2002 COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN – PAKISTAN

Part I: Executive Committee Summary

(a) Context and Beneficiary Population(s)

Pakistan hosts two different refugee caseloads, Afghans and non-Afghans, mainly Somalis, Iraqis and Iranians.

According to Government estimates, there are some 2 million Afghans in the country, of whom 1.2 million live in refugee villages assisted by UNHCR. For twenty-two years, Pakistan has generously hosted several million Afghans fleeing the conflict in their homeland. However, since the change of government in October 1999, there has been a radical shift in policy. On 10 July 2000, the Foreigners' Act of 1946 was amended and now requires all Afghans to hold valid travel documents to enter and remain in Pakistan. Since then, a large number of Afghans have been deported. On 9 November 2000, Pakistan closed its border with Afghanistan and imposed a ban on new arrivals. Out of some 154,000 Afghans estimated to have entered NWFP in 2000 prior to the closure of the border, 60,000 were settled and assisted in New Shamshatoo refugee camp. Denied registration by the authorities, some 80,000 remain in Jalozai, a squalid makeshift site.

As of March 2001, there are some 1, 400 refugees of various origins recognised by UNHCR under its mandate. They live mostly in urban areas awaiting a durable solution outside Pakistan, resettlement or repatriation.

Political context. In light of declining international support for Afghan refugees, and a generous asylum policy spanning over 22 years, Pakistan has been exhibiting signs of asylum fatigue for several years. It has consistently expressed its frustration with being left to shoulder this problem alone. However, it took Pakistan a while to translate this into action. The new government, albeit gradually, has taken a more inflexible approach, whose impact has been unmistakably felt since the year 2000, i.e. the border closure in November 2000, the categorisation of all new arrivals as illegal migrants, the denial of a site to protect and assist new refugees and the threatened eviction of refugees from their settlements. The refugee problem is no longer addressed in purely humanitarian terms but it has increasingly become a hot political issue with broader internal and international ramifications. The Government of Pakistan (GOP) is no longer prepared to accept additional refugees and has requested that the international community should address population displacements inside Afghanistan. While not questioning the basic premises that more humanitarian aid is required in Afghanistan and the need to alleviate the heavy asylum burden placed on Pakistan, UNHCR is for the first time confronted with the challenge of not being able to protect and assist some persons of concern to the organisation.

However, despite recently emerging restrictive trends, the asylum regime for the more than 2 million refugees already in Pakistan remains one of the most generous in the world. Current strains in the asylum regime should also be seen in the context of increasing economic difficulties and constraints faced by Pakistan in hosting a refugee population which is amongst the largest in the world. In summary, the

political context is the most negative one that UNHCR has had to confront in its long-standing relationship with Pakistan.

Security situation. The GOP is responsible for the security of refugees. Common concerns include sexual abuse and domestic violence. There are also attempts to the life of opponents to the Taliban. Recently refugees are increasingly threatened by arbitrary harassment, arrest and detention. Deportations are reportedly on the rise and carried out without due process.

Protection issues. Inside Afghanistan the conflict continues unabated. The Taliban have recently made inroads in territory long held by the opposition Northern Alliance in north east Afghanistan. Reliable reports indicate that both sides are preparing for a large scale and more deadly offensive. Ongoing conflict, violation of human rights, a devastated economy and a crippling drought, the worst in living memory, is forcing many Afghans to leave their homes. More than 500,000 people were uprooted in 2000 and many more are expected to be displaced in the coming months. Many of them came to Pakistan in 2000 and more are expected to try to cross the border in 2001. At the same time there are Afghan refugees in Pakistan, who want to be assisted to return home. Such assistance is only provided when it is ascertained that they want to return to areas where repatriation is feasible and hopefully sustainable and that once they are back they will remain in Afghanistan. Repatriation takes place under less than optimum conditions in the country of origin, and is therefore only facilitated as a response to the refugees' demand and to ensure the quality of asylum for those who are not able to return yet.

UNHCR's role in Pakistan focuses on the protection of all Afghan refugees, the newly arrived in the country as well as those who have been here for a longer period. Efforts are underway to gain access to refugees, address specific protection concerns, namely arbitrary arrests, detentions and deportations. For some refugees, the concerns may be precipitated by their ethnic origin or religious and political orientation, including cases of women-at-risk, and prevent their deportation. Substantial assistance is provided by UNHCR, other UN agencies and NGOs to newly arrived refugees, while limited community-based assistance is provided for those who have been here for many years and living in refugee villages. Thus in the camp for new arrivals, New Shamshatoo, refugees receive food, shelter, relief items, health and sanitation, water and education. Local integration is not an option acceptable to the GOP and given the socio-economic conditions in the country, the possibilities for total self-reliance are limited. The GOP is neither able nor willing to provide access to basic services. Therefore, UNHCR's programme in the villages focuses on the provision of primary health care accessible to all refugees, especially the very poor, sensitive to the specific needs of women in the refugee villages; quality education for all school age children residing in the refugee villages, with a focus on increasing girls' enrolment and retention and ensuring 90% attendance at all levels; adequate access to water for human consumption and daily use; and community development in the form of a mobilisation of a larger segment of the community, i.e. women, the youth and the elderly, to address protection concerns, the situation of vulnerable refugees and community self-reliance.

Throughout the years, UNHCR's relevance with regard to assistance to Afghan refugees in refugee villages has been increasingly eroded as funding has been decreased, thereby reducing the scope of its activities and the beneficiary population. NGOs, some of whom but not all are UNHCR's implementing partners, have increasingly developed programmes in the villages often without adequate co-ordination with UNHCR or the GOP. As a result, there are increasing calls for UNHCR to focus on a co-ordinating role. However, lack of leverage hamper UNHCR's efforts in that respect.

Overview of refugee population. An estimated 1.2 million Afghans live in 195 refugee villages in NWFP, Baluchistan and Punjab where they receive UNHCR community-based assistance. They are a remnant of a much larger group of approximately 3 million persons many of whom returned to Afghanistan in the 90s. In addition, the GOP estimates that some 0.8 million Afghans live in urban centres in NWFP, Sind, Baluchistan and Punjab.

Afghan refugees in Pakistan are no longer a homogenous group. They have fled into Pakistan in several waves; the exodus of 1980's, the large-scale movement of 1990's and the latest influx of 2000. The reasons for flight are not the same and they often come from different ethnic origins and social backgrounds. Their protection needs also differ since most of the new arrivals belong to ethnic and religious minorities in Afghanistan and/or are persons known for their opposition to the Taliban, and are more vulnerable compared to the refugees who came into Pakistan in the early years.

Although there is a small percentage of other minorities such as Baluchis, Hazaras, Nuristanis, Tajiks and Turkomens, the first refugees were pre-dominantly Pashtoons of rural origin with little or no education. While those who fled after 1992 and 1996 were the educated ones from the country's urban centres. The latest arrivals are of a rural background and originate from the northeast Afghanistan. They are Farsi-speaking Tajiks, Uzbeks, Turkomens and Hazaras. Although the majority of the Afghan refugees are Muslim Sunnis, among them are Hazaras and Tajiks who belong to the Shia community. The average family size is 6.6.

UNHCR also provides protection and assistance to refugees from elsewhere. These refugees are mainly Somalis (44%), Iraqis – mostly Kurds (27%) , Iranians (23%) and other nationalities (6%). They are mostly in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. 45% of the caseload are single female-headed households with children and 55% single men. Many of these women fall in the women-at-risk category, having no adult male relatives to provide support and protection. The GOP considers them as "illegal migrants" and they have no legal access to work or to public services. Pending the identification of a durable solution, they receive basic subsistence allowances, educational assistance and medical care. The majority wishes to be resettled. However, since increasingly among this caseload, there are refugees who have received multiple rejections by resettling countries, voluntary repatriation for those able to return to their countries of origin, may be the optimum solution. Repatriation counseling will be intensified for such cases.

Policy issues. All the policy priorities, women/gender equality, children and adolescents, environmental concerns and refugees with special needs, including older

refugees, are addressed in the design and implementation of all protection and assistance activities. A community-based approach is used, through committees, trainers, and volunteers, under the overall support and guidance of the Community Services Officer and the GOP Social Welfare Cell.

Linkages to other countries within a defined "situation". UNHCR's programme in Pakistan is closely linked to that of Afghanistan and Iran. Goals and strategies are jointly defined to address the Afghan refugee issue within the context of Afghanistan's political, social and economic situation. In this regard, a regional strategy has been developed taking into account the similarities between host countries and the potential for replicability in terms of repatriation and screening operations.

Capacity and presence of implementing partners. UNHCR activities are implemented with the support and in collaboration with the GOP, national and international NGOs and UN agencies. Repatriation and resettlement activities are directly implemented by the Office. Registration for refugee status determination purposes and resettlement pre-screening are carried out by two NGOs, one local and one international. The GOP and 17 NGOs, 8 local and 9 international, plus a local NGO dealing with assistance to non-Afghan refugees deliver assistance in the refugee villages. Co-ordination takes place through regular meetings, sectoral and general, at the provincial and country levels. Training of partners focuses mainly on protection matters.

Presence and role of other UN agencies and international organisations. WFP support is crucial to assist new arrivals and repatriating refugees. Close linkages exist with UN Agencies working both in Pakistan and Afghanistan but based in Islamabad, to ensure a comprehensive view of and response to the Afghanistan situation. Information is also shared on a regular basis with UNDP, UNAIDS, UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO, UNFPA and UNDCP. Inter-agency partnerships with concrete financial and technical inputs are being considered with the WB and UNFPA. Discussions are underway with the World Bank for the establishment of a joint education programme, and with UNFPA for the implementation of reproductive health activities for new arrivals. The UN country team is particularly cohesive and extremely supportive of UNHCR at a critical time for refugees in Pakistan.

Revised and updated on 16 July 2001

Selected Programme Goals and Objectives

Name of Beneficiary Population/Theme: **Afghan refugees in Pakistan**	
Main Goal (s): 1. To protect and assist newly arrived refugees 2. To protect and assist refugees who arrived in earlier years 3. To provide a rapid and adequate protection response to the needs of a limited number of vulnerable refugees (women-at-risk and security cases) for whom resettlement may be the only viable option 4. To facilitate the repatriation of refugees who have no fear of return	
Principal Objectives	**Related Outputs**
Female and male asylum-seekers are allowed to enter and remain in Pakistan	- Negotiations with GOP to reopen the border - Establishment of screening committees
Female and male refugees enjoy personal security and safety	- Individual refugee status determination - Establishment of legal clinics/advice centres - Refugees relocated or resettled
Female and male newly arrived refugees have access to adequate levels of assistance (food, shelter, water, health and sanitation, relief items and education).	- Food distributed regularly and effectively - Shelter and relief materials distributed - Health, water, sanitation and education facilities established and functioning
All refugee boys and girls in the refugee villages have access to, and complete, primary education	- Male and female teachers hired - Textbooks and supplies distributed - Schools maintained
All refugees in the refugee villages have access to primary health care, sensitive to the specific needs of women	- Male and female medical staff hired - Medicines procured - Basic Health Units maintained - Children and pregnant women immunised
Refugees who desire to repatriate do so	- Repatriation grants and WFP food package distributed - Tarpaulins procured and distributed - Refugees verified

Name of Beneficiary Population/Theme: **Non-Afghan refugees**	
Main Goal (s): To identify suitable durable solutions for Non-Afghan refugees outside Pakistan, i.e. repatriation or resettlement	
Principal Objectives	**Related Outputs**
Male and female refugees are allowed to remain in Pakistan pending the identification of a durable solution	- Individual status determination - Care and maintenance assistance provided
Refugees who desire to repatriate do so	- Counselling provided - Repatriation assistance provided
Refugees are resettled as quickly as possible	- Cases submitted to resettlement countries
While awaiting a durable solution refugees receive subsistence allowances and have access to health and education services	- Care and maintenance assistance provided