

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

INITIAL OBJECTIVES

- Support the voluntary repatriation of Afghans in safety and dignity. UNHCR will make efforts to conclude the tri-partite agreement with the Afghanistan Interim Administration (AIA) and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, register all Afghans wanting to voluntarily repatriate, and provide them with basic materials and transportation to the Milak and Dogharoun border exit stations.
- Provide limited assistance in vocational training, health care and education to Afghan and Iraqi refugees living in the Islamic Republic of Iran.
- Promote resettlement for Afghan and Iraqi refugees for whom this may be the only durable solution.
- Encourage the creation of a joint refugee status determination (RSD) procedure focusing initially on individuals at risk of deportation.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS, PROGRESS ACHIEVED, AND CONSTRAINTS

By January 2002, UNHCR shifted its programme in the Islamic Republic of Iran from assisting Afghans fleeing the conflict after 11 September, to supporting the regionally co-ordinated programme for Afghans wanting to voluntarily repatriate.

In April 2002, UNHCR signed a tri-partite agreement with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the AIA, and began a joint voluntary repatriation programme for Afghans who wanted to return to their place of origin. By the end of June, the Office, in co-ordination with the authorities, provided assistance to some 86,000 Afghans returnees.

From January to June 2002, there was a decrease in the number of Afghans returning home under the joint programme. The fall in the number of returnees, and at the same time, the high number of Afghans still remaining in the country, hampered progress in the establishment of an RSD procedure in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Refugee protection in the country is being challenged, at a time when there is a high number of alleged deportations of Afghans.

In June 2002, the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrant Affairs (BAFIA) established a new registration mechanism to register previously registered and unregistered Afghans in the country. The last exercise had been conducted in 2001. According to the authorities, the data collected through this exercise would be the basis for the implementation of Article 48 (which requires all foreign nationals not holding a work permit to leave the country unless they face "physical threats" in their country of origin) of the Five-Year Development Plan, adopted by the Iranian Consultative Assembly, Majlis (parliament) in April 2000.

Under the joint repatriation programme, Afghan refugees register at one of the nine voluntary repatriation centres (VRCs). UNHCR conducts a confidential interview, and if they qualify for voluntary repatriation, they are provided with basic materials and transportation to the border by UNHCR and BAFIA. 95 per cent of those returning go through the Dogharoun border, while the others travel through the Milak crossing point from Sistan Baluchistan. The Office monitors all border crossings to ensure that returnees do not experience any difficulties. UNHCR provides returnees with mine awareness training, and they are given access to medical care, if needed - either at the VRCs or at the exit point.

In addition to supporting the repatriation of Afghans to Afghanistan from January to June 2002, the Office also continued to facilitate the voluntary return of Iraqis to Iraq. UNHCR assisted the return of 320 Iraqi Arabs and 260 Iraqi Kurds. The repatriation of Iraqis was suspended in June after the Government of Iraq insisted on the establishment of a clearance procedure for the voluntary return of its nationals from the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Iraqi authorities also requested that the repatriation be through areas under government control. UNHCR provided the Iraqi Kurds with transportation to Iraq and a USD 20 subsistence allowance.

At the end of June 2002, UNHCR provided assistance in health, sanitation, water, community services and education to some 77,670 Afghan and Iraqi refugees in 29 camps (the overwhelming majority of refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran live outside camps). The Office made efforts to reduce hygiene-

related health problems, provide shelter, and support primary education in the various sites. In spite of the budget cuts in the first half of the year, UNHCR maintained a medical referral programme for refugees living outside the camps. The budget cuts, however, resulted in the reduction of many planned activities (construction of houses for refugees, skills-training and income-generating projects).

UNHCR promoted resettlement for refugees for whom this was the only viable solution. During the first half of 2002, more than 73 per cent of the applications submitted for resettlement were accepted. However, there was a delay in resettlement for those refugees who had not participated in the 2001 registration exercise for foreigners, since they could not obtain exit visas, even though they may have had entry visas or acceptances from resettlement countries.

Progress as measured against indicators

Impact/Performance Indicators	Actual Progress
The voluntary repatriation of 400,000 Afghans in safety and dignity.	Some 86,000 Afghans repatriated from April to June 2002, following the signature of a tri-partite agreement between UNHCR, the AIA, and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Nine VRCs were set up, staffed and equipped. The existing Milak and Dogharoun border exit stations were upgraded through the creation of more reception areas and an increase in accommodations for overnight stays. The Office provided returnees with blankets, food packages, jerry cans and transportation to the border with Afghanistan. UNHCR provided medical assistance to more than 7,000 returnees.
Improved hygiene and health in refugee camps.	The Office provided bars of soap and detergent on a monthly basis to some 77,670 Afghani and Iraqi refugees in 29 camps. UNHCR gave chlorine powder to purify the water, and collected and disposed of garbage and solid waste from all the camps. No water-related diseases were reported from any of camps during the first half of the year.
Refugee children have access to primary education.	Some 13,440 refugee children in camps enrolled in 40 primary schools located throughout the country. UNHCR provided them with textbooks and stationery.
Refugees have improved access to medical services.	UNHCR's implementing partner provided medical assistance to more than 13,000 Afghan and Iraqi refugees. Some 80 children suffering from cancer received medical treatment.
Increased number of resettlement cases resolved.	Resettlement countries have increased their quota and the number of acceptances for UNHCR-referred applications. The Office submitted 1,500 applications from Afghan refugees for resettlement to various countries, of which 1,000 were re-screened in light of the evolving situation in Afghanistan. 820 applications from other nationalities were submitted for resettlement. UNHCR is following up on the 2,000 applications in need of

further documentation to receive exit permits from BAFIA.

**REVISED OBJECTIVES AND
PRIORITY ACTIVITIES FOR JULY-
DECEMBER 2002**

protection to Afghans in the country and those voluntarily repatriating to their place of origin, as well as continue to support the voluntary return of Afghans to Afghanistan.

UNHCR will continue to pursue its initial objectives in 2002. The Office will provide

Financial Data (USD)

Annual Programme Budget				Supplementary Programme Budget			
Initial Budget	Revised Budget	Total Funds Available	Obligation Level	Initial Budget	Revised Budget	Total Funds Available	Obligation Level
25,555,447	25,771,290	16,552,699	11,182,725	0	7,672,414	4,323,259	3,032,150