IOM: Serving the people of Afghanistan for 20 years
Tajik internally displaced persons wait for IOM return assistance, Bamyan District, Afghanistan. © IOM
As IOM marks 20 years of uninterrupted service to the Afghan people, this publication takes stock of the years gone by, and sheds a light on the Organization’s achievements over twenty years.

At the request of the Government of Afghanistan, IOM is mandated to assist with orderly and humane migration. Towards this goal, our efforts are focused on building the capacities of Afghan government institutions to manage human mobility. IOM also provides emergency relief to vulnerable and displaced families; facilitates voluntary return of Afghan nationals abroad and reintegration into Afghan society; and helps Afghans to develop stable communities through the provision of key services and infrastructure including health and education facilities. Moreover, IOM supports safe and dignified repatriation of vulnerable undocumented Afghans returning from bordering countries; and protects and rehabilitates victims of trafficking.

IOM programmes in Afghanistan are implemented in close cooperation with national government counterparts and are designed to support the goals of the Afghan National Development Strategy.

From the massive return of Afghans from Iran in 1992 to IOM’s operations in Herat assisting drought-displaced people and managing some of the largest IDPs camps of the time in 2001 to operating during the tumultuous time of the fall of the Taliban-led government, IOM has adapted both its mandate and structures to better serve the people of Afghanistan.

Despite significant progress, the gains have been hard ones and setbacks are frequent owing to continued insecurity, conflict, recurrent drought and other natural disasters, rapid urbanization, the growth of urban slums and a youth population ‘bulge.’ All of these factors pose a great challenge to the return of Afghans residing abroad and the creation of an enabling environment for sustainable reintegration.

As of 2012, the voluntary and gradual return of an estimated 2.4 million undocumented Afghans from Iran and Pakistan will pose new challenges. The sustainable reintegration of these people will affect the overall stability of the country and its fragile economy and further impact migration dynamics in the sub-region.

Moreover, limited absorption capacity; scarce access to land and housing; insufficient coping mechanisms, especially in relation to livelihood opportunities; compounded by security risks and limited access to basic services all impact upon the decision of Afghans to repatriate to their country of origin. According to the estimates of our close partner agency UNHCR, since 2002, more than 5.7 million Afghan refugees have returned home. Returnees constitute 25 percent of Afghanistan’s population, of whom an estimated 40 percent have not fully reintegrated, leaving them particularly vulnerable.
With its staff of more than 350 national and international women and men working at IOM's main office in Kabul and sub-offices across the country in Badakhshan, Balkh, Bamyan, Herat, Kandahar, Kunduz, Nangarhar and Paktya provinces – IOM is a reliable partner with extensive presence across the country.

IOM's work is made possible through generous contributions from several countries, including Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Japan, Norway, France, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom and United States of America, as well as the European Commission and a number of United Nations agencies.

The photographs in this collection focus on IOM’s efforts to support the government and Afghan women, children and men to re-build their lives, their homes and their streets. I hope that this selection of images will bring you closer to their triumphs and trials as seen through the evolution of IOM’s services to migrants and the people of Afghanistan over the last 20 years.

Sincerely,

William Lacy Swing
Director General
International Organization for Migration
Qader Sufi and his family are back in their home in the Astana Valley. They were forced to leave their home because of the drought. One of IOM’s reintegration projects brought potable water to eight villages in the area. © IOM
IOM in recent years

IOM helped 13,201 Afghans to return home from over 20 countries between 2002-2011, 4,290 of whom received individually-tailored assistance such as employment referrals, training, and assistance in setting up small businesses. Some 7,819 vulnerable members of communities receiving large numbers of returning migrants also benefitted from community development projects across the country.

Neighbouring Iran and Pakistan house overwhelming numbers of undocumented Afghans. Since 2008, IOM has assisted 300,000 deported Afghans by providing reception assistance at the Iranian border and reintegration assistance such as permanent housing, income generation and business skills training especially catered to widows, female heads of household and women seeking employment.

Afghanistan remains a major source, transit and destination country for victims of trafficking. 534 victims of trafficking have received protection, rehabilitation and reintegration assistance from IOM. 50 percent of these were women.

In 2004, IOM established an Identity Checking Unit within the Ministry of Interior, which aims to increase the government’s capacity to check identity, detect fraud, establish authenticity, and manage other border control activities. The identities of 1700 people have been verified and 3500 passports have been examined at the IOM-assisted document laboratory at the Kabul International Airport.

In 2010, IOM installed an Afghan Passport and Visa Issuing System at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that is now fully operational, and another at the Ministry of Interior, which will become operational this year. 12,800 passports are issued monthly at the IOM-installed passport issuance office.

Between 2002-2011, at least 1,400 Afghan experts living abroad, 200 of whom were women, returned to Afghanistan from more than 30 countries to participate in rebuilding their nation. IOM provided relocation assistance including a special support package for female experts and helped them to secure placements in key development-related positions within ministries, government institutions and the private sector.

From 2007-2011, IOM provided assistance packages to almost 10,000 Afghan families and communities across 30 provinces that suffered losses as a direct or indirect result of the current conflict. Some were women singlehandedly running their household, many of them with children without any educational opportunities. Assistance included literacy courses, funds to rebuild damaged homes, vocational training, business start-up support and useful household items.
Since 2002, IOM has completed over 1,000 infrastructure projects including schools that have benefitted at least 80,000 Afghan children in several geographic areas of the country; teacher training colleges where 2,400 female and male teachers can be trained at any given time; health facilities to serve 7.8 million women and men, including mid-wifery training centers where future midwives will be trained, to bring reproductive health services to 1 million Afghan women; buildings that will facilitate government operations benefiting 13 million people from enhanced capacity of governmental bodies; 14 of the country’s 17 Women’s Resource Centres that were then handed over to the Ministry of Women Affairs to exclusively carry out women’s empowerment activities. Since social, economic and political instability are major causes of migration, these projects aim to stabilize communities.

Between 2008-2011, IOM assisted over 90,000 families and 630,000 individuals (an estimated 3,780,000 women) countrywide by providing warm clothing kits, emergency shelter kits, family revitalization kits and tarpaulins. The contents of these kits are designed to address the specific needs of women, children and men and prevent families from being displaced and reduce their vulnerability while they are displaced.

In the last 7 years, IOM has financed 21 capacity building initiatives and trained 294 individuals from partner governmental agencies. IOM-trained women and men have strengthened the capacity of government, as they are now members of parliament and form part of the workforce of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Women Affairs, and Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation amongst others.

IOM in 2011:

Direct beneficiaries: 556,798  
Indirect beneficiaries: 21.9 million  
Budget: US$ 121 million  
Number of staff: Over 350 national and international women and men  
Number of offices across Afghanistan: 18  
Funding partners: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Italy, Japan, Norway, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom and United States of America, as well as the European Commission and a number of United Nations agencies.

IOM speeds humanitarian assistance including winter kits containing warm clothing and blanket, family kits suitable for a household following a manmade or natural disaster and shelter kits for families that lose their home in the aftermath of a natural disaster. © IOM
IOM steps up firewood distribution in the Maslakh IDP camp in Western Afghanistan from 50,000 kilos to 100,000 kilos a day to combat the bitter cold. The camp houses some 120,000 internally displaced persons. © IOM
Children play at an IOM shelter housing victims of trafficking that largely remain at risk of being re-victimized. Afghanistan is a source, transit and destination country for human trafficking. IOM provides victims of trafficking with the necessary protection, rehabilitation and reintegration back into their society. © IOM
Afghan internally displaced persons return home with assistance from IOM. © IOM
Based on international standards, IOM assisted in the full roll-out of passport and visa issuing systems in an effort to help the government provide its citizens with machine-readable travel documents in Afghanistan and in Afghan diplomatic missions worldwide. IOM trained around 250 staff implementing the new system in the central passport department. © IOM
Small businesses have sprung up within the Maslakh camp, offering essential items to camp residents. © IOM
A family running a bakery in Kabul. IOM’s return and reintegration assistance is catered to migrants abroad wanting to come back home. Assistance offered includes employment referrals, training, and assistance in setting up small businesses. © IOM
IOM-constructed water point brings clean and potable to an Afghan community. Community projects are meant to empower communities. © IOM
A house in Kandahar being rebuilt after it was destroyed by an airstrike. IOM assisted families to restore their lives after suffering losses from the current conflict by providing inter alia funds to rebuild damaged homes, sustainable income generation possibilities, support to children’s education, medical assistance and vocational and literacy training for adults. © IOM
IOM Afghanistan offers return and reception assistance through the IOM Airport Coordination Cell at Kabul airport, which can include medical consultation and referrals. © IOM
Afghanistan is prone to natural disasters including floods, drought, landslides, avalanches and earthquakes which often result in the destruction of housing, land and livestock. As a result, some families lose their homes and become displaced. IOM provides humanitarian assistance to reduce their vulnerability. © IOM
An Afghan woman receives assistance to set up her tailoring shop after her husband died in a bomb blast that destroyed their house. IOM helped Afghan civilians, who suffered losses from the current conflict, to get back on their feet by providing inter alia funds to rebuild damaged homes, sustainable income generation possibilities, support to children's education, medical assistance and vocational and literacy training for adults. © IOM
Demobilized child soldiers and war-affected youth receive certificates following their completion of IOM-facilitated nine-month educational and three-month vocational training courses. © IOM
Members of a community in Parwan province stand on an IOM-built bridge. IOM implemented quick impact projects in an effort to assist the rehabilitation of key infrastructure, and to support the processes of political stabilization, community recovery and development in Afghanistan. © IOM
An IOM-constructed maternity clinic. Afghanistan ranks among the worst places in the world to give birth due to very high maternal mortality rates. Owing to a chronic shortage of skilled birth attendants and access to health facilities, many women die at childbirth. Most of the IOM-assisted health facilities are basic clinics equipped with rooms for deliveries, examination, vaccinations and pharmacies.

© IOM
IOM conducts an intensive training of trainers in Kabul to combat trafficking in persons, particularly children. The training targeted 35 school teachers from 13 different provinces, representatives from the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and local NGOs. IOM’s counter-trafficking efforts work to enhance Afghanistan’s institutional capacities to combat trafficking in women, children and men. © IOM
IOM distributes winter kits in northern Afghanistan that remain unreachable for half of the year as roads become impassable due to heavy snow. IOM distributes blankets and warm clothing to vulnerable and internally displaced people in the area to help protect them from the freezing weather. © IOM
The Government of Afghanistan is faced with various administrative challenges; a central problem remains limited capacity in areas of migration governance and a lack of coordination among the various stakeholders. IOM has refurbished the document laboratory at the airport, provided necessary equipment and facilitated training for the Ministry of Interior staff with the aim to effectively identify fraudulent documents. © IOM
IOM responds to emergencies arising from natural disasters, including heavy snowfall, avalanches, floods and landslides. If required, it also responds to the needs to vulnerable populations including victims of conflict. © IOM
Once the applications for return assistance have been approved, IOM’s sending mission makes the travel arrangements and IOM in Afghanistan offers return and reception assistance to migrants coming home through the IOM airport coordination cell at Kabul airport. © IOM
An Afghan family being wheeled away after receiving humanitarian assistance from IOM. © IOM
Vulnerable members of a migrant community, including widows and women whose husbands are ill, produce blankets as part of IOM’s voluntary return project. At least 25 women successfully completed an intensive blanket production course and are gainfully employed at the Afghan Women Vocational Skills Learning Centre. © IOM
A returned migrant runs his general store which was set up with the help of IOM's non-cash grant aimed to assist such individuals and families reintegrate back into Afghanistan. © IOM
An IOM field officer conducts last checks before departure by a group of Afghan returnees  © IOM
The opening ceremony of IOM’s Airport Coordination Cell at Kabul airport that offers reception assistance to migrants returning from abroad. © IOM
Afghan woman receives an IOM winter kit. © IOM
Building new shelters from locally baked mud bricks is a component of IOM’s Afghan Relocation Project. © IOM
IOM-sponsored tailoring course for women, in Nimroz. In addition to immediate assistance at the border, IOM provides reintegration assistance such as funding income generation activities and business skills training especially catered to widows, female heads of households and women seeking employment.
Community members await humanitarian assistance kits from IOM. © IOM
Ex-hostages returning to Afghanistan in an IOM-chartered plane disembark in Kandahar © IOM
A man tending to a customer in his shoe store. IOM’s return and reintegration assistance targets migrants abroad wishing to return home. Assistance offered includes employment referrals, training, and assistance in setting up small businesses. © IOM
A returned qualified Afghan doctor operates on a woman patient. During a quarter century of fighting, a significant number of qualified nationals took refuge in host countries worldwide. IOM assists in the return of qualified Afghans residing abroad to participate in rebuilding their nation by finding suitable placements in key development-related positions within ministries, government institutions and the private sector. © IOM
After 2001 as Afghans returned by the millions to their country and gradually learned about the political changes that were taking place, IOM played a key role in educating and assisting average Afghans through income generation projects, encouraging economic recovery fostering community stabilization and aiming at lowering the rural to urban migration rate. The project also focused on building constructive relationships with their government representatives for the first time. © IOM
Two internally displaced persons begin their journey home with help from IOM's Afghan Repatriation Assistance Programme © IOM
A counter-trafficking poster used in Afghanistan. By using posters and other public information materials, IOM aids countries in educating the public on the dangers of human trafficking and smuggling. © IOM
IOM-sponsored auto mechanic course, in Nimroz. In addition to immediate assistance at the border, IOM provides reintegration assistance such as funding income generation activities and business skills training. © IOM
Afghan children receive warm clothes, winter boots, blankets and other items to prevent them from being displaced and reduce their vulnerability while they are displaced. © IOM
IOM contributes to Afghanistan’s nation-building efforts by addressing the health care and education needs of almost 10 million Afghans through the construction and refurbishment of 337 schools and training centres and 178 health facilities and hospitals in 23 provinces of the country. © IOM
IOM provides reception assistance to Afghan deportees and returned migrants at the border with Iran and reintegration assistance such as enabling families to construct a shelter for themselves. © IOM
The traditional Afghan game of Buzkashi is played in an internally displaced persons’ camp. © IOM
Afghan internally displaced persons work hard to clear a river blocked during an earthquake in Northern Afghanistan. IOM provided the shovels and logistical support to aid in the return of water to the community © IOM
Migrants returned from Europe run an artificial teeth laboratory made possible through IOM’s assistance aimed at helping returned migrants reintegrate into the society. © IOM
IOM-trained women and men have strengthened the capacity of government, as they are now members of parliament and form part of the workforce of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Women Affairs, and Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation amongst others. © IOM
A man installing electric pillars and lines in Faryab. Communities receiving large numbers of returning migrants also benefit from IOM's community development projects across the country. © IOM
A voluntary returnee receives assistance from IOM to set up and run a boxing club. © IOM
Since 2002, IOM has completed over 1,000 infrastructure projects including schools that have benefitted at least 80,000 Afghan children; teacher training colleges where 2,400 male and female teachers can be trained at any given time; health facilities to serve 7.8 million men and women, including midwifery training centers where future midwives will be trained, who will eventually bring reproductive health services to 1 million Afghan women; and buildings that will facilitate government operations benefitting 13 million people from enhanced capacity of governmental bodies. Since social, economic and political instability are major causes of migration, these projects aim to stabilize communities. © IOM
IOM assists natural disaster-affected and natural disaster-displaced populations and upon UNCHR's request, conflict-induced internally displaced persons.
IOM established a drug treatment and rehabilitation centre in Herat for returning migrants and deportees from across the border in Iran as well as internally displaced persons. © IOM
International Organization for Migration

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