

South-West Asia

Recent Developments

At the time of going to print, planning for possible 2002 activities related to the Afghan crisis has not yet been finalised, owing to the rapidly changing situation in the region after the terrorist attacks on 11 September. These activities will be presented in an Addendum to this Appeal, which will be published once the needs have been assessed and the Supplementary Programme approved.

The events of 11 September 2001 have added a new and urgent dimension to Afghanistan's protracted political and humanitarian problems. The evacuation of all assistance agencies from Afghanistan has made it even more difficult to respond to the needs of an estimated over 6 million vulnerable Afghans. It has also impacted on population movements both internal and external. The conflict, civil disorder, and food shortages have already triggered large-scale migration from the main cities.

Afghanistan
Islamic Republic of Iran
Pakistan



It is estimated that over 1.2 million Afghans are currently internally displaced. Reports from within Afghanistan indicate that many people have fled the cities of Herat, Jalalabad, Kabul and Kandahar. Most appear to have sought refuge in rural areas, but increasing numbers are making their way towards borders, particularly towards Baluchistan and the North West Frontier Province in Pakistan. UNHCR and the Government of Pakistan estimate that the number of new arrivals during the month of October exceeded 100,000. These people are crossing illegally and seeking refuge with families and friends, keeping a low profile to avoid being sent back to Afghanistan.

During the last week of October the Government of Pakistan allowed UNHCR to establish a staging camp at Killi Faizo near the Chaman border-crossing into Baluchistan. The camp was rapidly utilized to its full capacity and negotiations about moving the people currently in the camp to more suitable sites are ongoing. A border monitoring system, using monitors hired from local tribes rather than regular UNHCR staff members, was instituted on 25 October. A total of eight teams are monitoring and interviewing new arrivals. Most say they fled because of the bombing, fear of forced recruitment, and food shortages.

Although the borders to the Islamic Republic of Iran remain closed, it is believed that hundreds of Afghans are arriving unofficially, seeking refuge in villages and cities. Reports indicate that Afghans would leave home if they could, but are more scared of being accommodated in IDP camps, where they fear they will be used as “human shields”, than of being at home. Displaced people who are assembling close to the borders are being accommodated in camps inside Afghanistan, assisted directly by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Iranian Red Crescent. Many Afghans are also returning to tranquil areas inside Afghanistan, following previously established migration patterns.

Strategic Objectives

All countries in the region have established contingency plans for potential refugee movements. The worst case scenario, jointly agreed upon by all United Nations agencies in the aftermath of the attacks on 11 September events, indicated that over 1.5 million people might flee from Afghanistan. UNHCR, with its mandate for refugees, co-ordinated these planning exercises with other UN Agencies and NGOs in close collaboration with the respective Governments. During the

first phase of this potential emergency the offices in the region have been preparing for a possible refugee influx of over 400,000 people. In addition, UNHCR stands ready to assist vulnerable persons inside Afghanistan, whenever possible.

UNHCR's protection and assistance activities will concentrate on refugees and returnees, while providing limited assistance to IDPs as part of the United Nations overall strategy for the region. The challenge is to ensure protection and at least minimum standards of treatment for new arrivals, and to meet the basic humanitarian needs of the entire refugee population. The basic humanitarian needs include food, shelter, water, sanitation, health care and community services. UNHCR will strive to respect family and community group unity and take gender issues into account when implementing protection and assistance projects. All activities will be co-ordinated with the host Governments, UN Agencies, NGOs and other humanitarian actors.

While assisting in the context of the present crises, it is imperative that the long-term objective of voluntary repatriation and support to returnees and their communities in Afghanistan is

not forgotten. UNHCR is planning to support 500,000 returnees to Afghanistan, should the present conditions change and return be advisable and sustainable.

Operations

All UNHCR operations in the region are further described in separate country chapters.

BUDGET (USD)	
Country	Annual Programme
Afghanistan	9,492,176
Islamic Republic of Iran	25,555,447
Pakistan	24,771,574
Total	59,819,197

Pakistan: Afghan refugee children in Shamshatoo site. *UNHCR/L. Boscardi.*

