

## AT A GLANCE

### Main Objectives and Activities

Ensure international protection and seek durable solutions for refugees from the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey, as well as for other urban refugees; liaise with the authorities to facilitate agreement on the voluntary repatriation of refugees; train Government authorities and local NGOs on refugee law and promote the Government's accession to the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol; co-operate with the Government and local authorities to provide basic humanitarian assistance to all refugees, paying special attention to the needs of refugee women and children.

### Impact

- Durable solutions were found for 413 Iranian Kurdish refugees, who were resettled in third countries and 264 Turkish refugees, who repatriated to their respective country of origin with the help of UNHCR.
- UNHCR processed the asylum applications of the newly arrived refugees in the north; refugee status was granted and assistance provided to ten Syrian Kurds. UNHCR followed up on protection matters for other refugees.
- Some 120 refugee women received training and assistance to engage in income-generating activities. Refugee women above primary school age were given priority for adult literacy classes.
- A total of 8,497 children (3,869 boys and 4,628 girls) attended school and 655 children, including 105 girls, received secondary education.



Main Refugee Origin/Type of Population	Persons of Concern			
	Total in Country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent Female	Per cent under 18
Islamic Rep. of Iran (Refugees)	23,900	23,900	47	56
Turkey (Refugees)	12,600	12,600	56	59
Iraq (Returnees)	3,700	1,400	-	-
Islamic Rep. of Iran (Asylum-seekers)	850	-	-	-
Eritrea (Refugees)	570	10	-	-

Income and Expenditure (USD)				
Annual Programme Budget				
Revised Budget	Income from Contributions <sup>1</sup>	Other Funds Available <sup>2</sup>	Total Funds Available	Total Expenditure
3,945,642	1,200,901	2,173,294	3,374,195	3,374,195

<sup>1</sup>Includes income from contributions earmarked at the country level.

<sup>2</sup>Includes allocations by UNHCR from unearmarked or broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

The above figures do not include costs at Headquarters.



## WORKING ENVIRONMENT

### The Context

The Government of Iraq is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention, nor its 1967 Protocol, but has played a strong role in providing legal and physical protection to refugees, including those arriving in the country prior to UNHCR's formal presence in 1988. At present, the Government provides assistance to all refugees in the country under the ration system set up under UN Security Council resolution 986 (oil-for-food), while UNHCR provides complementary assistance to refugees residing in refugee camps and settlements.

The UN sanctions continue to have a serious impact on the welfare of the population and the refugees in Iraq. Although the oil-for-food programme has helped abate some of the shortage of food and medicine, it has not addressed a number of major problems in the steadily deteriorating sectors of health and nutrition, education, housing, sanitation, power-generation,

transportation and communications. The social fabric of Iraq is subject to huge stresses, and economic activity is drastically reduced. In this context, the Government of Iraq has requested that UNHCR increase its complementary assistance to refugees. UNHCR responded through systematic assistance to the Iranian Ahwazi refugees in the settlements in the centre and south of the country. Following an extensive consultation process in 2000, UNHCR agreed to meet the costs incurred by the Government in establishing the infrastructure of Makhmour camp. If socio-economic conditions continue to worsen, UNHCR will have no option but to respond to similar requests in like manner, upgrading its involvement by providing further assistance to three refugee camps and ten refugee settlements.

The three northern governorates are not controlled by the central authorities and fall within the USA/UK-declared "no-fly zone". Most of UNHCR's assistance is provided to the refugees in the north, largely Iranian and Turkish refugees, whose options are limited by the



confused political and military situation. The lives of the refugees are further destabilised by the close proximity to and influence of their countries of origin.

## Constraints

The main constraints in 2000 were UNHCR's funding shortfall, the overall security situation and the complexity of relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq and Turkey. UNHCR's financial difficulties repeatedly led to budget reductions that compromised the credibility of its operations. UNHCR tried to reactivate the voluntary repatriation of the Iranian refugees in Iraq, and of Iraqi refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran, but not much progress was made in talks between the two countries.

In 2000, UNHCR had to conduct its operations in an atmosphere of either latent or openly violent conflict. There were sporadic mortar attacks on Baghdad, one killing four people and injuring 34. In a separate, unrelated incident on 28 June, a gunman forced his way into UN premises and killed one international and one local FAO staff member, injuring three others. This incident resulted in strict travel restrictions. Travel to some areas was further restricted due to the continuing air strikes. The three northern governorates (Dohuk, Erbil and Sulamaniya) remained under UN security restrictions, hampering efforts to assist those in need. Factional tensions continued throughout the year, and at least one refugee was injured as a result of a shoot-out in July between different political factions.

## Funding

The shortage of funds resulted in the curtailment of several activities, including those to enhance the role of women and children, and to improve the camp environment. Activities to strengthen and insulate accommodation against winter weather were drastically reduced. Assistance to the Iranian Ahwazi refugee group commenced two months behind schedule. The repair and maintenance of access roads and the water network in Al-Tash refugee camp was postponed to 2001. In addition, the Office had difficulty procuring medicines for lack of funds.

## ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

### Protection and Solutions

UNHCR carried out refugee status determination in the northern areas. However, the Government held to its position that the individuals concerned should not be recognised as refugees as the Government had no effective

control over that part of the country and therefore could not be expected to give asylum to a group of asylum-seekers not known to it on an individual basis. Persons recognised by UNHCR as refugees in these areas were at times accused by the de facto local authorities in the north of violating the law. UNHCR was not always kept promptly informed about the ensuing investigations. However, refugees accused of breaking the law were generally not deported, with the exception of two Iranian refugees, who were accused of spying and were deported in December. A new development in 2000 was the arrival of former members of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), who were reported to have fled the PKK and sought refugee status in Iraq (37 individuals and 50 families). UNHCR processed their asylum applications on a case-by-case basis.

Two workshops on refugee law were held, to promote the country's accession to the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol and to further develop knowledge of protection issues among Government officials. UNHCR initiated a number of activities aimed at improving the situation of refugee women, children and adolescents, such as support for primary and secondary education, vocational training and income-generating activities.

With regard to durable solutions, the central Government's restrictions since 1999 on exit permits for persons accepted for resettlement and residing in the north of the country slowed down the resettlement process for refugees residing in that area. A total of 413 Iranian Kurdish refugees were resettled in third countries. Meanwhile, some 264 Turkish refugees returned to Turkey. Another group of 362 refugees applied for repatriation to Turkey and, at the end of the year, they were waiting for their applications to be processed. At the same time, an unconfirmed number of Iranian asylum-seekers and refugees left northern Iraq for Turkey, where they approached the local UNHCR office. Most of these persons had not been registered with UNHCR as refugees. It is believed that they left Iraq because of the slow registration and resettlement process. Unrelated to these movements, meetings between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Iraq on the repatriation of Iranian refugees were planned for early 2001.

### Activities and Assistance

*Community Services:* The refugees in the Al-Tash and Makhmour camps and those in the Ahwazi settlements organised cultural and recreational activities, with sports equipment and other support provided by UNHCR. Refugee communities clearly managed to maintain social cohesion, thanks in part to UNHCR's community service support.

**Domestic Needs/Household Support:** A total of 2,000 kerosene heaters were distributed in Makhmour camp, 350 in Erbil and 428 in Sulemaniya. UNHCR distributed 425 blankets and 2,100 cooking sets to refugees, and monthly cash assistance was provided to the most vulnerable refugees in Erbil and Sulemaniya.

**Education:** Every effort was made to ensure that children were not deprived of education. Along with the building of new schools, and the maintenance of existing ones, UNHCR provided basic furniture and educational supplies as well as assistance packages to encourage school attendance. A total of 8,497 refugee children in the camps attended primary school and 638 students pursued their secondary education. UNHCR provided transport assistance, essential course material for private classes, and supported vocational training such as carpet weaving, carpentry, auto-mechanics and ceramics. The provision of selected school supplies and stationery to private classes in the camps encouraged education outside formal classrooms. English language and adult literacy classes were also conducted.

**Food:** Refugees received regular monthly food rations of 2,150 kcal per person from the Government of Iraq under the UN Security Council resolution 986 programme (oil-for-food).

**Health/Nutrition:** Medicines and medical supplies were delivered to the refugee camps and settlements on a quarterly basis. Children under five were vaccinated against polio as a matter of routine. UNHCR also constructed and furnished a new health clinic for the Ahwazi refugees in Dujaila. The Iraqi health staff provided health advice and consultation to pregnant women and nursing mothers on a monthly basis, and female refugees were provided with sanitary items throughout the year.

**Income Generation:** Among the activities to promote income generation were the distribution of 310 sheep to refugee families. Vegetable seeds were distributed to those in Al-Tash and Makhmour camps for co-operative and backyard gardening. However, the refugees in Erbil strongly resisted self-reliance, as they thought it would compromise their chance of resettlement to a third country.

**Legal Assistance:** UNHCR undertook activities for the promotion of refugee law and legal assistance, including the compilation of demographic data, and the facilitation of travel documents and residence permits.

**Operational Support (to Agencies):** Monthly financial incentives were paid to the Government administrative staff in Makhmour and Al-Tash refugee camps

and to local authorities in refugee settlements in Dohuk in the north.

**Sanitation:** The environmental situation in Al-Tash and Makhmour camps was improved through regular cleaning campaigns, fumigation and the planting of some 16,000 trees. For the Ahwazi refugees, 166 sanitary units were completed in the first phase of the rehabilitation of the sewage and drainage system and 400 family latrines were provided. Although UNHCR involved refugees in campaigns to keep the camps environmentally sound, much still needs to be done to improve the poor environmental condition (exacerbated by the arid climate) of the settlements in the south.

**Shelter/Other Infrastructure:** UNHCR helped construct one primary school in the south and one secondary school in the north. In the south, over 200 children (50 per cent girls) enrolled in this new school (compared to 50 children in 1999, when the school was using the unsound former structure). With support from UNHCR, the refugees in Ali El-Gharbi rehabilitated seven defective motors used in crop irrigation. The water supply from these seven water pumps helped this group of refugees to resume cultivation, a step towards self-reliance. UNHCR also completed ten km of access road to the Dujaila settlement. In addition, fire extinguishers and a diesel water pump were given to the refugees. Selected families received basic materials to rehabilitate their accommodation.

**Transport/Logistics:** All refugees returning from Dohuk to Turkey, and those departing for third country resettlement benefited from logistics and transport support from UNHCR. The Office also transported non-food items (medicines and relief items) from Amman to Baghdad and onward to the refugees, and provided transport to take children from Al-Tash camp to secondary school in Ramadi town.

**Water:** All parts of Iraq endured serious power cuts due to the sanctions, resulting in a severe shortage of drinking water especially in the summer. In Al-Tash camp, UNHCR had to resort to water trucking for the whole month of July, at a rate of about 250,000 litres per day, to supplement piped water. Throughout the year, hydraulic machinery, pumps and generators were regularly maintained and repaired.

## ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

### Management

UNHCR operated with 11 international staff (including one JPO) and 23 local staff. The long gap between

the departure of staff and the arrival of their replacements placed a strain on the Office.

## Working with Others

The only implementing partners for UNHCR are the national Government in the centre and south of the country and the local authorities in the north. There are no NGOs in the centre or south of the country, and those in the north are considered illegal by the Government and do not work for UNHCR. The other UN agencies in Iraq are predominantly involved in the implementation of the programme set up by UN Security Council resolution 986 (oil-for-food), which benefits the whole Iraqi population, refugees and returnees alike. UNHCR worked in partnership with UNICEF to install an artesian well and a water distribution network in one settlement of Turkish refugees and commenced construction of a primary school in another. Moreover, UNDP provided four generators to run water pumps; FAO provided veterinary advice to the beneficiaries of the sheep rearing projects; and at the end of the year the UN Office of the Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq made funds available for supplementary heating fuel for the refugees in Erbil.

The office in Baghdad was in regular contact with the UNHCR office in Tehran to facilitate a dialogue between the two Governments to address problems related to the displaced populations of each country. The Office also continued similar contacts with UNHCR in Ankara, hoping that the Turkish Government would help to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of Turkish Kurds.

## OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Despite the limited progress on voluntary repatriation, the operational objectives remained strategically appropriate. Without refugee status determination and resettlement as protection tools, the refugees, especially those in the north, would have come under increasing risk because of the fragile security environment. UNHCR's intervention in most cases was timely and effective. UNHCR's decision to increase complementary material assistance was appropriate in view of the deterioration of social and economic conditions during the embargo of the past ten years. The Office will continue to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of Iranian and Turkish refugees will continue; indeed, therein lies the most desirable solution for the majority of the refugees.

For the established camps like Al-Tash and Makhmour, and the Ahwazi settlements in the south,

it was possible to involve the refugees in the planning and implementation of the programme, especially as the Government extended its full support to this approach. However, in the north it was not possible to effectively involve the beneficiaries because they lacked official refugee status. The Office consistently endeavoured to infuse all its activities with an awareness of the resources (and, conversely, the needs) of women, children and adolescents. Staff were systematically apprised of gender issues and how to act upon them. UNHCR will continue to try to elicit the support of authorities, religious leaders and male heads of households in these issues. Progress was made in this area, but further efforts will be needed if improvements in the camps are to become evident. UNHCR will also have to ensure more active participation by the refugees, the authorities and the staff in formulating programmes to address environmental concerns.

Apart from refugee law promotion activities and one programme management workshop held in Damascus, no other capacity-building activities were provided for government officials. However, UNHCR plans to intensify capacity-building in the areas of refugee law and programme management in the future.

Frequent reductions and interruptions of activities due to financial constraints risked turning a difficult situation into an emergency and damaged UNHCR's credibility among the refugees and other concerned parties.

### Offices

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Baghdad  
Dohuk  
Makhmour

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Financial Report (USD)				
Expenditure Breakdown	Current Year's Projects		Prior Years' Projects	
		notes		notes
Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination	854,989		23,715	
Community Services	44,888		25	
Domestic Needs / Household Support	121,480		19,830	
Education	75,140		1,264	
Food	19,437		1,247	
Health / Nutrition	98,657		62,464	
Income Generation	484		0	
Legal Assistance	97,541		111	
Operational Support (to Agencies)	23,293		146	
Sanitation	56,453		17	
Shelter / Other Infrastructure	105,247		1,509	
Transport / Logistics	25,824		5,509	
Water	255,549		4,673	
<b>Sub-total Operational</b>	<b>1,778,982</b>		<b>120,510</b>	
Programme Support	1,429,454		91,601	
<b>Sub-total Disbursements / Deliveries</b>	<b>3,208,436</b>	(3)	<b>212,111</b>	(6)
Unliquidated Obligations	165,759	(3)	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,374,195</b>	<b>(1) (3)</b>	<b>212,111</b>	

#### Instalments with Implementing Partners

Payments Made	0		0	
Reporting Received	0		0	
<b>Balance</b>	<b>0</b>		<b>0</b>	
Outstanding 1 January	0		(17,392)	
Refunded to UNHCR	0		0	
<b>Outstanding 31 December</b>	<b>0</b>		<b>(17,392)</b>	

#### Unliquidated Obligations

Outstanding 1 January	0		357,215	(6)
New Obligations	3,374,195	(1)	0	
Disbursements	3,208,436	(3)	212,112	(6)
Cancellations	0		145,103	(6)
<b>Outstanding 31 December</b>	<b>165,759</b>	<b>(3)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(6)</b>

Figures which cross reference to Accounts:

(1) Annex to Statement 1

(3) Schedule 3

(6) Schedule 6