

Appeal no:21/2000
22 August 2000

IRAN: Drought Support to Afghan Refugees

***THIS APPEAL SEEKS CHF 2,268,146
IN CASH, KIND AND SERVICES
TO ASSIST 100,000 BENEFICIARIES FOR 12 MONTHS***

Summary

The extensive drought that presently covers the Caucasus, South Asia and Central Asia is having a significant impact in Iran. The government faces a considerable challenge in getting water supplies to the local population, including a large number of dispersed refugees, as well as the Afghan refugees located in camps.

To complement the on-going work of the Iranian government, the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United Nations agencies, the International Federation will increase water delivery capacity to two major cities (Zahedan and Zabul) and to refugee camps for a period of 12 months.

The Iranian government, in co-ordination with the UNHCR, is responsible for water delivery to the Afghan refugee camps but with the increased demands, the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran will provide emergency water assistance for 12 months to the Afghan refugee camps to supplement the work carried out by the government.

The Disaster

For the third consecutive year, the country is faced with an unprecedented drought which is now affecting 18 out of the 28 provinces. The most affected provinces are Sistan va Baluchistan, Yazd, Fars, Kohkiluyeh Boyer-Ahmad, Bushehr, Hormuzgan, Kerman, and Khuzista. Consequences are serious on livestock and water supply. More than 50% of the total population of 62 million are affected with the most critical situation in rural areas. Refugees living in settlements on the outskirts of villages and cities suffer the most.

An assessment mission comprising representatives from the Netherlands Red Cross/the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran/the Federation was carried out in the most-affected province of Sistan va Baluchistan. The situation is particularly critical in Zabul and Zahedan which suffer from a shortage of water supply systems. Long lasting drought has weakened the systems even more. The situation of refugees in camps is even worse as water is sold at high price and hygiene standards are low thus representing a health hazard.

In Zabul and its surroundings, the population is estimated at 500,000 in total. Out of that number, approximately 120,000 are dispersed Afghan refugees while there are also 2 settlements with additional 10,000 refugees. In Zahedan, population is more than 500,000. Out of that number, 200,000 are dispersed refugees while there are 2 main settlements in slum areas, with 40,000 and 25,000 refugees, respectively.

	Total population	Afghan refugees in camps	Total
Zabul	500,000 (of whom 120,000 refugees)	10,000	
Zahedan	500,000 (of whom 200,000 refugees)	65,000	
Beneficiaries	>50,000 (in cities)	50,000	>100,000

The city water system in Zahedan does not supply potable water and it is, instead, sold at water points. As regards the refugee camps, water traders are present there only every 2 days.

The Response so far

Government Action w

Authorities are organising water supply but are overwhelmed with the extent of drought. The Ministry of Interior has called for a UN assessment mission (OCHA) and has welcomed the international assistance. The assessment was carried out in August 2000 and the draft report is available. The existing relief is dispatched with considerable difficulty to refugee camps.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action w

The Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran is active in supplying water with its fleet of water tankers in Tehran and provinces (including Sistan va Baluchistan), but the fleet is not sufficient to cover all needs. On 20 to 27 July, an assessment was carried out in Teheran and the province of Sistan va Baluchistan as the most affected province by the Netherlands Red Cross/the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran/the Federation.

Other Agencies' Action w

The UNHCR and the Government of Iran have signed a six month voluntary repatriation programme on 14 February 2000, entering into force on 8 April. By 29 July, 61,000 refugees have returned to Afghanistan. Consequently, the UNHCR has decreased their assistance to the refugee camps.

There are almost no NGOs represented in the country, except Médecins sans Frontières participating in the repatriation programme with medical screening at the border.

At the first Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Drought Task Force meeting held in Geneva on 13 July, it was agreed that the focus should be on Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan and Tajikistan. The Government of Iran, however, expressed their interest in the international assistance. Hence, the Task Force sent an assessment mission to Iran late July-beginning of August. The mission's findings state that the "provision of safe potable water has the highest priority".

Co-ordination w

The Federation, the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Netherlands Red Cross maintain close contacts and co-ordinate their activities with the UN agencies (in particular UNHCR and OCHA) through the Federation Secretariat.

The Intended Operation**Assessment of Needs •**

The Federation/the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran/the Netherlands Red Cross assessment mission was limited to the most affected province of Sistan va Baluchistan and to Tehran (including the National Society headquarters). While all the population in the cities of Zabul and Zahedan is affected, around 325,000 Afghan refugees dispersed through the city and partly living on the outskirts are the most affected due to poor living conditions and limited job opportunities. In total, there are around 100,000 refugees in Zabul with additional 7,000 refugees in the camp at Niatak and 1,200 refugees at the camp at Dahaneh Bagh. As regards the city of Zahedan, there are 150,000 dispersed Afghan refugees with additional 40,000 in the camp at Shirabad and 25,000 at Karimabad.

Immediate Needs •

In Zabul and Zahedan (Zabul being even more affected), water supply can be increased by providing better transportation facilities. In Gurband, 10 to 20 km south of Zahedan, the wells are still abundant with water and the trucks are needed for its transportation. Ten tractors (x 8 mt) in Zahedan and ten trucks (x 21 mt) in Zabul will allow water distribution of 480 and 630 mt a day, benefiting more than 100,000 people. Trucks purchased for Zabul which is in the worst situation will also be shared with Zahedan if needed.

With the participation of the community, solid waste disposals will be built outside the settlements. Distribution of basic hygiene and household items and dissemination of preventive health care and hygiene promotion by qualified nurses and community workers from the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran will also help improve the health conditions and avoid any major health risks.

Anticipated Later Needs •

After responding to immediate needs, further assessments will be needed in the field of health and nutrition (possibly in October). The following diseases were reported to the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran by the Department of Health in Zahedan: tuberculosis, typhoid, malaria, polio (children), hepatitis, aids. No statistical data are available, but the UNHCR office has reported no serious epidemics this far. As a water shortage can only increase health risks, a health survey will be organised after the immediate emergency is over.

Even with rains due next winter, there will not be enough water to fill the dried wells and restore environmental conditions, livestock and drinking water supplies. If rains are insufficient again, demand for water will be even higher next summer. A review of the water situation will be made after 6 months.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Objectives •

The main Red Cross/Red Crescent objectives are:

- To increase water supply to Zahedan and Zabul camps, and, whenever possible and needed, cities and surrounding areas;
- To carry out a community based sanitation campaigns in the Afghan refugee camps; and
- To establish a community based preventive health care scheme and promote hygiene.

National Society/Federation Plan of Action

Phase One: August - September 2000 •

This phase will include the implementation of the water supply and sanitation project i.e. procurement of tractors and trucks. Prices of these vehicles in Iran are very favourable (USD 8,000 for a tractor), and it is more advisable to buy them than lease them. Furthermore, they can remain with the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran, thus enhancing capacity for future actions. It will also include recruitment of a Wat/San or Public Health delegate, 2 drivers, 4 field staff for solid waste disposal and preventive health care scheme, 4 nurses and 20 volunteer community workers. Water will be chlorinated and delivered to camps and towns.

Phase Two: September 2000 •

While water program continues as stated in phase 1, a second phase will include building of solid waste disposals outside the 2 camps in Zahedan, with the participation of refugees as well as preventive health care and hygiene promotion, specially targeting women.

Capacity of the National Society •

The Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran has proved strong capacities in disaster response. However, the National Society is seeking the Federation assistance due to the extent of the needs. The National Society has the capacity to implement this project and will provide skilled staff including co-ordinators, field staff, preventive health care nurse, guards and truck drivers.

Present Capacity of the Federation in Iran •

A delegate to assist in the co-ordination of this project will be sent out immediately. The Federation Representation office is to re-open in Iran in September 2000.

Evaluation •

An evaluation of the project will be carried out by the National Society Co-ordinator and the Federation Delegate in 6 months. The findings will allow to state if a Delegate is needed on permanent basis for the second 6 month period or a visiting Delegate is sufficient. After 12 months, the project will be evaluated again. Based on the evaluation, a decision on the continuation or cancellation of the project will be made.

Budget summary

See Annex 1 for details.

Jean Ayoub
Acting USG - DROC a.i.

Didier J. Cherpitel
Secretary General

This and other reports on Federation operations are available on the Federation's website: <http://www.ifrc.org>