

Afghanistan

Main objectives

- Develop the capacity of the Islamic Transitional Authority of Afghanistan (ITAA) to plan, manage and assist the return, reintegration and protection of refugees and IDPs.
- Facilitate the voluntary return of Afghan refugees through transport and logistical support.
- Monitor the situation of returnees and IDPs and ensure that their rights are protected.
- Provide assistance to IDPs who cannot currently return to their home areas.
- Target assistance to problem areas to overcome obstacles to return.
- Ensure that returnees are included in all major national development plans.
- Strengthen links with reintegration partners.



2002, when the operation was essentially an emergency one. That year, UNHCR, government partners, other United Nations agencies and NGOs assisted the return and initial reintegration of some two million refugees and IDPs, many more than had been expected.

Working environment

Recent developments

Over the past two years, Afghanistan has been the scene of one of the largest assisted voluntary repatriation operations in recent history. At the same time, a new, internationally recognised transitional Government has been striving to establish control over the entire country and to attract foreign investment for reconstruction and development. Much has been achieved but much more still needs to be done.

For the past year, almost 800 UNHCR staff members (international and national) have been working out of 30 offices across Afghanistan. Their work has evolved since

In 2003, the focus moved from direct implementation to building government capacity and to linking up with various organisations chosen for their expertise. UNHCR's budget was included in funding requirements of Afghanistan's National Development Budget; strategies were agreed with the Government; programmes aligned with national priorities; and co-ordination organised through a Consultative Group system that involved the Government, donors, and organisations involved in assistance and development. There was also far greater emphasis on implementing projects through national NGOs.

Repatriation, although on a less spectacular scale than in 2002, remained substantial: by mid-September, almost 400,000 refugees had received assistance to return to Afghanistan from Pakistan and the Islamic

Republic of Iran. At the same time, large numbers of IDPs are estimated to have returned. Around 60,000 went home with assistance from UNHCR and its partners; others returned on their own. Some 190,000 people are expected to still be displaced by the beginning of 2004, the vast majority of them in the south.

Planning figures

Population	Jan. 2004	Dec. 2004
Asylum-seekers/refugees	100	100
IDPs	190,000	100,000
Returnee (IDPs)	100,000	90,000
Returnee (refugees)	650,000	910,000
Total	1,140,100	1,120,100

Total requirements: USD 76,209,468

A nationwide effort to profile the IDP population has revealed that some of the groups of people who remain displaced are those for whom it will be most difficult to find solutions. Some of these displaced groups (for example, some of those who left their homes in the northwest) cannot return until political or security issues have been addressed. Others, by contrast, who cannot currently return because of a lack of water or land, will require development-oriented solutions.

Constraints

Security in Afghanistan remains fragile, and in some parts of the country activities have been periodically curtailed. There has been a troubling increase in the number of security threats to assistance agencies (both national and international).

UNHCR protection monitoring reports reveal that returnees in some areas are subject to looting, extortion and harassment by local leaders. Resident populations are facing similar threats. In addition, although development activities have now begun, job opportunities remain scarce, and poverty and food security remain serious problems.

Strategy

Protection and solutions

In collaboration with the Government, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA), the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and other interested agencies, UNHCR will continue to monitor respect for the human rights of returnees and IDPs. UNHCR will propose and pursue measures to prevent returnees being subjected to human rights abuses (during the process of return, and after they have returned). The Office will try to ensure that legal instruments are in place to define returnees' rights. UNHCR will also advise the Government on the preparation of draft legislation to protect minorities.

Protection and field staff will carry out returnee monitoring, alongside trained NGO and Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) staff. This involves monitoring return movements from Pakistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran as well as from non-neighbouring countries. UNHCR will be responsible for the overall co-ordination of the monitoring and work closely with MoRR personnel. A nationwide Protection and Human Rights Network will facilitate referrals, so that investigation and follow-up can be handled by one of a number of interconnected United Nations, NGO and Afghan



institutions, including the Afghan Human Rights Commission and the National Lawyers' Association of Afghanistan.

UNHCR continues to work with the Return Commission established in 2002 in five north-western provinces. The commission is made up of MoRR, UNHCR, UNAMA, and representatives from the three main political parties. Its primary aim is to identify protection-related obstacles to return and recommend how these might be removed. Commission members have been travelling throughout the region and in August 2003, the first families returned to the northwest from camps in the south as a result of the Commission's work.



UNHCR's income-generating water project – cleaning up a canal in the Qalabagh village, Shomali plains. UNHCR / M. Shinohara

UNHCR is also undertaking RSD. So far, nine refugees and 20 asylum-seekers have been registered. The Office is liaising with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Interior in order to set up a system of asylum in Afghanistan.

The mass information programme for returnees launched in 2001 will continue. This enables UNHCR to gather information from areas of return and potential return and relay this to prospective returnees, alerting them to problems and also informing them when obstacles have been removed.

UNHCR will also continue to provide training programmes, targeting lawyers, teachers and officials working within

central and local government. As in 2003, it will support legal aid centres to ensure that returnees have access to legal advice and services.

The Office continues to assist MoRR in its negotiations with representatives of asylum countries on the conclusion and implementation of tripartite agreements on voluntary repatriation.

Assistance

The repatriation operation will continue to be implemented in close co-operation with UNHCR offices in neighbouring

countries, and the governments of Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The organisation expects, however, to make a further shift from direct implementation to capacity-building, particularly of government ministries. In the context of the 4Rs approach (repatriation, reintegration, rehabilitation, and reconstruction) it will work closely not only with MoRR, but also with the Ministries of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), Urban Development and Housing (MUDH) and Finance (MoF). In 2004, the Office will again be seconding staff (international and national) to the three ministries. A UNHCR/MoRR Joint Capacity Development Team will be maintained (housed within the MoRR), along with a Reintegration Unit (within the MRRD). During the year, it is anticipated that MoRR will take increasing responsibility for the actual repatriation of refugees, and MRRD and MUDH for reintegration of returnees. UNHCR will also work more closely with national NGOs and help develop their capacity by building on existing links with a range of development actors.

In order to support the MoRR, the Office will continue to act as focal point of the Government-chaired Consultative Group on returnees and IDPs which also comprises donors and other agencies involved in the return of displaced populations. A key aim will be to strengthen co-ordination, and support the development of government departments in the provinces.

Some direct shelter assistance will continue (20,000 units are currently planned), but in the water sector, by contrast, UNHCR will channel most of its interventions through one of the MRRD national development programmes. Community services will be delivered in areas of high return, and the Office will seek to ensure that returnees can participate in cash-for-work programmes.

UNHCR will continue to support the Government's national IDP strategy, focusing particularly on efforts to foster self-reliance among IDP populations. UNHCR will examine how it might best contribute to regional IDP plans which aim to find long-term solutions to IDP situations. IDPs who cannot currently return home will benefit from community-based skills training and have access to income generation schemes.

Finally, the Office will also maintain a contingency stockpile of non-food items.

Desired impact

UNHCR aims to ensure that return is voluntary, safe, and gradual, and to lay the foundations for the sustainable reintegration of both refugees and IDPs. The key here

is support for the local economy, and assurance that the rights of all returnees, regardless of their gender or ethnic or tribal affiliation, are protected. The building and maintenance of partnerships with others will be crucial to achieving this end.

Organisation and implementation

Management structure

UNHCR currently runs 30 offices throughout Afghanistan and employs 87 international staff and 695 national staff. Those numbers are expected to decrease by approximately 40 per cent in 2004. The Office of the Chief of Mission is based in Kabul.

Co-ordination

UNHCR works in close co-operation with UNAMA, other UN agencies (notably UNDP, UNICEF, and WFP), as well as a large number of national and international NGOs. It supports the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation in co-ordinating the plans and activities of other UN agencies and NGOs working with returnees and IDPs, and works closely with MRRD and MUDH (the Ministries for Rural Rehabilitation and Development and Urban Housing and Development) as well as the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission.

Offices

Kabul (Office of the Chief of Mission)

Kabul (supervising field unit in Bamyan)
 Gardez (supervising field units in Ghazni and Khost)
 Herat (supervising field units in Chaghcharan, Farah, Islam Qala, and Qala-I-Nau)
 Jalalabad (supervising field units in Asadabad, Mehtarlam, and Torkham)
 Kandahar (supervising field units in Dilaram, Lashkargah, Spin Boldak, and Zaranj)
 Mazar-I-Sharif (supervising field units in Jawzjan, Kunduz, Maimana, Pul-I-Khumri, and Sar-I-Pul)

Partners

Government agencies

Department of Women's Affairs
 Drug Control Department Herat
 Ministry of Public Health
 Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation
 Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
 Ministry of Urban Housing and Development

NGOs

Abu Muslim Khorasany Rehabilitation Unit
Action Contre la Faim (ACF)
 Afghan Construction Movement
 Afghan Development Foundation
 Afghan Health Development Services
 Afghan Planning Agency
 Afghan Rehabilitation and Agriculture Organisation
Agence d'aide coopération technique et développement
 Agency for Rehabilitation of Villages
 Ansari Rehabilitation Association for Afghanistan
 AREA
 Association of Experts in the Fields of Migration and Development Co-operation
 CARE International
 Catholic Relief Services
 Central Asia Development Group
 Children's Fund Afghanistan
Cooperazione e sviluppo
Cooperazione Internazionale
 Co-ordination of Humanitarian Assistance
 Co-ordination of Rehabilitation and Development Service for Afghanistan
 Country Development Unit
 Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees
 FOCUS
 Ghor Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Organisation
 Guardians
 Health Net International
 Hewad Reconstruction Service
 Independent Humanitarian Services Association
 International Catholic Migration Mission
 International Rescue Committee

InterSOS
 Islamic Relief Agencies
Malteser Hilfsdienst
 Multi-sectorial Development Organisation
 Newsaz Services
 Norwegian Project Office/Rural Rehabilitation Association for Afghanistan
 Norwegian Refugee Council
 Organisation for Humanitarian Assistance
 Peace Winds Japan
 Qandahar Drug Control and Co-ordination Unit
 Reconstruction Pioneers
 Rubaru Training and Advice
 Rural Capacities Development Committee
 Samaritan's Purse International Relief
 Save the Children (Sweden)
 Sherzad Reconstruction Organisation
 Shuhada Organisation
 Sina Association Rehabilitation Service
Solidarités France
 South West Reconstruction Council for Afghanistan
 Southern Western Afghanistan and Baluchistan Association for Co-ordination
 Voluntary Association for the Rehabilitation of Afghanistan
 Watan Rehabilitation Organisation
 Women's Activities and Social Services Association
 ZOA Refugee Care

Others

Afghan Commission for Human Rights
 British Broadcasting Corporation
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
 ILO
 National Lawyer's Association of Afghanistan
 UNICEF
 UNOPS
 UNV
 WFP

Budget (USD)

Activities and services	Annual Programme
Protection, monitoring and co-ordination	12,104,573
Community services	1,014,035
Domestic needs	870,000
Health	232,070
Income generation	5,186,424
Legal assistance	3,980,677
Operational support (to agencies)	2,342,095
Shelter / other infrastructure	17,611,136
Transport / logistics	27,977,763
Total Operations	71,318,773
Programme support	4,890,695
Total	76,209,468