

Annual Results Report

2025

Iran

Acknowledgements

UNHCR would like to thank all the stakeholders that contributed data and evidence to this report and reviewed their progress against the joint results of the strategy, including forcibly displaced and stateless people, host communities and host governments, United Nations agencies, and international and national non-governmental organizations, civil society and private sector. Their contributions enable us to create positive changes in the lives of the people we serve.

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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.

Downloaded date: 08/05/2026

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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 more than 40 years, upholding refugee-inclusive policies and largely ensuring access to essential public services, particularly health care and education. By year-end, UNHCR estimated that around 2.5 million forcibly displaced people with different documentation statuses were living in Iran, including some 770,000 refugees with Amayesh cards (758,000 Afghans) and Hoviat cards (12,000 Iraqis). Notably, 96% resided in urban areas, while the remaining 4% lived in 20 Government-run refugee settlements.

This long-standing approach is reflected in Iran's international legal commitments. The country has been a signatory to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol since July 1976, with reservations to Articles 17, 23, 24 and 26 of the 1951 Convention, which relate to paid employment, public relief, labour legislation and social security, as well as freedom of movement. At the same time, domestic legislation and ad hoc Government initiatives have resulted in various documentation statuses for forcibly displaced people, leading to differing levels of protection and access to rights.

In this broader policy environment, the expiry of headcount slips on 20 March 2025 was followed by the launch of a regularization and return scheme by the Government of Iran affecting more than 2 million Afghans. Government assessments determined whether former headcount slip holders could remain in the country.

In parallel, UNHCR worked closely with the Government of Iran, national and international NGOs, and UN agencies within the framework of the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) – which has guided regional efforts since 2012 – to seek solutions and provide services to forcibly displaced people. In September 2025, the SSAR Local Core Group was launched in the country by the Chair (the Netherlands) and Vice Chair (Switzerland) and hosted by Iranian authorities. UNHCR also co-led the development and implementation of the Refugee Response Plan (RRP) with Pakistan to ensure coordinated and complementary assistance among humanitarian partners.

Within this framework, UNHCR supported the Government in facilitating refugees' access to education, health and livelihoods. It also worked to strengthen the protection of forcibly displaced and stateless people by providing access to legal, psychosocial counselling, cash assistance for the most vulnerable families, and support for access to universal public health insurance for vulnerable refugees. UNHCR further supported inclusive access to primary health care, including through support to health facilities and essential medical supplies, as well as primary or secondary education. Support for higher education was provided through DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) scholarships for refugee students, livelihood and vocational training and income-generating activities.

Through regular engagement with refugee communities – in line with its accountability to affected people approach – UNHCR continued to identify and address specific protection risks. Voluntary return and resettlement also remained important solutions for refugees.

Despite these efforts, concerns persisted over complex protection risks and the increasing risks and vulnerabilities of refugees, compounded by a challenging economic situation that underscored the need for robust international responsibility sharing.

1.2. Progress Against the Desired Impact

1. Impact Area: Attaining Favorable Protection Environments

Forcibly displaced and stateless people benefit from an improved legislative framework that considers age, gender and diversity, supported by stronger governmental institutions enabling full enjoyment of their rights.

Population Type	Indicator	
	Baseline	Actual (2025)
1.1 Proportion of people seeking international protection who are able to access asylum procedures		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	20.54%	20.54%

In 2025, no progress was made in advancing the legislative framework to fully enable forcibly displaced people to enjoy their rights, including through the National Organization for Migration Bill. A formal asylum procedure was also not in place. During the year, the number of Afghan nationals in Iran decreased by a third following a Government regularization and return scheme, which primarily targeted undocumented people and those who previously held headcount slips. Some people under specific categories – including profiles at risk, those seeking family unity or other vulnerable people – had the possibility to present their personal situation and obtain a temporary right to stay. As a result, 12,175 people were granted a Movaqat (temporary) card, which was valid for one year. However, the future of this documentation category was unclear by year-end although regular assessments of card holders were expected ahead of any potential extension. In addition, the Government maintained differentiated legal statuses – such as Amayesh cards, family passports, visas and temporary documents – which conferred varying levels of protection and access to rights and services.

approximately 770,000 Amayesh and Hoviat card holders continued to be recognized as de facto refugees under the Amayesh system. In 2025, the Government launched Amayesh 19, primarily as a renewal and verification exercise, while reopening specific documentation pathways for children born to mixed-status families. These modalities enabled children of parents holding Amayesh cards and other valid documents – such as residence booklets or family passports – to obtain Amayesh documentation, reinforcing family unity and their access to basic services. However, plans to transition all legally resident foreign nationals to a consolidated smart ID system did not materialize during the year.

At the same time, the expiry of headcount slips in March 2025 marked a significant shift for affected Afghans. Following the nationwide regularization and return measures, some 1.9 million people returned or had been returned under adverse circumstances to Afghanistan in 2025. As part of the Government's return and regularization plan, those who returned voluntarily to their country of origin had the possibility of returning to Iran with a nine-month labour visa without their families. However, by year-end, it was unclear how many people had returned as labour migrants, as information available to UNHCR showed only student and medical visas were issued by Iran to Afghan nationals.

At the legislative level, parliamentary deliberations on the National Organization for Migration Bill advanced in 2025, with the Joint Parliamentary Commission reviewing the draft. The Bill aims to establish a centralized institutional framework for migration governance and consolidate fragmented legislation affecting foreign nationals. While this process represented progress toward a more structured migration management system, the proposed framework had not been approved by year-end.

Overall, while existing Iranian systems continued to provide a degree of protection for people documented by the authorities, the need for a formal and accessible asylum procedure remained. In this context, UNHCR continued policy dialogue, field monitoring and analysis in 2025 to promote forcibly displaced people's access to legal status, uphold protection principles, and inform strategic engagement with national counterparts.

2. Impact Area: Realizing Rights in Safe Environments

Forcibly displaced and stateless people benefit from enhanced protection and more effective responses to their needs, supported by inclusive Government policies across all public services, including health, education, social protection, and financial inclusion.

Population Type	Indicator	
	Baseline	Actual (2025)
2.2 Proportion of people residing in physically safe and secure settlements with access to basic facilities		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	90.00%	89.67%
2.3 Proportion of people with access to health services		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	92.86%	85.00%

As part of the Government's inclusive policies, all Afghans and Iraqis, regardless of their documentation status, had access to free primary health care services nationwide on par with Iranian nationals. These services included vaccination and immunization campaigns, ante- and post-natal care, maternal and child health care, growth monitoring for children under five, treatment for communicable and non-communicable diseases, and family planning. In 2025, 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 more than 10 refugee-hosting provinces.

While secondary and tertiary health care remained available, high costs posed a significant barrier, particularly for the most vulnerable. Since 2015, UNHCR has supported a government-led initiative aimed at facilitating subsidized access to national universal public health insurance and treatment for those in need. In 2025, 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 hemophilia, thalassemia, renal failure, kidney transplants and multiple sclerosis.

Despite these efforts, the economic crisis – exacerbated by ongoing sanctions and soaring inflation – continued to place immense pressure on refugee and host communities alike. By year-end, the poverty threshold for a family of three remained around IRR 200 million per month (approximately \$170), leaving many low-income households, including refugees, in increasingly precarious situations. This trend was reflected in a multi-year review of income levels among people trained by the Technical and Vocational Training Organization (TVTO), which showed that despite improved skills acquisition, most employed graduates continued to earn below the poverty line, with only a small number achieving higher, sustainable incomes.

Against this backdrop, UNHCR intensified efforts to promote self-reliance, expand livelihood pathways, and enhance refugees' educational access in 2025. TVTO trained 1,039 refugees across 84 certified vocational courses, representing 110% of the planned target and significantly exceeding 2024 participation levels. In addition, the Iranian Life Quality Improvement Association supported 65 Afghan women through structured, market-oriented, income generating programmes that combined vocational training, startup kits, entrepreneurship skills, psychosocial support and access to sales platforms such as Madarya and Digikala. These initiatives enabled participants to engage in wage earning or homebased production activities.

Education also remained an important component of efforts to strengthen refugees' self-reliance and future prospects. International Farda Development Activist Association (IFDA) administered DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) higher education scholarships for 199 refugee students. Of these, 191 students received full first-semester support and 100 received second semester assistance, complemented by academic workshops and tablet distributions to improve digital access. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education advanced the construction of four new schools in Isfahan, Qom, Tehran, and Yazd, reinforcing long-term educational inclusion for refugee and host community children. Collectively, these multi-partner interventions strengthened livelihood prospects, expanded access to education and enhanced refugees' future employability despite the challenging economic environment.

Access to education nevertheless remained a central protection concern. Government directives enabled children from irregular and mixed-status families to access schooling for the 2024/ 2025 academic year, including those previously enrolled, children with enrolled siblings and children of Iranian mothers or legally documented parents. Authorities reported the enrolment of approximately 320,000 foreign national children under these measures although implementation varied considerably across provinces and was dependent on short-term administrative instructions, local capacity and the timely issuance of referral letters.

4. Impact Area: Securing Solutions

Durable solutions are secured for forcibly displaced and stateless people through local and inclusive solutions, voluntary return, complementary pathways, and resettlement where appropriate.

Population Type	Indicator	
	Baseline	Actual (2025)
4.1 Number of refugees who voluntarily return in safety and dignity to their country of origin		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1,092	1,263
4.2a Number of people who departed on resettlement		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1,105	1,349
4.2b Number of people who departed through complementary pathways		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	50	52

The prospects for local solutions per se remained limited in 2025, 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 framework. 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 large number of Afghans hosted by Iran, worsening economic conditions due to additional sanctions and rising anti- Afghan sentiment among the local population.

From January to December 2025, UNHCR facilitated the voluntary repatriation of 1,263 Afghans, a 16% increase compared to the same period in 2024, excluding individuals who returned to Afghanistan to obtain documentation for university education who were assisted through a different avenue. The rise coincided with worsening economic conditions in Iran and lack of income earning opportunities, with returnees also citing the need to obtain documentation in Afghanistan and the desire for family reunification as key factors influencing their decision. In addition to the aforementioned figure of refugees who benefited from Voluntarily Repatriation Grant, some 310 valid Amayesh card holders also spontaneously returned to Afghanistan during April to December 2025, declaring lack of knowledge about Voluntarily Repatriation procedures. The increase of UNHCR Iran assisted voluntary return was reported against the backdrop of the decreased amount of cash support from 375 USD per person to 156 USD per household since May 2025 due to the funding situation of UNHCR, a reflection of overall deterioration socio-economic situation of Afghans in Iran.

The implementation of the return and regularization plan initiated by the government and mainly targeting the Headcount Slip holders led to the return of close to 1.9 million Afghans in 2025, including undocumented Afghans. UNHCR Iran closely monitored return figures through its field presence at Dogharoun, where most returns took place, as well as through inquiries and missions conducted by field offices and the Representation Office to understand movement patterns and identify protection risks along this route. According to the government's public statements, some 70% of the returns were voluntarily, although not falling under the Voluntarily Repatriation program.

Resettlement efforts for vulnerable Afghan nationals continued throughout 2025: 2,249 refugees were submitted for resettlement consideration in 2025, while 1,349 refugees departed Iran to resettlement countries, with some, 1,000 individuals accepted and awaiting departure to Australia, Finland, UK and New

Zealand, and 6,785 individuals submitted and pending decision at year end. The achievement was made despite staff reduction and interruption due to the 12 day-war but the processing times by resettlement countries 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.

In 2025, significant progress was made in expanding complementary pathways: 1,095 people received support to access these pathways, including 517 who benefitted from family reunification. In total, 52 people departed Iran through complementary pathways, reflecting increased access to these opportunities, despite that in 2025 some embassies were closed during the 12-day-war and few months after. 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.

In 2025, the three main destination countries for family reunification were Germany, France, and Spain. For humanitarian visa applications, the three main destinations were Australia, Switzerland, and France.

UNHCR supported refugees' access to safe and legal pathways through comprehensive counselling and case management. This included guidance on family reunification eligibility criteria, documentation and application requirements, and exit procedures, to ensure that refugees were able to navigate complex administrative processes in an informed manner. In parallel, UNHCR provided a range of protection interventions to facilitate access to complementary pathways, including registration, protection assessments, and the identification of individuals with specific needs. Particular attention was given to cases involving minor children and other vulnerable individuals, where UNHCR engaged in targeted advocacy with CAFIA/BAFIA to support family unity. These efforts were further strengthened through close coordination with implementing partners and UNHCR colleagues globally, ensuring follow-up across destination countries.

In 2025, UNHCR Iran implemented the Digital Bridges for Afghan Scholars initiative, aimed at promoting access to global education pathways for Afghan students residing in Iran. The project sought to enhance students' access to information on overseas scholarship opportunities and to support them in pursuing these opportunities through a structured mentoring programme. Two online mentoring schemes were implemented in 2025, engaging a total of 22 students in Iran and 11 student mentors based abroad. Over the course of the year, 88 mentoring sessions were delivered. In addition, one information session on UK Chevening scholarship opportunities was provided to 50 students. Through the Digital Bridges for Afghan Scholars project, ten students submitted scholarship applications abroad in 2025, while a further twelve students were supported and empowered to prepare applications for 2026.

Capacity-building efforts to strengthen staff support for work on complementary pathways were undertaken through on-the-job training and a series of briefings delivered to protection staff leading to enhanced staff capacity to provide effective counselling and support to refugees seeking access to complementary pathways.

Departures to third countries were not only maintained but improved compared to 2024, despite the months-long closures of most embassies in Iran throughout 2025.

1.3 Challenges to Achieving Impacts

In 2025, several evolving policy and operational dynamics in Iran constrained progress towards achieving protection and solutions for Afghans and other foreign nationals falling under UNHCR's mandate.

Staffing levels fell during the year in response to budget constraints and UNHCR's reprioritization exercise, which affected the implementation of some planned activities. In particular, reductions in reception, registration, and helpline staffing had implications for access to UNHCR services, information, and feedback and complaints mechanisms. Adjustments to the number of Durable Solutions staff required a review and adaptation of case processing modalities, while maintaining the integrity of procedures.

At the same time, Iran's migration and refugee policy shifted towards a stricter documentation- and status-based approach. The expiry of headcount slips in March 2025 and subsequent regularization and return measures significantly reduced legal certainty for millions of Afghans. Large-scale returns, including

deportation, coincided with increased anti-Afghan sentiment and reduced access to public services for undocumented Afghans. While exemptions existed for Afghans who fell within specific vulnerable groups – demonstrating the Government’s recognition of the international protection needs of some people – the lack of a formal and accessible asylum procedure continued to pose risks for people in need of international protection. National directives enabled some children from irregular or mixed-status households to enrol for the 2024/2025 school year although access remained dependent on short-term administrative instructions, local capacity and the timely issuance of referral letters. Provincial disparities and the absence of a stable, rights-based framework impeded educational inclusion for foreign children.

The June 2025 conflict between Iran and Israel compounded these challenges and intensified scrutiny of Afghan nationals, including documented refugees. Tighter movement controls, restrictions on access to services and growing public suspicion contributed to increased (and often hurried) returns. The high number of returns, combined with limited UNHCR access to border areas and immigration detention facilities, hindered monitoring, protection interventions and efforts to ensure safe and dignified returns.

In parallel, Iran experienced a steep economic downturn and rapid inflation. Crackdowns on unauthorized employment, including stricter penalties for employers found violating labour regulations, resulted in job losses for many Afghans who relied on these wages to support their families. Some also faced deportation. Rising prices and stagnant or declining wages further strained low-income Afghan families. Already facing socioeconomic vulnerabilities, many families struggled to meet basic needs, increasing their vulnerability to exploitation and negative coping mechanisms. Cash assistance was also limited to documented foreign nationals rather than being based solely on vulnerability.

Progress towards a migration governance framework remained slow. While a parliamentary review of the National Organization for Migration Bill advanced during the year, the draft framework had not been adopted by year-end. The absence of comprehensive legal and institutional architecture for migration and asylum limited access to legal pathways for newcomers or durable legal status for others. It also impacted UNHCR’s protection response and capacity to leverage policy reform for longer-term impact.

Many undocumented Afghans returned to Afghanistan in 2025 following new deadlines and enforcement measures by the Government of Iran. By year-end, approximately 1.9 million people had returned to Afghanistan – most of them having been deported. The highest number of daily crossings occurred in late June 2025. Those who remained in Iran continued to face significant needs. As of mid-2025, UNHCR data indicated that Iran hosted around 2.5 million refugees and other people in need of international protection, most of them Afghans. Approximately 773,000 registered Amayesh or Hoviat card holders continued to rely on overstretched national systems.

Many refugees also faced barriers to self-reliance and employment due to restrictions on permitted job categories. As a result, most working-age refugees lacked opportunities to acquire the skills needed to access employment and achieve financial independence. These challenges were further compounded by Iran’s worsening economic situation and rising unemployment among host communities. Through partnerships with governmental and local organizations, UNHCR provided technical and vocational training courses to strengthen refugees’ skills and enhance access to employment opportunities. Despite this, expanding access to sustainable livelihoods and income-generating activities remained critical for forcibly displaced and stateless people to be able to maintain a dignified life and navigate an increasingly fragile economy.

1.4 Collaboration and Partnerships

UNHCR strengthened the coordination architecture established under the 2021 Refugee Coordination Model by consolidating partnerships through the 2024-2025 Afghanistan Refugee Response Plan (RRP), ensuring a unified and strategic response within one of the world’s largest displacement situations. As lead agency, it continued to convene the refugee response group, providing strategic leadership, guiding joint prioritization and facilitating coordinated advocacy with the Government, while supporting partners – particularly smaller organizations – to review progress, adjust operational approaches and escalate protection concerns. Coordination among the 14 RRP partners remained robust through seven sector

working groups, with UNHCR actively participating in all and leading or co-leading the protection, shelter/NFI, cash and health sectors, and chairing an inter-sector coordination group focused on ensuring coherent multi-sector planning and reporting.

To support this coordination structure, the use of the 4Ws framework – a critical information management tool used by UNHCR and humanitarian partners to map, coordinate and analyze activities in emergency settings by considering who is doing what, where and when – enhanced monitoring and harmonized partner engagement across sectors and geographic areas. An interactive 4Ws map was also created to enable external audiences to visualize the response and access detailed information on RRP partners' activities across the country. In light of the ongoing exclusion of Afghan girls from secondary education in Afghanistan, partners also advanced inclusive education initiatives in Iran and jointly advocated for greater international responsibility-sharing on education.

Beyond operational coordination, the RRP also remained aligned with broader global development commitments, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). These included SDG 3 on good health and well-being, SDG4 on quality education, SDG 5 on gender equality, SDG 10 on reduced inequalities, and SDG 17 on partnerships for the goals. Through the response framework, partners worked to reduce disparities between refugees and the host communities while supporting national systems facing increased pressure from large refugee populations.

Implementation of these priorities relied on close collaboration with national partners. In 2025, UNHCR worked with 11 implementing partners, including national NGOs and five Government partners, to sustain inclusive policies and service delivery despite significant resource constraints. In addition, UNHCR continued to collaborate with WFP and UNAIDS and conducted joint assessments and post distribution monitoring with WFP as well as harm-reduction projects funded by UNAIDS through local NGOs.

Collaboration with the Center for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants' Affairs remained central to coordinating support for Afghan people in Iran, with regular dialogue to address growing protection concerns amid evolving national regularization and return procedures. UNHCR also maintained its observer role within the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and worked more closely with development partners to advance health, nutrition and education programmes benefitting both Afghan people and vulnerable Iranian communities. Through these coordinated efforts, UNHCR sought to deliver more sustainable and inclusive responses that prioritized the protection of forcibly displaced people within Iran's increasingly complex displacement landscape in 2025.

Section 2: Results

2.1. Outcomes and Achievements

3. Outcome Area: Protection Policy and Law

Forcibly displaced and stateless people benefit from a legal framework aligned with international standards and strengthened State institutions capable of responding effectively to their needs.

Core Outcome Indicators

Indicator			
Population Type	Baseline	Target (2025)	Actual (2025)
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	Not yet aligned	Not yet aligned	Not yet aligned

Core Output Indicators

Indicator	
Population Type	Actual (2025)
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

In 2025, UNHCR advocated for national laws, policies and institutional arrangements that strengthened access to legal protection, legal assistance and remedies for forcibly displaced and stateless people. Advocacy efforts focused on ensuring evolving migration policies and legislative developments, particularly those related to the establishment of the National Organization for Migration, remained aligned with international protection standards. UNHCR maintained regular technical-level dialogue with Government counterparts, primarily the Center for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs, to address key protection concerns and safeguards against refoulement.

Within this evolving policy environment, the National Organization for Migration Bill remained a central element of migration governance reform. While the National Organization for Migration Bill had not been enacted by year-end, its advancement marked a significant step toward restructuring Iran's migration governance framework and UNHCR continued to monitor its development closely. In parallel, a series of policy measures and administrative directives shaped the treatment of Afghan nationals, particularly those registered under the 2022 headcount exercise. This included the introduction of a nationwide return and regularization policy framework, which combined large-scale return measures with targeted exemption policies for prioritized categories. These exemptions resulted in temporary stay arrangements for selected profiles, reflecting efforts to manage returns while mitigating protection risks for specific groups. They

demonstrated Iran's understanding of international protection needs for certain people at risk, respect for family unity and a humanitarian approach towards medical and vulnerable cases. These measures also echoed advocacy points advanced by UNHCR and partners under the Refugee Response Plan.

In parallel, UNHCR sustained engagement on nationality and statelessness-related policy issues. No formal legislative amendment affecting the 2019 Nationality Law was adopted in 2025. However, UNHCR continued to follow discussions and proposals that could affect existing pathways to nationality for children at risk of statelessness. It advocated for the preservation of acquired rights and consistency with international standards in relation to the National Organization for Migration Bill and other policy-related decisions, while continuing to provide information and legal counseling to forcibly displaced and stateless people.

Alongside policy engagement, UNHCR also supported access to justice through its legal services project. Legal assistance was provided through dispute settlement committees and UNHCR-hired lawyers operating across 19 provinces. The committees continued to serve as an accessible, community-based dispute resolution mechanism, facilitating mediation in family, civil, financial and labour-related disputes with the involvement of relevant authorities and legal professionals. Complementing this work, UNHCR-hired lawyers offered free legal counselling, representation and referrals to people under UNHCR's mandate, particularly in relation to family law, civil and financial disputes, documentation and residency issues, and criminal and labour-related cases.

In 2025, dispute settlement committees assisted approximately 1,724 people, while UNHCR-hired lawyers provided legal services to 10,525 people, reinforcing their legal protection and facilitating access to remedies despite a challenging environment. and resolve disputes without resorting to lengthy court proceedings. More than 1,000 Afghan returnees in Qom province retrieved their housing deposits as a result of this support. In addition, through collaboration between UNHCR and the Fars Bar Association, more than 300 other deposit cases were being actively followed up by assigned lawyers.

6. Outcome Area: Safety and Access to Justice

Forcibly displaced and stateless people are identified, profiled, and holistically assisted, with protection interventions informed by evidence-based approaches.

Core Output Indicators

Indicator	
Population Type	Actual (2025)
06.1.1 Number of people who received legal assistance	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	12,249

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

(including Registration, GBV, CP, and community engagement)

UNHCR's registration activities in Iran continued to serve as an enrolment mechanism for vulnerable people needing international protection and case management, including durable solutions in Iran and also informed programme design. In 2025, despite the budgetary and staff reduction, 32,052 people were enrolled in proGres, facilitating their identification, assessment and protection response, including voluntary repatriation, resettlement, complementary pathways and specialized protection services. UNHCR successfully strengthened proGres data quality and identity management through biometric capture using its biometric identity management system for 70% of those registered. In addition, interviews were also conducted to update and verify 18,684 individual proGres records, further improving data reliability and complementing other quality control mechanisms. In addition, UNHCR's helpline, 40,000 people were pre-registered.

Within the broader protection response, UNHCR continued to address gender-based violence among forcibly displaced populations in Iran. Women, girls, and people with diverse profiles remained at risk of gender-based violence due to a combination of factors, so UNHCR maintained a survivor-centered approach, prioritizing the most critical cases while reinforcing prevention and risk reduction measures while the gender-based violence case management activities became more streamlined within the protection response. Based on assessed needs and vulnerability levels, 362 survivors were referred to specialized services during the year, including psychological support, legal counseling, medical assistance, and tailored cash assistance. Where relevant, protection considerations were also factored into durable solutions pathways. Despite UNHCR's reduced case management capacity due to budgetary and staff cuts, efforts focused on ensuring the quality, confidentiality and appropriateness of support. Protection staff received refresher support to reinforce their capacity to integrate gender-based violence considerations into their activities, ensuring risk analysis and survivor-centered principles remained central despite shifting priorities. Attention was also given to maintaining safe and ethical gender-based violence information management practices, including sensitive data entry, storage and controlled sharing through proGres.

Prevention and awareness-raising remained a key pillar of the gender-based violence response. Activities conducted during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign – which were complemented by ongoing in-reach sessions – were implemented in collaboration with local partners, refugee-led organizations, and affiliated service providers. To support long-term engagement at the national level, UNHCR continued its partnership with the Iranian NGO Association for Protection of Refugee Women and Children. Through this collaboration, survivors of gender-based violence, particularly women and girls in and around settlements in Khorasan Razavi province, accessed psychological and social counseling and empowerment-focused training activities. In total, 2,124 people were reached through this partnership, which remained an important avenue for community support amid reduced direct service delivery.

Child protection also remained a key priority within UNHCR's protection response despite staff and budget cuts, with the support focused on those who were at the greatest risk of harm (e.g. Children living or working in the streets, USC, children at risk of harmful traditional practices). In 2025, 147 targeted interventions were implemented, including psychological support, cash assistance, legal counselling, and referrals linked to solutions pathways where applicable. Best interest procedures continued to guide decision-making in complex cases, particularly those considered for resettlement or voluntary return; 191 best interest assessments were completed.

Access to formal education remained an important protection challenge. Undocumented Afghan children continued to face barriers related to enrolment requirements, inconsistent implementation of national policies, and limited capacity within public schools. These constraints contributed to prolonged exclusion from education and increased exposure to harmful coping strategies, including child labour and early marriage. To address these challenges, UNHCR maintained close collaboration with other agencies working in child protection to ensure a coordinated and comprehensive response, particularly UNICEF, which was guided by a letter of understanding outlining joint responsibilities and areas of cooperation. This collaboration focused on strengthening national child protection systems, building the capacity of service providers supporting vulnerable children, improving data and analysis, and supporting programmes in education and water, sanitation and hygiene. Through this partnership, both agencies sought to ensure vulnerable children received timely and appropriate support, avoid duplication and bolster coordination.

Communication with communities remained another critical component of UNHCR's protection response. In 2025, UNHCR Iran received and responded to enquiries via the helpline, online and email requests, written requests and in-person visits from forcibly displaced and stateless people. UNHCR's free of charge helpline remained one of the most frequently used channels by people seeking support, responding to 58,133 queries from 20,883 people. Accessibility was also improved through the installation of a new interactive voice response system that enables callers to select the reason for their call and receive pre-recorded information any time. Callers with complex or urgent needs could be directed to helpline operators, helping prioritize urgent enquiries and reduced congestion.

In addition, UNHCR responded to all 35,917 emails received during the year and, by year-end, had replied to all 95,935 requests through its online contact form despite staff capacity challenges. It also received 5,442 written letters and recorded 87,633 in-person visits across its locations in Iran. These channels supported the identification of people with specific needs and facilitated referrals for their registration.

To further strengthen access to information, UNHCR updated its helpline web page to include the most relevant topics for its target audience, including announcements or Government initiatives. The platform recorded nearly 2.3 million views from more than 1 million visitors during the year.

UNHCR moved closer to finalizing its 'gamification' project aimed at enhancing engagement with forcibly displaced and stateless communities. Developed through focus group discussions, the initiative introduces more interactive and user-friendly ways of sharing guidance and protection information through game-focused initiatives such as video games, simulation tools and educational games.

8. Outcome Area: Well-Being and Basic Needs

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

Core Outcome Indicators

Population Type	Indicator		
	Baseline	Target (2025)	Actual (2025)
8.1 Proportion of people that receive cash transfers and/or non-food items			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	78.00%	30.00%	71.66%

Core Output Indicators

Indicator	
Population Type	Actual (2025)
08.1.1 Number of people who received cash assistance	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	38,489
08.2.1 Number of people who received non-food items	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	17,737

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2025, UNHCR provided approximately \$1.8 million in cash assistance to 39,584 people (9,649 households). This included 37,754 people (8,616 households) who used this multi-purpose cash assistance to help meet their wellbeing and basic needs. A further 620 people across 192 households received targeted support to achieve durable solutions. Additional cash support was also provided to help refugees access legal assistance and resolve legal matters.

Post-distribution monitoring conducted with a sample of 222 refugee households provided insights into how the assistance was used and perceived. Women represented 62% of recipients and the vast majority (98%) lived in urban areas. Most respondents (93%) said they preferred cash assistance over in-kind support and 84% understood that the assistance was intended to help cover multiple essential needs. In addition, 93% reported that they had no difficulties accessing key items in the local markets.

Refugee households primarily used the cash to cover essential expenses, including food, health care, housing, rent and debt repayment. However, frequent price fluctuations throughout the year reduced purchasing power and limited the extent to which the assistance could meet household needs. As a result, 82% of respondents indicated that they were still unable to fully meet their basic needs due to rising costs. Food remained the highest priority: 54% of households allocating their cash assistance to food purchases, followed by health care (49%), rent and accommodation (42%), and debt repayment (32%). Compared with the same period in the previous year, spending in these key areas declined by between 11% and 28%, highlighting the growing financial strain on refugee households.

10. Outcome Area: Healthy Lives

Forcibly displaced and stateless people maintain inclusive and affordable access to primary, secondary, and tertiary healthcare.

Core Output Indicators

Indicator	
Population Type	Actual (2025)
10.1.1 Number of individual consultations in UNHCR supported health care services	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	3,200,000

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2025, Afghans and Iraqis in Iran continued to access free primary health care services on the same basis as Iranian nationals, irrespective of their documentation status. These services included routine vaccinations, immunizations, ante- and post-natal care, growth monitoring for children under five, and treatment for both communicable and noncommunicable diseases. UNHCR sustained its support for inclusive national health policies through continued collaboration with the Center for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants' Affairs under the Ministry of Interior, as well as the Ministry of Health and Medical Education.

While primary health care services remained broadly accessible, secondary and tertiary health care services continued to be constrained by high treatment costs. To help address this barrier, UNHCR maintained its support for the Government-led initiative enabling refugees – specifically Amayesh and Hoviat card holders – to enroll in the universal public health insurance scheme, which provides subsidized access to specialized care. In 2025, UNHCR financed insurance premiums for 95,000 refugees enrolled in the scheme.

11. Outcome Area: Education

Forcibly displaced and stateless people maintain inclusive and equitable access to primary and secondary education.

Core Outcome Indicators

Indicator			
Population Type	Baseline	Target (2025)	Actual (2025)
11.2 Proportion of children and young people enrolled in the national education system			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	60.03%	82.00%	85.00%

Core Output Indicators

Indicator	
Population Type	Actual (2025)
11.1.1 Number of people who benefitted from education programming	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	906

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

Since 2015, a decree from Iran's Supreme Leader guaranteed Afghan students access to education regardless of their documentation status. Refugee-specific school fees have been waived since May 2016. Despite these policy commitments, the education system remained under significant strain in 2025. Safe, adequate school infrastructure in refugee-populated areas was insufficient, contributing to overcrowded classrooms and increasing the risk that boys and girls would miss out on education.

To help address these challenges, the Ministry of Education advanced the construction of four additional schools, including two 15-classroom facilities in Tehran and Pishva and two 12-classroom facilities in Isfahan and Qahjavaristan. While these efforts helped alleviate some of the pressure on existing facilities, additional infrastructure needs remained in communities hosting large refugee populations.

Access to tertiary education was another important priority. In 2025, UNHCR administered 206 DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) scholarships for refugee students through the Farda Development Activist Association. The programme was complemented by academic workshops and the distribution of tablets to improve students' digital access and support their studies.

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

More forcibly displaced and stateless people benefit from expanded and diversified livelihood opportunities.

Core Output Indicators

Indicator	
Population Type	Actual (2025)
13.1.1 Number of people who benefitted from livelihoods and economic inclusion interventions	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1,110

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

Amid persistent economic pressures and structural barriers to employment, UNHCR and its national partners expanded livelihood activities aimed at strengthening refugees' self-reliance and economic inclusion across the country.

The Technical and Vocational Training Organization (TVTO) remained the principal Government partner for large-scale skills development. During the year, it delivered 84 vocational training courses across 14 provinces and reached 1,039 refugee and vulnerable Iranian trainees. These courses covered a range of market-oriented skills, including tailoring, greenhouse farming, digital literacy, graphic design, plumbing, resin and handicraft production, photography and multimedia. Most participants were women (681 women and 358 men). Course content was adjusted at the provincial level to better reflect local labour market demand, with undersubscribed courses replaced by more economically viable options such as gemstone cutting, mantle production, and pattern-less tailoring. These adjustments helped ensure the relevance, absorption and employment potential of the skills acquired.

TVTO's livelihoods programme was further strengthened through significant procurement and equipment provision, enabling centres across several provinces to upgrade their workshops and facilities. Investments supported training in areas such as welding, auto mechanics, ICT, artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual reality (VR), tailoring and handicrafts. These included the installation of AI and VR systems in Khorasan Razavi, advanced auto mechanic and AI labs in Isfahan, welding and IT equipment in Bushehr, solar

energy and electrical testing systems in Kerman and Markazi, and digital fabrication and gemstone cutting laboratories in Fars. These investments aimed to expand training capacity, improve practical experience, align training with real labour market tools and standards, and enhance the overall quality of vocational training available to refugees and vulnerable Iranians.

Complementing TVTO's national-scale programming, ILIA implemented a targeted livelihoods project designed to expand income generating opportunities for 65 refugee women and eligible Iranian nationals in Tehran (Shahre Rey) and Alborz province. Participants received structured vocational training in candle making, resin art and tailoring. Training was followed by access to a handicraft production workshop and dedicated marketing support.

To support business development, ILIA provided startup kits, raw materials, and ongoing mentorship and facilitated the online sale of products through Mehr ILIA Shemiranat Charity Institute (Ilia) its Madarya platform and external marketplaces such as Digikala. This approach ensured refugee women had viable pathways to translate their newly acquired skills into income. The project also incorporated soft skills training, entrepreneurship sessions, transportation support, and psychosocial services, helping participants overcome barriers and sustain their engagement in livelihood activities.

Accountability and programme quality remained central to implementation. A tripartite Executive Committee (UNHCR–The center for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants' Affairs –Mehr ILIA Shemiranat Charity Institute) oversaw beneficiary selection, training quality and workplace standards. The selection process prioritized women holding Amayesh cards, female heads of households, and those facing significant livelihood challenges.

14. Outcome Area: Voluntary Return and Sustainable Reintegration

People returning to country of origin receive counseling and/or information on voluntary repatriation

Core Output Indicators

Indicator	
Population Type	Actual (2025)
14.1.1 Number of people who received counselling and/or information on voluntary repatriation	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1,263

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

UNHCR continued to implement its voluntary repatriation programme in line with its updated Guidance Note on the International Protection needs of People Fleeing Afghanistan. The programme targeted Amayesh card holders and ensured that people received proper counselling to make informed and voluntary decisions about their return.

In 2025, the number of people assisted through this programme increased by 16% compared with the previous year, rising from 1,092 to 1,263. According to returnees, this increase was driven primarily by worsening economic conditions, limited income generating opportunities, and the need to obtain documentation in Afghanistan. Family reunification was also cited as an important factor influencing decisions to return.

15. Outcome Area: Resettlement and Complementary Pathways

Populations in need of resettlement, including through complementary pathways, are identified and submitted for resettlement.

Core Outcome Indicators

Population Type	Indicator		
	Baseline	Target (2025)	Actual (2025)
15.1 Number of refugees submitted by UNHCR for resettlement			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	3,775	4,000	2,249
15.3 Number of people admitted through complementary pathways from the host country			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	50	200	52

Core Output Indicators

Indicator	
Population Type	Actual (2025)
15.1.1 Country issues machine-readable travel documents	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	No

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2025, UNHCR submitted 2,249 Afghan refugees for resettlement consideration, prioritizing the most vulnerable in line with resettlement countries' submission categories. Nearly half (45%) of those submitted were from female-headed households, while 8% were children under 18. At the request of the Government of Iran, submissions primarily focused on Amayesh card holders although 97 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 different stages of resettlement processing.

While resettlement countries played a key role through their pledges and the processing of applicants, UNHCR facilitated a remote selection mission by Finland, as no face-to-face missions took place in 2025. IOM and TOLL organized travel arrangements and provided cultural orientation sessions for accepted refugees. Despite budgetary constraints and reduced staffing, UNHCR continued efforts to strengthen and streamline existing systems and processes. A merged refugee status determination and resettlement processing approach for Afghan women and children remained in place, while the nationalization of resettlement staff was advanced. Casework was entrusted to both national colleagues and deployees from the International Catholic Migration Commission, with targeted training and one-on-one coaching provided to staff involved in case identification and resettlement processing. Referrals from protection colleagues further bolstered the identification of people eligible for resettlement.

In parallel, efforts to expand new pathways gained momentum. In 2025, 1,095 people were supported to access pathways, including 517 who received assistance via family reunification. During the year, 52 people departed Iran through complementary pathways, reflecting improved access to safe and legal migration opportunities. To further expand these options, UNHCR implemented standard operating procedures for the Brazil humanitarian visa pilot programme. In addition, 23 Afghan students were assisted via the Digital Bridges for Afghan Scholars project. This project was launched in 2024 to promote overseas study opportunities for Afghan students by facilitating information-sharing and networking opportunities with past scholarship recipients. In total, 93 students were supported through education pathways in 2025. Efforts to develop labour mobility pathways continued through Talent Lift, which sought to open new avenues for economic opportunity for Afghan refugees.

Other Core Outcome Indicators

Population Type	Baseline	Target(2025)	Actual(2025)
7.1 Extent participation of displaced and stateless people across programme phases is supported.			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Limited	Limited	Moderate

Other Core Output Indicators

Population Type	Actual (2025)
05.1.1 Number of children and caregivers who received child protection services	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	346
07.1.1 Number of people consulted through Participatory Assessments	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	400
07.2.1 Number of people who used UNHCR- supported feedback & response mechanisms to voice their needs/ concerns/feedback	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	266,572
07.3.1 Number of people who received protection services	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	149,455
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

Although operational constraints limited outreach activities, UNHCR continued to advance age, gender and diversity-responsive communication through targeted in-reach activities and institutional communication tools. These efforts helped improve access to information and services for forcibly displaced and stateless people, while ensuring due consideration for diverse profiles and vulnerabilities.

UNHCR also systematically collected and analyzed disaggregated data by age, sex and other diversity characteristics from people accessing its offices. This data informed the production of dashboards and other information management products that supported evidence-based decision-making, programme adjustments and advocacy efforts.

Partnerships with implementing partners and other stakeholders further promoted inclusive approaches that addressed the needs of different nationalities within forcibly displaced and host communities. Attention was given to women and children facing increased protection risks.

To ensure accessible and timely information, UNHCR prioritized in-reach communication methods and disseminated information through multiple channels. These included regular updates to the UNHCR Iran help web page (which were also shared on Instagram), dedicated helplines, in-person services at UNHCR offices, batch SMS messaging, online protection forms and help desks operating in Government centres and reception gates. These channels improved access to information for people with varying literacy levels, limited internet connectivity, or mobility constraints.

In 2025, UNHCR handled 47,552 calls, assisted 86,929 visitors at reception areas, processed 182,845

online protection forms. UNHCR's help web page was visited by 1.8 million people. Similar information was also shared in the reception centres of the Center for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs (CAFIA) across the country, in close coordination with UNHCR, to promote consistent messaging.

Section 3: Resources

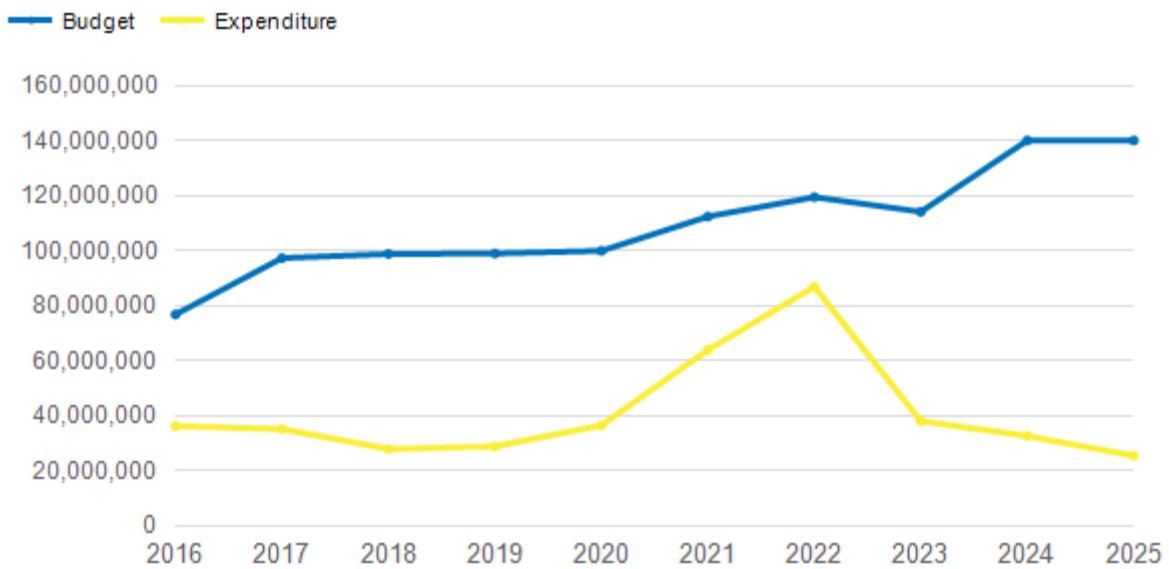
3.1 Financial Data

(Financial figures in USD)

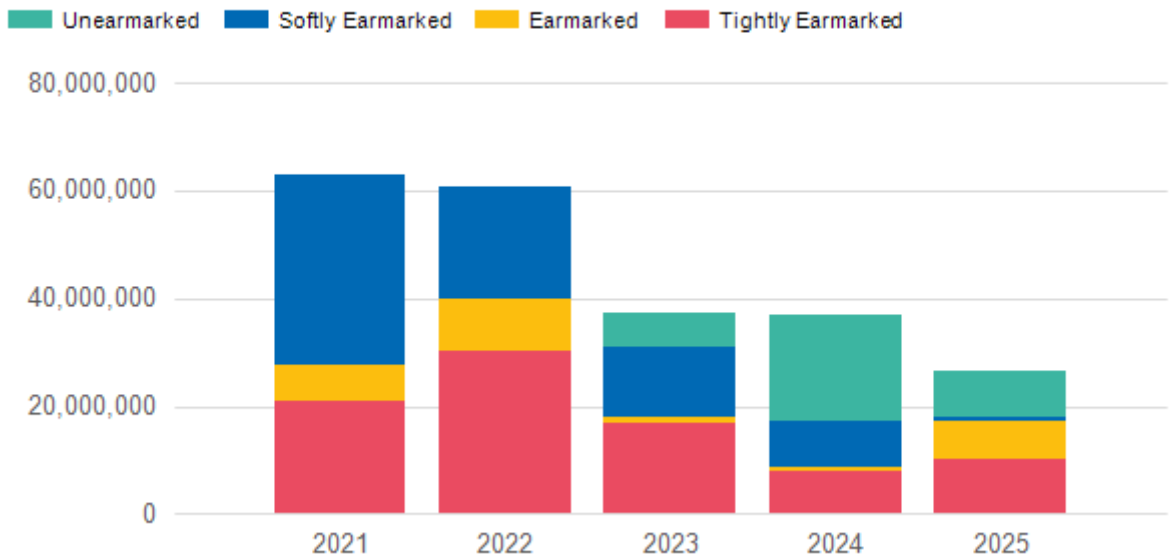
Impact Area	Final Budget	Funds Available	Funds Available as % of Budget	Expenditure	Expenditure as % of Funds Available
IA1: Protect	9,419,954	2,219,795	23.56%	2,070,062	93.25%
IA2: Respond	123,315,171	22,643,293	18.36%	22,643,293	100.00%
IA4: Solve	7,264,875	719,158	9.90%	719,158	100.00%
All Impact Areas		305,479			
Total	140,000,000	25,887,725	18.49%	25,432,513	98.24%

Outcome Area	Final Budget	Funds Available	Funds Available as % of Budget	Expenditure	Expenditure as % of Funds Available
OA3: Policy/Law	3,144,654	857,931	27.28%	857,931	100.00%
OA6: Justice	6,275,300	1,647,343	26.25%	1,212,131	73.58%
OA8: Wellbeing	37,694,718	3,621,051	9.61%	3,621,051	100.00%
OA10: Health	35,430,790	15,240,195	43.01%	15,240,195	100.00%
OA11: Education	39,259,307	2,288,937	5.83%	2,288,937	100.00%
OA13: Livelihood	5,278,664	1,117,290	21.17%	1,117,290	100.00%
OA14: Return	1,626,508	24,876	1.53%	24,876	100.00%
OA15: Resettle	5,638,366	694,283	12.31%	694,283	100.00%
EA18: Support	4,171,626	335,339	8.04%	335,339	100.00%
EA20: External	1,480,067	40,480	2.74%	40,480	100.00%
All Outcome Areas		20,000			
Total	140,000,000	25,887,725	18.49%	25,432,513	98.24%

Budget and Expenditure Trend



Contributions Trend by Type



3.2. Resources Overview

In 2025, UNHCR continued to operate in a complex environment in which forcibly displaced people relied heavily on Iran’s long-standing refugee-inclusive policies to access essential services, including health, education and protection. Within this context, UNHCR focused its efforts on five core priorities: safeguarding asylum space and strengthening protection, supporting inclusive national services, promoting refugee self-reliance, expanding access to resettlement and complementary pathways, and reducing statelessness through targeted advocacy.

Despite growing needs, UNHCR’s 2025 financial requirement of \$140 million remained critically underfunded, with only 19% secured by year-end. This limited UNHCR’s ability to scale essential protection

activities, sustain health and education programmes, and respond to increasing pressures.

At the same time, Iran's challenging economic situation placed additional strain on the operational environment, making it increasingly difficult for the Government to maintain inclusive policies. This situation contributed to heightened protection risks, increased humanitarian needs and greater demand for emergency assistance. In this context, UNHCR's response was focused on protecting the most vulnerable, particularly women, children and those with acute needs, while continuing to advocate for greater international responsibility sharing to help sustain Iran's long-standing commitment to refugee protection.

Section 4: Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

4.1 Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

In 2025, UNHCR continued its efforts to advance a more sustainable response to forcibly displaced and stateless people in Iran. However, the year was marked by significant challenges. UN-wide budget cuts affected UNHCR staffing and programme delivery, while an increasingly uncertain operating environment further constrained resource mobilization.

Despite these limitations, UNHCR strengthened its collaboration with UN sister agencies to deliver a more coordinated response. Targeted humanitarian support was also deployed to selected border areas to support people affected by the expiry of headcount slips and the pressures associated with the conflict, which contributed to increased returns to Afghanistan.

In parallel, efforts were made to broaden international responsibility-sharing. UNHCR launched the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) Local Core Group under the chairmanship of the Netherlands. The initiative aimed to stimulate donor engagement and mobilize additional resources. Both the Chair and Vice Chair announced financial contributions for Iran (to UNHCR and UNICEF) while further engagement with existing donors – including EU DG ECHO, EU DG INTPA and Japan – sought to secure additional support.

Operational planning and advocacy continued to be constrained by limited access to reliable data on refugees. Nevertheless, gradual improvements were made in obtaining some activity-related data through various channels, including the Government, while internal data management and analysis were further strengthened.

At the same time, field-level initiatives continued to complement centrally managed partnership activities across the country. Maintaining and expanding these efforts remains essential to address context specific needs and test innovative approaches that could be scaled up, including expanded partnerships, private sector engagement and improved access to livelihoods. During the 12-day war with Israel, UNHCR remained present and operational, ensuring largely uninterrupted delivery of assistance while providing timely information on emerging needs and gaps across affected areas. This reinforced the indispensable value of sustained field presence.

Meanwhile, broader economic and political challenges in Iran intensified during the year. The implementation of the return and regularization policy led to a high number of Afghans returning although the Government allowed some categories of people to remain in recognition of their specific needs.

In this context, the absence of an accessible asylum system posed barriers for people in need of international protection. Even for documented cases, rights and access to essential services remained limited, hindering pathways to self-reliance and local inclusion. In this context, and with limited financial incentives available, UNHCR faced increasing challenges in supporting both the host Government and people under its mandate. Nevertheless, UNHCR has continued to work with UN agencies and key NGOs, maintaining advocacy efforts through bilateral partnerships and donor briefings aimed at mitigating the impact on displaced communities.

Efforts to engage with forcibly displaced people faced setbacks during the year, primarily due to limited access to affected populations through outreach and reduced staffing capacity.

Despite these constraints, resettlement proved to be an important tool for expanding protection space in Iran. It facilitated collaboration with Government counterparts, enhanced access to other protection services, and reinforced support in areas such as child protection and protection against 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 on the situation.

At the same time, establishing complementary pathways programmes requires substantial investment,

particularly in a context such as Iran where engagement from international actors is limited. These programmes must be adapted to the local context, as reflected in the focus on family reunification support.

While resource and staffing constraints limit the scale and speed at which such programmes can be developed, they continue to offer important opportunities to create alternative avenues for protection and stability for those in need.



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