Contents

Background .............................................................................................................................. 1

Geographical Spread .............................................................................................................. 2

WFP's Interim Strategic Plan (I-CSP) ..................................................................................... 3

Partnerships ............................................................................................................................ 6

Funding and contributions ....................................................................................................... 8

2020 Nobel Peace Prize .......................................................................................................... 10
Background

The World Food Programme, the leading humanitarian organization fighting hunger worldwide, and the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, reopened offices in Iran in 1987. Since then, the organization has played a crucial role in supporting Afghan and Iraqi refugees residing in the country.

Iran currently hosts one of the world's largest and most protracted refugee situations in the world. The initial wave of Afghan asylum seekers arrived following the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 with a second major influx occurring at the height of Taliban control over Afghanistan between 1994 to 2001. Iraqis sought refuge in Iran in the 1980s and 1990s, during the first and second gulf wars.

Since 2003, when relative peace was established in Afghanistan, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has promoted the repatriation of Afghans to their homeland as the preferred solution. Meanwhile, the Government has continuously stressed the financial burden of refugees on Iran's economy and has expressed the need for greater international assistance to reduce this strain. This has become even more pronounced since the latest influx of Afghans to Iran following the Taliban takeover in 2021.

According to the latest figures communicated by the Government in October 2020, on which consultations are ongoing, **800,000 refugees live in Iran, of whom 780,000 are Afghans and 20,000 are Iraqis.** It is estimated that 96% of refugees in Iran live in cities, towns, and villages side by side with the Iranian host community, while 4% live in 20 settlements.

The Government and United Nations are committed to supporting refugees until such time that the situation becomes conducive for the safe, dignified and voluntary return of refugees to their homeland.

The Need for WFP Assistance

Various factors have made it increasingly difficult for the most vulnerable refugees to make ends meet. The increased cost of living, and reduced job opportunities as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, have exacerbated levels of food insecurity for the most vulnerable refugees, making WFP assistance all the more crucial to the poorest of the poor who are housed in settlements.
Geographical Spread

WFP provides assistance in 20 settlements scattered across 13 provinces, spanning from northwest to central, southwest, and northeast of the country. A round trip monitoring visit to all the settlements covers more than 10,500 kilometers.

Progress so far / Achievements

For over three decades, WFP has strengthened its humanitarian response to the protracted refugee crisis in Iran, continuing to provide unconditional food assistance to the most vulnerable refugees living in settlements while successfully adjusting and expanding activities related to education and livelihoods, with a special focus on refugee women and girls.

In close consultation with national counterparts, refugee communities, and donors, in 2018, WFP shifted from its traditional way of distributing food to a predominantly cash-based distribution modality. The preferred formula for refugees in Iran was identified as - and continues to be - a combination of unconditional cash assistance through bank cards and continued wheat flour distribution. This combination offers refugees freedom of choice to buy food items and diversify their food intake while ensuring that bread is available as in the past. Since the introduction of this 'hybrid' food assistance, around one in four refugee households living in settlements have reported acceptable food consumption.

WFP has also made great strides in reducing the gender gap and empowering young girls through its flagship girls’ education incentive scheme. Through this initiative, WFP encourages families to send their girls to school in return for a cash incentive that the girls receive after each month of regular attendance, contributing to the household economy while receiving an education. Since 2020, the introduction of a nutritious school snack for refugee girls and boys and their teachers each day they attend school has added to the success. Recent data indicates that there has been a significant improvement in retention and reduction in drop-out rates among refugee school girls, compared to baseline data.

In recent years, several large-scale natural disasters have occurred, putting a strain on national response capacities. WFP has become a partner of choice for responding to emergencies that exceed national response capacity, standing ready to mobilize complementary emergency response upon the request of the Government.
WFP's Interim Country Strategic Plan (ICSP) for the Islamic Republic of Iran

Since 2018, WFP has been operating under an Interim Country Strategic Plan (ICSP). The Iran ICSP was extended in November 2020 for two years until the end of 2022 to align it with both the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (2017–2022) and with Iran's 6th National Development Plan (2016–2022). During this extended period, WFP continues to contribute toward improving the food security and livelihoods of the most vulnerable refugees in settlements while preparing a new 3-year ICSP for the years 2023-2025.

The upcoming ICSP (2023-2025) is expected to be approved by the WFP Executive Board in November 2022. It will ensure the continuation of WFP's existing interventions in Iran, emphasizing an inclusive approach that puts the most vulnerable, including refugee girls, women, and persons with disabilities at the centre of programming, while embedding strengthened emergency preparedness and response across all activities. This will allow WFP to respond rapidly to potential new arrivals from Afghanistan, sudden-onset disasters, or partner requirements for WFP services.

WFP operations align with the objectives of the regional Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR), which was agreed upon by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Governments of Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan in 2011, as well as with the Afghanistan Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) launched in 2022. WFP has been an active member of the SSAR since its inception and a key contributor to the RRP, coordinating efforts relating to the food security and logistics sectors.

Activities of the Interim Country Strategic Plan (I-CSP) 2018-2022

The current five-year country strategy with an overall budget of USD 34.6 million seeks to achieve its primary objective of ensuring that food-insecure refugees in Iran can meet their basic food and nutrition needs, through four activities:

Activity 1: Provide unconditional food assistance to food-insecure refugees

The new transfer modality covers 80 percent of the daily food needs for food insecure male-headed households and 100 percent of the needs for female-headed households by providing them with in-kind wheat flour and cash for food through ATM debit cards. By introducing cash, refugees will have purchasing power and freedom of choice of food items which in turn will boost the economy of the settlements as majority of the shops where refugees source their food are run by refugees themselves.

Activity 2: Provide conditional support, especially to refugee women and girls, to incentivize and facilitate educational and livelihood activities

In 2020, WFP introduced school feeding for all refugee students who live in settlements and attend school, through the distribution of healthy snacks to ensure that no child attends school on an empty stomach. In addition, at the end of each scholastic month, primary and junior high school level refugee girls who regularly attend school receive a monthly allowance of cash in debit cards issued in their name as an incentive to learn and build their capacity.

World Bank studies have shown that a woman's income can rise by 10 to 20 percent for each year of schooling. Furthermore, keeping refugee girls in school decreases the possibility of marrying them off at an early age. Many of the girls who completed their education have gone on to become health workers in settlements, contributing to their communities while also helping to elevate the image of women in the Afghan society.

WFP also supports a variety of livelihood activities for refugees. These activities help improve refugees' self-reliance by generating income for their families as long as they remain in Iran. At the same time, the livelihood activities help create conditions for sustainable means of income upon return to their homeland (once the situation is conducive for a safe and voluntary return). Tailoring workshops, greenhouses, welding workshops, bakeries, and fish farming are among the livelihood opportunities WFP has made available to refugee women and men.
Activity 3: Provide support to the Government on emergency preparedness and response, including emergency food assistance through cash-based or in-kind transfers to shock affected populations

Although WFP's intervention in Iran is focused mainly on assisting refugees, the organization has the operational capacity to support the Government and people of Iran in emergency response, for example in case of a major natural disaster that would strain the capacity of the Government to respond.

In 2019, Iran was lashed by torrential rains, which caused massive flooding in most of Iran's 31 provinces. In response to flash flooding in 2019 and 2020, WFP delivered mixed commodities in the form of family emergency food packages worth USD 1,500,000 to the affected people through the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS). These 30-kilogram emergency food packs catered to the food and nutritional needs of at least 143,000 persons for one month in Khuzestan, Lorestan, Sistan & Baluchestan, Ilam, Kohgilouyeh & Boyerahmad provinces.

Activity 4: Provide cash transfer and other services to Government and other partners

Based on partners' needs and requests, WFP avails on-demand services to support a more effective and efficient humanitarian response in Iran. For example, in late 2021, WFP availed its existing cash-based transfer platform to UNHCR to facilitate complementary (one-off) cash assistance to refugees living in settlements.

Supply Chain Arrangements

Cash:
Cash-based transfers require robust and well-developed financial and Information Technology infrastructure, which is available in Iran. Settlement authorities regularly update the beneficiary lists and once data is verified by WFP cash entitlements are transferred at the beginning of each month to the debit cards issued in the name of the head of households. Similarly, the cash education incentive is transferred upon receipt and verification of girls' attendance records in schools.

In-kind:
Wheat flour is procured locally from local suppliers/millers. The local purchase ensures short lead-time and quick delivery mitigating potential deterioration of food quality as a result of long transit or storage time for imported commodities.

WFP purchases wheat flour from a roster of suppliers through a competitive process. WFP-appointed superintendents conduct quality and quantity controls of the commodity before delivery to settlements to ensure the wheat flour conforms to WFP specifications and regulations of the Iranian Institute of Standards. Using WFP's end-to-end supply chain management system and the Logistics Execution Support System, wheat flour purchases are tracked from the point of loading until final distribution.
Partnerships (Implementing partners)

WFP’s implementing partner is the Ministry of Interior’s Bureau for Alien and Foreign Immigrant Affairs (BAFIA), which is responsible for all refugee-related matters in Iran. WFP also coordinates closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Iran.

WFP together with UNHCR and BAFIA conducts regular process and post-distribution monitoring visits to all settlements to ensure that refugees have access to cash and can purchase adequate quantity and quality of food to maintain their food security at an acceptable level at all times. WFP also monitors wheat flour distributions to ensure that storage, handling, and distribution of this commodity are in line with WFP guidelines.

Emergency Operations

COVID-19 response:

Iran reported its first confirmed case of COVID-19 infections on 19 February 2020. By early March, the country was in the throes of a full-fledged pandemic. The number of confirmed cases and fatalities skyrocketed, making Iran one of the hardest-hit countries in the region.

With global shortages of Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) and closed borders in Iran and many other countries worldwide, the lack of PPEs posed a major challenge for health workers fighting the pandemic on the frontlines.

Refugees were also at risk of potential exposure to COVID-19 infection. The spread of COVID-19 posed an increased risk in refugee settlements being a relatively confined community, furthermore loss of income for already vulnerable communities such as refugees could lead to the deterioration of food security and nutrition situation in settlements.

Generous donor contributions enabled WFP Iran to purchase more than 3,000,000 PPEs for Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) staff and volunteers who were part of the COVID-19 national task force fighting the pandemic on the frontlines. These contributions also helped augment WFP’s assistance package to vulnerable refugees living in settlements in Iran.

Another example is WFP’s response to the devastating Bam earthquake in 2003. WFP immediately air-lifted high energy biscuits (HEBs) from its humanitarian Response Depot in Brindisi, Italy, within 96 hours of the quake and continued to assist 120,000 people most affected by the earthquake for three months while reconstruction efforts were going on in Bam and 16 surrounding villages. During this critical period, WFP set up and managed a United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) operation between Tehran and Bam. UNHAS provided free passenger and light cargo service to the humanitarian community assisting in the earthquake-stricken area.
Funding and Contributions
Since WFP is funded entirely by voluntary donations, all contributions whether cash or in-kind must be accompanied by the cash needed to move, manage and monitor WFP food assistance, or the “full cost recovery” concept. WFP’s funding comes from Governments, the Private Sector, and individuals.

Individual Donations
WFP encourages Iranian citizens and corporations to get involved and support WFP’s efforts in building a world without hunger.
All donations—large or small—have the power to make a difference. Online payment gateways, mobile banking, SMS payment, and ATM transfers are available in Iran to facilitate individual donations to WFP.

Celebrity Partners
Throughout the years, many Iranian artists, sports figures, and influencers have pledged their support to WFP Iran speaking openly about issues related to food security and joining WFP in its global fight against hunger in many public events and campaigns for WFP Iran.
2020 Nobel Peace Prize

In October 2020, the Norwegian Nobel Committee decided to award the Nobel Peace Prize to WFP "for its efforts to combat hunger, for its contribution to bettering conditions for peace in conflict-affected areas, and for acting as a driving force in efforts to prevent the use of hunger as a weapon of war and conflict."

WFP has been working on the frontlines of emergencies for more than 50 years, bringing hope to millions caught in conflict. Many of the people we help are fleeing violence, leaving their whole lives behind.

The link between hunger and conflict is a vicious circle. Where there is conflict, there is hunger. And where there is hunger, there is often conflict.

When fighting drives large numbers of people from their homes, their land, and their jobs, they are more likely to go hungry. But sometimes food shortages can also fan the flames of social tensions and fuel injustices.

Worse still, despite its prohibition under international humanitarian law, the use of starvation as a weapon of war is still widespread.

Food security, peace, and stability go together. Without peace, we cannot end world hunger; and while there is hunger, we will never have a peaceful world.