



Returnee women and children receiving medical services from MHT installed by ARCS at Islam Qala. (Photo: IFRC)

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Operation updates #3 Date of issue: 14/09/2025	Timeframe covered by this update: From 01/05/2025 to 30/07/2025
Operation timeframe: 24 months (01/05/2025 – 30/04/2027)	Number of people being assisted: Federation-wide: 252,750 people
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 14 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 from different crossing points.

A. SITUATION ANALYSIS

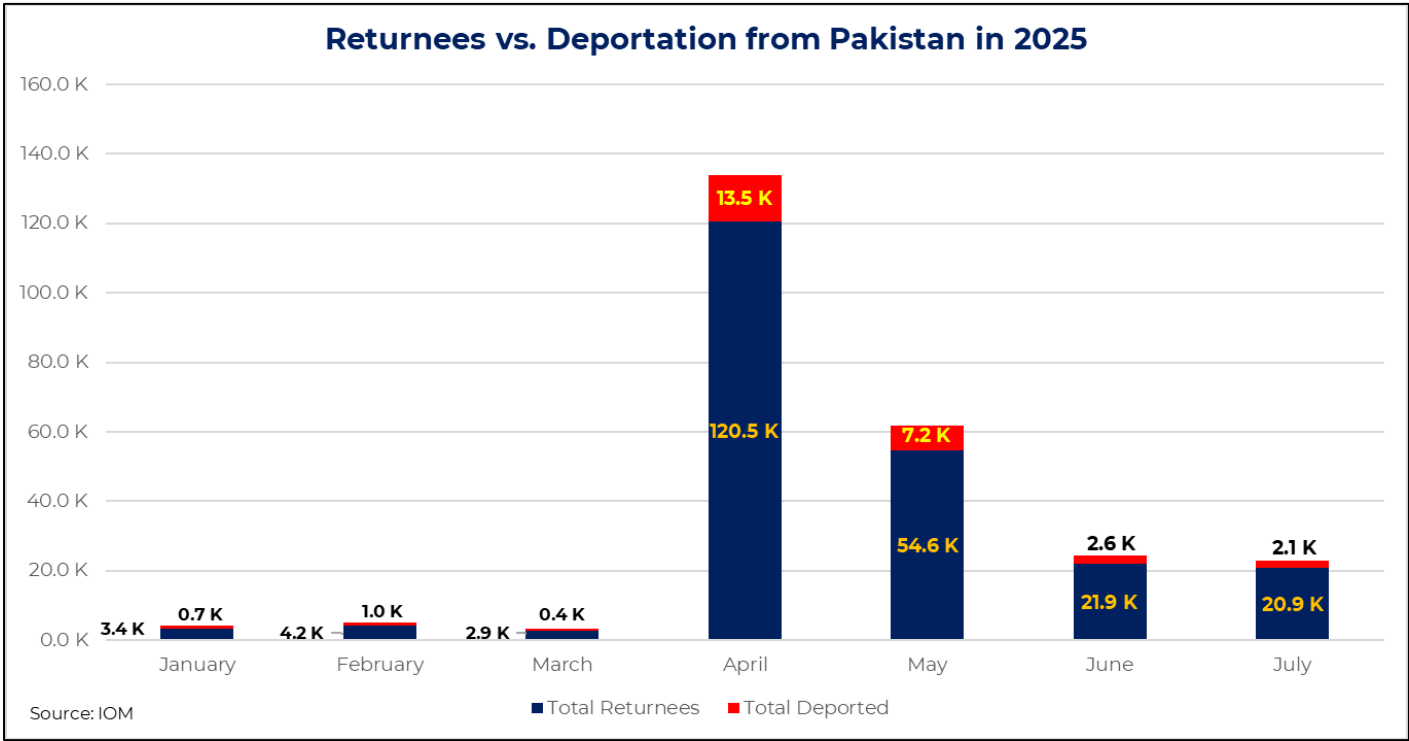
Description of the crisis

In less than two years, over 2.1 million Afghans have returned to Afghanistan from neighboring Iran and Pakistan by July 2025, of whom 1.9 million had been returned from Iran since January 2025 alone — an unprecedented movement that has further strained a country already grappling with a severe humanitarian crisis.¹

As of the end of July 2025, approximately 228,443 people have come back from Pakistan, with the pace of arrivals showing no signs of slowing. The majority of returns from Iran began after 1 April, highlighting the intensity of recent developments in both countries.

Returnees from Pakistan

On the basis of the IOM dashboard, between 1 January and 31 July 2025, an estimated 228,443 Afghans returned from Pakistan, of whom 27,566 (7%) were deported².



- January–March: Returns remained very low (2,900–4,200 per month), with deportees accounting for 10–12% of the totals.
- April: A sharp spike occurred, with 120,000 returns, including 13,500 deportees (10%).
- May: Returns dropped to 61,800, of which 7,200 (12%) were deportees.
- June: 21,900 individuals returned, with 2,600 (12%) deported.

¹ <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/117913>

² [Microsoft Power BI](#)

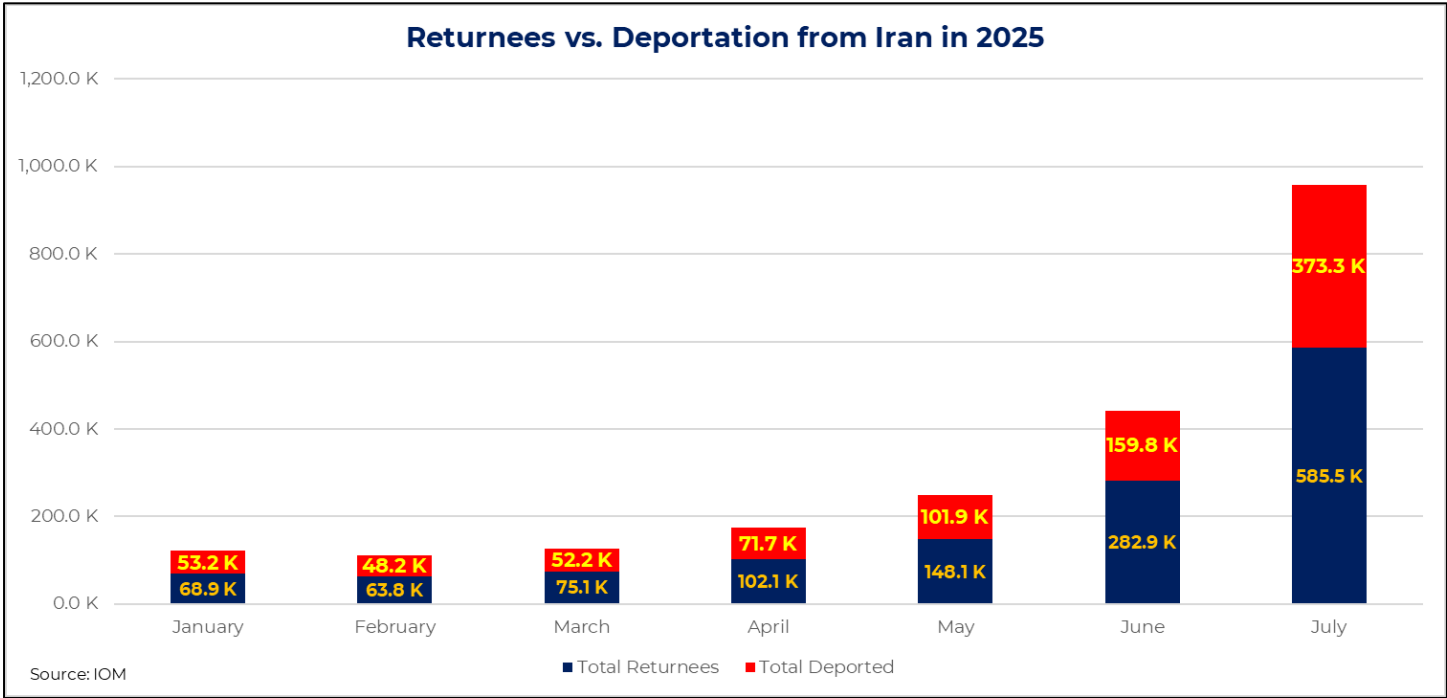
- July: 20,900 individuals returned, including 2,100 (10%) deportees.

The surge is linked to Pakistan’s Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan (IFRP), whose second phase was launched in April 2025. Initially targeting undocumented Afghans and ACC holders, the plan was expanded on 31 July to include PoR card holders. With the current grace period expiring on 31 August, pressure on Afghans to depart has intensified. Despite advocacy by UNHCR, many Afghans continue to face deportation with little notice or support.

According to Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) data, the highest daily influx was recorded on 12 April, when 6,543 individuals entered. 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.

Returnees from Iran

Between 1 January and 31 August 2025, an estimated 1.3 million Afghans returned from Iran, of whom 860,300 (64%) were deportees³.



- January–March: Returns averaged 60,000–75,000 per month, with deportees making up 73% of totals.
- April: Returns rose to 102,100, including 71,700 deportees (71%).
- May: Numbers increased further to 148,100, with 101,900 (41%) deportees.
- June: 282,900 individuals returned, of whom 159,800 (56%) were deported.
- July: A dramatic spike saw 585,500 returns, with 373,300 deportees (63%).

Overall, July alone accounted for half of all returns in this period, underscoring the scale and urgency of the mid-year surge in both voluntary and forced movements. These returnees primarily entered through the Milak–Zaranj crossing in Nimroz province and the Dogharoun–Islam Qala crossing in Herat province. On 4 July 2025, ARCS recorded, a massive influx of 40,334 individuals in a single day—5,762 families returning from Iran via the Islam Qala, Herat province crossing point.

³ [Microsoft Power BI](#)

At the Islam Qala border crossing, thousands of Afghans arrive each day from Iran, many carrying little more than the clothes on their backs. Their return is often involuntary, spurred by tightening policies, legal uncertainties, and rising discrimination. Amid scorching heat and limited infrastructure, families wait in long lines for assistance, their faces etched with exhaustion and uncertainty.

Returning Afghans, particularly women and female-headed households, face heightened protection risks and uncertainty at Islam Qala. Women without male guardians have expressed concerns about their future, highlighting the vulnerability of widows, separated women, and unaccompanied females. Returnees continue to report experiences of extortion, abuse, humiliation, and family separation in Iran, often linked to mixed marriages, arrests, and rising anti-Afghan sentiment. Protection screenings frequently identify GBV survivors, who are referred to as specialized support. Despite a strong humanitarian presence, the risks of trafficking and exploitation remain high.

Returnees from Tajikistan

Tajikistan has maintained strict border controls, allowing entry only to those with valid passports and visas. The situation has deteriorated further with reports of arbitrary deportations, including registered refugees and asylum seekers⁴. Recent government statements and media coverage in July 2025 have intensified fears within the Afghan community, prompting many to live in hiding or attempt risky crossings.⁵

Summary of response

Overview of the host National Society and ongoing response

During the reporting period from May to 31 July 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. A total of 483,362 individuals benefited from the collective efforts, highlighting the impactful outreach of the operation.

One of the achievements during this period was the provision of temporary shelter assistance in transit camps, which reached 44,006 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 296 individuals, addressing urgent hygiene needs.

The Cash-for-Work initiative provided opportunities for 60 people, empowering them to contribute to their communities while earning a livelihood. In the health and care sector, ARCS successfully reached 67,633 individuals, ensuring access to essential health services in underserved areas. Furthermore, 38,172 people benefited from improved water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities, contributing to improved health situation of the returnees in the targeted areas including Islam Qala and Torkham crossing points.

Food security remained a top priority, with the distribution of food packages and hot meals supporting 262,750 individuals. 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. Additional support was also extended at Torkham and Milak border points, addressing the needs of vulnerable populations in transit.

The ARCS deployed seven Mobile Health Teams (MHTs) to provide mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), underscoring the importance of addressing mental well-being in humanitarian responses. To enhance the effectiveness of operations, 34 staff members and volunteers received 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

⁴ [Tajikistan Escalates Deportations of Afghan Refugees Amid Growing Concerns - The Times Of Central Asia](#)

⁵ [Tajikistan Steps Up Deportations of Afghans Despite Risk of Persecution Back Home – KabulNow](#)



On the basis of the rapid needs assessment conducted by ARCS in May 2025 at Pakistan side crossing point and the evolving situation at the **Iran border** by 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, the top immediate needs reported by returnees include food (88%), shelter (71%), and financial support (74%). In terms of protection, key needs include documentation and legal assistance (63%), family reunification (51%), and support services for women and girls (21%). 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.

Returnees arriving from Pakistan and Iran face critical shelter challenges upon arrival. Many are accommodated in overcrowded tents, open spaces, or temporary public structures such as mosques and schools, where conditions are inadequate for even short-term stays. With temperatures regularly exceeding 50°C, the lack of proper shelter exposes families; particularly women, children, and the elderly to heat stress, dehydration, and protection risks. At the Islam Qala and Milak crossings points, the rapid influx of returnees from Iran has exceeded the current shelter capacity. Many returnees remain without access to safe, private, and weather-appropriate accommodation for 1 to 5 days, awaiting onward transport or relocation.

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Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH):

WASH services remained inadequate and overstretched across all major crossings. At Spin Boldak, all 50 bathing and sanitation units were 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.

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 extreme heat (up to 50°C) have further exacerbated WASH-related health concerns.

Health Services:

Health facilities both at Pakistan and Iran crossing points are under severe strain due to the sudden surge in returnees as Mobile Health teams (MHTs) report treating between 300 to 350 patients daily in Torkham and more than 1000 patients at Islam Qala. MHTs are attending a sharp rise in cases of dehydration, heat exhaustion, skin infections, and waterborne diseases. 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, vulnerable groups, especially women, children, and persons with disabilities—continue to face significant barriers to accessing services. Reports from the field in June confirm increasing needs for mental health and psychosocial support, particularly among those who experienced detention, separation, or distress during deportation from Iran.

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

Community Engagement and Feedback Mechanisms:

There is a continued need to establish and formalize community engagement mechanisms, ensuring two-way communication between returnees and humanitarian responders. As of June 2025, no structured help desks or complaint systems were in place at key border locations, including Islam Qala, despite the high volume of arrivals and pressing humanitarian needs. Although ARCS volunteers have been actively engaging with returnees at crossing points; responding to inquiries, supporting family tracing for separated individuals, and gathering verbal feedback, these interactions remain informal and undocumented, with limited mechanisms for systematic follow-up or analysis.

At Islam Qala, where daily returnee numbers surged in late June, there is increased need of communication and feedback channels especially among women, elderly returnees, and persons with disabilities who face additional barriers in navigating services. These gaps underscore the urgent need to formalize community engagement systems and ensure returnees are not only heard but meaningfully informed and supported throughout the response.

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 field observations and ongoing monitoring:

- Funding shortfalls only covering 14 per cent of the funding ask of CHF 20 million by end of July 2025 continue 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. With over 1.9 million returnees from Iran in 2025, the scale of need is growing faster than resources can be mobilized, increasing the risk of service disruptions.
- Public health risks are rising due to overcrowding, limited sanitation, and inadequate access to safe water as Islam Qala and Torkham reported sharp increases in waterborne diseases, respiratory infections, and child malnutrition, 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 compounds these vulnerabilities.

Based on initial assessments and ongoing monitoring, ARCS, with support from the IFRC Network, is preparing for the next phase of integrated recovery assessments to guide long-term support for returnees, while continuing to deliver essential emergency assistance.

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 returns from Iran, Pakistan, and other neighboring countries. The [Operational Strategy](#) published on 24 May 2025, outlines a 24-month operation to provide urgent humanitarian needs of returnees and establish a pathway for early recovery and long-term reintegration. 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, hot meals, cash support, and WASH, while also advancing early recovery efforts to restore livelihoods, ease pressure on host communities, and support vulnerable households in rebuilding 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 for the second half of the year including the response for returnees from Iran. 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.

C. DETAILED OPERATIONAL REPORT

STRATEGIC SECTORS OF INTERVENTION

 Shelter, Housing and Settlements		People Reached: 114,807	
		Female > 18: 28,398	Female < 18: 30,154
		Male > 18: 27,284	Male < 18: 28,971
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>	114,807	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			
Between April and July 2025, the ARCS made considerable progress in providing humanitarian assistance to vulnerable families affected by ongoing crises. A total of 16,401 families received temporary shelter assistance in camps near border crossing points, covering 114,807 people. ARCS erected five refugee tents within camp settings to accommodate larger groups and serve communal functions. This vital support helped families find shelter and stability amidst challenging circumstances.			

Moreover, in July infrastructure improvements aimed at enhancing the living conditions of those in these camps. Two Rub Halls was installed in Islam Qala and Nimroz (1 each), serving as essential facilities for returnees and supporting ARCS distribution activities. These halls provide critical shelter and operational space, facilitating the delivery of much-needed aid.

In addition to the new shelters, a light tower was installed at the Islam Qala and Torkham each crossing point to improve safety and visibility for individuals navigating the area. This enhancement not only aids in the distribution of assistance but also ensures that families feel more secure as they access services and support.

Through these efforts, ARCS continues to demonstrate its commitment to addressing the urgent needs of displaced families and improving their living conditions in the face of adversity.



Dispatching family tents to Islam Qala, Herat. (Photo: IFRC)



Relief and Recovery

People Reached: 262,750

Female > 18:
64,991

Female < 18:
69,011

Male > 18:
62,443

Male < 18:
66,305

Objective:

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

Key indicators:

Indicator

Number of people who received food items through the National Society's response

Actual

262,750

Target

85000

Hot Meal Distribution

Between May and July, ARCS supported by IFRC and ICRC significantly scaled up hot meal assistance for returnees from Iran. Starting with 2,500 meals per day in early May (1,500 through ICRC and 1,000 through IFRC), distributions rose to over 7,500 meals daily by the end of June. In July alone, IFRC through ARCS provided 126,350 meals (109,000 at Islam Qala and 17,350 at Milak), each accompanied by bottle of water. In total, 262,750 hot meal parcels with a bottle of water were provided to returnees over this three-month period, reflecting the rapid scale-up of support to meet increasing needs.

Meals are prepared and distributed twice daily at all major crossing points, offering a nutritious and practical alternative to packaged food, which is often unsuitable in extreme heat. These freshly cooked meals have been widely appreciated, particularly benefiting children and the elderly, who are more vulnerable to dehydration and heat-related illnesses.



Returnees standing in queue to receive the hot meals distributed by ARCS in Islam Qala, Herat. (Photo: IFRC)



Livelihoods

People Reached: 60

Female > 18:

Female < 18:

Male > 18: **60**

Male < 18:

Objective:

Communities, especially in disaster and crisis affected areas, restore and strengthen their livelihoods

Key indicators:

Indicator	Actual	Target
Number of people reached with livelihoods support	0	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	60	2,000

Cash for Work for Waste Management

To enhance camp hygiene and provide short-term income, 60 returnees were engaged in daily waste management through a cash-for-work initiative, with 40 workers at Omari Camp in Nangarhar and 20 at Takhta Pul in Kandahar. The Cash for Work program, implemented to ensure clean and safe living conditions for returnees, was carried out over a three-month period and officially concluded on 9 July 2025.

Livelihood Support

As part of early recovery efforts, five female-headed returnee families from Islam Qala have registered for longer-term reintegration support through the Marastoon program. Concurrently, a third-party market assessment, funded by FCDO, was conducted across eight provinces—Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, Nangarhar, Balkh, Kunduz, Paktika, and Parwan—to identify viable vocational skills for vulnerable returnee women. The findings will inform targeted income-generating activities and skills training within Marastoons, supporting the economic empowerment and self-reliance of returnee women.



Multi-purpose Cash

People Reached:

Female > 18:	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>	-	5,000
No MPCA intervention has been implemented until July 2025.			



Health & Care

(Mental Health and psychosocial support / Community Health / Medical Services)

People Reached: 31,220

Female > 18: 12,911	Female < 18: 961
Male > 18: 15,974	Male < 18: 1,374

Objective:	<i>Strengthening holistic individual and community health of the population impacted through community level interventions and health system strengthening</i>		
Key indicators:	Indicator	Actual	Target
	<i>Number of people reached through primary health care by the National Society</i>	31,220	350,000
	<i>Number of childbirths attended by a skilled health worker in a health facility operated by the National Society</i>	9	350
	<i>Number of functional mobile health service units providing quality primary health care</i>	11	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>	1984	22400
	<i>Number of people reached with immunization services</i>	2,381	67200
	<i>Number of people reached with mental health and psychosocial support services.</i>	9,296	35000
	<i>Number of volunteers trained in eCBHFA, NCD, HP, ECV, nutrition screening, and RH+</i>	-	1600

Primary Health Care

Between April and July 2025, ARCS, with IFRC support, provided primary health care services to 31,220 people, including 16,974 men and 14,246 women. In addition, Partner National Societies (PNS) reached 31,498 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 24,342 individuals (10,468 men and 13,874 women), while the Norwegian Red Cross (NRC) operated an MHT in Islam Qala and a health camp in Hilmand, reaching 7,156 individuals (3,012 men and 4,144 women). Altogether, ARCS and PNS health services supported 62,718 people during this reporting period.

As of July 31, 2025, a total of 11 Mobile Health Teams (MHTs) has been deployed:

- Three in Nangarhar (Torkham)
- Two in Kandahar (Spin Boldak)
- Four in Herat (Islam Qala)
- Two in Nimroz (Milak)

Additionally, two temporary health camps were established in Torkham and Takhta Pul to address the high demand for medical services at these entry points.

Outpatient Care

From April to July, a total of 31,220 beneficiaries received primary health services, comprising 16,974 male and 14,246 female. The consultations addressed various health conditions, including respiratory infections, dehydration, diarrhea, pneumonia, conjunctivitis, and non-communicable diseases.

Reproductive Health

ARCS conducted 1,900 family planning education sessions, reaching 952 women, which included 1,335 recipients of antenatal care and 649 recipients of postnatal care.

Nutrition Screening

In total, 2,381 children (1,176 girls and 1,205 boys) were screened for malnutrition. Out of these, 1,581 children had no acute malnutrition, 626 had moderate malnutrition, and 174 had severe acute malnutrition, requiring follow-up care.

Maternal and Child Health

Nine normal deliveries were safely conducted at ARCS clinics in Nangarhar. Overall, 231 individuals accessed maternal and child health (MCH) services.

Health Education

ARCS conducted awareness sessions on hygiene, disease prevention, and health-seeking behavior, reaching approximately 900 individuals.

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)

With support from the Danish Red Cross, ARCS continued to provide MHPSS services from April to July, at Torkham and Islam Qala, reaching a total of 9,296 individuals, including 4,295 men and 5,001 women through its MHTs. These services included psychological first aid, counseling, emotional support, and stress management sessions, tailored to the needs of returnees facing 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**

Male > 18: **8,779**

Male < 18: **10,307**

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

To address critical water and sanitation needs at key border crossings, particularly at Islam Qala and Torkham, the Afghan Red Crescent Society (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 handwashing facilities at the Islam Qala crossing point, alongside daily trucking of 15,000 liters of water, reaching approximately 33,676 people (about 813 returnees per day). Additionally, a bottle of drinking water was distributed daily alongside hot meals to support returnees facing 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 individuals daily. However, the sudden surge in returnees at Islam Qala has overwhelmed the existing sanitation infrastructure. Both returnees and ARCS personnel, including medical staff and volunteers, are struggling to access adequate 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:

Female > 18:

Female < 18:

Male > 18:

Male < 18:

Objective:

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

Key indicators:	Indicator	Actual	Target
	<i>Number of staff, volunteers, and leadership trained on community engagement and accountability</i>	-	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>	1	3
	<i>Number of methods used to enable communities to participate in planning and managing services, programmes, and operations</i>	-	3
	<i>Number of community perception and feedback reports produced</i>	-	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>	500	500

ARCS, with IFRC support, strengthened CEA by conducting a needs assessment and developing a standardized [CEA plan](#) and [guideline](#) for information desks.

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 strengthen two-way communication with returnees, ARCS, in collaboration with IFRC, is establishing formal information and help desks at border crossing points and returnee camps. 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 digitize the feedback mechanism. Four trained volunteers are ready for deployment in August at the Islam Qala and Milak border crossings 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.

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.



Protection, Gender, and Inclusion

People Reached:

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

Key indicators:

Indicator

Actual

Target

Number of volunteers mobilised disaggregated by gender

90

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

34

300

The ARCS applies the IFRC minimum standards for PGI in emergencies

Yes

Yes

The ARCS engages a PGI focal person

Yes

Yes

The ARCS engages a safeguarding focal person

Yes

Yes

With IFRC and Movement partner 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 PGI Officer with support from DRC and NRC and advanced plans for a joint protection assessment with ICRC.

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. 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 child-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

By the end of July 2025, over 2.1 million Afghans had returned from Iran and Pakistan. Returns from Iran were the largest, with 1.4 million between April and July (1.76 million since January), driven by the expiration of Headcount Slips, new return schemes, and growing discrimination. From Pakistan, 303,300 returns were recorded between April and July, including nearly 51,000 deportees.

Daily return numbers peaked mid-July and eased slightly by month's end, though levels remained very high. Returns accelerated with the government's repatriation plan and the expiry of Proof of Registration cards on 30 June, with PoR card holders making up 23 percent of returnees in July compared to 6 percent in April. While flows from Iran showed signs of slowing, returns from Pakistan are expected to increase further.

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 enhance coordination, an IFRC Technical Migration Cell—comprising colleagues from Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Asia Pacific Regional Office, and Geneva—was established and continued to meet bi-weekly during the reporting period. These meetings facilitate cross-border coordination with the Pakistan Red Crescent Society, 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 for delivery in September, to strengthen ARCS capacity in supporting returnees with essential services and protection. In parallel, 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: <i>Communities in high-risk areas are prepared for and able to respond to disaster</i>			
	Indicator	Actual	Target

Key indicators	<i>Number of strategic partnerships the National Society is engaged in</i>	-	5
	<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 Afghan Red Crescent Society (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.

To strengthen advocacy and visibility, a high-level joint visit to Islam Qala was conducted from 27 June to 2 July by the ARCS President, Disaster Management team, and senior IFRC representatives, including the Regional Director, Head of Delegation, and technical teams. This visit highlighted urgent needs, mobilized additional support, and reinforced ARCS's leadership role in the response. Coordination efforts have also included regular Movement task force meetings with ICRC and a Federation-wide partners call on 21 July, where operational gaps and funding needs were reviewed.

Partner National Societies (PNSs) continued supporting including Norwegian Red Cross supports 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 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.

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.



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>	3	2

The IFRC Country Delegation continues to provide strategic, operational, and technical support to the Afghan Red Crescent Society (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

By end of July 2025, communications and humanitarian diplomacy, IFRC has significantly scaled up efforts to raise visibility and advocacy. 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.

Links for stories shared:

- [Afghan returnee's story](#)
- [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 July 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)

In PMER, IFRC has supported the development and publication of two Operations Update, five Federation-wide Situation Reports, three Disaster Snapshots. In light of 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.

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 five 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 July 2025, four Rapid Response personnel have been deployed to support the operation, including an Operations Manager (first rotation), a PMER Officer, and a Communications Coordinator completing their mission, with a second Operations Manager rotation currently supporting in country (7 July - 31 October 2025). These deployments have strengthened operational management, planning, and communications, significantly enhancing ARCS’s capacity to address the evolving needs at the crossing points.

D. FUNDING

IFRC Secretariat Coverage	Amount Raised (CHF)	Funding Gap (CHF)	Coverage %
Hard Pledges + In kind + Soft Pledges	2,721,952	17,278,048	14%

Federation-wide Coverage	Amount Raised (CHF)	Funding Gap (CHF)	Coverage %
ARCS domestic income + IFRC Secretariat + Bilateral support to NRCS	3,287,555	21,712,446	13%

As of 31 July 2025, 14% 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.

A financial report will only be included in the next reporting period through a 6-month update.

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

Contact information

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- **Regional Logistics Manager:** Nuraiza Khairuddin, email: nuraiza.khairuddin@ifrc.org

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.