

Turkey



Main Objectives

Strengthen UNHCR's partnership with the Government of Turkey to ensure that protection is provided to refugees and asylum-seekers and to improve the quality and capacity of the national asylum system. Ensure rapid and reliable refugee status determination of asylum-seekers from non-European countries. Identify and promote durable solutions for refugees through resettlement, voluntary repatriation and local integration. Provide social counselling and material support for refugees, with a special focus on women and children. Facilitate and assist the voluntary repatriation of Turkish refugees from northern Iraq, and of Bosnian and Kosovar refugees from Turkey to their countries of origin. Raise public awareness of

rights of asylum-seekers and refugees and the mandate of UNHCR.

Impact

- Seventy six officials at the central and provincial levels of the General Directorate for Security, Ministry of Interior, received introductory training on refugee law. Partly as a result, collaboration with the government improved and nearly all emergency interventions by UNHCR to prevent the deportation of asylum-seekers were successful.
- UNHCR initiated refugee status determination for 2,700 new cases. The backlog was reduced by 16 per cent over the course of the year. Delays in processing claims were significantly

reduced, although more needs to be achieved in this respect. The average wait for a first interview was kept within the target of two months, but the average wait for a first decision, at just under five months from the date of interview, was still too long.

- In 2001, the resettlement programme achieved an increase of 18 per cent in the number of departures, while the average wait from recognition to departure for resettlement was only seven months.
- Voluntary repatriation of European (Bosnian, Kosovar and Yugoslav) refugees continued in small numbers. Progress was made in securing local integration as several European refugees sheltered in a centre in Kirklareli received residence permits in late 2001.
- A monthly average of 3,500 refugees and asylum-seekers received food, medical care, education, accommodation, local travel and social counselling services.
- NGO partners in Van, Agri, Hakkari and Istanbul expanded social and legal counselling services. Monitoring and evaluation of these projects demonstrated their highly positive impact on the welfare and morale of the refugees.
- A total of 406 refugee and asylum-seeker children attended primary school in Turkey as compared to 60 children in the previous year. A total of 347 received educational assistance from UNHCR. Some 90 children in the border city of Van received vocational training.
- A total of 100 refugees received training in reproductive health, family planning and fundamental rights.

- Some 38 Turkish nationals returned from Northern Iraq and received material assistance upon arrival, including food, blankets, kitchen sets and mattresses.
- The Office's Gender and Children Team piloted a series of enquiries aimed at improving the standard of attention given to vulnerable individuals. The research covered such topics as domestic violence, child custody, rape and sexual abuse, and paved the way for the creation of special guidelines for UNHCR and NGO case-workers. UNHCR's NGO partners in Turkey joined the Team in the second half of 2001.

Working Environment

The Context

UNHCR continued to benefit from positive co-operation with the national authorities. Dialogue on the improvement of the asylum system shifted up a gear with the entry into force of the Co-operation Framework agreed with the Ministry of Interior and the Government then started to draft new legislation on asylum.

In its National Programme for adoption of the EU acquis issued in April, Turkey declared its willingness to envisage lifting its geographical limitation to the 1951 Convention. The Programme referred to the need to first develop the country's ability to cope with refugee inflows and consequently Turkey's expectations for burden-sharing with the European Union. The Government, with the assistance of

UNHCR, IOM and NGOs, committed itself to improving accommodation facilities and developing social support for refugees.

Because of Turkey's application of the geographical limitation, non-European refugees are only granted temporary protection in Turkey, pending resettlement through UNHCR's offices. With respect to the eligibility of non-European applicants, the Government continued to consult UNHCR and to facilitate UNHCR's work

Persons of Concern				
Main Origin/ Type of Population	Total in Country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent Female	Per cent under 18
The Islamic Republic of Iran (Asylum-seekers)	2,800	2,800	39	29
The Islamic Republic of Iran (Refugees)	1,700	1,700	42	30
Iraq (Asylum-seekers)	940	940	44	43
Bosnia and Herzegovina (Refugees)	630	100	48	21
Iraq (Refugees)	590	590	44	43

Income and Expenditure (USD)				
Revised Budget	Income from Contributions	Other Funds Available ²	Total Funds Available	Total Expenditure
5,303,786	887,000	4,043,301	4,930,301	4,880,096

in carrying out individual assessments. Several problems persisted, such as the existence of a time limit for the registration of asylum claims, and the absence of a rapid screening mechanism to identify asylum-seekers among detained illegal migrants. These problems continued to impede full access to the national asylum system, and some incidents of refoulement consequently occurred.

Constraints

The number of people resettled in 2001 would probably have reached 3,100 but for the events of 11 September, which led to the postponement of some key resettlement selection missions and to other delays related to increased security screening. On account of these developments, the average waiting period for resettlement is expected to increase in 2002. Due to funding constraints, interpreters could not be deployed to the border areas to assist Turkish officials as planned. Owing to the difficulties in identifying experienced UNHCR personnel and JPOs, staffing of the refugee status determination unit could not be maintained at a desired level.

Funding

As part of the organisation's global prioritisation exercise in 2001, the budget for Turkey was reduced by 20 per cent. As a result, a large part of the planned training, social counselling and capacity-building activities, as well as some public information events, were cancelled or postponed to 2002. Substantial extra-budgetary contributions were made by some donors in for social counselling and to enable refugee children to attend primary school. Other contributions announced during the year will be utilised for activities from 2002 to 2005.

Achievements and Impact

Protection and Solutions

UNHCR remained involved in the national asylum procedure, through its role in advising the Government on individual applications and through training programmes and other regular contacts with the national and provincial authorities. The national asylum system continued to be open to

asylum-seekers who arrived both legally and illegally, the latter accounting for 30 per cent of the total. The 2,700 new asylum applications recorded in 2001 represented a drop of 11 per cent from the previous year. However, the number of decisions rose by seven per cent and the recognition rate rose from 49 per cent to 61 per cent.

Although the budget reduction limited the number of capacity-building activities, an important new audience was reached through the organisation of a seminar for provincial authorities responsible for security. Furthermore, two significant funding requests to external sources will lead to a broad expansion of activities.

Progress on resettlement was the result of the streamlining of procedures and concerted efforts to address the problems of long-stayers and family reunification cases. Some 2,747 refugees were resettled to third countries, including 41 vulnerable cases (105 persons).

Intensive counselling through NGO partners led to significant progress in identifying and achieving durable solutions for the European refugees still remaining at the centre in Kirklareli province. The Turkish authorities supported the requests made by 31 refugees for local integration. The Office in Turkey collaborated closely with the Office in Sarajevo to identify solutions for those Bosnian refugees who chose to repatriate.

Regarding the return of Turkish refugees from Northern Iraq, multiple clearances required by the authorities in both countries continued to cause delays. The repatriation of 38 persons in late 2001 brought to 2,206 the total number of returnees since 1996.

Activities and Assistance

Community Services: Approximately 4,500 refugees and asylum-seekers received social and legal counselling from UNHCR and from three implementing partners in four cities (Istanbul, Van, Agri and Hakkari). The expansion of counselling services delivered via NGO partners had a very positive impact on durable solutions as well as on the general welfare of refugees in Turkey and helped connect refugees with local governmental and non-

governmental services. The planned expansion of counselling services to three more cities (Nevsehir, Nigde and Aksaray) was postponed to 2002 because of lack of funding. The Inter Unit Committee for Special Cases (IUCSC), established by UNHCR in Ankara, continued to ensure a speedy comprehensive response to especially vulnerable cases and handled 36 vulnerable cases in 2001. The Gender and Children Team had a significant impact on policy development and the formulation of strategic goals, project design, systems, procedures and fund raising.

Domestic Needs/Household Support: Basic living allowances were provided to an average of 1,130 persons per month.

Education: Turkish regulations allow foreign children with valid residence permits to attend national primary schools. UNHCR and its partners strongly advised parents to take advantage of this right and supplied assistance to enable them to benefit from it. Out of an estimated 1,020 children of primary school age, 406 attended school, up from 60 in 2000. Some 479 asylum-seekers/refugee children received home-education kits.

Food: The Turkish government provided most of the food needs of refugees and asylum-seekers. At the Silopi entry point, UNHCR distributed hot meals and emergency food packages to 38 Turkish returnees.

Health/Nutrition: The increase in the number of refugees receiving medical assistance through the contracted clinics, hospitals and pharmacies reflected a rise in the number of recognised refugees, as well as the Government's more flexible approach, evidenced by its assistance for 11,460 persons. In addition, an average of 205 women per month received sanitary supplies.

Legal Assistance: During the year, 2,700 new applications for asylum were recorded. During the first interview the applicants had the opportunity to know the grounds for refusal of their claims. The appeal decisions were made on a case by case basis at the discretion of the appeal officer, and on condition that all information would be provided by the applicant at the first interview.

For asylum-seekers, the waiting period for the first interview in Ankara was less than the target of two

months, but the waiting period in the border cities was much longer during the last quarter of the year. This was largely the result of an exceptional influx of Afghan asylum-seekers and Iranians from Northern Iraq.

In addition to the two full seminars on international refugee law, a one-day session was organised by the Ministry of Justice for 20 staff of the Administrative Court. A full introductory course was also developed for the Gendarmerie officers guarding the eastern borders. UNHCR, in collaboration with a large number of NGOs, IOM and the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce, initiated a research project on the problems of undocumented migrants in the city. The research will be followed by proposals for assistance measures. Some 19 Turkish NGOs met with UNHCR in November to make plans for increased collaboration on behalf of refugees.

Staffing of the Office's eligibility unit remained below the level required as five JPO posts remained unfilled.

Operational Support (to Agencies): UNHCR provided support costs (staff, communication and office supplies) for the social and legal counselling services implemented by three NGO partners in Istanbul, Van, Agri, Hakkari and at the Kırklareli camps.

Contacts with the national media intensified in 2001. Several live and recorded television and radio interviews with staff increased UNHCR's visibility. The national media also published several in-depth articles and series on refugees. The Turkish public is generally better informed on asylum issues as a result of the new situation created by the Government's moves to adopt the EU acquis, the interest generated by recent refugee crises, and the public awareness activities carried out by UNHCR and voluntary associations. Furthermore, universities, NGOs and professional groups took initiatives to influence the legislative process and asylum practices. A questionnaire was sent to more than 80 new NGOs, of which 19 met with UNHCR in November to discuss the prospects of developing partnerships in the areas of advocacy awareness, women, children and health.



Iraqi refugee in Silopi. UNHCR / A. Hollmann

Shelter/Other Infrastructure: Direct assistance for accommodation was provided to vulnerable persons including victims of domestic violence, female heads of household, unaccompanied minors, and other persons with special needs.

Transport/Logistics: An average of 111 persons per month received local travel assistance to come to Ankara for eligibility and resettlement interviews.

Organisation and Implementation

Management

UNHCR maintained its main office in Ankara supported by other offices in Istanbul, Van and Silopi. The country programme was managed and implemented by 39 staff members, including five international staff (not including three Regional Advisors based in Ankara), three JPOs and 28 national staff. UNHCR also retained the services of a lawyer in each of the border cities of Agri and Hakkari. Some 35 project staff were employed to support refugee status determination and resettlement activities in Ankara, Van and Silopi. The project staff arrangement ended in 2001 with the establishment of UNHCR posts. From October 2001 to early 2002, all UNHCR staff in Turkey were able to benefit from a training programme on

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder/Secondary Trauma and gender awareness and mainstreaming to promote the incorporation of gender awareness into all activities.

Working with Others

The Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the Interior are UNHCR's main government counterparts on all refugee-related matters. UNHCR collaborated with IOM on resettlement issues and participated in regular UN Country Team meetings. In 2001, UNHCR worked with three international and three local NGOs in providing social/psychological counselling and health care services for refugees and asylum-seekers.

Overall Assessment

During 2001, UNHCR met its protection objectives including its special concern that the needs of women, children and the elderly be addressed productively through co-operation with the Government and civil society. A special emphasis was placed on training and other activities aimed at building national awareness and capacities. The majority of lecturers at the training seminars supported by UNHCR were delivered by the Turkish Government, academics and voluntary associations. This led to plans to create core trainer groups within the Government and to orient part of UNHCR's programme to the training of trainers. The first plans in this regard were discussed with the Ministry of Interior, in the context of the Co-operation Framework.

Authorities have shown increased ownership of international protection objectives and willingness to consider long-term improvements in the asylum procedure. The inclusion of gender-related issues has increased the sensitivity of many local authorities to the social problems of refugees. The training programmes have given asylum-seekers improved access to the Government's procedure, particularly in cases where an initial risk of deportation existed.

Offices

Ankara
Istanbul
Silopi
Van

Partners

Government Agencies

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Interior

NGOs

Anatolian Development Foundation
Association for Solidarity with Asylum-seekers and Migrants
Caritas (Istanbul)
Human Resources Development Foundation
International Catholic Migration Commission
Istanbul Interparish Migration Programme

Others

ARGEN
IOM
Turkish Red Crescent Society
UNICEF
UNFPA

Financial Report (USD)				
Expenditure Breakdown	Annual Programme Budget		Annual Programme Budget	
	Current Year's Projects	notes	Prior Years' Projects	notes
Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination	870,110		0	
Community Services	64,403		8,375	
Domestic Needs / Household Support	638,634		2,899	
Education	37,703		27	
Food	1,935		6,103	
Health / Nutrition	189,103		8,407	
Legal Assistance	765,604		57,078	
Operational Support (to Agencies)	38,727		(2,088)	
Shelter / Other Infrastructure	38,306		14,002	
Transport / Logistics	37,219		1,211	
Instalments with Implementing Partners	210,419		(33,856)	
Sub-total Operational	2,892,163		62,158	
Programme Support	1,841,950		0	
Sub-total Disbursements / Deliveries	4,734,113	(3)	62,158	(5)
Unliquidated Obligations	145,983	(3)	0	
TOTAL	4,880,096	(1) (3)	62,158	

Instalments with Implementing Partners

Payments Made	1,525,647		12,495	
Reporting Received	1,315,228		46,351	
Balance	210,419		(33,856)	
Outstanding 1st January	0		567,729	
Refunded to UNHCR	0		379	
Currency Adjustment	0		916	
Outstanding 31 December	210,419		534,410	

Unliquidated Obligations

Outstanding 1st January	0		77,530	(5)
New Obligations	4,880,096	(1)	0	
Disbursements	4,734,113	(3)	62,158	(5)
Cancellations	0		15,372	(5)
Outstanding 31 December	145,983	(3)	0	

Figures which cross reference to Accounts:

- (1) Annex to Statement 1
- (3) Schedule 3
- (5) Schedule 5