

Europe and the Near East



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Afghanistan **Complex Emergency**

Afghanistan remained a country in crisis during FY 1999 as more than two decades of conflict continued to take its toll on the population. The extended armed hostility in Afghanistan has caused an estimated 1.5 million deaths, including 300,000 - 400,000 children, with an additional 500,000 people either injured or disabled. The U.S. Committee for Refugees has estimated that between one million and 1.5 million Afghans remain internally displaced and 2.6 million Afghan refugees remain in other countries, the largest single refugee caseload in the world for the nineteenth year in a row. Conflict between rival factions and continuing tensions between international relief organizations and the Taliban, a Muslim fundamentalist militia group which controls most of the country, continued to generate new humanitarian needs. Hostilities made it problematic for relief organizations to address humanitarian needs, especially health service activities, 97% of which were implemented by PVOs, NGOs, and U.N. agencies.

Renewed fighting in July and August 1999 forced significant numbers of people on both sides of the conflict to flee affected areas. In July, the Islamic State of Afghanistan, also known as the Northern Alliance, issued an emergency appeal for humanitarian assistance for people displaced by fighting in the Shomali Valley, north of Kabul, Afghanistan's capital city. Between August 13-16, some 20,000 people fled Shomali for Kabul, and by September 7, the total number of people who had relocated to Kabul had risen to 55,000. Of this total, some 12,400 people, including an estimated 8,000 children, sought shelter in Kabul's former Soviet compound, while most of the remainder found accommodations with relatives.

The Panjshir Valley, northeast of Kabul, also hosted a significant number of the people who had fled the fighting in the Shomali Valley. The IDP population peaked at nearly 100,000 in the Panjshir Valley but, by September 22 UNOCHA reported that 20,000 IDPs had returned to their villages or moved on to Faizabad and Kabul. WFP warned that because agricultural resources of the host population in the valley had been strained by the recent influx,

up to 50,000 people in the Panjshir Valley were in need of emergency food assistance.

On October 1, 1998, Karl Inderfurth, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, redeclared a disaster in Afghanistan for FY 1999 to respond to the humanitarian needs of the victims of renewed fighting. BHR/OFDA continued to respond to the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan by providing \$526,140 to Save the Children /United States (SC/US) for vital health care services. In addition, BHR/OFDA provided \$168,410 to ACF to purchase primary health care items for 250,000 children in Kabul. BHR/OFDA also provided \$82,000 to the local Committee for Promotion of Medical and Humanitarian Aid to Afghanistan for surgical materials, firewood, and other fuel supplies to benefit the Chak-e-Wardak Hospital in Wardak Province, southwest of Kabul. In FY 1999, BHR/FFP provided 9,210 MT of P.L. 480 Title II emergency food commodities through WFP and the Aga Khan Foundation, at a cost of nearly \$6.4 million.

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| <i>BHR/OFDA Assistance</i> | <i>\$776,550</i> |
| <i>Other USG Assistance</i> | <i>\$6,359,700</i> |
| <i>Total USG Assistanc</i> | <i>\$7,136,250</i> |

Afghanistan **Earthquake**

On February 11, 1999, an earthquake measuring 5.8 on the Richter Scale struck near the village of Shaikhabad in Wardak Province south of Kabul, Afghanistan's capital. A strong tremor preceded the earthquake and caused many villagers to leave their homes, helping to minimize the number of casualties. According to UNOCHA, 70 people were killed, 500 were injured, and 30,000 were rendered homeless. Approximately 5,800 houses were destroyed or heavily damaged. A total of 480 mosques were completely destroyed, while collapsing structures killed more than 1,000 head of cattle. Continued aftershocks from the quake also drove many people out of their homes into the winter cold. Nearly 30% of the children forced to sleep outdoors contracted pneumonia.



On February 16, Karl Inderfurth, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, declared a disaster due to the damage from the earthquake and its aftershocks. BHR/OFDA provided \$275,000 to UNOCHA to purchase plastic sheeting and tarpaulins for 16,000 victims, and \$344,300 to CARE to assist 3,000 residents affected in Wardak Province.

BHR/OFDA Assistance.....\$619,300

Albania

Refugees

At the beginning of FY 1999, Albania hosted a population of nearly 20,000 ethnic Albanian refugees from Serbia's Kosovo Province in Serbia-Montenegro. This refugee population fled the violence in Kosovo that began with clashes between Serbian security forces and the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) in February 1998 and continued to escalate into October. Throughout the fall and winter, the refugees remained with host families receiving food and non-food aid through UNHCR and its implementing relief partners.

The humanitarian situation changed dramatically with the March 24, 1999 commencement of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) air strikes against Serbia-Montenegro. In response to the air campaign, Serbian military and police units immediately began their concerted efforts to drive the majority of ethnic Albanians from the province. The result was a massive influx of refugees into the neighboring countries of Albania and Macedonia. By March 30, more than 100,000 displaced Kosovars had crossed into Albania, and by April 3, the number of ethnic Albanians arriving from Kosovo had increased to 200,000. The immediate result of the massive and rapid influx was a severe overcrowding in the mountainous northern region of Kukes.

On April 7, U.S. Ambassador Marisa Lino declared a disaster due to the refugee crisis and requested immediate USG humanitarian assistance. A USAID/DART, which BHR/OFDA had deployed to Tirana on April 2, was tasked with assessing

and reporting on the international humanitarian response; supporting the efforts of UNHCR, WFP, and NGOs; coordinating the USG's role in the relief response; and identifying continuing humanitarian needs. Representatives of BHR/FFP, BHR/OTI, and State/PRM also participated on the USAID/DART.

The remoteness of the Kukes area increased the difficulty in assisting the large numbers of refugees there. Food was a critical need, especially in the early stages of the crisis, and getting sufficient supplies to Kukes was a major logistical problem. Relief agencies faced similar problems in providing shelter, water/sanitation, and health assistance. As many as 10,000 people were reported to be sleeping outside in the open. The growth in the size of the refugee population presented significant sanitation problems. Newly arriving refugees suffered from poor health, as many had spent significant time hiding in the wooded areas of western Kosovo before completing their journey into Albania.

Another major challenge facing relief efforts in Albania was the poor condition of the country's infrastructure. Albania's only international airport lacked the capacity to support nighttime logistics operations, and roads throughout the country were poorly maintained and subject to deterioration under heavy use. In early April, NATO officials announced that NATO would provide 8,000 troops to assist in the refugee relief effort. In addition, NATO's Albania Force (AFOR) provided helicopters and other logistical support to bring relief supplies to Kukes and to move refugees from Kukes to other locations in Albania. AFOR upgraded helicopter and warehouse capacity in Kukes, and DOD's Joint Task Force-Shining Hope upgraded Albania's international airport to increase landing capacity and permit around-the-clock relief operations. DOD, WFP, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), logisticians, and air operations specialists jointly staffed a coordination unit at the airport.

The scope of the refugee crisis created a tremendous need for relief response coordination. In early April, the Government of Albania (GOA), in conjunction with the OSCE and UNHCR, formed the Emergency Management Group (EMG) within the Prime Minister of Albania's office. The EMG was



responsible for coordinating the donors, relief agencies, and other international organizations involved in the humanitarian response. To assist in this effort, BHR/OFDA seconded a consultant to work within the EMG on coordination, contingency planning, and longer-term post-crisis development of an emergency response structure. A Humanitarian Information Center (HIC) was established in Tirana as a second coordination body independent of the GOA and with a significant focus on NGO activities. BHR/OFDA supported the HIC by a vertical satellite telephone link for Internet access.

By the peak of the influx in early June, the total refugee population in Albania had exceeded 465,500. Refugees were sheltered in host family homes, collective centers, and tented camps, including DOD's Camp Hope, located in Fier Prefecture. By early June, more than 283,057 refugees were living with host families, while more than 95,542 refugees were staying in collective centers, and 86,930 refugees were residing in 48 tented camps.

As of mid-May, some 348,000 refugees had been transferred from Kukes to more southern areas of Albania. Many refugees, however, were reluctant to relocate away from the Kosovo-Albania border. They wanted to wait for missing family members or return to Kosovo if the political/military situation improved. Some were reluctant to leave personal property, including farm tractors, in the border area. In early June, CARE, GOAL, UNHCR, and NATO agreed on a plan utilizing 1,800 farm tractors to assist families to move south, providing water, food, fuel, and security along the way.

Refugees began to return spontaneously to Kosovo in significant numbers within hours after

the first NATO troops entered Kosovo on June 12. Despite pleas by U.N. and NGO personnel working with the refugees, many returned even though Kosovo was littered with landmines and booby traps left by departing Serb forces. By June 17, refugees were returning to Kosovo nearly as quickly as they had arrived in Albania, with 15,000 reportedly crossing the Albania-Kosovo border in a single 24-hour period. By the end of August, fewer than 4,000 refugees remained in Albania.

In response to critical relief needs that were identified by the USAID/DART, BHR/OFDA provided \$11.8 million in assistance to Albania, including health, shelter, nutrition, and psychosocial emergency relief activities. BHR/OFDA provided ACF with

nearly \$1.5 million to support maternal, infant, and child nutrition; provide potable water; and build latrines in Kukes, Korce, and Tirana. BHR/OFDA also provided Children's Aid Direct with \$2.5 million for essential child services, including family hygiene and kitchen kits, psychosocial services, and infant care centers. CRS received \$2 million from BHR/OFDA for food and water distribution, cooking and hygiene kits, clothing,

recreational and educational activities, and community development activities in Tirana, Kukes, Durrës, Elbasan, and Fier.

In addition, BHR/OFDA provided \$81,563 to IMC for host family assessments in Kukes, Has, Tirana, Krume, and Durrës; nearly \$1.2 million to MERLIN for emergency health activities; more than \$1.5 million to Solidarités for the distribution of baby food and hygiene packs to refugees and host families in Fier, Berat, and Vlore; and approximately \$1 million to SCF for emergency psychosocial assis-



Refugees from Kosovo line up to return from Kukes, Albania after the signing of the NATO Peace agreement (photo by Amy Tohill-Stull, BHR/OFDA).

tance for war-traumatized children. Furthermore, BHR/OFDA seconded a water/sanitation engineer to UNICEF to help coordinate activities in the sector.

BHR/OTI provided the International Organization for Migration (IOM) with a \$3 million grant for rehabilitation/reconstruction activities related to host family efforts. BHR/FFP provided \$57.1 million in P.L. 480 Title II emergency food commodities as a regional response to the Balkans, and some of these commodities were diverted to the refugees in Albania. State/PRM provided \$16.9 million in funding to relief organizations for refugee registration; emergency shelter, hygiene, and sanitation; primary health care; winterization; food and nutrition; camp management; and education. DOD provided a total of \$143.8 million in funding as a regional response to the Balkans' crisis. *(For additional information, please see the "Serbia-Montenegro - Complex Emergency" case report. Readers may also request BHR/OFDA situation reports on the Kosovo crisis)*

BHR/OFDA Assistance \$11,890,876
Other USG Assistance \$19,960,401
Total USG Assistance \$31,851,277

Greece **Earthquake**

An earthquake measuring 5.9 on the Richter Scale shook Athens and its surrounding suburbs on September 7, 1999. The tremor was felt as far away as Corinth, 100 km south of the city. Nearly 100 people were killed, more than 3,000 residents were injured, and an additional 16,000 people were rendered homeless. Damage was heaviest in a low-income, industrial neighborhood close to the epicenter of the quake. At least 750 aftershocks followed the main tremor, hundreds of which registered above 3.5 on the Richter Scale.

As the death toll rose, the Government of Greece and NGOs found their emergency humanitarian resources stretched beyond capacity to respond to all of the earthquake victims' needs. On September 9, U.S. Ambassador R. Nicholas Burns declared a

disaster in affected areas of Athens and its surrounding suburbs. BHR/OFDA responded by providing \$50,000 through the U.S. Embassy in Athens to the Greek Red Cross for the local purchase of blankets, tents, and other emergency relief commodities to be distributed to homeless victims of the earthquake.

BHR/OFDA Assistance \$50,000

Hungary **Floods**

In July 1999, heavy rains caused flash flooding in eastern Hungary for the third time in the past ten months, leaving thousands affected. Eight people died as a result of the floods, and 40,000 were affected. The Government of Hungary (GOH) estimated the damage to infrastructure to be approximately \$400 million, with thousands of buildings destroyed and 70,000 hectares of agricultural land under water. On July 19, U.S. Chargé d'Affaires Thomas B. Robertson declared a disaster due to the effects of the flooding. The GOH requested support in providing water pumps, water treatment chemicals, and shelter materials. BHR/OFDA provided \$25,000 through the U.S. Embassy in Budapest to the Foundation for Development of Democratic Rights to assist in procuring these emergency items for flood victims.

BHR/OFDA Assistance \$25,000

Macedonia **Refugees**

Macedonia hosted a refugee population of approximately 18,000 ethnic Albanians from Serbia's Kosovo Province at the beginning of FY 1999. This displaced group fled violence in Kosovo that began when clashes between Serbian security forces and the KLA erupted in February 1998 and continued to escalate into FY 1999.

After the March 24 commencement of NATO

