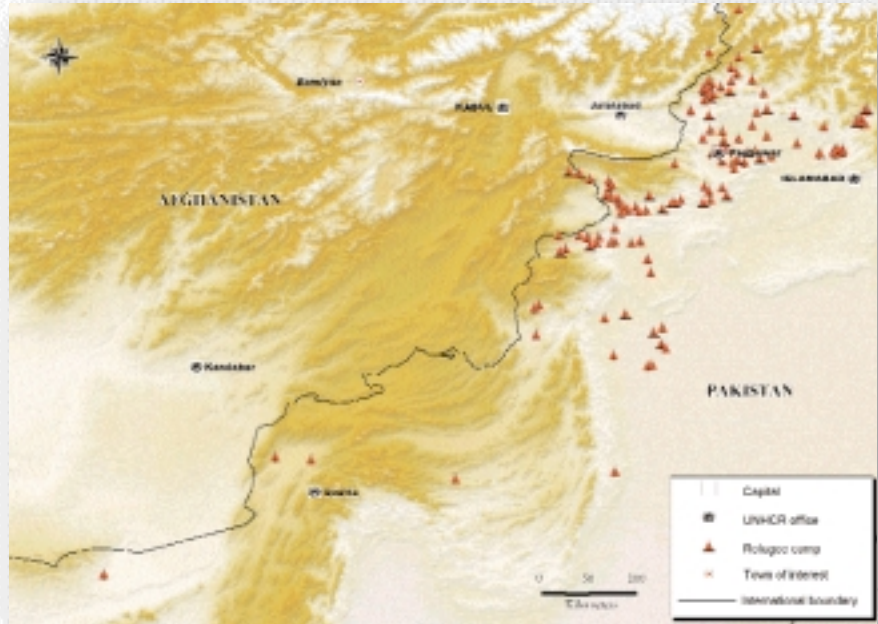


Pakistan

in short

Main Objectives

- Support the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees (individuals and groups) by making transportation available and offering repatriation grants.
- Protect and assist new arrivals and work with the Government on establishing joint screening committees to identify those in need of international protection.
- Continue limited community-based assistance in refugee villages (mainly for health, education and water) with maximum refugee participation; conduct skills-training and literacy classes for refugee women to increase their self-reliance.
- Provide a rapid response to the protection needs of a limited number of vulnerable Afghan refugees for whom resettlement may be the only viable solution (women at risk and refugees with security problems).
- Work with a network of NGOs to support vulnerable urban non-Afghan refugees pending their resettlement or repatriation.



PLANNING FIGURES

Population	Jan. 2001	Dec. 2001
Afghan Refugees ¹	1,200,000	1,200,000
Urban Refugees ²	2,400	2,400
Total	1,202,400	1,202,400

¹ UNHCR expects that 100,000 Afghan refugees will repatriate voluntarily from Pakistan in 2001. These returns may, to some extent, be offset by the arrival of a number of new refugees due to insecurity, drought and harsh living conditions in Afghanistan. The high birth rate among the Afghan population (4-6%) further fuels the expectation that year-end figures will remain unchanged. The Government of Pakistan estimates that a further one million Afghan refugees may be scattered in urban areas.

² An increasing number of urban non-Afghan refugees depend upon UNHCR's limited assistance for their survival. Their numbers are expected to remain unchanged throughout 2001 despite the achievement of durable solutions for some individuals.

TOTAL REQUIREMENTS • USD 18,377,812

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Recent Developments

In June 2000 the Government of Pakistan announced its intention to introduce a new sales tax and conduct a survey of income and assets (in which Afghan refugees are also expected to participate) in a bid to increase revenues and reduce corruption. The move triggered a strike by merchants and owners of small businesses and many economic activities ground to a halt. Continuing skirmishes with India in the Kashmir region

and a recent wave of bomb blasts in Lahore and Quetta did not directly affect the refugee programme. UNHCR was concerned about the detention of 24 urban asylum-seekers in Islamabad under the new provisions of the Foreigners Act as well as about reports that more than 200 Afghan men allegedly deported by authorities in the Gulf States transited Pakistan on their way to Afghanistan.

Afghan refugees in Pakistan are no longer a homogenous group. The majority is now believed to be living in urban areas (rather than in the refugee villages) where access to humanitarian assistance is limited. Due to the ongoing war and lack of development aid to Afghanistan, it is expected that refugees will continue to arrive in Pakistan almost as fast as others repatriate. However, the new refugees, many of whom belong to ethnic and religious minorities, are from urban backgrounds and are generally better educated than those of previous years and therefore have very different protection needs.

The identification of a range of solutions calls for creative thinking. In a recent mission to the region to assess an operation that began some 20 years ago, the UN High Commissioner met with senior Pakistani officials, UN agencies, NGOs and UNHCR staff in Islamabad. She highlighted the following urgent needs: to increase funding for Afghan refugees in general; to identify mutually acceptable local solutions (including the right to asylum and freedom from detention) for those unable to return home in the immediate future; to increase resettlement opportunities and support from the international community; and to strengthen dialogue with the Taliban to improve the prospects for voluntary repatriation.

Constraints

Against a backdrop of economic difficulties, Afghans have become the target of harassment and blame for various socio-economic problems. The effects of a protracted drought in Baluchistan have further compounded their situation. This has caused refugees and local residents to compete for scarce water supplies and reduced income-earning opportunities in agriculture and other sectors.

An assessment of asylum in Pakistan points to changing trends. For example, a new government policy subjects all Afghan nationals to the provisions of the Foreigners Act of 1946 which requires valid passports and visas for entry into the country. This Act lacks any specific provisions on asylum, and now includes a recently introduced amendment which prohibits 'illegal immigrants' from seeking employment and stipulates heavy prison sentences and fines for illegal entry. As a result newly arrived Afghan refugees are vulnerable and could be pushed back or deported. UNHCR is hoping to establish a joint screening mechanism in line with those set up in the Islamic Republic of Iran to assess the situation of new arrivals and prevent forcible return of those with legitimate claims.

Although a substantial number of Afghans are already well integrated into the Pakistani employment market, the Government would like to see that all Afghans return to Afghanistan whenever possible. Although this may be a feasible option for refugees originating from areas bordering Pakistan, conditions in the north and elsewhere do not easily lend themselves to large-scale UNHCR-sponsored voluntary repatriation.

STRATEGY

Protection and Solutions

Almost 2.5 million Afghan refugees have repatriated from Pakistan since 1990. In recent years, the pace of return has slowed to some 100,000 per year, mainly due to continuing insecurity and the limited absorption capacity of areas of return in Afghanistan. The lack of international support for the Taliban regime has precluded the reconstruction and rehabilitation of basic public services. Nevertheless, it is expected that an additional 100,000 Afghan refugees will repatriate from Pakistan in 2001. UNHCR will register and interview them to verify that their return is voluntary and provide repatriation forms entitling them to grants and material support in Afghanistan. The Office will also provide them with information about the conditions in their return communities and assess their needs for reintegration assistance. For refugees returning in groups, these requirements will be communicated to UNHCR's offices and NGOs located inside Afghanistan so that appropriate action can be taken.

A number of protection concerns have arisen among some Afghan refugees in Pakistan, particularly in urban areas. These concerns have included serious threats (including killings) and intimidation of members of the Afghan opposition, allegedly by followers of the Taliban movement, as well as harassment of refugees without valid documents, coupled with extortion. Resettlement is therefore the most appropriate solution for this group. To process the nearly 4,000 new requests received by UNHCR per month, the Office is considering launching a special refugee status determination project to help clear the growing backlog.

Urban refugees of other nationalities number more than 2,000. These individuals are based in the major cities and are completely dependent on humanitarian assistance for their survival as they are considered to be illegal immigrants and not allowed to work. UNHCR will work closely with a network of national NGOs in Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Quetta and Rawalpindi to identify those in need of international protection. Eligible individuals for which resettlement is the only option will subsequently be helped to resettle in a third country and others will be encouraged and assisted to repatriate to their country of origin. Training on international refugee law and interviewing techniques will be organised for these NGO partners to enable them to carry out their work more effectively. In addition to urban refugees, the NGO network will also serve Afghan refugees with protection problems. These individuals will contact the NGOs and then be referred to UNHCR if they meet the criteria for resettlement.

UNHCR will continue to encourage the Government to adopt a national refugee law. A series of activities, including workshops,

round-table discussions and visits to refugee locations will take place to raise awareness of refugee issues among government officials, the media, academics and the NGO community.

Assistance

Afghan refugees and their family members in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), Baluchistan and the Punjab who decide to return voluntarily in groups will travel together with



their belongings by truck through border crossing points. Upon arrival in Afghanistan, all repatriating refugees will receive a cash grant in Pakistani rupees equivalent to approximately USD 90 per family. They will use part of this grant to pay for onward transport to their final destination in Afghanistan. In addition, it is expected that up to 5,000 Afghan refugees living in Karachi may decide to repatriate. This group will be assisted with transportation up to the Chagai border point in Baluchistan. UNHCR will maintain an adequate stock of plastic sheeting for distribution to returnees inside Afghanistan. WFP will supply returnees with 300 kgs of wheat per family (sufficient for a six-month period).

Due to the continuous fighting in northern Afghanistan, it is expected that up to 30,000 new Afghan refugees will need UNHCR's support in Pakistan. A one-off aid package will be distributed to those who register and agree to settle in the refugee villages. In addition, newly arrived refugees in NWFP will receive WFP assistance. Assistance in the refugee villages

will primarily focus on health and education. More than 120 government-run health units will deliver basic health services to the refugees, including maternity and child health care, vaccinations and TB control. UNHCR will give the Government some financial support to help it give refugees access to hospital care. Up to 160,000 refugee students are expected to attend primary schools, 30 per cent of them girls. Of these, 8,000 girls will attend home-based schools in Baluchistan. This will require an increase in funds to cover teachers' salaries and school materials. UNHCR will standardise teacher training, improve teaching resources and encourage more female refugees to work as teachers.

In Baluchistan, after completion of the ongoing transfer of 48 drought-afflicted refugee villages to eight unaffected sites, new wells will be dug and ageing water equipment in functioning wells replaced (including pumps installed about 20 years ago) with the participation of refugee committees and volunteers. Other water-related work will include the chlorination of wells, the repair of tube wells and the installation of concrete rings and pipes. UNHCR and its partners will procure insecticides to combat malaria and new latrines will be dug using refugee labour.

Refugee women have restricted access to services due to conservative religious interpretations and cultural values.

Concerns related to sexual and gender-based violence will be addressed through a network of community-based volunteers and committees involving educated refugee women. Training on women's rights will be conducted for UNHCR and NGO staff and the refugees themselves. In Baluchistan, more than 60 informal education centres will deliver life skills and literacy courses for more than 1,000 women. Similar centres will exist in the Punjab for about 210 women and girls. Micro-credit schemes, skills-training and support for income-generation will target up to 2,000 refugee women in Baluchistan and the Punjab.

UNHCR will give special attention to the needs of refugee children and adolescents to help them lead a more normal life in exile. A network of some 90 community youth workers will oversee programmes ranging from the publication of a children's magazine to the setting up of 25 youth welfare organisations and 40 children's groups. Up to 14,000 'peace packs' will be made available for Afghan refugee children through an international NGO.

Urban refugees of other nationalities (mainly Somalis, Iraqis, Iranians) will receive legal aid and counselling regarding their status and other issues. UNHCR will provide the most needy among them with subsistence allowances to meet their basic needs for food, housing and education pending their resettlement or repatriation. Those with specific medical problems will be helped to access treatment.

Desired Impact

UNHCR's aim is that all newly arrived Afghan refugees in Pakistan with valid claims have access to international protection; that those who arrived prior to 1997 and who were accepted on a *prima facie* basis are returning to Afghanistan voluntarily; and that vulnerable groups have access to basic humanitarian assistance while in Pakistan. The end goal is to help Afghan refugees assume responsibility for their own lives through increased participation in community-based activities in the refugee villages. It is hoped that activities to generate greater public awareness of the plight of refugees and their need for protection, especially in urban areas, will act as an effective counterweight to xenophobic tendencies and advance their work opportunities pending long-term solutions.

ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Management

The country programme will comprise 23 international and 175 national staff. Of the latter category, 78 are regular UNHCR posts and 97 are RIFAH project posts. In addition, three Junior Professional Officers will support the operation. Several new posts have recently been created to respond to an increasing demand for refugee status determination and other protection-related work and two new protection posts will be created in 2001. The operation is supervised by the Representative and his staff based in Islamabad, from where support is given to refugee villages in the Punjab and to urban (non-Afghan) refugees. UNHCR's offices in Peshawar and Quetta are strategically located in the vicinity of over 200 refugee villages in the NWFP and Baluchistan.

OFFICES

Islamabad	Quetta
Peshawar	

Co-ordination

The refugee programme in Pakistan will continue to be implemented with the support of the Government (through the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions and Northern Areas

BUDGET (USD)

Activities and Services	Annual Programme
Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination	2,159,801
Community Services	545,576
Domestic Needs/Household Support	2,272,041
Education	4,754,587
Health/Nutrition	3,993,833
Income Generation	67,715
Legal Assistance	628,745
Operational Support (to Agencies)	936,726
Sanitation	508,658
Transport/Logistics	209,511
Water (non-agricultural)	409,908
Total Operations	16,487,101
Programme Support	1,890,711
Total	18,377,812

and RIFAH) as well as eight international and nine national NGOs. They will be assisted by the refugees themselves, who have formed committees to deal with the day-to-day management of, for example, water supply services. Co-operation with other UN agencies is strengthened through weekly briefings. WFP will continue to give each repatriating family 300 kgs of wheat, and will also give newly arrived refugees in North West Frontier Province food supplies for 12 months. UNICEF is expected to provide technical advice on issues related to education. UNDCP will be involved in raising awareness among refugees about the problems related to drug use. It is hoped that contacts with the World Bank will lead it to become more involved in educational programmes for refugees.

PARTNERS

Government Agencies

Ministry of States and Frontier Regions and Northern Areas

NGOs

Afghan Medical Welfare Association

Church World Service

Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees

Frontier Primary Health Care

Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ)

Health Net International

International Rescue Committee

Kuwait Joint Relief Committee

Mercy Corps International

Ockenden International

Pakistan Red Crescent Society

Rifah Foundation Sayyad Jamaluddin Afghani Welfare Organisation

Save the Children Fund (USA and Sweden)

Savera Counselling Services

Society for Human Rights and Prisoners Aid (SHARP)

Union Aid for Afghan Refugees