

South-West Asia

Major developments

Over 3.5 million Afghan refugees returned to their country between 2002 and 2005 with the assistance of UNHCR. In 2005, the fourth year of the repatriation operation, more than half a million Afghans returned with UNHCR's assistance from Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The progress on Afghanistan's political transition process concluded with the establishment of permanent government institutions. By the end of the year the "Bonn process" was complete, with the running of the elections for representatives to the new parliament. The Afghan Ministry for Refugees and Repatriation launched a major initiative to distribute government land to landless returnees, refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), and vulnerable families in the local communities. This land distribution initiative was welcomed by UNHCR. In August 2005, Afghanistan acceded to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, a significant step which demonstrates the Government's determination to become a full member of the international community.

A census of all Afghans in Pakistan was carried out in March 2005, the results of which showed that more than 3 million Afghans were still living in Pakistan. About 50 per cent of this population are below the age of 18 years. By the end of 2005 the number of Afghans remaining in Pakistan, not all of whom are of concern to UNHCR, had fallen to some 2.6 million. UNHCR's tripartite agreements with the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan were extended until March and December 2006 respectively. During the year, refugee children enjoyed improved access to health and education at reduced admission fees.

Afghanistan
Islamic Republic of Iran
Pakistan



Annual repatriation figures to date have been impressive and largely show that returnees believe in the future of Afghanistan. However, the return pattern was, and will continue to be, increasingly influenced by the policies adopted by the Governments in Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran towards the remaining Afghans.

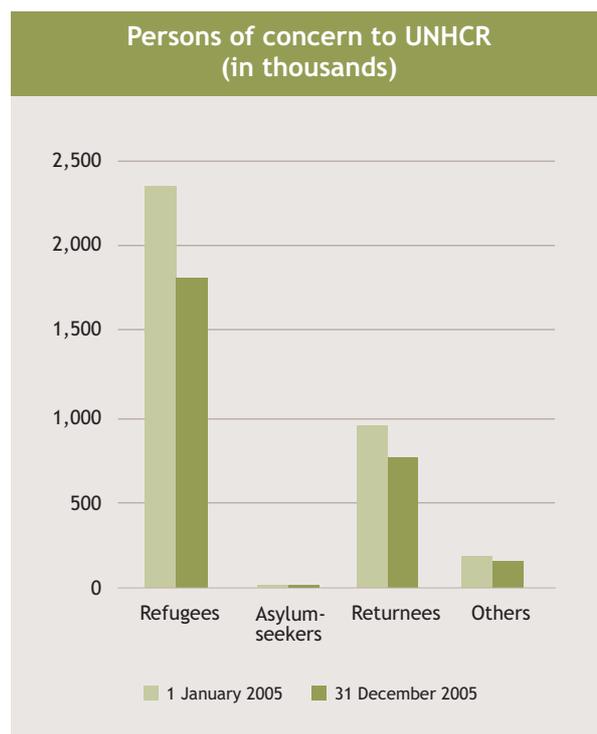
Challenges and concerns

The successful completion of the political transition in Afghanistan notwithstanding, long-term efforts are required to tackle the deteriorating security situation and the rebuilding of state institutions, particularly at the provincial level. The continued commitment of the international community will be crucial in this respect. Volatile security situations, particularly in the East, South-East and South of Afghanistan, continued to limit UNHCR's access to returnee areas. Military operations against suspected Al-Qaeda elements continued in the tribal areas of Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province, hampering UNHCR's activities and movement.

Economic relations between the countries in the region have improved, especially in terms of commerce. However, further developments of regional and bilateral cooperation remained constrained. This environment will continue to influence the dynamics of population movements to and from Afghanistan.

Many Afghans remaining in the neighbouring countries, some of whom are well established, are reluctant to return home. But, interestingly, ongoing research shows that

many Afghans move back and forth across the borders. While the current arrangements, embodied in tripartite agreements on voluntary repatriation from the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan, will remain a priority, UNHCR advocates a more comprehensive framework for Afghans in the region, addressing not only the return of refugees, but also the challenges of population movements to and from Afghanistan. This necessitates clear policies on the status of Afghans remaining abroad and better arrangements to manage the unregulated migrations.





Pakistan: Census of Afghans in Karachi. UNHCR / J. Redden

In this context, UNHCR continued an inclusive consultation and negotiation process with interested stakeholders, provided technical assistance and capacity development, undertook research and established partnerships with agencies such as IOM and ILO. At the strategic consultations convened in February and October 2005, there was broad agreement among the participants that whilst voluntary return will remain the preferred durable solution, many Afghans will probably remain in neighbouring asylum countries after the expiry of the tripartite agreements and comprehensive solutions for them will need to be examined carefully.

Progress towards solutions

Voluntary repatriation in safety and dignity remains the preferred durable solution for Afghan refugees, and return figures remained high throughout the fourth year of UNHCR's repatriation operation. However, return patterns are being increasingly influenced by the policies adopted by the Governments of Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran towards the remaining Afghans. Camp closures in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) led to the return of some 160,000 people. In the

Islamic Republic of Iran, by contrast, assisted repatriation figures for Afghans were low and the same pattern could be observed for Iraqis. This could be explained in terms of the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan and Iraq, an array of social and economic obstacles, and better living conditions in the country of asylum.

Afghanistan's limited absorption capacity and lack of access to land continue to be major obstacles to reintegration. Apart from providing initial reintegration assistance in the shelter sector, UNHCR continued working with development-oriented UN agencies and relevant ministries, advocating for the mainstreaming of the needs of returnees into national development programmes to meet the challenges of medium to long-term reintegration.

A key objective for UNHCR was to help concerned States to see the need for a change of approach in managing the Afghan situation. Instead of treating it purely as a refugee and humanitarian problem, the fundamentals of complex population movements must be addressed, including the problems of poverty and migration.

Ongoing research indicates that a considerable number of Afghans continue to move back and forth across the

Budget and expenditure (USD)						
Country	Final budget			Expenditure		
	Annual programme budget	Supplementary programme budget ¹	Total	Annual programme budget	Supplementary programme budget ¹	Total
Afghanistan	62,600,906	0	62,600,906	56,336,186	0	56,336,186
Islamic Republic of Iran	13,435,615	2,708,423	16,144,038	12,080,368	1,817,740	13,898,108
Pakistan	22,921,077	10,739,320	33,660,397	22,691,810	10,739,320	33,431,130
Regional projects ²	1,237,188	0	1,237,188	1,128,390	0	1,128,390
Total	100,194,786	13,447,743	113,642,529	92,236,754	12,557,060	104,793,814

¹ The supplementary programme figures apply to the Iraq Operation and the Supplementary Programme for the South Asia Earthquake Emergency.

² Includes scholarships for refugee students and repatriation of Afghans from various countries and comprehensive solutions for Afghan displacement.

Note: The supplementary programme budget does not include a 7 per cent support cost that is recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR.

borders. The majority of Afghans living in neighbouring countries have lived there for more than 20 years. It was against this background that UNHCR continued an inclusive consultation and negotiation process with interested stakeholders. UNHCR's efforts involved technical assistance and capacity development, research and knowledge building, and establishing partnerships with concerned agencies such as the ILO and IOM.

In February and October 2005, UNHCR convened Strategic Consultations with Governments in the region, key international institutions and interested States and international organizations on population movements to and from Afghanistan. These meetings were jointly hosted by UNHCR and the European Union in Brussels, and by UNHCR and the United States Government in Geneva. The meetings resulted in an understanding that whilst voluntary return will continue, many Afghans will probably remain in the neighbouring countries of asylum after the expiration of the tripartite agreements. The status

and prospects of Afghans will remain under careful review, as comprehensive solutions are sought for them.

Operations

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

Funding

As in previous years, donors continued to support UNHCR's Afghan operation generously in 2005. Although major donors still maintain some flexibility in funding for the Afghan operation, the trend towards strictly earmarked contributions is increasing. Due to the global shortfall of funds, operational budgets were decreased. This reduction had a negative impact on the quality of assistance delivered in camps in Pakistan.

Restricted voluntary contributions (USD)			
Earmarking ¹	Donor	Annual programme budget	Supplementary programme budget
South-West Asia			
	European Commission	359,783	0
	Italy	323,415	0
	Spain	7,267	0
	Sweden	7,564,297	0
	United States	26,639,650	0
Sub-total		34,894,412	0
Afghanistan			
	Australia	2,734,375	0
	Australia for UNHCR	136,166	0
	Austria	482,509	0
	Canada	4,032,258	0
	Denmark	1,271,048	0
	<i>Deutsche Stiftung für UNO-Flüchtlingshilfe</i>	117,647	0
	European Commission	6,149,979	0
	France	120,627	0
	Germany	1,958,634	0
	Italy	1,686,122	0
	Japan	5,000,000	0
	Japan Association for UNHCR	37,425	0
	Miscellaneous donors / Private donors in Greece	30,569	0
	Miscellaneous donors / Private donors in Italy	236,915	0
	Miscellaneous donors / Private donors in the United Kingdom	24,548	0
	Netherlands	3,614,500	0
	<i>Shinnyo-en</i>	38,095	0
	Spain	575,448	0
	Switzerland	1,250,000	0
	United Kingdom	459,770	0
	USA for UNHCR	6,327	0
Sub-total		29,962,962	0

Earmarking ¹	Donor	Annual programme budget	Supplementary programme budget
Islamic Republic of Iran			
	European Commission	1,413,524	0
	Germany	646,831	0
	Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO)	0	14,975
	Italy	907,912	0
	Japan	1,500,000	0
	United States	160,000	0
Sub-total		4,628,266	14,975
Pakistan			
	Australia	0	370,370
	Australia for UNHCR	0	266,432
	Canada	0	854,701
	Czech Republic	0	299,569
	Denmark	0	3,139,717
	<i>Deutsche Stiftung für UNO-Flüchtlingshilfe</i>	0	764,706
	European Commission	602,410	2,760,578
	Finland	0	1,176,471
	France	0	82,353
	Germany	304,878	0
	Ireland	0	300,000
	Italy	0	323,415
	Japan	2,000,000	1,000,000
	Japan Association for UNHCR	0	272,557
	Luxembourg	588,235	0
	Miscellaneous donors / Private donors in Austria	0	12,023
	Miscellaneous donors / Private donors in Canada	0	533,652
	Miscellaneous donors / Private donors in Greece	0	99,626
	Miscellaneous donors / Private donors in Hong Kong SAR, China	0	1,000
	Miscellaneous donors / Private donors in Italy	0	40,133
	Miscellaneous donors / Private donors in Switzerland	0	1,527
	Miscellaneous donors / Private donors in the United States	0	6,842
	Norway	0	5,981,414
	Online donations (Headquarters)	0	56,229
	PricewaterhouseCoopers Ltd	0	7,752
	Republic of Korea	0	50,000
	<i>Rissho Kosei Kan</i>	0	17,699
	<i>Shinryo-en</i>	0	100,000
	Spain	111,271	101,176
	<i>Stichting Vluchteling</i>	0	352,941
	Sweden	0	3,811,944
	Turkey	0	550,000
	United Kingdom	0	2,441,915
	United States	0	4,000,000
	USA for UNHCR	0	457,548
Sub-total		3,606,794	30,234,293
Total		73,092,435	30,249,268

¹ For more information on the earmarking, please refer to the donor profiles.