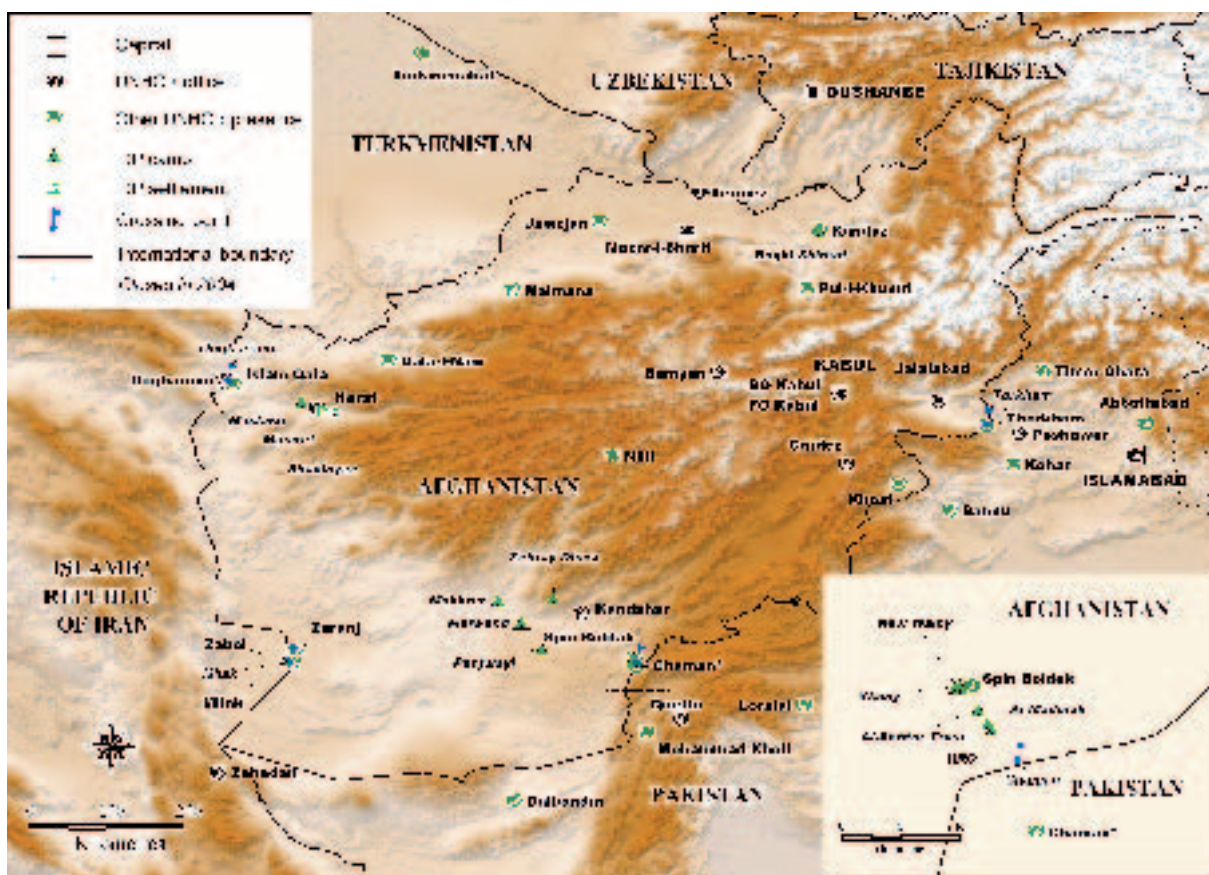


Afghanistan



Main objectives

UNHCR's plan for the third consecutive year of its Afghan Return and Reintegration Operation was to facilitate the voluntary return and initial reintegration of 947,000 displaced Afghans (refugees and IDPs) to communities of their choice. UNHCR sought to step up its efforts to develop the capacity of the Afghan authorities to plan, manage and support the return and reintegration processes. This entailed advocating for the Government to design key national development programmes with returnee needs in view. Other key objectives of the programme were returnee monitoring, and the provision of legal aid and assistance to the most vulnerable returnees, especially women at risk.

Impact

- The number of returnees to Afghanistan in 2004 was even higher than in 2003. In 2004, 760,900 Afghan refugees returned with the assistance of

UNHCR and its partners (377,600 from the Islamic Republic of Iran, and 383,300 from Pakistan), along with 27,400 IDPs. By the end of 2004, some 3.4 millions Afghans had returned from abroad since 2002, more than three million of them with UNHCR's assistance.

- As the "focal point" for the government-led Consultative Group on Returnees and IDPs, UNHCR continued to assist the Government in facilitating the coordination of returnee and IDP matters under the umbrella of the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MORR).
- UNHCR maintained an effective monitoring and intervention system through its network of offices despite deteriorating security which prevented access to a significant part of the country.
- The return of more than 3.4 million Afghans underlined and contributed to the ongoing process of political normalization. It also enlivened the economy, with the return of skilled Afghans and reintegration assistance in the areas of return, but at the same time it placed an additional strain on an already weak social infrastructure.

- Though on a smaller scale than in 2003, the main returnee areas continued to benefit from initial reintegration support in the form of individual shelter assistance, the establishment of community-based water points, the implementation of labour-intensive infrastructure projects and skills development programmes. UNHCR strongly advocated the targeting of return areas in national development programmes, with some success, but the pace of roll-out of these programmes remained slow.

The security situation deteriorated in the period leading up to the presidential election. For returnees and IDPs the main threats were localised conflicts and banditry. In 2004, anti-government activity in the eastern and southern part of the country led to numerous attacks on government, UN and NGO staff, resulting in several deaths. Only 27,400 IDPs returned to their homes in 2004. This low figure is explained by continued insecurity in the north-west during the first part of the year, and the prevailing drought in the south.

Working environment

The context

In 2004, Afghanistan took several strides forward in terms of implementation of the Bonn Peace Agreement. In January, a new national constitution came into existence; in the latter part of the year the Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) process progressed significantly; and, most significantly, presidential elections were held in October 2004, leading to the formation of a Government in December (some 850,000 Afghans had been enabled to cast their votes in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan).

Constraints

Security concerns drastically curtailed UNHCR's presence and reach in the south, east and south-east of the country. The development of a legal and judicial system constituted another key challenge for the Government. Land and property claims have continued to be a major issue for many returnees.

The sustainable reintegration of refugees and IDPs was threatened by the problems of access to housing (particularly in urban areas), employment opportunities, and basic social services. There was some progress on these issues, but the operational capacity of the Government remained limited.

Persons of concern				
Main origin/Type of population	Total in country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Islamic Republic of Iran (returnees)	515,200	377,600	49	48
Pakistan (returnees)	424,500	383,300	46	49
IDPs	159,500	-	-	-
Returned IDPs	27,400	-	47	-

Income and expenditure (USD) Annual programme budget				
Revised budget	Income from contributions ¹	Other funds available ²	Total funds available	Total expenditure
77,927,929	33,647,044	47,420,483	81,067,527	77,788,777

¹ Includes income from contributions earmarked at the country level.

² Includes allocations by UNHCR from unearmarked or broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments. The above figures do not include costs at Headquarters.



Afghanistan: During 2004, the majority of students in secondary high schools in Kabul province were refugees, most of whom came back from Pakistan in the last few years. Kabul is the largest gathering spot for refugees from Pakistan before they continue the journey back to their homes outside the city. *UNHCR/Lana Slezic*

Funding

Donors supported UNHCR's Afghan operation generously in 2004, as in the preceding two years. In 2004, the annual budget for the Afghan Operation of USD 127.4 million was 99 per cent funded. This support is clear testimony to the continued commitment of the international community, and an expression of confidence in the role played by UNHCR in the country.

Achievements and impact

Protection and solutions

A durable solution in the form of voluntary repatriation was achieved for some 790,000 Afghan returnees (refugees and IDPs). In assisting Afghans to fulfil their fundamental right to return home in safety and dignity, UNHCR paid special attention to the



extremely vulnerable cases, notably unaccompanied children and women, through family-tracing, reunification and referral to appropriate shelter networks.

Since early 2002, UNHCR staff have interviewed 278,500 returnees in 130 districts and 23 provinces. The reach of UNHCR's monitoring in returnee areas was satisfactory in 2003, but unfortunately it diminished in 2004 owing to the security situation. Three

years of returnee monitoring produced clear evidence that the circumstances of returnees did not differ fundamentally from those of their neighbours in receiving communities. The data also brought to the fore the most critical issues facing returnees, namely land and property disputes, forced recruitment and illegal taxation. Three thematic monitoring exercises were conducted in 2004 to look at urban returnees, women returnees and reintegration in the education sector.

In order to help returnees solve the most critical issues they face upon return, UNHCR took a number of initiatives in close cooperation with the Afghan authorities and local and international partner NGOs. Returnees' access to legal information and advice was increased with the opening by the Norwegian Refugee Council of an additional three Information and Legal Aid Centres (ILACs) in Bamyan, Maimana and Kabul. In 2004, 1,332 cases were registered in seven ILACs – dealing with the concerns of 291,000 returnees – of which 240 cases were resolved.

Afghans also returned from non-neighbouring countries, either with the help of government-funded schemes in Europe, Australia and Indonesia (743 people) or with the assistance of UNHCR elsewhere (401 people).

Activities and assistance

Community services: UNHCR continued to identify the most vulnerable returnees at the main encashment centres. Referral systems still remained weak, for lack of efficient referral and follow-up mechanisms, or indeed of appropriate institutions (governmental and non-governmental). MORR and UNHCR are currently developing a proposal for a referral network which will be managed by MORR.

Domestic needs/Household support: In early 2004, UNHCR decided to substitute a cash grant of eight US dollars per person for the package of food and non-food items formerly distributed to returnees, leaving it to returnee families to decide how best to spend it on re-establishing their homes. WFP continued to provide food to those who were returning to six provinces suffering from generalized food insecurity. Non-food items were distributed on an exceptional basis, such as to returnees from the new camps in Pakistan after their closure, or to

those from South Waziristan in Pakistan returning to Paktika province in Afghanistan. Some 41,000 vulnerable returnees and IDPs received non-food items under the "Winterization Preparedness Project".

Health/Nutrition: UNHCR's involvement in health was limited to its support to some medical posts in IDP settlements and encashment centres.

Income generation: The wide variety of labour-intensive infrastructure rehabilitation projects supported by UNHCR provided returnee communities with some 300,000 labour/days. These projects entailed small-scale rehabilitation of irrigation canals, access roads and suspension bridges and formed part of the National Emergency Employment Programme administered by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD). Vocational and skills development programmes continued to target returnees in need, with a special focus on women.

Legal assistance: UNHCR provided inputs to BBC broadcasts in Dari and Pashto so that potential returnees in Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran continued to have access to regularly updated information on the conditions prevailing in Afghanistan. UNHCR and its partners finalized the draft of a property manual due for publication in early 2005. Along with the continued provision of legal advice and information to returnees in ILACs, UNHCR paid special attention to the fate of women at risk through the support of two safe houses in Kabul and Herat and its close association with the development of a shelter network. Discussions have progressed on the development of rights-based returnee monitoring, which will be conducted in partnership with the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) and is expected to commence in 2005. Important training activities conducted by UNHCR focused on the rights of returnees and IDPs, various aspects of the return and reintegration operation and the planned accession of Afghanistan to the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol.

Operational support (to agencies): UNHCR assisted MORR in developing its operational capacity through the recruitment of capacity development advisers and various training activities. MORR also received assistance from UNHCR in the form of office supplies and equipment, as did MRRD. Training was also provided to NGO partners.

Shelter/Other infrastructure: Some 26,500 returnee families received assistance to rebuild their houses. This assistance comprised the provision of shelter material (iron or wooden beams, lintels, windows and doors, and tools) and a cash-for-work grant ranging from USD 50 to USD 100 per family according to the type of house constructed. Through a participatory beneficiary selection process, UNHCR targeted the most vulnerable returnees. In 2004, 38 per cent of beneficiaries selected were families headed by widows, 43 per cent were families headed by senior citizens, and 18 per cent were families with disabled members. By the end of the year, 98.7 per cent of required shelter was completed.

Transport/Logistics: At nine encashment centres inside Afghanistan, returnees received a cash travel grant, ranging from USD 3 to USD 35, depending on the final destination. UNHCR distributed some USD 17.6 million worth of transport grants in 2004, bringing the cumulative total since 2002 to USD 57.4 million. At the end of the year, UNHCR maintained warehousing facilities in eight locations. Working alongside IOM, UNHCR provided transport assistance to IDPs returning from the South.

Water: In 2004, UNHCR took the decision to implement half of its water programme through MRRD's Water Supply and Sanitation Programme in a bid to support the Ministry in its capacity building efforts. Joint Technical Monitoring Teams, comprising staff from MRRD, UNDP and UNHCR, oversaw the implementation of the programme. Of 2,110 water points planned, some 1,340 had been completed by the end of January 2005.

Organization and implementation

Management

At the beginning of the reporting period, UNHCR's office in Afghanistan had one branch office (Kabul), four suboffices (Herat, Jalalabad, Kandahar, Mazar), three field offices (Kabul, Gardez and Bamyan), 10 field units and one small supporting unit in Islamabad, Pakistan. By the end of 2004, UNHCR maintained 522 staff positions in Afghanistan, comprising 469 Afghan and 53 international staff. During 2004, UNHCR reduced its overall staff contingent by

40 per cent, but at the same time increased the number of positions held by senior Afghan staff. The many security incidents, particularly during the first nine months of the year, constituted a real and constant threat for UNHCR staff in Afghanistan. UNHCR ensured that all field offices, including staff guest-houses, were equipped to meet the Minimum Operational Security Standards (MOSS). Each suboffice underwent an audit by the resident internal auditors (Office of Internal Oversight) in Islamabad and subsequently implemented their recommendations.

Working with others

UNHCR entered into agreements with five government partners, 71 NGOs and two UN agencies. UNHCR's approach to partnerships continued to be guided by two main ambitions: to support the capacity of Afghan authorities and civil society organizations (local NGOs, AIHRC) to take gradual ownership and responsibility for the protection and achievement of durable solutions for returnees, IDPs, asylum-seekers and refugees; and to advocate the targeting of the main areas of return by national development programmes.

Overall assessment

The Afghan Return and Reintegration Operation made steady progress in 2004 in a volatile and challenging environment, giving rise to continued but cautious optimism. Although Afghanistan made gradual but steady progress towards political normalization, insecurity continued to prevail in parts of the country. By relying increasingly on Afghan partners, UNHCR was able to adapt to an environment in which its operational reach was significantly reduced.

The processes of reconstruction continued, though at a slow pace. Key challenges were enforcement of the rule of law, the establishment of a judicial system, access to basic social services, and the development of infrastructure. The implementation of major development programmes was minimal, especially in the rural areas, and migration from rural to urban areas was an increasingly common trend.

In asylum countries, particularly in the Islamic Republic of Iran, pressure on Afghans to repatriate was ratcheted up in 2004. Mindful that the

reconstruction of Afghanistan is still at an early stage, UNHCR continued to advocate a gradual return. It also made use of tripartite agreements to ensure the continued voluntary character of return.

UNHCR continued to fund directly initial reintegration activities whilst intensifying its efforts to link with longer-term development programmes. Key obstacles to reintegration remained the lack of employment opportunities, access to social housing, especially in the urban areas, and inadequate management of underdeveloped watersheds (i.e. drainage basins without development affecting the quality or quantity of water). The tackling of these long-term development issues clearly calls for the timely involvement of actors possessing both the required technical expertise and capacity. UNHCR sustained its efforts to forge policy and operational linkages with development actors. UNHCR also strived to contribute to joint programming through the Ogata initiative (Phase IV) and was actively engaged in the UN development planning process (CCA and UNDAF).

Offices
<p>Branch Office Kabul (supervising field office in Bamyan to which field unit Nili reports)</p> <p>Field office Kabul</p> <p>Gardez (supervising field unit in Khost)</p> <p>Herat (supervising field units in Islam Qala, Qala-I-Naw and Zaranj)</p> <p>Jalalabad</p> <p>Kandahar (supervising field unit in Spin Boldak)</p> <p>Mazar-I-Sharif (supervising field units in Jawzjan, Kunduz, Maimana and Pul-I-Khumri)</p> <p>Pakistan: Supporting unit</p>

Partners
<p>Government agencies</p> <p>Department of Social Affairs and Works (Jalalabad)</p> <p>Drug Control Department (Herat and Kandahar)</p> <p>Department of Public Health (Jalalabad and Kandahar)</p> <p>Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation</p> <p>Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development</p>

NGOs

Abu Muslim *Khorasany* Rehabilitation Unit
 Afghan Bureau for Reconstruction
 Afghan Construction and Rehabilitation Unit
 Afghan Health Development Services
 Afghan Mobile Reconstruction Association
 Afghan *Murad* Reconstruction Development Organization
 Afghan Planning Agency
 Afghan Public Welfare Organization
 Afghan Reconstruction and Development Unit/Bureau for Rural Rehabilitation
 Afghan Reconstruction and Welfare Organization
 Afghan Women Skills Development Centre
 Afghan/German Help Coordination Office
 Afghanistan Rehabilitation and Development Centre
 Afghanistan Extremely Vulnerable Individual Service Agency for Rehabilitation and Energy Conservation
Agence d'aide à la coopération technique et au développement
 Agency for Rehabilitation of Villages
Ansari Rehabilitation Association for Afghanistan
 Association of Experts in the Fields of Migration and Development
 CARE International
 Central Asia Development Group
 Cooperation for Peace and Unity
 Child Fund Afghanistan
 Community Development and Rehabilitation Organization
 Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance
 Country Development Unit
 Development Social Affairs and Works
 Emergency Health and Build Field Programme
Falahat Welfare Construction Organization
Ghor Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Organization
 Guardians
 Hewad Reconstruction Service
 Human Dignity Society
 Humanitarian Action for the People of Afghanistan
 Humanitarian Agency for Rehabilitation and Development
 Humanitarian Assistance Europe Foundation/FOCUS
 Humanitarian Assistance Society
 Independent Humanitarian Services Association

International Rescue Committee
 INTERSOS
Jawid Rehabilitation Organization for Afghanistan
Malteser Hilfsdienst
 Medica Mondiale E.V.
 Narcotic Control and Rehabilitation of Afghanistan
 Norwegian Refugee Council

Ockenden International
 Organization for Humanitarian Assistance
 Peace Winds Japan
 Reconstruction Agency of *Mashriq*
 Reconstruction and Employment Unit for Afghan Refugees
 Reconstruction Pioneers
 Rural Capacities Development Committee
 Society for Afghanistan Development and Assistance and Technology
 Samaritan's Purse International Relief
Sanaye Development Foundation
 Save the Children (Japan)
 Save the Children (Sweden)
Sherzad Reconstruction Organization
Sian Association Rehabilitation Service
 Society for Health and Education
 South West Reconstruction Council for Afghanistan
 Southern Western Afghanistan and *Baluchistan* Association for Coordination
 United Rehabilitation Bureau
Urozgan Construction Agency
 Voluntary Association for the Rehabilitation of Afghanistan
Watan Rehabilitation Organization
Watan Social and Technical Services Association
 Women Activities and Social Services Association
 Youth Assembly for Afghanistan
 ZOA Refugee Care

Others

Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission
 British Broadcasting Corporation
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
 UN Habitat
 UNV

Financial Report (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects	Prior years' projects
	Annual programme budget	Annual and Supplementary programme budgets
Protection, monitoring and coordination	14,253,343	0
Community services	699,944	769,792
Domestic needs / household support	108,196	0
Health and nutrition	229,488	141,449
Income generation	1,462,746	3,642,212
Legal assistance	2,248,075	475,713
Operational support (to agencies)	4,254,242	1,928,473
Shelter and infrastructure	15,629,503	8,187,022
Transport and logistics	19,941,421	1,173,797
Water	3,232,983	2,513,154
Instalments with implementing partners	10,275,355	(18,831,612)
Sub-total operational activities	72,335,294	0
Programme support	5,453,483	0
Total disbursements	77,788,777	0
Instalments with implementing partners		
Payments made	21,349,159	
Reporting received	(11,073,804)	
Balance	10,275,355	
Prior years' report		
Instalments with implementing partners		
Outstanding 1 January		15,356,462
Payments made		5,613,253
Reporting received		(18,831,612)
Refunded to UNHCR		(917,005)
Balance		1,221,098
Unliquidated obligations		
Outstanding 1 January		11,940,019
Disbursements		(9,813,814)
Cancellations		(2,126,205)
Outstanding 31 December		0