

South-West Asia

Operational highlights

- Some 139,000 Afghans returned home in 2006 with UNHCR's assistance while 260,000 returned on their own. The lowest number in five years. Deteriorating security in some provinces, difficult economic and social conditions and prolonged exile from Afghanistan are some of the causes of the reluctance to return.
- There was notable progress in compiling an overall profile of the Afghan presence and displacement in the region, aided by registration exercises in both the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan.
- Reintegration programmes included the construction of some 18,500 shelters, the digging of 350 water points and the completion of 134 income-generation and vocational-training projects. UNHCR also assisted the Government of Afghanistan with policy development, capacity building and budget support.
- Through a joint project between UNHCR and the Iranian authorities, registered Afghan refugees will benefit from skills training and access to basic services to improve their prospects for repatriation. In Pakistan, technical assessments in key sectors will feed into a programme to benefit refugee-affected areas.

Working environment

At the beginning of 2006, the Government of Afghanistan and the international community agreed on the terms of their partnership for the next five years. Known as the Afghanistan Compact, the accord outlines key objectives in governance and economic and social

Afghanistan

Islamic Republic of Iran

Pakistan



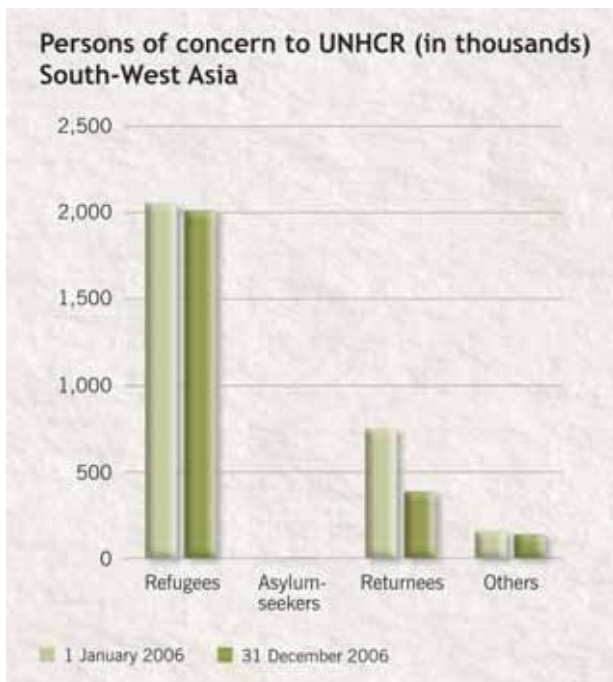
development. It includes provisions for the continuing voluntary return and reintegration of Afghan refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), and foresees bilateral negotiations with neighbouring countries on broader population movements.

After several years of exceptionally high returns, more than 4.8 million Afghans returned to their homeland, the number of people repatriating with UNHCR's assistance declined in 2006. A total of 139,000 people returned home, the lowest number since 2002. This

downward trend may be attributed to the deteriorating security conditions in some provinces in Afghanistan, to challenging economic and social conditions, and the fact that the majority of the remaining refugees have been in exile for more than 20 years. Solutions for IDPs were also affected by the resurgence in conflict in Afghanistan and its impact on aid programmes.

The tripartite agreements between UNHCR and Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan provided legal and operational continuity to the voluntary repatriation programme. The agreements proved to be useful mechanisms to reconcile the objectives of Afghanistan's neighbours for higher rates of repatriation with the prevailing security, economic and social realities inside the country. They also offered valuable opportunities to shape discussions and policy on issues such as camp closures, the modalities of repatriation and the regularization of population movements.

Security emerged as the single most important factor that will determine success in finding solutions for displacement in and from Afghanistan. The resurgence of violence in Afghanistan's southern and eastern provinces, and instability in frontier regions in both Pakistan and Islamic Republic of Iran, had notable effects on reconstruction, development and humanitarian work. This challenged public confidence in Afghanistan's peace and recovery process and the long-term commitment of its international supporters.

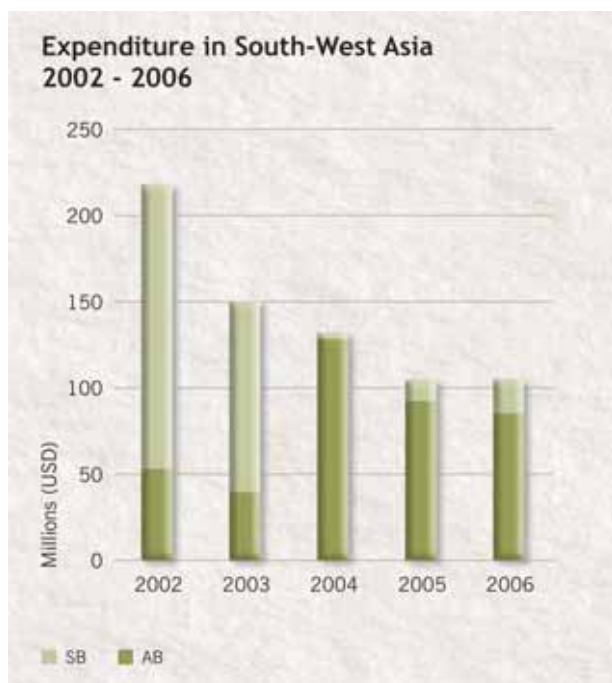


Achievements and impact

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the government registration process enumerated some 920,000 Afghans. While an agreement was reached with the Government of Pakistan to conduct a registration of the estimated 2.1 million Afghans in the country, the registration exercise actually started towards the end of the year. For the first time, detailed and comprehensive data will be available to guide policy development and operational arrangements. Pioneering research in 2006 on population movements, reintegration and the economic impact of the Afghan returnee and refugee presence generated more understanding of the challenges ahead.

The policy provisions of the Afghanistan Compact reflected increased international awareness of the range of population movements occurring outside the refugee and humanitarian framework. Ensuring the voluntary nature of repatriation, bringing greater predictability to the situation of the 3.4 million Afghans in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan, and using limited humanitarian resources more effectively remained the key protection challenges. Changes in the design and delivery of assistance programmes for Afghans indicated a move away from longstanding dependence on humanitarian instruments and approaches.

Although the numbers of returning refugees declined in 2006, the voluntary nature of the repatriation, critical to the success and sustainability of repatriation as a solution, was safeguarded. Returnee monitoring throughout Afghanistan underlined that this fundamental protection principle had been respected.



The suspension bridge in Barabad village in Jalalabad was built by one of UNHCR's implementing partners for the benefit of both returnees and those who had stayed behind.

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Joint Project Initiative between UNHCR and the Iranian ministries of the Interior, Education and Training, and Health was signed in October 2006. It aims to assist the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees by building their self-reliance through skills training, employment in specific areas and access to educational and medical facilities while in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Furthermore, the Iranian authorities indicated for the first time that they would consider offering work visas to registered Afghans provided that they first returned home to settle their families.

In Pakistan, preliminary needs assessments in the health, education, water and sanitation sectors were carried out in 38 key districts hosting Afghans. They underlined that both Afghans and Pakistanis live in some of the very poorest areas of the country, with social indicators well below international standards. It is anticipated that this first phase of data collection will feed into planning for an eventual Refugee-Affected Areas programme that will support communities hosting large Afghan refugee populations. The registration agreement in Pakistan will provide Afghans with an individual identity document valid for three years.

Constraints

The momentum of repatriation was largely determined – and will continue to be influenced by – the evolving circumstances in Afghanistan and the policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan. More investments are needed in development programmes and projects tailored to returnee and local needs in certain sectors. In view of the long-staying character of the remaining caseload, and the insistence of the asylum-country governments that all Afghans should

return home, maintaining the voluntary character of repatriation and improving the conditions for Afghans in Iran and Pakistan will be important protection challenges.

Operations

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

Budget and expenditure (USD)						
Country	Final budget			Expenditure		
	AB	SB ¹	Total	AB	SB	Total
Afghanistan	58,841,464	0	58,841,464	47,532,717	0	47,532,717
Islamic Republic of Iran	16,485,204	849,867	17,335,071	12,491,737	507,978	12,999,715
Pakistan	28,115,024	21,696,451	49,811,475	23,728,248	19,381,532	43,109,780
Regional activities ²	1,700,540	0	1,700,540	1,463,407	0	1,463,407
Total	105,142,231	22,546,318	127,688,549	85,216,110	19,889,510	105,105,619

¹ Does not include a 7 per cent support cost that is recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR.

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

Restricted voluntary contributions (USD)			
Earmarking	Donor	AB	SB
South-West Asia			
	European Commission	2,366,864	0
	Sweden	5,402,010	0
	United States	22,970,000	0
Sub-total		30,738,874	0
Afghanistan			
	Australia	2,688,372	0
	Australia for UNHCR	81,711	0
	Austria	7,094	0
	Denmark	3,249,859	0
	European Commission	7,277,837	0
	France	241,838	0
	Germany	1,551,675	0
	Japan	3,300,000	0
	Japan Association for UNHCR	1,762	0
	Liechtenstein	32,520	0
	Netherlands	2,410,000	0
	Norway	1,597,444	0
	Private donors in Italy	113,732	0
	Private donors in the United Kingdom	1,765	0
	Spain	235,632	0
	Switzerland	1,200,625	0
	United Kingdom	448,650	0
	United States	920,061	0
	USA for UNHCR	7,375	0
Sub-total		25,367,953	0

Earmarking	Donor	AB	SB
Islamic Republic of Iran			
	European Commission	1,504,837	0
	Japan	1,000,000	0
	Norway	43,277	0
	United States	144,627	0
Sub-total		2,692,741	0
Pakistan			
	<i>Amitié sans Frontières (Monaco)</i>	0	48,368
	<i>Association française de soutien à l'UNHCR</i>	0	118,484
	Australia for UNHCR	5,006	9,222
	<i>Deutsche Stiftung für UNO-Flüchtlingshilfe E.V.</i>	637,755	0
	European Commission	3,932,905	2,063,696
	Germany	296,209	0
	Islamic Association of Bahrain	0	9,970
	Italy	0	84,643
	Japan	2,500,000	0
	Japan Association for UNHCR	116,283	129,281
	Kuwait	0	500,000
	Private donors in Austria	1,568	59
	Private donors in Canada	0	192,369
	Private donors in the Czech Republic	148	0
	Private donors in Greece	0	10,349
	Private donors in Italy	10,123	26,214
	Private donors in the United States	0	500
	Private donors in the United Kingdom	0	3,565
	Online donations (Headquarters)	0	30,427
	<i>Société Générale Paris La Défense (France)</i>	20,400	0
	Spain	473,934	20,616
	United Kingdom	500,000	0
	United States	1,020,800	0
	USA for UNHCR	300,000	149,978
Sub-total		9,815,130	3,397,741
Total		68,614,698	3,397,741