

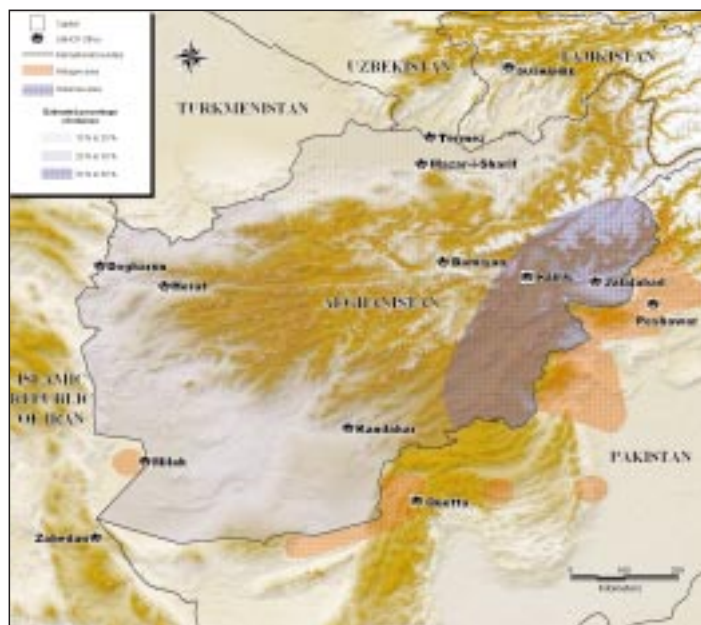
COUNTRY OPERATION

# A F G H A N I S T A N

## AT A GLANCE

### Main Objectives and Activities

Ensure safe and dignified repatriation; monitor respect for the basic rights and needs of returnees at all times; provide initial reintegration assistance to groups of returnees; share information obtained through returnee monitoring with other UN agencies and NGOs to help them work more effectively with returnee communities; help the UN Common Programming effort for Afghanistan by actively participating in the programming body, co-ordinating activities under the thematic group on refugee return and participating in the development of the human rights component of the strategic framework.



### Persons of Concern

MAIN REFUGEE ORIGIN/ TYPE OF POPULATION	TOTAL IN COUNTRY	OF WHICH: UNHCR-ASSISTED	PER CENT FEMALE	PER CENT < 18
Asylum-seekers	10	-	-	-
Others of Concern*	259,000	-	-	-
Returned in 1999**	253,000	100,780	49	56

\* IDPs newly displaced in 1999.

\*\* A total of 4.3 million refugees have returned to Afghanistan since the beginning of repatriation.

### Impact

- UNHCR protected and assisted 100,780 Afghan refugees who decided to return voluntarily to Afghanistan.
- Conditions inside Afghanistan, including respect for human rights (as affirmed in amnesty declarations issued by the authorities) were monitored by UNHCR staff. The Office also advocated for the rights of returnees by ensuring equitable access to basic assistance and services.
- Reintegration assistance helped returnees meet their basic needs during the initial reintegration period and mitigated economic hardship. Destroyed houses were rebuilt, potable water supply provided, children attended schools, irrigation systems were rehabilitated, income-generating opportunities were created for women heads of households, and sanitary facilities were restored. This significantly improved the health of local communities, particularly children. The programme focused on communities with large numbers of returnees and areas that had received little or no assistance in the past.



### Income and Expenditure - SP Activities (USD)

WORKING BUDGET	INCOME FROM CONTRIBUTIONS*	OTHER FUNDS AVAILABLE**	TOTAL FUNDS AVAILABLE	TOTAL EXPENDITURE
6,840,623	12,714,393	(4,815,639)	7,898,754	5,809,255

\* Includes contributions earmarked for the Afghan Repatriation and Reintegration Operation.

\*\* Includes opening balance and adjustments.

The above figures do not include costs at Headquarters.

## WORKING ENVIRONMENT

### The Context

War has been raging in Afghanistan for more than twenty years. The Soviet occupation pushed more than six million Afghans into exile. The departure of Soviet troops in 1989 gave way to fighting between the forces of Najibullah and various mujahedeen groups. This caused the intermittent flight of refugees and created hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Although the capture of the main cities by the current Taliban regime brought a certain degree of stability to large parts of Afghanistan, strict measures were imposed on women, banning them from education and employment. The country continued to be wracked by extreme poverty and underdevelopment. In 1999, fighting continued in the northern provinces, exacerbating the suffering of the civilian population. A week after inconclusive peace talks were held in Tashkent in July, the Taliban launched a major offensive against the United Front opposition forces in the Shomali plains, north of Kabul. Other locations affected by the war were Kunduz, Dar-e-Souf and Sar-i-Pul, where both sides made repeated partial gains and losses of territory.

The Afghan people have a strong desire to reclaim their homes and rebuild their lives. Despite the desperate need for assistance in many provinces, more than 4.1 million Afghan refugees have returned, including just over 100,000 people who decided to repatriate voluntarily in 1999. Areas receiving returnees were relatively accessible and safe, with the exception of some very remote villages, enabling the delivery of assistance. It is widely recognised that only lasting peace, a political settlement and the formation of a broadly accepted government in Afghanistan will enable rehabilitation of the country and prompt the return of 2.5 million refugees remaining in Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

### Constraints

In 1999, some 100,000 Afghans were involuntarily returned from the Islamic Republic of Iran and an additional 60,000 people returned outside the framework of the repatriation programme. With pressure to return building up in the two main countries of asylum, many Afghans were left with no choice but to return without prospects for sustainable livelihoods in Afghanistan.

It is vitally important to monitor the consequences of return, identify the main problems and needs of returnees and the impact of initial reintegration assistance in

Afghanistan. The long conflict continues to be characterised by serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, and the destruction of basic social and economic infrastructure. Resuming a normal life represents a huge challenge for individual returnees. They have to contend with food insecurity, countless land-mines and other unexploded ordnance, environmental degradation, and the collapse of state institutions. Unemployment and poverty help fuel crime, including an increase in illicit drug production.

Communications systems, security services and medical facilities are scarce. As a consequence, UNHCR staff in Afghanistan work under conditions of extreme hardship, isolation and stress. UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies have often been subjected to armed robbery, particularly targeting telecommunications equipment. The Office's work was hampered by restrictions on staff movement, and the UN-imposed ceiling on the number of international staff allowed to be present in Afghanistan at any given time. The imposition of sanctions by the UN Security Council in November 1999 led to demonstrations and outbursts of anger against the UN in all major cities. All UN offices in Kabul and some offices in field locations were targeted and property was damaged.

### Funding

Although donors eventually funded UNHCR's 1999 budget for Afghanistan, most contributions were received far too late for efficient planning and operations. The delay in contributions (most funds arrived in the second half of the year) seriously compromised UNHCR's ability to meet the basic survival needs of refugees who repatriated voluntarily, and made it impossible to respond to the needs of the large number of Afghans who were returned from the Islamic Republic of Iran.

## ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

### Protection and Solutions

UNHCR continued to interview and monitor as many returnees as possible, including those involuntarily returned from the Islamic Republic of Iran, despite security constraints. Some 3,270 interviews were conducted with heads of households, covering a total of 18,800 returnees. Of these, 77 per cent had returned from Pakistan and the remainder from the Islamic Republic of Iran. Eighty-two per cent of the returnees were women (including 100 heads of households) and

children under 18. Most of these women depended on income generated by young male children and other relatives. Information on the returnees and conditions in the country was regularly shared with other UN agencies, NGOs and donors.

Although UNHCR facilitated the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees, it was concerned that some Afghans were returning (especially those originating from increasingly dangerous areas) because of deteriorating economic and social conditions in the countries of asylum, rather than the prospect of sustainable reintegration. Return under these circumstances could lead to renewed internal displacement and increase the potential for conflict.

### Activities and Assistance

**Crop Production:** Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) in the Kandahar area involved the rehabilitation of an irrigation facility in Helmand for 500 returnee and IDP families, and the protection from flooding of farmland belonging to 40 returnee families. Diversion dikes were constructed to irrigate 500 hectares of land between Pule Khomri and Mazar-i-Sharif: enough to support 300 returnee and 550 local families.

**Education:** Material and operational support was provided for 78 primary schools serving 6,088 returnee children (39 per cent girls) in Kabul, Paktia, Logar and Khost provinces. Training and refresher courses were given to primary school teachers, 20 per cent of them women. A boys' secondary school in Jalalabad was extended and eight primary schools for boys and girls were constructed in Tizin, Batikot and Dandi-e-Patan districts, providing classrooms for 1,546 boys and 478 girls. In Kandahar, UNHCR assisted in the rehabilitation of six primary school buildings, including two in girls' schools. Basic stationery was supplied for 9,677 pupils including 500 girls in 58 community-run primary schools in Helmand, Kandahar and Nimroz provinces. About 160 women returnees in Helmand province received training and supplies for embroidery, tailoring and carpet-weaving.

**Forestry:** In Kabul province, eight tree nurseries were established and a community waste management scheme set up to rehabilitate and protect the physical environment and provide sustainable income. In Jalalabad, nine nurseries, a bio-gas unit for 45 families and alternative shelter assistance (concrete beams instead of wood) were provided. Environmental information leaflets were printed and distributed to schools.

**Health/Nutrition:** UNHCR helped to rehabilitate war-damaged health facilities and train village-level health personnel. The training component was implemented through WHO and NGOs. In central and southern Afghanistan, 360 women received medical equipment and training that combined midwifery with traditional birth attendant skills. In eastern Afghanistan, UNHCR covered part of the running cost of two clinics in the returnee-receiving districts of Azro and Tizin. Clinics were built and handed over to NGOs in Gorik and Batikot districts of Nangarhar to improve access to primary health care for women and children.

**Income Generation:** A micro-credit project provided financial assistance to start up small businesses run by women in northern Afghanistan. UNHCR also provided small-scale employment opportunities at home for female returnees in Logar, Kabul, Nangarhar, and Paktia provinces. The project increased the income and self-reliance of about 500 people from poor rural returnee families through an apprenticeship programme including training and loans. UNHCR supported projects implemented by national NGOs in Batikot district: two QIPs introduced the use of kerosene-powered incubators for poultry-raising and provided training for 450 needy female heads of family; another QIP trained 421 vulnerable returnees in patu-weaving and production.

**Legal Assistance:** Workshops on voluntary repatriation, protection monitoring and status determination were organised for UNHCR protection and field staff, in order to encourage closer attention to returnees' protection concerns and more accurate identification of their immediate needs, especially in remote geographical locations.

**Operational Support (to Agencies):** Three UNVs were hired to monitor projects in Kabul, Kandahar and Jalalabad. Funds also covered small local purchases of office supplies as well as part of the administrative costs of UNHCR's operational partners.

**Sanitation:** A total of 463 private baths and 420 latrines were constructed in the western, eastern and central regions of Afghanistan. The beneficiary communities participated fully in the implementation of the projects, which provided sanitary facilities for 3,704 persons. This led to an overall improvement in the health status of these communities, particularly of women and children.

**Shelter/Other Infrastructure:** A total of 4,263 returnee families were helped to rebuild their homes upon



return to their villages of origin. The main beneficiaries were women heads of household, and the very poor. This helped make their return more permanent and allowed the beneficiaries to engage quickly in life-sustaining economic activities.

**Transport/Logistics:** Transportation was provided to group returnees from Pakistan and individual returnees from the Islamic Republic of Iran (including those returned involuntarily). A transit centre was established and fully equipped in Herat to provide temporary accommodation to refugees returning under the pilot repatriation project. Warehouses were rented and maintained for the storage of food and household items that were distributed to returnees in Jalalabad, Khost, Kandahar and Lashqargah. In the Mazar-i-Sharif area, 73 meters of retaining wall and a 30-meter diversion dike were constructed to reinforce the capacity of the Alchin Bridge. A total of 500 families from Kunduz, Shirkhan Bandar and Emam Sahib used the bridge, which will also facilitate the future repatriation from Kunduz of some remaining Tajik refugees.

**Water:** The rehabilitation and establishment of infrastructure to access potable water is essential for the survival of the returnees. A total of 137 shallow wells and 94 tube wells were constructed in the western, eastern and central regions of Afghanistan with the full participation of the beneficiary communities. Some returnees were trained in the use of hand pumps. As a result, safe drinking water was made available for 40,700 people, primarily women and children. This served as a pull factor for refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan, who were encouraged to return by the progress made in providing safe water and the improved health of targeted communities.

## ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

### Management

UNHCR's activities in Afghanistan were managed from Islamabad, Pakistan, with active support of the office in Kabul. In addition, four field-based offices ensured immediate access to most returnee areas. Twelve international and 22 national staff, and three UNVs ran the operation. All offices in Afghanistan maintained close contact with those in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan and regular meetings were held in Islamabad, Quetta and Peshawar and at the Iranian border, to discuss operational matters.

### Working with Others

UNHCR signed implementing agreements with two international organisations, four international and one national NGO (in addition, a large number of national NGOs were sub-contracted for QIPs). Various co-ordination structures were established within the Strategic Framework for Assistance to Afghanistan and through the UN Common Programming drive, under the auspices of the Office of the UN Humanitarian Co-ordinator for Afghanistan. In Islamabad, five theme-based inter-agency groups met regularly to discuss policy and operational matters ranging from the return of refugees, social services and sustainable livelihoods to respect for human rights and the empowerment of Afghan women and men. In Afghanistan, Regional Co-ordination Bodies functioned in some areas while others were still being established. UNHCR participated in the preparation of joint inter-agency plans to respond to immediate needs. The longer-term reintegration needs of communities receiving returnees were addressed in partnership with specialised UN agencies and NGOs. The Greater Azro Initiative, a multi-sectoral project launched in 1999, provided much needed assistance to returnees and has proven an excellent example of inter-agency co-operation. The model has been used by other agencies in Afghanistan to develop similar projects.

## OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Involuntary return from the Islamic Republic of Iran created a number of operational and practical problems for UNHCR and the local authorities in Afghanistan, including internal displacement as many of those who were forcibly returned were unable to return to their places of origin.

In the Afghan context, international NGOs are normally best able to implement UNHCR-funded projects due to their management experience, technical know-how and potential co-funding from their own resources. They are also in a position to build up the expertise and facilities of local institutions and NGOs. Capacity-building is a long-term endeavour which should be incorporated into the planning processes of all UN agencies and NGOs operating in Afghanistan.

Some 75-80 per cent of UNHCR's beneficiaries in Afghanistan are women, children and adolescents. They are generally more restricted in their movements and socio-economic activities than men. Moreover,

male adolescents are exposed to military involvement, and children (especially girls) lack proper educational opportunities. Future projects should therefore be based on the welfare and best interests of the entire family. Humanitarian assistance has reduced the chances of a renewed exodus and lessened inter-ethnic and inter-communal conflict (usually driven by competition for scarce resources). For many returnee families, survival in their villages of origin would have been impossible without UNHCR's assistance.

Until the peace process in Afghanistan is successful, and the majority of the remaining Afghan refugees repatriate, it is very difficult for UNHCR to develop an exit strategy. The plan is to reduce assistance in sectors which may be more effectively implemented by other, more development-oriented agencies.

Offices	
<b>PAKISTAN</b>	Islamabad
<b>AFGHANISTAN</b>	Kabul Herat Jalalabad Kandahar Mazar-i-Sharif
Partners	
<b>NGOs*</b>	Afghan German Basic Education Agency for Rehabilitation and Energy Conservation in Afghanistan Care International International Rescue Committee Save the Children Fund (USA)
<b>Other</b>	International Organisation for Migration International Assistance Mission
*In addition, a large number of national NGOs were sub-contracted for QIPs.	

Financial Report (USD)

Expenditure Breakdown	Current Year's Projects*		Prior Years' Projects		
	Special Programmes	Total	General Programmes	Special Programmes	Total
Protection, Monitoring and Coordination	1,933,388	1,933,388	0	38,866	38,866
Crop Production	37,490	37,490	0	73,334	73,334
Education	55,380	55,380	0	191,797	191,797
Forestry	0	0	0	275	275
Health / Nutrition	37,655	37,655	0	45,184	45,184
Income Generation	11,348	11,348	0	287,360	287,360
Legal Assistance	786,849	786,849	0	12,856	12,856
Operational Support (to Agencies)	117,745	117,745	0	39,181	39,181
Sanitation	0	0	0	0	0
Shelter / Other Infrastructure	323,607	323,607	0	98,077	98,077
Transport / Logistics	37,135	37,135	0	97,772	97,772
Water	0	0	0	229,307	229,307
Instalments with Implementing Partners	704,901	704,901	0	(198,389)	(198,389)
Combined Projects	67,201	67,201	763,795	(830,996)	(67,201)
<b>Sub - total Operational</b>	<b>4,112,699</b>	<b>4,112,699</b>	<b>763,795</b>	<b>84,623</b>	<b>848,418</b>
Administrative Support	208,694	208,694	0	4,284	4,284
<b>Sub - total Disbursements/Deliveries</b>	<b>4,321,393</b>	<b>4,321,393</b>	<b>763,795</b>	<b>88,907</b>	<b>852,702</b>
Unliquidated Obligations	1,487,862	1,487,862	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,809,255</b>	<b>5,809,255</b>	<b>763,795</b>	<b>88,907</b>	<b>852,702</b>
<b>Instalments with Implementing Partners</b>					
Payments Made	704,901	704,901	0	400,958	400,958
Reporting Received	0	0	0	599,347	599,347
Balance	704,901	704,901	0	(198,389)	(198,389)
Outstanding 1 January	0	0	0	525,120	525,120
Refunded to UNHCR	0	0	0	0	0
Currency Adjustment	0	0	0	(143)	(143)
<b>Outstanding 31 December</b>	<b>704,901</b>	<b>704,901</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>326,588</b>	<b>326,588</b>
<b>Unliquidated Obligations</b>					
Outstanding 1 January	0	0	770,325	238,792	1,009,117
New Obligations	5,809,255	5,809,255	0	0	0
Disbursements	4,321,393	4,321,393	763,795	88,907	852,702
Cancellations	0	0	6,530	149,885	156,415
<b>Outstanding 31 December</b>	<b>1,487,862</b>	<b>1,487,862</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

\* There was no General Programme expenditure in Afghanistan in 1999.