

# IOM in Herat, Western Afghanistan

## Facts & Figures

22 April 2002



**Returns** – The IOM office in Herat is helping internally displaced persons (IDPs) to return home from camps on a daily basis. At the same time IOM staff have been deployed to the border to assist Afghan refugees returning from Iran.

Currently, the IOM Office in Herat is assisting between 4,000 and 5,000 IDPs and returnees per day to return home from camps and from the Islam Qala border crossing. IOM Herat is currently employing 285 local staff and using a fleet of some 700 hired vehicles.

IOM Western Afghanistan Chief Rafael Robillard describes the complexities of the ongoing operation. “Managing these two large migration programmes simultaneously remains a challenge. With the number of persons assisted on a daily basis, between four to five thousand,

we’ve had to hire some 700 trucks to make sure people can return safely to their homes before the planting season ends.”

The returnees are provided with overnight accommodation in transit centres. These centres provide shelter, security, water and food for the returnees. Travel to some of the most distant locations can take up to five days.

Returns are currently taking place from Maslakh, Shaidayee and Rawzabagh IDP camps and from the former Central PolyClinic in the centre of Herat.

As of 21 April, IOM Herat has assisted 29,655 persons (8,210 families) to return to their home districts of Ab Kamari, Moqor, Qadis, Qale Naw, Dara-e-Boom, Morghab, Ghormach, Jawand, Gulran, Kushk, Kusan, Karukh, Obe and Kabul.

An additional 20,000 IDPs in Maslakh have registered with IOM to return home, providing they were given agricultural tools and seeds to cultivate their land.

Returning families receive a reintegration package including 100 kilos of wheat, 50 kilos of seeds, 40 kilos of fertilizer and 30 high-energy biscuits.

When they arrive home, farmers receive an IOM-donated set of agricultural tools through the NGO Norwegian Project Office (NPO). NPO will continue to monitor conditions in the villages and channel international aid to vulnerable groups.

**On 9 April IOM started assisting Afghan refugees returning from Iran under a joint IOM-UNHCR programme** – IOM has deployed dozens of staff and trucks to the Iran/Afghan border crossing of Islam Qala. IOM is working with UNHCR and other partners to provide transportation to some 400,000 persons expected to return this year from Iran.

The returns take place six days per week at an average rate of some 1,600 persons per day. As of 21 April, IOM had assisted 10,231 refugees at the Iranian-Afghan border to return to their home provinces.



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IOM International Organization for Migration

Naik Mohammad, the IOM Operations Manager at Islam Qala says the number of refugees returning from Iran is on the increase. "On the second day of the operation 407 refugees returned from the Iranian towns of Mashhad, Kerman and Zahedan, compared to 222 refugees who crossed the Islam Qala border on the first day. Today, on average, 1,600 people return daily from Iran."



IOM has deployed four doctors, nurses and mid-wives and several ambulances for returnees in need of special medical assistance. IOM doctors and nurses also determine if they are fit for the onward travel.

Once this process is completed and their luggage identified, returnees board IOM trucks for the rest of the journey inside Afghanistan. Those persons not returning to Herat City spend one night at the IOM-run Gazarga Transit Centre before continuing their journey home. IOM buses and trucks transport the returnees to provincial capitals from where they arrange their own transportation home.

All returnees receive a non-food reintegration package and US\$10 from UNCHR to pay for the last

leg of their journey from provincial capitals to their villages. Returnees also receive 150 kilos of wheat from the World Food Programme (WFP).

Each family receives an identification card, which is used to facilitate the reintegration process and provide access to school and other public services.

Of the total planning figure for 2002, IOM expects that some 300,000 returnees will pass through the Islam Qala border crossing. Fifty-two per cent of the returnees will be returning to Herat City and 18 per cent to Kabul, the remainder to Ghazni, Kunduz, Logar and Wardak provinces.

Relief agencies including IOM, WFP and UNICEF continue to deliver food, and if need be, tents, blankets, clothing, stoves and other items to the estimated 87,000 IDPS still living in Maslakh Camp. IOM shelter programmes in the camp have included provision of 5 million mud bricks, construction of 1,000 mud brick shelters and the re-roofing and renovation of another 7,600 shelters. Other agencies that have contributed shelter for the IDPs include the NGOs Shelter for Life, Ockenden International and HAFO.

Since mid-October 2001, IOM road convoys from Mashhad in Iran carrying non-food items for the Herat camps have delivered some 7,000 tents, 138,000 blankets, 41,000 jerrycans, 6,500 plastic tarpaulins, nearly 13,000 kerosene lamps and tens of 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, jerrycans, 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. WFP delivers food to the camp every day. It also provides porridge to all children and pregnant and lactating women from 17 kitchens run by the NGO HRS.

After international staff were evacuated following the September 11 terrorist attacks, local staff continued providing assistance to the IDPs.

By mid-February, IOM, supported by UNHCR, other UN agencies and NGOs, completed a major re-registration of internally displaced Afghans living in Maslakh camp. The re-registration began on 12 February when some 400 staff, deployed at 36 registration centres throughout the camp fixed non-removable plastic wristbands on over 118,000 people in the course of the day. The ICRC originally set up Maslakh in the winter of 2000. IOM has coordinated the work of relief agencies in the camp since July 2001.



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