

Turkey



Main objectives

Support the Government of Turkey's efforts to strengthen and develop its asylum system, in conformity with international standards; work with the Government on joint training programmes and other asylum capacity-building activities designed to enhance the knowledge and skills of key officials; advise the Government regarding the eligibility of individual asylum-seekers from non-European countries and ensure efficient and fair refugee status determination (RSD) under UNHCR's mandate; promote durable solutions for refugees, mainly through resettlement to third countries, but also through voluntary repatriation and local integration; cooperate with the Government and NGOs in meeting the basic material, medical and psychosocial needs of refugees and asylum-seekers, with a special focus on refugee women and children; and raise public awareness about refugees and asylum-seekers and build support for their protection and care.

Impact

- UNHCR overcame initial delays caused by the Iraq crisis and fully implemented its training programme for Turkish officials, with 218 senior administrators, police officers, border guards, judges and public prosecutors participating in five introductory refugee law seminars and an advanced RSD workshop.
- During 2003 UNHCR issued more than 2,500 decisions at the first instance, appeal and re-opening stages of the Mandate RSD procedure. The average wait for a first interview was three weeks in Ankara and eight weeks in Van. First decisions took four months, on average, and appeal decisions a further six months.
- UNHCR provided financial assistance, medical care, education, accommodation, local travel and social counselling services to an average of 2,616 persons each month.
- A total of 2,935 refugees left Turkey for resettlement in third countries (slightly more than in 2002). The target of 3,500 departures could not be achieved, as most resettlement countries froze the processing of Iraqi applicants.

- The last 39 refugees from the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s left the Gazi Osman Pasa Camp for voluntary repatriation or local integration, following concerted efforts by UNHCR, the Turkish authorities and an international NGO partner to secure solutions for them.
- Only 35 Turkish refugees repatriated from Iraq during 2003, as conflict and insecurity in the country of asylum caused further delays in the already slow clearance and return procedures.
- The Gender and Children Team (GCT) oversaw the development of practical guidelines for handling matters arising in connection with birth registration, guardianship, sexual abuse, education, shelter and health monitoring for refugee and asylum-seeker children.

NGO partners fully engaged in contingency planning and emergency preparedness activities. As the risk of a major refugee influx abated, Turkey's candidacy for EU membership once again became the focus of Government action and public debate, with important implications for UNHCR's work in the country.

In July 2003, Turkey released the latest update of its National Plan of Action for the Adoption of the EU *Acquis* (NPAA). This provided a detailed roadmap of efforts to implement the asylum elements of the *Acquis* and renewed Turkey's conditional commitment to lifting its "geographic limitation" to the 1951 Refugee Convention, which restricts its obligations under the Convention to persons uprooted by events occurring in Europe. The *Acquis* requires adequate legal and institutional arrangements to deal with an expected increase in asylum applications and allay the fears of EU Member States about burden sharing. Planning for the new Turkish asylum law and related institutions continued during 2003 and is expected to proceed apace in 2004.

Working environment

The context

The Iraq crisis was the dominant feature of the working environment in Turkey during the first months of 2003, with the Government, UNHCR and its main

Reforms related to Turkey's EU candidacy have also contributed to improved prospects of return and reintegration for Turkish refugees now living in Iraq.

Persons of concern				
Main origin/Type of population	Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Islamic Republic of Iran (asylum-seekers)	2,500	2,500	-	-
Islamic Republic of Iran (refugees)	1,300	1,300	45	26
Iraq (asylum-seekers)	600	600	-	-
Somalia (asylum-seekers)	100	100	-	-

Income and expenditure (USD)					
Annual programme and Supplementary programme budgets					
	Revised budget	Income from contributions ¹	Other funds available ²	Total funds available	Total expenditure
AB	5,646,210	171,800	5,482,021	5,653,821	5,443,626
SB	1,736,038	0	1,551,250	1,551,250	1,551,520
Total	7,382,248	171,800	7,033,271	7,205,071	6,995,146

¹ Includes income from contributions earmarked at the country level.

² Includes allocations by UNHCR from unearmarked or broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments. The above figures do not include costs at headquarters.

Note: The Supplementary programme budgets do not include a 7 per cent charge (support costs) that is recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR.

At the end of the year, UNHCR was engaged in discussions with the Government of Turkey and the Iraqi authorities on a legal framework for voluntary repatriation. Unfortunately, security conditions in Iraq prevented the deployment of international staff and hampered efforts to assess the expectations and intentions of the refugees.

Constraints

UNHCR's workload in Turkey was seriously affected by the limited capacity of national NGOs still struggling to cope with a challenging environment. UNHCR was therefore obliged to continue to implement programmes which would ordinarily be handled by partners. The lack of a capable NGO partner to offer counselling in Van caused hardship for refugees and asylum-seekers, and placed a severe strain on UNHCR staff. In Ankara, however, the expansion in late 2003 of partners' psychosocial counselling services was a modest but welcome improvement.

Funding

Due to budgetary constraints, UNHCR was unable to increase financial assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers. Special funding was made available under the auspices of the EU High-Level Working Group on Migration and Asylum (HWLG), and this enabled UNHCR to strengthen its Mandate RSD operation and to expand training and technical cooperation activities on asylum with the Government.

Achievements and impact

Protection and solutions

Due to the geographic limitation to the 1951 Refugee Convention, non-Europeans only enjoy temporary asylum in Turkey pending their resettlement to third countries. For this reason, UNHCR continued to carry out refugee status determination under its Mandate for non-Europeans, both to

advise the Government regarding their need for temporary asylum in Turkey and to identify those in need of resettlement. UNHCR received 2,248 new applications for refugee status (representing 3,966 persons). This amounted to 7.5 per cent fewer applications than in 2002, continuing the trend towards a decrease in numbers since 1998.

Access to the Turkish procedure for temporary asylum remained problematic for some non-European asylum-seekers. Roughly one-fifth of those who lodged applications with UNHCR were unable also to register with the Government, usually because they did not apply within the 10-day time limit, failed

An Iraqi asylum-seeker in south-eastern Turkey. *UNHCR/A. Hollmann*



to present an identity document or travelled to Turkey via a third country. While UNHCR worked closely with the Government to ensure their protection, a few were subjected to forcible return or *refoulement*.

Activities and assistance

Community services: An average of 1,000 refugees and asylum-seekers per month received social, legal or psychological counselling from UNHCR and its implementing partners. UNHCR also fielded twenty-two mission teams to provincial cities to provide counselling regarding refugee status determination, assistance and resettlement matters. The Inter-Unit Committee for Special Cases also ensured appropriate care and follow-up for sixty-eight vulnerable individuals. All separated children underwent a "best interests" determination to establish what protection and care arrangements and eventual solutions would best meet their needs.

Domestic needs/Household support: UNHCR provided monthly financial assistance to an average of 855 persons and extended one-time assistance on 1,872 occasions.

Education: UNHCR helped 462 child refugees and asylum-seekers to attend Turkish primary schools by assisting their families to purchase uniforms, books and supplies. More than 1,000 home education kits were also distributed to children not enrolled in local schools. Through a Turkish foundation, UNHCR also offered vocational training and recreational activities for 220 refugee children and asylum-seekers in Van.

Food: UNHCR provided food assistance to vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers and distributed food packages to Turkish returnees upon their arrival from Iraq.

Health/Nutrition: An average of 1,389 refugees and asylum-seekers received medical treatment each month through clinics, hospitals and pharmacies working under contract with UNHCR. Sanitary materials were supplied monthly to an average of 561 refugee and asylum-seeker women and adolescent girls through contracted pharmacies.

Legal assistance: UNHCR supported the development of Turkey's national asylum system through an

expanded joint training programme and the provision of expert advice. A major comparative study commissioned by UNHCR surveyed the asylum laws, institutions, policies and practices of EU Member States and new accession countries, in order to provide the Government with an overview of possible models and good practices. Eight Turkish officials also participated in a study tour to Germany and Poland and gained exposure to the legal and institutional arrangements for asylum in those countries. Key documents on asylum were translated and shared with the Government. In addition, UNHCR produced an interactive CD-ROM training tool on refugee law principles and standards and practical aspects of protection. This was distributed to Government officials and other partners. UNHCR also worked to strengthen the "protection network" within Turkish civil society.

Operational support (to agencies): UNHCR helped to cover the staffing, communication and other administrative costs incurred by its implementing partners in the provision of social and legal counselling services. Two national UNVs also supported UNHCR's resettlement and voluntary repatriation activities in Turkey.

Shelter/Other infrastructure: Separated children, single parent families, survivors of domestic violence and other persons in a socially, psychologically or medically vulnerable situation received emergency accommodation assistance from UNHCR.

Transport/Logistics: Some 650 people received assistance for local travel during the year, mainly to attend interviews in Ankara. UNHCR also covered transportation costs related to vocational training and recreation programmes in Van.

Water and Sanitation: As lead agency for the water and sanitation sector, UNHCR was committed to supporting the activities of the Government and the Turkish Red Crescent Society (TRCS) in preparation for a response to a potential emergency in Iraq. In April 2003, UNHCR concluded a sub-agreement with OXFAM/GB for the deployment of an experienced water and sanitation engineer to provide technical advice to the TRCS and reinforced its contingency planning for a possible refugee influx along Turkey's south-eastern border. When no refugee influx occurred, UNHCR and OXFAM/GB agreed not to implement the planned activities.

Organization and implementation

Management

UNHCR managed the Turkey country programme from a main office in Ankara and through field presences in Istanbul, Silopi and Van with 69 staff members, including six international officers, 60 national staff members and three Junior Professional Officers.

Working with others

UNHCR in Turkey worked with the ministries and agencies of the Government of Turkey both on operational protection matters and on strengthening the national asylum system. UNHCR also collaborated with an international NGO, a Turkish foundation and a university to provide psychosocial counselling services for refugees and asylum-seekers in Ankara and Istanbul. Close cooperation continued with IOM on the departure of refugees from Turkey for resettlement, family reunification and voluntary repatriation. UNHCR served as the focal point for contingency planning and emergency preparedness and participated actively in UN Country Team security management activities and thematic groups working on HIV/AIDS, gender equality and children.

Overall assessment

During 2003, UNHCR in Turkey faced the significant challenge of strengthening its emergency preparedness and response capacity, while at the same time continuing to meet the protection, assistance and resettlement needs of the urban refugees and asylum-seekers. The fact that the backlog of pending applications and associated delays did not increase during this period is attributable to concerted efforts by the UNHCR team, with additional refugee status determination staffing provided by the HLWG project (though the pressure was also relieved slightly by a continued decline in new applications). However, a negative effect of this increased workload was UNHCR's inability to implement some planned activities, such as enhanced protection monitoring along Turkey's eastern and western borders.

Progress on the strengthening of Turkey's national asylum system was also delayed somewhat during the crisis period. Nevertheless, UNHCR was able to implement fully its planned programme of training and technical cooperation activities. Moreover, the mutual trust and close working relationships forged during the emergency phase will certainly benefit future cooperation on capacity building. Contacts also intensified with the EC Representation in Ankara and new Government interlocutors, such as the General Secretariat for EU Affairs, as Turkey began moving more decisively to meet the asylum standards of the EU *Acquis*.

Offices

Ankara
Istanbul
Silopi
Van

Partners

Government agencies

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of the Interior
Ministry of Justice
Social Services and Child Protection Institutions

NGOs

Anatolian Development Foundation
Association for Solidarity with Asylum-Seekers and Migrants
Caritas (Istanbul)
Human Resources Development Foundation
International Catholic Migration Commission
Istanbul Inter-Parish Migration Programme

Others

Bar Associations of Turkey
Hacettepe University School of Social Work
IOM
Turkish Red Crescent Society
United Nations Country Team

Financial Report (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects				Prior years' projects	
	Annual programme budget	Supplementary programme budget	Total	notes	Annual and supplementary programme budgets	notes
Protection, Monitoring and Coordination	1,509,213	1,152,244	2,661,457		0	
Community Services	83,258	9,456	92,714		(13,223)	
Domestic Needs/Household Support	654,806	107,065	761,871		1,253	
Education	40,814	0	40,814		0	
Food	2,756	0	2,756		0	
Health/Nutrition	255,907	19,083	274,990		1,033	
Legal Assistance	245,132	7,309	252,441		0	
Operational Support (to Agencies)	58,099	11,312	69,411		5,841	
Sanitation	0	16,770	16,770		0	
Shelter/Other Infrastructure	26,640	0	26,640		3,049	
Transport/Logistics	41,256	193,607	234,863		254	
Water (non-agricultural)	0	158	158		0	
Instalments with Implementing Partners	38,560	(1)	38,559		24,568	
Sub - total Operational	2,956,441	1,517,003	4,473,444		22,775	
Programme Support	2,468,336	14,035	2,482,371		11,998	
Sub - total Disbursements / Deliveries	5,424,777	1,531,038	6,955,815	(3)	34,773	(5)
Unliquidated Obligations	18,849	20,482	39,331	(3)	0	(5)
Total	5,443,626	1,551,520	6,995,146	(1) (3)	34,773	
Instalments with Implementing Partners						
Payments Made	216,758	615,241	831,999		291,777	
Reporting Received	178,198	615,241	793,439		267,209	
Balance	38,560	0	38,560		24,568	
Outstanding 1st January	0	0	0		(1,399)	
Refunded to UNHCR	0	0	0		(3,503)	
Currency Adjustment	0	0	0		(26,672)	
Outstanding 31 December	38,560	0	38,560		0	
Unliquidated Obligations						
Outstanding 1st January	0	0	0		44,507	(5)
New Obligations	5,443,626	1,551,520	6,995,146	(1)	0	
Disbursements	5,424,777	1,531,038	6,955,815	(3)	34,773	(5)
Cancellations	0	0	0		9,734	(5)
Outstanding 31 December	18,849	20,482	39,331	(3)	0	(5)

Figures which can be cross-referenced to the Accounts:

- (1) Annex to Statement 1
- (3) Schedule 3
- (5) Schedule 5