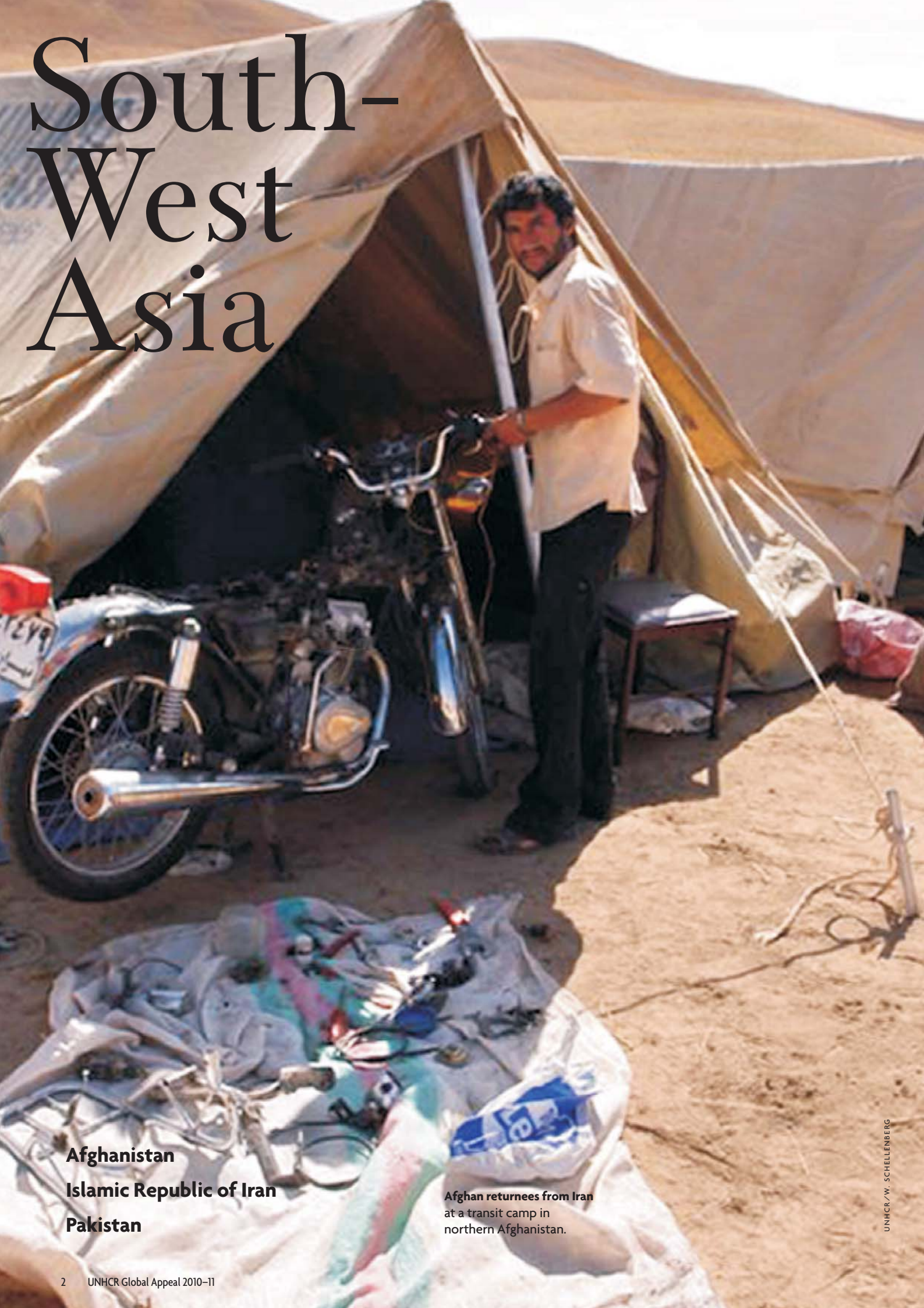


South- West Asia



Afghanistan
Islamic Republic of Iran
Pakistan

Afghan returnees from Iran
at a transit camp in
northern Afghanistan.

| Working environment |

The region continues to be dominated by increasing insecurity, which has an impact on UNHCR's operations in Pakistan and Afghanistan. In Pakistan, the humanitarian situation deteriorated significantly in the first half of 2009, affecting the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees and all programmes in Baluchistan. It led to an emergency in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and the Federally-Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), forcing more than two million people to flee to camps, stay with host families, rent accommodation or live in makeshift shelters. The situation also poses risks for the humanitarian community as it strives to deliver humanitarian assistance under volatile security conditions.

In Afghanistan, a worsening of the security situation has restricted the UN's access to about half the country. Further progress and stability will hinge on the final result of the Presidential elections of 2009.

In addition to the volatile security situation, Afghanistan is beset by an economic recession which has brought high inflation, rising market prices and unemployment. The crisis has exacerbated the already challenging humanitarian situation, forcing internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees into new movements and creating strong competition for already scarce resources.

Both Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran are hosting some of the largest long-staying refugee populations in the world. Some 1.7 million Afghans live in Pakistan and 933,500 in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The number of registered Afghan refugees opting for voluntary return declined in 2009, with some 5,500 returning from the Islamic Republic of Iran and about 51,000 from Pakistan in the first half of the year. In 2010, the total planning figure stands at 165,000 returnees.

The reduction in returns can be attributed to the profile of the remaining Afghans and the deterioration in security. During 2009, the host countries have taken significant steps to improve the status of registered Afghan refugees. The issuance of temporary work permits by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to eligible Afghan refugees during the *Amayesh* registration process is of particular importance, as it provides a framework for a more predictable and sustainable stay until return becomes possible.

In Pakistan, a joint communiqué issued by the Government and UNHCR in March 2009 is a major step towards extending Proof of Registration cards for Afghans until 2012, facilitating their protection and enabling them to stay in the country.

Achieving sustainable results in the reintegration of Afghan returnees is a major challenge due to the ongoing conflicts, landlessness and lack of income-generation opportunities. These issues are also reflected in a larger urbanization phenomenon.





Strategy

Finding solutions for the remaining 2.6 million registered Afghan refugees in Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran presents a complex challenge for UNHCR, and calls for active involvement of the international community. The lengthy exile of the refugees, poverty and the uncertain conditions in many parts of Afghanistan constitute the main impediments to return.

The expected extension of the validity of the Proof of Registration cards will ensure targeted protection intervention and assistance for registered Afghan refugees in Pakistan. In this context, two major projects will be implemented by UNHCR in 2010. The first is the Registration Information Project for Afghan Citizens, which has a particular emphasis on the issuance of identification documents by the Government. The second is the Refugee-Affected and Hosting Areas programme, which supports Afghans and Pakistanis by promoting their peaceful co-existence and assists host communities.

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, UNHCR will focus on improving the living conditions of registered Afghan refugees until their voluntary return is possible. UNHCR will support the renewal of *Amayesh* cards and temporary work permits, advocate for employers to issue work contracts to Afghan refugees and reach out to refugee communities with legal advice and counselling. The Office will also work with the Ministries of Education and Health to facilitate the access of urban registered refugees to education, primary health care and emergency medical assistance.

At the same time, UNHCR will continue to facilitate repatriation regionally, as long as it is voluntary and sustainable.

In Afghanistan, monitoring will be improved to gauge the sustainability of return.

Notwithstanding the unpredictability of the operational environment in Afghanistan, the Office will continue to work towards the goals established by the five-year Afghan National Development Strategy. Greater progress requires a more substantial investment in reintegration both from the Government and the international donor community.

While many persons affected by the humanitarian situation in Pakistan's NWFP and FATA are expected to return home in 2010, a significant number will remain with host families and in camps. UNHCR will help the Government with return to the NWFP. Together with the UN Country Team, it will also advocate for respect of international guiding principles. The key areas of UNHCR's involvement are: return transport; protection monitoring through legal and social centres in return areas; distribution of non-food items in return areas; and temporary shelter. At the same time, relief activities will continue for persons affected by the emergency who remain outside their places of origin. UNHCR will work closely with its partners through the three clusters it leads: emergency shelter, camp coordination and camp management, and protection. Conflict and poverty underpin internal displacement and informal settlement in urban areas in Afghanistan. There are an estimated 250,000 IDPs for whom a solution has to be found. The Office will pursue its policy of emphasizing the return and reintegration of long-staying IDPs where possible, and will advocate for the local integration of particular groups of IDPs. Protection and assistance will focus on those IDPs who are living in the most precarious circumstances.

| Constraints |

The serious deterioration of security in Pakistan and continued instability in Afghanistan are major concerns for UNHCR. The Office is faced with the difficult task of delivering humanitarian assistance while maintaining staff security. Access to IDP return areas will also be a major challenge.

In Afghanistan, the volatile security situation, the lack of infrastructure and livelihood opportunities, and increasing competition for land, water and natural resources may continue to discourage Afghan refugees from returning.

As a consequence of military operations in Afghanistan, an increase in internal displacement is foreseen. The Office plans to implement an integrated and area-based approach to deal with the issue. Internal displacement as a consequence of landlessness will remain another major concern of the Office.

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, UNHCR will be unlikely to access precise information on national refugee status determination procedures. Meanwhile, resettlement countries are likely to increase their resettlement quotas for refugees in the country.

| Operations |

UNHCR's operations in **Afghanistan**, the **Islamic Republic of Iran** and **Pakistan** are covered in separate chapters.

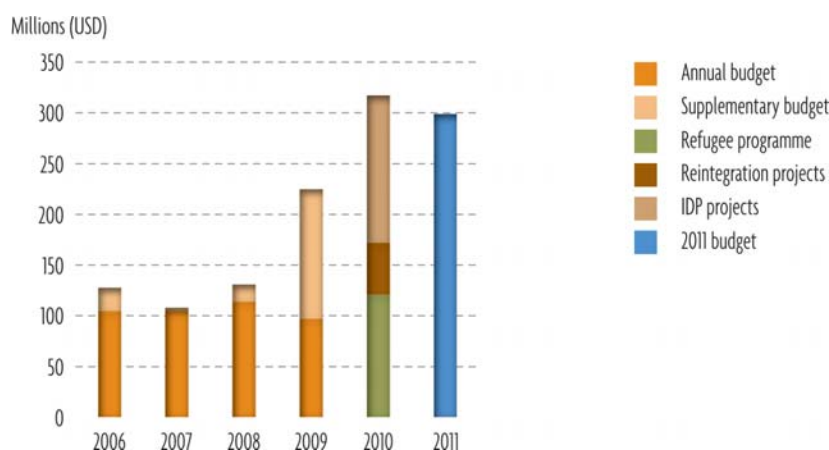
| Financial information |

Although the disbursement of cash grants for returnees in Afghanistan has been low in 2009, there are significant unmet needs related to shelter and reintegration, as well as potential new displacements in Afghanistan in 2010. Additional resources may be required to respond to sudden displacements and implement an integrated community-development approach.

UNHCR's financial requirements in Pakistan have varied significantly over the past few years as the Office responded to a number of emergencies. In 2010-2011, UNHCR's focus will be on recovery and reconstruction as a large number of affected people have returned to the NWFP.

In 2009, UNHCR's budget in the Islamic Republic of Iran was increased to address the requirements for the anticipated repatriation of Afghan refugees. These additional funds are helping the Ministries of Health and Education to improve access to services for Afghan refugees and will be maintained in 2010-2011.

UNHCR's budget in South-West Asia 2006 – 2011



UNHCR budget for South-West Asia (USD)

COUNTRY	2009 REVISED BUDGET	2010				2011
		REFUGEE PROGRAMME PILLAR 1	REINTEGRATION PROJECTS PILLAR 3	IDP PROJECTS PILLAR 4	TOTAL	
Afghanistan	55,896,417	38,370,873	51,471,572	14,908,617	104,751,062	85,668,800
Iran, Islamic Republic of	17,377,696	36,826,564	0	0	36,826,564	37,200,000
Pakistan	150,038,085	45,607,675	0	131,079,990	176,687,665	176,687,700
Regional activities	1,687,923	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	225,000,121	120,805,112	51,471,572	145,988,607	318,265,291	299,556,500

¹ Includes supplementary programme requirements of USD 127,586,208.