

Afghanistan



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Main objectives

UNHCR's main objective in 2005 was to strengthen the capacity of the Afghan Government to plan and assist the return, reintegration and protection of returnees and IDPs, with the important provision that returnees be included in all major national development plans. UNHCR also sought to encourage the Government to sign the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol.

Impact

- During 2005, Afghanistan acceded to the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, without reservations. This is a significant step for Afghanistan, demonstrating its determination to become a full member of the international community. UNHCR continued to undertake refugee status determination and 50 asylum cases were processed in 2005.
- Over half a million Afghans returned under UNHCR's auspices to all areas of the country.

- UNHCR progressively handed over the management of settlements of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the southern provinces (some 140,000 people) to the local authorities, while continuing to closely monitor the situation and conditions of the IDPs, and provided basic assistance. Some 8,600 IDPs returned to their places of origin with UNHCR's assistance.
- To address human rights issues more effectively and to strengthen national capacity, UNHCR entered into a partnership with an independent human rights organization.
- UNHCR continued to invest in the Coexistence Initiative, which contributed to reconciliation, coexistence and peacebuilding between returning refugees, IDPs and their host communities.

Working environment

The context

The main political development was the achievement of peaceful elections for Parliament and provincial councils in September 2005. This marked the successful

completion of the “Bonn Process”, as Afghanistan’s first Parliament (with 25 per cent women) was inaugurated in December 2005. By the end of the year, more than 60,000 former combatants had been disarmed, and the majority had benefited from reintegration programmes. Despite the successful completion of the political transition, there was consensus that longer-term efforts to tackle the deteriorating security situation and the rebuilding of state institutions, in particular at the provincial level, require the continued determined participation of the international community.

In 2005, the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation launched a major initiative to distribute government land to landless returnees (refugees and IDPs) as well as to vulnerable families in the local communities, an initiative welcomed by UNHCR. By the end of the year more than 227,000 plots of land had been identified in 21 provinces. Land allocation started on a limited scale in some provinces. It will be a challenge to implement the land allocation programme in 2006 (which will involve the provision of necessary infrastructure) as serious administrative weaknesses will need to be overcome at the provincial level.

The circumstances in which some 160,000 Afghans returned just before the onset of the winter from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas region in Pakistan to the provinces of Kunar, Nangarhar, Paktya, Paktika and Khost were highly problematic and posed a serious challenge to UNHCR. Returnees arrived with very few possessions and the majority claimed not to own land in their areas of origin. UNHCR was compelled to provide emergency assistance, over and above what is normally provided to returnees.

Constraints

The security situation remained fragile in many parts of the country, particularly in the South, South-East and East, where a sharp increase in the number and severity of anti-government attacks was recorded. There was a significant increase in the number of suicide attacks and the use of improvised explosive devices. The main targets of this violence were the coalition forces, the national army and police, as well as government officials. However, 27 NGO workers were killed in 2005, including five

health workers employed by a UNHCR partner in Kandahar. This situation was further exacerbated by increased crime and continued drug trafficking. This deteriorating security situation had a marked adverse effect on UNHCR’s presence, access and operational outreach.

The main obstacles to sustainable reintegration continued to be unemployment, lack of housing, inadequate infrastructure, and land and property disputes, as well as the lack of arable land and irrigation in rural areas.

Funding

As in the preceding three years, donors continued to support UNHCR’s Afghan operation generously. The USD 64.2 million budget for the Afghanistan programme was decreased to USD 62.6 million due to a global shortfall of funds. The donor earmarking for UNHCR in Afghanistan covered more than 80 per cent of this budget. Although major donors still maintained flexibility in funding for the operation, there was a growing tendency to earmark contributions.

Achievements and impact

Protection and solutions

In recent years, repatriation monitoring has shown that returnees, and the communities to which they return face broadly similar problems, including human rights violations. In order to address human rights issues more efficiently and to contribute to strengthening the national capacity to monitor, document and intervene to address human rights violations, UNHCR entered into a partnership agreement with an independent national human rights institution.

In 2005, UNHCR and an independent human rights organization were able to undertake human rights field monitoring missions, covering 164 districts in 29 provinces and interviewing about 8,000 Afghans. Of those interviewed, 75 per cent were returnees, 9 per cent were IDPs and 38 per cent were women. Issues such as problems regarding the realization of social and economic rights were regularly identified and analyzed and interventions were made whenever necessary.

Persons of concern					
Type of population	Origin	Total in country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
IDPs		143,000	-	-	-
Returnees (IDPs)		17,000	8,600	-	-
Returnees (refugees)	Pakistan	461,100	449,400	49	-
	Islamic Republic of Iran	289,600	63,600	46	-

UNHCR staff and representatives of the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation continued to monitor and interview newly-arriving returnees at the main encashment and transit centres in Kabul, Herat, Mohmand Dara and Gardez. In 2005, over 5,000 Afghan returnees, 28 per cent of them women, were interviewed at five encashment centres, as they arrived from the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan. The questions aimed to find out their motivation to return; their knowledge of Afghanistan today; and the problems they may have faced in countries of asylum. The questions went on to explore possible challenges regarding their reintegration in Afghanistan and to analyse the dynamics of return to Afghanistan. Findings were regularly used in tripartite discussions.



A doctor examines a child in Zari Dasht IDP camp in Kandahar, Afghanistan. In 2005, IDPs in Zari Dasht started to return to their homes in the north of the country.
UNHCR / T. Irwin

Following consultations and meetings during 2004 and the beginning of 2005 on Afghanistan's interest in accession to the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol, the Parliament recommended accession in April 2005. Finally, in August 2005, Afghanistan's accession instruments were deposited at the United Nations. In the absence of a national asylum system, UNHCR continued to undertake refugee status determination for some 50 cases. Basic social, medical and other care was provided to asylum-seekers and refugees by a UNHCR-funded NGO, as needed, and efforts were redoubled to assist refugees to locally integrate, learn the local language and find employment.

Activities and assistance

Community services: Activities in community services covered assistance to extremely vulnerable returnees, in particular those identified at the border and at encashment centres. During the implementation period, June to December 2005, over 2,700 cases were assessed and some 1,900 extremely vulnerable individuals were assisted. UNHCR continued to work with the Ministry of Education on validation of educational certificates held by returnee students and teachers. The running of encashment and transit centres, and the monitoring and identification of extremely vulnerable individuals, were among UNHCR's important activities.

Domestic needs and household support: Returnees continued to receive a reintegration grant of USD 12 per person. As part of its emergency response to assist returnees from Federally Administered Tribal Areas in Pakistan, UNHCR distributed non-food packages to 13,200 families in the provinces of Nangarhar, Kunar,

Paktya, Laghman, Logar and Khost. Within the overall framework of the National Winterization Preparedness Plan led by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development and the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, UNHCR allocated and pre-positioned non-food packages for some 13,900 families.

Health and nutrition: Limited support was provided, mostly to the Ministry of Public Health, for the provision of basic medical services to the returnees upon their arrival at encashment centres. Similar support was also provided to the Ministry of Public Health for medical services covering the IDP settlements in the South.

Income generation: Three main projects were implemented in this sector: vocational training, cash-for-work and co-existence projects. A total of 43 cash-for-work projects were implemented in 2005, benefiting some 86,000 persons. The 45 vocational training programmes which were implemented reached some 3,700 individuals. Through a pilot project undertaken with ILO in Kabul, some 1,000 returnees were interviewed at an employment service centre established on the premises of the Ministry of Refugees and Rehabilitation. Over a period of five months, half of them were referred to potential employers or providers of vocational training. Some 150 returnees were accepted onto vocational training courses and 50 found employment.

Legal assistance: The main activities funded under this sector were partnerships in human rights field monitoring, and the provision of information and legal aid. This work included mass-information activities, some of which drew upon the help of the British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) Dari/Pashtu Service.

UNHCR's work with the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation played an increasingly prominent role in this sector. The women-at-risk programme entailed funding for Afghan NGOs managing safe houses, and networking of Afghan women activists. Funds disbursed under this sector were also used for positioning field protection officers through UNV deployments, the printing of registration documents, as well as consulting services for the Geographical Information System and mapping services.

Operational support (to agencies): UNHCR pursued its capacity-building support to the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation through the appointment of capacity-development advisors and the improvement of communication facilities between the Ministry in Kabul and its departments in the provinces. In the latter part of 2005, UNHCR initiated an "institutional dialogue" with the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation to focus its capacity-building support around a set of agreed priority areas relating to the return and initial reintegration of returnees and IDPs. In July 2005, the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation established a Gender Unit. UNHCR continued to support the Reintegration Unit in the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development as a means to ensure that national development programmes integrated returnees. The Reintegration Unit also played an increasing role in the inter-ministerial coordination required for the organization of pilot assessments of the land allocation programme and subsequent approaches to donors.

Shelter and infrastructure: Some 23,000 returnee families benefited from the support of UNHCR for the rebuilding of their houses. This work included some 1,600 emergency one-room shelters for returnees from areas of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas in Pakistan. The support consisted in the distribution of shelter materials (iron and wooden beams, lintels, windows and doors, tools) and the provision of a cash-for-work component (ranging from USD 50 to USD 100 according to the type of shelter built). The selection of beneficiaries was community-based and focused on defined vulnerable groups. Between 2002 and 2005, some 140,700 houses were built under UNHCR's shelter programme, covering some 25 per cent of the total assisted returnee populations throughout Afghanistan. Despite continuous efforts to increase female representation, women accounted for only 14 per cent of the membership of the beneficiary selection committees.

Transport and logistics: In partnership with the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, UNHCR maintained and managed a network of nine encashment centres and two distribution centres for the reception of returnees and the distribution of transport and reinstallation grants. Returnees going to the six food-insecure provinces of Paktya, Paktika, Ghazni, Kandahar, Zabul and Uruzgan received a one-time food assistance package (an

average 150 kg of wheat per family) from WFP. In addition, WFP made available an additional 800 metric tons of wheat, on an emergency basis, for the returnees from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas in Pakistan. With a partner, UNHCR managed a country wide logistic operation entailing storage and transport, especially of non-food items, and the maintenance of vehicles and generators. The efficient management of the supply chain by UNHCR's partner was a key contributing factor in the timely implementation of the shelter programme and the rapid delivery of non-food items.

Water: For the second consecutive year, UNHCR supported the national water programme managed by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development. Contrary to the preceding year's experiences, the implementation of the programme started at a promising pace early in the year. By mid-year, agreements with NGO implementing partners had been negotiated for most of the 430 water points and 667 demonstration latrines covered under the UNHCR funding. The adoption by the Afghan Government in mid-2005 of legislation preventing NGOs from carrying out construction work significantly delayed the programme, as private companies had to be contracted through a tendering process. At the end of December, 224 of the planned 430 water points had been completed; the remainder are planned for completion in early 2006. UNHCR's water activities were designed to benefit some 64,500 individuals.

Organization and implementation

Management

The office in Afghanistan had a total of 521 staff (51 international and 470 national staff). During 2005, UNHCR maintained an Office of the Representative in Kabul, four sub-offices (Herat, Jalalabad, Kandahar and Mazar), three field offices (Kabul, Gardez and Bamyan), eight field units (reduced from ten) and one small support liaison office in Islamabad, Pakistan. Despite serious security problems, and consequent limitations on outreach, particularly in the South and East, a wide UNHCR presence is still considered crucial, as large numbers of refugees continue to return to Afghanistan. Considerable efforts were made to ensure that the field offices were well equipped to meet the Minimum Operational Security Standards (MOSS). Refresher sessions on UNHCR's Code of Conduct were also held in 2005.

Working with others

UNHCR entered into agreements with five government partners, 52 NGOs, three UN agencies, and four other agencies. The Office also worked in close cooperation with the United Nations Assistance Mission in

Afghanistan and other UN agencies. The approach to partnerships continued to be guided by two main ambitions: to support the capacity of Afghan authorities and civil society organizations 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. To this end, UNHCR participated in the Consultative Group for Refugees and Social Protection and advocated for the mainstreaming of reintegration issues into the design and implementation of national development and reconstruction programmes. UNHCR supported the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit in conducting independent research on transnational networks and co-sponsored with IOM, ILO and the European Commission a conference on the subject in Kabul in April 2005.

Overall assessment

Afghanistan's recovery, most notably the political transition to establish permanent government institutions, has progressed well, with the completion of the "Bonn Process" marked by parliamentary elections and the inauguration of the new Parliament at the end of 2005.

While Afghanistan slowly progressed towards peace and stability, the major operational constraint in 2005 remained the volatile security situation, which hampered access to some areas of return, especially in the border areas with Pakistan. Security problems and challenges in governance and public administration had an impact on the delivery of reconstruction and development programmes and, consequently, on economic and social conditions for the majority of Afghans.

Recognizing the organization's own limitations in securing durable solutions for the millions of Afghans and the need for a long-term approach to sustainable reintegration of returnees in the difficult socio-economic environment in Afghanistan, UNHCR continued to endeavour to link up with longer-term reconstruction and development programmes and actors, advocating the mainstreaming of returnee needs into national development plans. One example of the attempt to mainstream the needs of returnees into national initiatives was UNHCR's water programme, which for the second year was undertaken through the relevant Ministry, where UNHCR also supported a Reintegration Unit. Another example was the incorporation of the national land allocation programme, aimed at landless returnees and IDPs, into the National Area-Based Development Programme. The partnership with a human rights organization was a similar effort to mainstream UNHCR activities.

Offices

Kabul
Bamyan
Gardez
Herat
Islam Qala
Islamabad
Jalalabad
Jawzjan
Kandahar
Khost
Kunduz
Maimana
Mazar-i-Sharif
Nili
Pul-i-Khumri
Qala-i-Naw
Spin Boldak
Zaranj

Partners

Government agencies

Counter-Narcotics Department
Drug Control Department
Ministry of Public Health
Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation
Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development

NGOs

Abu Muslim Khorasany Rehabilitation Unit
Afghan Bureau for Reconstruction
Afghan Construction and Rehabilitation Unit
Afghan/German Help Coordination Office
Afghan Health Development Services
Afghan Planning Agency
Afghan Public Welfare Organization
Afghan Women's Skills Development Centre
Agency for Rehabilitation of Engineering, Education, Culture and Agriculture
Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
Ansari Rehabilitation Association for Afghanistan
Central Asia Development Group
Christian Children's Fund/Child Fund Afghanistan
Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance
Falhat Welfare and Construction Organization
Ghor Rehabilitation and Construction Organization
Hewad Reconstruction Service
Humanitarian Action for People of Afghanistan
Humanitarian Aid for Women and Children
Humanitarian Assistance Society
Human Dignity Society
Independent Humanitarian Service Association
INTEROS
Japan Emergency NGO
Javed Rehabilitation Organization for Afghanistan
Malteser Hilfsdienst
Masood Akbar Construction Agency
Medica Mondiale
Narcotic Control and Rehabilitation of Afghanistan

Norwegian Refugee Council
 Organization for Humanitarian Assistance
 Reconstruction and Employment Unit for Afghan Refugees
 Rural Capacities Development Committee
 Samaritan's Purse
Sanayee Development Foundation
 Save the Children Japan
Shafaq Reconstruction Organization
Shirzad Reconstruction Organization
Sina Association Rehabilitation Service
 Society for Health and Education
 South West Reconstruction Council for Afghanistan
 Tribal Liaison Office
Urozzan Construction Agency
 Vocational and Relief Organization for Afghanistan
 Widows, Orphans and Disabled
 Voice of Women Organization

Voluntary Association for Rehabilitation of Afghanistan
Watan Social and Technical Services Association
 Welfare and Development Society for Social Services
 Women Activities and Social Services Association
 Women's and Reconstruction Organization of Yasir for Afghanistan
 Youth Assembly for Afghanistan Rehabilitation
 ZOA Refugee Care Afghanistan

Others

Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission
 British Broadcasting Corporation
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
 International Labour Organization
 United Nations Human Settlements Programme
 UNV

Budget, income and expenditure (USD) Annual programme budget

Final budget	Income from contributions ¹	Other funds available ²	Total funds available	Total expenditure
62,600,906	29,962,962	26,373,224	56,336,186	56,336,186

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.

Financial Report (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects	Prior years' projects
	Annual programme budget	Annual and supplementary programme budgets
Protection, monitoring and coordination	13,149,957	0
Community services	465,393	101,354
Domestic needs and household support	6,464,117	3,809
Health and nutrition	281,014	110,497
Income generation	1,129,292	1,520,091
Legal assistance	2,118,839	793,434
Operational support (to agencies)	1,862,268	1,034,770
Shelter and infrastructure	11,585,983	4,078,828
Transport and logistics	9,167,710	780,294
Water	1,320,706	1,032,906
Instalments with implementing partners	3,699,381	(9,455,983)
Sub-total operational activities	51,244,660	0
Programme support	5,091,526	0
Total expenditure	56,336,186	0
Cancellation on prior years' expenditure		(900,382)
Instalments with implementing partners		
Payments made	14,156,764	
Reporting received	(10,457,383)	
Balance	3,699,381	
Prior years' report		
Instalments with implementing partners		
Outstanding 1 January		11,496,453
Reporting received		(9,455,983)
Refunded to UNHCR		(415,399)
Adjustments		(262,743)
Balance		1,362,328