed training or awareness-raising sessions on improved income-generation risk management practices	2,000
	Number of people provided or supported with formal or informal technical, vocational or professional education or training opportunities	2,000
	Number of volunteers and staff trained in livelihoods	100
	Number of people reached with essential inputs, materials, or tools for income-generation	2,000
	Number of households that received conditional cash to start income-generating activities	2,000
	Number of households that received cash for tools and equipment under the CFW programme	2,000
Multi-purpose Cash	Number of people provided with unconditional cash assistance	5,000
CEA	Number of staff, volunteers, and leadership trained on community engagement and accountability	100
	Number of methods established to communicate with communities about what is happening in the organisation/programme/operation, including selection criteria, if these are being used	3
	Number of methods used to enable communities to participate in planning and managing services, programmes, and operations	3
	Number of community perception and feedback reports produced	12
	Number of feedback comments collected, disaggregated by sex, age and disability, including sensitive feedback linked to SEA, fraud, corruption, or protection concerns	500
PGI	Number of volunteers mobilised disaggregated by gender	200
	Number of people reached by information dissemination sessions on menstrual hygiene management (MHM)	500
	Number of people reached by protection, gender, and inclusion programming	3,000
	Number of National Society staff and volunteers trained in prevention and protection of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and all forms of child safeguarding	300
	The ARCS applies the IFRC minimum standards for PGI in emergencies	Yes
	The ARCS engages a PGI focal person	Yes
	The ARCS engages a safeguarding focal person	Yes
Migration and Displacement	Number of Preparedness and Contingency Planning on Large-Scale Return	1
	Number of staff and volunteers trained in Migration and Displacement	100
NS Strengthening	Number of staff and volunteers reporting enhanced capacity for preparing and responding to emergencies	310
	Number of branches with strengthened mechanisms for responding to prioritised threats	5
	Number of branch warehouses optimised with required systems and supporting infrastructure for enhanced operations	5
	The National Society has a fully updated database, management structure, and the required institutional arrangements for recruitment, engagement, and retention of volunteers	Yes
	The National Society has an enhanced information management capacity to support its operations and strengthen accountability	1
	Number of strategic partnerships the National Society is engaged in	5

Coordination and Partnerships	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	8
	Partner engagement strategies are developed to maximise the ARCS's resources to be able to rollout key programmatic interventions	Yes
	Key HD messages and reactive lines are updated quarterly to reflect the ARCS's response operations in the crisis showcasing their value added as a leading local organisation	Yes
	Number of formal interagency/international coordination platforms the IFRC network is a part of	7
IFRC Secretariat	Number of technical and monitoring visits conducted	20
	Number of evaluations conducted (MTR and final evaluation)	2
	Number of surges profiles deployed	2

FUNDING REQUIREMENT

Federation-wide funding requirement*



**For more information on the Federation-wide funding requirement, refer to the section: Federation-wide Approach*

Breakdown of the IFRC secretariat funding requirement



OPERATIONAL STRATEGY

MDRAF018 - Afghanistan Population Movement from Pakistan

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

Planned Operations	19,034,000
Shelter and Basic Household Items	3,994,000
Livelihoods	4,793,000
Multi-purpose Cash	3,131,000
Health	5,304,000
Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene	1,544,000
Protection, Gender, and Inclusion	41,000
Education	0
Migration	160,000
Risk Reduction, Climate Adaptation, and Recovery	0
Community Engagement and Accountability	67,000
Environmental Sustainability	0
Enabling Approaches	966,000
Coordination and Partnerships	378,000
Secretariat Services	415,000
National Society Strengthening	173,000
TOTAL FUNDING REQUIREMENTS	20,000,000

all amounts in Swiss francs (CHF)

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Reference



Click here for:

- [Emergency Appeal](#)