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Aid to Khmer and Afghan refugees

The Commission has decided to finance two schemes to help Khmer displaced persons along Thailand's frontiers and Afghan refugees in Pakistan. This aid falls within the context of appropriations to help groups of refugees, displaced persons and others who have left their countries of origin, to achieve self-sufficiency.

Khmer refugees - 1 400 000 ECU

Some 240 000 Kampuchean are at present living in camps along the border between Kampuchea and Thailand under the responsibility and supervision of the United Nations Border Relief Organization, which was set up by the WFP. They are fully dependent on the humanitarian aid supplied to them and coordinated by the UNBRO with the agreement of the Thai Government and the participation of 13 NGOs.

Since 1979 the Community has contributed over 20 million ECU towards the survival of these people, 3.3 million ECU of which in the form of food aid and emergency aid.

This new Community aid will provide the financial and technical resources required in order to enable the Khmer refugees covered by the scheme (about 218 000) and living in the camps to start achieving some self-sufficiency through the supply of water, market-gardening activities, small livestock, weaving and dress-making, vaccinations and training.

Afghan refugees - 1 705 000 ECU

The Afghan refugees have been massing on the Pakistan frontier since 1980. 2.6 million of them have been officially registered by the UNHCR. Most of them are at present living in some 106 villages, 74% in the North-West Frontier Province, 20% in Baluchistan and 4% in the Punjab. They form the largest group of refugees in the world.

Since the 1979 invasion the Community has contributed considerably towards the survival of the refugees by providing humanitarian aid through the international specialized agencies, the UNHCR, the Red Cross and the NGOs. The amount granted since 1980 totals 110 million ECU, i.e. an average of 18.3 million ECU a year.

In 1984 it also financed two self-sufficiency operations, one of which was aimed at improving health and sanitary conditions in the Baluchistan camps. The other consisted of income-generating and self-sufficiency activities in the North-West Frontier Province which enabled 30 000 refugees to produce foodstuffs (vegetables, poultry and eggs) and be given vocational training.

The current programme, which is also in the self-sufficiency context, comprises two operations:

- i. production of blankets, uniforms and school-bags for the refugees;
- ii. construction of a building in Peshawar for vocational training purposes.