

Islamic Republic of Iran

Total requirements:
USD 14,063,109



Working environment

The Islamic Republic of Iran has hosted Afghan refugees for three decades. In 2002, UNHCR began facilitating the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees under agreements with the Islamic Republics of Iran and Afghanistan. Since then, more than 1.5 million Afghans have returned to their country from Iran, including 853,000 with UNHCR assistance.

There has been a marked decline in repatriation over the last three years, reflecting a combination of factors which include the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan, the socio-economic challenges the country faces, and the relatively high level of assimilation among many Afghans in Iran.

Some 900,000 registered Afghan refugees remain in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Most live in villages and urban areas, while about 27,000 stay in six refugee settlements managed by the Bureau for Aliens and

Foreign Immigration Affairs (BAFIA). UNHCR and the Iranian authorities are working on a strategy which combines efforts to improve the living conditions of registered Afghan refugees with support for voluntary return wherever possible. Discussions on the renewal of the Tripartite Agreement are expected following the International Conference on Return and Reintegration, organized by the Afghan Government and UNHCR, in November 2008.

In 2007, the Iranian authorities declared several provinces either fully or partially off-limits to foreigners, including refugees. The authorities asked some 120,000 Afghan refugees residing in these provinces to choose between relocation and voluntary repatriation. The relocation option proved unpopular with potential receiving communities and posed financial difficulties for refugees. As a result, the relocation has been partial, leaving some refugees in precarious circumstances. Refugees are subject to municipal taxes, face restrictions on their freedom of movement and have limited access to the labour market.

The Islamic Republic of Iran also hosts refugees from Iraq. The number of long-staying Iraqi refugees at the end of 2007 was approximately 55,000, mostly of Arab, Kurdish and Feili Kurd ethnicity. The majority of Iraqi refugees reside in urban areas, while some 5,000 are hosted in 12 refugee settlements. Despite the precarious political and security situation in Iraq, some Iraqi refugees are returning home; most, however, are reluctant to return until there are clearer signs of stability in their areas of origin.

UNHCR has registered some 4,200 newly arrived Iraqi refugees since early 2007. This number may represent only a small portion of the total population of new Iraqi refugees in Iran. UNHCR and BAFIA are discussing arrangements to address the legal and other needs of this population.

The needs

In early 2008, the Government carried out a comprehensive re-registration of all Afghan refugees in the country. UNHCR increased its funding to support this exercise, which will have positive effects on the protection of refugees and offer more predictable conditions of stay. The deteriorating economic situation in Iran has had a significant impact on the livelihoods of refugees, who may also be affected by an end to government subsidies on food and other items.

Many Afghan refugees need skills and financial resources to enable them to support themselves upon their return to

Afghanistan. While in Iran, the most vulnerable among them will be able to profit from skills training courses, conducted through community-based projects in partnership with national NGOs, charity organizations and UN agencies. With many refugees living under difficult socio-economic conditions, the high costs of medical treatment and schooling remain of concern.

UNHCR's overall operation will continue to support voluntary repatriation. Both Iraqi and Afghan asylum-seekers and refugees need protection and advice, and the identification of those in need of resettlement remains a priority.

Main objectives

- Enhance the international community's awareness and recognition of the Iranian authorities' three-decades-old hosting of refugees;
- Work with the Government to strengthen the protection of Afghan and Iraqi refugees and the asylum environment;
- Support the voluntary repatriation of registered Afghan and Iraqi refugees as appropriate;
- Provide targeted assistance to Afghan and Iraqi refugees with specific needs to enhance their self-reliance, allowing them to rebuild their lives upon return home; and
- Encourage the Iranian authorities to use bilateral channels with the Government of Afghanistan to discuss the management of migration issues.



Afghan refugees in a class room in Dalaki camp.

Key targets

Annual Programme for Afghan refugees

- Some 20,000 Afghan refugees from the Islamic Republic of Iran repatriate voluntarily with UNHCR assistance - depending on the security situation in areas of return in Afghanistan.
- Approximately 1,300 people with specific protection needs are resettled.
- Some 12,000 people with specific needs (children, pregnant women, people living with disabilities and older persons) benefit from specialized health treatment or financial and social assistance.
- In coordination with the Ministry of the Interior, partnerships with civil society are strengthened to support livelihood activities for refugees and to provide better access to health care and education services.
- The self-reliance of refugees is enhanced to help them support their stay in Iran and facilitate reintegration in Afghanistan.

Supplementary Programme for Iraqi refugees

- Some 1,500 refugees repatriate voluntarily with the assistance of UNHCR—depending on the security situation in areas of return in Iraq.
- An estimated 200 people with specific protection needs are resettled.
- Targeted assistance is provided to Iraqi refugees with specific needs, while children, pregnant women, persons living with disabilities and older persons benefit either from specialized health treatment or financial and social assistance.

medical screening at Border Crossing Stations (except for those returning to northern Iraq). Free legal aid will be provided by UNHCR-hired lawyers.

Negotiations will be further pursued with the Iranian Government to continue granting asylum to registered refugees as long as the situation in their areas of origin in Afghanistan has not significantly improved and to ensure their access to rights and services.

Information obtained from the database of the Government “Amayesh III” registration exercise will serve as the basis for designing project activities to better meet the needs of the refugees.

The Joint Project Initiative between UNHCR and the Ministry of Interior of the Government of Iran to enhance the capacity of refugees for self-reliance through provision of basic education and health assistance will be continued.

The voluntary repatriation of Iraqi refugees will be implemented under modalities established in 2007 and in accordance with prepared guidelines. Mass-information campaigns will help refugees make informed decisions about returning home.

The Office will enhance the use of resettlement as a strategic protection tool for both Afghan and Iraqi refugees.

Assistance for refugees with specific needs will include an emphasis on building their self-reliance and upgrading their skills in order to help them reintegrate successfully upon repatriation.

Strategy and activities

Afghan refugees who repatriate under UNHCR auspices will be provided individual counselling. They will be assisted with cash grants, transportation allowances and

Constraints

Refugees' lawful access to the job market is hindered by the lack of work permits and this curtails their ability to support themselves.

Planning figures

Type of population	Origin	Jan 2009		Dec 2009	
		Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR
Refugees	Afghanistan	884,770	-	863,470	-
	Iraq	55,710	-	54,010	-
Asylum-seekers	Afghanistan	500	-	500	-
	Iraq	50	-	50	-
Total		941,030	-	918,030	-

Due to an increase in medical costs, additional resources are required to support health services for groups with specific needs.

Organization and implementation

UNHCR presence	
Number of offices	7
Total staff	115
International	13
National	101
JPOs	1

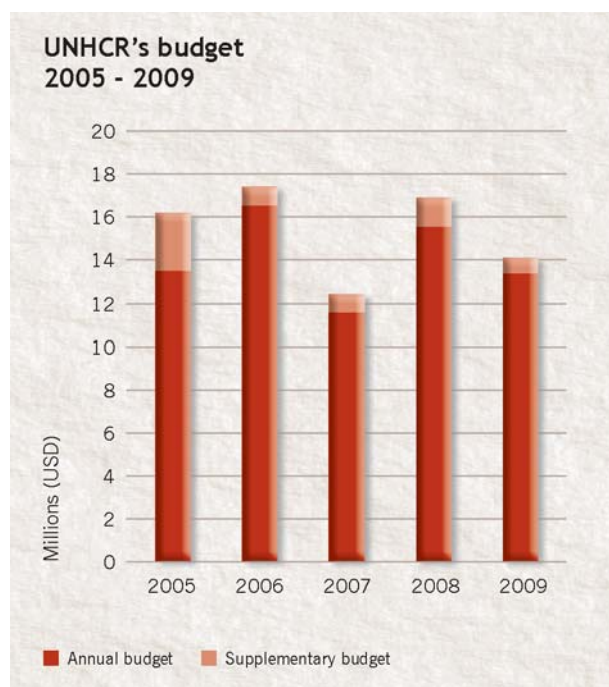
Coordination

UNHCR will continue to collaborate with its main counterpart and implementing partner, the Ministry of the Interior, through BAFIA, NGOs and the UN Country Team. At field level, UNHCR will coordinate its activities with provincial local authorities, NGO partners and refugee communities.

Partners
Implementing partners
Government agencies: Ministry of the Interior - Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrant Affairs (BAFIA), ministries of Education; Training; Health; Labour and Social Welfare
NGOs: Assisting Marsh Arabs and Refugees; Iranian Red Crescent Society; Iraq Refugee Aid Council; Passenger Transport Company; Society to Protect Children Suffering from Cancer; Relief Committee for Destitute Afghan Refugee Families
Others: Positive Life, HAMI, <i>Imam Sajjad</i> , <i>Imam Bager</i> , <i>Ghamar Bani Hassan</i>
Operational partners
NGOs: IRCS
Others: UN Country Team, WFP

Financial information

From 2002 to 2004, UNHCR's main task in the Islamic Republic of Iran was to assist the repatriation of Afghan and Iraqi refugees. In 2004, BAFIA assumed responsibility for management of camps, and UNHCR's assistance programme was largely phased out. An operational priority for the Office in 2009 will be to strengthen the protection of refugees and asylum seekers, with a particular emphasis on refugees' self-reliance, predictability of stay and lawful employment. Targeted support will be provided for essential community services such as water, education and health.



Budget (USD)						
Activities and services	2008			2009		
	Annual budget	Supplementary budget Iraq Situation	Total	Annual budget	Supplementary budget Iraq Situation	Total
Protection, monitoring and coordination	4,505,262	200,000	4,705,262	4,201,366	170,000	4,371,366
Community services	800,118	42,050	842,168	1,000,000	24,631	1,024,631
Domestic needs	39,000	86,903	125,903	399,024	152,474	551,498
Education	0	84,100	84,100	500,000	0	500,000
Health	2,028,522	472,352	2,500,874	2,045,011	314,617	2,359,628
Legal assistance	407,324	28,033	435,357	1,346,245	5,354	1,351,599
Operational support (to agencies)	407,642	24,098	431,740	373,280	7,929	381,209
Sanitation	35,000	56,067	91,067	70,000	0	70,000
Shelter and infrastructure	206,495	145,079	351,574	137,544	81,388	218,932
Transport and logistics	1,359,056	105,251	1,464,307	324,605	33,607	358,212
Water	40,000	56,067	96,067	131,813	0	131,813
Total operations	9,828,419	1,300,000	11,128,419	10,528,888	790,000	11,318,888
Programme support	2,548,250	0	2,548,250	2,744,221	0	2,744,221
Total	12,376,669	1,300,000	13,676,669	13,273,109	790,000	14,063,109

Note: Supplementary programme budgets exclude 7 per cent support costs that are recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR.