



COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN

Executive Committee Summary

Country : Yemen

Planning Year : 2006

2006 Yemen Country Operations Plan

Part I: Executive Committee Summary

(a) Context and Beneficiary Populations

Political context

Yemen lies along a historical migration route from East Africa to the Middle East. Somalis fleeing the seemingly endless cycle of violent conflict, social upheaval and economic deprivation in their country make up the largest component of the contemporary migratory flow, with Ethiopians constituting the next largest group. They rely upon smugglers in the Somali port of Bossaso poorly maintained to facilitate their perilous crossing of the Arabian Sea in small, unsafe vessels for a relatively small fee. Many lose their lives when these small, unsafe vessels sink or when the smugglers force passengers overboard before reaching the coast. Most do not plan to stay in Yemen. Some 80 percent of the Somalis interviewed by UNHCR upon arrival indicate that they plan to move on to Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries in search of employment. A smaller number, particularly the most vulnerable, remains behind in Yemen and turns to UNHCR for protection and support.

Protection issues

UNHCR's role

UNHCR supports the Government of Yemen in meeting its obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. The inter-ministerial National Committee for Refugee Affairs (NCRA) and its operational sub-committee facilitate cooperation with UNHCR. Yemen extends *prima facie* recognition to Somalis who register with the Government, issuing refugee cards co-signed by UNHCR that legalise their stay, permit freedom of movement and facilitate access to employment and education. A joint registration project resulted in the documentation of 46,976 Somali refugees through end-February 2004. Six Government-run regional registration centres are expected to be established in 2005. UNHCR conducts RSD under its Mandate for asylum-seekers of other nationalities and advocates for their registration and documentation by the Government.

UNHCR's operational protection activities focus on preventing *refoulement* and ensuring that refugees and asylum-seekers in Yemen enjoy basic human rights. UNHCR also pursues durable solutions, where possible, through voluntary repatriation, resettlement of special groups and by working to establish the necessary legal framework for local integration in Yemen. Lawyers under contract with UNHCR provide counselling, advice and, on a selective basis, representation in connection with criminal and civil legal proceedings, including women who have survived sexual or gender-based violence and those escaping situations of abuse or exploitation.

Overview of beneficiary populations

Somalis

UNHCR and the Government of Yemen have officially registered and documented 47,976 Somali refugees, as of 28 February 2004. They include 36,683 persons living in urban centres (mainly Sana'a, Aden and Taiz) and Somali refugees in the Kharaz camp. The registration figures do not include new arrivals passing through the Maifa'a reception centre during 2004 and 2005. To account for the continuous flow of new arrivals, UNHCR Yemen has established a planning figure of 53,000 Somali refugees for 2005.

Ethiopians

UNHCR has registered 1,990 Ethiopian refugees. All reside in Sana'a and other urban areas, with the exception of 663 Ethiopian Oromo who are accommodated in the Kharaz camp. The Ethiopian refugee community also includes some 720 former officers and cadets of the Ethiopian Navy and dependents, who received prima facie refugee status in 1991 by the Yemeni authorities.

Other nationalities

UNHCR has registered some 800 refugees of other nationalities, including 440 Palestinians, 219 Iraqis, 101 Eritreans and 56 Sudanese.

Kharaz Camp

In January 2005, a verification of camp residents and food ration cards was conducted jointly with WFP during a food distribution. The total number of refugees settling permanently in Kharaz was revised to 7,220 refugees. However, the high mobility of the refugee population is a constraint in obtaining accurate data. Since the camp is located in an isolated semi-arid area with harsh climatic conditions and scarce job opportunities, a large number of refugees are moving between Kharaz and surrounding areas in Lahj and Aden Governorates, searching for work and/or better living conditions. The refugee population permanently living in the camp is thus composed mainly of vulnerable individuals depending on UNHCR assistance.

The majority of the refugees are women and children. Sixty one percent (61%) of the total population is under 18 years of age. The adult refugee population is composed of 23 % women and 16 % men. Fifty three percent (53%) of the families in the camp are headed by a single female.

Refugees in Kharaz camp (As of 31 December, 2004)

Age	Male	Percentage (male)	Female	Percentage (female)	TOTAL
0-4	614	17	619	17	1,233
5-17	1,632	45	1,508	42	3,140
18-59	1,342	37	1,460	41	2,802
60 and above	28	1	17	0	45
TOTAL	3,616	50%	3,604	50%	7,220

New Arrivals

During each of the past three years, UNHCR registered roughly 12-14,000 Somalis at the Maifa'a reception centre near the village of Bir Ali, which lies opposite to the Somali port of Bossasso. Bir Ali, however, is only the most important of fifteen main entry points along the 2,400 kilometre Yemeni coast. In 2004, however, more than 16,600 Somalis arrived through Bir Ali – a nearly 25 percent increase over the same period last year. In addition, more than 3,000 Ethiopians have entered through Bir Ali in 2004, representing a dramatic increase over the previous years.

Arrival of asylum seekers and refugees by boat from Somalia, mainly through the port town of Bossasso, continued throughout the navigable months from October to April. In 2004, a total of 16,600 Somalis (3,333 females and 13,267 males) arrived while **13,993 (2,906 females and 11,087 males)** have approached the Maifa'a Reception Center to be registered (84.3%). At the same time, a total of 2,976 non-Somalis (mainly Ethiopians) arrived at Al Keda entry point in 2004.

Registered new arrivals in MRC (in 2004)

Age	Male	Percentage (male)	Female	Percentage (female)	TOTAL
0-4	79	46	91	54	170
5-17	644	57	492	43	1136
18-59	10351	82	2312	18	12663
60 and above	13	54	11	46	24
TOTAL	11,087	79%	2,906	21%	13,993

UNHCR Maifa'a Reception Center caters for basic needs of new arrivals; upon registration, the center provides shelter, cooked food, temporary registration forms and medical assistance for the duration of their stay. UNHCR started also providing transport facilities in October 2004 to all refugees wishing to reside in Kharaz camp.

While refugees arriving in Kharaz camp are provided with cooked food, shelter and other basic assistance during their temporary stay in the reception area in the camp, a majority of new arrivals (95%) have subsequently left the camp within three months.

Urban refugees

UNHCR's programmes outside the camp are focused on Sana'a and Aden (Basateen), where most urban refugees live. Direct financial assistance is very limited and targets the most vulnerable on the basis of strict criteria. Refugee health clinics offer preventive and curative treatment and refer more serious cases to local hospitals. Reproductive health and HIV/AIDS related services also available in Sana'a and Aden. UNHCR-funded community centres offer a safe environment for refugees and social and legal counselling, language training, day care for children, opportunities for recreation and social and cultural activities. Refugee children attend local primary schools with assistance from UNHCR. Vocational training programmes give adult refugees marketable skills, increasing their employability and prospects for achieving self-reliance and economic integration in Yemen.

Urban Refugees in Yemen						
Age Group	Male (in absolute numbers)	in %	Female (in absolute numbers)	in %	Total (in absolute numbers)	in %
0 to 4	903	5	933	5	1,836	5
5 to 17	7,379	38	7,059	36	14,438	37
18 to 59	9,818	51	10,073	52	19,891	52
60 and over	1,162	6	1,346	7	2,508	6
	19,262	49.8	19,411	50.2	38,673	100
Major locations: Sana'a, Aden (Basateen)						

Policy issues

The major policy challenge facing UNHCR in Yemen arises from the new security dynamic in the region. Confronted with intensifying international pressure to control Yemen's borders and increasing arrivals from the Horn of Africa, the Government is concerned about the strain that greater numbers of refugees and migrants may place on state institutions and the country's poorly resourced social infrastructure.

UNHCR, with support from its donors, will need to demonstrate a commitment to sharing this burden, in order to ensure continued access to asylum in Yemen, ease the growing strain on public services and consolidate the progress achieved in strengthening the national legal and institutional arrangements for refugee protection.

The mixed economic and refugee-related motivations of the Somalis (and increasingly Ethiopians) arriving in Yemen and the mainly transitory nature of their presence also poses complex policy dilemmas. UNHCR must ensure that its limited assistance reaches refugees and other persons of concern and targets the most vulnerable, while avoiding that its humanitarian programmes attract non-refugees and become overburdened by them.

UNHCR works with the Government to strengthen the legal framework and institutional capacities for refugee protection in Yemen. UNHCR provides technical advice and drafting support for the development of new national refugee legislation and carries out an intensive programme of training seminars for officials involved in policy development and day-to-day refugee matters. UNHCR also offers protection training for NGO personnel and government officials in refugee-affected provinces involved in the reception of refugees.

Linkages to other country operations

A 2003 initiative of the European Commission in collaboration with interested state governments - the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Somalia (CPA) – provides an opportunity to review and assess a 'protracted refugee situation' and to evaluate prospects for durable solutions. The CPA aiming at strengthening the national protection regime and improving assistance in Yemen to limit secondary movements of Somali refugees in the region, has provided detailed gaps analyses on protection and assistance, which will serve as a guidance for the Yemen operation in 2006. An extension of assistance to a needy urban population in Al Basateen (to both refugees and returnees), owed to the CPA rationale to facilitate local integration as a viable

option of durable solution, will have to be carefully designed and monitored to avoid dependency of a refugee population assumed to be self-sufficient.

UNHCR in Yemen has strong interest in the success of the planned Comprehensive Plan of Action for Somali refugees. Unless a measure of stability and economic vitality returns to Somalia, however, outward migration through Yemen will continue and voluntary repatriation will not be an attractive option for those already settled in this country. Yemen represents the first step in a much longer journey for refugees and other migrants from the Horn of Africa to the Middle East, Europe and beyond. Until the root causes of these movements are addressed, UNHCR's Yemen operation will be increasingly linked to the programmes of other countries along the route.

Capacity and presence of partners

UNHCR enjoys the support of four international and three national NGOs in providing humanitarian assistance and services to urban refugees in Sana'a and Aden and at the Maifa'a reception centre and Kharaz camp. UNHCR collaborates with these partners on training activities and efforts to strengthen their operational capacity

UNHCR and its partners provide essential humanitarian assistance and services at the Kharaz refugee camp, with a focus on meeting the special needs of vulnerable individuals. WFP supplies a basic food ration for all refugees living in the camp, in line with the established standards. Residents also have access to adequate water, sanitation, shelter, household items and medical care, as well as awareness education, counselling and services related to HIV/AIDS and harmful traditional practices (*i.e.*, female genital mutilation (FGM)). Programmes offered at the camp community centre include social counselling, language courses, vocational training and recreational opportunities. Primary education is available in both Arabic and Somali language, and needy children receive uniforms, books and supplies. To supplement their diet and achieve greater self-reliance, refugees are allocated garden plots and receive seeds and tools.

UNHCR seeks to empower the camp community, particularly refugee women, as partners in planning and managing programmes for their benefit through training and community development activities. Refugee women participate through the Women's Committee, and they make up half the Block Leaders and half the members of the Security Committee. UNHCR's training efforts also aim at building the capacity of NGO partners and the relevant line ministries and directorates in Lahj and Aden governorates, where the reception centre and camp are located. Funding permitting, UNHCR also allows poorer Yemenis in nearby villages to access some assistance and services, which reinforces local support for the presence of the camp.

UNHCR and its NGO partners provide supporting in meeting the basic humanitarian needs of refugees and asylum-seekers in Yemen. New arrivals at the Maifa'a reception centre are issued temporary registration cards, receive necessary medical treatment and care, basic assistance (*i.e.*, prepared meals, water and shelter) and information about the Kharaz refugee camp operated by UNHCR. Only three to five percent of the new arrivals ask to be transported to the Kharaz camp, with most preferring to proceed to Sana'a, Aden and other cities or to continue their onward journey from Yemen immediately. The vast majority of refugees transferred to the

camp later move on to urban centres, because the location is remote and inhospitable during the hot summer months.

Presence and roles of other UN and international organisations

WFP procures and delivers basic food rations for all refugees living in the Kharaz camp, and also supplies food for meals served to clinic in-patients, children attending camp primary schools and people in transit at the Mayfa'a reception centre. UNHCR works with UNAIDS and UNFPA to address the problem of HIV/AIDS through the Ministry of Health, within the framework of the national AIDS strategy plan. Well established partnerships with UNICEF help to ensure the quality of education for refugees, particularly at the Kharaz camp. UNHCR participates actively in the UN Country Team (UNCT) and inter-agency Security Management Team. UNDP has led UNCT efforts to formulate the Common Country Assessment (CCA) and UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), which set out the priorities of the UN development agencies in Yemen for the five year period beginning in 2001. The UN development agencies recognise the need to promote national development and address the needs of urban refugees in an integrated manner. UNHCR is also working to bring urban refugees within the scope of the poverty alleviation strategy being advanced by the World Bank and international donors through the Social Fund for Development.

(b) Selected Programme Goals and Objectives

Assistance to Urban refugees in Yemen

The precarious living conditions, exposing women and children to illegal activities and high risks, justify the intervention of UNHCR. A first step to reinforce protection of urban refugees is to establish six registration centres nation-wide to renew refugee ID cards in 2005. Through implementing partners in Sana'a and Aden, urban refugees benefit from basic health services and reproductive health services in health centers in Sana'a and Aden, and skills and vocational training and income generation, and community services including child care, social counselling and support to vulnerable families.

UNHCR will continue to support national authorities including the National Committee for Refugee Affairs through providing technical and material inputs needed for registration of urban refugees. UNHCR will select NGOs as implementing partners with an expertise in providing relevant services, and continue to build the capacity of existing implementing partners. Furthermore, UNHCR will provide legal assistance and representation for refugees that require legal advice with special emphasis on SGBV cases.

With the support of its partners, UNHCR will provide primary health services for urban refugees in the community centre in Sana'a. Also, community services will be implemented, offering social counselling, language and vocational training, geared towards promoting self reliance of urban refugees and meeting the special needs of vulnerable refugees.

Comprehensive reproductive health care services will be provided to urban refugees in Sana'a, including family planning, ante- and post-natal care, paediatric care and hospital referrals, as well as health education and HIV/AIDS awareness.

Community services will be implemented in Basateen (Aden), providing social counselling, day care facilities and skills/language training to ensure that the special needs of vulnerable refugees are identified and addressed. UNHCR partners will also be responsible for the school feeding of approximately 2,500 school children of the Basateen primary school. WFP will provide basic food commodities to support the school feeding programme.

A Mother and Child Center (MCC) will be run in Basateen (Aden), and will provide the data and logistics to distribute monthly family rations to about 500-600 vulnerable families in Basateen.

Assistance to new arrivals in Bir Ali and refugees in Kharaz camp

UNHCR in the past years has focused its assistance on refugees in Kharaz camp in a spirit of burden-sharing with the Government of Yemen. A majority of camp residents are vulnerable families largely relying on UNHCR assistance. Refugees living in Kharaz are assisted with shelter, food, water and sanitation services, health care, basic education, and community services, as well as agricultural activities, vocational training and income-generation projects.

New arrivals in Yemen passing through Maifa'a Reception Center usually arrive in poor physical condition after a long sea trip from Somalia. To meet their basic humanitarian needs during their stay at the MRC, new arrivals are assisted with shelter, cooked food, water and sanitation services, medical assistance and transportation, in case, they opt for the camp. UNHCR provides transport for vulnerable refugees to Kharaz camp.

Voluntary Repatriation of Refugees

The situation in Somalia remains fragile and unstable, unless major political developments in the constitution of the new Somali Government are achieved. In this void, the impact of rehabilitation and reintegration assistance in Somalia will be too limited to create sustainable conditions of return. The Comprehensive Plan of Action for Somalia (CPA) in its implementation phase in 2006, however, may be a catalyst to boost reintegration processes, and may improve living conditions in the country of origin. In this case, UNHCR Yemen will make provisions for the voluntary repatriation of about 500 somali refugees in 2006.