



IOM Afghanistan
Newsletter | Spring & Summer 2016



Foreword from the Chief of Mission

Migration is nowadays more and more in the headlines, with all those stories reflecting the drama of people on the move, pushed by so many motives and pulled by the prospects of a better future elsewhere.

Migration more than ever requires holistic governance, one that addresses root causes in countries of origin and facilitates integration in countries of destination, and not one which builds wall and fences, which do not bring about long-lasting solutions, but only additional pain and suffering for many individuals. Those returning to their home country need to find a conducive environment for their reintegration so not to exacerbate further existing vulnerabilities.

Afghanistan faces important challenges when it comes to reintegrating their citizens from neighbouring countries, but also from Europe and Australia. The government has set-up important coordination mechanisms, which should help with crafting a vision on migration and moving from ad-hoc projects to a comprehensive response, including labour migration. These are important steps which take time to witness impact, but significant work is underway.

IOM will continue to closely support efforts being made by Afghan authorities on the above, but also in responding to natural disasters and rapidly delivering aid to affected populations country-wide. With 8 sub-offices in main regions in Afghanistan, IOM is prepared to act quickly where action happens and being supportive to local stakeholders. Our dedicated staff, despite the many existing geographical and security constraints, strive to deliver aid and support to most remote areas of the country, even carrying it on donkeys, if other means are not possible.

I hope you will find inspiring reading this issue of the newsletter which features, among others, IOM's AVRR assistance, Cross Border Return and Reintegration services, Humanitarian assistance to vulnerable people as well as IOM's continued support to the Secretariat of Afghan Migration High Commission, and we always remain open to suggestions on how to better operate.

Laurence Hart
Special Envoy and Chief of Mission
IOM Afghanistan

IOM Assisted Increasing Number of Voluntary Returns of Afghan Nationals from Host Countries since January, 2016.

“I feel so happy to be back home, and I want to make the best of what we have here in our country.”

The words of a returning migrant after landing at Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul, echo those of many other Afghans who have voluntarily returned to Afghanistan under IOM's Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programme.

IOM Afghanistan coordinates with the Afghan government and relevant authorities to plan the arrival and reception of voluntary returnees from European countries. The returnees benefit from return and reception assistance back home, which include meet and greet, provision of necessary information, provision of temporary accommodation and onward transportation to their final destinations in the country.

The AVRR programme is run by IOM in Afghanistan since 2003 in close collaboration with a wide network of partners. Return and reception assistance is key to ensure means for safe, dignified and humane management of returning migrants. “The AVR assistance is a positive alternative to other types of return, or to remaining in the country of destination with limited possibilities of participation in the host society. It offers migrants the opportunity to re-think their future and make an informed choice prior to return”, says IOM Chief of Mission/Special Envoy for Afghanistan Mr. Laurence Hart.

The assisted voluntary returns to Afghanistan has significantly increased during January-June, 2016. 1,415 persons voluntarily returned in the whole 2015 while voluntary returns so far until June 2016 reached 4,103 individuals which already shows 290% increase in overall voluntary returns in comparison to the figures from last year. Most of the returnees returned to Kabul and other destinations across the country mainly Nangarhar, Kandahar, Herat, Balkh, Ghazni, Baghlan and Kunduz provinces.

The Afghan Minister of Refugees and Repatriation Mr. Said Hussain Alemi Balkhi highlighted: “The Afghan government welcomes any voluntary returns of its nationals back to Afghanistan from foreign countries and will explore options to assist them as much as possible.”

A significant increase has been observed in applications for assisted voluntary return from European countries to Afghanistan since the beginning of this year, due to long lasting asylum processes and/ or uncertainty about their acceptance.

Mrs. Argentina Szabados, Chief of Mission for Germany said: “The main reasons invoked by the returnees to go back to Afghanistan are the limitations they perceive in their long-term opportunities in Germany, including the limited possibilities for family reunification.”

Number of Assisted Voluntary Returnees so far in 2016:

Returning From	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Grand Total
Australia	-	-	1	1	-	2	4
Austria	53	76	76	48	18	11	282
Belgium	29	12	8	21	13	6	89
Bulgaria	3	3	4	8	5	22	45
Denmark	2	5	1	10	11	5	34
Finland	3	9	28	26	12	10	88
France	2	14	3	-	-	1	20
Germany	71	312	382	526	499	333	2,123
Greece	3	4	23	171	209	298	708
Indonesia	15	5	35	11	2	6	74
Netherlands	17	6	9	17	10	9	68
Norway	13	20	-	-	-	-	33
Serbia	-	-	-	2	-	-	2
Sweden	15	43	98	28	4	-	188
Switzerland	6	19	4	12	6	4	51
Turkey	-	2	24	84	93	81	284
UK	2	-	4	1	1	2	10
Grand Total	234	530	700	966	883	790	4,103



IOM supports 125 Afghan nationals in their voluntary return back home from Germany, 24 February 2016 - Kabul, Afghanistan.

Cross Border Return and Reintegration

He is going back home, to wipe his elderly mom's tears, and make the family proud.



IOM Chief of Mission visiting Gozargah Reception Center in Herat Province, April, 2016.

Salam, the 35 year old son of Mohammad Rahim left his siblings and elderly mother in Kasi village of Chaghcharan district in Afghanistan's, Ghor Province, three months ago in order to seek employment in Iran. He was involved in a car accident during the journey to Iran with people smugglers. Following this, Salam was arrested by the Iranian security officials and deported to Afghanistan through Milak border crossing point in Nimroz province. He did not receive any medical treatment for the injuries he sustained in the accident.

Soon after his deportation, the International Organization from Migration (IOM) in Nimroz hosted him in its transit center. Salam received a warm welcome to the country and was provided with humanitarian medical treatment for his severe injuries.

Salam was then referred to Herat Regional Hospital by IOM's Cross Border Return and Reintegration programme team and was hospitalized for a couple of days. Due to severely sustained wounds and lack of medical facilities he had to be discharged from the hospital.

Eventually, with no other option available, IOM Herat had to accommodate him in Guzargh Transit Center (GTC) and extended to him medical care by the only doctor in the camp and a daily wage helper. "We are helping him. We will further trace his family as part of our humanitarian assistance. Salam deserves to achieve his basic rights and re-unify with his family again", Said Eshaq Sakhizada, an IOM staff member of CBBR programme in Herat.



Salam ready to go home after cured in IOM's Guzargah reception center in Herat.

IOM put various efforts to trace his family, including posting his picture on walls at bus stations. His case was shared with various government and non-government entities such as; Directorate of Refugees and Repatriations (DoRR), Directorate of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (DoLSAMD) and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC). Eventually the team could trace his family in Kasi village of Chaghcharan district in Ghor province and informed them about their family member Salam.

When IOM called Salam's Mother, she could not believe that her son was still alive; as the rumors by people traveling along with him spread that he had died in the car accident. Salam's mother could not stop crying, she was desperate to hear Salam's voice and then they spoke over the telephone she was overjoyed.

Salam's brother Saleem was invited to GTC to visit him. Saleem, who is a member of the Afghan National Army, said "I don't know how to thank IOM's remarkable humanitarian assistance", "I called everyone over in Iran and Afghanistan to find him, but no luck. People traveling with him in the same vehicle informed us of his death which was so painful to hear" he added.

He added, "I did not give up looking for my brother and every minute I was calling everywhere, I always hoped my brother was still alive and would return home again."

Salam is a bit shocked about what happened to him, but he is happy that he survived; he cannot wait to see his family. Salam is recovering and will soon be discharged to be able to get on his way to unify with his family and friends back home.

IOM provides support to vulnerable undocumented Afghan returnees at the main border crossing points of Milak, Islam Qala and Torkham neighboring with Iran and Pakistan. Since 2009 IOM has supported more than 176,165 vulnerable undocumented Afghan returnees from Iran and Pakistan.

Over the past two years, IOM's primary Disaster Risk Reduction activity in Afghanistan has been the construction of 'gabion' flood protection walls in flash flood-prone communities. The structures are assembled in the lower parts of watersheds, insuring the protection of lives, homes, land, livestock and livelihoods.

Since 2013, IOM completed a total of 30 gabion wall projects in 15 provinces, including Samangan (pictured here). In total, the 5,520 meters of gabion wall protects 75 villages and 13,500 houses and 18,500 acres of agricultural land, benefitting 36,000 families (over 252,000 individuals).



IOM Responded to Massive Flash Floods in Afghanistan

“Coordination with relevant Afghan authorities and humanitarian partners have made it possible to quickly reach those remote areas and provide vulnerable people with most needed first assistance.”

Heavy rainfalls in April this year have caused widespread flooding and landslides throughout Afghanistan’s Ghor, Badghis, Herat, Faryab, Balkh, Samangan, Baghlan, Takhar, Badakhshan, Bamiyan, Daikundi, Logar, Ghazni, Paktiya, Parwan, Panjshir, Nuristan, Laghamn, Kunar, Uruzgan and Helmand provinces.

Massive flash floods claimed over 50 lives and left thousands homeless in northern, northeastern, western and central and central highland regions of Afghanistan earlier on in April this year.

Working alongside the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA), the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA) and other humanitarian partners, IOM immediately dispatches its field teams to disaster sites to assess the scale of the damage and the needs of the affected communities. IOM was among the first responders and mobilized urgently-needed relief assistance that had soon reach the affected families.

Speaking at an emergency coordination meeting, IOM’s Chief of Mission Laurence Hart said: “These floods are the worst that Afghanistan’s many provinces across the country have experienced in over a decade. Affected families are in urgent need of relief supplies, shelter, food, drinking water and basic health services.” “Many families and households have been affected by these floods, but the joint and rapid assessments in coordination with relevant Afghan authorities and humanitarian partners have made it possible to quickly reach those remote areas and provide vulnerable people with most needed first assistance,” said Hart.

The initial assessments found that 3,229 families had been affected by the floods, while 2,126 homes have been severely damaged and 404 houses have been completely destroyed. This number is expected to rise as assessment teams reach other affected communities. Reports also suggest that these floods have so far claimed 51 lives and left 11 injured as well as two persons missing. Many families who lost their homes have been displaced to surrounding villages.

IOM has prepositioned sufficient stocks of relief supplies and emergency shelter kits in regional hubs in Afghanistan to cover the needs of affected families. These relief supplies include basic household items, blankets, cooking sets, plastic sheeting and other goods that will help ease the burden of displacement. Additional supplies can be dispatched from IOM’s network of warehouses throughout the country.

IOM’s humanitarian assistance activities in Afghanistan are funded by the U.S. Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA.)



Supporting the Afghan Secretariat of Migration High Commission

The Afghan Government High Commission on Migration is a mechanism of the Afghan National Unity Government (NUG) to align their migration policy and practice with relevant international standards in a coherent, all-of-government manner.

In response to the growing concerns about Afghan out-migration, the issue of Brain Drain, and a significantly increased irregular flow of Afghans towards European countries, effective oversight of migration management, the Migration High Commission was established as an inter-ministerial entity under the chairmanship of the President, with membership including the CEO; Second Vice President; 15 Ministers including the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR), Ministry of Interior (MoI), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and the Disabled (MoLSAMD), and Ministry of Finance (MoF); and seven heads of independent directorates.

The High Commission makes migration policy decisions to coordinate activities and planning for the management of migrants' affairs. Thematic areas within the High Commission's remit include sustainable return & reintegration and provision of legal and social services to migrants, returnees and displaced people. In addition, the Council of Ministers (CoM) Technical Sub-Committee on Migration Affairs was created to operationalize and accelerate the implementation of the resolutions of the Cabinet at the CoM and Migration High Commission.

IOM has actively been attending monthly secretariat meetings of Migration High Commission; sharing thoughts and providing technical and advisory support on pertinent issues such as returns and sustainable re-integration of Afghans.

Support for IOM Afghanistan

Funding for IOM's activities in Afghanistan is provided by:

- Australia
- Denmark
- European Union
- Germany
- Japan
- The Netherlands
- Norway
- Sweden
- United Kingdom
- UN Development Programme
- United States of America



International Organization for Migration (IOM) Mission in Afghanistan

iomkabul@iom.int

<http://afghanistan.iom.int>