

SPCP - Zambia

Update, October 2007

Background

In 2007 UNHCR introduced the Strengthening Protection Capacity Project in Zambia (SPCP-Z). The SPCP is being implemented on two phases covering a three-year period and is supported through a USD 3.2 million financial contribution from the Government of Denmark. The project is also being carried out with the full support and cooperation from the Government of Zambia, which has for decades been engaged in efforts to protect and assist refugees. The key objectives of the SPCP in Zambia are to address gaps in refugee protection capacity and to expand opportunities for durable solutions to all refugees.



Pupils at Meheba High School, reading in the library

Methodology

The SPCP relies on a consultative methodology, involving a range of stakeholders at each stage of the process. Accordingly, a Task Force comprising of UNHCR, the office of the Commissioner for Refugees (COR) and a representative of the Danish embassy has been set up in Lusaka to steer the SPCP-Z and ensure effective coordination and consultation between all actors. Furthermore, a gaps analysis

document highlighting major protection gaps in Zambia has been published* and will be shared with Stakeholders in preparation for a two day National Stakeholders Consultations Conference planned for the first week of November 2007. The objectives of the stakeholders' consultations are to thoroughly discuss the gaps identified and come up with concrete proposals to remedy these gaps. A multiyear plan of action would be developed following the consultations to be implemented during phase 2 of the project.

Priority activities for phase 1 (March-December 2007)

Improved legislative framework

The introduction of the SPCP in Zambia coincided with the Government plans to introduce a new refugee legislation which is more in line with international standards of refugee protection and which would replace the current 1970 Refugee Control Act.

The SPCP-Z is supporting this process. A workshop for Zambian parliamentarians was conducted under the auspices of the SPCP on the 31st of July 2007 in an effort to sensitize parliamentarians on the need for the new refugee legislation and the positive contributions refugees make to their communities. The discussions which took place during the workshop will inform the parliamentary debates on the bill, which are due to start by end of the year. UNHCR would also provide its comments and suggestions to the draft refugee bill.

In addition it is envisaged that a legal consultant would be recruited through the SPCP once the bill is enacted by parliament to provide technical support to the Zambian Government in developing implementation procedures.

The consultant would also assist the Government in harmonizing the various pieces of national legislation which directly impact refugees.

* www.unhcr.org/spcp

Improved Registration

The lack of accurate and up-to-date information on the numbers and profiles of refugees in Zambia has been identified as a major protection concern which is hampering the search for durable solutions for refugees and the identification of their protection needs.

In order to remedy this problem a comprehensive registration exercise has commenced covering urban based refugees, refugees in Meheba and Mayukwayukwa camps and spontaneously settled refugees, with a total budget of USD 250,000 allocated to the exercise.



Urban based refugees in Lusaka during the registration exercise

As of the 21st of September 3,375 urban refugees and 1,650 spontaneously settled refugees have been registered. The registration of camp based refugees is expected to start towards the end of the year or early next year depending on when the registration of spontaneously settled refugees would be completed.

Provision of Legal Aid

The lack of legal assistance to refugees in Zambia is another priority concern which the SPCCP-Z is seeking to address during the first phase of the project.

This will be primarily done through partnership between UNHCR and the Legal Resources Foundations (LRF), a local NGO which has worked extensively for many years on providing

free legal aid to refugees and Zambians who are unable to afford the costs of legal services.

Following discussions with the LRF a project proposal has been solicited and a sub-agreement is expected to be signed during the month of October following which implementation of the project would start.

The three main areas covered by the project are provision of legal assistance to asylum-seekers during the asylum process, provision of legal aid and representation to refugees and asylum-seekers in criminal and civil cases and systematic monitoring of refugees and asylum-seekers in detention.

GBV Prevention and Response

A number of trainings on GBV prevention and response will take place during phase 1 of the project. The trainings will target a wide range of stakeholders in Lusaka and in refugee camps including government, civil society, medical staff, social workers and refugees. The trainings commenced on the third week of September and are expected to last until the end of the year. In addition to trainings it is expected that projects would be developed following the national consultations to further address the prevalence of GBV.