

# Afghanistan

## AT A GLANCE

### Main Objectives and Activities

Ensure the return in safety and dignity of Afghan refugees from neighbouring countries; contribute to the realisation of the basic human rights of returnees through systematic monitoring of their situation as well as through advocacy and interventions on their behalf; facilitate sustainable reintegration of returnees at their places of origin; encourage UN and NGO partners to increase their engagement in coordination mechanisms (this will include support for fledgling Afghan NGOs).

### Impact

- UNHCR provided protection and assistance to 210,170 Afghan returnees from Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran.
- Some 82,420 returnees benefited directly from UNHCR's reintegration activities, which mitigated economic hardship and contributed significantly to the eventual rehabilitation of the village level economy of Afghanistan.
- Hundreds of previously depopulated villages came back to life as houses were rebuilt, children sent to schools, irrigation systems and farmland revitalised and income provided to women heads of households. Potable water and sanitation facilities were restored, improving the health of the community in general and children in particular.



Persons of Concern				
Main Refugee Origin/Type of Population	Total in Country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent Female	Per cent under 18
Afghanistan (IDPs)	758,600	-	-	-
Afghanistan (Returnees)	292,500	261,000	-	-

Income and Expenditure (USD)				
Annual Programme Budget				
Revised Budget	Income from Contributions <sup>1</sup>	Other Funds Available <sup>2</sup>	Total Funds Available	Total Expenditure
7,771,097	5,491,833	2,451,977	7,943,810	7,599,793

<sup>1</sup>Includes income from contributions earmarked 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.



## WORKING ENVIRONMENT

### The Context

A political settlement and the formation of a broad based multi-ethnic government in Afghanistan remain necessary preconditions for the mass return of millions of Afghan refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan and tens of thousands elsewhere. By the end of 2000, there was no progress towards a political solution to the war and the Taliban claimed to control 95 per cent of the territory, exacerbating the ethnic nature of the conflict and the climate of fear. Significant numbers of Afghans continued to flee conflict, human rights abuses and severe economic hardship. These three factors are the principal obstacles to long-term investment without which there can be no national reconstruction. The fall of Taloqan in early September resulted in mass population movements within and outside Afghanistan. There were chilling reports of deliberate killings of persons belonging to the Hazara ethnic and religious minority group. Furthermore, the worst drought since 1971 decimated livestock and caused a total failure of the harvest and the collapse of the wage-labour markets, ultimately putting as many as one million Afghans at risk of starvation.

The increased rate of return from the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan is attributable largely to increasingly hard-line attitudes towards Afghan refugees in those countries. The returnee population comprises an equal number of males and females, the majority under the age of 18 years, with 51 per cent returning from Pakistan and 49 per cent from the Islamic Republic of Iran. Recent experience has demonstrated that return can be safe as long as the conflict does not flare up in areas of return and providing that returnees conform to changed local norms and traditions. A large number of returnees remain dependent on humanitarian assistance. There is a severe need for potable water, health care and social services. Former refugees want education for girls and health care for women and are better placed than the international community to make the local authorities see the logic of their demands.

### Constraints

The introduction in November 1999 of limited sanctions against the Taliban (expanded to include an arms embargo in December 2000) generated hostile reactions towards the UN and rendered working relations more difficult. The Taliban no longer consider the UN to be a neutral mediator for the peace process. To prevent



returnees becoming displaced inside Afghanistan, UNHCR pursued a selective approach to repatriation by advising against and not facilitating return to front-line areas and districts where armed clashes and insecurity had been reported and which were not accessible to aid agencies. Restrictions on access to female beneficiaries and the ban on employment of Afghan female staff posed insurmountable obstacles to monitoring the situation of returnee women, other than heads of household, and delivering assistance to them. The existing staff had to cope with an excessive workload caused by increasing returnee numbers: they were simply too few to deal adequately with repatriation, returnee monitoring, planning and the implementation of reintegration activities.

## Funding

Financial constraints and a higher than expected returnee population meant that only about one in six of the 39 per cent who found their houses destroyed could benefit from UNHCR's shelter assistance. Unpredictable and insufficient funding undermined UNHCR's ability to cope with repatriation rates that more than doubled and, simultaneously, to alleviate the suffering of 500,000 internally displaced persons. With a budgetary increase of only 20 per cent, UNHCR was compelled to re-allocate resources to vulnerable returnee households (requiring transport); these resources were originally earmarked for basic assistance. Reintegration assistance was limited to 40 per cent of 1999 levels, essentially for transportation, construction or rehabilitation of shelter and the provision of safe potable water.

Unless prevailing trends affecting funding of UN and NGO assistance programmes in Afghanistan are reversed, the durable absorption of returnees will be seriously jeopardised. The harsh climatic conditions in Afghanistan only allow organised repatriation to begin around May, and then it has to cease again in October. Therefore, support for returnees' needs should be available as early as possible in the year to give them sufficient time to rebuild shelter before the onset of winter.

## ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

### Protection and Solutions

UNHCR conducted systematic monitoring of the situation of returnees at their places of origin, while endeavouring to ensure that protection concerns in

Afghanistan did not undermine efforts to maintain a significant repatriation flow from countries of first asylum. UNHCR's presence at key locations, including the borders with Iran and Pakistan, prevented arrests, ill treatment, forced recruitment and discrimination on the basis of ethnic origin, religion or gender, as stipulated in the Declaration of Amnesties issued by the Taliban and the Northern Alliance in 1997. This Declaration provided a basis for dialogue with local authorities and the sensitisation of communities to the rights of returnees. It was noted that the guarantees were not respected in some situations, thereby affecting the lives of women, girls, adolescents, men of fighting age and those suspected of supporting the opposition.

Reintegration assistance significantly reduced the probability of further displacement and of inter-ethnic and inter-communal conflict (usually driven by competition over scarce resources). The emphasis was placed on communities with high returnee populations and areas that had in the past received returnees with little or no assistance. For many returnee families, survival would have been almost impossible without the assistance of the international community, within which UNHCR plays a catalytic role in joint efforts on longer-term reintegration projects for returnees and their new home communities.

### Activities and Assistance

*Community Services:* The provision of community-based housing and reconstruction programmes take up a substantial percentage of UNHCR's repatriation budget. Tools and other construction material were provided to support individual efforts at building or rebuilding homes for families.

*Crop Production:* Difficult weather conditions and extreme drought have led to serious crop failure. A WFP planting survey has revealed that only 30 per cent of provinces have achieved the minimum (subsistence) acreage of planted land. Farmers were reported to have resorted to planting wheat provided by WFP.

*Education:* UNHCR provided support and materials to 78 primary schools in central, eastern and southern regions, raising the quality of basic and primary education for 16,385 returnee children (6,402 of them girls). Primary school teachers (20 per cent women) received training and refresher courses.

*Food:* During the year, 7,500 tons of wheat (supplied by WFP) were provided to facilitate the return operation, while 1,500 tons were provided as food-for-work

to assist returning refugees (5,273 families) to build their shelter.

**Forestry:** In Kabul province, eight nurseries were established and 20 community solid waste management systems were put in place to rehabilitate and protect the physical environment and to generate income for the beneficiaries. Environmental awareness campaigns were undertaken in ten schools. In the eastern region, 45 simple bio-gas plants were installed for 59 households in five districts in Nangarhar and Laghman provinces. Printed material on environmental issues was distributed to schools. The projects were well received by the communities and the authorities.

**Health/Nutrition:** UNHCR's assistance consolidated the gains made in recent years by WHO/UNICEF and specialised NGOs in primary health care. War-damaged health infrastructure was rehabilitated and staff were trained at the village level by WHO and NGOs. Eight clinics were rehabilitated, and UNHCR contributed to the running cost of two clinics managed by an NGO in the districts of Azra and Tezin. Clinics were built and handed over to health NGOs in Gorik and Batikot districts of Nangarhar, improving access for women and children to primary health care. One nineteen-room village hospital was rebuilt, in the eastern region.

**Income Generation:** Small loans to community-based groups increased the economic self-reliance of the least advantaged rural Afghan women, empowering them to capitalise on their traditional and marketable skills. UNHCR's intervention in the sector also aimed at establishing an independent self-sustaining lending institution. Through an extensive programme, 761 apprentices and master artisans (362 female) were provided with a stipend and vocational training, at the conclusion of which the newly qualified apprentices received a commercial start-up loan. In Batikot district, UNHCR supported projects to introduce kerosene-operated incubators for poultry raising and provided training to 300 needy female heads of families. Another 300 vulnerable returnee families in the western region were trained in *patu* (traditional men's shawls) weaving and production.

**Legal Assistance:** As operations in Afghanistan focus increasingly on monitoring the situation of returnees, the presence of UNHCR protection and field staff is crucial to ensure access to them, often in remote locations. Staff were trained to monitor, document and analyse cross-border movements to enhance overall monitoring capacity. Country of origin information was generated regularly for repatriation and refugee status

determination purposes. The cases of Iranian, Iraqi and Tajik asylum-seekers were assessed and refugee status determination undertaken.

**Livestock:** In all regions, except the east and north-east, farmers failed to retain even 30 per cent of their sheep and goats. Depleted livestock and crop production had a devastating effect in eight provinces: Jowzan, Kandahar, Zabul, Badgis, Herat, Kabul, Ghazni and Faryab.

**Operational Support (to Agencies):** UNVs continued to monitor projects in Kabul, Kandahar and Jalalabad. Part of the administrative costs of UNHCR's operational partners were funded, including local purchases of office supplies.

**Sanitation:** UNHCR partly funded the construction of 422 private baths and 552 latrines across the country. The beneficiary community provided skilled and casual labour for the digging of wells, construction work (including cement work and the provision of sand and gravel), the installation of hand pumps and transportation of drilling rigs. The community constructed the superstructure of baths and latrines (providing the necessary sand and gravel for the baths). Educational activities covered sanitation as well as public and personal hygiene.

**Shelter/Other Infrastructure:** Shelter is the cornerstone of sustainable reintegration upon return. A UNHCR-WFP self-help shelter rehabilitation project for rural communities provided returnee families (80 per cent women and children) with a tool kit and materials for roofing and the construction of doors and windows for two-room accommodations. Upon completion, each family (5,273 in all) would receive 250 kg of wheat. Households headed by women, the very poor and the most needy were the main beneficiaries of assistance with shelter.

**Transport/Logistics:** In collaboration with IOM, transportation assistance was provided for 133,397 returnees from the Islamic Republic of Iran. Special arrangements were made for vulnerable people, including pregnant women and the disabled. A transit centre was established and fully equipped in Herat to provide temporary accommodation to refugees returning from the Islamic Republic of Iran under the Joint Repatriation Programme. Warehouses were rented and used for food and non-food items that were distributed to returnees in Jalalabad, Khost, Kandahar and Lashkargah.

**Water:** Consultations with refugee groups identified the supply of drinking water as a priority; thus, 275 wells were sunk across the country. This intervention enhanced

the sustainable economic and social recovery of target areas and had immediate health benefits.

## ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

### Management

UNHCR's activities in Afghanistan were managed from Islamabad (Pakistan) with an office in Kabul, supported by offices in Herat (covering two field units), Kandahar (covering three field units), Jalalabad (covering one field unit) and Mazar-i-Sharif (covering three field units). The management of operations will be transferred to Kabul if and when the situation permits. The programme was run by 12 international and 33 national staff. There were three UNVs, one JPO and 147 project staff recruited under an arrangement with IOM. Close contact was maintained with UNHCR offices in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan. Regular meetings were held in Islamabad, Quetta and Peshawar, as well as in the Islamic Republic of Iran, where information on repatriation movements was exchanged.

### Working with Others

In 2000, UNHCR worked with one government agency, eight international NGOs, one international organisation and one UN agency for the implementation of its programme. Under the Strategic Framework for Assistance to Afghanistan and through the Principled Common Programming various co-ordination structures have been established since 1998 under the auspices of the Office of the UN Humanitarian Co-ordinator for Afghanistan (UNOCHA). UNHCR worked closely with other UN agencies, in particular UNDP, FAO, WHO, WFP, UNESCO, UNICEF and UNDCP. UNHCR benefited from these agencies' expertise and resources, rendering integrated community-based reintegration assistance possible.

## OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Despite difficult living conditions in Afghanistan, many Afghans wished to return home, especially to regions enjoying relative peace and stability. Delivery of assistance to these areas remained feasible and had a visible impact on the lives of returnees and their communities at large. The repatriation of refugees, a large proportion of whom have been in exile for over 15 years, lessened the burden of providing assistance in neighbouring countries, and enhanced the level of protection available to those unable or unwilling to return.

Regular and systematic monitoring of returnees inside Afghanistan enabled UNHCR to address the rights of returnees and ensure equitable access to basic assistance and services. Monitoring also yielded information likely to encourage refugees still weighing up the potential advantages of repatriation.

UNHCR's ability to phase out its involvement in Afghanistan is predicated on a significant improvement in the prospects for Afghans, especially safety, if and when they return to their homeland. The policies of the Taliban stand in the way of the major reconstruction effort Afghanistan requires. Moreover, the unlikely prospect of a peace process, underlined by continued population displacements from the ongoing conflict, does not augur well for a durable solution for the remaining three million Afghans in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Afghanistan. UNHCR will continue to phase out of sectors when other actors are better equipped to implement programmes, and to stress the need for medium- to long-term approaches to returnee assistance interventions. Meanwhile, it will place more emphasis on protection, monitoring and immediate needs.

### Offices

#### Islamabad (Pakistan)

Herat  
Jalalabad  
Kabul  
Kandahar  
Mazar-i-Sharif

### Partners

#### Government Agencies

Ministry of Martyrs and Repatriation

#### NGOs

Afghan-German Basic Education  
Agency for Rehabilitation and Energy Conservation in Afghanistan  
Care International  
Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees  
International Assistance Mission  
International Rescue Committee  
Islamic Relief Agency  
Save the Children Fund (USA)

#### Other

International Organisation for Migration  
United Nations Volunteers

Financial Report (USD)				
Expenditure Breakdown	Current Year's Projects		Prior Years' Projects	
		notes		notes
Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination	1,253,585		2,117	
Crop Production	0		187,994	
Domestic Needs / Household Support	0		20	
Education	42,433		171,336	
Health / Nutrition	62,961		10,597	
Income Generation	60,048		162,859	
Legal Assistance	906,387		17,077	
Livestock	0		59,875	
Operational Support (to Agencies)	452,419		8,985	
Shelter / Other Infrastructure	713,440		403,829	
Transport / Logistics	42,513		8,490	
Water	55,164		19,841	
Transit Account	3,080		0	
Instalments with Implementing Partners	1,745,000		(155,674)	
Combined Projects	50,000		(50,000)	
<b>Sub-total Operational</b>	<b>5 387 030</b>		<b>847,346</b>	
Programme Support	1,292,745		119,488	
<b>Sub-total Disbursements / Deliveries</b>	<b>6,679,775</b>	(3)	<b>966,834</b>	(6)
Unliquidated Obligations	920,018	(3)	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,599,793</b>	<b>(1) (3)</b>	<b>966,834</b>	
Instalments with Implementing Partners				
Payments Made	1,745,000		188,699	
Reporting Received	0		344,373	
<b>Balance</b>	<b>1,745,000</b>		<b>(155,674)</b>	
Outstanding 1 January	0		1,031,489	
Refunded to UNHCR	0		0	
Currency Adjustment	0		0	
<b>Outstanding 31 December</b>	<b>1,745,000</b>		<b>875,815</b>	
<b>Unliquidated Obligations</b>				
Outstanding 1 January	0		1,487,862	(6)
New Obligations	7,599,793	(1)	0	
Disbursements	6,679,775	(3)	966,834	(6)
Cancellations	0		521,028	(6)
<b>Outstanding 31 December</b>	<b>920,018</b>	<b>(3)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(6)</b>

Figures which cross reference to Accounts:

(1) Annex to Statement 1

(3) Schedule 3

(6) Schedule 6