

# IOM in Northern Afghanistan

## Facts & Figures

1 March 2002



IOM programmes in northern Afghanistan are co-ordinated by the office in Mazar-e-Sharif. Sub-offices in Ankhoi, Baglan, Jawzjan, Faizabad, Kunduz, Maimana, Sari Pul, Samangan, and Taloqan continue providing emergency winter items for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and vulnerable populations, and are all part of the IOM internal transportation network assisting IDPs to return home in the north of the country. Offices in Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan also support IOM operations in northern Afghanistan.

IOM offices in the North are also in charge of managing camps for the internally displaced, registering IDPs for return to their villages, and the coordination of reintegration and community development projects.

IOM began its assistance programmes for displaced populations in northern Afghanistan in June 2001. The work continued after the events of September 11, in spite of the evacuation of international humanitarian staff, throughout the bombing, and under Interim Government. IOM is the focal point for IDPs in Kunduz and Faryab provinces and chairs the IDP Return Taskforce for the Northern Region.

**Camps for the Internally Displaced** – In early February, IOM and the NGO IRC designed a plan that would close all 19 IDP camps in the Mazar area, resettle real IDPs into one transit centre until they are able to return to their villages, and provide the urban poor with food assistance close to their homes.

To date, a total of 16 camps have closed, with some 250,000 of the urban poor back in their homes and receiving assistance.

Vulnerable families from urban areas had set up makeshift shelters in the IDP camps hoping to receive humanitarian assistance. Since September 11 when international organizations stopped providing food to the urban poor, their only safety net collapsed.

It was estimated that of the 45,000 IDP families who were living in the 19 camps in the Mazar area, only 15,000 families were internally displaced.

News of a distribution of relief items in the IDP camps not only causes a pull factor of the urban poor, but also creates unruly mobs.

To put the new plan into action IOM and IRC met with the local authorities. The two urged the authorities to close Baba Yadgar Camp, from where IOM recently assisted 130 families to return home. At that time, there were three tents remaining. In one week, 20 new tents had sprung up.

IRC deputy field coordinator in northern Afghanistan, Ahmed Idrees Rahmani told IOM, "I am from this country and I know the culture. Because there is no international organization in charge of any of these camps, we can provide assistance, but once we leave others may come and take things away from the people. This is why we want to set up a transit camp for real IDPs. In this camp we will have international organizations working together and supervising camp life on a daily basis."



IOM

17 route des Morillons  
CP 71, 1211 Geneva 19  
Switzerland

Tel: + 41 22 717 9111  
Fax: + 41 22 798 6150  
hq@iom.int



IOM International Organization for Migration

The head of IOM's office in Mazar, Jeff Labovitz, is also optimistic. "I know it's a big undertaking, but we have to start somewhere. We have to assist the urban poor in their homes so that we can provide assistance to the IDPs in the camps and register them for the eventual return home."

IRC and IOM each distributed 1,000 MT of wheat to the urban poor close to their homes and WFP distributed food to 48,000 families of the urban poor. After these distributions, regular food distribution and bakery programmes will be put in place.

**IOM Helps the Internally Displaced to Return Home** – Since late January IOM has assisted over 949 families (4,571 persons) to return home. Thousands of others are registering with IOM, IRC, and the NGO People in Need Foundation to return to their villages.

Before providing return assistance to any displaced family in the North of the country, IOM and the NGOs People in Need Foundation and IRC carry out assessment missions to the areas of return. The assessment includes availability of water, food, security, and the assurance that the elders and residents will receive the returnees. The ICRC is active in many of the return areas working on water and sanitation, clinics, schools and other basic infrastructure.

The IOM offices in Fayzabad and Taloqan are preparing for the return of IDPs to the Kabul area as soon as conditions are propitious. At the same time, IOM Mazar is preparing the return of 500 families to Dara I Souf. Within the next two weeks IOM plans to assist over 750 families to return home from Mazar.



Work has also begun on a series of IOM transit centres across Afghanistan to accommodate displaced people and refugees returning to their towns and villages. The first IOM centre, located in Qale-Naw, was inaugurated on 28 February housing a group of 77 families returning home to villages in Badghis province.

A one-time food assistance package containing 150 kilos of wheat per family and 100 kilos of seeds is distributed with the family package to help them get through until their first harvest. UNHCR and UNICEF are providing non-food items for the return packages.

Once back in their villages, farmers will receive an IOM-donated set of agricultural tools through NGOs. The UN's Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) will also provide returning

families with agricultural kits. Those returning to former conflict areas will receive a reconstruction kit to help them rebuild their houses.

To prepare for the upcoming returns, IOM is putting together 25,000 family kits that include: boots, jackets, blankets, a cooking set, one kerosene lamp, bath soap and laundry soap.

IOM has established an internal transportation network covering the North of Afghanistan. IOM has purchased 100 trucks and will complement these with a fleet of locally rented trucks.

**Nutrition & Health** – IOM staff are distributing BP5 high-energy biscuits in the feeding centre located in Baghe Sherkat camp. As of 20 February, over 500 malnourished children are receiving four biscuits daily. The NGO Merlin International is carrying out a weekly follow-up with the children in the supplementary feeding centre in the camp.

In Kunduz, IOM is working with the authorities, WHO, NGOs, and the Afghan Red Cross to establish 13 distribution points for the BP5 biscuits within Kunduz province, including Amirabad camp.

IOM will distribute 70MT of sugar in camps in Kunduz, Imam Sahib and Ali Abad districts and in Kunduz town and to IDP families living in Acha and Charbaghly camps in Faryab province.



Visit the IOM Web site [www.iom.int](http://www.iom.int)