



CONCEPT NOTE

Global Core Group Technical Consultation on Pillar One of the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR)

BACKGROUND

The Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) is the result of an unprecedented quadripartite consultative process among Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). In 2019, the Support Platform for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) was created to underpin collective global efforts to build on a solutions approach agreed to by Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Its creation was grounded in the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees that received wide support from the UN General Assembly. The Support Platform aims to redefine the way in which the international community responds to the Afghan refugee situation, recognizing the inclusive and generous policies of the major hosting countries, the urgent need for enhanced support for host communities, and the need to create a stable and peaceful environment in Afghanistan as the country of origin, conducive to voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration.

The SSAR has provided a comprehensive strategic vision built around three mutually reinforcing Pillars: (1) Creating conditions conducive to voluntary repatriation through community based investments in areas of high return, (2) Building Afghan refugee capital based on livelihood opportunities in Afghanistan in order to facilitate sustainable return and reintegration, and (3) Enhanced support for refugee hosting communities, preserving protection space in host countries and third country solutions.

Three dedicated virtual consultations aligned with the thematic focus of the three pillars of the SSAR Support Platform will provide an opportunity for the Members of the Global Core Group to review the current operational context in Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan as it relates to each Pillar, and consider needs, priorities, and future planned responses in support of solutions. The consultations will inform the preparation of a common outcome document, presenting a summary of key considerations and recommendations, that will inform a strategic dialogue between the Global Core Group members and the Quadripartite Steering Committee, that is provisionally scheduled to take place in November 2024, and support future actions by the Global Core Group Members.

PILLAR ONE: CREATING CONDITIONS CONDUCIVE TO VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION THROUGH COMMUNITY-BASED INVESTMENTS IN AREAS OF HIGH RETURN

Voluntary repatriation, together with local integration and resettlement, constitutes one of the three durable solutions for refugees which aims to provide a sustainable and long-term resolution to their displacement situation. Voluntary and sustainable return is often considered a preferred durable solution, should the circumstances allow, enabling refugees to return home voluntarily, restoring rights, citizenship, and an opportunity to rebuild their lives with dignity, security, and stability.

Within Afghanistan however, the situation remains volatile and continues to be uncertain. Voluntary and sustainable return is impeded by multiple, overlapping shocks- economic crisis, natural disasters, and political instability, which have tipped millions of Afghans into extreme poverty and displacement. This is compounded by registration and documentation challenges, loss of assets, lack of awareness of services in

areas of return, decades long displacement having often disconnected individuals from their communities of origin, and cultural differences. Challenges also extend to issues surrounding land and property rights upon return, where potential conflicts between returnees and host communities can arise.

The situation across the country is not homogeneous. Internally displaced persons and returnees have gone through different experiences in terms of community support, humanitarian assistance, and access to information. Overall, women and girls are perceived to bear the greatest burden, experiencing heightened vulnerability due to targeted policies limiting their freedoms and opportunities beyond their homes. Access to education and employment has been severely curtailed, with many enduring forced marriages and other forms of gender-based violence. These restrictions, mostly implemented since 2021, have reinforced traditional gender norms and patriarchal values, deepening discrimination and leaving women and girls disproportionately affected.

Amidst this complex setting, humanitarian and development actors are strategically looking at how to enhance conditions for safe voluntary repatriation through addressing both physical security as well as community participation, delivery of social services and engagement in livelihood, infrastructure, and policy development. By investing in community-based protection initiatives in areas of high refugee return, (re) integration can be facilitated sustainably, contributing to the long-term stability and development of both returning refugees and their communities of origin.

OBJECTIVES

Organized by the SSAR Support Platform Secretariat, the consultation provides a forum for Members of the Global Core Group of the SSAR Support Platform to review the current operational context in Afghanistan, as it relates to Pillar One, and consider the needs, priorities, and future planned responses that strengthen conditions conducive to voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration. The specific objectives of the consultation include:

1. Review the prevailing operational context in priority areas of return for Afghan returnees, in the context of infrastructure and essential services provision.
2. Consider social cohesion and community-based protection needs in priority areas of return.
3. Examine priority investments to further sustainable livelihoods for Afghan returnees.
4. Gain an understanding of multi-partner assessments in priority areas of return and identify approaches to better leverage and harmonise data.
5. Explore common positions that provide a basis for investments in priority areas of return that strengthen conditions conducive to voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration.

METHODOLOGY

This session will be chaired by the State of Qatar or the Kingdom of the Netherlands, as Chair and Vice-Chair of the Global Core Group of the SSAR Support Platform, with the support of the SSAR Support Platform Secretariat. The session will be a plenary virtual consultation, with presentations facilitated by Asian Development Bank (ADB), the World Bank, UNHCR, UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Resident Coordinator's Office (UNRCO) in Afghanistan, following by a Tour de Table between Members. The consultation will inform the preparation of a common outcome document covering the three Pillars of the SSAR, presenting a summary of key considerations and recommendations.

AGENDA (2 HOURS)

SSAR PILLAR ONE: CREATING CONDITIONS CONDUCTIVE TO VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION THROUGH COMMUNITY-BASED INVESTMENTS IN AREAS OF HIGH RETURN		
Opening remarks/presentation of the objectives of the session	Chair/Vice-Chair of the Global Core Group of the SSAR Support Platform	5 minutes
Infrastructure and essential human needs in priority areas of return	Asian Development Bank (ADB)	10 minutes
Social cohesion between returnees and their host communities	World Bank (WB)	10 minutes
Strengthening community-based protection	UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)	10 minutes
Expanding livelihoods	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	10 minutes
Common assessment and data harmonization	UN Resident Coordinator's Office (UNRCO) in Afghanistan	10 minutes
Tour de Table	Global Core Group Members (in alphabetical order)	60 minutes
Closing remarks	Chair/Vice-Chair of the Core Group of the SSAR Support Platform	5 minutes