

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN



Working environment

The context

The Islamic Republic of Iran hosts one of the largest and longest-staying refugee populations in the world. As of June 2009, the Bureau for Aliens, Foreigners and Immigrant Affairs (BAFIA) had registered some 976,500 refugees, of whom 933,500 were Afghans and 43,000 were Iraqis. The Government recognizes an estimated 4,200 Iraqi refugees on a *prima facie* basis, and UNHCR has registered an additional 100 mandate

refugees and 1,900 asylum-seekers. The majority of refugees in the country reside in urban areas, while approximately 3 per cent live in settlements.

The number of registered Afghan refugees opting for voluntary repatriation has declined over the last three years due to a combination of factors, including concerns about security in Afghanistan. Some 70 per cent of the Afghan and Iraqi refugees remaining in the Islamic Republic of Iran have lived in the country for 20 to 30 years. Half of them were born and educated in the country, and half the refugee population is female.

Planning figures

| TYPE OF POPULATION | ORIGIN | JAN 2010 | | DEC 2010 - JAN 2011 | | DEC 2011 | |
|--------------------|-------------|------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|
| | | 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 | Afghanistan | 935,600 | 935,600 | 935,600 | 935,600 | 935,600 | 935,600 |
| | Iraq | 44,400 | 44,400 | 44,400 | 44,400 | 44,400 | 44,400 |
| | Various | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 |
| Asylum-seekers | Afghanistan | 2,000 | 2,000 | 2,000 | 2,000 | 2,000 | 2,000 |
| | Various | 130 | 130 | 130 | 130 | 130 | 130 |
| TOTAL | | 982,210 | 982,210 | 982,210 | 982,210 | 982,210 | 982,210 |

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran is calling on the international community to increase its support for voluntary repatriation and invest more in Afghanistan to sustain reintegration. Meanwhile, it has taken steps to improve the lives of Afghan refugees in the country. Of particular importance was the issuance of temporary work permits to eligible registered Afghan refugees during the *Amayesh III* re-registration exercise in 2008. All male refugees between the ages of 18 and 60 were invited to apply for a permit, while it was optional for females.

In the context of the *Amayesh IV* re-registration exercise in 2009, the Government granted exemption from municipality taxes which are otherwise mandatory for urban refugees, to registered refugees deemed vulnerable or financially destitute.

In July 2009, as registered Afghan refugees in Khuzestan province, which was declared a no-go area for foreigners, were not availing themselves of relocation or repatriation options, BAFIA and UNHCR issued a statement reiterating the options while granting registered refugees a one-year extension of stay, until July 2010, provided they agree to move before the deadline expires. The refugees may remain in the Islamic Republic of Iran as

refugees if they relocate to designated areas. A similar statement was issued for registered Afghan refugees in Hormozgan province after it was declared a no-go area for foreigners in July 2009.

The 80,000 formerly registered Afghan refugees in the provinces of Sistan and Baluchistan who have remained in the province despite successive deadlines for relocation or repatriation are being issued with new temporary residence permits by BAFIA. They may choose to relocate to designated areas in the Islamic Republic of Iran or voluntarily repatriate to Afghanistan.

In July 2009, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran notified the Ministry of the Interior and Ministry of Education and Technology to treat the enrolment of all school-age children, including lawful foreign residents and registered refugees, in the same manner. However, despite a generally favourable protection environment, the living conditions of Afghan and Iraqi refugees are expected to deteriorate as a result of high inflation, rising prices and unemployment.

• *The needs*

The Islamic Republic of Iran is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, but no information is available on the number of

Key targets for 2010

- The availability of adequate sanitation facilities is increased by 30 per cent in refugee settlements.
- Some 2,200 people are resettled.
- Approximately 18,000 registered refugees repatriate to Afghanistan and Iraq.
- All eligible registered Afghan and Iraqi refugees (including women) receive temporary work permits.
- Refugee resident permits are re-issued to Iraqis (yearly) and Afghans (every six months) who are registered as refugees.
- Some 10,000 people are trained in community management and to identify the issues and concerns of refugees.
- Some 10,000 registered refugees receive emergency and life saving medical assistance.
- All registered refugees are able to use public health care services.

asylum-seekers undergoing RSD in the country, nor is there any data on newly recognized refugees, asylum-seekers, unaccompanied or separated minors and victims of trafficking who seek international protection.

In coordination with BAFIA, participatory assessments with refugee



Iraqi refugee girls studying in Jahrom camp, Fars province.

UNHCR's presence in 2010

| | |
|---------------------|-----|
| □ Number of offices | 7 |
| □ Total staff | 124 |
| International | 13 |
| National | 109 |
| JPOs | 2 |
| UNVs | x |

PARTNERS

Implementing partners

Government agencies:

Ministry of the Interior- Bureau of Alien and Foreign Immigrant Affairs (BAFIA)
Ministries of Health, Education, Training, Labour and Social Welfare
Literacy Movement Organisation
Technical and Vocational Training Organisation

NGOs:

Iraq Refugee Aid Council
Society to Protect Children Suffering from Cancer
Relief Committee for Destitute Afghan Refugee Families
Child Friendly Association
Assistance International Stichting
Rebirth Charity Organization

Operational partners

Others:

UN Country Team
WFP
UNICEF

women and men and government ministries were conducted in 2009 in the five areas of the Islamic Republic of Iran where UNHCR operates. The assessments identified three main needs: (i) job opportunities to cope with the increased costs of living and to pay the municipal taxes and service charges owed by urban refugees and settlement residents, respectively; (ii) adequate health care in view of the rising costs of treatment and refugees' exclusion from the national insurance policy; and (iii) education for refugee children and literacy classes for adults.

| Main objectives |

Fair protection processes

- Work with the Government to strengthen the protection of registered Afghan and Iraqi refugees and the asylum environment.

Basic needs and services

- Support the Ministries of Health and Education to improve refugees' access to health and education institutions.

Durable solutions

- Support the voluntary repatriation of registered Afghan and Iraqi refugees.

External relations

- Raise awareness in the international community of the protracted refugee situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

| Strategy and activities |

In 2010, the Office will continue to advocate for the re-issuance of refugee residence cards as well as temporary work permits in order to ensure a more predictable and sustainable stay in the Islamic Republic of Iran for registered refugees until such time as they can return. It will focus on refugees' livelihood capacities through vocational training to enable them to acquire skills for gainful employment. It will also work with the Ministries of Education and Health to facilitate the access of urban registered refugees to education, primary health care and emergency medical assistance.

UNHCR will lobby the employers' associations and unions to issue work contracts to registered refugees holding temporary work permits. It will also increase free legal services for registered refugees; and develop an outreach capacity with refugee focal points liaising between refugees and UNHCR-hired lawyers.

The Office will advocate for the granting of temporary work permits to

eligible registered Afghan refugees and lobby BAFIA to grant exemptions to allow destitute refugees to receive new identity cards and work permits. It will seek to ensure that the repatriation of registered Afghan refugees is voluntary and will aid the voluntary repatriation of Iraqi refugees on an individual case management basis.

The Office will work with the Iranian authorities to seek official status for the *prima facie* Iraqi refugees registered by UNHCR. The Office will also follow up on the conclusions of the 2009 round table on statelessness concerning Feili Kurd refugees; it will advocate for a solution for the groups of Feili Kurds and Khavari refugees, both of whom claim to be stateless.

UNHCR will advocate for more transparent RSD procedures and offer its RSD expertise to promote international standards and train law enforcement officials at borders. Furthermore, it will advocate for durable solutions for the remaining Uzbek refugees who are tolerated by the Iranian authorities on the condition that they will be resettled.

• Constraints and assumptions

The security and economic conditions in Afghanistan will continue to be difficult, and most of the registered Afghan refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran will refrain from voluntary repatriation. Despite being given temporary work permits, refugees will face difficulties in obtaining work from Iranian employers, particularly as the demand for jobs among the local population is high. The re-issuance of refugee cards and temporary work permits will continue to be a costly exercise. The overall situation may drive Afghan refugees to join irregular movements to third countries, in particular Turkey.

Security is expected to improve in Iraq. Iranian authorities will continue to renew the registered Iraqi refugees' identity cards, pending favourable circumstances for their repatriation.

UNHCR will be unlikely to access precise information on national RSD procedures. With the support of the authorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran, resettlement countries will increase their quotas as a protection tool and durable solution.

Further to a conference organized by BAFIA for international NGOs in May 2009, a follow up assessment mission is underway and is expected to create new opportunities for cooperation and partnership in support of refugees.

Organization and implementation

Coordination

The Government plays the main role in protecting and assisting Afghan refugees by allocating resources to subsidize public services such as water, sanitation, health, education, fuel, gas, electricity and basic food commodities. The authorities have helped with the administrative costs of camp management.

UNHCR works with WFP in the Food Assistance Programme in the refugee settlements. In 2010, WFP will also provide food assistance to vulnerable refugees outside the camps.

BAFIA is UNHCR's main operational counterpart, but partnerships with the State Welfare Organization (*Behzisti*), charities and orphanages will be broadened. UNHCR will also aim to work closely with the Ministries of Health and Education on initiatives in their respective areas. Local NGOs will be supported to assist refugees. Resettlement opportunities will be

enhanced in 2010 through a referral mechanism with BAFIA, *Behzisti* and other governmental and NGOs. UNHCR will also work with the Ministry of Labour on refugee employment issues.

Financial information

In 2009, the financial requirements were increased to compensate for the reduction of the operational budget in light of the anticipated repatriation to Afghanistan in 2004-2005. However, as voluntary repatriation slowed, the refugee population remained stable. In 2010 - 2011, UNHCR will increase its efforts in the areas of refugee settlement infrastructure, and continue to support the Ministries of Health and Education in order to provide increased benefits to refugees.

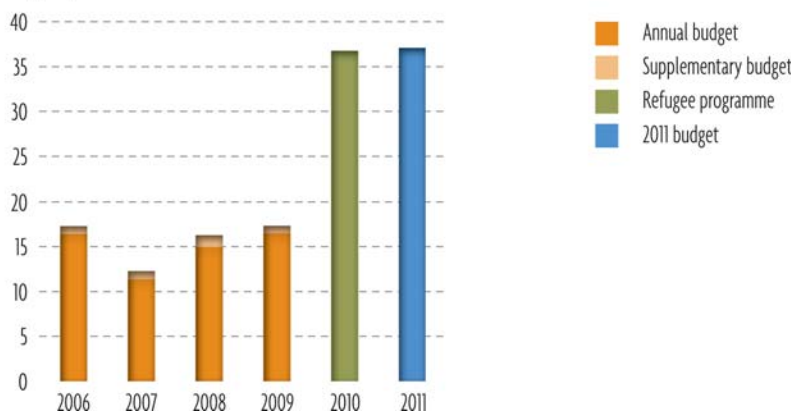
In consideration of the changed socio-economic situation (high inflation and rising unemployment) and the planned withdrawal of government subsidies, UNHCR will have higher financial requirements in 2010-2011.

Consequences of a 20 – 40 per cent funding shortfall

- Planned infrastructure improvements in refugee settlements, including increased numbers of paramedics and teachers, employment opportunities and the construction of roads and sewage-treatment systems in refugee areas, will not be undertaken.
- Refugees' access to affordable primary, secondary and tertiary health care will be reduced.
- UNHCR will not provide support to improve classrooms, provide teacher subsidies or educational materials in areas of high refugee concentration.
- 20,000 Afghan refugees in Hormozgan and Khuzestan provinces will not receive relocation transport assistance, which may affect discussions over the durable solutions prospects for an additional 80,000 former registered refugees.
- Skills training and start-up assistance will not be provided, limiting the ability of refugees to improve their livelihoods and become self-reliant.

UNHCR's budget in Islamic Republic of Iran 2006 - 2011

Millions (USD)



2010 UNHCR Budget for Iran (USD)

| RIGHTS GROUPS AND OBJECTIVES | REFUGEE PROGRAMME PILLAR 1 |
|---|----------------------------|
| Favourable protection environment | |
| National legal framework | 635,363 |
| National and regional migration policy | 256,377 |
| Cooperation with partners | 82,108 |
| National development policies | 58,229 |
| Public attitudes towards persons of concern | 43,876 |
| Access to territory | 21,666 |
| Non-refoulement | 25,666 |
| Environmental protection | 53,229 |
| Emergency management | 102,105 |
| Subtotal | 1,278,619 |

| RIGHTS GROUPS AND OBJECTIVES | REFUGEE PROGRAMME PILLAR 1 |
|---|----------------------------|
| Fair protection processes and documentation | |
| Registration and profiling | 1,856,704 |
| Access to asylum procedures | 120,168 |
| Fair and efficient status determination | 120,168 |
| Individual documentation | 411,181 |
| Civil status documentation | 280,624 |
| Subtotal | 2,788,845 |
| Security from violence and exploitation | |
| Gender-based violence | 312,445 |
| Protection of children | 779,859 |
| Freedom of movement | 131,834 |
| Non-arbitrary detention | 235,145 |
| Access to legal remedies | 583,791 |
| Subtotal | 2,043,074 |
| Basic needs and essential services | |
| Nutrition | 215,585 |
| Shelter and other infrastructure | 2,595,123 |
| Basic domestic and hygiene items | 663,051 |
| Primary health care | 8,127,830 |
| HIV and AIDS | 365,229 |
| Education | 6,459,161 |
| Sanitation services | 434,477 |
| Services for groups with specific needs | 940,512 |
| Subtotal | 19,800,968 |
| Community participation and self-management | |
| Participatory assessment and community mobilization | 367,680 |
| Community self-management and equal representation | 637,199 |
| Camp management and coordination | 315,064 |
| Self-reliance and livelihoods | 3,032,879 |
| Subtotal | 4,352,822 |
| Durable solutions | |
| Voluntary return | 2,936,080 |
| Resettlement | 761,213 |
| Subtotal | 3,697,293 |
| External relations | |
| Donor relations | 74,098 |
| Resource mobilization | 72,780 |
| Partnership | 80,287 |
| Public information | 138,876 |
| Subtotal | 366,041 |
| Logistics and operations support | |
| Supply chain and logistics | 963,254 |
| Programme management, coordination and support | 1,535,648 |
| Subtotal | 2,498,902 |
| Total | 36,826,564 |
| 2011 Budget | 37,200,000 |
| 2009 Revised budget | |
| Annual budget | 16,587,696 |
| Supplementary budget | 790,000 |
| TOTAL | 17,377,696 |