

UNHCR IN PAKISTAN

April 2009

UNHCR mission

Since late 1979, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been working in Pakistan to assist refugees fleeing conflict in Afghanistan.

The agency's 200 staff members in Islamabad, Quetta and Peshawar also care for several thousand asylum seekers from the region and Africa.

Asylum numbers

Some 1.7 million Afghans are registered in Pakistan today. Of this number, less than half live in 84 Refugee Villages in North West Frontier Province, Balochistan and Punjab. About 55% of registered Afghans live in urban areas.

More than half of them come from five provinces in Afghanistan – Nangarhar, Kabul, Kunduz, Logar and Paktya.

There are also several hundred non-Afghan refugees, and several thousand asylum seekers in Pakistan's urban areas. The biggest groups of asylum seekers are Afghans, Iraqis, Somalis and Iranians.

UNHCR Activities in Pakistan

Registration: In October 2006, the government, with support from UNHCR, started a 15-week exercise to register Afghans citizens living in Pakistan. 2.19 million Afghans were registered and issued a Proof of Registration (PoR) card valid until 31 December 2009. The full Registration Report is available at: www.unhcr.org.pk. Discussions on the new strategy for the management of Afghans in Pakistan beyond 2009 are in progress.

Protection: Based on registration results, UNHCR is planning on more targeted protection and interventions for refugees and persons of concern, including the implementation of durable solutions (voluntary repatriation/resettlement), refugee status determination, legal aid and assistance to individual and vulnerable cases.

Voluntary repatriation: Since 2002, more than 3.5 million Afghans have returned home with UNHCR assistance. The highest numbers were in 2002, when close to 1.6 million repatriated. 2005 saw the second-highest pace of returns, with some 450,000 Afghans going home, more than half of them from urban areas. In 2006, over 133,000 Afghans repatriated.

Starting 1 March 2007, UNHCR introduced new return modalities linked to the Proof of Registration (PoR) card, and an enhanced return package. Over 360,000 Afghans returned home in 2007, including more than 200,000 unregistered Afghans. Repatriation in Pakistan ended on 31 October 2007 and resumed at the beginning of March. In 2008, more than 274,000 Afghans voluntarily repatriated from Pakistan with UNHCR assistance.

Refugee Village (RV) Closure: The planned closure of four RVs in 2007 was reconfirmed by Pakistan, Afghanistan and UNHCR at the 12th Tripartite Commission meeting. In July 2007 Katcha Gari RV in NWFP was peacefully closed with some 40,000 Afghans returning home. The closure of Jalojai in NWFP was postponed to 2008; the site was officially declared closed on 30 May.

Community-based assistance in RVs: The Government of Pakistan, in collaboration with UNHCR and NGOs, is providing basic community-based services like primary school education (some 100,000 students in over 270 Refugee Village-based schools), basic health care, water and sanitation. UNHCR works with implementing partners to provide these services. In some Refugee Villages, the Afghans themselves participate in the running of these facilities.

RAHA Initiative: Refugee-Affected (RA) and Hosting Areas (HA) aims to facilitate the transition from a purely humanitarian to a more development oriented intervention in selected areas and communities impacted by the presence of Afghans. While RA proposes to repair the adverse impact (in terms of infrastructures, environment, health systems, etc) in areas once inhabited by refugees, HA is designed to create and support basic services that will benefit both Afghans and

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Pakistani populations mainly in the education, water/sanitation and health sectors.

UNHCR, in partnership with UNDP, have completed assessments of the RA and HA segments of the initiative and a \$135 million proposal has been submitted to donors as a Joint Programme under the One UN process.

RIPAC Project: Following the census and registration exercise conducted by UNHCR in collaboration with GoP and the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), the Registration Information Project for Afghan Citizens (RIPAC) aims to develop an analytical and updated profile of the Afghan population in Pakistan in order to formulate durable and sustainable solutions tailored to all registered Afghans.

The Project has three branches: 1. PoR Card Modification (PCM) centres, operating in collaboration with NADRA, to update, modify and correct information on the Proof of Registration (POR) cards (e.g. births, deaths, marriages, etc.). PCM centres, in Karachi, Quetta, Peshawar, Haripur and Lahore are operational; 2. A 'survey' at the household level, to help in the planning and design of solutions and protection interventions, and 3. a Special Assistance Fund (SAF) to facilitate immediate assistance to individuals with specific needs and skills as identified by the survey.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs): The escalating conflict in the Federally-Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Swat has resulted in the displacement of an estimated 600,000 people, mainly to the surrounding areas in NWFP but also to Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) decided that five clusters would be activated: 1) Health & Nutrition led by WHO, 2) Education and 3) Water/Sanitation both led by UNICEF, 4) Food led by WFP and 5) Shelter, Camp Management & Protection – as one cluster - led by UNHCR. The emergency operation is managed mainly from Peshawar with support from the Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) which will be strengthened in the near future.

UNHCR is supporting Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) in the Peshawar area where the Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees (CAR), with support from UNHCR, has admitted and registered over 93,000 people in IDP camps. The provincial government's Ministry of Social Welfare, with support from UNHCR, has also registered some 462,000 IDPs living outside camps, mainly in host families and rented accommodations.

UNHCR provides shelter and distributes non-food-items to the majority of IDPs living in camps and aims to assist, with partners, all IDPs living outside camps. WFP provides regular food assistance.

A pre-assessment of the IDP population living outside NWFP mainly in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore and Karachi (and adjacent districts) showed that approximately 13,500 families or over 82,500 individuals are living in these areas and in need of assistance. UNHCR, together with CAR, began the registration of this population on 20 April. Further details will be shared soon.

The main challenges today are the lack of resources, identification of suitable land for additional IDP camps, speedy registration and verification of IDPs living outside camps and access to IDPs in areas of conflict given the current security climate. OCHA has significantly boosted its presence on the ground and the Humanitarian Coordinator's office, through a policy advisory group, has delineated immediate priorities for assistance and is finalizing a humanitarian Code of Conduct, to provide clarity on the rules of engagement. A civil-military expert has been deployed to develop formal cooperation mechanisms with the military.

Funding: In response to a UN Consolidated Flash Appeal for Humanitarian Assistance to the IDP situation, UNHCR received some US\$17m in contributions from the governments of Japan, Sweden, USA, UK, Canada, France and Netherlands in 2008. For 2009, UNHCR requirements are USD 19 mio. Pledges have been made by the governments of Australia, UK, Japan, US and EU.

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