

SAVING  
LIVES  
CHANGING  
LIVES



# World Food Programme Islamic Republic of Iran



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## Background

The World Food Programme, the leading humanitarian organization fighting hunger worldwide, and the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, reopened offices in Iran in 1987. Since then, the organization has played a crucial role in supporting Afghan and Iraqi refugees residing in the country.

Iran currently hosts one of the world's largest and most protracted refugee situations in the world. The initial wave of Afghan asylum seekers arrived following the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 with a second major influx occurring at the height of Taliban control over Afghanistan between 1994 to 2001. Iraqis sought refuge in Iran in the 1980s and 1990s, during the First and Second Gulf Wars.

Since 2003, when relative peace was established in Afghanistan, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has promoted the repatriation of Afghans to their homeland as the preferred solution. Meanwhile, the Government has continuously stressed the financial burden of refugees on Iran's economy and has expressed the need for greater international assistance to reduce this strain. This has become even more

pronounced since the latest influx of Afghans to Iran following the Taliban takeover in 2021.

According to the latest figures communicated by the Government, it is estimated that some **3.4 million** refugee and refugee-like populations live in Iran in cities, towns, and villages side by side with the Iranian host community who potentially need protection and humanitarian assistance while the most vulnerable of them live in 20 settlements across the country.

The Government and United Nations are committed to supporting refugees until such time that the situation becomes conducive for the safe, dignified, and voluntary return of refugees to their homeland.

## The Need for WFP Assistance

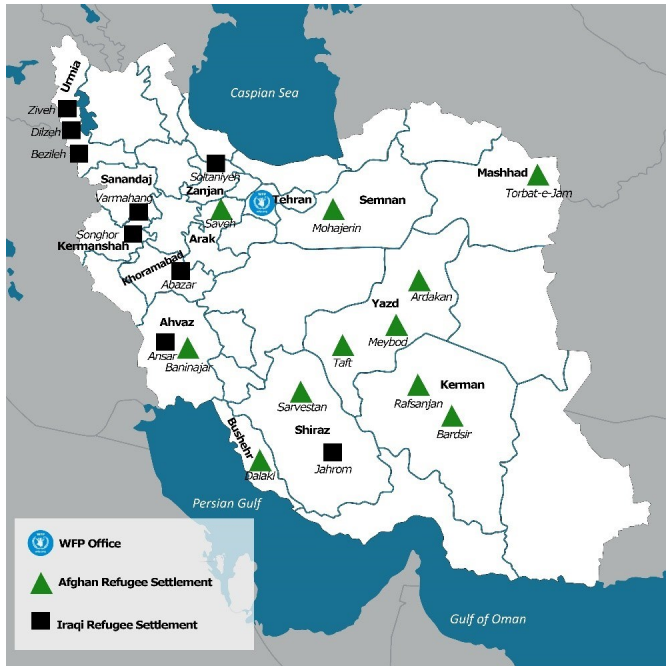
Various factors have made it increasingly difficult for the most vulnerable refugees to make ends meet. The increased cost of living, and reduced job opportunities, have exacerbated levels of food insecurity for the most vulnerable refugees, making WFP assistance all the more crucial to the poorest of the poor who are housed in settlements.





## Geographical Spread

WFP provides assistance in **20 settlements** scattered across **13 provinces**, spanning from northwest to central, southwest, and northeast of the country. A round-trip monitoring visit to all the settlements covers more than **10,500 kilometers**.



## Progress so far / Achievements

For close to four decades, WFP has strengthened its humanitarian response to the protracted refugee crisis in Iran, continuing to provide unconditional food assistance to the most vulnerable refugees living in settlements while successfully adjusting and expanding activities related to education and livelihoods, with a special focus on refugee women and girls.

In close consultation with national counterparts, refugee communities, and donors, in 2018, WFP shifted from its traditional way of distributing food to a predominantly cash-based distribution modality. The preferred formula for refugees in Iran was identified as **a combination of unconditional cash assistance through bank cards and continued wheat flour distribution**. This combination offers refugees freedom of choice to buy food items and diversify their food intake while ensuring that bread is available as in the past. Since the introduction of this 'hybrid' food assistance, around **two and a half in four refugee** households living in settlements have reported acceptable food consumption.

WFP has also made great strides in **reducing the gender gap** and empowering young girls through its flagship girls' education incentive scheme. Through this initiative, WFP encourages families to send their girls to school in return for a cash incentive that the girls receive after each month of regular attendance, contributing to the **household economy** while receiving an education. Since 2020, the introduction of a nutritious school snack for refugee girls and boys and their teachers each day they attend school has added to the success. Recent data indicates that there has been a significant improvement in retention and a reduction in drop-out rates among refugee schoolgirls, compared to baseline data.



In recent years, several large-scale natural disasters have occurred, putting a strain on national response capacities. WFP has **become a partner of choice** for responding to emergencies that exceed national response capacity, standing ready to mobilize complementary emergency response upon the request of the Government.

## WFP's Interim Country Strategic Plan (ICSP) for the Islamic Republic of Iran

The ICSP for the years 2023-2025 ensures the continuation of WFP's existing interventions in Iran, emphasizes an inclusive approach that puts the most vulnerable, including refugee girls, women, and persons with disabilities at the centre of programming, while embedding strengthened emergency preparedness and response across all activities. This allows WFP to respond rapidly to potential new arrivals from Afghanistan, sudden-onset disasters, or partner requirements for WFP services.

WFP operations align with the objectives of the regional Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR), which was agreed upon by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Governments of Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan in 2011, as well as with the Afghanistan Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) launched in 2022.

WFP has been an active member of the SSAR since its inception and a key contributor to the RRP, coordinating efforts relating to the food security and logistics sectors.

### Activities of the Interim Country Strategic Plan (I-CSP) 2023-2025

The current three-year country strategy with an overall budget of USD **37.1 million** seeks to achieve its primary objective of ensuring that food-insecure refugees in Iran can meet their basic food and nutrition needs, through four activities:

#### Activity 1: Provide unconditional food assistance to food-insecure refugees

WFP's unconditional food assistance covers 80 percent of the daily food needs for food-insecure male-headed households and 100 percent of the needs for female-headed households by providing them with in-kind wheat flour and cash for food through ATM debit cards. By introducing cash, refugees will have purchasing power and freedom of choice of food items which in turn will boost the economy of the settlements as the majority of the shops where refugees source their food are run by refugees themselves.

#### Activity 2: Provide conditional support, especially to refugee women and girls, to incentivize and facilitate educational and livelihood activities

WFP's distribution of healthy snacks to all refugee students who live in settlements and attend school ensures that no child attends school on an empty stomach. In addition, at the end of each scholastic month, primary and junior high school level refugee girls who regularly attend school receive a monthly allowance of cash in debit cards issued in their name as an incentive to learn and build their capacity.

World Bank studies have shown that a woman's income can rise by 10 to 20 percent for each year of schooling. Furthermore, keeping refugee girls in school decreases the possibility of marrying them off at an early age. Many of the girls who completed their education have gone on to become health workers in settlements, contributing to their communities while also helping to elevate the image of women in Afghan society.

WFP also supports a variety of livelihood activities for refugees. These activities help improve refugees' self-reliance by generating income for their families as long as they remain in Iran. At the same time, the livelihood activities help create conditions for sustainable means of income upon return to their homeland (once the situation is conducive for a safe and voluntary return).

Tailoring workshops, greenhouses, welding workshops, bakeries, and fish farming are among the livelihood opportunities WFP has made available to refugee women and men.







### Activity 3: Provide support to the Government on emergency preparedness and response, including emergency food assistance through cash-based or in-kind transfers to shock affected populations

Although WFP's intervention in Iran is focused mainly on assisting refugees, the organization has the operational capacity to support the Government and people of Iran in emergency response, for example in case of a major natural disaster that would strain the capacity of the Government to respond.



### Activity 4: Provide cash transfer and other services to Government and other partners

Based on partners' needs and requests, WFP avails on-demand services to support a more effective and efficient humanitarian response in Iran.

## Supply Chain Arrangements

### Cash:

Cash-based transfers require robust and well-developed financial and Information Technology infrastructure, which is available in Iran.

Settlement authorities regularly update the beneficiary lists and once data is verified by WFP cash entitlements are transferred at the beginning of each month to the debit cards issued in the name of the head of households. Similarly, the cash education incentive is transferred upon receipt and verification of girls' attendance records in schools.

### In-kind:

Wheat flour is procured locally from local suppliers/millers. The local purchase ensures short lead-time and quick delivery mitigating potential deterioration of food quality as a result of long transit or storage time for imported commodities.

WFP purchases wheat flour from a roster of suppliers through a competitive process. WFP-appointed superintendents conduct quality and quantity controls of the commodity before delivery to settlements to ensure the wheat flour conforms to WFP specifications and regulations of the Iranian Institute of Standards. Using WFP's end-to-end supply chain management system and the Logistics Execution Support System, wheat flour purchases are tracked from the point of loading until final distribution.



## Partnerships (Implementing partners)

WFP's implementing partner is the National Organization for Migration (NOM) which is responsible for all refugee-related matters in Iran. WFP also coordinates closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Iran.

WFP together with UNHCR and NOM conducts regular process and post-distribution monitoring visits to all settlements to ensure that refugees have access to cash and can purchase adequate quantity and quality of food to maintain their food security at an acceptable level at all times. WFP also monitors wheat flour distributions to ensure that storage, handling, and distribution of this commodity are in line with WFP guidelines.



## Emergency Operations

### Natural disasters:

In response to natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods that hit Iran, WFP delivered Emergency Food Packages to the affected population in different provinces of the country supporting thousands of vulnerable families.

These packages contained rice, canned pinto beans, canned tuna fish, green lentils, vegetable oil, sugar, tea, and iodized salt. All these commodities were purchased locally and catered to the nutritional needs of people for one month.

Also, in response to the 2003 Bam earthquake, WFP immediately air-lifted High Energy Biscuits

from Italy's Humanitarian Response Depot within 96 hours and continued assisting 120,000 affected individuals for three months. Additionally, WFP managed a UNHAS operation between Tehran and Bam, providing free transportation for the humanitarian community in the earthquake-stricken area.

### COVID-19 response:

In February 2020, Iran confirmed its first COVID-19 case, which quickly led to a full-scale pandemic by early March with a surge in cases and deaths, making it one of the worst-hit countries in the region. The shortage of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) due to closed borders posed a significant challenge for health workers. Refugee settlements were at risk of exposure to the virus, and loss of income among vulnerable refugee communities could lead to food insecurity. WFP Iran received generous donations, allowing the purchase of over 3 million PPE for Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) staff and volunteers and augmenting aid packages for refugees in settlements.

WFP's partner in times of emergency is the IRCS with which WFP has had stand-by agreements to respond to natural disasters since 2002.









## Funding and Contributions

Since WFP is funded entirely by voluntary donations, all contributions whether cash or in-kind must be accompanied by the cash needed to move, manage and monitor WFP food assistance, or the “full cost recovery” concept. WFP's funding comes from Governments, the Private Sector, and individuals.

### Individual Donations

WFP encourages Iranian citizens and corporations to get involved and support WFP's efforts in building a world without hunger.

All donations—large or small—have the power to make a difference. Online payment gateways, mobile banking, SMS payment, and ATM transfers are available in Iran to facilitate individual donations to WFP.



### Celebrity Partners

Throughout the years, many Iranian artists, sports figures, and influencers have pledged their support to WFP Iran speaking openly about issues related to food security and joining WFP in its global fight against hunger in many public events and campaigns for WFP Iran.





WORLD FOOD  
PROGRAMME

THE NOBEL  
PEACE PRIZE  
2020





## 2020 Nobel Peace Prize

In October 2020, the Norwegian Nobel Committee decided to award the Nobel Peace Prize to WFP "for its efforts to combat hunger, for its contribution to bettering conditions for peace in conflict-affected areas, and for acting as a driving force in efforts to prevent the use of hunger as a weapon of war and conflict."

WFP has been working on the frontlines of emergencies for more than 50 years, bringing hope to millions caught in conflict. Many of the people we help are fleeing violence, leaving their whole lives behind.

The link between hunger and conflict is a vicious circle. Where there is conflict, there is hunger. And where there is hunger, there is often conflict.

When fighting drives large numbers of people from their homes, their land, and their jobs, they are more likely to go hungry. But sometimes food shortages can also fan the flames of social tensions and fuel injustices.

Worse still, despite its prohibition under international humanitarian law, the use of starvation as a weapon of war is still widespread.

Food security, peace, and stability go together. Without peace, we cannot end world hunger; and while there is hunger, we will never have a peaceful world.

When fighting drives large numbers of people from their homes, their land, and their jobs, they are more likely to go hungry. But the opposite is also true. Food shortages can fan the flames of social tensions and fuel injustices, which may ultimately trigger or exacerbate conflicts.





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