

UNHCR IN PAKISTAN

June 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. UNHCR currently is engaged in one of the world's biggest internal population movements in the north-western Pakistan as a result of an ongoing conflict in the region.

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 percent 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 Afghan citizens living in Pakistan. The registration exercise was a follow-up of a census conducted in 2005, the first ever survey of Afghans conducted in Pakistan since their arrival in the country in 1979. Some 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: The UNHCR assisted Voluntary return program of Afghans started in 2002, and since then more than 3.5 million Afghans have returned home with UNHCR assistance. The highest numbers were in 2002, when close to 1.6 million returned home. 2005 saw the second-highest rate 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. In 2008, more than 274,000 Afghans voluntarily repatriated from Pakistan with UNHCR assistance. In 2009, as of the start of repatriation in April to date, some 37,000 Afghans have returned home via Hayatabad in Peshawar and Beleli in Quetta.

Community-based assistance in Refugee Villages (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

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

UNHCR, in partnership with UNDP, have completed assessments of the RA and HA segments of the initiative.

In May this year, UNHCR and the UN agencies signed an appeal endorsed by the government to request USD 140 million in funding from donors to implement the RAHA initiative. The Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas (RAHA) programme is planned over a period of five years and will benefit up to 2.5 million Pakistanis and Afghan refugees.

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) centers, 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 centers, 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 in the North Western Frontier Province (NWFP) has resulted in the displacement of an estimated 2 million people, mainly to the surrounding areas in NWFP but also to Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi and

Islamabad. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) has activated the cluster system: 1) Health led by WHO, 2) Education, 3) Water/Sanitation & 4) Nutrition led by UNICEF, 5) Food and 6) Logistics led by WFP and 7) Emergency Shelter and NFIs, 8) Camp Coordination & Camp Management and 9) Protection, all three led by UNHCR. The emergency operation is managed mainly from Peshawar with support from the OCHA office in Islamabad, under the purview of the recently-appointed Humanitarian Coordinator.

UNHCR is supporting the Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees (CAR) in the Peshawar area in its responsibilities with Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM). The registration of IDPs in camps is conducted by CAR as well as implementing partner, IRC with support from UNHCR. To date, over 240,000 people have been registered in 21 IDP camps. These camps include the two former Afghan refugee villages of Kacha Gari and Jalozei, which were closed in 2007 and 2008 and are now accommodating hundreds of IDPs from FATA and Swat.

UNHCR provides shelter and distributes non-food-items (NFIs) to IDPs in and outside camps. UN-HABITAT has also distributed 3,000 tents provided by UNHCR to IDPs living with host families.

Registration of the IDP population living outside NWFP mainly in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, and other parts of Punjab (and adjacent districts) shows that the registration of some 11,804 families or over 71,774 individuals has been verified. Registration of many more in these areas is being cross-checked.

NADRA is cross checking and 'cleaning up' the IDP registration data to verify those already registered, eliminate errors and duplicates. While the 'cleaning up' of data reduces the total figures, a constant flow of new arrivals adds to the overall IDP numbers. NADRA's verified data points to some 1.9 million IDPs in and outside camps. There are thousands more family forms yet to be verified.

The main challenges today regarding the management of the IDP operation include issues surrounding security and safety of staff in the field and lack of financial resources which hamper

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programme delivery especially to IDPs staying in host families. Access to the affected-areas, the decongestion of existing camps and the identification of new ones are also priorities which require urgent attention.

Funding for IDPs: In order to mobilize resources to run the IDP operations, UNHCR participated in the Pakistan Humanitarian Response Plan and initially appealed for USD 105 million. To date UNHCR had received contributions totaling US\$ 52 million.

With the increase in the number of beneficiaries (from 1.5 million to 2.5 million IDPs) and the

anticipated operations benefiting IDPs from South Waziristan and the provision of return assistance packages to those leaving the camps on a voluntary basis, the Office has revised its budget to USD 141 million. The funding gap is therefore is now US\$ 89 million.

UNHCR is grateful to donors who have generously funded its activities to assist IDPs and calls upon others to come forward with additional and much-needed contributions.

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