

# Afghanistan



## Working environment

### The context

The international community and the Government of Afghanistan agreed on key targets for reconstruction and development in the Afghanistan Compact of January 2006 and the related Interim Afghanistan National Development Strategy for 2006-2010. Both the Compact and the Strategy include objectives, benchmarks and indicators for the voluntary return and reintegration of Afghan returnees. However, the level of returns will depend on Afghanistan's overall progress towards political stability and security. The year 2007 saw a further deterioration in security, particularly in the eastern, south-eastern and southern parts of the country. This has impeded UNHCR's access to returnees and to project sites.

Despite some improvements, notably in the health and education sectors, Afghanistan is still one of the poorest countries in the world. Public transport and the supply of electricity and water remain unreliable, and by and large do not compare to what Afghans grew accustomed to during their long exile. The economy has shown

strong growth in construction, trade and agriculture, but unemployment and under-employment levels are still high. Land issues, including those related to tenure, confiscation, illegal occupation and disputes over property remain widespread. Indeed, landlessness in general is a significant obstacle to reintegration. More than 46 per cent of returnees face housing problems, and some 28 per cent of returnee households report that they do not have a stable income.

Some three million Afghans remain in Pakistan (2.1 million) and in the Islamic Republic of Iran (915,000). Their profile is rather different from those refugees who have returned to Afghanistan since 2002: the great majority of the families remaining in Pakistan and in the Islamic Republic of Iran have been in exile for more than 20 years. Half of the registered Afghan population in these two countries was born in exile.

In 2008 and 2009 the level of return will continue to be influenced primarily by developments in the countries of asylum. Pull factors in Afghanistan are likely to remain modest. It is estimated that a total of some 540,000 refugees will return home in the next two years.

## The needs

After some 20 years in exile, the decision to return constitutes a major undertaking. Most returnees rely to a great extent on their family and other networks for their social and economic reintegration. But many of the poorer families and individuals require assistance, particularly with regard to shelter and water. Although some have access to land, it is usually not sufficient to support their families. Land tenure and property rights also remain problematic. The situation requires monitoring, documentation and intervention, and affected returnees will need access to legal aid. Since the capacity of some of the local organizations involved in these activities is limited, training and advice is required. UNHCR will focus on facilitating returns and assist returnees with their initial reintegration. Private-sector growth and longer-term development programmes are essential in order to support the sustainability of return.

The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation needs to be strengthened through training, technical assistance and financial support. The Ministry covers policy, planning, operational management, monitoring and analysis and documentation of return trends. Other government ministries and departments are also in need of technical assistance, training and material support so that they may assume more responsibility towards Afghan refugees and returnees.

### Total requirements

2008: USD 49,871,900

2009: USD 50,595,410

## Main objectives

- Facilitate the voluntary, safe and gradual return of Afghans from Pakistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and other host countries, and support the initial reintegration of returnees.
- Provide assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs) through new and existing mechanisms.
- Strengthen the longer-term reintegration of returnees through national development programmes, particularly in key areas of return.
- Enhance the Government's ability to manage voluntary repatriation; assist its dialogue with neighbouring countries on the management of population movements; and develop strategies to address the internal and external displacement of Afghans.
- Ensure access to fair and efficient refugee status determination (RSD) procedures for refugees and asylum-seekers.

## Key targets for 2008 and 2009

- Some 540,000 refugees return to Afghanistan.
- All legal issues submitted by returnees to information and legal aid clinics are addressed.
- UNHCR's monitoring of human rights is maintained at the current level and the reports produced influence government policies and planning.
- The identification and assistance network for returnees with special needs is expanded and eventually managed by the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation; all those identified, including women at risk, receive assistance to cover their immediate needs.
- At least 20,000 returnee households receive shelter assistance in areas of return.
- Landless returnees and IDPs receive land and are able to build a home.
- The reintegration needs of the returnee population are given more serious consideration in national development programmes.
- The Government's capacity to engage in the return operation, reintegrate returnees and conduct dialogue with neighbouring countries to address broader population movements is increased.
- All asylum claims submitted to UNHCR in Afghanistan are processed within a reasonable amount of time, and the involvement of the Afghan authorities is gradually increased.

## Strategy and activities

UNHCR's primary objective in 2008 and 2009 will be the voluntary repatriation and initial reintegration of returnees. In parallel, UNHCR will develop differentiated policies and implementing arrangements to aid in the management of population movements into and out of Afghanistan.

The return programme will be implemented through the Tripartite Agreements on voluntary repatriation signed with the Governments of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan. The current Tripartite Agreement with Pakistan has been extended until the end of 2009, and the agreement with the Islamic Republic of Iran is expected to be renewed in early 2008. UNHCR and the Ministry for Refugees and Repatriation will monitor the voluntary, dignified and gradual nature of returns as well as the physical, legal and material safety of returnees.

Individual return assistance, notably the provision of repatriation and initial reinstallation cash grants, will be complemented by UNHCR's reintegration programme, particularly in the sectors of shelter, water and income generation. Shelter assistance will be provided to 20,000 of the most vulnerable families. In addition,



Sheikh Mesri returnees at a UNHCR-funded project in Jalalabad township.

UNHCR/V. Tan

UNHCR will support the government-led programme to allocate public land to landless returnees. An Employment Service Centre, established in partnership with the ILO at the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, will assist returnees in finding employment. The situation of returnees will be monitored and evaluated to assess the sustainability of return. The Office will also continue to provide legal aid.

Working with an implementing partner, UNHCR will strengthen its capacity-building activities and improve advocacy with relevant actors, including the Ministry of Justice and the judiciary. UNHCR will also lend support to the Ministry for Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation in order to identify and assist extremely vulnerable returnees, particularly women and girls.

The Office will establish closer links with development programmes to include the protection and reintegration needs of returnees in their implementation plans. Financial and technical support will be provided to relevant ministries in sectors such as water and sanitation to strengthen their capacity to facilitate return and reintegration.

With respect to IDPs, in 2008 and 2009 UNHCR will provide return assistance on an *ad hoc* basis and will assist new groups such as battle-affected IDPs. UNHCR will remain engaged in identifying durable solutions and

will support the Afghan Government, while advocating strongly for IDPs with the relevant authorities.

## Constraints

Security continues to be a major concern and will likely restrain operational access, especially in the south and the south-east of the country.

Despite UNHCR's efforts, the capacity of relevant government counterparts remains limited due to the high turnover of officials both at the central and provincial levels.

Insecurity and lack of land, shelter and livelihoods in Afghanistan are the main obstacles to return for refugees.

## Organization and implementation

### UNHCR presence

	2008	2009
Number of offices	13	11
Total staff	445	426
International	32	32
National	397	378
UNVs	14	14
JPOs	2	2

### Coordination

Under the Afghanistan Compact, the Government sets development priorities and oversees the coordination of donor assistance. UNHCR participates in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy consultative group on refugees, returnees, and IDPs. The group was created to find durable solutions for returnees and IDPs through joint discussions with the Afghan Government and the international community.

### Planning figures

Type of population	Origin	Jan 2008		Dec 2008 - Jan 2009		Dec 2009	
		Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR
Refugees	Various	100	100	100	100	100	100
Returnees (refugees)		253,000	253,000	220,000	220,000	320,000	320,000
IDPs		114,310	114,310	-	-	-	-
Returnees (IDPs)		15,000	15,000	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>382,410</b>	<b>382,410</b>	<b>220,100</b>	<b>220,100</b>	<b>320,100</b>	<b>320,100</b>

UNHCR works closely with other UN agencies, bilateral donors and NGOs. The Office supports the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation in its coordination role, and works with the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development and the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission.

## Partners

### Implementing partners

**Government:** Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled, Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, Ministry of Women's Affairs.

**NGOs:** Abu Muslim Khorasany Rehabilitation Unit, Afghan Bureau for Reconstruction, Afghan General Help Coordination, Afghan Health Development Services, Afghan Planning Agency, Afghan Public Welfare Organization, Afghan Women's Education Centre, Afghan Women's Skills Development Centre, Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development, Ansari Rehabilitation Association for Afghanistan, Child Fund Afghanistan, Civil Affairs Organization, Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance, Coordination of Rehabilitation and Development Services for Afghanistan, Development and Humanitarian Service for Afghanistan, Emam Saheb Construction and Rehabilitation Organization, Engineering and Rehabilitation Service for Afghanistan, Human Dignity Society, Humanitarian Action for the People of Afghanistan, Humanitarian Aid for Women and Children of Afghanistan, Independent Humanitarian Service Association, , INTERSOS, Malteser International, Masood Akbar Construction Agency, Medica Mondiale, Norwegian Refugee Council, Reconstruction and Employment Unit for Afghan Refugees, Services Women Relieve Centre for Afghanistan, Shams Women's Needs and Help Organization, Sina Association Rehabilitation Service, Voluntary Association for the Rehabilitation of Afghanistan, Watan's Social and Technical Services Association, Youth Assembly for Afghanistan Rehabilitation.

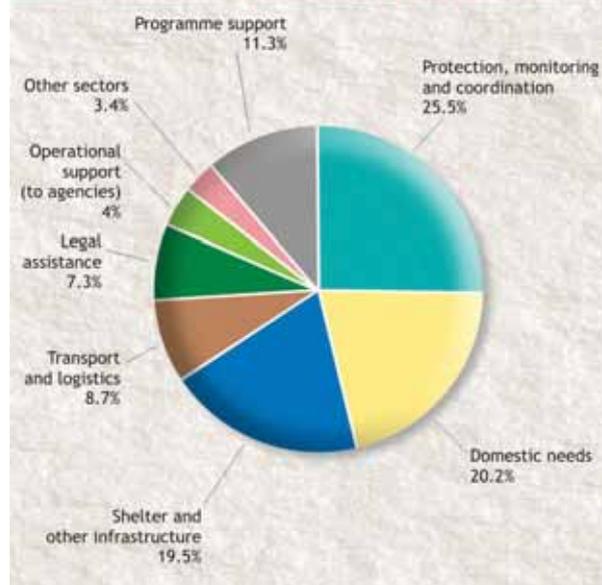
**Others:** Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, British Broadcasting Corporation, *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit*, ILO, United Nations Volunteers.

### Operational partners

**Government:** Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development.

**Others:** United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, UN Country Team, World Bank.

### 2008-2009 Biennial Programme Budget by sector



## Budget (USD)

Activities and services	Annual Programme Budget		
	2007	2008	2009
Protection, monitoring and coordination	13,583,773	12,909,090	12,739,930
Community services	575,000	575,000	575,000
Domestic needs	4,905,000	10,165,000	10,165,000
Health	235,000	150,000	150,000
Income generation	3,600,000	1,000,000	1,000,000
Legal assistance	3,205,000	3,170,000	4,170,336
Operational support (to agencies)	2,110,000	1,991,530	1,991,530
Shelter and other infrastructure	9,849,800	9,776,000	9,776,000
Transport and logistics	9,507,500	4,380,000	4,380,000
<b>Total operations</b>	<b>47,571,073</b>	<b>44,116,620</b>	<b>44,947,796</b>
Programme support	4,699,885	5,755,280	5,647,614
<b>Total</b>	<b>52,270,958</b>	<b>49,871,900</b>	<b>50,595,410</b>