

NRC's operations in Iran

Humanitarian overview

For the past 40 years, Iran has hosted one of the largest and most protracted refugee crises in the world. One year after the political changes in Afghanistan, at least 3.7 million Afghans reside in Iran: 780,000 Amayesh cardholders (long-term registered refugees); 600,000 Visa holders (long-term Afghan residents in Iran); and 2.3 million people who joined a 2022 government-led registration exercise.

Iran's inclusive policies grant access for all Afghans to primary health care and Afghan children can study in Iranian public schools. Amayesh and visa holders are allowed to work in certain job categories. Despite the inclusive policies and support from the international community, Afghans still face challenges finding and retaining stable incomes. This affects their ability to secure housing, keep children in school, and could impact their ability to renew documentation and legal status on time.

The re-imposition of US sanctions on Iran in 2018 and the Covid-19 pandemic have further pressured Iran's economy, increasing the challenges faced by all Afghans in Iran.

Iran is also prone to natural disasters which can lead to displacement and destruction.

NRC's operation

Since 2012, NRC has been assisting displaced Afghans in Iran as well as their Iranian host communities. We work to improve protection and access to basic humanitarian services across ten provinces and coordinate with UNHCR and other Regional Refugee Response Plan partners in Iran, and with NRC operations in Afghanistan.

Since April 2019, we have expanded operations to help people affected by floods and since early 2020 we have significantly expanded our programmes to support the Covid-19 pandemic response.

Since 2021, NRC is working with humanitarian partners to assist newly arrived Afghan refugees who need protection and basic services. Our programme in 2023 will continue to focus on supporting the protracted refugee caseload and the new arrivals living in refugee settlements and within host communities.

NRC Iran

Established	2012
International staff	10
National staff	115



NRC Iran

Country office

Tehran

Areas of operation

Alborz, Hormozgan, Kerman, Markazi, Razavi Khorasan, Semnan, Sistan and Baluchestan, South Khorasan, Tehran, Yazd



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Water, sanitation and hygiene promotion (WASH)

It is crucial that displaced Afghans in Iran as well as those affected by emergencies have access to clean water and adequate sanitation facilities. To ensure this, our WASH team:

- supports the Covid-19 pandemic response by distributing hygiene kits to households, cleaning and disinfection kits to schools and healthposts, and providing hand washing stations
- installs and repairs latrines, showers and hand washing facilities in public spaces such as refugee settlements and schools
- provides water, electricity and sewage connection to newly constructed shelter units in refugee settlements
- offers hygiene promotion training for students and adults
- distributes hygiene kits to students and households to reinforce training and support behaviour change

Education

In 2015, an “education decree” was issued through which all Afghan children are given access to education irrespective of their legal status in Iran. However, socio-economic and cultural barriers to the implementation of this decree remain. To support children in fulfilling their right to education, our team:

- provides cash assistance to Afghan families so they can continue sending their children to schools
- offers accelerated education programmes, with our partner the Literacy Movement Organization, through literacy and numeracy courses for out-of-school children to help them bridge the gap and enter school at the appropriate level
- offers school readiness programmes for children who have never been to school to support school enrolment
- provides life-skill courses for school students, parents, and teachers
- supports the formal education system by rehabilitating classrooms and expanding existing school

infrastructure (including water and sanitation facilities), and providing essential education materials including school equipment and stationery

- provides certified soft skills training for youth to complement vocational training
- provides stationary and educational materials to pupils to facilitate their home-schooling when schools closed due to Covid-19

Shelter and settlements

Our shelter team works towards providing displaced Afghans and those affected by emergencies with safe and suitable living conditions and addresses urgent shelter needs in settlements, urban, peri-urban and rural areas. Our team:

- provides/rehabilitates shelters and public infrastructure, including playgrounds, community centres, sport courts, etc.
- supports the expansion and rehabilitation of schools to provide safe and adequate educational spaces for thousands of Afghan pupils
- constructs community centres designed to serve as hubs delivering services to Afghan and host communities
- provides training about basic housing maintenance practices and energy-saving techniques
- supports our emergency response through the distribution of basic household items

Livelihoods and food security

Our livelihoods and food security team explores ways to improve refugee and displaced families' livelihoods in Iran. We provide cash assistance to help people meet basic needs while preserving their livelihoods so they do not resorting to negative coping strategies.

Our team:

- distributes multi-purpose cash through bank cards or bank transfers to cover basic household needs
- establishes community income-generating workshops and provides income-generating activities to small business owners
- provides business grants and/or toolkits for small business owners to initiate and/or expand their activities
- collaborates with our education team to offer certified vocational and transferrable skills training including tailoring, construction, welding, electricity, hairdressing, plumbing and computer use

Information, counselling and legal assistance (ICLA)

Our ICLA team supports Iran's displaced Afghan population in ensuring they have proper documentation, and with accessing essential services and making informed decisions. Our experts provide:

- information and counselling to improve access to essential services and maintaining legal status in Iran
- unconditional cash assistance to the most vulnerable to help them obtain and maintain legal residence, access identity and civil documentation, as well as essential services. Cash assistance is complemented with information which helps Afghans decide on how to use it and how to address their most pressing protection concerns
- information on how to access identity and civil documentation and available services upon return

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