

# AFGHANISTAN

## Returnees Response

Health Situation Report No. 1

9 November 2023

Based on available information as of 18:00 on 8 November 2023



World Health  
Organization  
Afghanistan



HEALTH  
CLUSTER  
Afghanistan

## Highlights

**An influx of returnees** from Pakistan started in October with the daily average of over 10,000, between 1 and 8 November, at the Spin Boldak (Kandahar Province) and Torkham (Nangarhar Province) border crossings.

Between 1 and 8 November 2023, a **total of 44,715 returnees have arrived at Spin Boldak and 37,564 at Torkham.** Approximately 47% are females.

Since 1 November 2023, WHO and Health Cluster partners have provided **a daily average of 2,500 consultations to returnees at the Torkham border and 2,000 at the Spin Boldak border,** through primary healthcare facilities.



*A significant increase of returnees have been observed in Torkham (Nangarhar) and Spin Boldak (Kandahar)*

## SITUATION UPDATE

On 3 October 2023, the Government of Pakistan announced its decree “Illegal Foreigners’ Repatriation Plan,” setting a 1 November 2023 deadline for the “voluntary return” of all undocumented Afghans in Pakistan.

As this decree applies to an estimated 1.3 million undocumented Afghans residing in Pakistan, an influx of returnees began arriving in October. The daily average of returnees increased from less than 260 individuals to over 10,000 between 1 and 8 November 2023 at the Spin Boldak (Kandahar Province) and Torkham (Nangarhar Province) border crossings, where the majority of returnees pass through. To accommodate the re-entry of such a large population, crossing points have recently opened in Herat and Paktya provinces as well.

Those who are returning include undocumented individuals, Afghanistan Citizen Card (ACC) holders and Assisted VolRep (Proof of Registration (PoR)) card holders. Between 1 and 8 November 2023, a total of 44,715 returnees had arrived at Spin Boldak and 37,564 at Torkham. Approximately 47% are females. It is anticipated that approximately 720,000 undocumented individuals and 50,000 Assisted VolRep card holders will require assistance at border points from November 2023 through July 2024.

In coordination with the health authorities, the World Health Organization (WHO) and its Health Partners rapidly mobilized response efforts and extended the immediate provision of healthcare services to the returnees as part of the overall integrated strategic operations of the border consortium. Since 1 November 2023, WHO and Health Cluster partners have provided a daily average of 2,500 consultations to returnees at the Torkham border and 2,000 at the Spin Boldak border.

As the surge of returnees is expected to continue and the demand for aid grow, the Health Cluster has requested US\$ 8.9 million. To date, only US\$ 900,000 has been received, leaving a funding gap of US\$8 million.

## Health Cluster Coordination

The Health Cluster has coordinated its response to leverage the efforts of all partners and stakeholders.

- A Health Cluster coordination meeting was held on November 7, 2024; coordination, response, and challenges related to returnees were discussed, with a focus on the Torkham and Spin Boldak borders.
- As agreed in this meeting, a Migration Health Task Force was established under the Health Cluster to provide technical guidance for the healthcare response to returnees. The TOR has been drafted, and the first meeting is scheduled for early next week.
- The Regional Health Cluster coordination team for the eastern and southern regions has been actively collaborating with the health partners regarding the healthcare response. Their activities include developing a contingency plan and conducting weekly and ad-hoc coordination meetings with the de facto authorities (DfA) and health partners, as well as undertaking multiple joint missions with the Provincial Public Health Directorate (PPHD) and UN agencies to monitor the health response from both the Torkham and Spin Boldak borders.
- A WhatsApp group was created for the health partners involved in the response, and focal points for partner organizations participating in the returnee response have been identified.



*Health Partners Coordination meeting being conducted in Torkham border, Nangarhar to establish a health committee.*

## Health Responses by Province

### 1. Kandahar Province

- A total of 10 Health Cluster partners – ARCS, BARAN, HealthNet TPO (HN TPO), HEWAD, INTERSOS, IOM, Save the Children International (SCI), UNFPA, UNICEF, and WHO – are supporting 22 health facilities, and 10 ambulances in three locations: Spin Boldak border crossing point, Takht-e-Pul, and Kandahar transit center. The 10 ambulances (3 by BARAN, 2 by HEWAD, and 5 by other partners) are in operation at Spin Boldak.
- WHO and its Health Cluster partners have dispatched 130 workers to support primary healthcare services delivery to the returnees.
- The service includes outpatient consultation, immunization, reproductive, maternal, newborn, and child health care, nutrition screening, health promotion, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), and ambulatory referrals to health facilities for advanced care. WHO: Two surveillance support teams (SSTs) are conducting screening, reporting, and collecting specimens from suspected cases of priority diseases.
- The following health partners are actively engaged in providing healthcare services to returnees:
  - SCI: three mobile health teams, with 24 members working in shifts.
  - ARCS: 14 Mobile health teams, with 84 members, working in shifts.
  - IOM: 16 Health workers providing healthcare and screening services for communicable diseases with one ambulance.
  - HEWAD: Five healthcare workers providing services for returnees with two ambulances.
  - BARAN: four health teams providing PHC services in all three locations with three ambulances.
  - HN TPO: Eight health staff members providing services at Spin Boldak.
  - WHO: Two surveillance support teams (SSTs) are conducting screening, reporting, and collecting specimens from suspected cases of priority diseases.

- Since November 1, 2023, the Health Cluster partners have provided an daily average of 2,000 consultation at the Spin Boldak border through those primary healthcare facilities. The majority of the cases received were communicable diseases, such as acute respiratory infections and acute watery diarrhea.
- Additionally, the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) deployed 20 vaccinators to provide routine and COVID-19 vaccinations at Spin Boldak. WHO supported the 37 teams stationed in Kandahar. Each team was comprised of two vaccinators.
- Between 1 and 8 November, 32,791 returnees were vaccinated with the Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV), 40 children under 5 years old received Pentavalent vaccine, 4545 returnees received COVID-19 vaccines. Measles vaccine was administered to 159 returnees, and 32 children received BCG vaccines.

## 2. Nangarhar Province

- A total of 11 Health Cluster partners – AADA, IOM, JACK, ORCD, PU-AMI, SCI, TDH, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, and WORLD – are supporting 16 health facilities with ambulances, and one FATP. Of the 20 ambulances deployed at Torkham, 4 were by Nangarhar Ambulance, 3 by JACK, 2 by PUI, 2 from Laghman and Kunar by HN TPO, 1 each from AADA, WORLD, SCI and the Swedish Committee in Nuristan, 5 ambulances from other partners.
- WHO and its health partners have put in place more than 200 workers to support and provide primary healthcare services.
- The provided service includes outpatient consultation, immunization, reproductive, maternal, newborn, and child health care, nutrition screening, health promotion, MHPSS, and ambulatory referrals to health facilities for advanced care.
- WHO brought in two SSTs to conduct screening and collect specimens from suspected cases of priority diseases.
- WHO supported the activities of 32 vaccinator teams in Torkham. Each team was comprised of two vaccinators. Between 1 and 8 November 2023, all returnees were vaccinated with OPV at the Torkham border crossing.



*Primary healthcare service has been provided 24/7 for the returnees at Torkham by Health Cluster partners, Nangarhar Province.*



*Regional Health Cluster Coordinator conducted a monitoring visit of mobile health team in Torkham, Nangarhar Province.*

## 3. Paktika Province

Paktika Province have two unofficial border with Pakistan one in Barmal district (Angor Ada) and one in Turwe district (Qamardin) border, where a daily average of 30 families are crossing. Directorate of Refugees and Repatriation registers returnees and provides food for them.

- Angor Ada border: Currently OPHM is providing health services and WHO provides OPV vaccines.
- Qamardin border: ARCs is providing health services.



## GAPS and URGENT NEEDS

- The continued increasing number of returnees will escalate the demand for healthcare services. There is already a critical shortage of medicine, and more resources will need to be mobilized, including medicine, medical supplies, and equipment.
- Due to the large backlog for registration, a significant number of returnees are staying in temporary shelters, such as tents, where limited water and hygiene are available, increasing the risk of communicable disease outbreaks.
- With fast approaching the harsh winter, the cold weather will intensify the vulnerability of those staying in temporary shelters. Inadequate, overcrowded conditions will increase the incidence and severity of diseases.
- While there is a vital need to establish fixed-location health facilities, the movement of returnees makes it difficult to support the response with static health facilities alone.
- With the increasing number of returnees, health resources are being stretched. There is a critical funding gap in health operations. Health Cluster has requested US\$ 8.9 million. To date, only US\$ 900,000 has been received, leaving a funding gap of US\$8 million.



*Returnees waiting for registration at Spin Boldak zero-point reception center, Kandahar Province*



*WHO visited health teams responding returnees at Kandahar Transit Center, Kandahar Province*

### **For more information on the response to #HeratEarthquake, contact:**

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