

A young girl wearing a light-colored headscarf and a patterned top is looking directly at the camera. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and a building.

South West Asia

Operational highlights

- Some 167,000 registered Afghans repatriated in 2007, similar to the number of registered Afghans that returned in 2006.
- Another 206,000 unregistered Afghans returned with UNHCR assistance from Pakistan during a one-time grace period granted by the Government of Pakistan.
- The registration of 2.1 million Afghans in Pakistan was completed in February 2007; those holding Proof of Registration cards had the right of residence valid through 2009.
- In late 2007, the Islamic Republic of Iran began re-registering Afghans with a view to eventually issuing them with work permits.
- In Afghanistan, a return and reintegration cash grant of USD 100 per person allowed families to meet transport costs and cover their initial basic needs on return.

Afghanistan

Islamic Republic of Iran

Pakistan



Working environment

The number of registered Afghans who returned voluntarily to their homeland in 2007 confirmed the declining trend of 2006, and signaled the end of mass voluntary repatriation to Afghanistan. Since 2002, more than 5 million Afghans have returned to their homeland, with some 4 million assisted by UNHCR.

The slow-down in returns may be attributed to continuing insecurity in Afghanistan, the slow pace of reconstruction and the profile of the remaining population in host countries, with over 80 per cent having been in exile for more than 20 years and 50 per cent born in exile.

Some 3 million registered Afghans remain in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan. Domestic and international pressures have caused the Governments of these countries to review the situation of Afghans on their territory.

Security in Afghanistan has deteriorated markedly since 2005, with 2007 witnessing the highest number of incidents since the fall of the Taliban. It is estimated that only 30 per cent of the country is under the effective control of the Government. Violence has intensified in the southern, south-eastern and eastern regions and spread to the central and northern region. The access of the UN was limited to barely half the country.

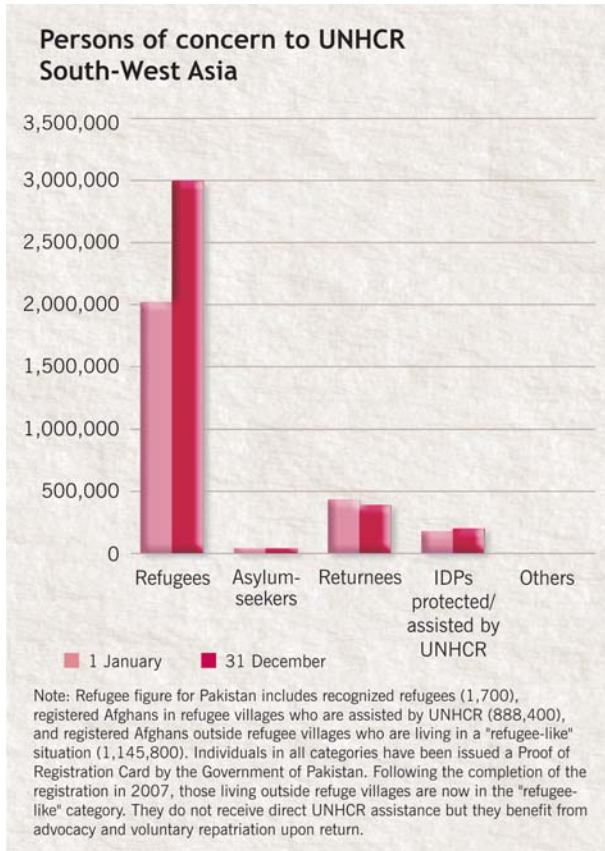
There was a sharp rise in the numbers of Afghans in Pakistan who cited poor security in their homeland as preventing them from returning home. Many of the Afghans in Pakistan originate from currently insecure regions.

Economic difficulties have reduced the sustainability of return and reintegration. Returnee monitoring and needs assessments indicate a growing trend of displacement within Afghanistan among 2007 returnees. Many males, and sometimes whole families, have returned to the former country of asylum as they are unable to sustain themselves in their homeland.

Consequently, the protection of some 3 million registered Afghans remaining in countries of asylum is a priority. UNHCR is working to secure greater predictability of stay in the countries of asylum with the necessary support to Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran. To reduce the burden of hosting refugees on these countries, the Office is calling for the concerted engagement of the international community.

Achievements and Impact

In Pakistan, the 2.1 million Afghans that were registered by February 2007 received 'proof of registration' cards, which grant holders the right to



temporary stay in Pakistan until the end of 2009. For the first time, Afghans were provided with an element of predictability to their stay in Pakistan.

However, assuring the voluntary and gradual return of registered Afghans affected by planned closure of refugee villages required concerted efforts by all stakeholders. Katcha Garhi refugee village, host to over 64,000 registered Afghans, closed in August 2007, while the closure of Jalozei refugee village was postponed until spring 2008. Half of the population of Katcha Garhi and a third of Jalozei refugee villages opted to repatriate with UNHCR assistance. The remainder relocated to other areas in Pakistan or returned spontaneously.

In Afghanistan, monitoring showed that families who returned after the closure of refugee villages in Pakistan were living in worse conditions than other returnees. For example, a group of 160 families from Katcha Garhi refugee village in Pakistan is living in tents in Afghanistan. They cannot return to their place of origin due to insecurity.

The Tripartite Agreement between Pakistan, Afghanistan and UNHCR was extended to the end of 2009. The Agreement provides the legal and operational framework for returns and ensures that they are voluntary. The Tripartite Agreement with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran was renewed in March 2007 for one year.

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the re-registration of Afghans began in October 2007 and will be completed in 2008. UNHCR has confirmed that all those currently registered will have the opportunity to re-register. A positive development is the possibility for re-registered Afghans to receive work permits.

The Office also welcomed the announcement by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran of a new work visa scheme for 200,000 Afghans, whereby registered males of working age would be entitled to apply for a work visa on return to Afghanistan with their family. UNHCR is working with the authorities on ways to simplify the procedures and reduce the costs of the scheme to allow more Afghans to benefit from it. These schemes for registered Afghans in the Islamic Republic of Iran could give them more predictable legal means of remaining in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

In Afghanistan, returnee reintegration needs were made an integral part of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy. Achievements in the shelter and water sectors, targeted support for people with specific needs, and the increased cash grant addressed the basic needs of returnee families. However, as sustaining return and reintegration is beyond the capabilities of UNHCR alone, the Office shared its needs assessments and worked to secure new partnerships to increase support to areas of high return.

Constraints

Achieving sustainable solutions for returning Afghans is tied to the longer-term process of reconstruction and state-building in Afghanistan, as well as improving the security situation, which is likely to take many years.

Worsening security across the region, particularly in Afghanistan, was a major constraint in 2007. Security concerns were also cited as the reason for the closure of refugee villages in Pakistan and the declaration of "off limits areas" in the Islamic Republic of Iran. 19 provinces were declared off limits for foreigners and more than 124,000 registered Afghans were subsequently given the choice to repatriate, relocate or face deportation. There is concern that the situation may lead to involuntary and unsustainable return.

The quickly changing circumstances of Afghan refugees make it difficult to predict the numbers in future return movements. Voluntary repatriation movements will likely become smaller and require the targeting of resources to particular locations and sectors in Afghanistan. Maintaining operational flexibility to deal with sudden or concentrated influxes will remain important.



A young returnee who just arrived in Afghanistan from the tribal areas of Pakistan.

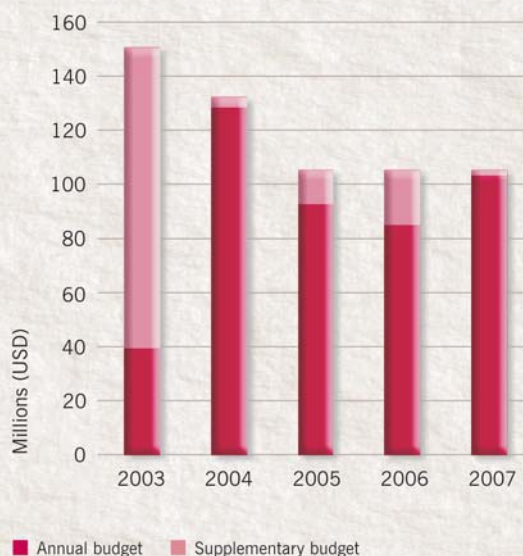
Operations

Details of operations in **Afghanistan**, the **Islamic Republic of Iran** and **Pakistan** can be found in the respective country chapters.

Financial information

The Afghanistan operation was well funded in 2007. In the course of the year, an additional amount of USD 20 million was required to cover the increase in the cash grant. Funds were also needed to support more than 200,000 unregistered Afghans who returned during the grace period provided by the Government of Pakistan.

Expenditure in South-West Asia
2003 - 2007



Budget and expenditure (USD)						
Country	Final budget			Expenditure		
	Annual budget	Supplementary budget ¹	Total	Annual budget	Supplementary budget	Total
Afghanistan	70,641,122	0	70,641,122	70,329,927	0	70,329,927
Islamic Republic of Iran	11,455,653	884,782	12,340,435	11,330,581	632,241	11,962,822
Pakistan	20,769,247	2,548,598	23,317,845	20,473,887	1,468,933	21,942,820
Regional activities ²	1,787,300	0	1,787,300	798,377	0	798,377
Total	104,653,322	3,433,380	108,086,702	102,932,772	2,101,174	105,033,946

¹ Excludes a seven per cent support cost that is recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR.

² Includes repatriation of Afghans and comprehensive solutions for Afghan displacement.

Restricted voluntary contributions (USD)			
Earmarking	Donor	Annual budget	Supplementary budget
South-West Asia	Estonia	47,133	0
	European Commission	1,315,789	0
	Finland	567,376	0
	Norway	7,468,124	0
	Sweden	7,714,702	0
	United States	23,100,000	0
	Sub-total	40,213,124	0
Afghanistan	Australia	3,539,625	0
	Australia for UNHCR	66,426	0
	Austria	361,812	0
	Belgium	683,060	0
	Canada	4,716,981	0
	Denmark	1,352,657	0
	European Commission	10,469,526	0
	Germany	3,551,805	0
	Islamic, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	11,000	0
	Italy	3,998,569	0
	Japan	3,300,000	0
	Japan Association for UNHCR	30,634	0
	Netherlands	3,704,000	0
	Norway	20,136	0
	Pakistan	4,680,080	0
	Private donors in Canada	170,905	0
	Private donors in Italy	31,308	0
	Private donors in the United Kingdom	80	0
	Spain	75,641	0
	Switzerland	909,836	0
United Kingdom	480,962	0	
United States	7,093,581	0	
USA for UNHCR	27,765	0	
	Sub-total	49,276,387	0
Islamic Republic of Iran	European Commission	1,585,487	0
	Japan	1,000,000	0
	Norway	22,234	0
	Private donors in the Islamic Republic of Iran	5,465	0
	United States	11,707	0
	Sub-total	2,624,893	0
Pakistan	CERF	0	622,468
	European Commission	1,891,523	0
	Finland	0	636,115
	Islamic, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	6,000	0
	Japan	2,500,000	0
	Japan Association for UNHCR	18,598	0
	New Zealand	0	345,960
	Pakistan	926,756	0
	Spain	1,523,170	0
	United States	29,359	0
	USA for UNHCR	54,155	0
	Sub-total	6,949,560	1,604,543
Total		99,063,964	1,604,543

Note: Contributions shown exclude indirect support costs that are recovered from contributions against supplementary programmes and the "New or additional activities - mandate related" (NAM) Reserve.