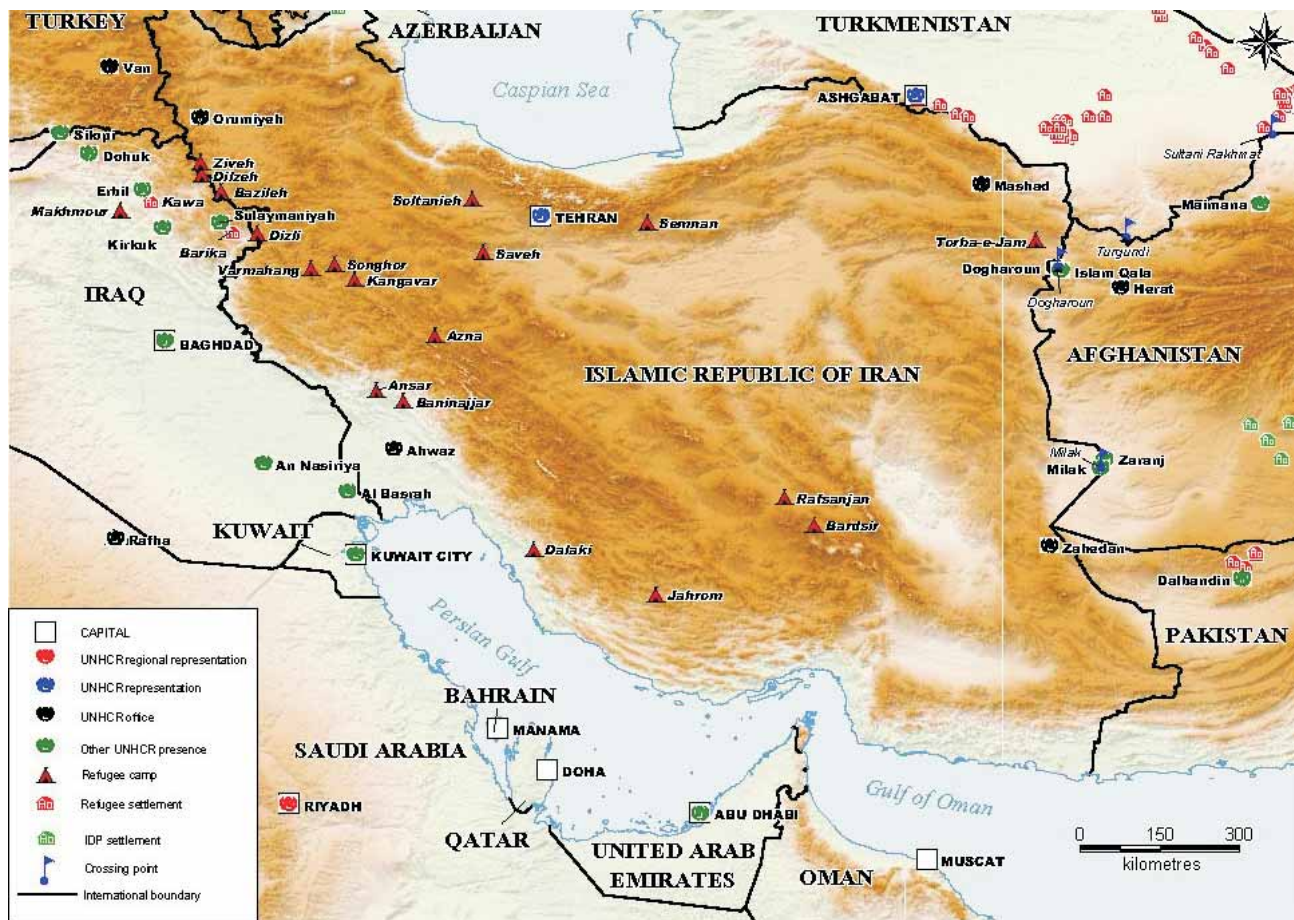


Islamic Republic of Iran



Working environment

The context

The Islamic Republic of Iran has hosted Afghan refugees for more than two decades. Since UNHCR started the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees in 2002, more than 1.5 million have repatriated to Afghanistan, including 846,000 with UNHCR assistance. The marked decline in repatriation over the last two years is a reflection of a combination of factors including the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan, the socio-economic challenges the country faces as well as the relative degree of assimilation of many Afghans into Iranian society.

Some 915,000 registered Afghans remain in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Most are settled in cities, towns and villages, while about 25,000 live in six refugee camps managed by the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigration Affairs (BAFIA). In this environment UNHCR and the Iranian authorities are envisaging a strategy of combined approaches with a view to enhancing voluntary return wherever possible and, at

the same time, reconsidering terms and conditions for the continued stay of certain registered Afghans.

As a part of the proposed plan, the Iranian authorities have advised UNHCR that they envisage undertaking a Refugee Status Determination (RSD) exercise targeting the residual Afghan refugee population (Amayesh II card-holders). UNHCR stands ready to share with the Government its expertise and experience in conducting such an exercise.

In 2007, the Iranian authorities requested Afghan refugees residing in specified areas (estimated at 120,000) to choose between relocation or voluntary repatriation. The relocation option, which is limited to designated refugee camps, may prove not to be attractive or viable for a number of reasons, notably reluctance within the population, including the local/provincial authorities, to receive more refugees in their areas. This has caused refugees to lose jobs, an issue of particular concern to those holding valid work permits. Furthermore, the imposition of municipal taxes and restrictions on freedom of movement and access to the labour market have caused anxiety among registered refugees.

The Islamic Republic of Iran also hosts refugees from Iraq. The number of longstanding Iraqi refugees at the end of 2006 was approximately 54,000, mostly of Arab and Feili Kurd ethnicity. This population has been well received and accommodated by the Iranian authorities. Due to the precarious political and security situation in Iraq, many of the Iraqi refugees are reluctant to return until clear signs of stability and law and order become visible in their homeland.

UNHCR has registered an increasing number of recently arrived Iraqi nationals fleeing generalized violence and targeted persecution. UNHCR and BAFIA are discussing the arrangements for addressing the legal status and needs of this population.

The needs

The Government recently shared its database (Amayesh II) on the Afghan refugee population in the country with UNHCR. Pending a comprehensive household poverty and vulnerability study of all Afghans, it appears from initial assessments that many Afghans are in need of skills and financial resources to enable them to re-establish themselves in Afghanistan. To this end, it is essential to address and implement the Joint Project initiative with the Ministry of the Interior, which aims to build the capacity of some 3,000 Afghan refugees with a view to their future repatriation through skills training; to assist the most vulnerable Afghan refugees through community-based and self-reliance projects; to develop partnerships with national NGOs, charity organizations and UN agencies in order to share the cost of assisting refugees; and to build refugees' self-reliance.

Total requirements

2008: USD 12,376,668

2009: USD 12,273,117

(Annual programme only. The financial requirements for the supplementary programme for the Iraq situation are being finalized).

Main objectives

- Continue to support the facilitated voluntary repatriation of Afghan and Iraqi refugees where appropriate.
- Address critical protection concerns so as to ensure improved treatment and predictable conditions for refugees remaining in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

- Provide targeted assistance to vulnerable groups of Afghan and Iraqi refugees to enhance their self-reliance, allowing them to rebuild their lives upon return home.
- Support the Iranian authorities in their discussions with the Government of Afghanistan on the management of migration issues.

Key targets for 2008 and 2009

Annual programme for Afghan refugees

- Some 540,000 Afghans from the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan (regional planning figure) repatriate voluntarily.
- Approximately 1,500 persons with specific protection needs are resettled.
- Some 18,000 people with specific needs (children, pregnant women, persons with disabilities and elderly refugees) benefit from specialized health treatment or financial/social assistance.
- Children suffering from cancer, identified through the Community Integrated Social and Medical Assistance Programme (CISAMAP), receive medical assistance.
- Partnerships with charity organizations, NGOs and line ministries are strengthened in coordination with the Ministry of the Interior. The aim is to promote links with other actors in the health and education sectors.
- The self-reliance of refugees is enhanced to help them better reintegrate in Afghanistan upon repatriation.

Supplementary programme for Iraqi refugees

- Some 1,500 refugees repatriate voluntarily—depending on the security situation in areas of return in Iraq.
- An estimated 500 persons with specific protection needs are resettled.
- Medical assistance is provided to compelling cases, including children suffering from cancer identified through the Community Integrated Social and Medical Assistance Programme (CISAMAP).
- Targeted assistance is provided to the most vulnerable Iraqi refugees.

Strategy and activities

In cooperation with the Government, UNHCR will support the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees in 2008 and 2009. The Tripartite Agreement signed by UNHCR and the Islamic Republic of Iran and Afghanistan in February 2007, which extended the assisted voluntary repatriation operation until 19 March 2008, is expected to be further extended until early 2009.

Returnees will be provided with a cash grant, transportation, medical screening and mine-awareness training. Special transportation arrangements will be made for vulnerable refugees, and departures will take place from five voluntary repatriation centres, one dispatching centre and two border-exit stations.

Under the new return modalities established in 2007, mass-information campaigns will help refugees make informed decisions about returning home. Legal aid will be made available through UNHCR-hired lawyers.

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

While assisting the most vulnerable refugees, emphasis will be placed upon building their self-reliance and upgrading their skills so as to allow for sustained reintegration upon repatriation.

The Office will coordinate with the UN country team and the respective Governments of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Afghanistan on issues of health, education, labour and welfare.

Constraints

The commitment by the Iranian authorities to grant work and residency visas for one to two members of repatriated families has yet to be fully implemented.



Voluntary repatriation of Afghan families ready to board a bus provided by UNHCR, on the outskirts of Tehran.

Refugees' access to work is limited to a number of fields and is subject to acquiring a work permit, which often includes a financial charge.

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

The Iranian authorities have not yet clarified the legal status of newly arrived Iraqi refugees and how they may be assisted.

Organization and implementation

UNHCR presence

	2008	2009
Number of offices	7	7
Total staff	127	127
International	17	17
National	109	109
JPOs	1	1

Planning figures

Type of population	Origin	Jan 2008		Dec 2008		Dec 2009	
		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	894,000	894,000	874,000	874,000	854,000	854,000
	Iraq	99,000	99,000	94,000	94,000	79,000	79,000
Asylum-seekers	Afghanistan	500	500	500	500	500	500
	Iraq	50	50	50	50	50	50
Total		993,550	993,550	968,550	968,550	933,550	933,550

Coordination

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

Partners

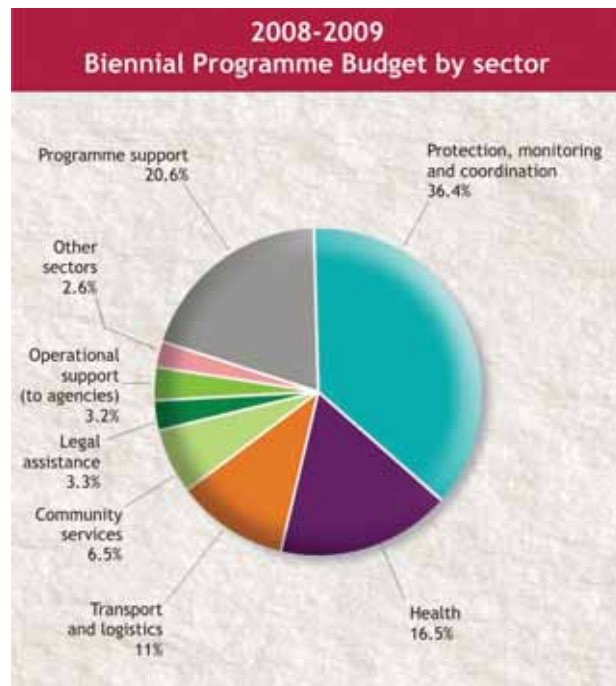
Implementing partners

Government: Ministry of Education and Training, Ministry of Health, Ministry of the Interior - Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrant Affairs (BAFIA).

NGOs: Assisting Marsh Arabs and Refugees, Iranian Red Crescent Society, Iraq Refugee Aid Council, Passenger Transport Company, Society to Protect Children Suffering from Cancer.

Operational partners

Others: UN Country Team, World Food Programme, elf-reliance



Budget (USD)

Activities and services	2007			2008	2009
	Annual Programme Budget	Supp. Programme Budget	Total	Annual Programme Budget	Annual Programme Budget
Protection, monitoring and coordination	5,134,754	100,000	5,234,754	4,505,261	4,459,150
Community services	792,000	0	792,000	800,118	800,118
Domestic needs	313,373	386,392	699,765	39,000	39,000
Education	0	50,000	50,000	0	0
Food	15,998	30,000	45,998	0	0
Health	1,284,832	150,000	1,434,832	2,028,522	2,028,522
Legal assistance	407,324	10,000	417,324	407,324	407,324
Operational support (to agencies)	334,497	40,834	375,331	407,642	382,193
Sanitation	0	10,000	10,000	35,000	35,000
Shelter and other infrastructure	57,777	0	57,777	206,495	206,495
Transport and logistics	2,088,356	107,556	2,195,912	1,359,056	1,359,056
Water	0	0	0	40,000	35,000
Total operations	10,428,911	884,782	11,313,693	9,828,418	9,751,858
Programme support	2,420,519	0	2,420,519	2,548,250	2,521,259
Total	12,849,430	884,782	13,734,212	12,376,668	12,273,117

Note: The Supplementary Programme Budget excludes a 7 per cent support cost that is recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR.