

TURKEY

INITIAL OBJECTIVES

- Further strengthen UNHCR's partnership with the Government of Turkey for the protection of refugees and asylum-seekers.
- Ensure rapid and reliable refugee status determination for asylum-seekers from non-European countries.
- Identify and promote durable solutions for refugees through resettlement, voluntary repatriation and local integration. Offer social counselling and support for refugees, with a special focus on women and children.
- Facilitate and assist the voluntary repatriation of Turkish refugees in northern Iraq, and of Bosnian and Kosovar refugees from Turkey to their countries of origin.
- Raise public awareness of asylum-seekers and refugees and UNHCR's mandate.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONSTRAINTS

Turkey recently decided to review its asylum legislation, and UNHCR has intensified its dialogue with the Government on the subject. The 2001 – 2003 Co-operation Framework between the Government of Turkey and UNHCR on capacity-building was concluded in late 2000. Detailed plans have been drawn up for its implementation, and activities are expected to begin in the coming months. Refugees who fail to register with Turkish authorities within 10 days of arrival or who do not present an identity document (“extra-procedure cases”) are still unable to enter the Turkish asylum system. However, the Government has demonstrated some flexibility and provided exit permission for several “extra procedure cases” that were accepted for resettlement.

In the context of its candidacy for EU membership, Turkey has expressed a conditional commitment to lift the geographical reservation to the 1951 Convention. This reservation limits the country's obligations to persons who have become refugees as a result of events occurring in Europe. This commitment and the recent decision to review the asylum legislation gave rise to increased interest in refugee issues among the Turkish media, academics and NGOs. The first World Refugee Day received extensive coverage in the national media and a high profile public debate was organised by NGOs in Istanbul. At the same time, the deteriorating economy and concern over human smuggling have fuelled some anti-refugee sentiments. To counter these developments, UNHCR supports pro-refugee activities, has increased media appearances and fosters debate on the alignment of Turkey's asylum practices with those of the EU. UNHCR also works on a local level, seeking to improve community relations in towns with high numbers of refugees.

Non-European refugees

UNHCR is responsible for the refugee status determination and for identifying durable solutions for refugees from outside Europe. In the first half of 2001, compared with the same period last year, applications to UNHCR for refugee status dropped by nearly 12 percent, to 1,111 cases (representing 2,132 persons). The trend was especially noticeable in the border cities where asylum-seekers without proper identity documents frequently apply. In this category, the number more than halved, from 357 between January and June 2000, to 173 in the same period this year. The overall number of non-European persons of concern to UNHCR in Turkey declined by 13 percent, to a new total of 6,405 persons. However, on 30 June there was still a backlog of nearly 2,000 pending asylum

applications (3,900 persons, including dependants). Waiting periods for decisions in first instance and appeal continued to be very long, particularly in view of the difficult living conditions of the applicants. On the other hand, the quality of decisions continued to be high, as evidenced by the rapid acceptance of those cases presented for resettlement to third countries. The average waiting period from recognition of refugee status to departure for resettlement was substantially reduced. During the reporting period, 1,750 refugees were resettled to third countries, an increase of 88 percent compared to the same period in 2000. Amongst them, 17 vulnerable cases (38 persons) and three emergency cases (five persons) were resettled. In addition, 625 more had by June been accepted for resettlement and were awaiting departure. UNHCR has initiated a survey to identify tailor-made durable solutions for non-European refugees who have often found it difficult to be resettled.

In April, sub-agreements were concluded with a range of NGOs for the continuation and expansion of social and legal counselling services in Ankara, Istanbul and Van. The services have already had a very positive impact on the welfare of asylum-seekers, and they are helping to increase the use of local-government services by asylum-seekers. A training project in reproductive health care in Van is scheduled for August.

At UNHCR's request, the Turkish Child Protection and Social Welfare Institute provided emergency shelter, counselling and psychosocial intervention for several children and women at risk. To increase school attendance, UNHCR provided uniforms, school supplies and education kits for children of asylum-seekers. Surveys of the problems of refugee women and children and research into special issues including domestic violence provided valuable inputs for programme activities and will serve as the basis for new guidelines to be developed for UNHCR and partner staff.

Progress as measured against selected indicators

INDICATORS	PROGRESS
Backlog of pending claims, waiting period in general and waiting period for first instance interviews reduced.	The number of pending claims fell by 24 percent in the reporting period. First instance interviews were kept within the two-month target.
Reduced resettlement processing time.	The average processing period was reduced from 10 to 7 months.
Increased number of resettlement applications accepted on first submission.	Acceptance on first submission rose significantly, to 90 percent.
The number of asylum seekers and refugees assisted.	An average of 2000 refugees and asylum-seekers per month received monthly allowances, health care, local travel and accommodation assistance. Some 1,100 persons received social and legal counselling. 846 refugee women received hygienic parcels.
The number of children in primary education.	350-400 children attended primary schools. 57 children received support for school supplies & uniforms. 338 children received education materials.
Improved attention to women, children and other vulnerable persons.	22 persons (9 cases) were assisted by UNHCR.
Living allowances adjusted in line with local conditions.	Allowances were increased by 40 percent in local currency as of June to cope with inflation rates.

Bosnian and Kosovar Refugees

UNHCR, in partnership with NGOs, has established a new counselling programme for the refugees in the government-run camp in Kirklareli as well as the urban refugees.

An estimated 634 Bosnian and 286 Kosovar refugees benefit from the programme. As of January 2001, new and stricter eligibility criteria have been applied for the provision of material assistance, limiting this to the

most vulnerable persons. UNHCR focuses on finding durable solutions for the remaining population in the camp in Kirklareli province. The counselling

programme is developing individual plans for each refugee in the camp, with a view to solving legal and other obstacles to either voluntary repatriation or local integration.

Progress as measured against selected indicators

INDICATORS	PROGRESS
Updating information on the intentions of the refugees in the government-run camp concerning their future.	All remaining refugees in the government-run camp were interviewed at the start of 2001 (73 Bosnians and 39 Kosovars).
Number of Bosnian and Kosovar refugees who repatriated voluntarily to their countries of origin.	12 Kosovar refugees were assisted to repatriate. No Bosnian refugees have yet opted to repatriate.
Gathering information about the Bosnian and Kosovar urban refugees to identify assistance needs and promote durable solutions.	A total of 473 urban refugees were interviewed.

Turkish Returnees from Northern Iraq

UNHCR continued to work with the Turkish authorities to facilitate and monitor the voluntary repatriation of Turkish citizens from northern Iraq. A total of 96 persons in

northern Iraq registered for repatriation during the reporting period. Furthermore, a follow-up visit was undertaken to the houses of nine families from among those who had returned in December 2000.

Progress as measured against selected indicators

INDICATORS	PROGRESS
Number of Turkish refugees who repatriated voluntarily from northern Iraq	No movement took place, but preparations started for the return of 17 families (96 persons)

REVISED OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITY ACTIVITIES FOR JULY-DECEMBER

While the initial objectives of the UNHCR programme in Turkey remain valid, efforts will be adjusted in response to recent developments. Priority areas of concern and focus include:

- Enhancing UNHCR's ability to fulfil the ambitions of the Co-operation Framework with the Ministry of Interior. This will depend on mobilising sufficient resources in 2001 and beyond.
- Doubling the efforts to help the Government perfect its own refugee status determination capacities and thus to allow for an eventual reduction in UNHCR's refugee status determination role. Meanwhile, UNHCR will continue to ensure a high-quality determination procedure for non-European asylum

seekers while seeking to mobilise additional resources to reduce the backlog.

- Delivering workshops on gender-awareness planned for UNHCR and partner staff beginning in September, in collaboration with the Department of Women's Studies at Ankara University. UNHCR's policy priorities for refugee women and children will be given greater weight in the country programme.
- Placing greater emphasis on public information on UNHCR programme activities. In towns where significant numbers of asylum-seekers live, more focus will be put on community relations and the inclusion of asylum-seekers, especially women and children, in social and educational activities sponsored by local NGOs.

FINANCIAL DATA (USD)

	Initial Budget	Revised Budget	Total Funds Available¹	Total Funds Obligated
APB	5,622,130	4,991,824	2,190,095	2,104,501

¹Includes income from unrestricted contributions, income from contributions restricted to the regional, sub-regional and/or country level, opening balance and adjustments.