

TURKEY

INITIAL OBJECTIVES

Non-European Refugees

- Strengthen UNHCR's partnership with Turkey for the protection of non-European refugees
- Provide protection and conduct refugee status-determination for some 7,500 non-European refugees and asylum.
- Provide assistance pending their resettlement to a third country and to seek other durable solutions as necessary
- Reinforce the protection system in Turkey through capacity building efforts such as training of government agencies, and the judiciary. Intensify outreach to civil society and improve working partnerships to support UNHCR's objectives.

Refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovars

- Find durable solutions for the approximately 850 Bosnian refugees and 300-400 Kosovar refugees remaining in Turkey. Provide counselling pending durable solutions and relief assistance for those in need.

Turkish Returnees from Northern Iraq

- Facilitate and assist the voluntary repatriation of refugees from northern Iraq and monitor their conditions of return.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS, PROGRESS ACHIEVED AND CONSTRAINTS

Non-European Refugees

A total of 2,181 persons applied for asylum during the first six months, which represents a decrease of some 10 per cent in comparison with the same period last year. This can be explained in part by the severe winter. The number of applications increased markedly in May and June (560 persons) and this trend is expected to continue. There is a significant backlog of cases from 1999 awaiting refugee status

determination (RSD). There has also been an increase in the number of cases pending RSD in the border areas, and of refugees residing in these areas who are awaiting resettlement.

There has been modest progress regarding those asylum applicants who fail to meet Turkish procedural requirements and are subsequently denied temporary asylum and exit permission. These so-called "extra-procedure cases" normally risk refoulement. In the first half of the year, however, the Government has facilitated exit permission for several vulnerable such cases on an *ad hoc* basis. In addition, talks are taking place between UNHCR and the Government regarding a solution for the cases in this category that reflects international norms.

Training activities continued with successful results and were expanded to police forces, judges and public prosecutors working in the border towns. In February, an introductory workshop on refugee law was organised for 35 new police officers dealing directly with asylum-seekers. In April, an advanced RSD workshop targeted 62 police officers who are directly handling asylum and refugee cases in the towns where they work. Introductory workshops were organised for the Police in April, and for judges and public prosecutors working in the border towns and in Ankara in the Council of State and in administrative courts in May. Some observers from donor countries attended. The third cycle of training activities for Turkish government institutions was concluded with a study tour to the Netherlands in June.

Turkey achieved EU candidacy status late in 1999, giving added impetus to the need to adopt reforms, including improvements in its asylum policies. UNHCR held meetings with selected groups of the Turkish public to draw their attention to the asylum issues in the EU *Acquis*. Meetings with the media and NGOs were organised to discuss asylum issues. A Speakers' Kit on issues of concern to UNHCR will be completed soon.

In the first six months of 2000, 931 refugees departed to resettlement countries, an increase of 10 per cent compared to the same period in 1999. As of 30 June 2000, a total of 1,133 refugees were being processed for resettlement. A major development was the introduction and implementation of the Canadian Government's Urgent Processing Pilot Project, under which two emergency cases (5 persons) were resettled. A further improvement was the introduction of special procedures for some resettlement to the USA. The procedures are working smoothly and it is expected that some 500 persons will be processed by the end of October.

In the first six months of 2000, the average number of refugees and asylum-seekers receiving assistance increased by more than 40 per cent as compared to the same period in 1999. This increase was due to a build-up of decisions on applications lodged in the border areas, the arrival of new asylum-seekers and accelerated eligibility interviews and decisions. Due to funding constraints, the policy of giving material assistance to asylum-seekers in border areas had to be reviewed in order to cope with the increased number of those being assisted. A total of 3,500 persons received monthly allowances, health care, local travel and accommodation. A total of 1,027 refugees and asylum-seekers received social and legal counselling in Ankara and in provincial capitals. Some 300 children received education kits in Arabic and Farsi for informal education and 20 children in Istanbul and in other cities received support for their educational needs. UNHCR has set up procedures and structures to rapidly identify and address the needs of vulnerable groups. In order to ensure proper implementation of policies towards women and children, UNHCR established a Gender and Children Team.

The continued high number of asylum applications places a serious burden on UNHCR's refugee status determination resources, particularly given the backlog of over 2,400 interviews and decisions to be taken on cases arriving in

1999. Progress on reducing the backlog has been limited by the lack of financial means to recruit additional eligibility staff and due to continued delays in replacing JPOs. UNHCR is exploring the possibility with local embassies of temporarily using eligibility staff provided by donor countries. Due to both the increase in the number of those assisted and funding shortages, social services and assistance programmes have had to be reduced, while some aspects were eliminated, such as the plan to improve and expand social counselling services and reproductive health care. This may lead to increased tensions with host communities as well as irregular movements from Turkey

Refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovars

At the beginning of the year, there were approximately 850 Bosnian and 300-400 Kosovar refugees in Turkey. UNHCR continued to seek durable solutions for these refugees. A total of 120 Bosnian refugees and 12 Kosovar refugees repatriated during the first half of the year.

The Turkish Government covered most of the needs of the remaining Bosnian and Kosovar refugees in Kırklareli camp. UNHCR's assistance to the camp population included community development activities, social counselling, clothing, basic domestic items, and a portion of the administrative costs of one implementing partner. UNHCR also supported 41 Bosnian and 9 Kosovar children with educational materials. In Istanbul, single women, women heads of households and elderly people, continued receiving food and medical assistance.

UNHCR started a survey was started to obtain information on the legal and socio-economic situation and the future intentions of the remaining Bosnian and Kosovar refugees in the cities. This will be finalised in the second half of the year. In view of funding constraints, assistance to the remaining Bosnian refugees both in the camp and in urban areas will be limited to cover mainly food and medical care, and the administrative costs of the implement-

ing partner.

Turkish Returnees from Northern Iraq

UNHCR continued to facilitate and monitor the voluntary repatriation from northern Iraq of Turkish refugees. Only 132 persons repatriated during the first half of 2000. The returnees received emergency packages from UNHCR, consisting of mattresses, blankets, kitchen sets and food rations for two months. Due to the small number of returnees, planned reintegration activities were not carried out. The limited returnee movement and the funding constraints did not justify implementation of the planned projects for income-generation, and upgrading of school and health services. Co-ordination between the many actors involved in the return of the Turkish refugees continues to be complex and poses difficulties for the return movements.

REVISED OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITY ACTIVITIES FOR JULY - DECEMBER

The initial overall objectives remain valid. Priority activities will include the following:

Non-European Refugees

- The number of legal staff in the border areas will be increased to provide an efficient, fair and consistent status-determination process, limiting the build-up of pending cases. The objective is to decrease the number of incidents of refoulement and to ensure that asylum-seekers have access to the government asylum procedure.
- Training activities for the key counterparts in refugee law, refugee policy issues and refugee status determination procedures will continue, if financial means allow. Contributions from the EU and member state embassies will continue to be sought in this regard. Public awareness will, given

the current financial situation, be limited to media and academic contacts as well as other no-cost activities designed to promote a better understanding of refugee and migration issues. UNHCR will also seek to participate in seminars and orientation programmes for different target groups organised with external funding.

- If the backlog of pending SDR cases can be diminished, the number of refugees in need of resettlement may increase considerably. Although the target of resettling 2000 refugees this year will most probably be reached, UNHCR will continue its efforts to increase further the number of resettled refugees per year, through a reduction of the resettlement-processing time and increases in the acceptance rates of the resettlement countries.

Refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovars

- As voluntary repatriation as a durable solution for the remaining Bosnian camp population (79 persons) has most probably been exhausted, UNHCR will renew efforts to seek local integration for this group. The full range of durable solutions will continue to be sought for the remaining 600-700 Kosovar refugees.

Turkish Returnees from Northern Iraq

- Continue to facilitate and monitor the voluntary repatriation of Turkish returnees from northern Iraq and to visit areas of return to identify problems. The findings of such missions will be discussed with the local authorities. Efforts will be made to improve co-ordination procedures among all actors involved and streamline the voluntary repatriation, to ensure that all refugees who wish to repatriate can do so and with as little delay as possible.

FINANCIAL DATA (USD)

	Initial Budget	Revised Budget	Total Funds Available*	Total Funds Obligated
AB and TF	4,573,978	5,034,329	2,472,504	2,422,300

*Includes income from unrestricted contributions, income from contributions restricted to the region/country, opening balance and adjustments.