The International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Afghanistan’s Return of Qualified Afghans programme aims at bridging human resource gaps in Afghanistan’s public and private sectors by facilitating the return of skilled and qualified Afghan diaspora.

Qualified Afghans residing outside of Afghanistan are identified and placed into key positions to strengthen public and private sector institutions in Afghanistan. This engagement with the Afghan diaspora, in partnership with the Afghan government, contributes to the reconstruction, capacity-building and development of Afghanistan.

IOM approaches the link between migration and development from the perspective that international migration, if properly managed, can contribute to the growth and prosperity of countries of origin and of destination, as well as benefiting migrants themselves. It therefore harnesses the development potential of migration for the benefit of both individual migrants and societies.

IOM started its Return of Qualified Afghans (RQA) programme in 2001 after the Afghan Interim Administration appealed for international assistance.

The RQA programme focuses on the return of qualified Afghans, who are motivated to contribute their skills for the reconstruction and development of their country of origin, on a temporary or permanent basis.

As of 2018, IOM has facilitated the return of 1,665 Afghan experts from 29 countries through different RQA projects funded by different donors. These skilled returnees have worked in ministries, other government institutions, NGOs and the private sector. Former RQA beneficiaries went on to hold very high-level positions in Afghanistan including: former Deputy President of Afghanistan, former Minister of Justice, former Chief of the Supreme Court, and former Minister of Interior, among others.

Number of RQA placements by country of return since 2001

For further information, please visit http://afghanistan.iom.int or contact iomkabul@iom.int
Current programme

Return of Qualified Afghans from Iran

The RQA from Iran project has been implemented since 2008. It is part of a twelve-month project, renewed annually with the financial support of the Government of Japan, under the ‘Japan supplementary budget.’

This project specifically targets qualified and skilled Afghan diaspora from Iran, focusing on five professional areas: agriculture, health, engineering, ICT and civil services.

In cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled and the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations, labour needs in the above-cited professional areas are identified within Afghan public and private institutions. The institutions then develop Terms of References for RQA vacancies and these are posted on a dedicated website hosted by IOM Iran allowing Afghans living in Iran to submit their applications. These applications are then reviewed by a committee comprising representatives from IOM and the respective host institutions. Once the selection process is complete, the participants are issued employment contracts for a period of twelve months, which includes a monthly allowance, housing allowance and an additional cash incentive for female candidates.

During the period 2018-2019 the RQA from Iran project is supporting the return of 30 qualified Afghans while the total number of beneficiaries under this project stands at 616.

Connecting Diaspora for Development (CD4D)

The CD4D project supports the development of the health and urban and rural infrastructure sectors in Afghanistan by strengthening the capacity of key institutions through the engagement of the Afghan diaspora in The Netherlands.

Funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, CD4D is a continuation of IOM’s successful Temporary Return of Qualified Nationals (TRQN) project, which started in 2006 and facilitated 219 temporary return assignments to Afghanistan.

With around 45,000 people, The Netherlands hosts one of the largest Afghan diaspora communities in Europe. Many of these diaspora members are highly-skilled professionals.

Under CD4D, through temporary physical and online assignments, professional diaspora members residing in The Netherlands are linked to institutions in Kabul to share their knowledge and expertise.

As mentioned, CD4D focuses on two main areas of support: health and urban and rural infrastructure. The average duration of the temporary return assignments is three months. The project is to be implemented until March 2019.

IOM’s RQA programme is in alignment with the following Sustainable Development Goals:

Goal 8, Target 3 which seeks to: “Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation”

Goal 10, Target 7 which seeks to: “facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies”