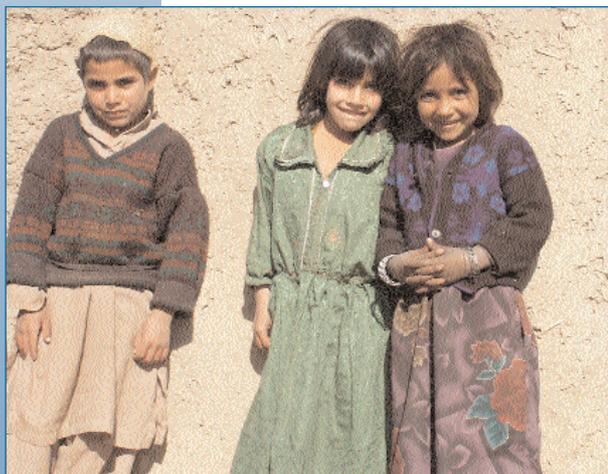


# IOM in Herat, Western Afghanistan

## Facts & Figures

5 February 2002



IOM will shortly go ahead with a massive exercise to re-register up to 350,000 displaced persons in camps near Herat. The re-registration will be supported by UNHCR, as well as other UN agencies and NGOs. The process, which will involve 1,060 staff and will take up to nine days, is needed to ensure that aid is directed to people most in need, particularly in the giant Maslakh camp.

Up to now, aid agencies have only been able to guess the number of IDPs in Maslakh. Abuse of the camp registration system under the Taliban regime, which resulted in multiple registrations and registration of some non-IDPs and local people, put the official camp population at 324,000. But an IOM count of tents and mud shelters in the camp in December

showed some 23,500 dwellings. Assuming that about six people live in each tent or shelter, this would mean a population of about 141,000 – less than half the official number.

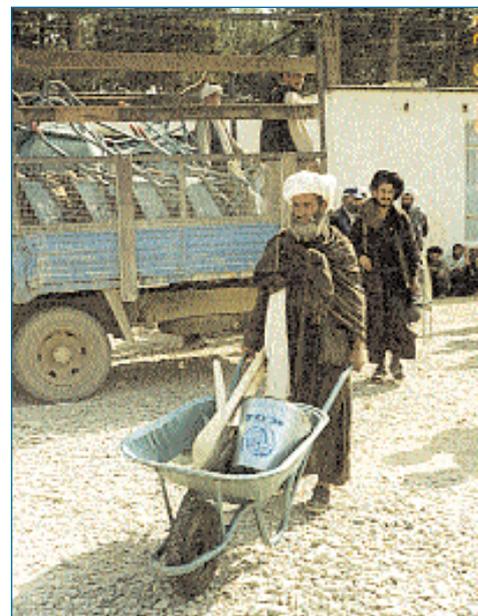
Up to now relief agencies including IOM, the WFP and UNICEF have delivered food, tents, blankets, clothing, stoves and other items to Maslakh's desperately poor population on the basis of the official figure of 324,000 to exclude nobody. But fears are growing that some of the aid could either be going astray, or making Maslakh a magnet for impoverished villagers and nomads elsewhere in region. Most IDPs in the Herat camps come from rural areas of drought-stricken Ghor, Badghis and Faryab provinces.

As the coordinating agency for humanitarian aid to displaced people in Western Afghanistan, IOM has also become increasingly concerned with the logistical problems associated with managing and providing services to a camp that is already one of the largest in the world and is still growing.

Registration of newly arrived displaced families now takes place at four IOM checkpoints located on roads leading to Herat to ensure that only genuine IDPs are registered. In the week 19-27 January, 399 families or 1,676 people were registered at the check points.

But some families apparently already living in the camp and requesting assistance are unregistered and therefore currently unable to participate in distributions of food and non-food items (although they can access other food, water and health services). Among these are a number of genuine IDPs who arrived in the camp during one of the periods when registration was suspended for security or other reasons. Registration, which previously took place in the camp, was stopped several times following shooting incidents and when IOM staff were mobbed by non-IDPs demanding registration.

The re-registration, the date of which will not be pre-announced, will resolve this problem, if there is no prior influx of people into the camp. On the day of the registration, the camp will be sealed and anyone present will be given a non-removable plastic bracelet. Subsequently



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anyone with a bracelet will be registered and his or her bracelet will be cut and exchanged for a numbered ration and distribution booklet.

When the re-registration is complete, Maslakh will be closed to new arrivals and newcomers will be directed to a new tent camp – possibly at Mir Daud – some 20 kilometres south of Herat on the road to Kandahar. The other four IDP camps in Herat – Shaidayee, Minarets, Transit Centre (CTC) and Ruwzabaq – which house a total of about 35,000 people, are already closed to new arrivals.

The re-registration will also provide important data on the IDPs and their places of origin. Many are expected to start returning to their villages for the planting season as early as next month and IOM is already working with other agencies to prepare the transport, seeds and tools that they will need to restart their lives.

The influx of aid to Maslakh since October 2001 has dramatically improved living conditions for most of the IDPs, despite the camp's bleak setting in the desert some 20 kilometres west of Herat on the road to the Iranian border. Distributions of food and non-food items by the international community have provided people with the basic resources that they need to survive Herat's harsh winter.

Maslakh was originally set up by the ICRC in the winter of 2000. IOM has coordinated the work of relief agencies in the camp since July 2001. International staff were evacuated after 11 September, but local staff continued to work in the camp throughout the Taliban period and the coalition bombing.



Most basic needs of the existing camp population are currently being met. IOM shelter programmes in the camp have included provision of five million mud bricks, construction of 1,000 mud brick shelters and the re-roofing and renovation of another 7,600 shelters. Other agencies contributing to shelter for the IDPs include the NGOs Shelter for Life (3,000 shelters completed, 1,000 under construction), Ockenden International (1,000 shelters funded by ECHO) and HAFO (1,000 shelters funded by UNOCHA).

Since mid-October, IOM road convoys from Mashhad in Iran carrying non-food items for the Herat camps have delivered 6,600 tents, 137,500 blankets, 41,000 jerry cans, 6,400 plastic tarpaulins, nearly 13,000 kerosene lamps and thousands of items of winter clothing.

Other agencies have also donated large quantities of non-food items and services. UNICEF donations to Maslakh have included tents, blankets, sweaters, rubber boots, jerry cans, mattresses and stoves. UNHCR and ICRC have donated tents. Among NGOs, World Vision has provided tents and items of winter clothing and personal hygiene kits. German Agro Action has donated tents, plastic tarpaulins and kitchen sets.

The UN World Food Programme delivers 90 MT of food to the camp every day. This translates into a 50-kilo bag of wheat per registered family of five per month. WFP also provides porridge served to all children and pregnant and lactating women from 17 kitchens run by the NGO HRS. Porridge is distributed regardless of registration.

Health services in the camp comprise six clinics run by the NGOs Médecins du Monde (3), HRS (1), CHA (1), IbniSina (1). The NGO Médecins Sans Frontières screens new arrivals and operates two supplementary and two therapeutic feeding centres. Deaths in the camp, based on IOM daily monitoring of the cemetery, are currently running at between 25-30 people a week. According to the UN, this mortality rate could be described as “average” in any developing country.

Water and sanitation in Maslakh is coordinated by UNICEF, supported by IOM, WHO, and UNCHS (Habitat); international NGOs IRC, DAACAR, Shelter For Life and Ockenden International; and local NGOs HAFO, HRS and RRD. There are currently 237 water points, 2,410 latrines, 167 solid waste bins and 750 bath-houses in the camp.



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