

Egypt

AT A GLANCE

Main Objectives and Activities

Assist the Government of Egypt in ensuring the protection of refugees by carrying out status determination; assess the needs of vulnerable persons and provide assistance as required; identify lasting solutions for refugees through resettlement to third countries or voluntary repatriation; help local authorities and NGOs to build up the resources and expertise needed to assume greater legal and administrative responsibility for refugees; supervise UNHCR's activities in the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon and co-ordinate activities in the region; develop regional strategies for public awareness and private sector fund raising; enhance co-operation with the League of Arab States.

Impact

- Some 15,180 asylum-seekers were registered during the year. Refugee status determination was completed for roughly 8,620 persons, which reflected the enhanced capacity of the Office.
- Roughly 7,000 refugees and 137 elderly stateless persons were assisted under various sectors during the year.
- Close to 3,060 refugees were resettled, and 20 persons of concern to UNHCR were repatriated.
- Vulnerable groups, such as women, children and older refugees, received social counselling.
- Educational grants were paid for 977 refugee children (511 boys, 466 girls).
- About 4,000 refugees received health care, based on strict criteria and the availability of funds.
- Ninety-six elderly stateless persons were granted a subsistence allowance.
- Sixty refugee women received training in reproductive health.



Persons of Concern				
Main Refugee Origin/Type of Population	Total in Country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent Female	Per cent under 18
Sudan (Asylum-seekers)	8,700	-	-	-
Sudan (Refugees)	2,800	2,800	46	42
Somalia (Refugees)	2,600	2,600	51	30
Somalia (Asylum-seekers)	1,500	-	-	-
Yemen (Refugees)	680	680	49	38
Ethiopia (Asylum-seekers)	520	-	-	-

Income and Expenditure (USD)				
Annual Programme Budget				
Revised Budget	Income from Contributions ¹	Other Funds Available ²	Total Funds Available	Total Expenditure
3,758,753	0	3,318,240	3,318,240	3,318,240

¹Includes income from contributions earmarked at the country level.

²Includes allocations by UNHCR from unearmarked or broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

The above figures do not include costs at Headquarters.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

The Context

In 2000, the large influx of asylum-seekers and refugees, mainly from Sudan, was largely due to continued instability and insecurity in major countries of origin, coupled with relative easy access to the country and what was perceived as a better protection environment than in neighbouring countries. The scale of the influx led to a long interview and asylum processing period. As a result, there were some 11,180 asylum applications pending at the end of the year. The large number of asylum-seekers waiting for extended periods for an interview highlighted the need for the reception and registration of asylum-seekers to be taken over by the State authorities. However, owing to prevailing economic and political constraints at country and regional levels, the Government was not able to give priority to further develop its national asylum system. This hindered progress towards the local integration of refugees and their self-reliance. The Government nevertheless renewed its assurances that documented refugees with firm work offers could obtain a work permit.

Constraints

The main constraints were ongoing political instability in the region and the lack of funds, which prevented UNHCR from meeting all the needs of the refugees and placed the Office in a difficult position vis-à-vis the refugee community. The lack of funds considerably hampered UNHCR's efforts to hand over the asylum procedure to the Egyptian Government. In the course of the year, the Government could not make any firm commitment to meet target dates for improvements in the management of the asylum system.

Funding

UNHCR's overall budget reduction had drastic consequences. Medical assistance was restricted to urgent cases from May onwards and subsistence allowances were cut by 20 per cent as of July. Many refugee children could not go to school on account of reduced and delayed education grants (at a time when UNHCR was advocating general enrolment of refugee children). All vocational training activities were suspended in July, which left refugees as passive recipients of assistance and undermined earlier progress towards self-reliance. Many refugees were evicted from their accommodation due to non-payment of rent as a result of reduced allowances. A number of capacity-building activities and public information campaigns to raise awareness on refugee issues were postponed. The

budget cuts also affected progress in implementing UNHCR's policy priorities.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

Protection and Solutions

The most significant development was the commitment of the Egyptian authorities to assume a larger share of responsibilities within the national asylum system in the future. Two decades after Egypt's ratification of the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol, UNHCR is still requested to assume several protection activities which would normally fall under the responsibilities of the contracting State. These include reception and registration of asylum-seekers, determination of refugee status, and ensuring enjoyment by refugees of a set of rights. Progress towards transfer of these activities was achieved during the year through enhanced co-operation at various technical levels, such as exchange of data, joint follow-up on insufficiently documented asylum-seekers, and training provided to the Ministry of Interior on UNHCR's registration software. UNHCR also provided training to senior government officials on refugee law and related issues. In addition, an inter-ministerial steering committee was established, which provided a forum for the exchange of information and brainstorming on available options for refugees. Its main task is to negotiate with UNHCR on the process of gradual handover of refugee status determination to the Government.

The number of interviews undertaken by the Office rose by 47 per cent. Nevertheless, the increased number of asylum-seekers (23 per cent up on 1999) outstripped UNHCR's processing capacity. The average waiting period for (non-vulnerable) asylum-seekers increased and some of those without sufficient documentation were arrested while still awaiting their first interview. UNHCR was normally granted unhindered access to detainees, but interventions (on behalf of 229) put an unnecessary burden on the Office. UNHCR formally requested that the Egyptian authorities grant temporary residence to asylum-seekers pending a final decision on their application.

To speed up the refugee status determination process, a fast track procedure was established for vulnerable persons (women single heads of households, older applicants, former government officials and other persons at risk, unaccompanied minors, victims of torture and disabled applicants). Access to legal representatives was made possible and interpreters were trained, including female volunteer interpreters. Refugee identity cards

were issued to all registered asylum applicants. The authorities then stamped renewable residence permits on these cards, granting the right to freedom of movement. UNHCR streamlined the various aspects of protection work through the issuance of standard operating procedures, and updated eligibility guidelines for specific groups of asylum-seekers. These efforts made the decision-making process more consistent and reinforced the credibility of decisions in the eyes of the Government, NGOs and resettlement partners.

As a result of UNHCR's efforts, the Ministry of Education announced that all refugee children with approved registration cards would have access to state schools. This was seen as a first step towards the lifting of Egypt's reservation under article 22.1 of the 1951 Convention, whereby the contracting State shall accord to refugees the same treatment as is accorded to nationals with respect to elementary education.

Resettlement remained the main durable solution. UNHCR processed resettlement applications based on protection considerations and the needs of refugees. A total of 3,057 persons were resettled to third countries (23 per cent more than in 1999). Developments in the

main countries of origin (Sudan, Somalia) dampened any hopes of voluntary repatriation. UNHCR did however discuss with the Yemeni authorities the prospects for voluntary repatriation of a group of refugees from Yemen residing in Egypt and Syria.

Activities and Assistance

Community Services: Sixty refugee women participated in workshops on reproductive health, nutrition and the physical and mental health risks of female genital mutilation. A group of 74 refugees attended a first aid course on the specific needs of women.

Domestic Needs/ Household Support: Some 6,920 refugees and 96 elderly stateless persons were assisted with subsistence allowances to cover their basic living costs such as accommodation, food and household necessities. This moderate assistance to refugees had to be supplemented through the refugees' own resources (in informal sectors of the economy) and occasional assistance from some charitable organisations. A total of 177 refugees were given one-off humanitarian assistance payments and emergency grants were given to 23 needy asylum-seekers and 38 elderly stateless persons.



Regular home visits were conducted by implementing partners to ensure the welfare of elderly stateless persons. The Office covered funeral expenses for ten elderly stateless persons who died during the year. Departure allowances were granted to 3,057 refugees when they were resettled.

Education: Partial education grants (covering some of the actual costs of schooling) were provided for 977 refugee children and 29 refugee students (who were thus able to continue with their post-secondary education). Because of extremely high university fees levied on refugees, only the five previously supported students were given scholarships to enable them to complete their current studies. In addition, 131 refugees attended language courses.

Health/Nutrition: Medical assistance was provided for some 4,000 refugees; elderly stateless persons received specialist treatment. In addition, 75 per cent of the total cost of medicines for chronic diseases was reimbursed, as was 50 per cent of other pharmacy bills or specialist doctors' fees; eyeglasses were provided. The costs of medical examinations of 78 asylum-seekers (victims of torture) were covered prior to a decision by UNHCR on their refugee status.

Income Generation: 124 refugees attended vocational training courses during the first part of the year.

Legal Assistance: A travel and subsistence allowance was paid for four national UNVs interviewing asylum-seekers outside Cairo. One refugee was helped to repatriate.

Operational Support (to Agencies): UNHCR covered the administrative costs of implementing partners, including living allowances for the staff.

Transport/Logistics: UNHCR provided transportation allowances to the refugees to visit the Office for various reasons. UNHCR also provided travel assistance to 20 refugees in Egypt and 22 others in the region who repatriated voluntarily to their countries of origin.

ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Management

The Regional Office in Cairo was administered by six international (including one JPO) and 16 national staff. In addition to its regional co-ordination functions, the office in Cairo was responsible for supervising operations in Syria and Lebanon and providing support and services to the region.

Working with Others

UNHCR worked with three national NGOs. A number of churches and humanitarian organisations also worked closely with UNHCR to deliver complementary services to refugees and asylum-seekers. UNHCR regularly participated in UN inter-agency meetings and the Regional Representative led the Disaster Management Team. NGOs, embassies of traditional resettlement countries, bilateral donors, refugee communities and charitable organisations attended inter-organisation forums for refugees and displaced persons initiated by UNHCR. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Interior and State Security were UNHCR's main governmental counterparts, while UNHCR also co-operated with the Ministries of Health and Education.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

UNHCR achieved most of its overall objectives of protecting and assisting refugees in Egypt despite constraints on resources. The refugee status determination capacity of the Office was strengthened through streamlining of procedures, extensive training and recruitment of UNVs. However, there is still a need for protection staff. UNHCR harmonised protection and resettlement criteria to deal consistently with refugees and asylum-seekers in the region. The specific needs of refugee children and adolescents, older persons and other vulnerable groups were given priority in the refugee status determination procedure, needs assessment and identification of appropriate durable solutions. Awareness of gender equity and other issues affecting refugee women was promoted through training and advocacy.

A very large number of refugees were accepted for resettlement during the year. This relieved the host government of an immense burden and reduced the costs of assistance borne by UNHCR and its NGO partners. Regular regional co-ordination of technical and support services was stepped up. There was some useful dialogue between UNHCR and the Egyptian Government on refugee children being granted access, on a par with nationals, to state schools, hospitals and employment, but more discussion is needed if refugees are to become self-reliant and integrate locally. Economic and political constraints in Egypt still hamper self-reliance and local integration; thus, the majority of beneficiaries remain dependent on UNHCR's assistance despite efforts to find alternatives for them.

The cancellation or suspension of several activities had an adverse effect on local capacity-building and the search for long-term solutions for refugees, who suffered genuine

hardship through reduced subsistence allowances, reduced medical assistance and reduced education grants.

The eventual transfer of refugee status determination responsibilities to the competent authorities is expected to have an impact on UNHCR's level of assistance activities. However, UNHCR's capacity-building and monitoring role will be maintained and strengthened. UNHCR will also continue its efforts to promote durable solutions through resettlement.

Offices	
Cairo	
Partners	
NGOs	
Caritas (Egypt)	
Family Planning Association	
Saint Andrew's Church	
Other	
United Nations Development Programme	
United Nations Volunteers	

Financial Report (USD)				
Expenditure Breakdown	Current Year's Projects		Prior Years' Projects	
	notes		notes	
Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination	148,240		2,889	
Community Services	8,669		2,629	
Domestic Needs / Household Support	766,351		349,562	
Education	8,794		219,197	
Health / Nutrition	90,884		41,841	
Income Generation	7,088		854	
Legal Assistance	218		0	
Operational Support (to Agencies)	224,025		34,813	
Transport / Logistics	17,274		196	
Instalments with Implementing Partners	816,497		(619,523)	
Sub-total Operational	2,088,040		32,458	
Programme Support	1,205,600		6,091	
Sub-total Disbursements / Deliveries	3,293,640	(3)	38,549	(6)
Unliquidated Obligations	24,600	(3)	0	
Total	3,318,240	(1) (3)	38,549	

Instalments with Implementing Partners

Payments Made	1,688,389		0	
Reporting Received	871,892		619,523	
Balance	816,497		(619,523)	
Outstanding 1 January	0		630,247	
Refunded to UNHCR	0		8,158	
Currency Adjustment	0		(2,566)	
Outstanding 31 December	816,497		0	

Unliquidated Obligations

Outstanding 1 January	0		101,918	(6)
New Obligations	3,318,240	(1)	0	
Disbursements	3,293,640	(3)	38,549	(6)
Cancellations	0		44,350	(6)
Outstanding 31 December	24,600	(3)	19,019	(6)

Figures which cross reference to Accounts:

(1) Annex to Statement 1

(3) Schedule 3

(6) Schedule 6