

UNESCO and UNHCR enter new partnership for mainstreaming Afghan Refugees in National Programs

The UN refugee agency (UNHCR) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) signed an agreement for enhanced collaboration to support mainstreaming services for Afghans in the Joint Programs under One UN. This new initiative between the two UN Agencies is in line with the Government of Pakistan's Management and Repatriation Strategy for Afghans in Pakistan for the years 2010-2012, and it is a joint commitment of mainstreaming this vulnerable group in school education, non-formal education, literacy and other relevant social service programmes.

During the last 30 years, UNHCR has been supporting primary education services in the schools located in the refugee villages in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan and Punjab provinces. UNICEF has been supporting the government in its efforts for equitable access to basic education for all children through capacity building, service delivery and advocacy.

The collaboration between UNHCR-UNESCO as stipulated in this new partnership indicates that UNESCO will collaborate for the inclusion of assistance for Afghan refugees and IDPs in the areas of School Education, Literacy, Non-Formal Education, Special (Inclusive) Education, Natural Science, Culture, Communication and Information, and other social service sectors in the agency's broad mandates.

Presently, UNHCR is providing free elementary education to more than 74,000 Afghans through 176 schools in 81 camps. In addition to the provision of free education, the agency also facilitates the repair and maintenance of schools, provide teacher's salaries and school supplies to students. Under the signed initiative, UNESCO will include Afghan children, youth, women and other vulnerable groups in the agency's programmes to achieve sustainable and long-lasting solutions and ensure their rights to have the full access to education, science, free flow of information, cultural activities and social services during their stay in the country.