



**UNHCR-WFP Joint Funding Proposal to
the Government of Italy, General
Directorate for Development Cooperation**



**Support to Voluntary Repatriation and Reintegration
of Afghans returning from Iran and Pakistan**



Budget: EUR 4,000,000
Implementation Period: 1 January 2009 to 31 December 2009

UNHCR-WFP Kabul, Afghanistan
August 2008

I. PROJECT SUMMARY

This joint UNHCR-WFP project is part of broader appeal for Afghanistan, launched collectively by UN agencies, the Government of Afghanistan as well as international NGOs in January and July 2008.

The proposal will be launched in conjunction with a concert in honour of the late Luciano Pavarotti, which will take place in Petra, Jordan, on 12 October 2008.

Main objective

The overall objective of the proposed joint UNHCR/WFP intervention is to assist in the smooth reintegration of Afghan refugees in the regions of high displacement. UNHCR/WFP efforts will focus on the areas of community based activities such as; construction of shelters, establishment/rehabilitation of community infrastructure/assets projects that specifically target vulnerable families and individuals and in particular female heads of households through WFP Food for Education (FFE), Food for Training (FFT) and Food for Work (FFW) activities. WFP will provide food assistance to returnees and host communities to address both immediate food insecurity and the needs of the most vulnerable. UNHCR will provide a cash grant for the transportation of the returnees, the initial reintegration package and also the long-term livelihood needs of these communities.

Proposed activities

- Provision of repatriation and reintegration cash grants to refugees returning from Iran and Pakistan;
- Provision of shelter assistance to returnees;
- Construction of four kindergarten schools in high return communities;
- Construction of micro-hydro power and irrigation channels in high returnee communities;
- Health and hygiene education in high returnee communities;
- Livelihood opportunities for vulnerable returnee women;
- Support the increased enrolment and attendance of primary school children, particularly girls through FFE activities;
- Develop life skills for poor rural adults, especially women, through FFT activities , through vocational skills training;
- Support towards the establishment/rehabilitation of community infrastructure and assets creation through FFW activities to improve the capacity of vulnerable groups, and particularly women, to manage shocks, meet necessary food needs and protect livelihoods;
- Construction of two primary schools, which will be dedicated to Pavarotti for visibility issues.

Beneficiaries

- Approximately 150,000 (24,690 families) Afghan returnees in the Eastern regions, specifically targeting women and children;
- 8,300 Afghan refugees who will be assisted to return to their places of origin from Pakistan and Iran through cash grants;
- 350 vulnerable returnee families will benefit from UNHCR's shelter assistance;
- FFE: 2,490 boys and girls (30%) will be enrolled in WFP-supported primary schools;
- FFT: 4,106 beneficiaries (10% of returnees and 5% of host communities) will benefit from vocational skills training projects;
- FFW: 11,700 beneficiaries (305 of returnees and 14% of host communities) will directly benefit from community infrastructure/assets rehabilitation through FFW projects;

Location of planned activities: This joint UNHCR/WFP project will focus primarily on areas of high return (Eastern regions) targeting returnees from Pakistan and Iran, but also on the Northern and Western regions, where communities have been hard hit by drought and food shortages. The activities planned will inter-link with UNHCR's overall national shelter programme, rehabilitation of community infrastructure and cash grants to assist returnees as well as communities receiving former displaced peoples.

Total amount requested: Euro 4,000,000 (Euro 2 million for each agency).

Implementation Period: January – December 2009

II. BACKGROUND

UNHCR/Returnees

From the start of the UNHCR repatriation operation in 2002 to early August 2008, some 5.4 million refugees have returned to Afghanistan, of which almost 4.3 million benefited from UNHCR's assistance. With regard to returnees thus far in 2008, the overall voluntary repatriation figure to Afghanistan from Pakistan as of 14 August 2008 is 213,631 individuals, while 2,604 Afghans have returned voluntarily from Iran and 282 from other countries, totalling 216,517. The majority of Afghans continue to return to the Eastern provinces of Nangarhar, Laghman, and Kunar. In total, 134,869 (62%) individuals have returned to these three districts so far in 2008, of whom almost 66,500 are women.

Return of the refugees during 2008 is being largely driven by policies in the countries of asylum. According to registration data from Pakistan collected in 2006-2007, almost 2 million Afghan refugees have Proof of Registration (PoR) cards allowing them to stay until 2009. More than 80% of the remaining population has been in exile for more than twenty years and 50% were born there. Due to cultural, personal, economic, and social proximity, many have assimilated well in their host communities. Surveys have repeatedly demonstrated that Afghans remaining in asylum are less inclined to go back home and that the major challenge to return is security, combined with the prevailing socio-economic situation in Afghanistan. The future pattern, pace and sustainability of returns are likely to be influenced by a range of factors, and in particular by the policies the neighbouring host countries will adopt towards Afghans residing there.

Despite gradual improvements in the delivery of public services, notably in the health and education sectors, Afghanistan is still one of the poorest countries in the world. Livelihood opportunities are mentioned by returnees as the most important concern/challenge. Returnees need jobs and livelihood activities, access to basic services such as health and education, and the availability of a minimum physical infrastructure such as shelter, clean water, roads, bridges and electricity.

Furthermore, due to the small size of farm lands and low farm productivity, a significant number of males of working-age population are engaged in non-farm economic activities in order to provide for the basic needs of their families. A needs assessment from 2007 showed that a great majority of the returnees earn their income as unskilled and/or daily wage labourers and that their incomes are not sufficient for family subsistence since their jobs are irregular and low-paid. The situation is even more difficult in the case of families/individuals with extreme vulnerability, including widows and female heads of households.

As expressed by returnees themselves, shelter is their most important need for reintegration. Recognising this enormous and immediate need, UNHCR, together with the Afghan authorities, has embarked on a large-scale shelter programme which took off in the spring of 2002. Since then, UNHCR has been able to provide shelters to some 170,000 families, benefiting more than one million people. In 2008 UNHCR has planned to support approximately 10,000 families with shelters, benefiting some 60,000 individuals.

WFP/Food Security

The assessments carried out recently and data collected by the Government and UN agencies that formed the basis of the July Joint Emergency Appeal suggest that 35% of Afghan households do not meet their minimum daily caloric intake (2100 kcal/person), 5% higher than similar findings in 2005 and approximately 46% of households are now classified as having very poor dietary diversity and food consumption. Food expenditure for most affected households stands at 85%, compared to 56% in 2005. Furthermore, agriculture has been severely affected by drought, with the cereal harvest in 2008 estimated to be the lowest experienced since 2002 and 30% lower than in 2007. A combination of continuing high food prices and drought will have serious implications on household food security (weakening the purchasing power of affected people, mainly for those that normally rely on market purchases, deteriorating terms of trade for waged labourers and increasing household food expenditures at cost of reducing expenditures on other essential needs, hence compromising health, nutrition and livelihoods in the medium and long term) and the humanitarian situation (with structural vulnerability exacerbated by high food prices and drought) in the country.

Until the end of 2009, within the scope of its regular activities (PRRO 10427.0), WFP plans to assist 3.7 million food insecure people in 34 provinces with 179,000 tonnes of food, with special emphasis on vulnerable women and children, through a range of relief and recovery food-based interventions (emergency/relief assistance to IDPs and other vulnerable groups, TB patients, school feeding, food for training and food for work), targeting chronically poor and food-insecure families, schoolchildren, teachers, widows, illiterate people, the disabled, internally displaced persons, returnees and tuberculosis patients. Furthermore, under the Joint Government and UN Emergency Appeal on High Food Price and Drought Appeal, launched in July, WFP plans to reach 5 million Afghans by delivering 230,000 tonnes of food, from July 08 to July 09, in urban and rural areas.

All interventions are implemented in partnership with the Afghan government, other UN agencies (notably UNICEF, UNHCR, FAO and WHO), Community Development Councils and non-governmental organizations.

More specifically, FFE aims to assist the Government to rebuild the national education system. In an effort to alleviate short-term hunger and encourage school attendance, WFP provides a daily ration of fortified biscuits to 1.5 million boys and girls in food-insecure districts with especially poor educational indicators. WFP also provides an estimated 800,000 children with take-home rations of wheat in areas that are difficult to reach in the winter months. In addition, 575,000 girls receive cans of oil during the school year as an added incentive to keep them in class and encourage parent to send their girls to school, with the objective of reducing gender gap in areas of low female enrolment. The program also supports community based schoolteachers, mainly women engaged in teacher training programmes in remote areas, by providing them with a monthly ration of vegetable oil. WFP assists the Afghan government's functional literacy campaign by distributing family rations to adult students undertaking literacy courses. Classes often also include a vocational training and life skills component, mainly for women and adolescent girls. FFW projects provide food to Afghans as they build or repair community assets, including roads, bridges, schools, reservoirs and irrigation systems. Assistance to protracted Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) aims to promote the return of IDPs to their places of origin and involve these groups in activities that support the host communities and the return and reintegration of IDPs and returnees from neighbouring countries.

This joint UNHCR-WFP project seeks to help strengthen and expand the limited existing national mechanisms to assist and provide solutions for extremely vulnerable persons (EVIs) of concern, often identified among returnees in Afghanistan. Among these extremely vulnerable individuals are unaccompanied returnee women, the elderly and minors, abandoned women, women seeking protection from violence within the family or from forced and under-aged marriages, as well as very poor families and medical cases.

III. ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

Return and Reintegration Cash Grant

Through this contribution 8,300 returnees will receive a cash grant, enabling them to address transport costs and to meet their immediate needs upon return to Afghanistan.

The cash grant will be distributed at the five encashment centres (ECs) across Afghanistan (Kabul, Herat, Jalalabad, Gardez and Kandahar) after the verification of the Voluntary Repatriation Form or the cancellation of the new Proof of Registration Card issued in Pakistan. The aim of this assistance is to help families who return to be able to cover initial and unique needs during the return process and upon arrival. ECs are managed by UNHCR in cooperation with the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR). At the ECs, returnees also have access to a variety of services including mine-awareness, polio and measles vaccinations for children, basic medical assistance, legal aid and transit centres for overnight staying.

In 2007, UNHCR decided to increase the repatriation cash grant. The increase was requested by Governments in the region and agreed at the respective Tripartite Commission meetings with the Islamic Governments of Iran and Pakistan in February 2007 to provide additional support to returnees. Since the beginning of 2007, the repatriation cash grants have been increased to USD 100 per returnee, depending on travel distance to the area of origin in Afghanistan.

Activities

UNHCR provides an average of US\$ 100, for transportation and initial reintegration assistance, to all returnees who have come back home under the Voluntary Repatriation Programme. The transportation grant provided to returnees from Pakistan ranges from US\$ 12 to US\$ 23 per person depending on the distance to the province of origin in Afghanistan. Along with the transportation entitlement, all returnees receive an initial reintegration grant of \$83 per person.¹ This assistance allows people to procure for immediate needs upon reaching their final destinations.

Shelter Assistance

Due to the high number of potential beneficiaries, it is impossible to extend shelter assistance to cover the full needs of all returnees in villages of origin. Therefore, the shelter programme will focus on areas of high return and/or potential return areas.

Beneficiaries in targeted communities will be selected on the basis of vulnerability and will include both returning refugees and IDPs, maintaining a balance among various ethnic groups. Relative levels of community destruction, access to water, security, and accessibility to land are among the other factors considered in the identification of beneficiaries.

Where appropriate, UNHCR will also attempt to actively support the government's land allocation policy for landless returnees and IDPs and other vulnerable groups through the provision of shelters to beneficiaries of this programme.

Activities

Based on UNHCR's revised and improved guidelines for shelter assistance in 2007 and updated in 2008, some 350 vulnerable returnee families will be assisted with shelter materials and construction tools through this and other donor contributions. The weak dollar and sharp increase in steel prices have raised the cost of a shelter unit considerably compared to 2007. UNHCR is currently reviewing the shelter package to ensure that the standards are appropriate in any given context and in an attempt to source cost reducing elements.

The UNHCR shelter assistance is a community based, self-help programme. UNHCR supports the returnees by providing a shelter package which includes essential construction materials such as tools,

¹ Returnees repatriating from Iran receive the cash grant in two tranches: the reintegration component is disbursed in Iran, the transport one in Afghanistan.

roofing beams, doors and windows, and by supervising them to achieve a minimum standard of quality. With the help of the community, the returnees make the sun-dried mud bricks and build their own houses. Partner agencies provide technical assistance as well as additional construction materials. Whenever appropriate, WFP will assist in the shelter construction through mobilizing the community to carry out the labour work through FFW.

In accordance with the Sphere Standards, the design is based on a mud house structure with an average of 32 sqm floor area, two rooms, a corridor, and an external latrine. Between June and September 2006, UNHCR carried out a thorough review of its shelter programme in close co-operation with government counterparts (MoRR, and the Ministry for Rural Rehabilitation and Development, MRRD) and NGO partners, in order to harmonise the implementation of shelters throughout the country and improve the quality of the buildings. This process resulted in the Shelter Guidelines 2007, which improved the shelter model (design and specification) by bringing some technical changes to the package. These guidelines have been further improved in 2008. In the implementation of the shelter programme, UNHCR will continue to pay particular attention to some fundamental principles:

- Community-based approach, where the community takes the primary responsibility to verify the eligible beneficiaries.
- Focus on individuals at risk.
- Women's participation in the beneficiary selection to the maximum extent possible.
- Clear property ownership.
- Involvement of local authorities (MoRR and its departments - DoRRs).
- Efforts towards an integrated approach between shelter and water interventions from other actors, to facilitate the construction process and increase the sustainability of the reintegration.

Beneficiary Selection Committees will be formed in all villages where the shelter assistance programme is implemented, in order to allow the community to take the primary responsibility of verifying the eligible beneficiaries. The selection committees will be composed of representatives of the relevant DoRRs, district authorities, local village shura/elders, returnee representatives (women), the implementing partner and UNHCR. Only the most destitute (e.g. large families with no sources of income) and vulnerable families or individuals (single headed households, elderly, disabled, and widows) will be eligible to receive UNHCR shelter assistance.

The direct monitoring of the shelter assistance programme is a major activity of UNHCR offices. Missions of UNHCR staff will take place regularly in the areas of implementation, during the different stages in the shelter programme, unless the security situation imposes severe limitations.

Implementation and Monitoring

The project is implemented in a cycle encompassing six stages:

- Initial planning and assessment;
- Beneficiary selection and first operational steps;
- Start of the construction on site and the delivery of the material;
- Roof construction;
- Installation and completion (including doors, windows and sanitary installations);
- Hand-over to the beneficiaries.

The construction of shelters starts in the spring when the weather allows, and has to be finalised before the winter begins. Monitoring of the shelter programme is a constant UNHCR activity. It will be conducted directly by UNHCR and by the IPs during the different stages of the shelter programme, as outlined above. UNHCR direct monitoring is carried out with the increased co-operation of the

representatives of the MoRR. Based on the visits conducted and the information provided by the IPs, also during periodical meetings in each UNHCR sub-office location, data on the progress of the shelter programme will be systematically gathered and forwarded to UNHCR Kabul data section. The consolidation of the data by progress stages will allow an overall quantitative monitoring and evaluation to occur at a central level, which will in turn be essential for the future planning purposes.

Support for community infrastructure/assets rehabilitation and education in high return areas

The overall objective of the proposed joint UNHCR/WFP programme is to help realise sustainable return and reintegration of Afghan returnees in the targeted region. Receiving communities in areas of high return will be helped to cope with the arrival of returnees, and returnees themselves will be supported in finding sustainable sources of income through community infrastructure and asset rehabilitation projects, as well as vocational skill training and literacy programmes. Particular attention will be paid to targeting vulnerable families and individuals, especially women.

In 2009 UNHCR intends to undertake community support activities as part of its effort aimed at facilitating the reintegration of returnees. This activity will target receiving communities in districts which received large numbers of returns since 2002 in order to enhance livelihoods of returnees and returnee communities as a whole. The construction of water infrastructures and, according to the specific needs of the communities, other types of infrastructure such as roads, etc., will serve as employment generating projects.

WFP's intervention will aim to improve food security for returnees and receiving communities, as well as helping communities build and maintain sustainable sources of income. Projects will be implemented through Food-For-Work schemes, where workers are paid with food to build vital new infrastructure, or Food-For-Training activities, where food is given as an incentive for beneficiaries to learn new skills. Projects will include agricultural and environmental initiatives, such as the construction of intake and flood protection walls, rehabilitation and construction of small scale irrigation schemes, providing electricity with micro hydro-power plants, drinking water projects and tree plantation activities. There will also be community infrastructure projects such as the construction and improvement of roads. On the Food-For-Training side, projects will especially help women, for example with literacy training and vocational skills such as small-scale livestock rearing and management of small cottage industries. Children of returning families will be enrolled in WFP-supported primary schools. In addition, 2 primary schools with 12 classrooms each, including two administrative rooms, will be constructed with burnt bricks, reinforced concrete roofs, boundary walls, safe drinking water points and 5 improved sanitation latrines, in agreed locations by WFP, UNHCR and the Ministry of Education.

All WFP planned food interventions will be implemented in line with the modalities defined in WFP on-going Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation – PRRO 10427.0, and as previously agreed with the Government of Afghanistan. Food assistance projects will be implemented in close coordination with Government authorities, mainly the Provincial Education, Rural Rehabilitation and Development, Agriculture Departments, as well as relevant UN and NGOs partners, as appropriate. The interventions will benefit from the operational and logistics structure that serves WFP's on-going activities in the country, using its network of Areas and Sub-Offices.

The Pavarotti funded component of this overall joint UNHCR-WFP programme is expected to contribute to a number of projects under the community infrastructure/assets rehabilitation in the Eastern regions, specifically targeting women and children. Among these are Micro-Hydro Power and Irrigation Canals that will improve agricultural production in high returnee communities and will ensure electricity supply to more than 700 families that will help schoolchildren to study after dark.

This project would additionally provide an electrical grinding mill that would help relieve women and children from this harsh task.

Another project is the Health Improvement & Hygiene Education that will benefit approximately 4,800 families or more than 25,000 individuals. Many villages do not have proper access to health services and the sanitation/hygienic condition is very poor. In most cases women and children are the most vulnerable groups that suffer from negative effects of improper hygiene. This project would provide hygiene training and latrine and mobile clinic services to a number of villages that would benefit both returnees and communities. After one year, the project will be handed over to the Department of Public Health.

Another key project is the Women's Mobilisation Group with the objectives of improving livelihood opportunities for some of the most vulnerable returnee women (60) through skill training and to mobilize and empower the women's group through the establishment of an association for wool production.

One of the projects with a specific focus on children is the construction of 4 kindergartens that will give 400 children the opportunity to have better pre school education and an opportunity for working mothers to have childcare while they are at work. The non-exhaustive list of proposed projects in the Eastern regions is as follows:

- Human rights awareness for women in five districts of Nangarhar province;
- Kindergarten construction in Nangarhar province;
- Irrigation canals, irrigation intakes and hydropower in Nangarhar benefiting women and children;
- Health improvements for vulnerable groups of women and children that suffer from improper hygiene in Nangarhar province;
- Mobilization of women's' group and skill training for vulnerable women in the Sheik Mesri township (and Lower Sheikmesri FATA cluster), Nangarhar province;
- Fish farming training and operation for extremely vulnerable individuals in Mohmanadara, Nangarhar province;
- Poultry raising with a focus on female headed households, Nangarhar and Kunar provinces;
- Cow raising benefiting lactating mothers and children, Laghman province;
- Rehabilitating of road and tree planting, Qarghaee, Laghman province;
- Agricultural skill training for vulnerable farmers and training on peanuts processing activity for women groups, Mehterlam, Laghman province;
- Solar power water points that will facilitate water collection for women and children who are traditional water fetchers, Nangarhar and Laghman province;
- Community based Agricultural Machinery Service that can improve working conditions in farming that women and children usually undertake, Nangarhar province;
- Skills and literacy training for disabled people, Laghman Province;
- Construction of a protection wall, water intakes and the construction and rehabilitation of a suspension bridge in flood prone areas aiding communities from flooding destroying crops and houses. Women and children are more often in the houses than the men and therefore also more at risk, Nangarhar, Kunar and Laghman provinces.
- FFE, FFW and FFT activities, in the above targeted UNHCR projects will be supported by WFP.

Implementation and Monitoring

WFP will provide food for the participants and UNHCR will support other materials and operational costs in the above listed projects in the Eastern regions. The projects will be implemented by

experienced national NGO partners and/or relevant government departments such as Provincial Governors and Departments of Agriculture, Education, Rural Rehabilitation and Development, Labour and Social Affairs, in cooperation with Departments of Repatriation and Refugees and UNICEF. Monitoring of the projects will be conducted jointly by WFP and UNHCR with relevant local partners.

Whenever possible, Community Development Councils (CDCs), particularly for FFW, will be considered as implementing and supporting bodies as a way of both maximising the involvement of the communities, and mainstreaming the projects in the National Solidarity Programme framework.

IV. BENEFICIARIES

Return and Reintegration Cash Grant - Some 8,300 returnees will receive a cash grant. Only refugees in possession of a Voluntary Repatriation Form issued by UNHCR in Iran or a Proof of Registration issued and deregistered in Pakistan are entitled to assistance upon their return to Afghanistan. Returnees have to show their VRF at the Encashment Centre (EC) in Afghanistan in order to receive UNHCR cash assistance.

Shelter Assistance - Some 350 vulnerable returnee families will receive a basic shelter in their areas of origin. The need for housing of these returnee families will be addressed, thus fulfilling the main requirements of the initial reintegration.

Support for Community Infrastructure/Assets Rehabilitation and to Education in High Return Areas – Approximately 150,000 Afghan returnees (24, 690 families) who have returned to their places of origin in the Eastern region will benefit from this component of the proposed project. The majority of whom are vulnerable return families.

It is anticipated that some 65,520 beneficiaries in communities with high return numbers will directly benefit from the above-mentioned food-based interventions. But the planned activities will only target some of them (see section I. Project Summary – Beneficiaries).

V. WORK PLAN

Sector	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Transportation / cash grant												
Shelter												
Support for community infrastructure / assets rehabilitation												

VI. REPORTING

An interim and a final report, highlighting progress in the funded activities will be submitted by the UNHCR and WFP Representations in Kabul to the Italian Embassy in Afghanistan and respective agency’s headquarters.

VII. VISIBILITY

The concert in honour of the late Luciano Pavarotti will take place in Petra, Jordan, on 12 October 2008. The concert will feature internationally renowned artists from the pop and classical music worlds and will be performed live for an exclusive VIP audience, and then broadcast on television around the world, starting with Italy.

This event will provide ample opportunity to showcase the generosity of the Italian government for this project. High media interest is expected, and the GoI would be acknowledged in various public

relations events in conjunction with the concert, including press releases and a participation in a press conference.

The project also envisages at least one enduring symbol of the GoI-Pavarotti contribution, for example through the construction and naming of a school or hospital.

VIII. BUDGET

The implementation period extends from 1 January to 31 December 2009. This proposal seeks Italy's support of Euro 4,000,000 as indicated below:

Sector	Agency	Amount in Euro
Transportation / Cash Grant	UNHCR	533,690
Shelter	UNHCR	337,575
Support for community infrastructure/assets rehabilitation	UNHCR	796,294
Operational Coordination Costs	UNHCR	201,600
Implementation Support Costs (7%)	UNHCR	130,841
Sub-Total (1) – UNHCR		2,000,000
Food for Education and Training	WFP	718,333
Food for Work	WFP	917,181
School Construction	WFP	233,645
Implementation Support Costs (7%)	WFP	130,841
Sub-Total (2) – WFP		2,000,000
Grand Total		4,000,000