

# Islamic Republic of Iran



## Main Objectives

In the first nine months of 2001, UNHCR's main activities were to facilitate the voluntary repatriation and other durable solutions for refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran; ensure that refugees in need of protection were identified through a transparent and fair procedure; assist camp-based Afghan and Iraqi Kurdish/Arab refugees; develop new partnerships with national and international NGOs and specialised UN agencies; raise awareness of refugee problems among institutions and in civil society at large.

As a result of the events of 11 September 2001, UNHCR and Government priorities shifted to emergency planning for a possible influx of

Afghans. UNHCR argued for the border to be opened to allow Afghans to seek refuge in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Meanwhile the office stockpiled emergency relief items carried out direct cross-border assistance activities from the Islamic Republic of Iran to western Afghanistan.

## Impact

- Some 143,501 Afghans repatriated spontaneously to their country and 3,116 Iraqi refugees (1,727 Iraqi Arabs and 1,389 Iraqi Kurds) were assisted to voluntarily repatriate to Iraq.
- Almost 20,000 urban refugees were examined and more than 14,000 people received financial support to cover their medical expenses through UNHCR's medical referral units.

- Construction began on seven new schools in Tehran, Khorassan, and Sistan-Baluchistan.
- UNHCR conducted income generation activities for women and established a women's sewing factory in Jahrum where 50 trainees were provided with sewing machines and other tailoring equipment.
- Some 200 refugee children suffering from cancer received assistance, while 42 disabled children were given financial support for transport to and from school.
- UNHCR gained improved access to non-camp Afghan refugee settlements, thus allowing for better protection monitoring and closer supervision of the assistance provided. Provincial authorities and community leaders played a greatly expanded role in the design and implementation of projects.
- Progress was made between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Iraq on refugee affairs. A Joint Committee was created and officials from both countries met several times. Both Governments agreed to redouble efforts to find a solution to the citizenship issue of people expelled from Iraq who are denied Iranian and Iraqi nationality.

## Working Environment

### The Context

The Islamic Republic of Iran continues to host one of the largest refugee populations in the world.

Persons of Concern				
Main Origin/ Type of Population	Total in Country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent Female	Per cent under 18
Afghanistan (Refugees) <sup>1</sup>	1,482,000	1,482,000	38	44
Iraq (Refugees)	386,000	286,000	43	18

<sup>1</sup> According to the Government, the number of Afghans is estimated to be some 2.3 million.

Income and Expenditure (USD) Annual Programme Budget and Supplementary Programme Budget					
	Revised Budget	Income from Contributions <sup>1</sup>	Other Funds Available <sup>2</sup>	Total Funds Available	Total Expenditure
AB	15,961,971	11,631,970	3,470,097	15,102,067	12,962,894
SB	2,628,250	7,500	2,562,250	2,569,750	1,388,056
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18,590,221</b>	<b>11,639,470</b>	<b>6,032,347</b>	<b>17,671,817</b>	<b>14,350,950</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes income from contributions restricted at the country level.

<sup>2</sup> Includes allocations by UNHCR from unearmarked or broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

The above figures do not include costs at Headquarters.

Only around three per cent of the refugees live in camps, the majority residing in the urban areas. In September 2001, a government census reported that there were 2,563,827 registered aliens in the Islamic Republic of Iran, of whom 2,355,427 were Afghans (holding passports, refugee booklets, registration cards, Joint Programme certificates or registration slips). UNHCR has asked for full access to all the data in the survey.

Following the events of 11 September and the US-led military strikes, a major outflow from Afghanistan was considered likely, and UNHCR started to prepare for an exodus of refugees into the Islamic Republic of Iran. This did not occur on the scale envisaged, largely because all neighbouring countries closed their borders with Afghanistan. Limited numbers of Afghans did cross into the Islamic Republic of Iran, however. At the same time, deportations from the Islamic Republic of Iran to Afghanistan continued to take place.

### Constraints

UNHCR's access to refugees remained limited, as central and/or provincial authorities still required prior notice. In addition, the new Article 48 of the Five Year Development Plan Act, banned the employment of people not in possession of valid papers. The main constraint for UNHCR was the lack of reliable statistics, as the Government only shared some of its survey data with UNHCR. In addition, the Government still allowed only few national and international NGOs to work in the country. UNHCR was therefore obliged to operate without the implementing partners it needed.

### Funding

The global funding shortfall at the beginning of the year precluded implementation of activities as planned. However, specific projects such as the Medical Referral Unit, which gives refugees better access to health care, did stimulate donor interest. The funding situation improved sig-

nificantly following the events of 11 September, the launch of the emergency operation and the subsequent preparations for repatriation to Afghanistan. Following the military strikes on Afghanistan, all repatriation activities were suspended, which meant that funds received for them were carried over to 2002.

## Achievements and Impact

### Protection and Solutions

The registration of aliens carried out by the Government was a major step forward in gathering accurate information. Persons registered under this exercise received registration slips, which, in principle, entitled them to protection against deportation. Based on this data UNHCR has this data, it will be able to plan its activities with greater precision.

In 2001, some 143,500 Afghans repatriated spontaneously from the Islamic Republic of Iran. At the same time, and despite all constraints, UNHCR facilitated the return of a limited number of Afghans to the country. UNHCR was also able to continue organising voluntary repatriation of Iraqi

Arabs to government-controlled areas in Iraq. With assistance from UNHCR, 1,727 Iraqi Arabs repatriated to southern Iraq in 2001 – more than in 2000. A total of 1,607 refugees were resettled in Canada, Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden.

### Activities and Assistance

**Community Services:** UNHCR provided counselling and assistance to the most vulnerable refugees such as the disabled, female headed households, children and the elderly, in the form of financial assistance, medical care and special assistance for disabled children and students. UNHCR promoted employment for refugees, provided training via refugee groups, encouraged gender equity and the active participation of both refugee women and men in planning, implementing and managing their projects

**Domestic Needs/Household Support:** Most activities in this sector occurred after 11 September and were directed cross-border to assist IDPs and returnee populations in western Afghanistan. Meanwhile, clothes and sanitary materials were provided for women and children in refugee camps in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Thousands of Afghans fled to safer areas both inside Afghanistan and outside the country. *UNHCR / R. Ek*



**Education:** To ensure continued free access to education for refugee students and provide more classrooms, construction began on seven schools in Tehran, Khorassan, and Sistan- Baluchistan. However, implementation was slower than expected and the work will be completed in 2002. UNHCR also achieved a breakthrough in winning Government permission to support informal schools in Tehran, where 15,000 Afghans are being educated.

**Forestry:** Refugee communities from 12 Iraqi Kurdish camps maintained the tree plantations in surrounding areas.

**Health/Nutrition:** In addition to the maintenance of health posts in camps, Medical Referral Units in Tehran, Mashad, Orumieh, Ahwaz and Zahedan screened almost 20,000 non-camp refugees, helping more than 14,000 people cover medical costs.

**Income Generation:** UNHCR provided income generation opportunities, such as tailoring and sewing classes, for refugee women.

**Legal Assistance:** Mediation was provided in disputes between Afghan and Iranian nationals in an effort to defuse tension between the two communities. The Legal Committee examined and settled almost 3,000 cases related to family disputes, non-payment of wages, debts, rent and mortgages. Training and dissemination activities included a refugee law course at Teheran University, the translation and publication of a compendium of international instruments of refugee law, the handbook on status determination, an English-Persian dictionary of relevant protection terms, and information pamphlets.

**Operational Support (to Agencies):** UNHCR continued to contribute to the implementing partners' overheads, including logistics, office and computer equipment, travel costs and training.

**Sanitation:** Essential work was done to ensure that basic hygiene standards were met in all camps, but there is a need to further develop community training and awareness-raising with regard to environment and health issues.

**Shelter/Other Infrastructure:** UNHCR erected some 450 new shelters at Torbat-e-Jam to replace worn-out

tents, and set up a further 140 in Bardsir and Rafsanjan camps. Around 250 shelters were completed in Ansar and Sarvestan camps for Iraqi Arabs.

**Transport/Logistics:** An access road was constructed for Semnan camp. UNHCR also contributed to the construction of a 200-square-metre warehouse in Ebrahimabad.

**Water:** UNHCR provided a new deep well in Barsir Camp, and enough chlorine powder to disinfect the water in all 29 refugee camps.

## Organisation and Implementation

### Management

Operations were managed through the country office in Tehran and six field offices. Staffing levels fluctuated during the course of the year, as a result of the crises in Afghanistan: the average was 18 international staff (including one JPO and five on mission status) and 107 nationals. In the autumn of 2001, the Chief of Mission for Afghanistan was appointed as the UNHCR Regional Co-ordinator for the Afghanistan emergency, with a view to harmonising the various country programmes in the region. The UNHCR offices in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan co-operated closely to ensure a joint emergency response.

### Working with Others

In addition to working with the Government, UNHCR also engaged the services of other organisations, particularly in the period immediately after 11 September, in its efforts to provide assistance to Afghans displaced by the military strikes in Afghanistan. Within the overall framework of the United Nations Country Common Assessment Steering Committee, UNHCR participated in information-sharing, joint project design, implementation and funding of activities in key areas. UNHCR staff participated at different levels in a range of inter-agency working groups covering issues such as the economy and poverty, the environment, gender, NGOs, social development and other programmes.

## Overall Assessment

The implementation of the activities planned for 2001 was disturbed by the global funding shortfall that led to budget cuts and revisions. Delays in implementation were aggravated by the authorities' reluctance to approve the participation of NGOs.

However, UNHCR's Medical Referral Unit (MRU) met the needs of thousands of refugees in need of medical treatment. This was particularly important as the implementation of Article 48 resulted in many refugees losing their jobs, which meant that they could no longer afford medical treatment for themselves and their families. Furthermore, the spiralling cost of medical treatment in Government and private hospitals exceeded many people's resources.

One of the most tangible results of work done in 2001 was the construction of seven schools to increase capacity for the education of Afghan children. This project was implemented by UNHCR with the firm understanding that the Government would allocate no less than 50 per cent of the places in these schools to Afghan children.

In the wake of the 11 September events, UNHCR prepared for a large-scale refugee influx. As the borders remained closed, UNHCR nevertheless managed to alleviate some of the problems resulting from displacement inside Afghanistan through cross-border relief convoys. Following the creation of the new Interim Administration in Afghanistan, through the Bonn Agreement, UNHCR shifted its focus and began to prepare for the facilitation of the voluntary repatriation of Afghans wishing to return home.

### Offices

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Tehran  
Ahwaz  
Dogharoun  
Mashad  
Milak  
Orumiyeh  
Zahedan

### Partners

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#### Government Agencies

Ministry of Education and Training  
Ministry of Education and Training/Bureau of International and Scientific Co-operation  
Ministry of Health  
Ministry of Interior/Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs

#### NGOs

Family Planning Association of Iran  
Iraqi Refugees Aid Council  
Society for Protection of Children Suffering from Cancer  
Society to Protect Vulnerable People  
The Iranian Red Crescent

#### Others

IOM  
WFP

Financial Report (USD)						
Expenditure Breakdown	Current Year's Projects			Prior Years' Projects		
	Annual Programme	Supplementary Programme Budget	Total	notes	Annual Programme Budgets	notes
Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination	2,306,141	307,192	2,613,333		30,634	
Community Services	225,106	0	225,106		12,485	
Domestic Needs / Household Support	261,071	459,420	720,491		2,493	
Education	76,398	0	76,398		1,497,045	
Food	0	47,505	47,505		7,371	
Forestry	1,135	0	1,135		23,812	
Health / Nutrition	1,217,531	7,446	1,224,977		585,749	
Income Generation	181,815	0	181,815		0	
Legal Assistance	61,226	113	61,339		2,271	
Operational Support (to Agencies)	373,521	0	373,521		1,540,432	
Sanitation	82,393	0	82,393		172,453	
Shelter / Other Infrastructure	296,767	39,349	336,116		1,074,965	
Transport / Logistics	463,224	78,498	541,722		697,075	
Water	133,423	5,621	139,044		136,670	
Instalments with Implementing Partners	3,506,799	0	3,506,799		(5,582,475)	
Transit Accounts	0	0	0		9,416	
<b>Sub-total Operational</b>	<b>9,186,550</b>	<b>945,144</b>	<b>10,131,694</b>		<b>210,396</b>	
Programme Support	1,533,249	263,457	1,796,706		44,633	
<b>Sub-total Disbursements / Deliveries</b>	<b>10,719,799</b>	<b>1,208,601</b>	<b>11,928,400</b>	<b>(3)</b>	<b>255,029</b>	<b>(5)</b>
Unliquidated Obligations	2,243,095	179,455	2,422,550	<b>(3)</b>	0	<b>(5)</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12,962,894</b>	<b>1,388,056</b>	<b>14,350,950</b>	<b>(1) (3)</b>	<b>255,029</b>	

#### Instalments with Implementing Partners

Payments Made	4,831,535	0	4,831,535		0	
Reporting Received	1,324,736	0	1,324,736		5,582,475	
<b>Balance</b>	<b>3,506,799</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3,506,799</b>		<b>(5,582,475)</b>	
Outstanding 1st January	0	0	0		5,499,844	
Refunded to UNHCR	0	0	0		19,816	
Currency Adjustment	0	0	0		3,002	
<b>Outstanding 31 December</b>	<b>3,506,799</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3,506,799</b>		<b>(99,445)</b>	

#### Unliquidated Obligations

Outstanding 1st January	0	0	0		577,458	<b>(5)<sup>1</sup></b>
New Obligations	12,962,894	1,388,056	14,350,950	<b>(1)</b>	0	
Disbursements	10,719,799	1,208,601	11,928,400	<b>(3)</b>	255,029	<b>(5)</b>
Cancellations	0	0	0		187,437	<b>(5)</b>
<b>Outstanding 31 December</b>	<b>2,243,095</b>	<b>179,455</b>	<b>2,422,550</b>	<b>(3)</b>	<b>134,992</b>	<b>(5)</b>

Figures which cross reference to Accounts:

(1) Annex to Statement 1

(3) Schedule 3

(5) Schedule 5

(5)<sup>1</sup> This balance includes USD 90,228, outstanding from operations before 2000. It is also reported under "Unearmarked" in Schedule 5, page 46 of UNHCR's Accounts.