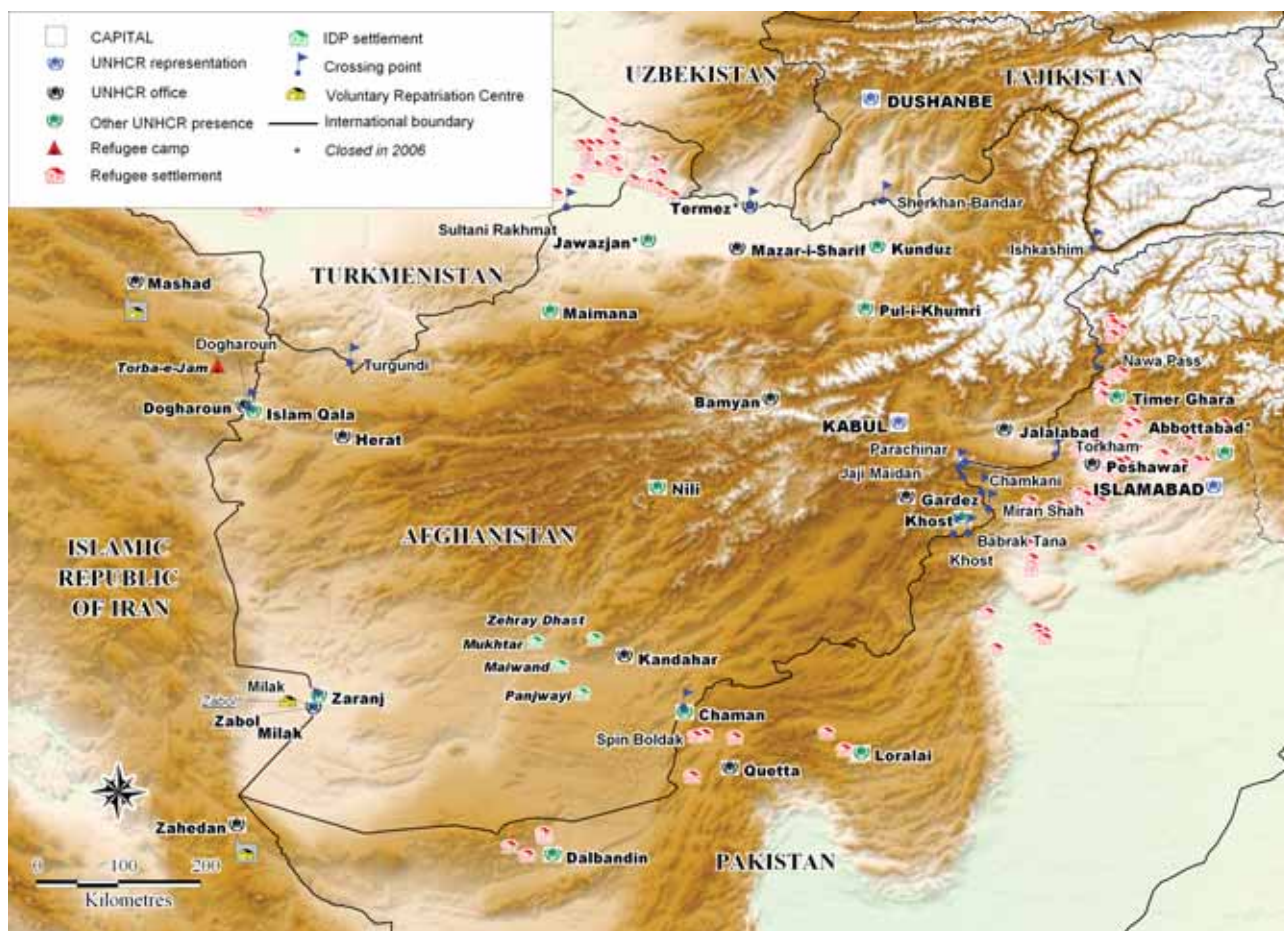


Afghanistan



Operational highlights

- UNHCR assisted approximately 139,000 Afghan refugees to return home in 2006.
- The Office helped returnee reintegration by constructing some 18,500 shelters, digging 350 water points and supporting over 100 income-generating and vocational-training projects.
- Some 9,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) were assisted to return to their places of origin in the north and west of Afghanistan.

Working environment

The government-led reconstruction effort faced a number of challenges, notably the insurgency led by the *Taliban* and other extremist groups. The modest rate of implementation of the National Development Budget is testimony to the low absorption capacity of the government. There has been some progress in key areas of reform, such as land tenure, the judicial system and infrastructure.

In late 2005, the Afghan Government issued Presidential Decree 104 governing the allocation of public land to landless returnees, including IDPs. In the first year, some 15,000 people moved to their new plots of land. This programme was complemented by contributions from donor countries for the construction of shelter and roads as well as the digging of water points in five pilot locations.

The Afghanistan Compact adopted at the London Conference in January 2006 marked a new partnership between the international community and Afghanistan for the period 2006-2010. It prepared the ground for peace and stability and the promotion of equitable economic growth. Donor nations pledged a promising USD 10 billion in aid.

Achievements and impact

Main objectives

UNHCR's main objectives in 2006 were to help the Government of Afghanistan and its Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation in the formulation of strategies to

address the reasons for the displacement of Afghans in the region; strengthen the capacity of the Government to plan, manage and assist the return, reintegration and protection of refugees and IDPs; and facilitate the voluntary return of Afghans from Pakistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and other countries.

The Office also sought to support the reintegration of returnees; monitor the situation of returnees and IDPs in order to protect their rights; and help IDPs to return and reintegrate. Furthermore, UNHCR aimed to ensure that asylum-seekers had access to fair and efficient refugee status determination.

Protection and solutions

In 2006, UNHCR assisted some 139,000 Afghans to return home. Returnee monitoring at the border and in encashment centres in Afghanistan confirmed the voluntary nature of the repatriation. The return figure for the year was the lowest since large-scale repatriation to Afghanistan started in 2002. This may indicate that the period of mass voluntary returns is over, and that the operation is entering a new phase for which a different approach will be needed.

At the end of 2006, there remained an estimated 129,300 IDPs in Afghanistan's southern (Kandahar and Helmand) and western regions. Some 9,000 IDPs returned during the year. Access to IDPs in these areas was virtually impossible due to poor security. The distribution of food ended in the spring of 2006. A feasibility study was commissioned to review the possibilities of local integration for the nomadic Kuchi IDPs in their present settlements, particularly in Zahre Dasht, Panjway and Mukhtar.

UNHCR and ILO carried out a study of the impact of returnees on the Afghan labour market, which highlighted the entrepreneurial spirit of the returnees. Furthermore, 90 per cent of returnees interviewed said they had found jobs within six months of arrival. The study also recommended possible areas of intervention

to aid the returnee population, ranging from support for business development to providing credit, training and labour-intensive employment schemes. The findings guided a joint ILO/UNHCR initiative in Herat province. Meanwhile, the independent Kabul-based Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit began a study on second-generation Afghans in Pakistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Afghanistan, the results of which are due in 2007.

Afghanistan acceded to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 protocol in August 2005. In the absence of national refugee legislation and related government institutions, UNHCR conducted refugee status determination. Though an essential part of the Office's work, it constituted a small component of its country programme given the low number of individuals involved.

Activities and assistance

Community services: The capacity of local authorities to assist extremely vulnerable individuals among returnees, IDPs and deportees was strengthened to cover 11 provinces. More than 9,000 cases were assessed and some 2,700 individuals were identified as having special needs requiring assistance. Two workshops were conducted for local authorities from 11 provinces dealing with people with special needs. The workshops reviewed good practice and agreed on effective strategies to meet the challenges ahead. In addition, UNHCR in Herat identified 570 people with special needs among deportees and assisted them with transportation, family tracing and reunification.

The Office supported existing peace committees and community groups for both men and women and formed new ones. Joint activities such as road repair, religious ceremonies and social activities helped bridge the divisions between different ethnic groups.

Domestic needs and household support: Within 14 days of arrival in Afghanistan, all assisted returnees were

Persons of concern

Type of population	Origin	Total	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Returnees (refugees)	From the Islamic Republic of Iran	243,600	5,300	-	-
	From Pakistan	143,000	133,300	-	-
	From the United Kingdom	500	700	-	-
	From Various	700	700	-	-
IDPs		129,300	129,300	49	-
Returnees (IDPs)		10,400	10,400	49	-
Total		527,500	279,500		



UNHCR/S. Schulman

A UNHCR shelter project in a village in Tangi cluster provided homes, water and other basic services to many returnees.

provided with a reintegration grant of USD 12 per person at encashment centres.

Health and nutrition: Basic health services were provided to returnees in all encashment centres. Children were vaccinated and medical assistance provided to pregnant women, unaccompanied minors, the elderly and the disabled. But deteriorating security conditions forced UNHCR to reduce medical support to IDPs drastically. Health services were suspended in some areas, while mobile clinics could not operate in others.

Income generation: UNHCR and its partners implemented 56 cash-for-work projects benefiting more than 170,000 returnees, and 78 income-generation projects to help another 7,500. Vocational training projects provided returnees with more employment opportunities. In addition, UNHCR supported ILO as it sought ways to increase returnees' access to business-development support and services.

Legal assistance: Refugees and IDPs were provided with essential information to make informed decisions on return through mass information bulletins and flyers and the BBC's radio programmes in Dari and Pashtu. The latter were broadcast three times a week to countries of asylum and Afghanistan. Of 2,700 returnees that UNHCR interviewed at encashment centres, 88 per cent said they had received sufficient information.

Information and legal aid centres provided helped returnees to surmount obstacles to reintegration. The majority of the new 1,100 legal cases registered concerned property rights. Some 40 per cent of the cases were resolved. UNHCR conducted 12 training sessions on property law in Afghanistan for provincial authorities and the judiciary.

To address human rights violations related to voluntary repatriation, interviews were conducted with more than 12,000 Afghans by the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission. Returnees were monitored in 32 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces and in 178 of its approximately 400 districts. Some 400 cases of human rights violations were identified. Since this monitoring began some 24 per cent of the cases have been resolved or closed, through interventions or referral to national and international authorities.

The Office expanded its programmes to assist women at risk and victims of sexual and gender-based violence, and made progress in discussions with the authorities on the setting up of safe houses. Some 130 women sought refugee status and were provided with accommodation as well as legal, psychosocial and medical assistance in two safe houses in Kabul. In line with its exit strategy, UNHCR began handing over the management of some safe houses to local partners. Donors were encouraged to guarantee multi-year funding for the project.

Operational support (to agencies): UNHCR sought to increase the responsibility of the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation for the return operation. This was particularly the case in monitoring the border and encashment centres and identifying and assisting those with special needs. Similarly, the ministry led the development of the land-allocation scheme for landless returnees, IDPs and other individuals and expanded the number of sites for the implementation of the programme. Furthermore, its monitoring role in project implementation increased as the humanitarian space for UNHCR was reduced by the worsening security situation.

Shelter and infrastructure: Under its reintegration programme, UNHCR assisted more than 18,500 vulnerable returnee families to build their homes. The allocations for the shelter programme took into account Afghans who returned from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas in Pakistan in late 2005. The returnees were given shelter materials and financial assistance so they could hire workers. However, ensuring the participation of women in beneficiary selection committees remained a challenge; only 17 per cent of the committee members were women.

Transport and logistics: UNHCR managed a countrywide operation to store and transport shelter materials and non-food items and maintain vehicles and generators. To reduce operational costs, long-held items were given away. All satellite warehouses were closed by mid-2006, while the size of the central warehouse in Kabul was reduced by 40 per cent. Transportation grants and assistance were provided to all returnees from the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan in the seven encashment centres operated by the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation and UNHCR.

Water: UNHCR supported the National Water Programme of the Refugee Ministry through the construction of 400 water points and 315 demonstration latrines. The support included the secondment of an international water expert whose work with the authorities led to notable improvements in the management of the programme.

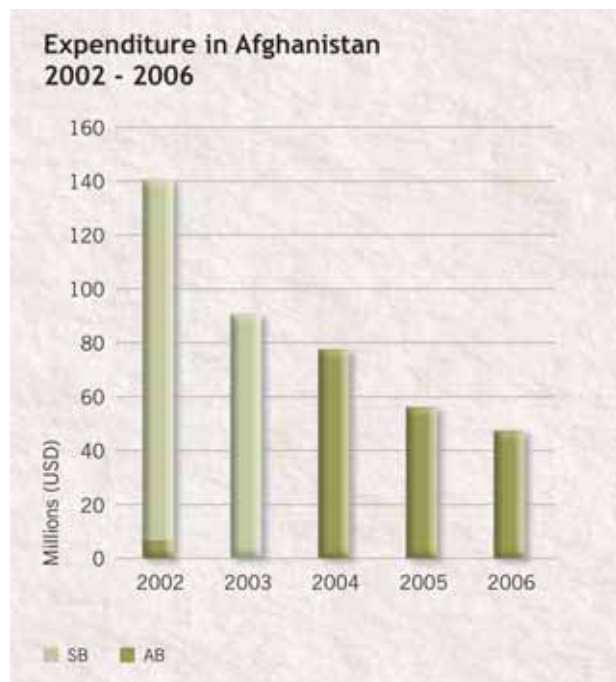
Constraints

The security situation deteriorated significantly in the south, southeast and east of the country, with warlike conditions in many districts of Helmand and Kandahar. In other areas the Government could only exercise limited control. Consequently, the number of Afghanistan's districts to which UNHCR had direct access decreased from 62 per cent to 49 per cent by end of the year.

Financial Information

The Afghanistan operation has received very positive donor support since the start of the assisted repatriation of Afghans in neighbouring countries. It was well funded in 2006 and all activities for the reintegration for returnees and displaced persons were supported.

The largest repatriation operation in the history of UNHCR started in 2002. A supplementary appeal budget established that year saw an expenditure of some USD 140 million under the repatriation operation. With repatriation being scaled down in 2005 and 2006, expenditures have been gradually reduced.



Organization and implementation

Management

In 2006, the Office in Afghanistan had 522 staff members, comprising 38 international and 466 national staff, three JPOs and 15 UNVs. The office of the Representative was maintained in Kabul, with five sub-offices in Herat, Jalalabad, Kabul, Kandahar and Mazar, two field offices, eight field units and a small liaison office in Islamabad, Pakistan.

Working with others

UNHCR continued to build the capacity of the Afghan authorities to manage voluntary repatriation and reintegration. The Office also funded the Reintegration Unit within the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and

Development and provided technical expertise for the Refugee Ministry's land-allocation scheme.

UNHCR continued to encourage the relevant authorities to ensure that returnees benefited from national development programmes. These included the National Solidarity Programme, the National Skills Development Programme, the Emergency Employment Programme and the MicroCredit Support Facility of Afghanistan. It also liaised with the development community to promote the inclusion of high-return areas in their programmes. UNHCR cooperated with ILO and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and supported the Employment Service Centre Programme. The Office and ILO initiated a multi-year employment-generation programme in Herat Province.

Under the Afghanistan Comprehensive Solutions initiative, UNHCR worked with the European Commission, ILO, IOM and the Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit to build the capacity of the Government, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other national institutions to deal with regional counterparts on population movements and migration.

Overall assessment

At the end of 2006, Afghanistan experienced both positive and negative trends. Whilst significant progress was achieved under the Bonn Agreement through the establishment of key political institutions, this has not yet resulted in improved governance and socio-economic advances for the population at large, particularly in rural areas. In addition, there was a marked deterioration of security in the south, south-east and east of the country.

The level of repatriation in 2006 was lower than in preceding years but its voluntary character was upheld. It is evident that intensified support for reintegration will be required to sustain returns, more than three million Afghans remain in Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran. UNHCR will continue to advocate for government and donor support for the land-allocation scheme, with a focus on areas where most future returns are expected.

Partners

Implementing partners

Government agencies: Department of Petroleum and Gas, Drug Control Department, Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation.

NGOs: Abu Muslim Khorasany Rehabilitation Unit, Afghan Agency for Integrated Development, Afghan Bureau for Reconstruction, Afghan General Help Coordination Office, Afghan Health Development Services, Afghan Planning Agency, Afghan Public Welfare Organization, Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit, Afghan Women Enterprise Network, Afghan Women Skills Development Centre, Afghan Women's Educational Centre, Afghanistan's Children-A New Approach, Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development, *Ansari* Rehabilitation Association for Afghanistan, Blind Roshandillan Association of Afghanistan, Child Fund Afghanistan (USA), Civil Affairs Organization, Community Forum Development Office, Cooperation Centre for Afghanistan, Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance, Coordination of Rehabilitation and Development Service for Afghanistan, Development and Humanitarian Services for Afghanistan, Development Association for National Cooperation, *Emam Saheb* Construction and Rehabilitation Organization, Engineering and Rehabilitation Services for Afghanistan, *Hewad* Reconstruction Service, Huge-Afghanistan Rehabilitation & Development Organisation, Human Dignity Society, Humanitarian Action for the People of Afghanistan, Humanitarian Assistance for Women and Children of Afghanistan, Independent Humanitarian Services Association, INTERSOS, Jawidan Rehabilitation Organization for Afghanistan, Khahan Improvement Organization, *Malteser Hilfsdienst*, Masood Akbar Construction Agency, *Medica Mondiale*, National Consultancy and Relief Association, Norwegian Refugee Council, Peace Winds Japan, Reconstruction and Employment Unit for Afghan Refugees, Rehabilitation and Development Organization, *Sanayee* Development Foundation, Services Women Relieve Centre for Afghanistan, Shafaq Reconstruction Organization, Shams Women's Needs and Help Organization, *Sharq* Foundation for Rehabilitation and Development, *Sherzaad* Reconstruction Organization, *Sina* Association Rehabilitation Service, Social Service Development and Reconstruction Organisation, Society for Afghanistan Development and Assistance, *Urozgan* Construction Agency, Voice of Women Organization, Voluntary Association for the Rehabilitation of Afghanistan, *Watan* Social and Technical Services Association, Welfare and Development Society for Social Services, Women Activities and Social Services Association, Women's and Reconstruction Organisation of Yasir for Afghanistan, Youth Assembly for Afghanistan Rehabilitation.

Others: British Broadcasting Corporation, Central Asia Development Group, *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit*, ILO, IOM, UNV.

Operational partners

Government agencies: Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development.

Others: United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, UN Country Team, World Bank, WFP.

Budget, income and expenditure (USD) Annual programme budget

Final budget	Income from contributions ¹	Other funds available ²	Total funds available	Total expenditure
58,841,464	25,367,953	22,383,982	47,751,934	47,532,717

¹ Includes income from contributions earmarked at the country level.

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

Financial Report (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects	Previous years' projects
	AB	AB and SB
Protection, monitoring and coordination	12,283,527	0
Community services	272,758	101,978
Domestic needs and household support	1,763,451	20,898
Health and nutrition	171,112	103,117
Income generation	1,332,421	792,203
Legal assistance	2,298,537	420,328
Operational support (to agencies)	1,603,007	558,165
Shelter and infrastructure	12,452,153	1,247,428
Transport and logistics	4,453,005	156,775
Water	1,063,475	0
Instalments with implementing partners	4,539,467	(3,400,892)
Sub-total operational activities	42,232,914	0
Programme support	5,299,803	0
Total expenditure	47,532,717	0
Cancellation on previous years' expenditure		(110,869)
Instalments with implementing partners		
Payments made	13,778,791	
Reporting received	(9,239,323)	
Balance	4,539,467	
Previous years' report		
Instalments with implementing partners		
Outstanding 1st January		5,061,709
Reporting received		(3,400,892)
Refunded to UNHCR		(268,859)
Adjustments		(6,176)
Balance		1,385,782