

# Afghanistan

## Main Objectives

- Facilitate and co-ordinate the initial return of up to 1,200,000 refugees and IDPs.
- Monitor population movements to and inside Afghanistan.
- Provide returnee packages to returning refugees and IDPs and emergency assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs), in close co-operation with other agencies.
- Prepare for a multi-year repatriation and re-integration programme.
- Maintain a level of preparedness for a possible influx of refugees into neighbouring countries.

## PLANNING FIGURES<sup>1</sup>

Population	January 2002	December 2002
Returnees and IDPs	1,200,000	-

1. The planning figure will be revised from time to time to reflect the rapidly changing situation. This figure does not include returnees and IDPs who are assisted through the Annual Programme.

**TOTAL REQUIREMENTS:  
USD 119,191,920**

## WORKING ENVIRONMENT

### Recent Developments

The installation of the transitional authority in Kabul has led to further stabilisation in the country, and has contributed to reducing the one key obstacle to refugee returns - insecurity. UNHCR is currently planning a multi-year operation to support the return of the vast majority of more than five million Afghan refugees in exile. It is expected that between March and November 2002, more than one million persons may return to their places of origin. Consequently, UNHCR

operations in the region will focus on strengthening preparedness for returns, while not overlooking the need to maintain plans to address a possible outflow from Afghanistan.

With immediate prospects of Afghanistan remaining fragmented and, to a certain extent, unstable, Afghans may return to relatively stable areas either spontaneously or with assistance from UNHCR. For the time being, UNHCR will facilitate repatriation but not promote it. When the political and security situation is more stable and extends to wider areas of the country, the Office will move towards promoting voluntary repatriation.

Under the leadership of the United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) and in support of the inter-agency framework in Afghanistan, UNHCR has assumed a more expanded role to assist IDPs. The Office is undertaking an assistance programme that focuses on protection and durable solutions. In support of the other actors responding to the IDP crisis, UNHCR will also undertake emergency assistance. Under the present division of responsibilities, UNHCR has assumed a co-ordination role, most notably in the south, centre and east of Afghanistan.

### Constraints

UNHCR anticipates two major constraints to Afghans in certain areas, and ensuring the security of the humanitarian staff and of the beneficiaries. UNHCR, will therefore, adopt an approach based on opportunities, intervening when possible. It is impossible to predict at this stage, however, the accessibility and security of areas with the greatest needs.

## STRATEGY

### Protection and Solutions

UNHCR will facilitate the return and initial re-integration of IDPs and refugees during 2002, whilst undertaking a major planning process for a large-scale repatriation and return of refugees to Afghanistan over the next five years.

The following concerns underpin the Office's repatriation and return programme:

- Rapidly expanding border monitoring activities to determine the number of those returning and to identify vulnerable returnees (women head of households, elderly people, and unaccompanied children) with special protection needs, in order to assess their needs for material assistance.
- Extending protection and assistance to both new arrivals in host countries, to Afghans in various locations in Afghanistan, and to refugees and displaced people not contemplating immediate return.
- Establishing reliable baseline data (e.g. demographic and socio-economic) on the refugee population and on their intentions after return.
- Assessing the protection needs of Afghans throughout Afghanistan. Design targeted re-integration assistance, which will increase access to those in need.
- Avoiding a distinction being made between the initial re-integration assistance provided to returning IDPs and that provided to returning refugees.
- Placing appropriate safeguards to minimise the occurrence of non-refugees benefiting from repeated grants of assistance.

Tri-partite agreements between UNHCR, the host country and the country of origin provide a consistent legal framework for return, and offer a formal mechanism for co-ordination. UNHCR is concluding such

agreements with the interim Afghan administration, the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as with Pakistan. Additional short-term, ad-hoc agreements with local authorities in Afghanistan will also be considered when necessary, to facilitate the return process.

UNHCR has begun to prepare for returns, by re-establishing border monitoring systems, collecting information about existing refugees in the countries of asylum, and setting up a "go and see" system under which selected refugee representatives will visit places of origin to ascertain the feasibility of return. UNHCR will negotiate guarantees for the safety and rights of returnees and IDPs with the new authorities in Afghanistan.

In Afghanistan, UNHCR will also help rebuild the capacity of national systems. By contributing to the establishment of a legal, administrative, and social framework that supports the return and the smooth re-integration of refugees and IDPs, UNHCR will ensure that guiding ministries become genuine co-owners of the return and re-integration process. Such a framework will need to address human rights issues such as: physical security and freedom of movement; legal security; arbitrary arrest and detention; potential statelessness; access to basic social services; access to assistance; recovery of property; support to female-headed households; and other issues related to the protection of women and children.

### Assistance

UNHCR planning is being co-ordinated with that of development agencies and other partners to ensure that relief assistance for immediate return dovetails harmoniously longer-term re-integration. The aim of the assistance will be to support displaced people and to strengthen and support protection mechanisms to host communities through assistance. The establishment of camps will be discouraged and settlements will be kept to a minimum size, in order to prevent pull-

factors to certain locations. UNHCR will, whenever possible, provide assistance through partners, with a view to strengthen and increase existing links with international and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), build their capacity in the relevant aspects of protection, and ensure the long-term continuation of programmes for the re-integration of IDPs and returnees. UNHCR is establishing framework agreements with selected international NGOs or agencies to provide the umbrella arrangements needed through which Afghan NGOs could be contracted and strengthened.

Communication is an integral component of the operation, particularly mass information in Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries. Key target audiences include returnees, IDPs, refugees in neighbouring countries, authorities in Afghanistan, and authorities in neighbouring countries. The overall objective is to ensure that Afghan refugees and IDPs are able to make a free and informed choice concerning their return, with adequate information on conditions in their home villages.

Preparedness for the return of refugees will also take place in the countries of asylum. UNHCR offices in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan and other countries hosting Afghans, will design and implement harmonised repatriation assistance. UNHCR and its partners are strengthening their presence at the borders, to monitor and interview returnees, and to intervene with the respective authorities, when necessary. The Office is also providing training on the protection of returnees and refugees to the respective administrative bodies. A strong field presence of UNHCR and its partners on the main routes and areas of return, will seek to ensure that key issues such as the right to return to places of their choice, family unity, transfer of personal assets, special assistance and protection measures for vulnerable returnees, mine awareness and observance of the rule of law are respected.

The Office will also collaborate with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) in addressing detention issues, conducting tracing and in the monitoring of the general human rights conditions in the areas where returnees settle. UNHCR will also prepare profiles of districts in Afghanistan likely to receive returnees. The principal long-term aim will be to gather data that can be used to start up development programmes which will benefit returnees and to which they can eventually contribute. In the short-term, it will facilitate the establishment of baseline data through the Afghan Information Management System (AIMS) which will help prospective returnees decide whether or not to go home, as well as help UNHCR and its partners plan for the returns. AIMS offers a useful mechanism which will eventually expand to include development-related baseline data, such as employment opportunities.

To provide further protection, and in the search for durable solutions for asylum-seekers and refugees in Afghanistan, UNHCR will work with the interim administration and local authorities to establish a national refugee legislation and local structures for asylum seekers. The aim is to enable asylum-seekers to enter/or remain in Afghanistan, lodge their applications, and have their cases reviewed by a competent body.

Refugees who wish to register with and receive support from UNHCR can do so at the newly established voluntary repatriation centres in the Islamic Republic of Iran and in Pakistan. Regardless of whether refugees are transported to the Afghan border by the Government (as in the Islamic Republic of Iran) or organise their own transport (as in Pakistan) UNHCR will pay for their transportation costs, within the country up to a figure of around USD 20 per person. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, where the distances to the

border are often very long, returnees will also receive blankets and jerry cans.

Transport within Afghanistan will be organised by returnees themselves, with cash grants being provided.

Returnee families (refugees and IDPs) will receive food and non-food items, and packages which consist of lanterns, hygienic cloth, blankets, soap, sleeping mats, jerry cans, buckets and shelter repair kits consisting of hammers, axes, nails and door hinges. To ensure that returnees have access to water, wells will be dug to provide drinking water and springs will be rehabilitated to provide water for domestic purposes. To secure access to basic health care for returnees during the initial period following their return, UNHCR, in co-ordination with other relevant government ministries, will rehabilitate health centres and provide medical kits in remote returnee areas. Partner organisations will also operate mobile clinics to assist refugees en route to their home villages and, in need of medical attention. For those returnees in need of shelter assistance, standard shelter materials comprising of beams, nails, doors and windows will be provided. To foster peaceful co-existence among the returnees and their community, UNHCR in collaboration with other agencies, will also make sure that the shelter needs of other needy community members are met.

The recent political developments in Afghanistan recognise the importance of women in stabilising the community and in rebuilding Afghanistan. In support of this positive development, UNHCR will provide women and village communities with vocational training, empowerment, and community mobilisation activities. To further the education of returnees, and increase access of school-age children to primary education, school buildings will be rehabilitated in areas with large returnee populations that do not fall within the priority areas of other agencies, teacher training kits will be provided, and a one-time provision of school materials will be

given to all returnee children in their first year.

Forest degradation has been a major concern in Afghanistan. For the last two years, UNHCR has financed a pilot project, implemented by an Afghan agency (AREA), to establish tree nurseries and carry out experimental projects for alternative cooking/heating fuel sources. As soon as the situation allows, an evaluation will be made of the project, and returnee communities will have the possibility of undertaking small-scale fruit gardening in their individual homes.

To promote the self-sufficiency of returnees, UNHCR in co-ordination with the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) and NGOs will ensure the re-establishment of farming activities of refugees and IDPs in their areas of return. Returnees will be provided with seeds (all year-round-wheat and assorted vegetables) and traditional agricultural tools (hoes, sickles, watering cans, etc). UNHCR will also assist families to generate income through other small-scale activities.

## **ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION**

### **Management Structure**

UNHCR has so far established its field presence in Kabul, Herat, Jalalabad, Kandahar and Mazar-i-Sharif. Its previous network of field units (12 prior to 11 September 2001) will be expanded to 22, thus further enhancing the Office's extensive field presence. UNHCR's operations will be particularly active in key geographic regions where returns are expected. National staff will play an important role to promote sustainable peace in Afghanistan. Former UNHCR female staff as well as national staff who were "in exile" in neighbouring countries have resumed their duties. UNHCR plans to increase its existing national staff component up to 500 persons, and the Office will make every effort to employ

Afghans in senior positions. A public information officer is based in Kabul, with responsibilities to ensure a regional and integrated approach. Local staff will also be identified for public information activities. As part of the global information strategy, an internal information mechanism is being put in place to ensure timely and relevant reporting throughout the region, to Geneva and thence to New York, and vice-versa.

### Co-ordination

UNHCR's Regional Co-ordinator is in charge of the repatriation programme in the region. UNHCR will ensure close co-ordination with other actors to promote longer-term recovery and reconstruction. Strategies to that effect need to include the development needs and capacity of returnees, representing potentially a fifth of the Afghan population. Particular efforts will be made to co-ordinate activities and share information with key UN agencies and organisations which provide assistance to returnees and IDPs. This will also facilitate the gathering of protection information including numbers, locations, and return requirements. Co-ordination will also be sought with traditional partners within the UN, international and national NGOs, the Red Cross and Red Crescent family, and through active participation in UNOCHA's Humanitarian Information Centres, working-level donor meetings and sectoral meetings. UNHCR is also exploring new partnerships with the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and bi-lateral institutions.

### OFFICES

Kabul (supervising Field Unit Ghazni)

Herat (supervising Field Units Islam Qala and Farah)

Jalalabad (supervising Field Unit Khost)

Kandahar (supervising Field Units Laskargah, Spin Boldak, Zaranj and Dilaram)

Mazar-i-Sharif (supervising Field Units Pul-i-Khumri and Kunduz)

### PARTNERS

To be determined.

### BUDGET (USD)

Activities and Services	Supplementary Programme
Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination	11,004,913
Community Services	612,000
Crop Production	4,610,000
Domestic Needs	7,707,100
Education	1,166,000
Food	162,000
Forestry	320,000
Health / Nutrition	2,617,500
Income Generation	879,000
Legal Assistance / Protection	1,348,000
Operational Support (to Agencies)	3,767,700
Sanitation	0
Shelter / Other Infrastructure	38,513,800
Transport / Logistics	25,560,785
Water	5,851,350
<b>Total Operations</b>	<b>104,120,148</b>
Programme Support	15,071,772
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>119,191,920</b>