

Islamic Republic of Iran

AT A GLANCE

Main Objectives and Activities

Facilitate the voluntary repatriation of 100,000 Afghan and 30,000 Iraqi refugees; ensure that all refugees in need of protection have access to a transparent and fair status determination procedure; continue to assist Afghan and Iraqi refugees within and outside camps; develop new partnerships with national and international NGOs and specialised UN agencies to enhance refugee protection and care; raise awareness of refugee problems among institutions and within civil society.

Impact

- Teams comprise of UNHCR and government representatives examined 50,000 claims and conducted interviews affecting some 250,000 undocumented refugees and new arrivals. As a result, 80,000 persons were recognised as requiring protection. The Government provided them with documents and authorised their stay in the provinces where they had been residing.
- The Joint Programme for the Voluntary Repatriation of Afghans assisted 133,923 Afghans (both documented and undocumented) to return voluntarily to their country. Another 50,187 returned spontaneously, without UNHCR's assistance and, in most cases, the Office ascertained the voluntary nature of their decision.
- UNHCR assisted 1,360 Iraqi Arabs to return voluntarily to southern Iraq, and provided them with allowances, food and non-food items, as well as repatriation grants. Another 2,277 Iraqi Kurds repatriated spontaneously to northern Iraq by their own means.

- Assistance was maintained for refugees living both within and outside camps.



Persons of Concern				
Main Refugee Origin/Type of Population	Total in Country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent Female	Per cent under 18
Afghanistan (Refugees)	1,482,000	1,482,000	-	-
Iraq (Refugees)	386,000	286,000	-	-
Afghanistan (Asylum-seekers)	12,200	-	-	-

Income and Expenditure (USD)				
Annual Programme Budget				
Revised Budget	Income from Contributions ¹	Other Funds Available ²	Total Funds Available	Total Expenditure
7,884,842	1,657,675	4,919,892	6,577,567	6,570,648

¹Includes income from contributions earmarked at the country level.

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

The above figures do not include costs at Headquarters.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Context

Whereas previously the Government carried out refugee status determination without involving UNHCR, the Joint Programme for the Voluntary Repatriation of Afghans succeeded in establishing a framework that helped meet protection needs and identify solutions. UNHCR gave the relevant government officials training on international protection prior to conducting joint screening exercises.

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, 95 per cent of the refugees are dispersed in major cities and provinces throughout the country. Another 46,188 Iraqis and 30,862 Afghans are settled in 29 camps located in various provinces.

Constraints

Systematic access to the scattered refugee population is difficult. UNHCR's visits to both camp-based and non-camp-based refugees must be cleared and co-ordinated with the Government. The difficulties are compounded in the absence of a legal framework defining the conditions under which NGOs can operate. There are only two foreign-based NGOs with expatriate staff. National NGOs are largely structured as charitable organisations

along strict Islamic lines, and are constrained by limited resources and experience. Though numerous, the Government allowed only three of these NGOs to implement programmes on behalf of UNHCR. The Government objects to financial support being channelled through international NGOs. The consequence is that they are unable to operate, because they are dependent on UNHCR funding. Refugees thus receive assistance either directly or through governmental implementing partners. Delays in transferring funds from the central departments to provincial offices are inevitable, as authorising UNHCR to transfer funds directly would contravene the Government's financial rules and regulations.

Funding

UNHCR drastically curtailed plans to increase resources for non-camp refugees on account of both the global funding shortfall and the vastly increased requirements for voluntary repatriation support and protection screening. Quick impact projects in the sectors of water, sanitation, infrastructure, shelter and income generation were cancelled. Resources for emergency medical assistance and community services were reduced despite increased demand. The procurement of vehicles, essential non-food items, and project equipment and supplies was cancelled along with NGO capacity-building activities.



ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

Protection and Solutions

New legislation (referred to as “Article 48”) requires non-holders of a work permit to leave the country unless physical threats await them upon their return. UNHCR expressed concern about the consequences of the new criteria for documented Afghans and Iraqis who have thus far enjoyed protection in the Islamic Republic of Iran as de facto refugees.

UNHCR submitted files on 1,375 Afghan and Iraqi refugees applying for resettlement to third countries; 1,162 were accepted and received UNHCR’s assistance with formalities prior to departure.

The planned large-scale repatriation to Iraq could not take place for a number of reasons. UNHCR and the two governments concerned could not reach agreement on the details of return. Refugees rejected the Iraqi Government’s conditions requiring that repatriation movements transit through government-controlled areas and that candidates be screened prior to repatriation. Moreover, the Iraqi Government amnesty of June 1999 does not exempt from prosecution those who participated in opposition activities.

UNHCR continued to complement Government assistance to the 77,040 camp-based Iraqi refugees, providing safe drinking water, improving basic standards of hygiene through garbage and solid waste disposal, and maintaining and improving health as well as educational facilities. More UNHCR resources were devoted to education and health projects for non-camp refugees following the reduction of Government subsidies on basic commodities and increased restrictions on access to the labour market.

Assistance and Activities

Community Services: Activities in favour of non-camp refugees in Khorasan province included a basic computer centre for 400 young refugees, a day-care centre for 60 vulnerable Afghan refugee children, a tailoring skill development centre benefiting 380 Afghan women, as well as typing and English courses for 1,063 Afghan refugees. Two soccer pitches with running tracks were laid in the Iraqi refugee camps of Sefid Chogha and Songhor, and a community centre for refugee women was renovated. Out of 5,000 refugees who sought financial assistance from UNHCR, 1,040 (mainly women) heads of family benefited from one-off financial assistance and counselling services. Needy non-camp families

received 272 school bags containing a drawing pad, crayons, children’s books, toothbrush and toothpaste for pre-school children. A UN Inter-Agency Gender Theme Group ran training programmes for national women NGOs and UN agency joint projects. The UN agencies developed a work plan in line with the platform of action approved at the Fourth World Conference on Women. In addition, the UN agencies jointly published a booklet containing information on women in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the role of UN agencies in the Islamic Republic, including those for refugee women.

Domestic Needs: Sanitary items were distributed to camp-based Afghan and Iraqi refugee women. Afghans who opted for voluntary repatriation received 50 kg of wheat per person, one plastic sheet per family and USD 40 (reduced to USD 20 in August). Iraqi Kurds who de-registered at Ziveh camp were provided with USD 32 to cover any costs resulting from their relocation. Repatriating Iraqi Arab Shiites received a grant of USD 30 and one plastic sheet per family.

Education: Primary and secondary education was provided for 178,695 documented Afghan and Iraqi non-camp refugee students under a scheme in which UNHCR reimbursed a proportion of the costs incurred by the Ministry of Education and Training. The scheme targeted 367 schools in the most destitute areas with the greatest refugee enrolment. A 16-classroom primary school was built in Pakdasht, on the outskirts of Tehran, where large numbers of Afghan refugees reside and where 50 per cent of the students attending will be Afghans. UNHCR continued to support the education of more than 8,000 Afghan and Iraqi students residing in the 29 established camps; 195 young Afghan and Iraqi refugees engaged in university studies, of whom 47 percent were female.

Forestry: Refugees planted 18,000 seedlings in the camps of Ziveh, Bazileh and Dilzeh, home to some 4,122 Iraqi refugees.

Health/Nutrition: Afghan and Iraqi refugees (totalling some 11,800) were seen at the Medical Referral Units based in the UNHCR premises in Tehran and the field offices. Some received emergency treatment, including surgery; 75 refugee children with cancer received in-patient or out-patient treatment, including diagnostic investigations, medication and counselling (for themselves and their families). Within camps, 19 health posts were repaired, maintained and supplied with essential basic medicines and equipment. Special attention was given to the prevention and treatment of tuberculosis and communicable diseases. Salaries were paid to 37 Afghan and 24 Iraqi and refugee commu-

nity health workers, and financial assistance provided to five focal points at the Ministry of Health.

Income Generation: Some 124 heads of family (mainly women) received grants to support income generation based on tailoring, carpet weaving, shoe-making and small-scale trading skills. Small home-based income generation projects were launched for 45 groups of four to eight members each. An income generation committee assisted UNHCR's community services unit with the identification of skills among needy families. The beneficiaries presented three exhibitions to promote their products.

Legal Assistance: UNHCR continued to support a legal committee, which provides mediation in disputes between Afghan refugees and Iranian nationals. This serves as a safety valve to defuse tension that would otherwise lead to protection problems for the refugee community. The committee examined 1,675 cases involving family disputes, non-payment of wages, indebtedness, rent and mortgage disputes; the end result was positive in 76 per cent of cases. The Farsi translation of the collection of international instruments and other legal texts concerning refugees and displaced persons is being edited and will be distributed among relevant institutions. The *Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status* was translated and will be published in 2001.

Operational Support (to Agencies): UNHCR contributed towards the expenses for the management of refugee programmes incurred by the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrant Affairs, which included contracting temporary staff for protection screening and other activities under the Joint Programme, as well as related purchase or rental of premises, equipment and supplies.

Shelter/Other Infrastructure: In Torbat-e-Jam camp, 318 permanent accommodation units were built for some 1,590 Afghan refugees, to replace worn-out tents. The main streets of Sefid Chogha, Songhor and Kangavar camps were repaired and gravelled, benefiting 2,346 Iraqi refugees. In Sarvestan camp, 100 refugee shelter units measuring 25 square metres were constructed for Iraqi refugees. Refugee shelters were maintained in all 29 established camps.

ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Management

Operations were managed from Tehran and seven field offices. In addition, eight temporary screening centres were established in Arak, Isfahan, Kerman, Marshad, Semnan, Shiraz, Yazd and Zahedan. UNHCR's offices

were staffed by 15 international and 78 national staff, supported by one international resettlement and three national resettlement staff employed through implementing partners. Furthermore, seven physicians and 24 administrative staff continued to work for an NGO within the Medical Referral Units based in the UNHCR premises in Tehran and the field offices.

Working with Others

Four Government agencies, three national NGOs, one international NGO, one international organisation and two UN agencies comprised UNHCR's implementing partners in 2000.

During the year, UNHCR continued to push for increased NGO participation. The International Consortium for Refugees organised training on project management, and research on refugees. UNHCR also continued to support joint initiatives within the UN system. WFP provided basic food rations to refugees in camps and oil to families with girls at school. In collaboration with UNFPA, four reproductive health and family planning clinics continued to operate in areas hosting Afghan refugees.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

By the end of December, 3,595 asylum applications awaited review. More Afghans were indiscriminately deported in 2000 than in the previous year (75,000 reported in 1999). The screening exercise was not conducted on a scale broad enough to meet the needs of many additional potentially deserving asylum applicants living in areas (including Tehran) not served by the screening centres.

In 2000, there was marked improvement in progress towards lasting solutions through the voluntary return of both Afghan and Iraqi refugees. However, continued fighting in Afghanistan and the worst drought in three decades triggered large movements of Afghans across the border into the Islamic Republic of Iran. With the help of the Government, UNHCR will continue to endeavour to re-orient activities and improve programme delivery.

Offices

Tehran

Ahwaz
Doharun
Kermanshah
Mashad
Milak
Orumiyeh
Zahedan

Ministry of Health

Ministry of Interior (Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrant Affairs)

NGOs

Agency for Supporting Vulnerable Groups
International Consortium for Refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran
Iraqi Refugee Aid Council
Society to Support Children Suffering from Cancer

Other

International Organisation for Migration
United Nations Volunteers
World Food Programme

Partners

Government Agencies

Ministry of Education and Training (Bureau for International and Scientific Co-operation)
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Financial Report (USD)				
Expenditure Breakdown	Current Year's Projects		Prior Years' Projects	
		notes		notes
Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination	2,313,281		0	
Community Services	83,654		69,125	
Domestic Needs / Household Support	1,856,791		2,145,658	
Education	98,055		2,523,814	
Food	0		13,687	
Forestry	0		9,148	
Health / Nutrition	913,904		718,018	
Income Generation	7,686		32,876	
Legal Assistance	59,078		20,743	
Operational Support (to Agencies)	853,923		1,155,239	
Sanitation	0		245,585	
Shelter / Other Infrastructure	0		1,046,100	
Transport / Logistics	2,182,161		694,866	
Water	2,499		548,933	
Transit Account	4,789		0	
Instalments with Implementing Partners	4,167,419		(2,970,649)	
Sub-total Operational	12,543,240		6,253,143	
Programme Support	1,556,014		87,883	
Sub-total Disbursements / Deliveries	14,099,254	(3)	6,341,026	(6)
Unliquidated Obligations	487,230	(3)	0	
Total	14,586,484	(1) (3)	6,341,026	

Instalments with Implementing Partners

Payments Made	5,203,855		3,404,157	
Reporting Received	1,036,436		6,374,806	
Balance	4,167,419		(2,970,649)	
Outstanding 1 January	0		5,171,125	
Refunded to UNHCR	0		167,523	
Currency Adjustment	0		(700,527)	
Outstanding 31 December	4,167,419		1,332,426	

Unliquidated Obligations

Outstanding 1 January	0		7,667,136	(6)
New Obligations	14,586,484	(1)	0	
Disbursements	14,099,254	(3)	6,341,026	(6)
Cancellations	0		1,235,882	(6)
Outstanding 31 December	487,230	(3)	90,228	(6)

Figures which cross reference to Accounts:

- (1) Annex to Statement 1
(3) Schedule 3
(6) Schedule 6