

Iran

# **Annual Results Report**2024

# Acknowledgements

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#### Note:

The baseline values presented in this document reflect previous year's progress when available. If such data is not available, strategy baseline values are used instead.

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# **Section 1: Context and Overview**

# 1.1 Changes to the Operational Context

The Islamic Republic of Iran has generously hosted forcibly displaced people for over 40 years, upholding refugee-inclusive policies and ensuring continued quality access to essential public services, in particular including healthcare and education. However, the operational context has undergone significant changes in recent years, posing new challenges to both refugees and the host country.

According to available information, Iran hosts approximately 773,000 refugees holding Amayesh (761,000 Afghans) and Hoviat cards (12,000 Iraqis). Iran is also the largest refugee-hosting country globally, with some 3.8 million refugees and refugee-like of various documentation statuses, including 2.6 million Afghans registered through a government-led headcount exercise in 2022. The volatile and unsafe situation in Afghanistan, especially for women and ethnic minorities, continues to drive Afghans to seek protection in Iran.

Despite these mounting challenges, Iran has maintained its inclusive policies by ensuring access to primary healthcare for all, regardless of documentation status. However, recent shifts have introduced new documentation-based restrictions in the Education sector. As such, only foreign students with a Yekta code\* can register in schools, and even then, enrolment depends on the availability of spaces. At the same time, the compounding effects of sanctions and economic instability, including currency depreciation and high inflation, have triggered a cost-of-living crisis, making basic goods and services increasingly unaffordable. Without greater international responsibility-sharing, these inclusive policies may come under strain, potentially leaving many Afghans, including children, without critical support.

Amid rising needs and funding shortfalls, UNHCR's capacity to assist refugees in Iran is becoming increasingly constrained, impacting protection efforts and the overall asylum space. The country's worsening economic situation, coupled with reduced UNHCR financial resources, will affect ongoing and future partnerships, narrowing the scope of assistance available. Consequently, more vulnerable people may be forced to resort to negative coping mechanisms to survive.

\*Yekta code is a unique 10-digit code issued to foreign nationals with valid residence status. This code is used to identify and provide services to foreign nationals.

# 1.2. Progress Against the Desired Impact

# 1. Impact Area: Attaining Favorable Protection Environments

1) By end of 2024, all asylum-seekers have access to asylum systems and refugees and asylum-seekers enjoy improved access to social protection systems and UNHCR services following the adoption of progressive legal policies

Indicator					
Population Type Baseline Actual (2024)					
1.1 Proportion of people seeking international protection who are able to access asylum procedures					
Refugees and Asylum-seekers 19.77% 20.54%					

Iran remained responsible for the registration and documentation of foreign nationals, including those in need of international protection. In the absence of a fully-fledged asylum procedure the Government continued to implement several documentation systems that provide foreign nationals, including forcibly displaced people, with certain documentation statuses. These include Amayesh and Hoviat cards, headcount slips, family passports, and visas, each granting varying levels of social protection, rights and access to services.

Since February 2003, Amayesh and Hoviat card holders have been recognized as de-facto refugees. In 2024, approximately 773,000 Amayesh and Hoviat card holders continued to benefit from this protection, based on the last Government-led verification conducted in 2022. While there were plans to transition all legally staying foreigners to smart ID cards, the process was put on hold. Instead, the Government launched an Amayesh card renewal exercise (Amayesh 18) in December 2024 to verify existing Amayesh and Hoviat card holders.

For the 2.6 million Afghans registered through the 2022 headcount exercise, including those who arrived after August 2021, temporary protection was provided in principle, safeguarding them from / deportation and granting access to some rights and services. However, in 2024, more restrictive policies impacted this group, particularly concerning access to education and, in some provinces, the right to stay. This population was the primary target of a new financial scheme although this initiative was also put on hold in July 2024.

The Government extended the validity of family passports visas until June 2025. However, by year-end, valid passport holders, including those in need of international protection, faced various challenges extending their visas. Following the July 2024 Presidential election, discussions on a proposed legal framework for foreign nationals, including forcibly displaced populations, remain ongoing in Parliament. Meanwhile, newly arrived people in need of international protection continue to lack any legal avenues for refugee status determination or access to social protection schemes, while UNHCR's ability to provide assistance remains limited.

Looking ahead, UNHCR will continue engaging with its key Government partner, the Center for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs under the Ministry of Interior, to ensure access to legal status and documentation for all Afghan nationals in need of international protection, particularly headcount slip holders, who risk losing their status when it expires in March 2025. UNHCR's global non-return advisory for Afghanistan, issued in August 2021, and its guidance note on the international protection needs of people fleeing Afghanistan, published in February 2022, remain in effect. Despite these measures, effective access to protection remained a challenge throughout 2024.

# 2. Impact Area: Realizing Rights in Safe Environments

2) By 2024, inclusive policies of GIRI across all public services (health, education, social protection and financial inclusion) will continue to be maintained and become further refined, affordable and

#### sustainable for refugees and asylum-seekers

Indicator				
Population Type Baseline Actual (2024)				
2.2 Proportion of people residing in physically safe and secure settlements with access to basic facilities				
Refugees and Asylum-seekers 89.67% 90.00%				
2.3 Proportion of people with access to health services				
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	92.00%	92.86%		

As part of the Government's inclusive policies, all Afghans and Iraqis, regardless of their documentation status, continue to have access to free primary healthcare services nationwide, on par with Iranian nationals. These services include vaccination and immunization campaigns, ante- and post-natal care, maternal and child healthcare, growth monitoring for children under five, communicable and non-communicable disease treatment, and family planning. In 2023, UNHCR reinforced these inclusive policies through a partnership with the Center for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs and the Ministry of Health and Medical Education, focusing on over 10 refugee-hosting provinces.

While secondary and tertiary healthcare remained available, high costs posed a significant barrier, particularly for the most vulnerable. To address this, UNHCR has supported a Government-led initiative since 2015, ensuring subsidized access to national universal public health insurance and treatment for those in need. In 2024, UNHCR covered the premium fees for 95,000 of the most vulnerable refugees through a special partnership agreement with the Iran Health Insurance Organization, prioritizing people with chronic conditions such as haemophilia, thalassemia, renal failure, kidney transplants, and multiple sclerosis.

However, the economic crisis – exacerbated by ongoing sanctions and soaring inflation – continued to put immense pressure on refugee and host communities alike. By year-end, media reports indicated that the poverty threshold for a family of three had risen to around IRR 200,000,000 (USD 300, based on the UN exchange rate as of 31 December 2024). A five-year impact assessment (2018-2022) of income levels among people trained by the Technical and Vocational Training Organization found that most employed people earned below this threshold, regardless of family size, with only a few exceptions.

Against this backdrop, UNHCR continued efforts to promote self-reliance and economic opportunities for refugees. In 2024, 856 refugees participated in technical and vocational training courses, while 71 female refugees received vocational trainings and employment support – helping them build sustainable livelihoods and secure decent incomes for the future.

# 3. Impact Area: Empowering Communities and Achieving Gender Equality

3) By 2024, improved self-sufficiency and self-management is realized by refugees and asylumseekers as a result of the advancement in inclusive economic policies and access to national social networks and community based mechanisms

Indicator			
Population Type	Baseline	Actual (2024)	
3.1 Proportion of people who have the right to decent work			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	19.77%	40.13%	
3.2a Proportion of children and young people enrolled in primary education			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	88.00%	60.03%	
3.2b Proportion of children and young people enrolled in secondary education			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	73.00%	60.03%	

Iran has long upheld an inclusive approach to education, allowing foreign children to learn alongside Iranian students in public schools. Since 2015, the Supreme Leader's Decree has ensured access to primary and secondary education for all Afghan students, including those without documentation. In addition, since May 2016, refugee-specific fees (ranging from \$70 to \$90) have been waived, enabling Afghan students to receive an education comparable to their Iranian peers.

Despite these policies, significant challenges persist. The education system remains overstretched due to the large number of children enrolled at public schools. In 2024, only foreign students with a Yekta code (unique 10-digit code issued to foreign nationals with valid residence status) were eligible for enrolment – subject to available space – effectively limiting access for undocumented children. According to the Ministry of Education, around 610,000 refugees were enrolled in Iranian schools for the 2024-2025 academic year.

To help ease pressure on the national education system, UNHCR supported the construction of four 12-classroom schools in the refugee-hosting provinces, benefiting both refugees and host communities. However, greater responsibility-sharing by the international community will be critical in sustaining and expanding education opportunities in 2025.

Beyond education, forcibly displaced people in Iran remain disproportionately affected by the country's economic conditions, exacerbated by high inflation. Many Afghan refugee households struggle to meet basic needs, living well below the subsistence minimum. While UNHCR, along with other UN agencies and NGO partners, continued livelihoods support through technical and vocational training, opportunities remain limited. Refugees are restricted to a narrow range of job categories and female refugees rarely receive temporary work permits. Enhanced advocacy and follow-up will be crucial in the coming year to improve self-reliance and expand access to sustainable livelihoods.

# 4. Impact Area: Securing Solutions

4) Durable solutions are secured for refugees and asylum-seekers, through a combination of local solutions/inclusion, voluntary return, complementary pathways and resettlement, when appropriate

Indicator				
Population Type	Baseline	Actual (2024)		
4.1 Number of refugees who voluntarily return in safety and dignity to their country of origin				
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	521	1,092		
4.2a Number of people who departed on resettlement				
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1,489	1,105		
4.2b Number of people who departed through complementary pathways				
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	28	50		

The prospects for local integration remained limited in 2024, even for long-staying forcibly displaced people or those born in Iran, as the country does not grant nationality to refugees. While many Afghans were de facto integrated from a socioeconomic perspective – some even holding investments that could qualify them for long-term residence permits – Iran continued to lack a formal integration policy. Although certain subsidies available to Iranian nationals also extended to foreigners regardless of their legal status, the country's once-commended inclusive policies deteriorated over the year. This decline was largely driven by worsening economic conditions due to sanctions and rising anti-Afghan sentiment among the local population.

In this context, UNHCR maintained a cautious approach to voluntary repatriation following the renewal of the non-return advisory for Afghanistan in February 2023. The advisory reaffirmed the call for States to suspend the forced return of Afghan nationals due to ongoing concerns about safety and human rights concerns. From January to December 2024, UNHCR facilitated the voluntary repatriation of 1,092 Afghans, a twofold increase compared to the same period in 2023. The rise coincided with worsening economic conditions in Iran, with returnees citing the need to obtain documentation in Afghanistan and the desire for family reunification as key factors influencing their decision.

Beyond those who benefited from UNHCR-assisted voluntary repatriation programmes – available only to Government-recognized refugees (Amayesh card holders) – UNHCR Afghanistan's border monitoring reports estimated that approximately 516,000 Afghan nationals spontaneously returned from Iran in 2024. These spontaneous returns likely reflect a complex mix of personal, economic and social factors shaping decision to return.

Resettlement efforts for Afghan nationals continued throughout 2024. 3,775 refugees were submitted for resettlement consideration in 2024, while 1,105 refugees departed Iran for resettlement. By year-end, 1,890 refugees were awaiting departure to resettlement countries. However, processing times remained lengthy, with an average timeline of one to two years from submission to departure. The resettlement programme has further strengthened collaboration with the Government, which views resettlement as an important responsibility-sharing mechanism that underscores Iran's role as one of the largest refugee-hosting countries.

Iran maintained the same exit policy as in 2023, allowing Afghan refugees accepted for resettlement to depart without Afghan passports – an exemption that has been in place for several years. In 2024, significant progress was made in expanding complementary pathways. 678 people received support to access these pathways, including 483 who benefitted from family reunification. In total, 50 people departed Iran through complementary pathways, reflecting increased access to these opportunities. These developments underscore ongoing efforts to enhance safe and legal migration opportunities for Afghan refugees while strengthening cooperation with key partners to facilitate durable solutions.

# 1.3 Challenges to Achieving Impacts

For decades, Iran has generously hosted Afghan and Iraqi refugees, implementing inclusive healthcare and education policies even after the significant influx of Afghan refugees in 2022. In 2024, Iran officially became the largest refugee-hosting country globally, sheltering 3.8 million refugees and people in refugee-like situations. However, amid a worsening socioeconomic situation, the responsibility of hosting refugees has been increasingly perceived by both the Government and the general public as a strain. Sharp increases in the cost of basic commodities, housing, services, and utilities, has left many refugees — primarily Afghans — increasingly vulnerable. Given the widespread reliance on informal and daily labour arrangements among forcibly displaced and stateless people, a considerable number of households live at or below subsistence levels. Access to a favourable protection environment became increasingly difficult in 2024 due to limited pathways for inclusion and reduced funding for the refugee response. Widespread anti-Afghan rhetoric intensified, placing additional pressure on the Government to advance restrictive policies toward foreign nationals, including forcibly displaced populations. This resulted in stricter restrictions on access to rights and services. The absence of a predictable legal framework for asylum procedures also

continued to prevent people in need of international protection from receiving effective safeguards in line with international standards.

Political developments throughout the year added further uncertainty. The elections in March (Parliament) and June (Presidency) brought changes that affected refugee polices in Iran. In July, the new administration suspended registration for unified smart ID cards and the financial scheme, reinstating the Amayesh system later in the year. In October, the new Government withdrew the proposed bill on the "Establishment of Foreign Nationals Immigrants Organization", in favour of submitting a new bill to establish the National Organization for Migration (NOM). As a result, a considerable number of people in refugee-like situations, including headcount slip holders and those with expired documents, were at imminent risk of losing their legal status, making them vulnerable to potential arrest and deportation. Despite the scale of displacement, equitable responsibility-sharing by the international community remained insufficient. Restricted access to official statistics also hindered UNHCR's ability to incorporate accurate projections into protection programming.

The healthcare sector was also severely impacted by the Government's financial constraints. This reduced its capacity to provide subsidized healthcare services to refugees and subsequently increased peoples' reliance on humanitarian actors to fill widening gaps. While UNHCR provided support through international medical procurement, staffing costs, and hygiene items, significant needs were unmet. As a result, greater international responsibility-sharing continues to be needed to sustain UNHCR's programmes and support Iran maintaining its inclusive policies and services to ensure Afghans are not left behind.

The sharp increase in forcibly displaced and stateless people since 2021, coupled with UNHCR Iran's shrinking education budget since 2023, placed immense pressure on the national system. A lack of safe educational infrastructure in refugee-populated areas has led to overcrowded classrooms and a growing number of out of school children (both boys and girls). These challenges are likely to undermine social cohesion and peaceful coexistence. Although the Government has maintained an inclusive education policy, the recent restriction on undocumented Afghan children's access to education presents a significant protection concern, particularly in light of the ongoing ban on secondary education for girls in Afghanistan. Most refugees face barriers to self-reliance and employment due to restrictions on permitted job categories. Many working-age refugees still lack opportunities to acquire skills to seek employment and achieve financial independence. The worsening economic situation has also led to rising unemployment among host communities, further compounding difficulties for forcibly displaced populations. Through partnerships with governmental and local organizations, UNHCR provided technical and vocational training courses to empower refugees and enhance their access to the job market. However, expanding access to sustainable livelihoods and income-generating activities remains critical for forcibly displaced and stateless people to maintain a dignified life and navigate the challenges of an increasingly fragile economy.

# 1.4 Collaboration and Partnerships

Building on the 2021 Refugee Coordination Model in Iran, UNHCR consolidated its partnerships under the 2024-2025 Refugee Response Plan (RRP) for the Afghanistan situation. As the lead agency, UNHCR convened a Refugee Response Group comprising RRP partners to provide strategic leadership, oversee joint planning and prioritization, facilitate advocacy with the Government, and develop common operating standards. This platform enabled partners to review achievements, adjust strategies and raise concerns, particularly benefitting smaller organizations.

Coordination among the 14 RRP partners continued via seven sector working groups, with UNHCR actively participating in all and leading or co-leading four: Protection, Shelter/NFI, Cash, and Health. It also convened the Inter-Sector Coordination Group and led key coordination processes. The use of the 5Ws framework facilitated monitoring and coordination under the 2024-2025 RRP. RRP partners prioritized inclusive education services in Iran, particularly for Afghan girls and women who remain excluded from secondary education in Afghanistan, and launched an Education Brief, calling for increased responsibility-sharing from the international community.

In 2024, UNHCR worked closely with 13 implementing partners, six NGOs and two UN agencies, securing funding to advance inclusive policies and protect refugees' rights. Engagement with the Center for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants' Affairs within the Ministry of Interior, UNHCR's primary Government counterpart, remained constructive, with regular discussions highlighting concerns over the protection status of many Afghans in Iran.

As an observer to the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, UNHCR collaborated with

international aid organizations to align the RRP with broader development initiatives. This included expanding area-based programmes that provide health, nutrition, and education services to Afghan populations and vulnerable Iranians. By strengthening these synergies, UNHCR sought to explore and promote nexus approaches to foster more sustainable responses on the ground.

# **Section 2: Results**

# 2.1. Outcomes and Achievements

## 1. Outcome Area: Access to Territory, Reg. and Documentation

1.2 By the end of 2024, increased number of people in need of UNHCR assistance/interventions are registered on individual basis

#### **Core Output Indicators**

Indicator		
Population Type	Actual (2024)	
01.1.1 Number of people registered on an individual basis		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	46,513	

## **Progress Against the Desired Outcome**

UNHCR's registration activities in Iran continued to serve as an enrolment mechanism for people seeking assistance. In 2024, UNHCR enrolled 46,154 new people in proGres, facilitating access to assistance and solutions such as cash-based interventions, voluntary repatriation, resettlement, specialized services (including child protection and gender-based violence case management) as well as support for people with disabilities, medical needs, legal aid and psychological assistance.

The operational capacity for registration activities was impacted by budget reductions in 2024, leading to a decrease in staffing. In addition, biometric data collection through BIMS became mandatory, increasing the duration of each interview by an average of 10 minutes. While these factors affected the number of people enrolled in 2025, they contributed to improved data quality in ProGres and strengthened identity management.

Despite these challenges, UNHCR responded to the growing demand for registration to support planning, case management, and durable solutions in Iran. Between October and December 2024, UNHCR conducted its first verification exercise, updating and verifying 21,645 individual proGres records – 77% more than the initial target. This significantly enhanced data reliability, complemented by other data quality control mechanisms.

However, the lack of accurate and updated data prior to 2022, when forcibly displaced and stateless people were only enrolled in proGres on an ad-hoc basis for specific assistance, remained a key gap. Efforts to improve data integrity led to a substantial increase in biometric capture rates, rising from 48% in 2023 to 70% in 2024, while data quality accuracy improved from 66% to 94%.

# 3. Outcome Area: Protection Policy and Law

1.1 By 2024, national policies will be enacted to enhance access to documentation, legal assistance and legal remedies for persons in need of international protection

#### **Core Outcome Indicators**

Indicator				
Population Type	Baseline	Target (2024)	Actual (2024)	
3.1 Extent national legal framework is in line with the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol				
None	Progressing toward alignment	Progressing toward alignment	Progressing toward alignment	
3.2 Extent national legal framework is in line with the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness				
None	Progressing toward alignment	Progressing toward alignment	Not yet aligned	

#### **Core Output Indicators**

Indicator		
Population Type	Actual (2024)	
03.1.1 UNHCR has engaged in legislative and judicial processes to strengthen laws and policies for the protection of refugees, IDPs, returnees and stateless people and/or the reduction and prevention of statelessness		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Yes	

# **Progress Against the Desired Outcome**

UNHCR continued advocating for national policies that enhance access to documentation, legal assistance and legal remedies for people in need of international protection. In 2024, advocacy efforts focused on ensuring that developments related to the establishment of the National Organization for Migration (NOM) aligned with international standards. UNHCR engaged in a series of advocacy interventions throughout the year, including holding technical-level dialogues with Government counterparts - primarily the Center for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs (CAFIA) - to address key protection concerns such as access to territory and asylum, protection from refoulement, and the prevention of statelessness. Structural changes in the Government's management of migration and refugee affairs progressed further in 2024. The "NOM Bill", which aimed to formalize its establishment and was initially set to be enacted under Article 86 of the 7th National Development Plan approved in October 2023, remains under parliamentary review. Meanwhile, NOM's role as UNHCR's main Government counterpart, has undergone modifications. Following the presidential election in July 2024, NOM was integrated into CAFIA's structure. The bill also proposed significant changes to Iran's asylum framework, including provisions for the "revocation of the 2019 Nationality Law Amendment", which had previously allowed children born to Iranian mothers and non-Iranian fathers to acquire nationality under certain conditions. The potential reversal of this provision remained a key concern for UNHCR, which continued to monitor the bill's progress and sought access to its latest version for further analysis and advocacy.

Access to rights and services in Iran for forcibly displaced people has largely been governed by ad-hoc government decisions on people's legal status. Since 2003, the Government has annually renewed refugee identification cards – Amayesh cards for Afghans and Hoviat cards for Iraqis. A new registration exercise, Amayesh 18, was initiated in December 2024 to verify and update records of previous Amayesh and Hoviaat cardholders. These cards provide long-staying refugees conditional freedom of movement, access to basic services and eligibility for temporary work permits in limited job categories. Since 2023, the Government has attempted to unify different documentation statuses under the Smart Governance Scheme for Foreign Nationals, which was linked to the Financial Scheme requiring foreign nationals to make financial contributions in exchange for conditional access to rights and services. However, both schemes were revoked in July 2024 following a policy shift by the newly elected administration and parliament, leaving the legal status and access to rights for forcibly displaced people unresolved.

Throughout 2024, UNHCR continued to provide legal assistance to refugees through 16 Dispute Settlement Committees (DSCs) and 18 UNHCR Hired Lawyers (UHLs) under its Legal Services Projects across 19 provinces. DSCs served as a free, accessible alternative dispute resolution mechanism, enabling Afghan refugees to settle disputes through mediation with the involvement of Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrant Affairs officials, judges, and UHLs. While DSC decisions were nonbinding, they were widely respected by both Afghan and Iranian parties. UHLs also played a critical role beyond DSC participation, offering free legal services to people under UNHCR's mandate. In 2024, DSCs assisted 1,773 people, while UHLs provided legal services to 9,728 people, primarily addressing family, civil, financial, and criminal disputes.

#### 4. Outcome Area: Gender-based Violence

1.2. GBV survivors are identified, have access and are aware of existing/ strengthened support services, including national support systems

#### **Core Outcome Indicators**

Indicator			
Population Type	Baseline	Target (2024)	Actual (2024)
4.1 Proportion of people who know where to access available GBV services			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	10.00%	20.00%	20.00%

#### **Core Output Indicators**

Indicator		
Population Type	Actual (2024)	
04.1.1 Number of people who benefitted from specialized GBV programmes		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	633	

# **Progress Against the Desired Outcome**

UNHCR continued to identify and offer appropriate multi-sectorial assistance to survivors of gender-based violence through its registration activities, protection interviews and assessments led by UNHCR-trained staff. Survivors were prioritized for referrals to specialized services, including legal counselling by lawyers, psychosocial support, healthcare assistance, tailored cash assistance, and where appropriate, resettlement considerations. In 2024, 633 survivors received support through 813 interventions, including psychosocial counselling (204 people), cash assistance (125 people) and legal aid (107 people), among other services.

To mitigate risks of further exposure and reduce reliance on negative coping mechanisms, UNHCR strengthened the capacity of protection staff through a Training of Trainers programme. This initiative aimed to mainstream prevention and response across protection activities, particularly in light of the reprioritization of protection efforts and staff realignment. UNHCR also enhanced the quality of sensitive data management, including data entry, storage and sharing in proGres.

In all five field locations, UNHCR conducted an awareness campaign on addressing gender-based violence as part of the 16 Days of Activism in December 2024, alongside regular awareness raising. During the campaign, UNHCR organized 20 awareness raising sessions, reaching more than 700 people, including parents, young people, other minorities and people with disabilities. These efforts were supported by several partners, including local NGOs and refugee-led organizations, UNHCR-hired lawyers, affiliated workforce, and psychosocial counsellors.

To ensure the sustainability of these efforts, UNHCR maintained its partnership with the Iranian NGO Association for Protection of Refugee Women and Children – also known as HAMI – to provide psychosocial counselling and training for women, including survivors of violence, both inside and outside settlements in the provinces of Semnan and Khorasan Razavi.

#### 5. Outcome Area: Child Protection

1.3. Children are protected from violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation and discrimination and have access to child friendly procedures and inclusive national services

#### **Core Outcome Indicators**

Indicator			
Population Type	Baseline	Target (2024)	Actual (2024)
5.1 Proportion of children at heightened risk who are supported by a Best Interests Procedure			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	61.13%	80.00%	14.64%

#### **Core Output Indicators**

Indicator		
Population Type	Actual (2024)	
05.1.1 Number of children and caregivers who received child protection services		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	570	

# **Progress Against the Desired Outcome**

In 2024, UNHCR identified and recorded 3,921 children at risk through registration and protection interviews. These included children engaged in labour, those with special education needs, unaccompanied and separated children, child spouses, and others facing protection risks. UNHCR continued to provide child protection case management services such as psychosocial and social support, cash assistance, legal aid, and durable solutions.

470 best interest assessments were undertaken to assess the best interests of children, particularly in cases considered for solutions such as resettlement and voluntary repatriation. In addition, 570 children received support through 854 interventions, including psychosocial counselling (128 cases), cash assistance for child protection (114 cases), legal aid (67 cases), education enrolment support (44 cases), alongside continuous case follow-up. Case management was carried out by trained protection staff following established standard operating procedures and UNHCR's global child protection policies. As part of efforts to mainstream child protection, UNHCR organized two child protection training sessions in September 2024, attended by 129 and 109 colleagues, respectively. Participants included staff from different units including protection, programme, external engagement and information management, to strengthen collective knowledge and engagement in child protection efforts.

# 7. Outcome Area: Community Engagement and Women's Empowerment

3.1 By 2024, diverse refugees and asylum-seekers are better informed and are able to participate in a progressively more meaningful manner with UNHCR, the Government and

partners in programme design, implementation and evaluation while also being able to access safe and effective feedback and response mechanisms

#### **Core Outcome Indicators**

Indicator				
Population Type	Baseline	Target (2024)	Actual (2024)	
7.1 Extent participation of displaced and stateless people across programme phases is supported.				
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Unknown	Moderate	Limited	
7.2 Proportion of people who have access to safe feedback and response mechanisms				
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	10.00%	45.00%	27.95%	

#### **Core Output Indicators**

Indicator			
Population Type	Actual (2024)		
07.2.1 Number of people who used UNHCR- supported feedback mechanisms to voice their needs/ concerns/feedback	& response		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	129,925		
07.3.1 Number of people who received protection services			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	149,455		

# **Progress Against the Desired Outcome**

In 2024, UNHCR's Hotline remained one of the most frequently used communication channels by communities, receiving 606,985 calls. UNHCR responded to 56,435 queries, helping identify vulnerable people in need of protection and referring them for enrolment in appropriate support programmes. 95,362 people were received in UNHCR's reception areas, where they participated in group counselling sessions. Of these, 7% were identified and referred for further support.

To enhance reporting on community-based protection, UNHCR implemented a harmonized reporting template in 2024. This facilitated timely and systematic documentation of feedback and complaints, disaggregated by sex and age, alongside the corresponding responses. Communication with forcibly displaced and stateless people was also maintained through emails and letters via a dedicated email address and functioning feedback and complaints boxes in UNHCR offices. By November 2024, UNHCR had received 105,388 emails, all of which were addressed by the end of the year, ensuring no backlog. Most emails related to resettlement and cash assistance, while those requiring urgent protection interventions were referred to designated caseworkers covering different thematic areas for appropriate assistance.

To improve accessibility and efficiency, UNHCR partially replaced email-based communication with a new online contact form in November 2024. By year-end, 92,017 requests had been received through this platform, increasing engagement with the UNHCR Iran webpage, which recorded 1,860,300 views in 2024. 88,087 requests submitted via the online contact form were addressed. This new system enabled automated referrals to focal points in field offices, standardized information collection and improved UNHCR's ability to track and identify urgent cases, resulting in more effective and timely response management.

# 8. Outcome Area: Well-Being and Basic Needs

2.1. Services and assistance to support the most vulnerable people to cover their basic needs is extended and strengthened through an inclusive approach (where possible) with a particular focus on persons with specific needs

#### **Core Outcome Indicators**

Indicator						
Population Type Baseline Target (2024) Actual (2024)						
8.1 Proportion of people that receive cash transfers and/or non-food items						
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	33.17%	70.00%	78.00%			

#### **Core Output Indicators**

Indicator			
Population Type	Actual (2024)		
08.1.1 Number of people who received cash assistance			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	56,914		
08.2.1 Number of people who received non-food items			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	25,000		

### **Progress Against the Desired Outcome**

In 2024, cash-based interventions (CBI) supported 53,125 people from 11,635 households under the well-being and basic needs categories. In the durable solutions category, cash assistance was extended to 551 households, benefiting 2,106 people. Financial support was also provided to 21 CBI focal points to facilitate legal assistance, helping resolve legal claims within the refugee community. Overall, the number of non-duplicated assistance across all outcome areas reached 12,813, covering 56,303 people. The total amount of assistance provided was IRR 1,002,733,090,000 (approximately USD 2,233,679). The total number of "unique" individuals supported stood at 54,897, corresponding to 12,134 "unique" households.

Post Distribution Monitoring – conducted with a sample of 508 refugee households – revealed that 62% were female, and 98% resided in urban areas. Among them, 85% expressed a preference for cash assistance over in-kind support, and 90% recognized that the assistance was intended to help meet their multipurpose needs. 83% reported no difficulties accessing key items in the market. Refugee households primarily used the assistance to cover food, healthcare, housing, rent, and debt repayment. However, frequent price fluctuations significantly eroded purchasing power, with 82% of respondents stating they were unable to meet their basic needs due to rising costs. Food remained the highest priority, with 58% of households allocating their cash assistance to cover food expenses, followed by 48% for healthcare, 38% for rent and accommodation and 26% for debt repayment. Compared to the same period last year, household spending in these key areas declined by 11% to 28%, underscoring the growing financial strain.

# 10. Outcome Area: Healthy Lives

2.3 Refugees and asylum-seekers maintain inclusive and affordable access to primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare over duration of multi-year plan

#### **Core Output Indicators**

Indicator			
Population Type	Actual (2024)		
10.1.1 Number of individual consultations in UNHCR supported health care services			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	3,708,176		
10.2.1 Number of consultations in UNHCR supported mental health and psychosocial support services			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1,784		

### **Progress Against the Desired Outcome**

In 2024, all Afghans and Iraqis, regardless of their documentation status, continued to have access to free primary healthcare services on par with nationals. These services included vaccinations, immunizations, ante- and post-natal care, growth monitoring for children under-five, and treatment for communicable and non-communicable diseases. UNHCR reinforced its support for health-inclusive policies through a partnership with Center for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants' Affairs within the Ministry of Interior as well as the Ministry of Health and Medical Education.

While secondary and tertiary healthcare remained available to all, high costs continued to pose a barrier for many people. To mitigate this, UNHCR has supported a Government-led initiative since 2015 that enables refugees to enrol in the national Universal Public Health Insurance scheme, granting access to treatments at reduced costs. In 2024, UNHCR covered the premium fees for 97,032 refugees, including 95,000 through a partnership with the Iran Health Insurance Organization and 2,032 of the most vulnerable refugees through a UN-to-UN agreement with UNFPA, ensuring their subsidized access to public hospitals.

#### 11. Outcome Area: Education

2.2 Refugees and asylum-seekers maintain an inclusive and equitable access to the primary and secondary education system in Iran over duration of multi-year plan

#### **Core Outcome Indicators**

Indicator						
Population Type Baseline Target (2024) Actual (2024)						
11.2 Proportion of children and young people enrolled in the national education system						
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	82.00%	82.00% 82.00%				

#### **Core Output Indicators**

Indicator		
Population Type	Actual (2024)	
11.1.1 Number of people who benefitted from education programming		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	2,880	

### **Progress Against the Desired Outcome**

Since 2015, a decree from Iran's Supreme Leader has guaranteed access to education for Afghan students, regardless of documentation status. Since May 2016, refugee-specific fees – ranging from \$70 and \$90 – have been waived. Despite these progressive and inclusive policies, many refugee and undocumented students still faced challenges. The education system remained overstretched due to a significant increase in new arrivals, while associated costs such as uniforms, insurance and transportation placed a heavy burden on families.

To support the Government's efforts, UNHCR contributed to a package of education interventions, including the construction of 10 schools, each with 12 classrooms, to help accommodate the approximately 800,000 Afghan students in the country. UNHCR also collaborated with Center for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants' Affairs Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Education to co-fund the construction of four 12-classroom schools. This initiative helped alleviate pressure on the already overstretched educational infrastructure, providing space for around 3,000 students. However, this contribution alone was unable to meet the growing demand for educational infrastructure.

Furthering its commitment to education, UNHCR, in partnership with Iranian NGO International Association of Tomorrow's Development Activists (IFDAA), supported 303 students in pursing tertiary education through the DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) scholarship programme. This initiative facilitated their transition to or completion of higher education thereby enhancing their opportunities for future self-reliance and professional growth.

### 13. Outcome Area: Self Reliance, Economic Inclusion and Livelihoods

3.2 By 2024, an increased number of refugees and asylum-seekers enjoy expanded and diversified livelihood opportunities

#### **Core Output Indicators**

Indicator		
Population Type Actual (2024		
13.1.1 Number of people who benefitted from livelihoods and economic inclusion interventions		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	927	

# **Progress Against the Desired Outcome**

In 2024, UNHCR facilitated vocational training and income-generating opportunities for 927 refugees through partnerships with the government and NGO partners, including the Technical and Vocational Training Organization (TVTO) and Iranian Life Quality Empowerment (ILIA). Among them, 856 refugees participated in TVTO programmes, while 71 female refugees received specialized support from ILA. These programmes equipped participants with practical skills in hairdressing, candle making, tailoring, and auto mechanics, enhancing their self-reliance and employability.

TVTO's training courses were delivered across 24 centres in 14 provinces, including Alborz, Bushehr, Esfahan, Fars, Golestān, Kerman, Kermanshah, Markazi, Qazvin, Qom, Razavi Khorasan, Semnan, South Khorasan, and Sistant and Baluchistan. Meanwhile, in Tehran and Alborz, ILIA extended its support beyond technical and vocational training by providing life skills and business skills sessions, empowering female refugees with the tools needed to build sustainable livelihoods. To further enhance economic opportunities, ILIA facilitated the production and sale of refugee-made products through its online platform, Madarya, as well as charity markets, which helped participants generate income and gain financial independence.

# 14. Outcome Area: Voluntary Return and Sustainable Reintegration

#### 4.1 Potential for voluntary return realized

#### **Core Output Indicators**

Indicator		
Population Type	Actual (2024)	
14.1.1 Number of people who received counselling and/or information on voluntary repatriation		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1,265	

## **Progress Against the Desired Outcome**

UNHCR continues to adhere to the Guidance Note on the International Protection needs of People Fleeing Afghanistan, last updated in February 2023, which includes a non-return advisory urging states to suspend the forcible return of Afghan nationals until there is a substantial improvement in security, rule of law and human rights conditions in Afghanistan. The guidance also underscores the fundamental distinction between voluntary repatriation and forced returns.

In line with this cautious approach, UNHCR maintained its voluntary repatriation programme in 2024, ensuring that people received proper counselling to make informed, voluntary decisions about their return. The number of people assisted through this programme more than doubled compared to the previous year, increasing from 521 to 1,092. A sharp increase in applicants was observed after September 2024, equalling the total reported for the first eight months of the year. According to returnees, the primary drivers behind this surge included the worsening financial and economic situations in Iran, the need to obtain documentation in Afghanistan, and the desire to be reunited with their families.

# 15. Outcome Area: Resettlement and Complementary Pathways

4.2 Increased number of people in need of resettlement identified, and submitted for resettlement

#### **Core Outcome Indicators**

Indicator						
Population Type Baseline Target (2024) Actual (2024						
15.1 Number of refugees submitted by UNHCR for resettlement						
Refugees and Asylum-seekers 3,274		5,000	3,775			

#### **Core Output Indicators**

Indicator		
Population Type	Actual (2024)	
15.1.1 Country issues machine-readable travel documents		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	No	

### **Progress Against the Desired Outcome**

In 2024, UNHCR submitted 3,775 Afghan refugees for resettlement consideration, prioritizing the most vulnerable under its resettlement submission categories. Nearly half (49%) of those submitted were from female-headed households, while 11% were children under 18. At the request of the Government, submissions primarily focused on Amayesh card holders although 101 Afghans who arrived after 2021 were also included. UNHCR led resettlement efforts, with critical support from the Government, resettlement countries, IOM, and TOLL Group. Regular discussions with Iranian authorities throughout the year helped strengthen across all areas of resettlement processing.

While resettlement countries played a key role through their pledges and applicant processing, UNHCR facilitated remote selection missions, as no face-to-face resettlement selection missions took place in 2024. IOM and TOLL supported accepted refugees by organizing travel and providing cultural orientation sessions. Building on the resettlement upscaling efforts initiated in 2022, UNHCR continued strengthening existing systems and processes. A merged refugee status determination and resettlement processing approach for Afghan women and children remained in place, while nationalization of resettlement staff was further advanced. Casework was entrusted to both national colleagues and International Catholic Migration Commission deployees, with targeted training and one-on-one coaching provided to all staff involved in case identification and resettlement processing. Referrals from protection colleagues also further bolstered the identification of resettlement-eligible people.

In parallel, efforts to expand new pathways gained momentum. In 2024, 678 people were supported in accessing complementary pathways, including 483 who received assistance via family reunification. 50 people departed Iran through complementary pathways, reflecting improved access to safe and legal migration opportunities. To further expand options, UNHCR initiated the development of standard operating procedures for the Brazil humanitarian visa pilot programme, set for implementation in 2025. With funding from the UNHCR Innovation Fund, the Digital Bridges for Afghan Scholars project was launched to promote overseas study opportunities for Afghan students by facilitating information-sharing and networking opportunities with past scholarship recipients. Labour mobility pathways also took shape through Talent Lift, which offered Afghan refugees new avenues for economic opportunity. All these collective efforts underscored UNHCR's commitment to broadening solutions through strengthened partnerships in 2024.

#### **Other Core Output Indicators**

Population Type	Actual (2024)		
06.1.1 Number of people who received legal assistance			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	11,501		
09.1.1 Number of people who received shelter and housing assistance			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	570		
16.1.1.Government Social protection system is inclusive of forcibly displaced and stateless people			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Limited		

# 2.2. Age, Gender and Diversity

To support age, gender and diversity inclusive programming, UNHCR collected disaggregated data by age, sex, and other diversity considerations for people approaching its offices. This data was used to produce various dashboards and other information management products for analysis, programming, and advocacy. UNHCR continued targeted cash programmes for children at risk, gender-based violence survivors, and people with disabilities, while partnerships with stakeholders adopted inclusive approaches, which addressed the needs of different nationalities within forcibly displaced and host communities. Specific interventions were focused on vulnerable profiles such as women and children at risk with heightened protection needs. Although no participatory assessments were conducted, several initiatives were undertaken to address the capacities and priorities of diverse groups. These included cash post distribution monitoring and a UNHCR Hired Lawyers programme satisfaction survey.

To ensure information accessibility for all community members, including those with varying literacy levels and limited internet access, UNHCR provided regular updates through multiple channels. These efforts included frequent updates to the UNHCR Iran Help page and dedicated hotlines and in-person services. In 2024, UNHCR handled 606,985 calls, responded to 56,435 queries, assisted 95,362 people at reception areas, and recorded 1,860,300 views on its Help Page. Batch SMS messages were also sent to share critical information, while help desks in governmental centres in Tehran and Shiraz continued to function.

In response to feedback and to enhance service delivery, UNHCR Iran replaced its generic protection email with an online form that offers more tailored options for people to raise concerns, provide feedback and flag complaints. Along with traditional channels like complaint boxes and hotlines, this new online tool provided additional technology-based options for people to engage with UNHCR.

# **Section 3: Resources**

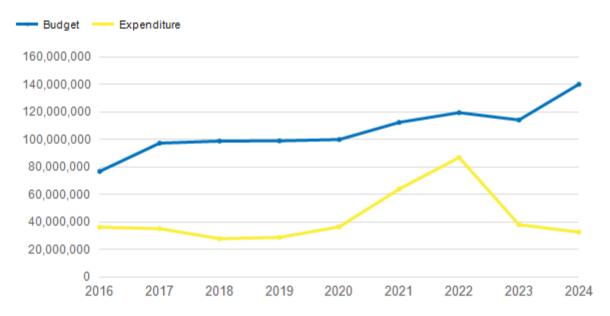
# 3.1 Financial Data

(Financial figures in USD)

Impact Area	Final Budget	Funds Available	Funds Available as % of Budget	Expenditure	Expenditure as % of Funds Available
IA1: Protect	14,620,569	2,309,757	15.80%	2,309,757	100.00%
IA2: Assist	106,754,857	23,937,425	22.42%	23,937,425	100.00%
IA3: Empower	6,164,517	1,850,542	30.02%	1,850,542	100.00%
IA4: Solve	12,461,591	4,515,047	36.23%	4,515,047	100.00%
All Impact Areas		7,177,011			
Total	140,001,535	39,789,782	28.42%	32,612,771	81.96%

Outcome Area	Final Budget	Funds Available	Funds Available as % of Budget	Expenditure	Expenditure as % of Funds Available
OA1: Access/Doc	2,230,000	5,109	0.23%	5,109	100.00%
OA3: Policy/Law	6,547,305	741,296	11.32%	741,296	100.00%
OA4: GBV	2,237,305	674,173	30.13%	674,173	100.00%
OA5: Children	1,618,653	344,427	21.28%	344,427	100.00%
OA7: Community	1,443,012	986,377	68.36%	986,377	100.00%
OA8: Well-being	27,400,571	6,454,634	23.56%	6,454,634	100.00%
OA10: Health	33,823,714	12,636,720	37.36%	12,636,720	100.00%
OA11: Education	38,228,714	3,452,097	9.03%	3,452,097	100.00%
OA13: Livelihood	4,721,506	864,165	18.30%	864,165	100.00%
OA14: Return	3,780,796	1,771,745	46.86%	1,771,745	100.00%
OA15: Resettle	8,680,796	2,743,303	31.60%	2,743,303	100.00%
EA18: Support	7,301,857	1,393,973	19.09%	1,393,973	100.00%
EA20: External	1,987,305	544,752	27.41%	544,752	100.00%
All Outcome Areas		7,177,011			
Total	140,001,535	39,789,782	28.42%	32,612,771	81.96%

#### **Budget and Expenditure Trend**



#### Contributions Trend by Type



# 3.2. Resources Overview

In 2024, UNHCR faced significant challenges addressing the needs of displaced people due to limited resources. Only 43% of UNHCR's programmes in Iran were funded in 2024 and when factoring in donor-earmarked funds, this figure dropped to 12% of the total operational plan. This marked a substantial and continuous decrease in funding since 2022, falling far short of meeting the needs of the 3.8 million forcibly displaced people currently in the country.

This reduced funding severely impacted UNHCR's ability to deliver essential services, including shelter, healthcare, and education. The decline in international community support further strained efforts, putting

the future of refugee protection and response at risk. In this challenging environment, UNHCR sought innovative solutions and explored alternative funding sources, including reaching out to non-traditional donors. Advocacy efforts continued both at the regional and headquarters levels as well as in donor countries' capitals. These efforts were underpinned by evidence-based assessments such as the Refugee Response Plan and Global Compact on Refugees, which sought to promote a conducive protection environment in key areas like healthcare, education, and shelter, while also aligning with sustainable response principles. However, financial constraints remained a significant obstacle.

# Section 4: Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

# 4.1 Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

UNHCR established a sustainable response framework but a particularly challenging fundraising environment threatened to undermine progress. To mitigate this risk, UNHCR plans to step up engagement with other UN agencies and local NGOs to advance a sustainable response with a clear roadmap for a phased exit.

Access to data on refugees remains a significant challenge, as the Government is still cautious about sharing information. However, gradual improvements have been made in obtaining data through various channels and enhancing internal data management and analysis. While comprehensive Government-held refugee data is still lacking, there are opportunities to improve accountability and access to information on forcibly displaced people assisted by UNHCR. As such, bolstering data management and analysis will be a key focus for UNHCR in 2025.

Field-level initiatives, while limited, have proven invaluable in complementing activities implemented through partnership agreements across the country. Although these agreements are signed centrally, it is crucial to maintain and expand such initiatives at the field-level to address people's specific needs. These efforts not only allow for more tailored responses but also provide an opportunity to pilot innovative approaches that could be scaled in the near future. This includes broadening partnerships and private sector fundraising, while also improving access to livelihoods.

The economic and political challenges in Iran continue to escalate, driven by high inflation, sanctions, and geopolitical tensions, alongside the growing presence of Afghan nationals. Despite hosting over 6 million Afghan refugees, Iran is struggling to harmonize its documentation systems for foreign nationals, contributing to rising anti-foreign sentiment. The Government's call for irregular foreign nationals to leave the country, combined with stalled refugee policy reforms, has further complicated the situation. In 2024, the suspension of critical schemes such as the smart governance and financial schemes left many uncertain about their futures, particularly those without valid documentation and those at risk of losing their status such as the 2.6 million headcount slip holders. Despite these challenges, UNHCR has continued to work alongside UN agencies and key NGOs, maintaining advocacy efforts through bilateral partnerships and donor briefings to mitigate the impact on displaced communities.

Iran's national asylum system remains a major concern, as it lacks procedures for granting asylum, leaving new arrivals without practical access to national protection mechanisms vulnerable to arrest, detention and deportation. This systemic gap, compounded by the absence of viable pathways for long-term residency or nationality, has limited prospects for acquiring sustainable long-term residence or nationality. In particular, Afghan nationals holding "headcount slips" are increasingly vulnerable to exclusion from essential services like education and documentation. The recent uptick in deportations and spontaneous returns underscores the vulnerability of this group, with many citing economic hardship in Iran and rising anti-Afghan sentiment as key factors driving their decisions to leave.

Efforts to engage with forcibly displaced people faced setbacks, primarily due to limited access to affected populations and a reduction in staffing capacity. Nevertheless, UNHCR has worked to cultivate strategic partnerships and bolster coordination with Government actors, NGOs, and the private sector partners to optimize resources and enhance access to forcibly displaced people. Building trust across these relationships, both internally and externally, will help improve UNHCR's effectiveness, ensuring consistent protection-related messaging reaches both Government counterparts and displaced communities. Resettlement has proven to be an important tool for expanding protection space in Iran. It has facilitated collaboration with Government counterparts, enhanced access to other protection services, and reinforced support in areas such as child protection and addressing gender-based violence. As one of the world's largest refugee-hosting countries, Iran's participation in resettlement efforts not only supports the most vulnerable Afghans but also draws positive international attention.

At the same time, establishing complementary pathways programmes requires substantial investment, particularly in a country like Iran, where there is limited engagement from international actors. These programmes must be tailored to the local context, as seen with the focus on family reunification support in

Iran. While these initiatives present challenges in terms of resources and staffing, they also represent a valuable opportunity to create alternative pathways for protection and stability for those in need.



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