



United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)  
OCM Afghanistan, P.O. Box 3232, Kabul, Afghanistan

**Free of Charge**

**1 December 2004**  
**Issue: 69**

# RETURN

Information Update

**ADVICE FOR CIRCULATION:** This update is intended for Afghans both abroad and displaced inside their country to help them make an informed choice about returning to their homes. It is a public document and should be circulated as widely as possible.

## Announcements to Returnees

**Customs:** Returnees' personal belongings are exempt from all customs duties. However, please remember that returnees can neither take items in commercial amounts nor export or import items proscribed by the relevant authorities. Returnees should also advise those assisting them with transport (lorry drivers) not to carry business goods on returnee trucks in order to avoid delay at the border and undesired consequences at customs. Returnees are also advised to ensure the truck is empty when they begin loading their belongings.

**Land Issues:** UNHCR has learned about the existence of fraudulent schemes to extract money from refugees in return for a promise to get them government land for housing. UNHCR is aware of no legitimate government programme to distribute land and refugees are advised to certify the legality of all land transfers with representatives of the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation in Pakistan or Iran or with UNHCR offices. UNHCR will not provide shelter assistance to refugees who acquire land under fraudulent schemes.

**Legal Aid:** Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) offers free legal and information assistance to returning refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) through its Legal Aid Centres (ILACs) in Afghanistan. ILAC officers provide basic information at regional encashment centres as well as lawyers and more formal legal services at ILAC offices throughout the country. In addition, ILACs assist people to familiarize themselves upon return with options for healthcare, schools, humanitarian aid other essential services.

**Religion:** In response to queries received from prospective returnees, UNHCR reminds people that Afghanistan is a Muslim country and that the Constitution states, "The religion of Afghanistan is the sacred religion of Islam. In Afghanistan, no law can be contrary to the sacred religion of Islam and the values of this Constitution." The Constitution also holds, "followers of other religions are free to perform their religious ceremonies within the limits of the provisions of law."

**Students and Teachers:** All refugee students who want to be admitted to schools must have their school certificates stamped by Afghan embassies or consulates and by a representative of the Afghanistan Ministry of Education while still in their countries of asylum. According to a directive issued by the Afghanistan Foreign Ministry, Afghan diplomatic missions in the region should NOT charge fees for validation and stamping of academic certificates for returning students. Those teachers or graduates who want to work as teachers in Afghanistan similarly should have their documents stamped by Afghan embassies or consulates and a representative of Afghanistan Ministry of Education while still in their countries of asylum.

**Travel Safety:** Returnees are advised NOT to travel during the night. Also, while in route they should find shelter in major settlements. Several robberies have been reported recently on the road between Herat and Kandahar, and returnees have complained of security threats on the way from Herat to Kandahar in the areas of Greshk and Shindand and on the way from the Pakistan border to Jalalabad in the area of Torkham.

**VRF Forms:** Returnees should make sure their Voluntary Repatriation Forms (VRFs) are correctly filled out while still in their countries of asylum as they will not be issued or altered in Afghanistan.

## Regional News

### **Central Region:**

#### **Afghan Ministry of Commerce Launches International Trade Exhibition**

The Ministry of Commerce launched a four-day international trade exhibition on November 21 in Kabul. 400 companies from 12 countries including Germany, Turkey, Japan and Iran, exhibited various kinds of commodities.

Currently 55% of investment in Afghanistan comes from the private sector, the majority of which is from outside the country. According to ministry officials, the goal of the seminar was to continue to encourage foreign investment and with it commercial development in the country.

*Source: Ministry of Commerce.*

### **Northern Region:**

#### **Afghan-Europe Company Building 1,200 Concrete Houses in Mazar-i-Sharif City**

Under the support of the World Bank, on 27 November the Afghan-Europe Company began construction of a project called Hazrat-e-Omar Farough in the northern part of Mazar-i-Sharif City, Balkh province. 1,200 houses will be built along with an 800-bed hospital, a health clinic, a school, a kindergarten and a park. According to the head of the company, Mohammad Akbar Noori, the project should be finished within a year.

Afghan-Europe will provide families with 450 sq m plots and each can choose one of four types of house designs ranging in value from US\$13,500 to US\$19,000. Residents are required to pay 50% of costs up front with the remainder to be handled through short- and long-term, fixed loans at 20% for government employees, returnees and families of war victims.

*Source: Afghan-Europe Company.*

### **Southern Region:**

#### **Department of Rural Rehabilitation and Development Completes 116 Wells**

On 22 November, the Department of Rural Rehabilitation (DRRD) in Kandahar announced the completion of 116 wells in the districts of Zhari and Spin Boldak. The total cost of the project, which took six months to complete, is US\$172,000. According to the DRRD, 2,950 families will now have access to clean drinking water.

#### **BBC Starts Five-Day Course in Journalism**

On 21 November, the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) launched a five-day journalism course held at the Aina office in Kandahar. The goal was to enhance the capacity of local journalists prior to parliamentary elections. Of the 14 participants in the course, five are from Helmand and Nimroz provinces.

*Source: Tolo-e-Afghan.*

### **South Eastern Region:**

#### **USAID/IRC Start Midwife Training in Paktia Province**

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) began implementing a United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded midwife training program in Gardez Civil Hospital in mid-November. 22 women will be trained for a period of 18 months. Participants come from various districts of Paktia and were selected by the Department of Public Health (DoPH).

#### **USAID Funds Construction of Health Centers in Paktia Province**

On 7 November, the Country Development Unit (CDU), a national NGO with financial support from USAID, handed over ten of 11 health clinics to the DoPH, Paktia province.

*Sources: IRC and CDU representatives.*

## **Eastern Region:**

### **USAID Funds Canal Cleaning Project**

On 1 November, the Qinaat Construction Campaign (QCC), with a budget of US\$108,440 provided by USAID, completed cleaning the Haji Baba Canal in Kama district, Nangarhar province. According to the Nangarhar Department of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (DRRD), this eight-km canal will provide irrigation water to roughly 2,400 ha of agriculture land.

### **Japan Funds Construction of School**

Mashriq Rehabilitation and Development Agency (MRDA) started a Japanese-funded school construction project estimated at US\$87,000 in Gardi Kas village of Nangarhar province, on 11 November. According to the MRDA, the school, which will be completed in six months, will have ten, fully-equipped classrooms.

### **BRAC Commences Construction of Pipe Scheme**

On 5 November, the Bangladesh Rehabilitation and Advancement Committee (BRAC) began construction on a roughly US\$25,000 pipe scheme in Akhunzadgan village in Nangarhar province. The project is being implemented under the National Solidarity Program (NSP) and will be completed in two months. A total of 163 families will be provided with safe drinking water upon the completion of the project.

*Sources: MRRD Nangarhar and Nangarhar newspaper.*

## **Western Region:**

### **DRRD Constructs School Buildings in Herat**

On 18 November, the Herat DRRD laid the foundation for a six-classroom school building in Maliki village of Zindajan district. The project is funded jointly by the local community and the NSP and is being implemented by United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat). Out of a budget totalling US\$39,556, US\$3,771 was contributed by the community.

### **DRRD Digs Wells in Herat**

On 15 November, the Herat DRRD began digging eight wells in Urdan village of Enjil district. Each will be equipped with hand pumps. UN-Habitat donated US\$6,515 to the effort under the NSP and the local community contributed US\$651. 3,539 persons will benefit from the project.

### **Entrance Exam for Night Faculties Accomplished**

On 22 November, Herat University held the entrance examination for its new night faculties programme targeted at graduates of Grade 12 who cannot pursue higher education due to daytime jobs. 536 students including 24 girls attended the entrance exam. The six faculties to be opened include the Faculties of Economics, Law, Literature, Agriculture, Islamic Studies and Art.

*Source: Tolo-e-Afghan.*

### **Update on Police Training**

**Kabul Police Academy:** After the establishment of the Afghan Interim Administration, the partially functioning Kabul Police Academy was rehabilitated with funding from the German Federal Government under the Stability Pact for Afghanistan. While renovations continue, currently 1,247 trainee police officers are studying at the academy and a total of 2,067 have graduated since 2002.

Each year the Academy, which at present is run under the German Police Project and has both local and international instructors, invites both male and female trainees from around the country to join the five-year program that includes three years of coursework and two years of practical studies. Registration for the next academic year, which begins mid-February 2005, will begin in January.

Interested returnees with proof of graduation from Grade 12 are welcome to apply. Applicants who are accepted will be provided food and accommodation, winter and summer uniforms as well as toiletries, and access to medical and laundry facilities. Each student also receives US\$68 as a monthly salary.

For more information, please contact the Kabul Police Academy located west of Kabul beside the Kabul Polytechnic Institute, phone number: 0093 2200156.

*Sources: Kabul Police Academy.*

**The Transition Integration Program:** The Transition Integration Program (TIP) supported by US government began in April 2003. It is a national project implemented in regions throughout Afghanistan that provides police officers who have already been employed by the police force training in law, human rights and police tactics.

Under the TIP, officers attend a two-week training course, literate soldiers attend a two-month training course and illiterate soldiers attend a one-month training course. The program aspires to send 20,000 police officers through this program.

For more information, please contact the Police Training Center, Police Department No. 9, Customs Street, Kabul, phone number: 0093 2301666.

## Radio Programmes

**UNHCR/BBC Radio Programme:** There is a joint-BBC/UNHCR radio programme specifically aimed at Afghan refugees, IDPs and returnees. The programme focuses on the situation in Afghanistan, including security, development activities of the Afghan government, United Nations and other aid agencies and the challenges that Afghans, especially returnees, face.

The programme is part of UNHCR's efforts to provide an accurate account of the situation in Afghanistan to those wishing to return home and to offer a forum for a wider debate on all aspects of repatriation and reintegration. Broadcasts are from Saturday to Thursday (six days a week) on shortwave frequencies 13605 kHz and 9795 kHz, and on FM frequency of 89 MHz in Kabul.

Language	Days	GMT	Afghanistan Time
Pashto 1 <sup>st</sup> edition	Saturday to Monday	0916	1346
Pashto 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition	Tuesday to Thursday	1603	2033
Dari 1 <sup>st</sup> edition	Saturday to Monday	1616	2046
Dari 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition	Tuesday to Thursday	0846	1316

The programme has a section for listeners' letters. For comments and questions, please write to any of the following addresses and BBC will include them in the programme as time permits:

Afghanistan: BBC, Post Box No. 1, Central Post Office, Kabul, Afghanistan  
 Pakistan: BBC, Post Box 255, University Town, Peshawar, Pakistan  
 Iran: UNHCR (BBC) – P.O. Box No. 91775 – 1876, Mashad, Iran

BBC FM transmitters in different provinces of Afghanistan are as follows:

City	Kabul	Mazar	Jalalabad	Bamyan	Kunduz	Faizabad	Pul-i-Khumri	Herat
FM Trans. MHz	89.0	89.0	89.0	89.0	88.1	88.4	99.6	89.2
City	Gardez		Kandahar	Jabulsaraj	Shibirgha n	Maimana	Khost	Taloqan
FM Trans. MHz	87.9		88.0	89.1	91.0	92.1	90.1	88.3

**UNHCR/ERTV Radio Programme:** UNHCR also runs a joint radio programme with Afghanistan Radio and TV called "Coming Home," which is also part of UNHCR's efforts to provide information to refugees. The programme is broadcast on Sundays and Fridays (two days a week) at 2100 hrs for 30 minutes in Dari and Pashto languages.

### Market Prices of Essential Commodities

Cities	Wheat (kg)		W/Flour (kg)		Bread (kg)		Diesel/Litre	
	AFS	US\$	AFS	US\$	AFS	US\$	AFS	US\$
Kabul	11.0	0.24	13.4	0.30	16.0	0.35	23.0	0.51
Kandahar	10.8	0.24	11.9	0.26	12.0	0.26	21.0	0.46
Jalalabad	11.0	0.24	11.7	0.25	17.6	0.38	23.7	0.51
Herat	9.5	0.20	12.5	0.27	15.0	0.32	20.0	0.43
Mazar	8.0	0.17	10.0	0.22	15.0	0.32	21.0	0.45
Faizabad	10.7	0.23	15.0	0.33	33.3	0.72	27.0	0.59
Bamyan	10.0	0.22	13.2	0.29	17.9	0.39	25.5	0.56
Maimana	10.0	0.22	12.0	0.26	20.0	0.44	23.0	0.50
	One-Year-Old Live Sheep		Casual Labour/day		Exchange Rate		Wheat Per One Day Labour	
Cities	AFS	US\$	AFS	US\$	AFS	US\$	Kg	
Kabul	3,850	84.80	145.0	3.19	45.4	1	13.2	
Kandahar	3,800	83.89	145.0	3.20	45.3	1	13.5	
Jalalabad	3,933	86	123.3	2.68	45.0	1	11.2	
Herat	3,500	75.51	142	3.06	45.4	1	14.9	
Mazar	3,300	70.97	140	3.01	46.5	1	17.5	
Faizabad	3,900	84.78	200	4.35	45.0	1	18.7	
Bamyan	3,270	72.03	124	2.72	45.4	1	12.4	
Maimana	3,200	70.02	190	4.16	45.7	1	19.0	

*Source: World Food Programme (WFP), Third Week of November 2004*

*For more information, please contact:*

*Andy Barash at (0093) 70 279 230, e-mail: [barash@unhcr.org](mailto:barash@unhcr.org)*

*or Babrak Noorzad at (0093) 70 280 568, e-mail: [noorzad@unhcr.org](mailto:noorzad@unhcr.org)*