

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN



Working environment

The context

The Islamic Republic of Iran hosts one of the largest and most long-staying refugee populations in the world, comprised of Afghans who have been in the country for more than 30 years. As of July 2011, according to the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants' Affairs, the total number of refugees registered with the authorities stood at some 1,061,500, including 1,019,700 Afghans and 41,800 Iraqis. Some 3,500 Iraqi refugees registered with UNHCR are awaiting a decision

on their legal status by the authorities. Most refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran reside in urban areas, with only some 3 per cent living in settlements.

UNHCR has assisted almost 886,000 Afghan refugees to return home voluntarily since 2002. The repatriation continues under the auspices of tripartite agreements signed by the Islamic Republic of Iran, Afghanistan and UNHCR. Beginning in 2008, there was a steady decline in the number of Afghan refugees opting to return to Afghanistan. But in 2011, this trend has appeared to be turning, with the number of people wishing to repatriate increasing substantially.

Planning figures for the Islamic Republic of Iran

TYPE OF POPULATION	ORIGIN	JAN 2012		DEC 2012 - JAN 2013		DEC 2013	
		TOTAL IN COUNTRY	OF WHOM ASSISTED BY UNHCR	TOTAL IN COUNTRY	OF WHOM ASSISTED BY UNHCR	TOTAL IN COUNTRY	OF WHOM ASSISTED BY UNHCR
Refugees	Afghanistan	1,040,000	1,040,000	1,060,000	1,060,000	1,080,000	1,080,000
	Iraq	46,000	46,000	47,000	47,000	48,000	48,000
	Various	80	80	70	70	70	70
Asylum-seekers	Afghanistan	500	500	200	200	50	50
	Iraq	30	30	10	10	-	-
	Various	30	30	10	10	-	-
Total		1,086,640	1,086,640	1,107,290	1,107,290	1,128,120	1,128,120



Afghan refugees wait to board a bus as part of a UNHCR-facilitated voluntary repatriation programme.

UNHCR / B. MOHAREK

Preparations are ongoing for the Afghan Stakeholders Conference scheduled for early 2012. The Conference will establish a platform for dialogue among relevant stakeholders from Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan.

UNHCR will support the Dispute Settlement Committees which help to resolve legal disputes among applicants for voluntary repatriation in ten Iranian provinces. It will also seek to optimize the involvement of international and national institutions operating in Afghanistan.

In June 2011, the Iranian Government began re-registering Afghan refugees extending the validity of the card to one year and linking the Amayesh residence permits with the issuance of the work permits. During the exercise, which receives financial support from UNHCR, the Government has identified

vulnerable refugees to be granted exemption from payment of municipality taxes and school tuition fees. Such fees are normally obligatory for registered Afghan refugees.

In May 2011, following an agreement with the Government and a private insurance company, UNHCR launched a Health Insurance Scheme for refugees in Iran. The scheme complements UNHCR's support for the Ministry of Health programme to provide free primary health care to refugees. UNHCR contributes some 40 per cent of the cost of each policy, which covers secondary and tertiary medical health care, with refugees paying the rest. The insurance plan will allow refugees to have 70 per cent of their medical bills reimbursed by the insurance company.

Main objectives and targets for 2012

Basic needs and essential services

- The health status of the refugee population is improved.
 - ☞ More than 1 million registered refugees have access to free primary health care.
 - ☞ At least 80 per cent of the refugee population benefits from health insurance covering secondary and tertiary treatment.
 - ☞ The medical referral system is maintained.
- The population has optimal access to education.
 - ☞ Adult education is provided for 3,000 refugees.
 - ☞ Four educational facilities are constructed.
 - ☞ More than 280,000 registered refugees have access to primary and secondary education.

Community participation and self-management

- Self-reliance and livelihoods are improved.
 - ☞ Access to self-employment and small-business opportunities is facilitated for 5,000 refugees.

- ☞ Access to work is facilitated through reductions in the cost of obtaining temporary work permits and/or establishing payment schemes that are easier for refugees.
- ☞ Entrepreneurship and business training is provided for 5,000 refugees.

Durable solutions

- The potential for voluntary return is realized.
 - ☞ Cash grants are provided for 15,000 refugees opting to return home.
 - ☞ A minimum of four cross-border meetings are undertaken with relevant authorities of Afghanistan and Iraq.
 - ☞ Health screening is undertaken for all vulnerable refugees who will be assisted by UNHCR to repatriate.
- The potential for resettlement is realized.
 - ☞ More than 2,000 resettlement files are submitted for consideration by resettlement countries.

UNHCR's presence in 2012

□ Number of offices	4
□ Total staff	137
International	11
National	118
JPOs	1
Others	7

○ *The needs*

In 2010 an Iran Contact Group was established, chaired by the Government of Norway and including selected resettlement countries (Australia, Finland, Germany, Norway, with Brazil as an observer) and UNHCR, in close cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran, with a view to improving existing efforts to resettle Afghan refugees in Iran by systematically increasing refugee resettlement quotas and making the process more predictable through multi-year commitments by resettlement countries. For 2011, over 1,300 places have been pledged while resettlement needs are at 5,000 people a year. In addition to burden-sharing by increasing resettlement quotas, members have also indicated their willingness to consider supporting an increase of humanitarian assistance to refugees in Iran, particularly in the areas of livelihoods, skills training and tertiary health care, as a gesture of international solidarity.

In addition to pursuing voluntary repatriation and resettlement as durable solutions, UNHCR is giving priority to needs related to health, education and livelihoods. Based on the findings of recent participatory assessments and field visits, the most pressing difficulties faced by refugees in both urban and refugee settlements are the high cost of medical treatment and education, and limited access to employment opportunities.

There is an imperative need for all stakeholders to fill the educational and vocational training needs of refugees in Iran. UNHCR will make every effort to share this burden with the Government. It will also act as a catalyst for all partners, but particularly the line ministries, to address the pressing needs of the people of concern. In this regard, UNHCR will continue to support the Government in the areas of health and education, develop programmes to enhance refugees' self-reliance and livelihoods, and assist individual refugees with specific needs.

| **Strategy and activities** |

A quadripartite consultative process commenced in 2011, involving the Governments of Afghanistan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan and UNHCR, to develop a multi-year solutions strategy. It is envisaged that a stakeholder conference will be held in 2012 to seek endorsement of this strategy. It will involve voluntary repatriation and resettlement as durable

solutions, along with a legal framework for the continued stay of Afghans and Iraqis in Iran through the renewal of their registration cards and access to employment, social services and documentation. The strategy will also focus on programmes relating to the interlinked sectors of education, livelihoods and health, which benefit refugees while they are in the Islamic Republic of Iran, and upon their return to Iraq or Afghanistan.

These solutions will be implemented in close consultation with stakeholders in the refugees' country of origin, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, donor and resettlement countries, and refugees.

To implement these solutions, UNHCR will advocate with the Iranian Government to ensure that registered refugees are accorded continuing protected status, as well as effective legal access to employment, affordable health care and free primary education. UNHCR will make efforts to increase human and financial resources to the Government in this regard, and link its projects to development projects in Afghanistan, in order to help ensure sustainable return. It will also give impetus to strategic use of resettlement for the refugee population remaining in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

UNHCR will work with the UN Country Team to develop refugee-specific inputs for development plans for host communities, especially with respect to livelihoods. It will also work with the Government, IOM and other UN agencies to include refugee protection in a national migration-policy debate, and endeavour to obtain a change in attitude to allow local integration.

○ *Constraints*

The socio-economic situation of refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran is being affected by the recent economic reforms in the country, and requires UNHCR to expand its monitoring of all key livelihood indicators. This has also led to new initiatives by UNHCR to compensate for the additional financial burden placed on vulnerable refugees. The removal of these subsidies as part of economic reforms in the country began to be implemented in 2010. Inflation induced by the removal of subsidies has caused a significant increase in the prices of basic commodities, services and energy. The costs of fuel and basic services such as utilities have increased four to sevenfold.

The Iranian Government provides monthly cash payments to needy Iranians to compensate for the soaring prices in the market—a safety net from which refugees do not benefit. As a result of economic pressures, UNHCR is witnessing a significant spike in the number of vulnerable refugees approaching it for assistance. The inflationary pressures and the rise in the number of vulnerable refugees present challenges to UNHCR as it tries to implement its programmes.

Organization and implementation

Coordination

The Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants' Affairs of the Ministry of Interior remains UNHCR's main government counterpart. Partnerships with line ministries such as those covering the sectors of health, labour and education will help to mainstream refugee-related issues into national programmes. Collaboration with the Literacy Movement Organization, State Welfare Organization and the Technical and Vocational Training Organization under the Ministry of Labour will be expanded to enable refugees to gain access to social services and adult education.

WFP continues to be UNHCR's main operational partner in the country. The cooperation between the two agencies will continue in all refugee settlements in 2012. Regular monitoring of food distribution is planned for, as an outcome of

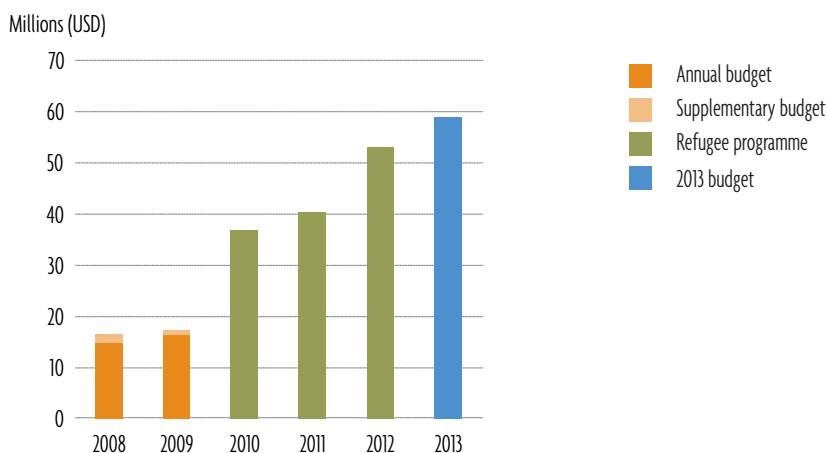
WFP-UNHCR Joint Assessment Mission. In recognition of the deteriorating food security situation for urban refugees, both UNHCR and WFP are exploring the possibilities of extending WFP assistance beyond settlements to vulnerable groups in urban areas.

UNHCR plans to enhance coordination with other UN agencies in 2012. Since September 2011, UNHCR has been engaged in finalizing the UN Development Assistance Framework for 2012-2016 in cooperation with the UN Country Team (UNCT) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. UNHCR has incorporated refugee-related themes into the proposed UNCT interventions. Modalities for cooperation are currently being discussed with the view to launching joint programmes in 2012. UNHCR will also redouble its efforts to persuade civil society, including charity foundations, the private business community and the media, to become more involved in refugee-related issues.

Financial information

The 2012 budget is more than 30 per cent larger than that of 2011, mainly because of the implementation of the health insurance scheme for all refugees with registration cards. The rapidly increasing prices of basic goods and services have also played a role in the increase.

UNHCR's budget in Islamic Republic of Iran 2008 – 2013



PARTNERS

Implementing partners

Government agencies

Literacy Movement Organization
 Ministry of Education
 Ministry of Health
 Ministry of Interior - Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants' Affairs
 State Welfare Organization of Fars
 State Welfare Organization of Kerman
 State Welfare Organization of Tehran
 State Welfare Organization of Qom
 Technical and Vocational Training Organization

NGOs

Danish Refugee Council
 International Catholic Migration Commission
 Iraqi Refugee Aid Council
 Organization for Defending Victims of Violence
 Rebirth Charity Organization
 Society to Protect Children Suffering from Cancer

Operational partners

Government agencies

Imam Khomeini Relief Committee

NGOs

Norwegian Refugee Council

Others

IOM
 UNAIDS
 UNDP
 UNESCO
 UNFPA
 UNICEF
 UNODC
 WFP

2012 UNHCR Budget in the Islamic Republic of Iran (USD)

BUDGET BREAKDOWN	REFUGEE PROGRAMME PILLAR 1	TOTAL
Favourable protection environment		
International and regional instruments	112,136	112,136
Law and policy	163,896	163,896
Access to legal assistance	871,669	871,669
Public attitude towards people of concern	394,546	394,546
Subtotal	1,542,246	1,542,246
Fair protection processes and documentation		
Refugee status determination	469,182	469,182
Individual documentation	132,136	132,136
Civil status documentation	293,792	293,792
Subtotal	895,110	895,110
Security from violence and exploitation		
Prevention of and response to SGBV	391,928	391,928
Non-arbitrary detention	192,273	192,273
Protection of children	297,792	297,792
Subtotal	881,992	881,992
Basic needs and essential services		
Health	31,058,500	31,058,500
Reproductive health and HIV services	234,273	234,273
Water	647,860	647,860
Sanitation and hygiene	913,928	913,928
Shelter and infrastructure	859,655	859,655
Basic domestic and hygiene items	573,532	573,532
Services for people with specific needs	1,311,877	1,311,877
Education	3,842,953	3,842,953
Subtotal	39,442,579	39,442,579
Community empowerment and self-reliance		
Community mobilization	164,396	164,396
Self-reliance and livelihoods	4,599,358	4,599,358
Subtotal	4,763,753	4,763,753
Durable solutions		
Comprehensive solutions strategy	399,669	399,669
Voluntary return	2,292,857	2,292,857
Resettlement	1,032,138	1,032,138
Subtotal	3,724,664	3,724,664
Leadership, coordination and partnerships		
Coordination and partnerships	165,136	165,136
Donor relations	375,146	375,146
Subtotal	540,282	540,282
Logistics and operations support		
Operations management, coordination and support	839,805	839,805
Subtotal	839,805	839,805
Headquarters and Regional Support		
Fund raising and resource mobilization	94,636	94,636
Media relations and public affairs	491,182	491,182
Subtotal	585,818	585,818
Total	53,216,250	53,216,250
2011 Revised budget	40,178,139	40,178,139