

Enhancing the Search for Durable Solutions for Somali Refugees Regional Strategy May 2013

Executive summary

With renewed support and attention from the international community, for the first time in over twenty-three years, Somalia is showing tangible signs of a return to normalcy and stabilization especially in Somaliland, Puntland and some areas in the South Central part of the country. This positive trend has been characterized primarily by an improvement of the political and security landscape as a result of the election of a new president and parliament followed by some successes in containing radical militia and their allies.

UNHCR and the humanitarian community consider that these developments present brighter prospects for improved conditions in the country which could generate prospects for refugees to explore the option of voluntary repatriation. UNHCR and its partners will maximize these opportunities in the search of durable solutions for the Somali refugee populations. While recognizing these developments, this document reaffirms the need for continued international protection for Somali refugees in the countries of asylum and examines ways of reinforcing this imperative through innovative approaches such as better livelihoods and revision of tools such as the eligibility and return advisory guidelines. In anticipation of further developments and to ensure that asylum countries do not act precipitously in their assessment of conditions inside Somalia, and that they act within their legal and humanitarian obligations within the 1951 convention, UNHCR will start working with asylum countries to begin the process leading to Tripartite Agreements.

The strategy also establishes that conditions in South Central Somalia, where the majority of return would occur, are not yet safe or stable enough to warrant large scale voluntary returns. Notwithstanding these challenges, UNHCR has noted that a number of refugees from the countries of asylum are choosing to return spontaneously. To better understand both the scale and scope of these returns, UNHCR has embarked on mapping of the refugee caseloads in the countries of asylum. This will better reveal the refugee profiles, and the areas that they would be returning to. In some asylum countries such as Kenya, Return Help Desks (RHDs) have been established to provide those who come forward with further information of the situation obtaining inside Somalia. An intention survey is planned in the course of this year. Ethiopia and Djibouti will soon be embarking on a

similar exercise to better understand the profiles of their Somali refugee caseload as well as their intention.

While resettlement will continue to be an important durable solution for Somali refugees, it will benefit only very small numbers. The long processing due to the slowness of security clearance process applicable to Somalis, coupled with domestic prejudices faced in some of the resettlement countries in respect of Somalis will continue to pose challenges for resettlement of Somali refugees.

In this strategy, UNHCR also acknowledges the central role that enhanced livelihood interventions would play during and after displacement. In this spirit, an innovative three-year project is being implemented in Ethiopia with the support of the IKEA Foundation whose main thrust is to increase the level of self-reliance for both refugees and host communities. Inside Somalia, the strategy takes into consideration the ongoing IDP return programs, as well as resilience projects and various interventions mounted by other players. To better provide protection and assistance to the persons of concern, UNHCR has begun the process of relocating its Somalia Branch Office from Nairobi to Mogadishu, Somalia. Elsewhere in Somalia, other offices that were previously closed, will also be re opened and/or reinforced to enable the operation to have a complete and effective footprint.

The strategy will include a timeframe for activities to be implemented in relation to the preservation of asylum and protection space, local integration, enhancing livelihoods, mapping and better understanding the caseload, resettlement, data management, communications and a phased approach to voluntary repatriation. It also crucially includes activities to be commenced in the country of origin in the interim period such as mapping of possible areas of return, in terms of security and existing support infrastructures that would support returns. Specific recommendations for improved data management are also provided to ensure fact-based planning and response. The timelines has been prepared based on the assumption that there will be gradual improvement of the situation inside Somalia and that average levels of rainfall will be sustained.

1. Background and introduction

Context and purpose of the strategy

In 2011, the Horn of Africa faced one of the worst droughts in decades. In July 2011, the Somalia UN Country Team (UNCT) declared a famine emergency due to successive failed rains, on-going conflict, human rights violations as well as restricted humanitarian access to parts of Somalia. As a result, the number of Somalis internally displaced increased to some 1.4 million while over 300,000 sought asylum in Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Uganda and Yemen in the course of 2011. Countries neighbouring Somalia generously responded to the 2011 emergency by granting access to asylum to these new

arrivals and allowing the international community to assist. By the end of 2012 there were close to a million refugees in the region and over 1.3 million internally displaced Somalis.

Although there is a wide general acknowledgement that the AMISOM forces¹, Ethiopian military as well as the Somali forces and their allied militias have made significant headway in terms of reducing the presence and threat of insurgents inside Somalia, these gains remain for the most part reversible and may not have contributed to the overall improvement of general security especially in the countryside where the return of refugees and internally displaced persons would occur. In summary, even in the so called “newly recovered areas”, security remains tenuous.

For the first time however in a long time, the future of Somalia can be envisaged more positively than in the recent past following the election of a new Somali Federal Republic government seen as more representative of the people of Somalia than previous ones, the adoption of a new constitution, a gradual reassertion of the role of the central Government as a result of better security conditions in Mogadishu, spontaneous returns to the capital city and a progressive “re-engagement” of the international community. These developments carry brighter prospects for improved conditions in the country which could generate more interest for refugees to explore the option of voluntary repatriation. The search for durable solutions will however continue to be firmly grounded on the need to preserve the ability of Somali refugees to continue to seek and enjoy asylum and protection in neighboring countries and beyond.

Situation in asylum countries

By the end of December 2012 Kenya hosted over 530,000 Somali refugees most of whom are residing in the Dadaab area, North Eastern part of the country. It sees the successful intervention by its military, Kenya Defense Forces (KDF) as having provided adequate security for a safe return of refugees. However, it also recognizes that return should be voluntary and taking place in conditions of safety and dignity which are not yet met throughout South and Central Somalia. Nevertheless, in order to plan for return, the Government of Kenya has in consultation with UNHCR Kenya devised a roadmap towards voluntary repatriation once conditions allow. It embarked on support to the Somali Government in building capacity and re-establishing administrative and security structures in the so referred recovered areas.

¹ The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) is the regional peacekeeping mission operated by the [African Union](#) with the approval of the [United Nations](#) in [Somalia](#). It is composed of Djibouti, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Burundi. It is mandated to support transitional governmental structures, implement a national security plan, train the Somali security forces, and to assist in creating a secure environment for the delivery of [humanitarian aid](#). As part of its duties, AMISOM also supports the [Transitional Federal Government](#)'s forces in their battle against [Al-Shabaab](#) militants.

Ethiopia was host to over 220,000 Somali refugees in the Southern part of the country (Dollo Ado and Jijiga) by the end of 2012 and the country continues to receive new arrivals. While the Government has continued to provide protection and asylum to Somalis, it has also expressed willingness in facilitating cross-border humanitarian interventions inside Somalia aimed at alleviating the suffering of Somalis, including the internally displaced persons (IDPs), in pursuit of its “people to people relations”. The Government has initiated discussions with the Government of Somalia and UNHCR with a view to prepare for the eventual return of Somali refugees when conditions permit.

Yemen was the second largest receiving country for Somali refugees with a total of 225,000 registered persons at the end of 2012 of whom only 103,037 are registered. Many attempt to travel onwards to third countries. There have thus far been no discussions on return.

There were as of end of 2012 some 28,501 Somali refugees in Uganda. Majority of them, are urban-based and resident in Kampala. The others are in Nakivale Settlement in the South West of Uganda. 86% of the total Somali refugee population in Uganda is from the Banadir Region of Somalia. During a recent intention survey in the context of the re-verification exercise, 58% expressed a willingness to return when conditions permit. A number of them have recently approached the office exploring what kind of support they would receive to enable them to return to Somalia.

Similarly, Djibouti has been receiving a continuous flow of Somali refugees many of whom also travel onwards to third countries. The number of Somali refugees in Djibouti stood at 18,324 as of December 2012 most of them residing in the Ali-Adeh and Holl-Holl camps.

During Somalia’s protracted conflict, many other Somalis sought asylum or were resettled overseas, and established the large Somali diaspora, scattered across Australia, North America, Europe and the Arab States. To that effect, UNHCR has already liaised with IOM that is about to start the mapping of the main communities of the Somali in the diaspora.

While in 2011 governments of a number of Gulf States have been returning Somali nationals to South Central Somalia, most Governments in the world have refrained from doing so. A number of these governments are however, increasingly challenging UNHCR’s 2010 eligibility guidelines. UNHCR intends to issue revised eligibility guidelines in the second half of the year.

Situation in Somalia

As indicated above, the situation in the South Central part of Somalia remains fragile and precarious. As of end December 2012, UNHCR estimated that some 1,3 million Somalis were internally displaced in Somalia, the vast majority of whom are in the South Central part of the country. Humanitarian access to most parts of South Central Somalia is limited and this continues to hamper effective monitoring, engagement with communities and delivery of humanitarian assistance. In this challenging context, UNHCR continues to deliver critical programs to communities affected by displacement through program-adaptation and a network of local partners and community based organizations (CBO) that are able to access areas not yet reachable directly by UNHCR.

As a result of the relative improvement of the situation, certain groups of IDPs have either spontaneously returned to their villages of origin or made specific requests to UNHCR and other humanitarian actors for assistance to do so. By the end of 2012, up to 1,800 families had been supported to return to their places of origin in Bay, Bakool and Lower Shabelle. Spontaneous refugee returns have also been recorded.

The establishment of conditions conducive to voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return is fundamentally linked to security, political, social and economic development processes, which are outside UNHCR's mandate and capacity. The primary responsibility to establish such conditions and provide the means to facilitate voluntary return of refugees and IDPs rests with national authorities and its partners within the international community. In that regard, the SFRG in its "Political Program" from November 2012 committed to ensuring the return of IDPs and refugees. The program states that the Federal Government will make it a "high priority to reduce and eventually stop the pain of the Somali IDPs or those who had ended up being refugees in neighboring countries". Towards the end of the year, with a more robust presence established inside Somalia, UNHCR intends to substantially increase its assistance to IDP return and other persons of concern.

2. Preserving asylum and protection space for Somali refugees in the region and beyond.

Under the current circumstances of Somalia, it is established that Somalis from central and south continue to be in need of international protection.

All countries in the region are party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1969 OAU² Convention related to refugees and most have adopted national legislation reflecting the key elements of international refugee law. In general, UNHCR's recommendations with regard to the protection needs of Somalis are followed, such as, for example, the granting of refugee status on a prima facie basis.

² With the exception of Yemen not party to the 1969 OAU Convention.

While countries in the region have generally acknowledged the protection needs of Somalis, there have recently been signals that certain countries further afield may review their approach towards Somalis seeking asylum and protection in view of the recent developments in Somalia and as based on a number of political, economic and security-related considerations.

A number of challenges affecting the protection situation of Somali refugees and asylum seekers have been experienced in key refugee-hosting neighboring countries, including cases of non-admission at the border, delays in registration and refugee status determination, enhanced security screening, xenophobia, restrictive encampment policy resulting in severe limitations on refugees' right to freedom of movement, and infringements on other refugee rights as reflected in international instruments and / or national legislation.

UNHCR is striving to address such challenges through strategic advocacy efforts with various national, regional and global stakeholders and targeted interventions, seeking to enhance the protection environment for refugees in the region. In that regard, UNHCR eligibility guidelines for Somalis asylum seekers will be reviewed in light of the most recent developments in order to guide asylum countries in their appreciation of asylum claims. The updating of the 2010 eligibility guidelines will take full account of the changes within Somalia including the south central part of the country and Mogadishu, the fluid situation within the country, detailed information on refugee profiles and the steps towards implementation of this comprehensive solutions and protection strategy. UNHCR will also publish a return advisory.

3. Self-reliance and livelihood approaches for protection and solutions

The Somali refugee situation which has lasted for over twenty three years has underlined the fact that achieving the highest degree possible of self-reliance for refugees ought to be a key protection objective from the outset of a refugee situation. In rural areas, it requires the early introduction of area-based livelihood activities targeting both refugees and local populations.

Limited Livelihood interventions in the past have mainly targeted vulnerable groups. It is, however, acknowledged that demands and expectations from the refugee community at large remain high and not fully met. Livelihoods activities need also to better take into account the different expectations and capacities of long stayers and new comers, as well as of vulnerable groups. A differentiated approach is needed in order to meet the special needs of individuals in a diverse group of refugees.

UNHCR offices will work with Government counterparts, the humanitarian community and development actors including NGOs, UN agencies and the civil society to continue to promote livelihood protection through the establishment of projects that will help provide

essential services and empower refugees while ensuring peaceful co-existence with host communities in the countries of asylum. It will further equip them for the future.

Although, the Government has expressed hopes that the situation in their country will allow the return of Somali refugees to their country, it is expected that many, especially those who have been in Kenya for more than a decade, will not be in a position to return immediately in large numbers. UNHCR in Kenya will therefore jointly with partners develop a livelihoods strategy for both “old stayers” and new arrivals in the Dadaab operation with the aim to protect the most vulnerable and boost resilience as well as reinforcing existing coping mechanisms. The strategy will focus on four areas: training and capacity building, production, agriculture and livestock, and income generating activities. With regards to capacity building and in complement to the work of the host government, NGO and UN partners, UNHCR in Kenya proposes, amongst others, to identify a pool of refugee youth to be capacitated as trainers for business skills and entrepreneurship, to build a multi-purpose vocational training institution in Dadaab, and to provide packages of tools to graduates of skills trainings to start their own businesses.

Since North Eastern Kenya suffers from water scarcity, until infrastructure is built up to use existing underground water reserves, agricultural activities will remain limited to a small proportion of the refugee population. However, small-scale home gardens for local fruits and vegetables are feasible. Keeping livestock is an important income generating activity among the host population, however, because of competition for grazing land, refugees have largely refrained from engaging in livestock keeping. UNHCR and partners are exploring opportunities for joint host population-refugees ventures on livestock as well as introducing poultry and beekeeping.

With regard to Ethiopia, an innovative three-year plan is being implemented with the support of the IKEA Foundation and other donors. Its main thrust is to enhance livelihood related activities to increase the level of self-reliance for both refugees and host communities. The long-term plan on livelihood activities aims at ensuring that refugees will eventually return better equipped to face the challenges of reconstruction in Somalia.

As part of this three-year plan, UNHCR engaged a consultancy firm to conduct a household survey and livelihoods mapping in Dollo Ado camps and nearby host communities in November 2012. The studies confirmed that most individuals have a background in agriculture and livestock, with few other skills and very little formal education. Based on these findings, UNHCR and its partners are planning interventions in the following four areas for 2013.

Firstly, a labour market and value chains study will be carried out to determine which occupations and value chains have the greatest potential in the Dollo Ado region. Based on the results, a Youth Education Pack (YEP) model will provide a total of 600

individuals with vocational training in Kobe and Hilaweyn. Moreover, UNHCR will explore options for in-camp employment such as the construction of transitional shelters.

Secondly, UNHCR Ethiopia will promote microenterprises by building on the existing business culture among the refugees through a comprehensive and sequenced support packages. This includes the selection of a local partner to implement a poverty-reduction program that will enable 600 participants to understand market opportunities, accumulate savings and build viable micro businesses.

Thirdly, UNHCR Ethiopia will support at least one small enterprise in each of the five existing camps that will manufacture locally needed commodities such as perfume, soap etc, which are currently imported. Moreover, refugee and host community association and cooperatives will be supported through capacity building in financial management training and through the provision of technical assistance.

Lastly, UNHCR plans to support innovative approaches to agriculture for income, social cohesion and food security. For example, in 2012, UNHCR together with its main agricultural implementing partner the Pastoralist Welfare Organization (PWO) has supported irrigation agriculture activities in one of the five existing camps. Refugees and host communities have been working together on 10 hectare cooperative farms. These are each run by 10 refugee women from the local host community. Refugees are employed as labourers and the crops are shared equally. Similar cooperatives already exist near another camp but so far without refugee involvement. The host community has expressed interest in refugee participation. Incentives to encourage the employment of refugees, for example, through the provision of agricultural equipment will be used.

In Yemen, programs to address formal technical education and vocational training are inadequately funded to meet the increasing demand. Recent livelihood surveys have indicated that short term vocational trainings have a limited impact on the employment prospects for refugees. However, long-term tertiary/formal vocational training and micro-credit programs have had a positive impact, increasing self-reliance prospects upon completion. In 2009, UNHCR signed an agreement with the Ministry of Technical Education and Vocational Training to build the capacity of a number of training centers for which the Ministry established a number of slots for refugees to pursue formal training in Aden and Sana'a. Since then, this program has been implemented and further expanded to include a training center and slots for refugees in Mukalla. It has additionally been noted that the majority of the DAFI graduates who benefited from the program have found regular employment in Yemen.

In Djibouti, UNHCR has started small scale income generating activities in Ali-Addeh refugee camp (revolving loan project that enabled families to buy and keep livestock or start small shops and restaurants) despite a challenging socioeconomic environment. Plans to offer refugees secondary education and vocational training in a number of marketable areas (electricity; plumbing; mechanic; carpentry; painting...) are being put

together in coordination with LWF (UNHCR IP for education and livelihoods/IGA). In this regard, the latter has commissioned a consultancy on livelihoods for refugees with the aim of further developing their prospects for self-reliance. Future projects will aim at empowering refugees and ensure peaceful co-existence with host communities in the country of asylum pending solutions. In addition, a BPRM funded multi-year livelihood project has been entrusted to IOM and will benefit refugees and the host communities around the refugee camps. The project will be implemented by ONARS (government refugee agency) and UNHCR is offering its contribution in the identification of the beneficiaries. Selected candidates will be enrolled in public vocational schools where they will receive training in different skills. The project also seeks the involvement of the Somali diaspora living in the host country (businessmen and entrepreneurs) who could offer counseling, internships and job opportunities.

In Uganda, like all other refugees, the Somalis are well received and enjoy the right to work and freedom of movement in accordance with the 2006 Refugee Act. They are therefore able to be engaged in livelihood activities mainly within the informal sector. In Kampala especially, they are fairly well organized as a population and support each other. Many are able to start small businesses using remittances from the diaspora. UNHCR and partners support them in vocational skills training and limited start-up loans, an area that needs improvement.

Overall, UNHCR will strive to bring onboard donors, UN agencies, NGOs and other interested parties such as host governments and civil society to strengthen livelihood activities in Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Uganda and Yemen in preparations for the eventual return of refugees. As mentioned earlier, livelihood activities often target the most vulnerable rather than those with the greatest entrepreneurial potential are aimed at keeping people busy rather than generating wealth in a productive context. Furthermore, progress made in achieving self-reliance will need to be measured over a realistic period of time. UNHCR will endeavor to work more closely with development actors such as the World Bank to ensure development assistance to Somali refugees and to the populations hosting them. In this regard, a regional project will be presented to development partners such as Japan as part of the TICAD V³ which is calling for projects to be presented along three themes, namely “Robust and Sustainable Economy”, “Inclusive and Resilient Society”, “Peace and Stability”. The EU will also be approached to fund project benefiting refugee hosting regions.

4. The search for durable solutions

The search for durable solutions for over a million Somalis will continue to be a challenge for the foreseeable future. Resettlement is available to only a very small number of persons, while prospects for local integration are limited for Somali refugees

³ Tokyo Initiative on Development in Africa

in many host countries. Voluntary repatriation, when available will benefit a larger proportion of the refugee population.

The exceptional depth and nature of the Somali situation (its scope and duration, the scale of people affected, its security implications) requires new and innovative approaches beyond the traditional three durable solutions and may need to explore forms of migration as part of a broader approach to solutions. Enhancing livelihoods as outlined in Para 3 provides a strong basis for the realization of any of the three classical solutions. This will require a concerted effort from all interested parties such as host governments, donors, UN agencies, the World Bank, NGOs and civil society in order to achieve results.

A number of studies will be commissioned by UNHCR to support innovative approaches and better understand the challenges specific to the Somali situation and support the search for durable solutions. These will include (1) the use of mobility and transnationalism as a survival strategy for Somalis, (2) the impact of remittances and financial transfers on Somalia and the Somali diaspora, (3) secondary movements of Somali refugees from countries of first asylum, (4) the impact of the conflict on clan configurations in Somalia and the implications for return and reintegration as well as rehabilitation and development opportunities in potential areas of return (6) land issues and urban returns.

4.1 Voluntary repatriation and reintegration

The present conditions in Somalia are not conducive for large scale voluntary repatriation. The security situation, while improved, remains tenuous and severely constrain economic opportunities which are very limited. Yet, recent reports point to increased spontaneous returns from Kenya and Ethiopia, with refugees citing reasons ranging from difficult living conditions and limited services in the camps to the improvement of agricultural and livelihood conditions in their areas of origin. Those who are returning spontaneously face numerous challenges along the routes they take and not assisting them exposes them even further to those risks. UNHCR will therefore counsel and provide assistance to those who approach the office with intention to return despite the conditions obtaining in areas they want to return to. Additionally, certain groups of IDPs have either spontaneously returned to their villages of origin or made specific requests to UNHCR and other actors for assistance to do so. By the end of 2012, up to 1,800 families had been supported to return by the Return Consortium to their places of origin in Bay, Bakool and Lower Shabelle. It is expected that this movement will continue and hopefully intensify in 2013. Monitoring the return and reintegration of IDPs in the current environment is a challenge although it is expected that lessons learnt will provide key indicators and information to guide and inform the return of refugees. Given access issues, innovative monitoring mechanisms through telecommunications and third-party monitoring will be considered. Where feasible, it is hoped that with a more robust presence in Somalia, UNHCR can expand its IDP return support in country.

The return and reintegration of IDPs will constitute the foundation for the refugee return strategy. The monitoring of IDP movements will provide information on spontaneous refugee return and on security as well as socio-economic conditions in various parts of south central Somalia. In close cooperation with partners UNHCR will strive to ensure that refugees originating from these areas and who spontaneously express the desire to return receive the same assistance as is provided to IDPs⁴. This initiative should in no way be seen as facilitating or promoting the return but aiming at ensuring that refugees opting to return are not discriminated against with regard to access to humanitarian assistance and that, in exercising their right to return, they are not rendered destitute or placed in disadvantageous circumstances.

At a broader level, along with other actors, UNHCR will support the Somali authorities in their efforts to create conditions which allow the return and reintegration of all displaced populations. Activities for returning refugees will build on existing resilience programmes aimed at widening livelihood opportunities and expanding local community-based public services in areas of returns. For that purpose UNHCR presence in south central Somalia will be gradually expanded with a strategic focus in areas of arrival/transit and areas of origin.

The “Return Help Desks” (RHD) established in Kenya and in other countries of asylum will play an important role in channeling the information collected on the prevailing situation in various parts of Somalia including on available assistance. In Mogadishu, dialogue between UNHCR and the SFR Ministry of the Interior and National Security for the establishment of a platform on durable solutions for refugees and IDPs is ongoing.

In order to provide refugees who are interested in obtaining first-hand information on areas of return or generally assessing the conditions inside Somalia, an opportunity to visit the country without losing their refugee status in the countries of asylum, “go and see” visits will be organized whenever feasible. Such visits could include other parties such as civil society, government authorities, NGO partners and even interested donors.

The above strategies will be pursued in a phased manner. The plan will be detailed in terms of resource implications.

4.2 Resettlement

While resettlement will continue to be an important durable solution for Somali refugees, it will benefit only very small numbers. The long processing pipeline faced by the key resettlement countries due to the slowness of security clearance procedures applicable to Somalis, coupled with domestic prejudices faced in some of the resettlement countries in respect of Somalis will continue to pose serious challenges for resettlement of Somali refugees.

Additionally, with regard to Kenya, the deterioration of the security situation in the Dadaab operation since 2011, prevents most resettlement countries from accessing the camp to conduct resettlement processing. In order to enable resettlement processing to take place, UNHCR will continue to work with resettlement countries to conduct interviews through innovative methodologies such as videoconferencing and relocating refugees to Kakuma camps or to transit facilities in Nairobi for resettlement interviews. Due to the challenges of conducting group resettlement processing for the Somali refugees in Dadaab, UNHCR Kenya shifted to referrals based on identifying individual protection needs, thus enabling a better managed approach to resettlement for Somali refugees in Kenya. The importance of resettlement as a protection tool for Somali refugees in Dadaab will continue to be underscored through the designation of Dadaab as a priority situation for the strategic use of resettlement in recognition that resettlement could serve as an expression of international solidarity and burden sharing with Kenya, and could help leverage asylum space and decongest camps

In Ethiopia, Djibouti and Uganda, Somali refugees will also be resettled through individual referrals on the basis of identified resettlement needs, and will be expedited through use of Abridged RRF. It is not foreseen that the large scale resettlement to the US of Somali refugees, such as had previously taken place in Uganda, will be re-instated due to the continuing challenge of long security clearance processes. In Yemen, resettlement efforts and prospects were compounded by the deterioration of the security situation of the country, bringing a halt to a number of selection missions from resettlement countries, including the USA. Perceived security risks associated with refugees who have resided in Yemen for prolonged periods of time may further reduce resettlement prospects

UNHCR will continue to work with partners to keep resettlement of Somali refugees as a priority, particularly with regard to seeking a way forward for speedier security clearances. Innovative methods of resettlement interviews will continue to be reinforced and supported. Enhanced identification and the use of Abridged RRF will be encouraged to enable larger numbers to avail of this durable solution.

4.3 Local integration, including other forms of long term legal stay

Countries of asylum have been generous in hosting the large Somali refugee population, for over two decades. This acknowledged, opportunities for local integration have remained, to UNHCR's knowledge, limited for many refugees. With the possible reduction of the Somali refugee population and taking into account the close ties some refugees have developed with host communities, long term legal residency or naturalization might emerge and could be taken advantage of.

In Kenya, many refugees from Somalia were born and educated in the Dadaab refugee camps, and many more have developed close ties with the host population, including

through marriages and other family links. The Citizenship and Immigration Act of 2011 offers possibilities for long term legal stay for some refugees. It is also possible to take advantage of the devolution of authority to County Governments to increase advocacy and build alliances for some form of local integration for Somali refugees. UNHCR will commence pursuing these opportunities with the Kenyan authorities particularly for the pre 2011 caseload.

In Ethiopia, the extension of the “out of camp” policy to refugees from other nationalities, including Somalis offer some opportunities. Through the policy, refugees who can sustain themselves financially or have relatives or sponsors who commit to supporting them no longer have to remain in camps and can live in urban settings. With further international support actively cultivated by UNHCR, the opportunities opened up by this policy could be maximized to enhance access to education and refugee self-reliance, longer-term sustainable stay in the country, and certainly improved possibilities for durable solutions elsewhere.

In Djibouti, while the Nationality Code contains provisions that can allow refugees to access nationality (Art.5 and Art.12), in practice, the process is more complex. At the same time, although Art. 7 and 8 of the Djibouti refugee act enables refugees to engage in wage earning activities and provide for a favorable treatment on the labor market (at least as favorable as for aliens residing legally in the country), host country authorities have in reality been consistently reluctant to deliver work permits for refugees in order to protect employment opportunities for nationals. Djibouti is, indeed, an arid country with no or limited natural resources, including agriculture and industry. The country is also confronted with difficult socio-economic conditions. In view of these constraints, local integration has remained practically unrealistic for the majority of refugees.

In Uganda there is no encampment policy and Somali refugees are able to move freely within Uganda. Those that are able to sustain themselves live in Urban centres mainly Kampala and although by law local integration through naturalization is not accessible to refugees, because of the positive asylum policy that includes the right to work, freedom of movement, they are able to achieve some measure of de facto integration.

The Government of Yemen as well as the general Yemeni population has been very generous and hospitable towards refugees (especially Somalis) in spite of the difficulties that the country is facing. In Yemen, there is no structural mechanism in place to allow Somali refugees to access Yemeni nationality. However, there is a provision in Yemeni nationality law No. 6 (1990) that foreigners including, Somali refugees, can apply to obtain Yemeni nationality. The decision of granting nationality must be taken by the Minister of Interior, but within the current political instability and due to the large number of Somali refugees residing in Yemen the Ministry of Interior is not considering such requests. The Government of Yemen grants *prima facie* recognition to all Somalis

requesting asylum, conducts registration and issues refugee identity cards valid for two years which can be further renewed. After strong intervention and support of UNHCR over the years, the government has been systematically lowering barriers for refugees to access to basic government services and institutions, thus facilitating what is akin to local integration. The Yemeni government has already mainstreamed access for refugees into the state health services, judiciary system, access to education including vocational and technical training, and recently in August 2012 the government granted a waiver for work permit fees for Somali refugees thereby streamlining the work permit process. Furthermore, over the years many Somali refugees have developed very close ties with the host population, including through marriage and other family links.

4.4 Migration movements

Somali refugees move from their countries of asylum to third countries, to seek employment or livelihood opportunities. Information on their movements is however not systematically captured, and, if available, not adequately analyzed. As part of this solutions strategy, UNHCR will proactively seek an appropriate partnership, to better understand the migration patterns of the refugees, refugees' own coping mechanisms and explore how the inclusion of migration will enhance opportunities for solutions for Somali refugees, and complement the classic three durable solutions. Representatives of the Somali diaspora will play an important role in that regard.

5. Data collection and management

The use of all available sources of data in order to establish a comprehensive and detailed profiling of Somali refugees is essential for planning for durable solutions needs and possible durable solutions. Information available includes data obtained during enhanced verification exercises, data obtained through surveys (profiling, intention, etc.), consultations with refugees and participatory assessments.

Return Help Desks (RHDs) are being established in the refugee camps to provide opportunities to provide information on return to refugees as well as gather the most relevant information on refugees' return intentions and needs. It will also help obtain information related to coping mechanisms, related resources and capacities inside Somalia, their place of intended return, opportunities and obstacles to materialise this option, composition of the necessary assistance package in the initial return and re-integration phase in the receiving communities etc. These Desks have now been set up in Kenya and in Ethiopia they will be established given that it is in these two countries that most of the cross border movements are being witnessed. The refugee community will play an active role in the functioning of the Return Help Desk.

In addition, Return Intention Surveys will be organised in Djibouti, Uganda, Ethiopia and Kenya to obtain the most up to date concrete objective information on the level of interest in return by the refugees. Return Help Desks will collect and collate information on the following: duration of stay in refugee camps or country of asylum in the case of Uganda; clan/sub-clan; family composition; individuals in each family wishing to return; when the movement is planned; area of intended return, reasons for return, obstacles to return, reintegration prospects and sustainability of the return.

UNHCR and its partners will use the movements back to asylum countries as an opportunity to gather detailed and updated information on their reasons for coming back as well as conditions in the areas of return, where UNHCR may not have direct access. Such reasons might be closely linked to coping mechanisms, related family members in different countries, migrations patterns and the overall protection situation.

While respecting data protection and confidentiality principles, the information will be used to effectively plan and design the most sustainable response in terms of durable solutions.

6. Partnership and communication strategy:

Communications will be built into the strategy from the start and will not be an add-on. Refugees will be a key source of information, taking into account age, gender and diversity. The information collected from refugees moving back and forth on conditions inside Somalia will be used systematically to help refine our policy at all stages of protection and durable solution strategy to supplement usual sources of information. For example, UNHCR Dadaab has had a successful community communication program (formerly called “mass information”) which will be used to ensure that accurate information is given to refugees and reliable information received from them.

A joint communication component of the present strategy involving all stakeholders at country level based contacts with journalists, press releases and video releases will be developed.

Regarding inter-agency cooperation, it is important to remember that while in the asylum countries UNHCR has mandated responsibilities to lead and coordinate refugee protection and assistance services, the involvement of all relevant actors in livelihood related activities for refugees and eventually returnees will be crucial. Inside Somalia, although the humanitarian response to IDPs will be based on the inter-agency cluster approach planning and activities in favor of Somali returning refugees will be closely coordinated with cluster leads. In this respect, UNHCR Somalia will work closely with the Somali authorities at the central and regional levels to ensure potential areas of conflict that would impair return and reintegration such land and property restitution are adequately addressed during or upon return.

7. Resource mobilization

In 2011 as one of the largest populations movement took place as a result of continuous insecurity in Somalia and the unprecedented famine which affected the country, large contributions were received in support of emergency requirements. It is expected that a similar level of support will continue to be provided as additional resources are sought to enhance livelihoods in asylum countries. Besides humanitarian support, aid facilities aimed at reconstruction and stabilization will be sought. Many donors have also supported and shown much interest in resilience type projects both inside Somalia and in countries of asylum. Additional resources will also be sought to expand the presence of UNHCR and its partners to help the Government in creating conditions which will allow the eventual return of refugees.

8. Coordination

Coordination will take place at the country level with all partners. At regional level, a meeting involving all stakeholders, Government, UN Agencies and other partners will take place twice a year to review the implementation of the strategy. While bilateral meetings involving Somalia and respective asylum countries will take place as necessary, a Technical Support Task Force led by the country of origin with support from Headquarters has been established. Its main tasks will be to develop, follow-up and coordinate all aspects of voluntary and spontaneous returns for returnees and IDPs. These will include but not limited to the timing, scope, character of return assistance, and harmonization of Tripartite Agreements etc.

Conclusion

UNHCR will pursue its vigorous engagement with the Governments of the region and regional organizations on refugee matters so that these partners can take ownership of the present strategy. Some of these governments have policies and practices that are evolving rapidly based on the situation in Somalia, public perceptions of Somali refugees hosted in the country etc. In view of the fact that policy decisions of a country would have immediate influence on the others, UNHCR's engagement will remain one of strong advocacy for protection space for refugees, keeping their will at the central point of any policy making process.

Although IDPs do not feature prominently in the present strategy, the solutions found to their plight will very much determine return prospects for Somali refugees. The present strategy will therefore be closely coordinated with the one for IDPs implemented under UNCT Somalia. In this spirit, UNHCR will work within the cluster to ensure that the IDP return strategy that covers their return in Mogadishu and its environs, will further be expanded to cover the whole country.