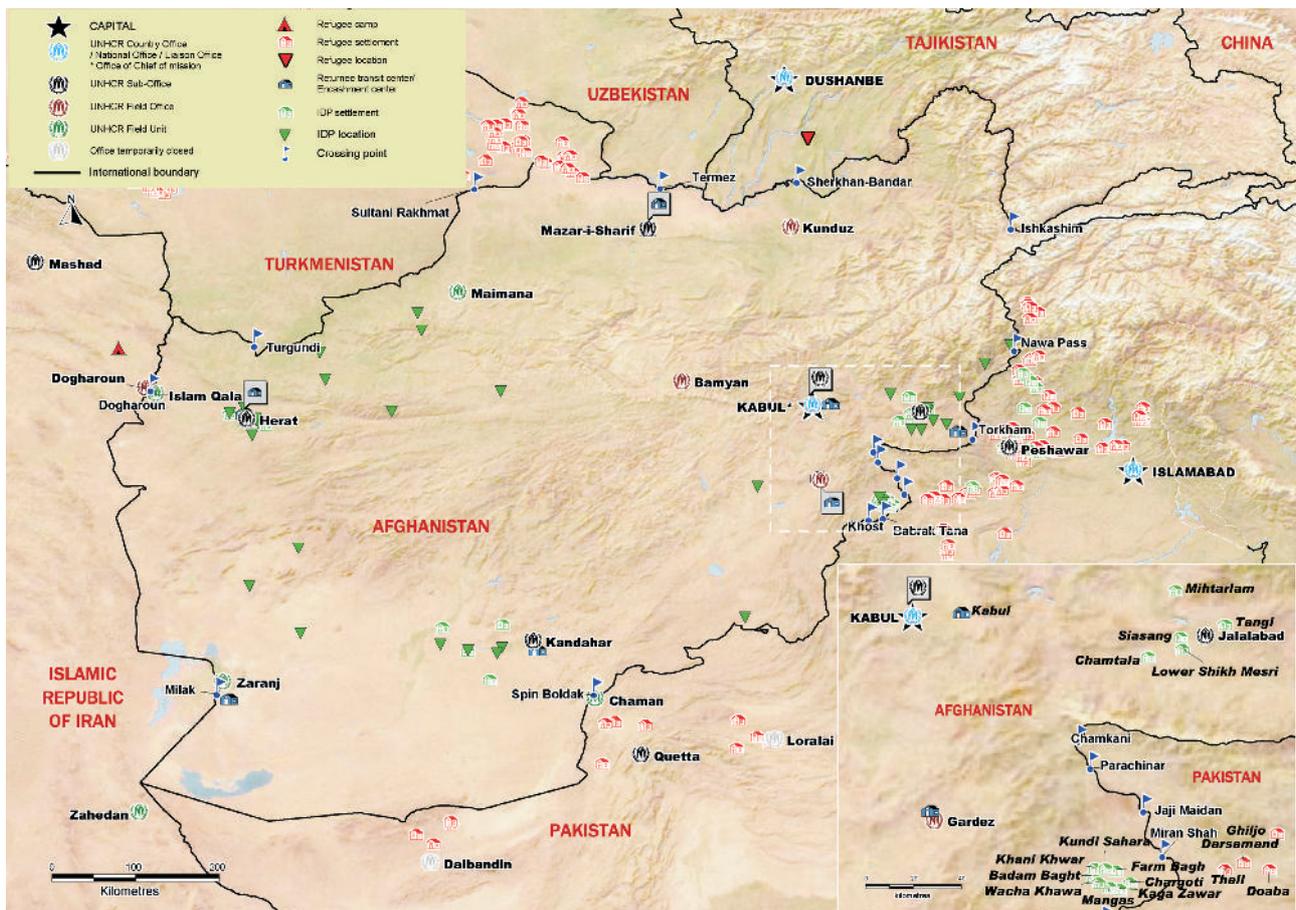


AFGHANISTAN



Operational highlights

- Some 54,500 registered Afghans returned to their homeland with UNHCR assistance in 2009. Returnees received an average of USD 100 each as a return and reintegration grant.
- Some 7,900 returnee families, approximately 34,000 persons, benefited from a UNHCR project to construct one- and two-room shelters.
- UNHCR negotiated and facilitated the return of over 1,000 internally displaced families (some 7,000 individuals) to relatively stable areas in the north, east and centre of Afghanistan.
- Non-food items (NFIs) and winterization packages were provided to over 29,500 vulnerable families as part of an inter-agency winterization effort. A contingency stock of NFIs for an additional 67,500 families was created to cover emergency needs.

Working environment

The security situation deteriorated in 2009. Although significant portions of Afghanistan remained relatively stable, the intensification of armed conflict in certain areas—particularly in the south—created protection concerns for civilians. The August presidential elections and the volatile post-election period generated considerable political tension. An attack by the Taliban on a UN guest house in late

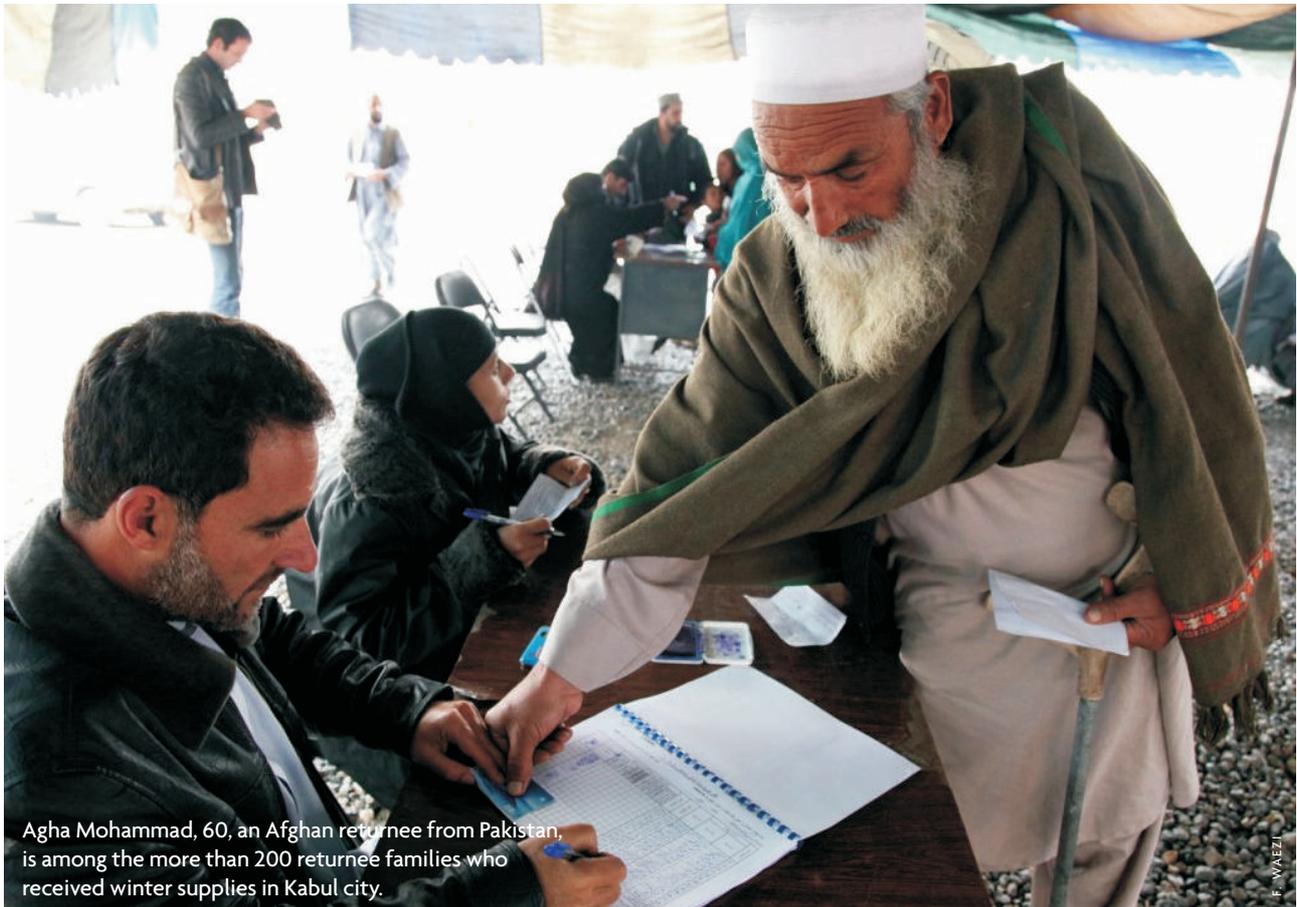
October led to the temporary withdrawal of some UN personnel and a review of security arrangements.

Insecurity and the inconsistent progress of reconstruction and development programmes continued to make it difficult for a significant portion of the population to fulfil their essential needs. Irregular movements within and from Afghanistan, and the need to distinguish between economic migrants, asylum-seekers with valid claims to international protection and others displaced by conflict, emerged as key policy and operational issues.

Achievements and impact

• Main objectives

In 2009, the main objectives for UNHCR in Afghanistan were to facilitate the voluntary, safe and gradual return of some 140,000 Afghans from Pakistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and other host countries and support their initial reintegration, as well as monitor the physical, legal and material safety aspects of the return and reintegration of both refugees and IDPs. The Office also sought to address the longer-term reintegration needs of refugee and IDP returnees. Another objective was to help strengthen the ability of the Afghan authorities to plan for, manage and respond to displacement flows within, to and from Afghanistan. Lastly, UNHCR worked to improve the access of asylum-seekers to fair and efficient refugee status determination (RSD) procedures and facilitate durable solutions.



Agha Mohammad, 60, an Afghan returnee from Pakistan, is among the more than 200 returnee families who received winter supplies in Kabul city.

● *Protection and solutions*

UNHCR had initially planned to assist an estimated 140,000 returns in 2009. However, political and security events in Afghanistan and Pakistan had a negative impact on returns. Insecure conditions on the main repatriation route via the Torkham border and the temporary closure of the voluntary repatriation centres in Quetta and Peshawar in Pakistan for security reasons proved particularly disruptive. Political and security tensions in Afghanistan also contributed to the reduced repatriation total. Nonetheless, approximately 57,000 persons returned, mostly from Pakistan (51,000) and a smaller number from the Islamic Republic of Iran (6,000). These numbers are in keeping with the figures foreseen in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy.

Conflict-induced displacement continued to occur in some parts of Afghanistan in 2009, affecting a small percentage of the total number of recorded IDPs. In most instances, conflict-related displacement was of short duration, with IDPs generally able to return home after the fighting subsided.

Notwithstanding ongoing efforts by many actors to improve the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, sexual and gender-based violence continued to be a serious problem in 2009.

Led by UNHCR, stakeholders agreed in late 2009 to create a gender-based violence prevention and response sub-cluster. A stakeholder workshop hosted by UNHCR in October began developing a strategy and work plan for the sub-cluster, which will be led by UNFPA. The Office strengthened an existing protection project aimed at providing legal, psycho-social and material assistance to victims of sexual and gender-based violence.

UNHCR developed and refined practical tools to address IDP protection challenges and promoted innovative methods of community outreach and humanitarian response. These included organized monitoring by trained local partners, tribal leaders and government representatives; the use of group interviews and the gathering of information from different local actors; and the utilization of photos and mobile phones to show results and improve communication.

Persons of concern					
Type of population	Origin	Total	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Refugees	Various	40	40	35	30
Asylum-seekers	Various	10	10	42	17
IDPs	Afghanistan	297,100	297,100	49	54
Returned ex-IDPs including returned IDP-like	Afghanistan	7,200	7,200	49	54
Returnees (refugees)*	Pakistan	51,300	51,300	49	54
	Islamic Republic of Iran	6,000	6,000	49	54
	Various	240	240	49	54
Total		361,890	361,890		

* Demographic breakdown of returnees refers to all returnees.

The Office facilitated the return of over 7,000 IDPs from camps in southern Afghanistan, primarily to the relatively stable northern and western areas of the country.

UNHCR also carefully monitored events along Afghanistan's borders. Some 314,000 individuals, predominantly young men, were expelled from the Islamic Republic of Iran. UNHCR assisted vulnerable individuals and families and along with other actors, refined the existing Joint Action Plan to respond to large-scale forced movements.

In 2009, some 1,500 Afghans returned from the Islamic Republic of Iran to the northern province of Sar-e-Pol after two decades of exile to find their houses destroyed and land occupied. Despite significant security and logistical constraints, a transit camp was established and support services provided to this vulnerable group.

○ *Activities and assistance*

Community services: The extremely vulnerable individuals project (EVI) was expanded in 2009 to 18 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces and made sure that such individuals were provided with cash support, counselling or referral to other agencies or programmes for assistance. In 2009, some 3,000 EVIs received cash assistance. This flexible social-protection programme helped individuals facing hardship and hunger.

Domestic needs and household support: More than 54,000 registered returnees received a USD 100 reintegration cash grant within seven days of arrival in Afghanistan. In addition, UNHCR provided NFIs and other winterization assistance, including warm clothes and heating materials, to 29,500 vulnerable families as part of an inter-agency winterization effort. A contingency stock of core NFIs for an additional 67,500 families was built. Under an emergency request, UNHCR provided a total of 2,000 blankets, 1,400 plastic sheets and 700 jerry cans to affected people in Herat and Badghis. Some 35,000 families displaced because of conflict in Kandahar received emergency assistance coordinated by UNHCR.

Health and nutrition: No outbreak of communicable disease was reported. Settlements of IDPs were provided with basic services. All settlements were serviced by mobile clinics run by the provincial departments of public health. Returnees had access to emergency basic health services with the possibility of referral for further treatment at hospitals in urban centres. Basic medical assistance was provided at encashment centres.

Income generation: Interventions in this sector mainly targeted districts of high return. Community infrastructure was rehabilitated through cash-for-work projects. In 2009, some 36 small community-based cash-for-work projects were implemented, benefiting some 26,900 individuals. In addition, returnees and host populations benefited from skills training.

Legal assistance: UNHCR continued to provide information on the socio-economic and security situation in Afghanistan through radio broadcasts and the distribution of leaflets and publications. Returnee monitoring countrywide remained one of the key protection activities at the encashment centres. It was carried out in part through an existing cooperation agreement with the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC). The Commission and UNHCR

undertook over 430 monitoring missions and conducted some 11,500 interviews to identify human rights violations and other challenges to reintegration.

Increasing emphasis was also placed on monitoring IDPs and identifying protection concerns. The existing information and legal counselling services continued, thanks to the collaboration of NGOs, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and the Afghan authorities and communities themselves. Seven Information and Legal Aid Centres (ILAC) run by the NRC in Afghanistan provided a variety of practical information. The majority of the 950 individual and group cases registered were related to property rights. Some 690 legal cases were solved, and 60 legal training courses were conducted for over 2,000 participants.

Operational support (to agencies): UNHCR concentrated on promoting operational support to the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) and particularly to its local departments in key provinces absorbing returning refugees or managing IDP situations. The Office also worked with the MoRR on policy issues such as relations with third countries, institutional development, the Government's Land Allocation Scheme and emergency response. A total of 64 implementing partner agreements were concluded in 2009, 90 per cent with national implementing partners.

Shelter and other infrastructure: In 2009 the shelter programme benefited a total of 7,900 vulnerable returnee families (approximately 47,400 individuals) in five regions across the country. The target of building 10,000 housing units could not be reached because of an increase in the price of construction materials during the implementation period.

The Land Allocation Scheme (LAS) has suffered from a lack of managerial, technical and financial capacity. Since 2007 UNHCR has supported a Programme Implementation Unit (PIU) tasked with providing technical advice to the MoRR in this area. Some 344,000 applications to the LAS were registered in 2009, and some 65,500 beneficiaries selected. By the end of the year some 9,000 families were physically installed on the sites.

Transport and logistics: The transportation grant was provided to all returnees who availed of regular repatriation assistance through UNHCR encashment centres. UNHCR maintained storage and in-country transport capacity throughout the country.

Water: Some 480 families were assisted to gain access to potable water. Some 150 families in Kharooti village in the northern province of Kunduz were given access to potable water through the construction of a gravity pipe scheme. Twelve water points were built in the north and the north-east. Finally, technical support was provided to the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) and other actors in the water sector.

○ *Constraints*

In 2009 the challenges to sustainable returnee reintegration in Afghanistan were primarily related to the deteriorating security conditions in some areas and limited employment opportunities overall. The United Nations has access to only 51 per cent of the country.

UNHCR operations were maintained thanks to innovative outreach methods and a wide range of partnerships. Moreover, most returning refugees and IDPs went back to areas which were safe and accessible to the humanitarian community.

Financial information

An additional USD 2.9 million above the revised ExCom budget was made available to the operation in support of new needs arising during the year. The added resources supported the provision of essential NFIs to 21,000 beneficiaries, secondary transport for refugee returnees, 300 emergency shelters for returnees in Sar-e-Pol, the purchase of two additional armoured vehicles and the implementation of new measures to enhance staff safety.

Organization and implementation

UNHCR's presence in Afghanistan is composed of a Branch Office in Kabul, complemented by five sub-offices in Herat, Jalalabad, Kabul, Kandahar and Mazar-i-Sharif, three field offices and three field units. There were a total of 345 UNHCR staff in Afghanistan: 30 international staff, 27 national officers and 288 national employees.

A total of 16 international staff positions were recommended for discontinuation in 2010. More responsibilities were given to local staff and NGOs in order to help them assume leadership roles in selected field locations and ensure the continuity of key functions.

Working with others

UNHCR enjoyed productive partnerships with its traditional governmental and humanitarian counterparts. It embraced the humanitarian reform process being led by the newly established OCHA office in Afghanistan and participated in inter-agency contingency planning processes, including the 2009 Humanitarian Action Plan. UNHCR led the protection and emergency shelter and NFI clusters. The inter-agency winterization response continued under UNHCR's lead and concentrated on improved preparedness. UNHCR also strengthened its partnerships with ICRC, IOM, UNICEF and UNODC and continues to work closely with a large number of national implementing partners.

UNHCR co-chaired the National IDP Task Force with the MoRR and refined a national strategy for IDP protection. Links with ministries and organizations responsible for development programming were intensified.

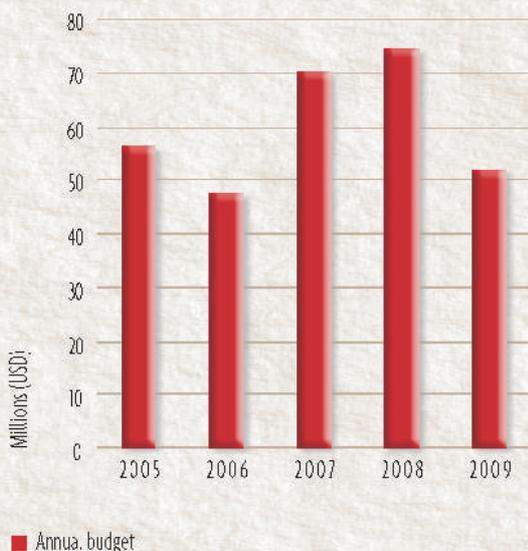
Overall assessment

In 2009, approximately 57,000 Afghans returned to their country. A relatively small proportion of those who returned were unable to settle immediately in their areas of origin.

Through its leadership in the protection and emergency shelter and NFI clusters, as well as the National IDP Task Force in Afghanistan, UNHCR helped improve humanitarian and protection responses.

Access to land for returnees and IDPs remained a significant challenge. UNHCR referred those who expressed concerns about recovering land and property to the NRC's Information and Legal Aid Centres.

Expenditure in Afghanistan
2005 - 2009



UNHCR strengthened human rights monitoring in the Field through partnerships with a range of actors involved in community outreach. The ultimate aim was to maximize humanitarian assistance delivery and strengthen protection.

In line with the objectives set out in the Refugees, Returnees and IDPs chapter of the 2008-2013 Afghanistan National Development Strategy, UNHCR continued to highlight policy development and operational challenges related to refugee reintegration, besides mobilizing support for the reintegration of returnees.

With regard to preparedness and response, UNHCR worked with key actors to develop contingency plans at the national and provincial levels.

UNHCR continued to conduct refugee status determination (RSD) for the small number of asylum-seekers in Afghanistan.

Partners

Implementing partners

Government: Ministry and Departments of Refugees and Repatriation; Departments of Public Health; Laghman Agriculture Irrigation and Livestock Directorate

NGOs: Afghan Bureau for Reconstruction, Afghan General Help Coordination Office, Afghan Planning Agency, Afghan Public Welfare Organization, Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance, Coordination of Rehabilitation and Development Services, Development and Humanitarian Services for Afghanistan, Education and Aid Center, Engineering and Rehabilitation Service for Afghanistan, Human Dignity Society, Humanitarian Action for the People of Afghanistan, Mediotek Afghanistan, National Consultancy and Relief Association, New Noor Rehabilitation Organization, Norwegian Refugee Council, Reconstruction and Employment Unit for Afghan Refugees, Reshad-Reconstruction Association, Social Services Organization for Afghanistan, Society for Afghanistan Development and Assistance in Technologies, Voluntary Association for the Rehabilitation of Afghanistan, Watan's Social and Technical Services Association, Zardozi -Markets for Afghan Artisans

Others: Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, British Broadcasting Corporation, *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit*, United Nations Development Fund for Women, UNV

Operational partners

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, UN Country Team, World Bank and Bi-lateral assistance missions in Afghanistan

Budget, income and expenditure in Afghanistan (USD)

	Final budget	Income from contributions	Other funds available	Total funds available	Total expenditure
Annual budget	57,364,250	45,784,482	8,167,375	53,951,857	51,933,968

Note: Income from contributions includes contributions earmarked at the country level and do not include seven per cent support costs for NAM contributions. Other funds available include transfers from unearmarked and broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

Financial report for UNHCR's operations in Afghanistan (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current years' project			Previous years' project
	Annual budget	Supplementary budgets	Total	Annual and supplementary budgets
Protection, monitoring and coordination	12,939,838	0	12,939,838	0
Community services	260,525	0	260,525	58,294
Domestic needs and household support	10,207,024	0	10,207,024	101,890
Health and nutrition	199,924	0	199,924	3,899
Income generation	873,354	0	873,354	34,997
Legal assistance	2,132,670	0	2,132,670	68,530
Operational support (to agencies)	642,794	0	642,794	172,006
Shelter and infrastructure	12,103,410	0	12,103,410	896,564
Transport and logistics	3,436,897	0	3,436,897	219,698
Water	18,019	0	18,019	358,522
Instalments to implementing partners	2,329,637	0	2,329,637	(1,914,400)
Subtotal operational activities	45,144,092	0	45,144,092	0
Programme support	6,789,876	0	6,789,876	0
Total expenditure	51,933,968	0	51,933,968	0

Cancellation on previous years' expenditure

(219,209)

Instalments with implementing partners

Payments made	12,897,727	0	12,897,727	
Reporting received	(10,568,090)	0	(10,568,090)	
Balance	2,329,637	0	2,329,637	

Previous year's report

Instalments with implementing partners:				
Outstanding 1st January				4,045,718
Reporting received				(1,914,400)
Refunded to UNHCR				(342,359)
Currency adjustment				(750)
Outstanding 31st December				1,788,209