

# CONCEPT NOTE

Global Core Group Technical Consultation  
on Pillar Two 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 2012. 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 Afghanistan, Iran, 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 Support Platform 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 eventual 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. The first virtual consultation on Pillar One took place on 26 June 2024, resulting in a summary of recommendations document.

## PILLAR TWO:

### **BUILDING AFGHAN REFUGEE CAPITAL BASED ON LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES IN AFGHANISTAN IN ORDER TO FACILITATE SUSTAINABLE RETURN AND REINTEGRATION**

Building individual skills capital based on livelihood opportunities in Afghanistan is crucial to help facilitate voluntary sustainable return and reintegration for refugees hosted in Pakistan and Iran. Key considerations in this regard include enhancing vocational training and education tailored to the current market demands within Afghanistan. By equipping refugees with relevant skills during their displacement, they have more opportunities to secure employment or start their own businesses upon returning to Afghanistan. This not only empowers individuals economically but also stimulates local economies, contributing to broader community development and social cohesion. Partnerships with local businesses, international organizations, international private sector and NGOs are considered key enablers to ensure the delivery of related training programs. In addition, integrating new technology and digital literacy into such initiatives

can open new avenues for refugees, and encourage the development and diversification of the economy in Afghanistan, and foster innovation within their communities.

Fostering a supportive environment for entrepreneurship is also an essential component for sustainable return. This includes access to microfinance and small business grants that can help returning refugees to start their own enterprises, promoting economic self-sufficiency and dignity. Establishing community-based cooperatives can also enable collective investment and shared resources, making it easier for individuals to overcome initial financial barriers. Prioritizing initiatives that empower women and girls through education, access to resources, and supporting women-led businesses is critical in ensuring their meaningful participation in socio-economic and community development to enhance their agency and harnessing their potential as agents of change within their families and communities.

Moreover, creating policies that ensure property rights and access to land can significantly boost agricultural productivity, a critical sector in Afghanistan. Encouraging sustainable agricultural practices can not only provide livelihoods but also ensure food security and environmental sustainability. By focusing on these areas, the SSAR Support Platform can contribute to the establishment of a robust framework that supports returnees, ensuring their reintegration is both economically viable and socially cohesive.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The consultation provides a forum for Members of the Global Core Group of the SSAR Support Platform to review the current operational context in the sub-region, as it relates to Pillar Two. This includes identifying the needs, priorities, and future planned responses that build Afghan refugee capital based on livelihood opportunities in Afghanistan, and invest in key segments of the economy, to facilitate sustainable return and reintegration. The specific objectives of the consultation include: :

1. Consider the development and implementation of comprehensive vocational training and education programs for refugees in Pakistan and Iran, tailored to Afghanistan's current labour market demands, focusing on high-demand skills in Afghanistan.
2. Review opportunities to utilize technology to enhance education, training, and economic opportunities for Afghan refugees, both in Iran and Pakistan, and upon return to Afghanistan.
3. Consider the enabling environment for multi-partner collaboration that builds local capacity in the delivery of effective vocational training programmes, including support for curriculum development, teacher training, and infrastructure.
4. Discuss the adoption of approaches that facilitate access to microfinance, small business grants and entrepreneurial training to foster a conducive environment for business development, with a specific focus on women.
5. Identify initiatives that could enhance agricultural productivity and sustainability in rural areas of return to help ensure food security and economic development.
6. Focus on collaborative action to ensure a vibrant, well-functioning private sector and labour market in Afghanistan to create jobs and opportunities for returnees and local communities, with a particular focus on women.

## **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 guiding interventions and exchange facilitated by the Global Core Group Members and select invited partners. 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.