



COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN

Executive Committee Summary

Country: Pakistan

Planning Year: 2005

Note : This planning document was written in March 2004.

Pakistan 2005 Country Operation Plan

Part I: Executive Committee Summary

(a) Context and beneficiary populations

UNHCR's two-decade old refugee programme has undergone a major transformation in the last three years. During the post-11 September 2001 emergency response, which re-directed world attention to the situation of Afghan displacement, UNHCR set up 19 new camps in Pakistan's North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Balochistan to accommodate an influx of some 250,000 Afghans. UNHCR was also able to enhance its community based-assistance programme in the old camps (with an estimated population of 1.4 million Afghans) in the sectors of education, health and water. In 2002, when the establishment of the Islamic Transitional Authority of Afghanistan (ITAA) brought renewed prospects for peace and development in Afghanistan, UNHCR shifted to a large-scale voluntary repatriation operation, facilitating the return of 1.5 million Afghans in a span of eight months. Corresponding to this dramatic change, camp-based assistance has been scaled back, and several new and old sites have been closed and consolidated. Today, the camp population in Pakistan is estimated to be 1.1 million Afghans, and will be the main focus of UNHCR's intensified facilitated return operation in 2005.

Political context: With the holding of national elections in October 2002, the appointment of the Prime Minister in November 2002 and the re-convening of Parliament in December 2002, Pakistan's political landscape underwent a gradual but significant transformation in 2003. The provinces in particular have begun to exercise more autonomy vis-à-vis Islamabad. For UNHCR, this devolution of authority to the provinces has resulted in a further softening of the asylum climate for Afghan refugees, who are treated with more tolerance and acceptance in NWFP and Balochistan.

Security situation: The Government of Pakistan's intensified crackdown on terrorism, a rise in sectarian violence and tensions among local landowners have increased the risk to humanitarian aid workers operating in camps outside of Pakistan's settled areas. Since March 2003 (when the military intervention began in Iraq), there has been a steady deterioration in the security environment in parts of the country, with mortar attacks in Quetta town between rival groups now occurring almost weekly. Meanwhile, the countrywide crackdown on poppy cultivation, which forced the closure of access roads, periodically disrupted the delivery of assistance. Although UN staff members are not said to be the target of this violence, they nevertheless face an increasing risk.

Protection issues: By signing the Tripartite Agreement with the Government of Afghanistan and UNHCR, the Government of Pakistan has committed itself to a policy of gradual and voluntary return until March 2006. Still satisfied with the results of the 2002 mass return of 1.5 million Afghan refugees, Pakistan has subsequently generated a more relaxed asylum climate – despite not having signed the 1951 Convention and its Protocol. The global war on terror, threats to Pakistan's national security and sectarian clashes, however, have the potential to undermine UNHCR's

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efforts to provide protection and assistance to the remaining Afghan population in Pakistan. While the Government continues to advocate for voluntary repatriation, local administrations in Islamabad, Karachi and Quetta nevertheless continue to order large-scale arrests of Afghans on national security grounds.

In the search for comprehensive solutions to Afghan displacement, UNHCR will work with its partners and asylum governments to advance from its assessment of this issue as a purely refugee problem to one that also addresses the challenges of poverty and migration. This will require devising new policies and arrangements including a mechanism and procedures to determine those among the remaining Afghans that will continue to require international protection in future (i.e., screening and refugee status determination). The Government of Pakistan plans to conduct a census and registration of the Afghan population during the second quarter of 2004, for example, which will enable UNHCR to have a more accurate assessment of the size and profile of the remaining refugee population. Taken within the context of the Tripartite Agreement, this exercise could provide necessary inputs for a screening and refugee status determination (RSD) in 2006.

UNHCR's role continues to be the provision of international protection to all refugees in Pakistan, and together with implementing partners, to provide assistance to Afghans in camps, and to newly arrived asylum seekers according to specified criteria. UNHCR also plays a key role in co-ordinating the delivery of humanitarian relief among various local and international NGOs, and the Government of Pakistan.

The goals and objectives pursued in 2005 will be fundamental in determining the scope and function of UNHCR's role in 2006, in finding solutions to Afghan displacement. As such, 2005 is viewed as an important transition year, during which time UNHCR will concentrate primarily on preparing the ground for a major re-orientation towards protection in 2006. For more than two-decades, UNHCR's overall focus in Pakistan has been on the delivery of material assistance. To shift away from this to a protection-oriented programme, UNHCR will need to be proactive in mobilising the support of development agencies and in mainstreaming refugee-hosting areas into development programmes. At the same time, UNHCR must define the mechanisms required to identify and provide protection to persons of concern, while accelerating the voluntary repatriation operation during its final year. To bring about the required changes in 2006, and to ensure a "soft landing" of a two-decade old programme, UNHCR will maximise the time and resources available.

Between now and the end of 2005, UNHCR will undertake the following activities to prepare the ground for a re-orientation towards protection in 2006:

- enhance facilitated voluntary repatriation and eventually, shift to promoted return from camps by developing closer synergies with UNHCR Afghanistan, intensifying dialogue with refugees, identifying and seeking solutions to obstacles to return and enhancing incentives for return (with support from key donors and aid agencies in Afghanistan);
- complete the process of camp consolidation, which in turn will trigger more significant repatriation from these locations and also streamline and target assistance to persons of concern;

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- forge new strategic partnerships and strengthen existing ones, in an overall effort to mainstream refugee hosting areas into Pakistan's national development programmes;
- promote refugee rights and the development of refugee law by conducting workshops, seminars and training with a range of relevant stakeholders, including national NGOs, academia and Government authorities (i.e., police and immigration officials);
- develop profiles of the remaining Afghan population, using the data collected by the Government of Pakistan's census of the in-country Afghan population, and establish mechanisms to identify persons of concern to UNHCR (through an eventual screening and refugee status determination); and
- remain better informed and involved in changes that have already started to occur within Pakistan's Ministry of Interior with regard to the reinforcement of the border, modernisation of the immigration database and the tightening of immigration mechanisms.

Overview of the Afghan refugee population: For 2005, UNHCR estimates a remaining camp population of less than 1 million Afghans. An untold number of Afghans, however, are presently living in urban areas, and it is therefore anticipated that the census and registration, if pursued in 2004, will provide a more accurate estimate and profile of this population.

The Afghan population residing in Pakistan is of diverse ethnic backgrounds, the majority being Pashtuns, with minority groups including Balochis, Hazaras, Tajiks, and Turkomens. The largest percentage of the total Afghan refugee population originates from eastern Afghanistan, near the Pakistan border. Significant numbers come from Kabul, as well as the northern provinces.

Overview of the non-Afghan refugee population: A small group of urban-based refugees of other origins (e.g. Somalis, Iraqis and Iranians) also receive protection and assistance from UNHCR. The majority of non-Afghans have remained in Pakistan for several years, and as such, UNHCR is working towards enhancing their self-reliance, while also actively pursuing durable solutions through repatriation or, where appropriate, resettlement.

Policy issues: Between now and early 2006, UNHCR will focus primarily on enhancing repatriation from the camps, working with colleagues in Afghanistan to remove obstacles and create more incentives to return (with cooperation and support from the key actors/donors in Afghanistan's reconstruction effort). At the same time, we will dedicate resources to develop a more accurate profile of the remaining Afghan population – as part of our overriding goal to find comprehensive, sustainable solutions to their displacement.

For the camps, particularly the older more established settlements (where UNHCR continues to provide basic assistance in the sectors of health, education and water), there is a need for an in-depth assessment that will allow us to determine the level of

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self sufficiency, and thereby whether (if, for whom, and in what form) UNHCR's existing programme should continue. In tandem, we are intensifying our contacts with donors and co-operation agencies in Pakistan to identify ways and means in which development assistance can be mobilised to support programmes for Afghans and local populations.

The Government of Pakistan has approached UNHCR for both financial and technical assistance in order to conduct a census and registration of Afghans in Pakistan in September 2004. The objective of this exercise is to collect relevant data related to their stay in Pakistan and place of origin in Afghanistan. As such, the information gathered would be significantly useful for UNHCR as it would provide a profile of the different categories of Afghans still residing in Pakistan. This in turn could provide key inputs for the design of a screening exercise at the expiry of the Tripartite Agreement, as well as for the promotion of a broader legal framework for migration.

Linkages to other countries within a defined “situation”: The Pakistan programme has maintained close co-ordination and regular exchange with offices in the region, particularly Afghanistan. Activities, planning and projections are linked to Afghanistan's return and reintegration programme. The Government of Pakistan's adherence to the concept of gradual and voluntary returns, for example, is the result of regular tripartite consultations. A harmonised regional approach to the voluntary repatriation of Afghans is evidenced not only by the signing and implementation of a Tripartite Agreement (between UNHCR and the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan), but also on an operational level through frequent cross border meetings and training.

Throughout 2005, UNHCR will encourage closer bilateral contacts between the Governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan, in developing a regional framework for migration. This will be complemented by UNHCR's efforts to develop mechanisms to identify persons of concern (through RSD and screening). Central to this process will be the guidance and support provided by the newly established Afghanistan Comprehensive Solutions Unit (ACSU) in Geneva. Events happening in and related to Afghanistan will also be a determining factor in defining UNHCR's protection role in the region, e.g., Afghan national elections (presidential and parliamentary) at the end of 2004.

Capacity and presence of implementing partners: UNHCR's programme in Pakistan is implemented through governmental and non-governmental organisations. The Ministry of States, Frontier Regions and Northern Areas (SAFRON) and the Office of the Chief Commissioner for Afghan Refugees (CCAR) are UNHCR's main government interlocutors, responsible for refugee policy making, security and camp management.

In 2003, when UNHCR experienced a mid-year funding shortfall, several key NGOs came forward to cover gaps in the assistance programme with their own sources of funding. As such, UNHCR signed MOUs and LOUs with Action against Hunger, Plan International, MSF Holland, and Rotary International. In 2005, UNHCR will work to forge similar alliances with other partners, and, whenever possible, strengthen these existing ones.

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Working closely with donor countries, the Government of Pakistan and implementing partners, UNHCR will devote considerable time and resources next year to soliciting the support of multilateral and bilateral development agencies and funds for initiatives in refugee impacted areas and host populations. While these efforts have the potential to make an important contribution to reducing poverty, addressing the effects of protracted displacement, and enabling sustainable return from Pakistan, they nevertheless require intensive negotiations on all levels, not least with refugees and their host communities.

The devolution of authority to the provinces adds to the complexity of UNHCR's work. Negotiations will be conducted simultaneously in Islamabad, as well as with the provincial and local authorities in Peshawar and Quetta.

Forging new partnerships and strengthening existing ones in the longer-term effort to mainstream refugee hosting areas into Pakistan's national development programmes demands discipline as well as technical expertise, particularly in the areas of health, water and education. The health sector in particular calls for an objective assessment and analysis, as UNHCR would need to re-align itself with different institutions, identifying new interlocutors within the Government of Pakistan and among the local NGO community.

Presence and role of other UN agencies and international organisations: Under a global pilot project, WFP assumed complete responsibility in January 2003 for the procurement and distribution of food rations to refugees in the new camps in Pakistan. UNHCR, however, continues to monitor the delivery of this assistance, and participates with WFP in the regular evaluations, as well as the annual Joint Food Assessment Mission (JFAM). Whether this arrangement will remain unchanged in 2005 will depend on the outcome of further evaluations and the follow-up JFAM scheduled for June 2004.

UNHCR has worked to strengthen its co-operation with other UN Agencies, entering into special agreements with UNICEF on operational and technical support in child protection and UNESCO on refugee education. Such co-operation will be supported and expanded in 2005, as UNHCR aims to mainstream refugee hosting areas into national development programmes.

(b) Selected programme goals and objectives

Afghan refugees

Beneficiary Population/Theme: Afghan refugees

Main Goals:

1. To provide international protection to Afghan refugees and asylum seekers.
2. To facilitate the voluntary repatriation of the remaining Afghan refugee population (primarily in camps) and, for targeted groups with high return potential, to promote voluntary repatriation to selected areas of origins according to clearly defined benchmarks.
3. To forge new and strengthen existing strategic partnerships with a broad range of stakeholders within the Government of Pakistan (relevant line ministries), civil society, development-oriented institutions and NGOs.
4. To ensure a cost-effective use of resources and management of assets, while place a priority on staff security and welfare.

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| Principal Objectives | Related Output |
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| <p>To provide international protection to Afghan refugees and asylum seekers.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deportations and arbitrary arrests contained. • Greater, more widespread awareness and knowledge of refugee protection and international principles within the Government of Pakistan, particularly at the provincial level where there is increasingly more autonomy. • Birth certificates are issued to all new-born children in camps. • Enhanced capacity and activity among NGOs, government authorities and civil society to promote, monitor and provide international protection to refugees and asylum seekers. • Expanded network of Advice and Legal Aid Centers, with sufficient numbers of legal counselors and lawyers helping refugees through mediation and legal representation in legal disputes that hamper repatriation, providing advice and counseling to refugees, and assisting to remove obstacles to return. • Special needs of women and children are identified and addressed. • Mechanisms for identifying persons of concern to UNHCR (post-2005) defined (i.e. RSD and screening). • Registration data used to develop profiles of the remaining population, as a first step towards a screening, or the elaboration of a migration framework. • UNHCR better informed of policy changes within the Government of Pakistan, particularly with regard to changes in immigration law and regulations affecting cross border movements. • Increased contacts with Pakistan's Ministry of Interior, and law enforcement officials, to promote refugee principles. • Stronger bilateral exchanges between the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan on issues related to migration (as well as arrests and refoulement). |
| <p>To facilitate the voluntary repatriation of the remaining Afghan refugee population (primarily in camps) and, for selected groups with high return potential, to promote voluntary repatriation to selected areas of origins according to clearly defined benchmarks.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced awareness among refugees of conditions in places of origin (including assistance available, reconstruction efforts underway, security conditions, etc) through more targeted mass information campaigns as well as more regular counselling and intensified information sharing. • Well-trained repatriation teams, with detailed information about conditions in places of origin. • Expanded "go and see" and "come and tell" visits designed to ensure that refugees make well-informed decisions about their return. • Regularly convened community discussion groups. • Enhanced information flow between UNHCR offices in Afghanistan and Pakistan, on areas and groups with high return potential. • Intensified counselling and negotiation with refugees yielding higher returns. • Removal of obstacles to return through negotiation, targeted assistance and representation from Advice and Legal Aid Centers. • Optimised access of refugees to registration and repatriation through mobile teams spread throughout camps and more remote areas (where Afghans are concentrated). • Closer coordination with and enhanced capacity of the Afghan authorities in assisting refugees to overcome obstacles and to make informed decisions about their return (including the arrangement of "come and tell" visits to camps in Pakistan). • Minimised incidents of double registration due to the effective use of iris recognition technology at validation centres. • Increased and motivated returns achieved through intensified facilitated repatriation and promoted returns. |

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| <p>To forge new and strengthen existing strategic partnerships with a broad range of stakeholders within the Government of Pakistan (relevant line ministries), civil society, development-oriented institutions and NGOs.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced dialogue with Pakistan's line ministries (i.e., health, education and water). • Closer interaction with key development actors such as WFP (e.g. food for work programmes), UNDP, World Bank, Asian Development Bank. • Assessment and analysis of self-sufficiency in the old camps, and potential for mainstreaming UNHCR-funded activities into national development programmes. • Trained local NGOs capable of raising funds, and receiving more support from international donors. • Expanded and strengthened strategic partners in the areas of health, education and water. |
| <p>To enhance technical capacity to facilitate the negotiation and formulation of sector-specific projects that are integrated into national and provincial development programmes.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary deployment of (external) technical experts to conduct necessary assessment and analysis of existing programmes and prospects for sector-specific projects within national/provincial development programmes. • Successful negotiations with local communities and administrations, resulting in more opportunities for joint initiatives. • Empowerment of refugee and local communities through increased negotiation and counselling. • Technically sound assessments and studies, offering relevant, practical and concrete recommendations. |
| <p>To ensure a cost-effective use of resources and management of assets, without compromising the security and welfare of staff.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular assessment and in-depth of analysis of security conditions in UNHCR's areas of operation. • Closer co-ordination with national and international security professionals. • Backlog of assets recorded, retrieved and disposed of in due course. • Enhanced and consistently updated database on assets. • Increased compliance to reporting requirements. • Timely closure of projects and submission of expenditure reports. • Clearance of x21 balance. • More receptive Security Management Team (in Islamabad) to the specific security needs related to UNHCR's work. • Timely release of instalments, corresponding to the rate of implementation. • Timely advertisement of posts and transparent recruitment/selection and separation procedures followed. • Enhanced capacity of staff. |

Non-Afghan refugees

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| <p>Beneficiary Population/Theme: Non-Afghan refugees</p> | |
| <p>Main Goal: To provide international protection pending identification of durable solutions.</p> | |
| <p>Principal Objectives</p> | <p>Related Outputs</p> |
| <p>Refugees and asylum seekers are allowed to remain in Pakistan pending the identification of a durable solution.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of asylum applications processed and Refugee Status Determination (RSD) conducted. • Enhanced capacity and activity among NGOs, government authorities and civil society to promote, monitor and provide international protection to refugees and asylum seekers. • Deportations and arbitrary arrests remain minimal. • Greater, more widespread awareness and knowledge of refugee protection and international principles within the Government of Pakistan, particularly at the provincial level where there is increasingly more autonomy. • Special needs of women and children are identified and addressed. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased contacts with Pakistan's Ministry of Interior, and law enforcement officials, to promote refugee principles. • UNHCR better informed of policy changes within the Government of Pakistan, particularly with regard to changes in immigration law and regulations affecting refugees and asylum seekers (e.g., amendment to the Foreigners' Act of 1946 and the SAARC Additional Protocol). |
| Refugees are empowered to better meet their protection and assistance needs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugees that have received work permits are assisted to find employment and become self-reliant. |
| Assisting refugees wishing to repatriate. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling and repatriation assistance provided. |
| Refugees unable to repatriate for protection related reasons are considered and their cases submitted for resettlement. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cases in need of third country resettlement processed and submitted to resettlement countries. |
| Recognised or identified vulnerable non-Afghan refugees are assisted. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly subsistence allowances paid to recognised or identified vulnerable non-Afghan refugees. • Increased number of non-Afghan refugees issued identification documents and work permits by NARA. |