

UNHCR DJIBOUTI National Programme: Fact Sheet



Highlights

With peace and security continuing to reign in Djibouti, in a sub-region where conflict and strife are rampant, thousands of asylum seekers and migrants flock to the country on a daily basis. Against the back drop of forced displacement and mixed migration movements from neighbouring countries, early 2008 presented UNHCR and the Government of Djibouti with new challenges, but also with new opportunities to protect, assist and find solutions for a growing number of refugees and other people displaced by conflict.

Between January and March 2008, 2,213 new arrivals from South/Central Somalia were registered by UNHCR in conjunction with the national authorities. Two profiling and registration exercises were carried out at Ali-Addeh in February and April for asylum-seekers.

In March, UNHCR established field presence with the recruitment of two national field staff. They joined the AMDA medical and APEF Community services' teams - to ensure daily presence in the refugee camp where assistance and protection activities are delivered to 7975 refugees. In addition 266 urban refugees are under the Office's care in Djibouti-ville but the latter group does not receive food and other direct assistance.

On 10 March, 12 families/19 persons departed for resettlement in Canada. Last year 1,853 persons were repatriated to Somaliland and around 1,000 will return home later this year.

| Key Facts and Figures |
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| <i>Beneficiaries as of 1 May 2008</i> |
| <i>Total refugees: 8,241, of whom:</i> |
| <i>5,275 are from South/Central Somalia</i> |
| <i>2,295 are from Somaliland</i> |
| <i>578 are from Ethiopia</i> |
| <i>90 are from Eritrea</i> |
| <i>03 are from Sudan</i> |
| <i>2,213 are new arrivals from S/C Somalia - January to April 2008</i> |
| <i>Ali-Addeh is the only official camp</i> |
| <i>Office Presence:</i> |

| | |
|---|----|
| <i>1 Country Representation</i> | |
| <i>(Djibouti)</i> | |
| <i>Field presence in Ali Sabieh and Ali Addeh</i> | |
| <i>Total number of Staff:</i> | |
| | 22 |
| <i>International:</i> | 3 |
| <i>National:</i> | 13 |
| <i>International UNVs</i> | 2 |
| <i>National UNVs:</i> | 3 |
| <i>Staff on emergency mission:</i> | |
| | 2 |
| <i>Number of Operational Partners</i> | |
| <i>International: 2 (AMDA and UNESCO)</i> | |
| <i>National: 2 (APEF and ONARS)</i> | |

Political

The political environment, based on a multiple-party system, has remained stable over the past eight years. Legislative elections took place in a peaceful atmosphere in February 2008.

Djibouti has a strategic position in the region and maintains good relations with the neighbouring countries, especially with Ethiopia, notwithstanding the diverging views on issues concerning the ongoing conflict in south Somalia. Ethiopia is highly dependent on Djibouti’s port services.

Djibouti has often been a safe haven surrounded by countries which have regularly been destabilised by internal strife and cross-border conflicts. Tens of thousands of refugees have been received in the country since it gained independence from France in 1977.

Thousands of migrants, from Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia have been using Djibouti as a transit route over the past years and the numbers increased dramatically during 2007. While exact figures are not available regarding the latter group, during the last year, the phenomenon nonetheless attracted the attention of the local authorities who are very concerned about the recent trends. During the first three months of 2008, with limited resources, the Djiboutian navy intercepted several boats and traffickers at sea, off the north shores en route to Yemen. In early 2008, over 500 persons were detained by the authorities trying to get to Yemen by boat.

Security

Despite a tense regional situation characterised by the conflict in South Somalia and the stand-off on the Ethiopia/Eritrea border dispute, security in Djibouti has not been a major concern.

It should be noted that the presence of American, French and German military contingents within the framework of the coalition to fight against international terrorism is seen as a stabilising factor for the security in the country. At the same time this is also contributing to an improvement of the socio-economic landscape as it induces investor confidence, job creation and infrastructure rehabilitation.

Influx

Since July 2007, there has been a steady arrival of South/Central Somali refugees fleeing from the deteriorating situation in Southern Somalia. For the whole of 2007, there were 330 new arrivals from South/Central Somalia. In the first three months of 2008 alone, 2,213 refugees were registered by UNHCR as new arrivals and granted prima facie refugee status after screening by a joint ONARS/UNHCR Committee.

Asylum and mixed migration

The Office is strengthening asylum seeker/refugee mechanisms; including the construction of a reception facility at the main Loyada border with Somaliland and boosting the joint ONARS/UNHCR Registration Committee. In the longer term, UNHCR and Government efforts will focus on the setting up of a National Eligibility Commission to clear the backlog of pending individual cases and the drafting of comprehensive legal legislation to address refugee issues.

UNHCR is called to play a greater role, alongside the authorities of the host country, in the monitoring of and responding to, the new migration trends through Djibouti to Yemen and further a field to Europe.

Overall objectives

1. Support the Government to conduct key protection activities:
 - Assisting the host country in the implementation of registration/verification mechanisms that are efficient and fair in accordance with international standards.
 - Assisting the host country in the issuance of adequate refugee identity documents for better protection, to help to prevent cases of *refoulement* and offer improved freedom of movement and opportunities for self-reliance: vital to the beneficiary population;
 - Assisting the host country in drafting refugee legislation and a legal framework that agree with the provisions of the relevant refugee and human rights instruments signed by Djibouti.

2. Ensuring that refugees continue to enjoy legal status, rights and legal protection according to international refugee protection principles, with specific emphasis on the protection of vulnerable groups (women/girls, children, physically challenged persons, elderly persons).
 - Disseminating information and promoting respect for international refugee, human rights and humanitarian law.
 - Strengthening the capacity of governmental and non governmental partners, by offering equipment and training.

- Pursuing the identification and strategic implementation of durable solutions for refugees:
 - promotion of voluntary repatriation to Somaliland;
 - individual repatriation to Ethiopia and Sudan where feasible;
 - local integration options are explored and implemented strategically;
 - resettlement as a durable solution, an international protection and a burden sharing tool;
- Providing life sustaining assistance to refugees in the Ali-Addeh camp.
- Strengthening the management of the environment and infrastructure through a rehabilitation programme in Ali Addeh camp, and in Assamo, Aour Aoussa and Holl-Holl – areas formerly inhabited by refugees.
- Strengthening operational coordination with other UN Agencies, ONARS and relevant ministerial departments.

Achievements

Djibouti is party to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and to its 1967 Protocol. On 26 June 2006, the Government of Djibouti (GoD) ratified the 1969 OAU Convention governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa.

Verification, screening and registration activities continued throughout 2007 and into 2008 for newcomers as well as for long staying refugees. The provision or renewal, where necessary, of Attestations co-signed by the Government of Djibouti and UNHCR to all registered refugees, help to improve the protection of the various refugee groups in the country.

Repatriation to Somaliland resumed after the registration and based on the arrangements agreed upon during Cross-border meetings in May, August and November 2007. By December 2007, 1,853 refugees were assisted to return in safety and dignity to Somaliland.

Sixteen refugees departed for resettlement to Canada in 2007. In the first three months of 2008, 19 refugees left for resettlement to Canada. In the first quarter of 2008, ten cases needing urgent medical case, or facing security risks were submitted for the consideration of resettlement countries.

The Eligibility Office within ONARS has now been upgraded by four new posts budgeted by UNHCR. This should help to improve the efficiency of that office. Under an RSD project, supported by Headquarters, two UNV RSD posts (one national and one international) are being advertised and will strengthen the determination of refugee status with a view to finding solutions for long staying refugees – particularly through resettlement.

Constraints

Djibouti has not yet drafted comprehensive national refugee legislation and refugee-related issues have so far been managed by means of administrative decrees.

The National Eligibility Commission (government institution responsible for deciding on individual refugee claims) is still not in place - this has created backlogs.

INGO & NGO partners have limited capacity to manage refugee issues in an efficient manner, hence the need to provide regular training and support to their staff in order to build their capacities.

Due to the non existence of Community Services personnel in the office, and the limited capacity and expertise of Implementing Partners, skills training and income-generating activities which could lead to the improved self-reliance of refugees and enhance their livelihoods, especially for urban refugees, are not part of the programme.

Limited human and financial resources will affect the capacity of the Office to adequately attend to the needs of the arriving populations or engage in responding to the needs of asylum-seekers amongst mixed migration flows.

Contingency Planning

In October 2007, UNHCR prepared a contingency plan for Djibouti based on the likelihood of massive influxes into the country of up to 5,000 if the conflict in South/Central Somalia intensified; 10,000 fleeing violence from the Somalia region (Ogaden) in Ethiopia; 5,000 persons running from prolonged insurgency and war between Ethiopia & Eritrea over the disputed border. All plans will be revised in 2008 – in light of increasing food prices on the international market, the drought that is causing massive starvation and malnutrition throughout Djibouti, and the stand-off between Djibouti and Eritrea over the alleged encroachment of Eritrean troops on Djiboutian soil at Ras-Doumeira.

UNHCR Djibouti actively participated in the drafting of the UN Country Team (UNCT) contingency planning, taking into consideration the situation in Djibouti, and in the East and Horn of Africa region.

| 2008 Current Appropriation | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|-----|
| Programme: | | USD |
| 2,026,647 | | |
| ABOD: | | USD |
| 358,300 | | |
| Staffing: | | USD |
| 1,336,162 | | |
| Earmarked (Japan) | USD | |
| 100,000 | | |
| Resettlement (USA) | | USD |
| 28,656 | | |