

SOUTH-WEST ASIA

Regional Overview

Afghanistan • Islamic Republic of Iran • Pakistan

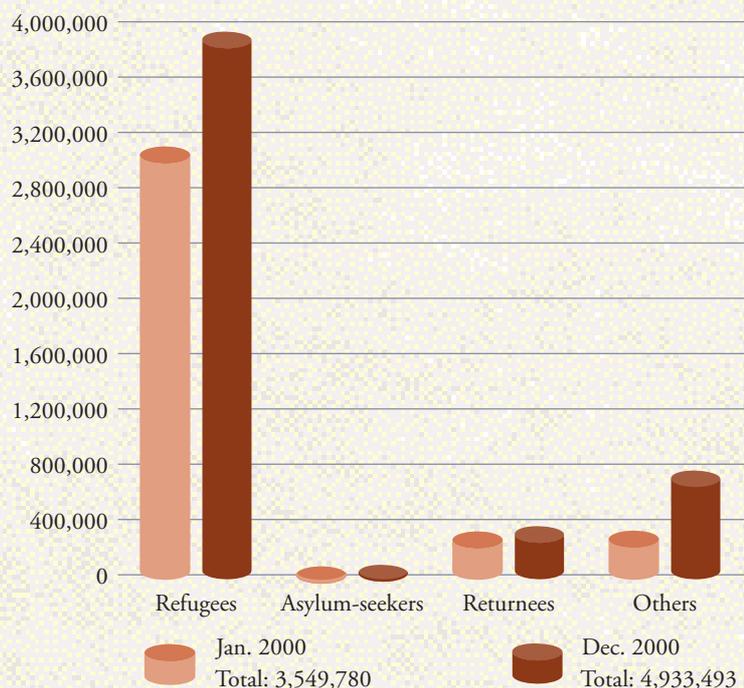


MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

Conditions in Afghanistan during the course of 2000 deteriorated further than ever, due to continued fighting between the warring factions, and the worst drought in three decades. Attempts to bring the warring Afghan factions to the negotiating table once again came to nought. The sanctions imposed by UN Security Council on the Taliban Government compounded the problems. This led to the displacement of tens of thousands of civilians inside Afghanistan, while many thousands crossed into the neighbouring Islamic Republic of Iran or Pakistan. Up to 600,000 Afghans are believed to have been newly displaced or to have become refugees during 2000 due to war and drought. At year's end it was widely expected that the numbers of displaced would rise further, but no assessment was possible due to insecurity and inaccessibility.

This worst drought in recent living memory has left great swathes of the largely agricultural Afghan population without hope. After 21 years of almost continual war and

Persons of Concern to UNHCR



destruction, coping mechanisms fail: for society and the individual alike. Likewise, the combatants' respect for human rights continued to deteriorate, leading to targeting of civilians. Civilians were forced to relocate, men of fighting age were arrested, and houses and crops were systematically burned and destroyed. There were extrajudicial killings of prisoners of war and civilians from the ethnic minorities: the Hazaras, Tajiks and Uzbeks.

Despite this bleak picture, some 286,000 refugees repatriated to Afghanistan. These numbers reflect the growing reluctance on the part of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan to continue to provide asylum with dwindling financial support from the international community.

CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS

Afghanistan's unpredictable political climate and the prevailing insecurity continued to impede planning for any long-term solutions. Hostility towards the entire UN as a result of the 1999 sanctions was exacerbated following the renewed sanctions in 2000. The Taliban banned the employment of Afghan women and imposed restrictions on access to them. This represented an almost insurmountable obstacle for the assistance community in its efforts to monitor the circumstances of returning women (and consequently children) and deliver assistance to them. UNHCR's continued efforts to increase its international presence were stymied by the Taliban's restrictions on the number of UN international staff in Afghanistan. The combined effect of all these factors made fulfilment of UNHCR's protection mandate in Afghanistan extraordinarily difficult.

Mounting asylum fatigue in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan continued to erode the traditional hospitality that had been shown by host populations and authorities alike. In Pakistan, efforts late in the year to screen and register new Afghan arrivals failed. UNHCR struggled to maintain a meaningful profile in these countries with such limited financial resources available to assist refugees (not all of them Afghans).

PROGRESS TOWARDS SOLUTIONS

Voluntary repatriation arguably remains the only viable durable solution for the Afghan refugees, given the unwillingness of the asylum countries to consider local integration. Following UNHCR's agreement with the Islamic Republic of Iran in February 2000, a Joint Programme began in April to screen undocumented Afghans and facilitate their voluntary repatriation

from the Islamic Republic of Iran. Under this Joint Programme, the number of returnees assisted by UNHCR doubled (some 210,000 people went home) as compared to 1999. Conversely, many thousands of asylum-seekers obliged to remain in the Islamic Republic of Iran were now able to do so legally, and receive proper documentation. Another 75,600 people repatriated from Pakistan. Despite the very difficult conditions of life in Afghanistan, many more Afghans continued to express their wish to return to their home country, particularly to areas enjoying relative peace. It remained for the most part possible to assist repatriates in these areas, and markedly improve their livelihood.

Assistance inside Afghanistan focused on efforts to address the immediate needs and priorities of the returnees during the initial phase after return: transportation, shelter and potable water. Collaboration with other UN agencies and NGOs addressed the longer-term needs of communities affected by large numbers of returnees.

OPERATIONS

UNHCR's operations in **Afghanistan**, the **Islamic Republic of Iran** and **Pakistan** are described in separate country chapters.

FUNDING

The severe lack of overall funding for UNHCR, and the resulting reduction of resources available for this region, compelled UNHCR to take some difficult decisions in prioritising its assistance. The most unfortunate result was often the reduction in programmes favouring women and children, including financial assistance, education and medical services and micro-credit scheme.

The 2000 Global Appeal included a box describing the situation of Afghan refugees, which indicated total financial requirements for the year in an amount of USD 36,997,146. The box was intended to summarise UNHCR's strategy, to highlight the regional nature of the refugee situation and to facilitate the transition from the former Special Programme for Repatriation to Afghanistan to the unified budget structure, which was launched on 1 January 2000. Earmarked contributions received for this refugee situation are reflected in the table at the end of this Regional Overview. Total expenditure for the situation in 2000 amounted to USD 34,527,960. A description of the corresponding activities may be found in the Operations section of this Overview and in the relevant country chapters following it.

Voluntary Contributions - Restricted (USD)			
Donor	Earmarking ¹	Annual Programme Budget	
		Income	Contribution
Australia	Islamic Rep. of Iran	433,526	433,526
	Pakistan	433,526	433,526
Canada	Afghanistan	337,838	337,838
Denmark	Afghanistan	1,387,283	1,387,283
Finland	Afghanistan	310,596	310,596
France	South-West Asia	290,103	290,103
Germany	Afghanistan	477,970	477,970
Italy	Islamic Rep. of Iran	483,573	483,573
	Pakistan	483,573	483,573
Japan	Afghanistan	500,000	500,000
	Islamic Rep. of Iran	1,100,000	1,100,000
	Pakistan	1,100,000	1,100,000
Netherlands	Afghanistan	401,931	401,931
Norway	Afghanistan	225,479	225,479
Poland	Islamic Rep. of Iran	10,000	10,000
Sweden	South-West Asia	2,927,928	2,927,928
Switzerland	Afghanistan	198,864	198,864
	Islamic Rep. of Iran	994,318	994,318
United Kingdom	Afghanistan	117,755	117,755
	Islamic Rep. of Iran	714,286	714,286
	Pakistan	725,689	725,689
United States of America	Afghanistan	1,480,000	1,480,000
	Islamic Rep. of Iran	5,056,700	5,056,700
	Pakistan	2,960,000	2,960,000
	South-West Asia	3,016,600	3,016,600
European Commission	Islamic Rep. of Iran	383,509	0
	Pakistan	910,834	0
United Nations Population Fund	Pakistan	40,223	40,223
<i>Action Réfugiés (FRA)</i>	Afghanistan	166	166
<i>Deutsche Stiftung (GFR)</i>	Pakistan	56,603	56,603
<i>Radda Barnen (SWE)</i>	Pakistan	46,191	46,191
UK for UNHCR (GBR)	Pakistan	206,223	206,223
	Afghanistan	1,534	1,534
World Conf. on Religion and Peace (JPN)	Afghanistan	47,619	47,619
Nippon Foundation (JPN)	Islamic Rep. of Iran	1,000,000	1,000,000
Private Donors Islamic Rep. of Iran	Islamic Rep. of Iran	2,439	2,439
Private Donors Italy	Afghanistan	3,569	3,569
	Pakistan	40	40
Private Donors Japan	Afghanistan	1,229	1,229
Total²		28,867,717	26,207,761

¹For more information on the various earmarkings, please refer to the Donor Profiles.

²Total funds available for obligation in the region also included unearmarked voluntary contributions, broadly earmarked contributions, opening balances and adjustments.

Budget and Expenditure (USD)		
Country	Revised Budget	Expenditure
	Annual Programme Budget	
Afghanistan	7,771,097	7,599,793
Islamic Republic of Iran	17,351,964	14,586,484
Pakistan	17,913,028	16,366,676
Bureau at Headquarters	1,487,070	1,435,645
Total	44,523,159	39,988,598