



COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN

Executive Committee Summary

Country: Afghanistan

Planning Year: 2005

Afghanistan 2005 Country Operations Plan

Part I: Executive Summary

(a) Context and Beneficiary Population

2001-2004: The Bonn Agreement signed in December 2001 started a three-year process of transition towards the establishment of permanent public institutions and the installation of an elected government. The formation of the Afghan Interim Administration in December 2001 and the presence of ISAF and coalition forces brought relative peace, security and stability after a period of 25 years of devastating wars and political fragmentation, during which more than 7 million Afghans were displaced. In June 2002, the Emergency Loya Jirga approved the establishment of the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan and elected Hamid Karzai as its president. Almost 18 months later, this was followed by the holding of the Constitutional Loya Jirga in December 2003, which despite considerable differences of the participating factions and ethnic groups reached a compromise on a new Afghan constitution. The consolidation of the central government continued in 2003, when it managed to expand its authority with the appointment of key officials including the Governors in most provinces. The process for Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR), which was to be a critical turning point in the Bonn Process for 2003, was launched with considerable delay and initially focusing on a number of pilot projects only. Progress on DDR remains unfortunately very slow. The change of ISAF command to NATO and its commitment to establish a presence outside of Kabul was well received by the Afghan government and the international community. Initially NATO established a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Kunduz and intends to expand its presence in Northern Western and Central Afghanistan leaving the PRTs in the South, South-East and East to the coalition forces. Although the absence of rule of law and the lack of effective administrative and judicial structures combined with small-scale conflicts and human rights abuses continue to pose a degree of uncertainty to the population, the general confidence in the state-building process and a gradual return to peace and economic development still remain. The effects of the severe drought, which led to the displacement of more than 1.5 million Afghans during the past 5 years, remain largely limited to the South where in particular nomadic Kuchis who lost their livestock are considered highly vulnerable, albeit that prospects for the harvest in 2004 are less promising than in the previous two years and water shortages are reported from several areas other than the Southern region.

Repatriation: Following the large-scale return of more than 2.5 million refugees and IDPs returned in 2002, mainly to Central, Northern and Eastern Afghanistan, the return in 2003 remained substantial with some 645,767 ¹refugees returning mainly from the neighbouring countries (375,526 from Pakistan and 269,391 from Iran). With the organized return of some 82,000 IDPs, the total number of returns in 2003 amounted to 727,834. Based on last year's trend and considering the continued positive indications in Afghanistan's political stabilization and economic reconstruction, it is anticipated that up to 1 million refugees and IDPs would return in 2004 and another 778,000 in 2005. The return trend in 2003 remained similar as in 2002, with few Afghans returning to the Provinces of Kunar, Paktia, Khost, Paktika, Zabul, Uruzgan and Bamyan, mainly because of lack of security and economic development. If progress in the peace process continues, UNHCR together with the Government of the Afghanistan and the neighboring countries may call for selective

¹ Covering both assisted and non-assisted.

promotion of voluntary repatriation to areas where benchmarks for protection and re-integration are met.

Government and Institutions in 2005: The political situation in the second half of 2004 and in 2005 will be determined by the outcome of the presidential election due to take place in October 2004 and the parliamentary election that will follow in April 2005. On July 21st 2004, UNAMA signed a Memorandum of Understanding with IOM for the organization of the voter registration and polling for Afghans in Iran and Pakistan. Inside Afghanistan however, returning refugees are already included in the voter registration exercise. It is expected that the Transitional Government of the Islamic State of Afghanistan will continue its inter-action with local power holders and mediate in localized conflicts in 2004/5. The continuation of national institution building (national army, police force, Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, civil service commission and others) will be crucial also in 2005 and will support the process of consolidation of the Government and the Institutions of the Bonn process. To improve the credibility and efficiency of the Government, wide-ranging civil service reforms will be required and would be expected to take place after presidential elections. The overall security and stability of Afghanistan will be ensured by a continued presence of ISAF under NATO and the presence of the coalition forces. Despite a slow start of National Development Programmes in 2003, it is expected that an increased development impact will take place in 2004, in particular major infrastructure projects (roads, irrigation systems). The key planning assumptions for 2004 and 2005 are therefore based on a continued positive political, social and economical development for Afghanistan with slow but steady improvements in public services, rule of law and security.

Security and Human Rights: 2003 was marked with a partial deterioration in security, in particular in the provinces bordering Pakistan (including Uruzgan and some parts of Ghazni). Reported cross-border infiltration of elements associated with Taleban and Al-Qaеeda required continued military activities by the coalition forces and generated considerable security problems, especially for government officials, UN and NGO employees. It is expected that – in view of the elections – the deterioration will continue for large parts of 2004 but the situation may improve in 2005 after the electoral period. This would enable Government and development actors to mobilize resources and provide refugees from the border provinces a chance to return to areas that have seen little security and development so far. It is anticipated that with the consolidation of Government in all provinces, the overall human rights situation may improve but in some areas will continue to remain very challenging, especially in the North-West including North Badghis and in the central area comprising Northern Uruzgan, West Ghazni, Southern Bamyan and parts of the West. The partnership between UNHCR and the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission will be intensified in 2005 and will contribute to enhance monitoring of the human rights situation and the situation of returnees and remedial measures. The field presence of UNAMA Human Rights Officers has been increased in 2004 and more strategic inter-action with other human rights actors is likely to take place in 2005. A commitment by General Dostum at the Constitutional Loya Jirga in December 2003, to respect the rights of Pushtoons in the North and inviting the displaced Pushtoons to return brought new momentum into the work of the Return Commission and its working groups in the North. Following several Go and See visits, the return of Pushtoon IDPs from the camps in the South and West to the North has begun in March 2004, but then stagnated as the envisaged improvements remained largely unattained. It is expected that, following presidential elections, renewed efforts to improve the situation of ethnic minorities in the North will yield positive results.

Economic Environment: According to a recent Government-led budgeting exercise covering the next 12 years, a 9 % economic growth rate per annum in the legal economy will be needed to ensure that there is visible economic and social progress. However, even with this growth rate, in ten years time, per capita income will only be US \$500 per annum. As a result, the Government will need to establish, alongside economic policies, a focused social welfare policy to address the needs of the most vulnerable members of society. Through this exercise, the Government also tried to assess the funding needed to foster economic growth and reduce poverty. Over the seven years, public recurrent expenditures are estimated to be \$7 billion, while it is estimated that only \$4.4 billion of domestic revenue will be collected. To this, one needs to add the financial resources necessary to implement major development and social programs. Accordingly, Afghanistan will require external assistance in the range of just over \$28 billion over a period of seven years. This will therefore require the sustained support of the international donor community in the foreseeable future.

In the immediate future, to address the relatively high percentage of rural poverty found through a recent survey (53%), increased emphasis is given to poverty reduction programmes within the National Development Budget for 1383 (2004/5). Major national development programmes initiated in 2003 (NSP, NEEP, NABDP and MISFA) will increase their coverage and activities throughout 2004 and their results will be increasingly felt in 2005. Support to the agricultural sector through large programmes such as USAID's RAMP, will be complemented by employment and self-employment support mechanisms and projects. Self-employment will be particularly supported through programs like MISFA (microfinance) as the Government considers that the private sector must be the driver of growth in Afghanistan. There are, however, major risks to private sector development, particularly in the areas of security, rule of law, a clear regulatory environment and access to infrastructure and skilled labor. The latter is being addressed through extensive infrastructure projects (rehabilitation of major roads, NEEP, etc.) together with vocational and skills training programmes as well as capacity development projects for both the public and the private sectors. The value and impact of capacity building in the public sector is likely to be limited by the lack of substantial progress in the civil service reform.

Main Countries of Asylum: The one-year tripartite legal framework with Iran will end on 20 March 2005 and it has not yet been decided whether it will be extended or not. If so, returns from Iran will continue in 2005 under an extended tri-partite agreement. Following the imposition of sharp economic and social rights restrictions based on an Iranian "Government Regulation on Accelerating Repatriation of Afghan Nationals" issued in December 2003, it is likely that destitute Afghans and their families feel increasingly compelled to return to Afghanistan. Such returns pose greater re-integration challenges in Afghanistan and will tax the stretched services and humanitarian support schemes. The tri-partite agreement with Pakistan remains valid until terminated by mutual agreement, but it was envisaged to last for 3 years (Article 6, Paragraph 2), thus until March 2006. Increasing interest by European Countries to sign tri-partite agreements or bilateral readmission agreements that also allow for enforced returns will continue in 2004 and 2005 (as of March 2004, such agreements have been signed with France, UK and the Netherlands).

Towards comprehensive solutions displacement: With the improvement of socio-economic conditions inside Afghanistan, UNHCR's intends to enhance its support to return in what is expected to be the last year of assisted mass repatriation under currently existing mechanisms. At the same time, UNHCR will continue to support the Afghan government in developing a regional migration strategy which reflects and addresses the range of reasons,

beyond flight and asylum, why Afghans enter and remain in the neighbouring countries. This broad-based solution strategy would notably entail the following:

Enhanced support to repatriation:

- 2005 is expected to be the last year of UNHCR assisted mass repatriation.
- UNHCR will reinforce and refine its mass information capacity throughout the region as of mid-2004. Special publicity (the “Good-News-Grid”) will be given to areas which have positive indicators.
- Inside Afghanistan, by early 2005, UNHCR should be able to determine the impact of its own activities and of the inclusion of returnees in national programmes, in terms of reintegration. Based on this, UNHCR will advise the government and agency partners on how to address the issue in 2005 and the following years.

Monitoring the restoration of national protection:

- It is anticipated that a move from facilitation to selective promotion of voluntary repatriation to certain areas where key benchmarks of legal, physical and material safety are met might be envisaged.

Development by the Afghan authority of a migration strategy:

- Development by the Afghan Government of a migration strategy with the support of ILO, IOM and UNHCR placing the migration issue within the broader context of their regional economic, trade and cooperation relations. The central aim is to support a transition from treating the challenge as a purely humanitarian/refugee problem under international supervision to one that can increasingly be managed as a bilateral political and economic issue by the concerned countries themselves.
- To support the development of an Afghan migration strategy, UNHCR will support the Afghan government to commission in very close collaboration with ILO and IOM a number of research studies on Afghan populations in exile and regional migratory patterns and trends.

Another key protection objective for 2004/5 is to ensure that Afghanistan will sign the Refugee Convention.

For the detailed implementation strategy, please refer to corresponding sections in Part B.

(b) Selected Programme Goals and Objectives

Name of Beneficiary Population: Afghan Returnees (refugees and IDPs)	
Main Goal: To (selectively) promote gradual, voluntary, safe and gender-sensitive return of refugees and IDPs, and to assist in sustainable reintegration of returnees into their communities of origin.	
Principal Objectives	Related Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugees and IDPs make informed and voluntary decision on their return. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information related to areas of return gathered, analyzed and disseminated

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugees and IDPs return to their communities of origin in safety and dignity. • Returnees’ protection and reintegration needs are identified and addressed. • Returnees are integrated into national development plans as part of 4Rs approach. • Returnee issues and concerns are addressed at all levels of the Government structure. • New asylum-migration framework is developed and agreed by the Governments of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan • As a result of identification and tackling of obstacles to return , refugees and IDPs are in position to return 	<p>regularly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport and cash assistance, basic health services available for 705,000 refuge returnees • Transport, basic health services and material assistance available to 73,000 IDP returnees. • Established national and local mechanism for systematic returnee and protection monitoring • Number of deportations decreased to less than 5 per week • Basic human rights of returnees, including ethnic minorities are respected and incidence of illegal land-occupation, illegal taxation, extortion, forcible recruitment and forced labour by commanders reduced or stopped in most areas. • UNHCR Reintegration programmes continue at a decreased level targeting specific groups/areas, to complement national development programmes • Linkages, including information sharing with development actors effectively maintained/increased • Partnership arrangement continued to complement UNHCR interventions • Co-existence projects continue where reconciliation needs to be promoted • Capacity building programmes continued • Migration agreements between Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan negotiated and concluded • Progress against promotion benchmarks is regularly monitored and documented throughout 2005.
Name of Beneficiary Population: Internally Displaced Persons (Residual Caseload)	
Main Goal: To ensure protection of IDPs and to facilitate finding long-term solutions including local settlement	
<p style="text-align: center;">Principal Objectives</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Related Outputs</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IDPs enjoy protection and assistance pending durable solutions • Opportunities for solutions increase through the establishment of better and conducive environment • Local integration of IDPs implemented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IDP issues analyzed and problems addressed, and disseminated • Minimum humanitarian standards maintained for all • Protection monitoring and intervention, and material assistance available at IDP camps/settlements • Decreased number of abuses and other

<p>where appropriate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afghan Government progressively assumes ownership of IDP management and strategies at national and provincial level. 	<p>protection problems for IDPs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IDPs registered and profiled • National IDP solutions strategy further implemented • Interventions by the Return Commission/Task Force and other ad hoc mechanisms implemented • Local settlement possibility negotiated and agreed • Number of IDPs decreased by 95,000 • Co-existence and other forms of reconciliation projects in minority return areas continued • Government's advocacy role and intervention capacity on IDPs strengthened
--	---

<p>Name of Beneficiary Population: Refugees and Asylum Seekers</p>	
<p>Main Goal: To ensure protection standard and minimum level of care and maintenance for asylum seekers and refugees pending solutions</p>	
<p>Principal Objectives</p>	<p>Related Outputs</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afghanistan ratifies the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and enacts national legislation to implement international principles of refugee law. • Asylum seekers have access to fair and effective refugee status determination procedures • Asylum seekers and recognized refugees enjoy personal safety and have access to adequate means of subsistence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required steps taken to assist development of a draft refugee legislation • Refugee Status Determination (RSD) conducted jointly by UNHCR with increasing involvement by the Government of Afghanistan • Registration and documentation for up to 200 asylum-seekers and refugees • Asylum-seekers received basic assistance pending RSD • Mechanisms for the effective provision of protection and assistance established