

Highlights

The influx of Afghan returnees from Pakistan started in September 2023, with **the daily average of over 17,000** in early November. As of 11 November, **327,400 Afghan returnees** were recorded.

Between 15 September and 11 November 2023, a **total of 233,700 returnees have arrived at Torkham (Nangarhar Province) and 93,700 at Spin Boldak (Kandahar Province)**. Approximately 52% are females.

As of 14 November 2023, WHO and its Health Cluster partners have reached **51,494 returnees** (11,205 boys, 12,749 girls, 11,348 men, 16,192 women) with various health services.



More than 233,000 Afghan returnees from Pakistan crossed the Torkham, Nangarhar Province

SITUATION UPDATE

As a result of the Pakistan's decree of repatriation of illegal foreigners, the influx of Afghan returnees from Pakistan has continued since 15 September 2023. As of 11 November, a total of 327,400 returnees have crossed the border, mainly in Torkham (Nangarhar Province) with 233,700 and Spin Boldak (Kandahar Province) with 93,700. During this period, an average of 17,000 returnees crosses the borders each day.

The majority of returnees are women and children. Approximately 24% of returnees are children under five years of age, and 60% of total returnees are children and adolescents 17 years and younger. Almost 48% of returnees are female. The majority of returnees are from Nangarhar Province followed by Kandahar, Kunar, Kunduz and Laghman provinces. The vast majority of returnees (90%) aim to return to their provinces of origin.

Before returning to their intended locations in Afghanistan, due to the registration process, returnees stay in temporary shelters, such as school rooms and tents, in reception centers which have been set up mainly at Torkham and Spin Boldak borders. However, the harsh winter is approaching, and the cold weather will intensify the vulnerability of the returnees. These living conditions, characterized by overcrowding, poor sanitation and insufficient access to food and water, heighten the risk of communicable diseases and mental stress.

In response to this looming public health emergency, the World Health Organization (WHO) and its Health Partners have ramped up their operations for the provision of healthcare services to returnees as part of the overall integrated strategic operations of the border.

As of 14 November 2023, WHO and its Health Cluster partners have reached 51,494 returnees (56.2% are female) with various health services across the five regions (eastern, southern, southeastern, western and northern). Between 5 and 11 November 2023, a total of 59,369 returnees have been vaccinated with oral polio vaccines (OPV) in Nangarhar, Kandahar, Hilmand and Kabul, by 52 vaccination teams deployed by the partners.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Health Cluster Coordination

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

A Migration Health Task Force was established under the Health Cluster to provide technical guidance for the healthcare response to returnees. A bilateral meeting with IOM and Health Cluster was held on 12 November to discuss formation of Task Force as well as to jointly review the Terms of Reference.

At the regional level, the Regional Health Cluster coordination teams have been actively collaborating with the health partners. Their activities include developing contingency plans and conducting coordination meetings with the de facto authorities (DfA) and health partners, as well as multiple joint missions with the Provincial Public Health Directorate (PPHD) and UN agencies.

• Eastern Region:

- A Returnees Task Force meeting has been conducted on 13 November 2023 to coordinate the response and avoid duplication of interventions. It was agreed that one agency will be specified by the nutrition cluster to deliver the food commodities, and the health cluster will follow up with IOM on the delivery of services in the transition centers.

• Southern Region:

- The Regional Health Cluster Coordinator conducted a joint mission with WHO, UNHCR, and WFP to Spin Boldak zero-point clinic to monitor the health response for the returnees.
- An ad hoc coordination meeting has been conducted with IOM and PPHD to coordinate the response for the returnees in Kandahar.

• Southeastern Region:

- The Regional Health Cluster team conducted a meeting on 14 November 2023 where roles and responsibilities have been assigned to partners to ensure a comprehensive intervention and avoid duplication of services.

• Western Region:

- The Regional Health Cluster Coordination meeting has been conducted on 14 November 2023.
- Bilateral meetings have been conducted to enhance the health response and reporting.

Health Responses by Region

As of 14th of November 2023, the Health Cluster partners have reached 51,494 beneficiaries (11,205 boys, 12,749 girls, 11,348 men, 16,192 women) with health services. This includes 35,828 received primary health care (PHC) consultations; 8,963 received secondary health care services; 3,280 have been reached with health promotion activities; 1,751 received mental health psychosocial support (MHPSS) services; 1,312 with maternal, newborn and child health services.

1. Eastern Region

- Based on the recent decision by the local authorities, the returnees were relocated to a site around 5 kilometers away from the Torkham border crossing in Nangarhar Province. Accordingly, the health facilities (HFs) have been established in this new site. Currently, health services are available in three locations: Zero Point, IOM transition center, and the new settlement known as Omari camp.
- A total of 13 Health Cluster partners – AADA, ARCS, IOM, IRC, Islamic Relief, JACK, ORCD, PU-AMI, SCA, SCI, TDH, WHO, and WORLD – are supporting 16 HFs including 2 comprehensive health centers (CHCs), 6 basic health centers (BHCs), 1 subhealth center (SHC), and 7 mobile health teams (MHTs).
- To support the referral system to advanced healthcare facilities, six ambulances were dispatched to the location, with an additional three on standby at healthcare facilities along the Torkham-Jalalabad route.



JACK has provided OPD service to the returnees in Torkham border crossing, Nangarhar Province.

- The health partners have put 277 workers (82 females) in place to support and provide primary healthcare services.
- WHO has operated a 20-bed emergency hospital at Torkham ground-crossing where acute surgical and medical emergencies treatment have been provided, as well as referral services.
- WHO also deployed two surveillance support teams (SSTs) to conduct screening and collect specimens from suspected cases of priority diseases. In addition, WHO ensured the availability of cholera kits in stock. Some of these kits were supplied to healthcare facilities at Zero Point.
- There are 19 vaccinator teams in Torkham. Each team was comprised of two vaccinators. Between 5 and 11 November 2023 (W45), 19,529 returnees were vaccinated with Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV), and 377 received measles vaccination at the Torkham border crossing.

2. Southern Region

- A joint mission with WHO, UNHCR, and WFP was conducted to Spin Boldak Zero-point in Kandahar Province on 12 November to review the situation and the needs.
- A total of seven Health Cluster partners (ARCS, UNICEF/BARAN, HEWAD, UNFPA/HNTPO, IOM, SCI, WHO), and the Mirwais Regional Hospital have provided 24/7 healthcare services to the returnees through 18 healthcare facilities (HFs): 17 mobile health teams (MHTs) and one static HF. Six ambulances in three locations; Spin Boldak border crossing point, Takht-e-Pul, and Kandahar transit center are also available.
- The Health Cluster partners have dispatched 196 workers (49 female) to support primary healthcare services delivery to the returnees.
- WHO has supported a 30-bed emergency hospital in Spin Boldak ground crossing to provide emergency services and referral service. Also, WHO deployed two SSTs in Spin Boldak for conducting screening, reporting, and collecting specimens from suspected cases of priority diseases.

- Between 5 and 11 November, 39,505 returnees were vaccinated with OPV, and 166 returnees received measles vaccines by 32 vaccination teams deployed to four repatriation centers in Kandahar and one center in Hilmand.



Provision of OPD services by female healthcare workers for the returnees at Spin Boldak, Kandahar Province (BARAN).

3. Southeast Region

- There are seven unofficial border crossing with Pakistan in the southeastern region (Paktya, Paktika, Ghazni and Khost provinces).
- A total of eight health cluster partners (ADAA, ARCS, HADAAF, NAC, OHPM, PU-AMI, RHDO, and WHO) are supporting the health response to the returnees in Paktya, Paktika and Ghazni provinces.
- The health partners have deployed 40 health workers (10 female) to support and provide primary healthcare services.

Dand wa Patan in Paktya Province:

- There are 50 families registered in Dand Patan border crossing, where currently 3 MHTs, supported by PU-AMI, NAC, and AADA, operating at the reception center.
- HADAAF/WHO donated 56 items of medicine to the MHTs.

Angorada in Paktika Province:

To date, 60 families entered through the border crossing. There are three MHTs (2 by OHPM/UNICEF, one by ARC) equipped with 14 healthcare workers are functional and standby in this border point.

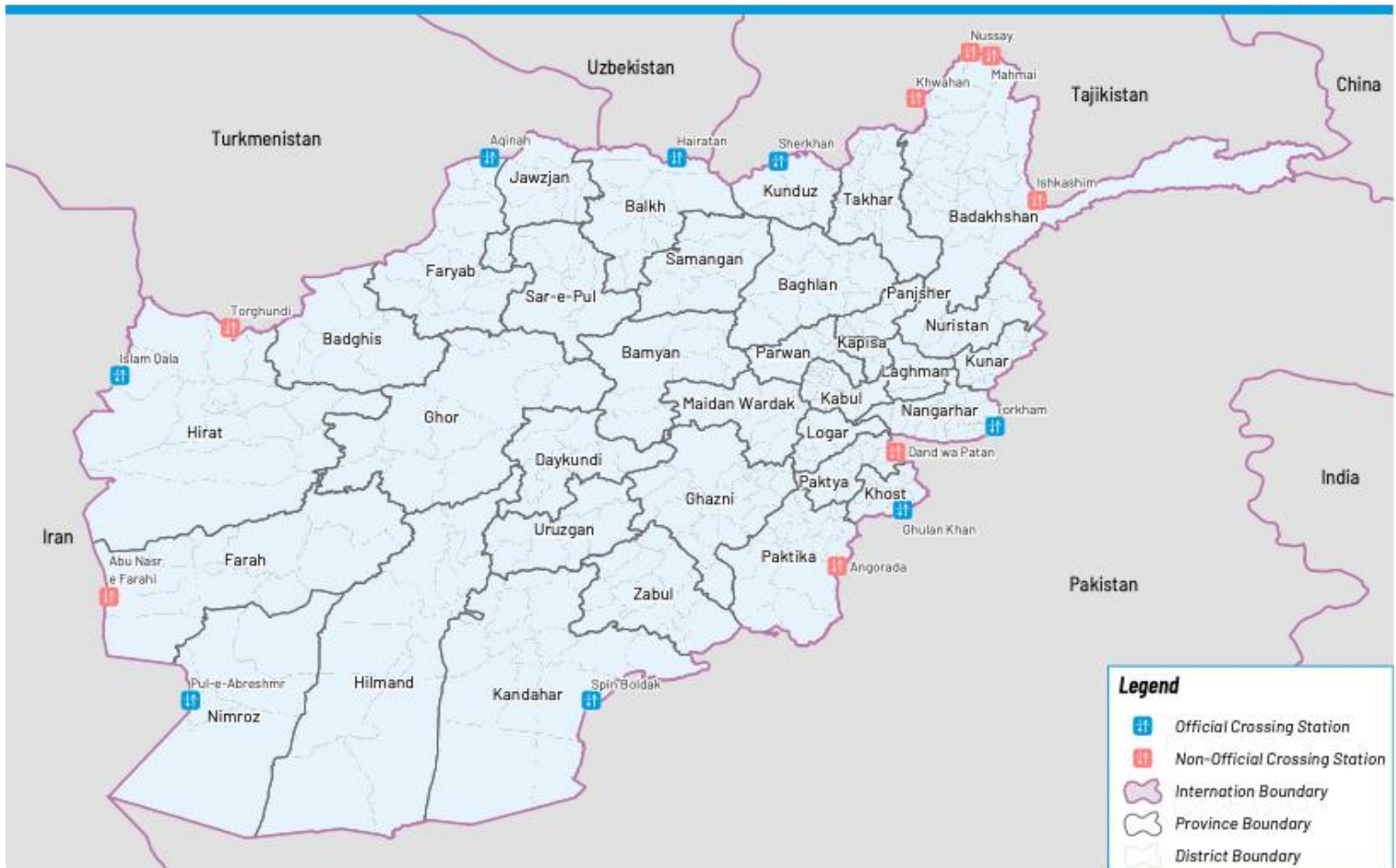
4. Western Region

- A total of six health cluster partners (AFGA, HNTPO, IOM, JACK, WHO and WVI) are supporting the health service delivery to the returnees through two fixed centers and three MHTs.
- To date, the health partners have deployed around 42 health workers (15 females) to support and provide primary healthcare services.
- WHO supports SSTs in the area to conduct screening and collect specimens from suspected cases of priority diseases.

5. Northern Region

- A camp has been established for the returnees in Kabul-Mazar highway, near to Balkh international airport with capacity of 33 tents which can cover 35 families. As of 12 November 2023, a total of 1382 individuals were registered in this camp.
- One MHT (BDN/WHO) and one ambulance were assigned to provide health services delivery for returnees in the camp. In addition, Camp Sakhi BHC under the Health Emergency Response (HER) project has been assigned to start night duty. Between 7 and 12 November, a total of 234 people were received various health care services.

Afghanistan, Crossing Border Stations



Disclaimer: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the World Health Organization (WHO). Feedback: khawasia@who.int

GAPS and URGENT NEEDS

- The continuously increasing number of returnees will escalate the demand for healthcare services. There is already a critical shortage of medicine, healthcare workers (specifically female), medical supplies, and equipment.
- The limitation of space in health facilities set up within the temporary settings like tents is making it difficult to maintain patient privacy and conduct reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health services, including normal deliveries and the insertion of Intrauterine Contraceptive Devices.
- There is a lack of proper Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) facilities, such as toilets, washing basins, and solid waste management, which could increase the risk of communicable disease outbreaks.
- There is a lack of suitable accommodation for staff of humanitarian partners. This is hindering the ability to maintain and expand response efforts.
- In addition to the limited availability of drinking water for the refugees, food for returnees depends on food distribution, creating concerns regarding inadequate nutrition in tented environments. The need for support is crucial, including nutrition screening and health promotion.
- With the increasing number of returnees, health resources are being stretched and there is a critical funding gap in health operations. **WHO has requested US\$10 million to reach people in need of health assistance.**



Together with the partners, WHO supports vaccination teams in Spin Boldak, Kandahar Province.



BDN/WHO established a mobile health team in a camp in Balkh Province.

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

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