

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN



Operational highlights

- The voluntary repatriation of Afghans and Iraqis continued.
- The predictability of stay of registered Afghan refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran was increased by an inclusive re-registration exercise and the issuance of temporary work permits.
- UNHCR worked with the Government to increase access to education and health services for Afghan refugees.
- The Office advocated with the authorities for the continued protection of Afghan refugees, and in particular the continued stay of registered refugees, who were again offered the opportunity to relocate.

- UNHCR expanded its outreach programmes to urban refugees.
- Self-help projects and training in various skills helped increase the capacity of refugees and those returning to their countries of origin to improve their livelihoods.

Working environment

Parliament's decision in November to remove subsidies on basic commodities for all sectors of the population over a five-year period has had a direct effect on the economic situation of vulnerable refugees. Only some Iranians are expected to be entitled to any cash assistance in place of the subsidized goods and services. Vulnerable Afghan refugees in Iran are likely to be further affected. In addition to

Persons of concern					
Type of population	Origin	Total	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Refugees	Afghanistan	1,022,500	1,022,500	46	37
	Iraq	47,900	47,900	38	44
	Various	70	70	39	39
Asylum-seekers	Afghanistan	1,700	1,700	46	37
	Various	140	140	35	40
Total		1,072,310	1,072,310		

insecurity, a lack of jobs and threats on religious grounds were some of the reasons given by refugees for not wishing to repatriate to Afghanistan. Afghan refugees in Sistan and Baluchistan had to decide whether to relocate to other approved provinces or opt for voluntary repatriation to Afghanistan.

Participatory assessments revealed that some refugees with serious health conditions have no health insurance. Even refugees with temporary work permits can encounter difficulties with law enforcement bodies and be denied adequate treatment in case of injuries. The Government decree to give access to education for all foreigners under the same conditions as Iranian children was a welcome step, despite concerns over high tuition fees.

| Achievements and impact |

◦ Main objectives

In 2009, an important objective for UNHCR was to increase the international community's recognition that the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran had hosted large groups of refugees for three decades. The Office also sought to work with the Government to strengthen the asylum environment in order to protect Afghan and Iraqi refugees. Where appropriate, it aimed to support the voluntary repatriation of Afghan and Iraqi refugees. Other objectives were to help Afghan and Iraqi refugees with specific needs to enhance their self-reliance, thereby allowing them to rebuild their lives upon return home; and to encourage the Government to use bilateral channels with the Government of Afghanistan to discuss migration issues.

◦ Protection and solutions

UNHCR's role in the Islamic Republic of Iran is to support the Government in partnership refugee issues and advocate on behalf of the displaced.

Repatriation activities were maintained at more or less the same level as in previous years, with almost 6,000 Afghans returning home with UNHCR assistance. Close to 3,200 Iraqis also repatriated with UNHCR's help.

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran took a series of positive measures that improved the predictability and sustainability of stay for registered refugees in the country. Of particular importance was the distribution of temporary work permits to eligible Afghan registered refugees. While this was compulsory for males between 18 and 60 years of age, it was optional for women.

The Government facilitated the distribution of Amayesh IV registration cards to registered Afghan refugees with specific needs by granting them full exemption from municipality taxes, which was of significant assistance to the financially destitute.

Registered Afghan refugees in Khuzestan and Hormozgan provinces, which were declared no-go areas for foreigners, have until 1 July 2010 either to commit to voluntary repatriation or relocate to designated areas. The 83,000 formerly registered refugees in Sistan-Balochistan province who remained there were also given the possibility of being reinstated as refugees provided they voluntarily repatriated or relocated.

At the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement in July 2009, the Government called for more effective burden-sharing by traditional resettlement countries, as only a handful of refugees are resettled from the Islamic Republic of Iran each year.



Afghan refugee girls study in a library at a charity centre in Mashad.

The Government continues to prevent the *refoulement* of registered Afghan refugees, in light of an order for the mass deportation of undocumented Afghans, through monitoring by the Bureau of Aliens and Foreign Immigrant Affairs (BAFIA) at detention centres and border crossings. In 2009 BAFIA agreed to re-activate the 2007 Re-Admission Agreement for Afghan registered refugees holding valid Amayesh cards who had been inadvertently deported to Afghanistan.

○ *Activities and assistance*

Community services: Five new refugee committees were formed in settlement and urban areas to promote a community-based approach to the management of refugee issues and to ensure participation in income-generating activities. Some 300 urban refugee families were identified and provided with non-food items (NFIs). Three hundred urban refugees with disabilities were also identified by the refugee committees and benefited from various rehabilitation activities and the provision of tools and counselling.

Some 90 refugees from urban areas were trained in first aid, and 59 visually-impaired people were given assistance. Approximately 170 refugees with specific needs identified by community workers were provided with tools such as sewing machines and welding and stone cutting implements.

Domestic needs and household support: Twelve thousand Afghan and Iraqi refugee women and girls of reproductive age received sanitary kits, and 3,000 hygiene kits were distributed to vulnerable refugee families in refugee settlements throughout the country.

Education: Some 130 computers, 1,110 desks, 220 whiteboards and 200 science kits were provided to primary schools in 12 provinces. Approximately 950 Afghan and Iraqi refugees received vocational training. Tenders for the construction of two 10-classroom schools were issued in Yazd and Kerman provinces.

Health and nutrition: Approximately 10,100 urban refugees in six provinces benefited from training in family planning, reproductive health and personal hygiene. A delivery room was constructed in one refugee settlement. Some 600 refugee families received insurance booklets and over 7,800 refugees received medical referrals to hospitals.

Legal assistance: Some 4,000 refugee families received free legal services on a variety of issues including blood money (*diyeh*), family conflicts, non-payment of wages and housing rights. Refugees received Amayesh IV cards and vulnerable refugees were exempt from paying municipal taxes. Approximately 600 Afghan refugees and 38 Iraqi refugees departed for resettlement in 2009.

Operational support (to agencies): UNHCR provided funds to BAFIA to help cover support costs in the management of refugee affairs and audit fees.

Sanitation: Two sewage trucks were procured for the Bardsir settlement to improve sanitation systems.

Shelter and infrastructure: The Voluntary Repatriation Centre was maintained and a water tank repaired in Dogharoun, the main border crossing for voluntary repatriation of Afghans.

Transport and logistics: Nearly 6,000 Afghan refugees repatriated to Afghanistan through Dogharoun with assistance from the individual self-organized transportation scheme. Some 3,000 Iraqis who returned through the Shalamcheh and Haj-Omran border points received transportation grants.

Water: The water supply system in three settlements was repaired. Some 1,800 metres of worn piping in two settlements was replaced.

○ *Constraints*

UNHCR has no evidence of the Iranian authorities processing asylum claims. The Government expels all foreigners who have entered or remained in the country illegally, including those who might have valid asylum claims.

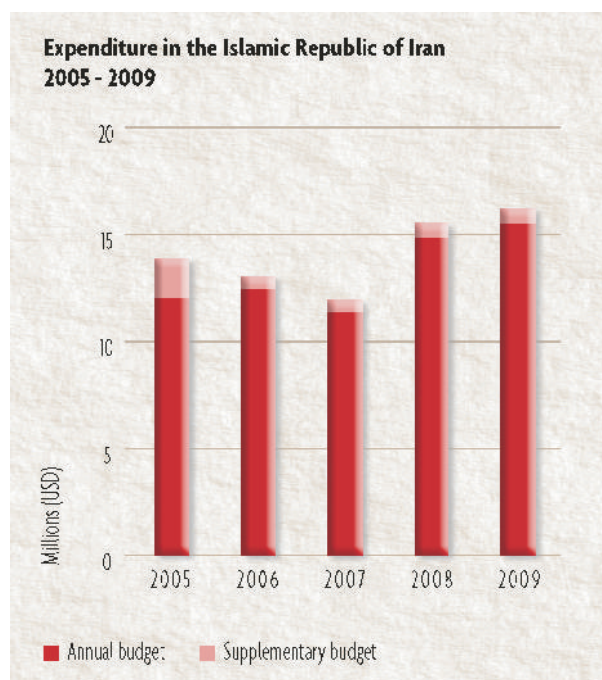
There are few options for resettlement in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Those accepted for resettlement are mainly from female-headed households.

Authorizations to carry out home visits were difficult to obtain, and departure formalities remain lengthy and cumbersome.

There are concerns about the ability of refugees to benefit from the temporary work permits as the fees for the first issuance and re-issuance of the permits, which have a six-month validity, have been increased from around USD 70 to between USD 350-500.

| **Financial information** |

UNHCR increased its budget by USD 3 million to support the Government's efforts to help Afghan refugees in urban areas avail themselves of health and education services. Expenditures



Islamic Republic of Iran

for both the Annual Budget and the Iraq situation response supplementary budget were on a par with levels from 2008.

Organization and implementation

UNHCR's operation was managed by the country office in Tehran, two sub-offices, one field office and three field units with nine international staff, 115 national employees and one JPO.

Working with others

In the past few years UNHCR has established partnerships with provincial offices of the Ministries of Health and Education for project activities. In addition, the Office has established partnerships with governmental organizations, such as the Social Welfare Organization (Behzisti) and Literacy Movement Organization. MAHAK and IRAC are two major NGOs with a long history of partnership with UNHCR. Following intense negotiations with BAFIA to increase the partnership base, UNHCR has developed links with local charity organizations to assist refugees with their social, economic and medical needs. The Office also supported an international NGO symposium in May at BAFIA's request.

Overall assessment

UNHCR recognizes the generosity of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran in hosting refugees for several decades and the tripartite resettlement meeting was an unprecedented opportunity to present the Iranian case for international support.

The Office has advocated persistently for the continued protection of refugees in the country who have been ordered to relocate or repatriate.

UNHCR began an outreach programme for urban refugees and was successful in building skills that would enhance livelihood opportunities for those remaining in the Islamic Republic of Iran or returning to Afghanistan. The distribution of temporary work permits signifies major progress in ensuring the sustainable and predictable stay of Afghans registered as refugees.

Owing to the elections in both the Islamic Republic of Iran and Afghanistan, support for bilateral migration discussions was limited.

Partners	
Implementing partners	
Government:	BAFIA Lorestan, BAFIA Tehran, BAFIA Fars, BAFIA Kerman, BAFIA Khorasan, BAFIA W.Azarbaijan, BAFIA Markazi, BAFIA (Zanjan), Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Education and Training (MET), MOH South Khorasan (Birjand), MOH Khorasan Razavi, Vocational Training Centre (VTC) Golestan, Social Welfare Organization (SWO) Kerman, Literacy movement Organisation (LMO) South Khorasan
NGOs:	IRAC (Iraqi Refugees Aid Committee), MAHAK, Re-birth, FPA (Family Planning Association), RCDARF (Relief Committee for Destitute Afghan Refugee Families)
Others:	Embassy of Afghanistan
Operational partners	
Government:	All Ministries delivering services to refugees
NGOs:	Chain of Hopes, Médecins Sans Frontières, IRAC, MAHAK and other local NGOs and charities
Others:	WFP, WHO, UNICEF, UNDP

Budget, income and expenditure in Iran (USD)					
	Final budget	Income from contributions	Other funds available	Total funds available	Total expenditure
Annual budget	16,576,456	6,855,938	8,986,742	15,842,680	15,514,079
Iraq Situation Response SB	790,000	0	700,934	700,934	700,934
Total	17,366,456	6,855,938	9,687,676	16,543,614	16,215,013

Note: Supplementary programmes do not include seven per cent support costs that are recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR. Income from contributions includes contributions earmarked at the country level. Other funds available include transfers from unearmarked and broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

Financial report for UNHCR's operations in Islamic Republic of Iran (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current years' project			Previous years' project
	Annual budget	Supplementary budgets	Total	Annual and supplementary budgets
Protection, monitoring and coordination	3,755,218	91,547	3,846,765	0
Community services	430,989	2,986	433,974	105,933
Domestic needs and household support	256,359	248,972	505,331	0
Education	153,685	0	153,685	402,593
Health and nutrition	2,129,619	125,934	2,255,554	104,110
Legal assistance	260,315	8,101	268,417	641,277
Operational support (to agencies)	271,992	2,979	274,971	387,198
Sanitation	122,237	0	122,237	57,143
Shelter and infrastructure	18,411	41,583	59,994	7,086
Transport and logistics	570,577	76,626	647,203	0
Water	0	8,365	8,365	55,594
Instalments to implementing partners	4,788,203	93,840	4,882,044	(1,760,934)
Subtotal operational activities	12,757,605	700,934	13,458,538	0
Programme support	2,756,474	0	2,756,474	0
Total expenditure	15,514,079	700,934	16,215,013	0

Cancellation on previous years' expenditure

(15,661)

Instalments with implementing partners

Payments made	5,554,783	189,175	5,743,958
Reporting received	(766,580)	(95,335)	(861,914)
Balance	4,788,203	93,840	4,882,044

Previous year's report

Instalments with implementing partners:	
Outstanding 1st January	2,147,673
Reporting received	(1,760,934)
Refunded to UNHCR	(6,796)
Currency adjustment	1,835
Outstanding 31st December	381,778