

TURKEY

INITIAL OBJECTIVES

- Advise the Government of Turkey on the eligibility of asylum-seekers from non-European countries and ensure rapid and reliable determination of refugee status.
- Assist the Government in strengthening and developing its asylum system in conformity with international standards.
- Identify and promote durable solutions for refugees, mainly through resettlement, but also through voluntary repatriation and local integration.
- Co-operate with the Government and NGOs to ensure basic assistance and services to refugees during their stay in Turkey.
- Raise public awareness about asylum-seekers and refugees and UNHCR's mandate.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS, PROGRESS ACHIEVED, AND CONSTRAINTS

Dialogue between UNHCR and the Government intensified on the incorporation of international standards and best practices into a new Turkish asylum law. The Government created an inter-ministerial task force to guide Turkey's adoption of the EU *acquis* on asylum and migration, and invited the UNHCR Representative to address its inaugural meeting. Recommendations made by UNHCR on refugee-related aspects of a draft law on work permits for foreign nationals were well received by the Ministry of Labour.

Training activities continued in accordance with the co-operation framework concluded in late 2000 by UNHCR and the Ministry of the Interior. The Gendarmerie also expressed interest in formalising a similar agreement and a draft text is nearing finalisation. Co-

funding from the EU's High Level Working Group on Migration and Asylum facilitated these activities, as well as the expansion of co-operation with the Government on strengthening national asylum procedures.

UNHCR was able to partially realise the objective of expanding social services for refugees and asylum-seekers in Turkey. The counselling project in Istanbul was extended to include all nationalities, but the implementing partner providing counselling services in central and eastern provinces was unable to secure authorisation to receive funding for similar projects.

If the budgetary constraints faced by UNHCR globally persist, the branch office's assistance activities could be affected in the coming months. Delays in resettlement arising from the events of 11 September 2001 have significantly increased the number of refugees in need of assistance. As a result, 60 per cent of the operational budget was expended in the first half of the year. Without additional resources, UNHCR will be unable to adequately meet the basic subsistence needs of these eligible beneficiaries. Other forms of support, such as, education grants may have to be suspended altogether.

Non-European Refugees

UNHCR is responsible for refugee status determination and the identification of durable solutions for refugees from outside Europe. In the first half of 2002, compared to the same period last year, applications for refugee status dropped by nearly 28 per cent to 802 cases representing 1,428 persons. The number of applications from undocumented asylum-seekers in the border cities also fell significantly. These numbers, however, do not include persons who are awaiting completion of registration formalities with the authorities. The overall number of non-European refugees and asylum-seekers

declined by 14 per cent, to a new total of 5,484 persons by 30 June 2002.

Asylum-seekers waited for an average of six months for a first decision on their application for refugee status. This represents a slight improvement, but the delays remain too long, particularly in view of the difficult living conditions of the applicants. With funding from the EU High Level Working Group, UNHCR has established a special unit supported by five eligibility assistants to reduce the number of pending applications as well as the average waiting period. The quality of decisions continued to be high, as evidenced by the rapid acceptance of recognised cases for resettlement by third countries. During the first half of 2002, 1,119 refugees (including 50 vulnerable persons) departed for resettlement to third countries. Another 1,541 refugees had been accepted by resettlement countries (subject to security clearance) and were awaiting departure. Some 1,164 refugees were submitted for consideration and are awaiting a decision from resettlement countries.

In addition to the social counselling programme in Istanbul, UNHCR funded a programme for reproductive health training in two cities in central and eastern Turkey. Some 600 children also received educational supplies and uniforms from UNHCR, and 85 asylum-seekers and refugee children participated in the vocational training and recreational activities in Van. These programmes may have to be scaled down in the second half of the year, due to budgetary constraints. In March, the Government decided to provide free medical services to refugees and asylum-seekers through the state hospitals.

During the reporting period, the branch office's Inter-Unit Committee for Special Cases ensured proper protection and care for 23 extremely vulnerable persons. UNHCR developed practical guidelines for caseworkers covering issues such as domestic violence, rape, separation and divorce and child custody, which will be introduced through workshops to staff, NGO partners and government counterparts.

Progress as measured against indicators

Impact/Performance Indicators	Actual Progress
Number of pending asylum claims.	The number of pending asylum claims fell by 34 per cent during the reporting period.
Resettlement processing period maintained at an average of 7 months.	The processing period exceeded the average 7 months period due to the postponement of selection missions and the introduction of new security by some resettlement countries.
The number of children in schools and receiving education assistance.	400 children attended primary school, 242 children received school supplies and uniforms, 360 children received informal education kits.
The number of asylum-seekers and refugees provided with assistance.	An average of 3,035 persons received monthly allowances and an average of 530 persons per month received social and legal counselling, refugee women received 2171 sanitary pads.
Strengthening and development of the Turkish asylum system to conform to internationally accepted standards.	UNHCR addressed the Government task force drafting the new asylum law, progress was made in the implementation of the co-operation framework agreement and more than 80 key government officials received introductory refugee law training, with a special focus on protection needs of women and children.

Bosnian and Kosovar Refugees

UNHCR continued to promote durable solutions for Bosnian and Kosovar refugees in Turkey, with special focus on the remaining camp population, in co-operation

with NGO partners. Results have been very positive, demonstrating the effectiveness of a counselling-based approach to seeking solutions for long-staying refugees.

Progress as measured against indicators

Impact/Performance Indicators	Actual Progress
Number of individuals for whom solutions have been identified and implemented at the Gazi Osman Pasa camp in Kırklareli province.	The camp population fell from 112 to 50 persons. 41 refugees received residence permits, 39 of whom have already moved out of the camp. 19 refugees voluntarily repatriated while 11 are awaiting repatriation pending practical arrangements. 4 refugees departed for family reunification in third countries and another 18 are awaiting decisions from embassies.
Number of vulnerable persons assisted.	44 refugees received assistance with accommodation to facilitate their local integration, 38 refugees received medical care, and 25 refugee children in Kırklareli camp received education assistance.

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.

Progress as measured against indicators

Impact/Performance Indicators	Actual Progress
Higher number of returnees compared to the last 2 years.	Clearance for new voluntary repatriation requests is still being processed in Iraq.

REVISED OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITY ACTIVITIES FOR JULY-DECEMBER 2002

If the current financial outlook continues, UNHCR will need to revise its assistance objectives for the second half of the year. Resources to cover the basic needs of refugees may not be adequate because of the sharp increase in the number of persons receiving assistance. Subsistence allowances to refugees may have to be reduced and education assistance for children attending Turkish primary schools may have to be suspended altogether. Counselling services, reproductive health training for refugees will also receive less attention.

Continuation of protection activities may also be at risk if funds are unavailable for the relocation of persons at risk and for emergency shelter. Missions from the resettlement countries will also no longer be able to depend upon UNHCR to pay local transportation and accommodation costs to refugees coming to Ankara for selection interviews. Efforts to strengthen UNHCR mandate refugee status determination, to reduce application processing periods, and training and co-operation on strengthening asylum procedures with the Government will continue, thanks to the support from the EU's High Level Working Group on Migration and Asylum.

Financial Data (USD)

Annual Programme Budget			
Initial Budget	Revised Budget	Total Funds Available	Obligation Level
5,697,397	6,106,541	3,805,086	3,219,200