

Afghanistan
Islamic Republic of Iran
Pakistan

Afghan returnees have just arrived at Kabul encashment centre (Afghanistan) where they will be provided with a grant as well as health, social and legal counselling.



South-West Asia





| Working environment |

The Afghan refugee situation is the world's largest protracted refugee situation, with some 1.7 million registered Afghans in Pakistan and almost 1 million in the Islamic Republic of Iran. In addition to the registered Afghan refugee population, an additional 1 million undocumented Afghans reside in Pakistan and a similar number in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Since 2002, some 5.7 million Afghans (4.6 million assisted by UNHCR) have opted to return voluntarily to Afghanistan, where they now represent about a quarter of the population. However, despite the best efforts of UNHCR and other humanitarian and development actors, their sustainable reintegration has remained elusive. The main reasons are an unpredictable security situation and the lack of basic facilities and livelihood opportunities.

In an effort to ensure a coordinated and consistent approach to the Afghan situation, UNHCR has engaged the Governments of all three affected countries and facilitated the articulation of a multi-year solutions strategy for Afghan Refugees. The *Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees to Support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries* was endorsed at an international conference in Geneva in May 2012.

| Strategy |

UNHCR is planning for the voluntary return of some 172,000 Afghan refugees in 2013: 150,000 from Pakistan, 20,000 from the Islamic Republic of Iran and 2,000 from other countries. There is increasing "asylum fatigue" in the Islamic Republics of Iran and

Pakistan, and authorities in both countries have stated that voluntary repatriation is the primary solution for the 2.7 million registered refugees in the region.

Afghan refugees opting for voluntary repatriation will be provided with repatriation grants of USD 150 per person. They will also receive health support, legal aid and social counselling, as well as information about mines and ordnance risks in areas of return.

To implement the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees, UNHCR in Afghanistan is working closely with government ministries, UN agencies and international and national NGOs, targeting specific accessible villages in areas of high return in order to facilitate sustainable reintegration. UNHCR is also advocating for the activities of the Solutions Strategy to be included in the Afghan Government's national priority programmes.

In Pakistan, the focus will be mainly on the Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas project, which supports activities that benefit both refugee and hosting communities, thereby facilitating coexistence and preserving asylum space.

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the primary focus will be on sector-based assistance to Afghan refugees. Programmes promoting education, poverty alleviation and livelihood activities, in particular, will help refugees reintegrate when they return to Afghanistan.

Although UNHCR will continue to advocate with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for it to allow the continued stay of Afghans and Iraqis in the country, voluntary repatriation remains the preferred solution for these refugees. Working in collaboration with the Governments of Afghanistan

and the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Office will evaluate the conditions in areas of return inside Afghanistan. It will also support interventions in the areas of water, electricity, access to roads, shelter, health, education and access to diversified livelihood opportunities, with a focus on food security.

To advocate for more resettlement places, UNHCR will continue to work closely with the contact group of concerned Governments to emphasize the urgent needs of female-headed households and vulnerable groups, including refugees with chronic medical conditions.

Projects will be developed, synergies sought with existing projects, and new sources of funding explored, to empower refugees to contribute to rebuilding Afghanistan as well as facilitate their reintegration. Activities will address current assistance gaps in the education, health and livelihoods sectors, both in Afghanistan and refugee-hosting countries.

| Constraints |

A complex array of security, political, and socio-economic factors in Afghanistan have contributed to a gradual reduction in the number of refugee returns from neighbouring countries. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, refugees have been especially hard hit by international sanctions as they are not protected by social safety nets. Meanwhile, hyper-inflation has substantially increased the cost of living for refugees while raising UNHCR's operating costs in the country.

Despite the Government of Pakistan's commitment to the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees which spans 2012-2014, it is possible that there will not be a legal framework for refugees in place in Pakistan in early 2013. UNHCR will therefore

continue with its advocacy and technical support on accession to the Refugee Convention and the drafting of a refugee law. The absence of legal or administrative frameworks necessitates *ad hoc* interventions on behalf of recognized refugees and asylum-seekers.

The planned withdrawal in 2014 of International Security Assistance Force troops could result in an increase in the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Afghanistan.

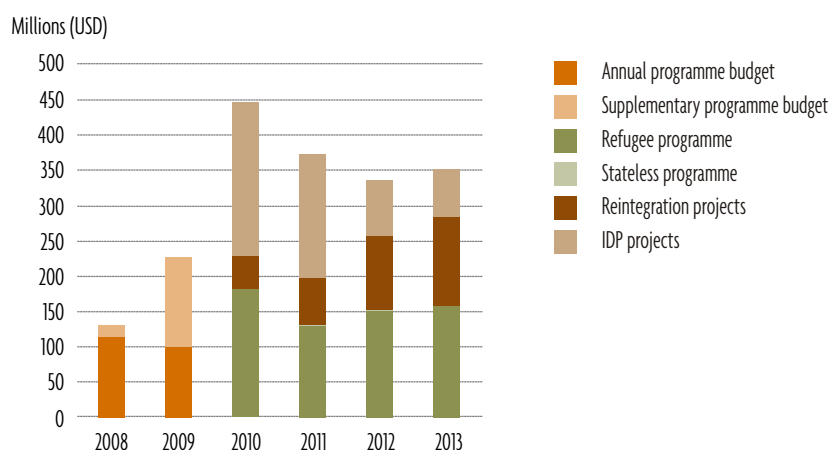
| Operations |

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

| Financial information |

The budgetary requirements for South-West Asia have remained relatively stable for the past few years, with net increases proportionate to new initiatives in the region. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the budgetary requirements increased from 2010 to 2013 with the introduction of the Health Insurance Scheme for Afghan Refugees. In Pakistan, budgetary needs increased dramatically in 2010 and 2011 due to a devastating flood that destroyed large areas of the country in 2010 and affected almost 20 million people, including refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants. With the launch of the multi-year Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees in 2012, the budgetary needs in the coming years are likely to increase, reflecting a more collaborative and robust response to the immense challenges arising from refugee return and displacement in the country.

UNHCR's budget in South-West Asia 2008 – 2013



UNHCR's budget in South-West Asia (USD)

OPERATION	2012 REVISED BUDGET (as of 30 June 2012)	2013				TOTAL
		REFUGEE PROGRAMME PILLAR 1	STATELESS PROGRAMME PILLAR 2	REINTEGRATION PROJECTS PILLAR 3	IDP PROJECTS PILLAR 4	
Afghanistan	139,665,105	38,226,788	0	65,740,767	27,352,675	131,320,230
Islamic Republic of Iran	53,221,255	59,558,289	0	0	0	59,558,289
Pakistan	143,905,331	59,930,184	1,489,107	59,679,717	40,215,305	161,314,312
Total	336,791,691	157,715,261	1,489,107	125,420,484	67,567,979	352,192,831