



2026 WORKPLAN

of the Global Core Group
of the SSAR Support Platform

Under the Chairmanship of the
Swiss Confederation

The objectives, scope of engagement and priorities of the Core Group of the Support Platform for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) are detailed in the [Modalities of the SSAR Support Platform](#), [Terms of Reference of the Core Group](#) and in the [Chairperson's Summary](#) of the Inaugural Meeting of the Core Group with the Governments of Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan. This workplan builds on these agreed strategic directions, with a view to identifying specific areas of engagement for 2026.

Relevant information and documents can be found on the website of the Support Platform:
<https://ssar-platform.org/>

I. BACKGROUND

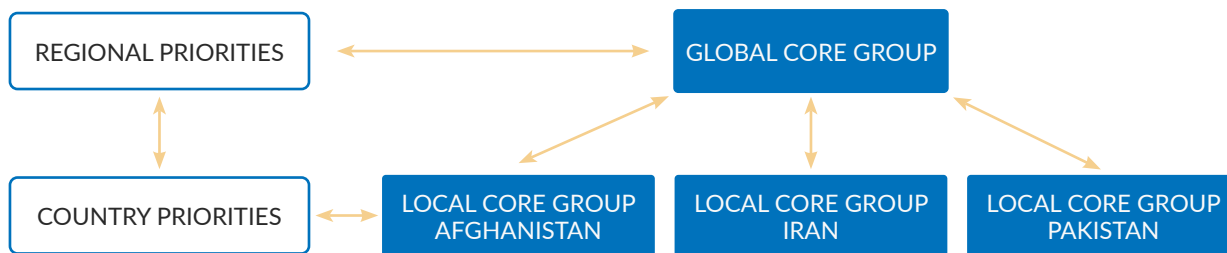
The Afghan displacement crisis remains one of the world's largest and most protracted, with over 6 million Afghan refugees and asylum-seekers globally and 3.2 million internally displaced persons within Afghanistan. Iran and Pakistan have generously hosted Afghan refugees for more than four decades. However, 2024-2025 witnessed unprecedented shifts in the regional displacement landscape, with approximately 2.9 million Afghans returning to Afghanistan during 2025 alone - the largest scale of returns in recent history. These returns followed policy changes in both host countries, including Pakistan's Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan (IFRP) and Iran's regularization scheme, and occurred against a backdrop of deteriorating humanitarian conditions in Afghanistan, where 21.9 million people require humanitarian assistance.

The scale and pace of returns have strained Afghanistan's already overstretched resources and services, creating acute challenges for reception, protection, and sustainable reintegration. Returnees face critical needs for housing, documentation, basic services, and livelihoods, while host communities experience increased pressure on limited infrastructure. These dynamics have created risks of cyclical displacement and onward movements, underscoring the urgent need for sustained international support to host countries, coordinated regional responses, and investments in conditions conducive to voluntary, safe, and sustainable return. The Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) Support Platform remains a critical mechanism for fostering regional dialogue, mobilizing resources, and promoting burden- and responsibility-sharing to address this complex displacement situation.

II. CORE GROUP ARCHITECTURE

In line with the deliberations of the Inaugural Meeting of the Core Group, the Core Group functions at two levels. The Secretariat of the SSAR Support Platform at the global level is provided by UNHCR's Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific. At the country levels, the Secretariat is provided by the UNHCR Operations in Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan.

1. **The Global Core Group (GCG)**
2. **The Local Core Groups (LCG) at the country-level in Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan**



The Core Group at both the global and local levels have been operational since 2021 and the Global Core Group is comprised of 15 Members.¹ Opportunities to broaden membership may be explored in 2026. Local Core Groups may differ from the Global Core Group in their composition. In March 2026, Switzerland assumed the Chairmanship of the Core Group from the Kingdom of the Netherlands.²

While not part of the SSAR Support Platform Core Group, the Quadripartite Steering Committee serves as the principal forum for dialogue among Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, and UNHCR on the implementation of the SSAR. It provides a platform for the three countries to discuss shared challenges, coordinate responses, and advance solutions for Afghan displacement at the regional level.

III. THE PILLARS OF THE SOLUTIONS STRATEGY

The Support Platform - in its objective to further the SSAR - supports the three pillars of the SSAR, defined by Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan in 2012, as follows:

- 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 return
- 3 Preserving asylum space in host countries, including enhanced support for refugee-hosting communities, alternative temporary stay arrangements for the residual caseload, and resettlement in third countries.

¹ Denmark, the European Union, Germany, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, the Netherlands, Qatar, Switzerland, Türkiye, United States of America, the Asian Development Bank, UNDP, the World Bank and IOM.

² The role of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Core Group of the SSAR Support Platform are described in the 2022 Terms of Reference Chair of the Core Group of the Support Platform for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees.

IV. GLOBAL CORE GROUP OBJECTIVES³ AND ACTIVITIES IN 2025

General Objective: Galvanize structured regional coordination to increase political, financial, and technical support from existing and new partners for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) in 2026, with a view to continue and expand the work of the Core Group.



Specific Objective 1 [Coordination for enhanced burden and responsibility-sharing]:

Continue to facilitate evidence-based structured, regional exchange and cooperation among Core Group members in response to the regional context of displacement and onward movements.

- **Global Core Group consultations**

The Global Core Group is expected to meet regularly throughout the year to review the evolving displacement context in South-West Asia, including trends in displacement, returns, cross-border movements, and onward journeys along key routes. These meetings will provide a space to analyse emerging operational challenges, shifts in national policies, and the implications for access to protection and essential services. Discussions will also provide space for members to share information on planned or ongoing political, financial, or technical contributions, with a view to identifying opportunities for complementary or coordinated support.

To strengthen linkages between country-level realities and regional decision-making, the Local Core Groups in Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan will provide periodic situation inputs to the Global Core Group. These inputs will inform discussions at Global Core Group meetings, enabling more focused and substantive exchanges at capital and regional levels.

To support continuity, key takeaways from Global Core Group meetings, thematic consultations, and country-level engagements will be reflected in follow-up discussions and future planning, as appropriate. Where significant policy shifts or sudden changes in the displacement context occur, the Global Core Group may use its meetings to facilitate timely information-sharing and coordination among members, within the scope of the SSAR. Members will also support the production and sharing of reliable data and analytical products to inform Global Core Group discussions and enable evidence-based decision-making.



Specific Objective 2 [Engagement with the countries of asylum and origin]:

Facilitate opportunities for engagement with Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan within the framework of the SSAR, and the Members of the Core Group.

- **Country level missions and dialogues with the de-facto/national authorities in Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan**

Country-level engagements serve to enable regular opportunities for direct dialogue with authorities in all three countries to exchange updates, discuss operational needs, and reinforce the principles of the SSAR. Missions may focus on protection standards, service provision for refugees, and emerging pressures such as border dynamics or onward movements. In Afghanistan, engagement with the de facto authorities may encompass discussions on factors affecting displacement dynamics and conditions conducive to sustainable return, including livelihood opportunities. These engagements further offer a space to understand evolving policies, highlight priority needs, and bring national and local perspectives into Core Group discussions.

Where appropriate, country-level engagements will also help inform shared observations or key messages that members may draw upon in their respective bilateral or multilateral dialogues, while remaining sensitive to national contexts and evolving political conditions. To support coordinated advocacy, country-level engagements will contribute to the development of joint advocacy messages and key talking points that SSAR members can draw upon in their respective discussions with authorities, ensuring consistency in messaging while allowing for flexibility based on bilateral relationships and national sensitivities.

³ To be read along with the Terms of Reference of the Core Group and the Chairperson's Summary of the Inaugural Meeting of the Core Group with the Governments of Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan.



Specific Objective 3 [Visibility for Displaced Afghans]:

Amidst competing crises globally, keep a spotlight on the situation of Afghan refugees, displaced persons, and other vulnerable people on the move within the region, and their host communities.

- **SSAR External Presence**

To ensure continued visibility for displaced Afghans, but also for the Support Platform as a supporting mechanism, the official website will continue to serve as a central hub of information on the work of SSAR, including updates on activities, publications and events, as well as linking with other website such as the Global Data Portal. Moreover, the production of more targeted communications products can be explored, such as infographics, videos or success stories, to highlight the impact of collective efforts under the SSAR.



Specific Objective 4 [Partnerships in Mixed and Onward Movement]:

Strengthen collaboration with a wider range of partners – including civil society, private sector, development actors and international financial institutions (IFIs) – to address mixed and onward movements along key routes, support protection and basic needs en route, and reinforce coordinated action under the SSAR and the Route-Based Approach.

- **Introduction to the Route-Based Approach for the South-West Asia Route**

The progressive introduction of the Route-Based Approach will bring members together to review emerging movement patterns, identify priority points along key routes, and consider where coordinated and targeted support can have the greatest impact. Informed by relevant analytical inputs, including displacement tracking, border flow monitoring, and route-based analysis, the consultation will examine gaps in information-sharing, referral pathways, and protection-sensitive border practices, and explore opportunities for targeted political, technical, or financial engagement to strengthen protection outcomes and support more coherent regional approaches to mixed and onward movements.

- **Protection Needs in Mixed and Onward Movements**

The engagement on protection needs in mixed and onward movements will examine the specific risks faced by Afghans on the move, including documentation barriers, exposure to exploitation, detention risks, and limited access to essential services. Members will review available evidence, share national perspectives, and identify emerging concerns across different parts of the route. The discussion will build a clearer, shared understanding of protection needs and guide how members can direct focused, practical support to address vulnerabilities throughout the journey.



Specific Objective 5 [Enhanced Regional Cooperation]:

Strengthen regional exchanges between members, host countries, civil society as well private sector, development actors, IFIs, and regional processes like the Bali Process and the Budapest Process for cross-border coordination and engagement. Particular emphasis should be placed on engagement with the main host countries, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan, as well as neighboring countries such as Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, with a view to assessing their interest in collaboration under the SSAR framework and supporting regional approaches that complement existing initiatives.

- **Regional Conference**

The Global Core Group will support the organization of a Regional Conference on Afghan Displacement and Solutions in the second half of 2026. This conference will serve as a platform to bring together Member States, host countries (Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan), northern neighbouring countries (Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan), international financial institutions, UN agencies, civil society partners, as well as other regional processes.

V. COUNTRY-SPECIFIC PRIORITIES FOR 2026 - LOCAL CORE GROUPS

Country-specific priorities will be shaped by evolving political, security, and operational contexts in Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan. This section outlines the focus of the Local Core Groups in each country and the engagement modalities through which Members will work, including capital-level dialogue, technical exchanges, and regional advocacy. Country-level engagement may involve coordination with humanitarian and development partners as well as IFIs to promote flexible, multi-year financing in support of SSAR priorities and identify opportunities for socio-economic inclusion, social protection, and self-reliance, bridging humanitarian assistance with longer-term development. Engagement under the SSAR will take into account constraints affecting principled delivery, access, and participation in certain contexts, including limitations that may affect the provision of assistance to women and other vulnerable groups, with these considerations informing the sequencing and modalities of engagement, including joint advocacy on protection and solutions for Afghans.

AFGHANISTAN

In 2026, the Afghanistan Local Core Group will prioritize exchanging information, advancing advocacy and political dialogue. The Group will facilitate information-sharing on protection trends, humanitarian and basic needs, and sustainable reintegration efforts, including on livelihood opportunities. The Group will also explore opportunities to expand its membership to strengthen engagement and broaden the platform for coordinated action, while adapting modalities to the evolving operational environment affecting principled assistance delivery.

IRAN

In 2026, the Local Core Group in Iran will focus on policy engagement and advocacy with the Government on asylum systems and inclusive policies, resource mobilization to support Afghan refugees and host communities, and alignment with the SSAR Core Groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan. By adopting an inclusive approach that at times will engage entities beyond the Global Core Group members, it will facilitate coordinated advocacy and unify messaging across stakeholders. Activities will include regular coordination meetings, joint missions to assess needs in priority sectors, and information-sharing to inform Global Core Group discussions on protection trends and policy developments.

PAKISTAN

Throughout 2025, the Government of Pakistan implemented Phase 3 of the Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan (IFRP), under which Afghans without legal status have been asked to depart the country. While Pakistan has demonstrated longstanding generosity in hosting Afghan refugees over many decades, the current environment has presented increasing protection challenges for some individuals, including concerns related to returns, documentation, and access to services. In 2026, the Local Core Group will continue to engage in dialogue and advocacy to support the protection of the most vulnerable individuals who may face heightened risks upon return, including artists, journalists, activists, women, and children. Efforts will also focus on encouraging the development of practical protection mechanisms for those with specific needs, such as individuals married to Pakistanis, students, and people requiring medical care - while stressing respect for due process and advocating for lawful stay options for Afghans with established family and socio economic links in Pakistan.

VI. GLOBAL CORE GROUP ENGAGEMENTS IN 2026*

No.	Engagement	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
1.	<p>Global Core Group Meetings: Meetings to discuss the evolving displacement context in South-West Asia, including trends in displacement, returns, cross-border movements, and onward journeys along key routes. Another possible theme for a Global Core Group Meeting could be a discussion on the independent SSAR study.</p>				
2.	<p>Thematic Consultation 1: Introduction to the Route-Based Approach for the South-West Asia Route* Consultation to review emerging movement patterns, identify priority points along the main routes, and consider where coordinated and targeted support can have the greatest impact. The consultation will aim to identify practical follow-up actions and areas for enhanced coordination among members, while remaining flexible to the operational realities along the route.</p> <p><small>*This meeting would also mark the official handover of Chairmanship from The Netherlands to Switzerland.</small></p>				
3.	<p>Thematic Consultation 2: Protection Needs in Mixed and Onward Movements Consultation will examine the specific risks faced by Afghans on the move, including documentation barriers, exposure to exploitation, detention risks, and limited access to essential services. The consultation will aim to identify practical follow-up actions and areas for enhanced coordination among members, while remaining flexible to the operational realities along the route.</p>				
4.	<p>Regional Conference The Global Core Group will support the organization of a Regional Conference on Afghan Displacement and Solutions in the second half of 2026. This conference will serve as a platform to bring together Member States, host countries (Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan), northern neighbouring countries (Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan), international financial institutions, UN agencies, civil society partners, as well as other regional processes such as the Bali and Budapest Process.</p>				
5.	<p>Country level missions and dialogues with national/de-facto authorities Mission to enable direct dialogue with authorities in all three countries to exchange updates, discuss operational needs, and reinforce the principles of the SSAR.</p>				
6.	<p>Quadripartite/Tripartite Steering Committee Meetings In-person sessions as requested between parties to the SSAR, facilitated by UNHCR.</p>				

**Modest adjustments to scheduling are anticipated throughout the year.*