

SOUTH-WEST ASIA

Afghanistan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

From January to June 2002, over 1.1 million Afghans have gone home, far surpassing UNHCR's initial planning figures. Following the establishment of an Interim Administration in **Afghanistan**, the Office re-oriented its programme both in Afghanistan and the neighbouring countries. From ensuring international protection, providing basic relief items (tents, blankets and kitchen sets) to people who fled Afghanistan in the aftermath of 11 September, providing limited assistance to IDPs and long-staying Afghan refugees, UNHCR was able to begin facilitating the repatriation of Afghans from the **Islamic Republic of Iran** and **Pakistan**.

As a result of the higher than anticipated number of returns, UNHCR revised its planning figures upwards. The Office has not, however, increased the budgetary requirements for the programme, opting instead to prioritise its activities, and eliminate non-priority activities.

PROGRESS TOWARDS OBJECTIVES, AND CONSTRAINTS ENCOUNTERED

By 1 January 2002, UNHCR's Chief of Mission moved back to Kabul. Over the following months, 25 sub-offices and field units were re-opened, 22 distribution centres established, and some 600 staff members put in place.

By early 2002, large numbers of Afghans had returned spontaneously from **Pakistan**. At the same time, however, several thousand more headed towards the border into Pakistan's Baluchistan province, seeking refuge from conflict, ethnic harassment, drought and poverty.

Inside **Afghanistan**, UNHCR established important links with the new Interim Administration, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and with partner organisations. The repatriation operation was also undertaken with the co-operation of the Governments of the **Islamic Republic of Iran** and Pakistan. In Pakistan, UNHCR provided the new arrivals with basic humanitarian assistance at the Killi Faizo camp before they were transferred to new camps in the Chaman area in Pakistan. The Office also transferred 153,000 people from Peshawar, Quetta and the makeshift Jalozai camp to 17 new camps built in autumn 2001. In addition, UNHCR gave humanitarian assistance to some 300,000 Afghans who fled Afghanistan in the aftermath of 11 September, as well as continued to provide food, health, sanitation and education services to long-staying Afghan and non-Afghan refugees.

In February 2002, the Government of Pakistan refused entry to Afghans arriving at the Chaman border near Quetta. By June, some 20,000 people remained stranded in this area with little basic care. UNHCR and its partners made efforts to provide them with basic relief items and shelter materials. The Office, in co-ordination with the Interim Administration in Afghanistan introduced a voluntary return programme for these Afghans and offered to relocate those who could not go to their places of origin to temporary camp sites near Kandahar.

Since March 2002, the Governments of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan and the Central Asian Republics, in co-ordination with the Interim Administration in Afghanistan, UNHCR and its partners began a programme designed to facilitate the return of some 2.03 million people - 1.2 million Afghan refugees from Pakistan, 400,000 from Iran, 30,000 from other countries and 400,000 IDPs mostly

from southern, western, and northern Afghanistan to their places of origin. Of those who returned, an overwhelming majority came from Pakistan, with many heading towards Kabul and the eastern province of Nangarhar. Approximately 100,000 Afghans also returned to Afghanistan from the Islamic Republic of Iran from early April to the end of June. At the same time, 170,000 IDPs were assisted to return home.

In early June, just before the Loya Jirga process brought a Transitional Authority into power in Afghanistan for 18 months, a Letter of Understanding was co-signed by the authorities, UNAMA, and UNHCR. This document outlines the organisation's responsibilities as the designated secretariat to the Returnee and IDP Programme Group, one of the nine groups established to support the newly established line ministries.

Security remains precarious in certain areas in Afghanistan and in south-west Pakistan. Some ethnic Afghan groups have been harassed in the north and south of Afghanistan, and in the Islamic Republic of Iran and in Pakistan, UNHCR has also been concerned about the perceived moves to "encourage" ethnic Afghan groups to repatriate to their places of origin. The

Office has made efforts to ensure that their return is voluntary.

At the same time, UNHCR has also sought durable solutions to the plight of Afghans and other refugees in neighbouring countries who are not able to return home, through legal counselling as well as through interviews for resettlement. In Central Asia, the Office has made efforts to ensure that asylum-seekers are provided with free and fair access to countries of this region and to status determination procedures.

ACTIVITIES UNTIL 30 JUNE 2002

(Please refer to individual country chapters)

OUTLOOK FOR JULY-DECEMBER 2002

Following an internal review of the repatriation operation, UNHCR increased its planning figures for 2002 from 1.2 million returnees to 2.03 million. Budgetary requirements were not raised above the USD 271 million appealed for at the beginning of the emergency operation in October 2001 (to be used until 31 December 2002). Instead, the programme has been trimmed down to focus on four priority areas: protection, repatriation support, shelter and water. At the same time, UNHCR has strengthened links with partner agencies to ensure that returnees' needs are met.

Financial Data (USD)

Country / Activity	Annual Programme Budget				Supplementary Programme Budget			
	Initial Budget	Revised Budget	Total Funds Available	Obligation Level	Initial Budget	Revised Budget	Total Funds Available	Obligation Level
Afghanistan	9,492,176	9,516,676	6,120,511	4,584,690	0	135,513,510	72,758,642	72,424,393
Islamic Republic of Iran	25,555,447	25,771,290	16,552,699	11,182,725	0	7,672,414	4,323,259	3,032,150
Pakistan	24,771,574	24,796,519	18,025,256	12,154,550	0	28,982,603	13,912,556	14,744,470
Regional Activities ¹	325,000	292,361	136,684	131,550	0	1,139,883	70,000	170,000
Unrestricted Contributions	0	0	21,261,412	0	0	0	12,192,462	0
TOTAL	60,144,197	60,376,846	62,096,562	28,053,515	0	173,308,410	103,256,919	90,371,013

- Annual Programme Budget includes scholarships for refugee students and the regional consultations on population displacement initially reported in countries in the Middle East which has now moved to South-West Asia.

- Supplementary Programme Budget includes repatriation of Afghan refugees from various countries (reported in UNHCR's Financial Statements under Global Programmes/Ops) as well as tertiary scholarships for Afghan refugees in Pakistan and in the Islamic Republic of Iran.