

**UNITED KINGDOM**

**2002 COUNTRY**

**OPERATIONS PLAN**

## **Part 1: Executive Committee Summary**

### ***Context and Themes***

With a widely predicted downturn in the US economy, questions will be raised as to whether the UK can continue to maintain strong growth with low unemployment and low inflation. Regardless of the economic prospects, the issue of economic migrants will continue to be linked in public discourse to the asylum issues.

The government will seek to build on refugee integration initiatives alongside reforms to ease existing immigration policy with the broad aim to move from immigration control to “immigration management”. A similar relaxation in asylum policy will be highly unlikely. Asylum issues are expected to remain high on the political agenda. The climate for refugee protection will continue to be inhospitable as the government favours “tough” stances in order to disprove allegations of being “soft” on asylum issues.

A strengthening of deterrent measures may result in a reduction in the number of asylum applications lodged in the UK. Such measures include: a fourfold increase in the detention estate; new visa requirements; deployment of more Airline Liaison Officers overseas to prevent entry into Britain by undocumented persons; training of immigration officers in key gateway countries in Eastern Europe to put into place preventive measures for persons wishing to claim asylum in the 'West'; more severe law enforcement to punish those trafficking asylum-seekers and the establishment of bilateral agreements particularly with candidate countries of the EU to counter trafficking.

The government will redouble efforts to increase the number of rejected cases that are removed from the UK.

Asylum determination will be numbers-driven to the detriment of a fair asylum process.

The Home Secretary will continue vigorously to promote the “Lisbon agenda” both within and outside UNHCR’s Global Consultations, while at the same time asserting the validity of the 1951 Convention.

It is expected that xenophobia and hostility towards "foreigners" will remain in evidence, and race relations will remain a significant issue despite government initiatives.

The media will remain receptive to negative news stories and its reporting will continue to prefer a parochial approach with little coverage of international issues.

Other constituents will press UNHCR to pronounce itself on refugee and asylum issues.

### ***Description of Beneficiaries***

BO London’s plan of activities is theme-based rather than beneficiary-based.

Nevertheless, the main categories of persons and groups that will benefit from the country operations plan are the following.

- Refugees and asylum seekers. It is not possible to provide a precise projection of numbers for the coming months. Considering, however, that from January to May 2001, the UK received some 27,995 asylum applications (cases), it may be fair to expect that in 2002, annual asylum applications will probably remain at roughly similar levels to previous years - in the order of 75-80,000 cases per year. Approximately 1,000 asylum seekers detained every month constitute a sub-category of potential beneficiaries.

- Legal representatives, the judiciary and Tribunals as well as the Home Office are beneficiaries of UNHCR’s advice on asylum law and eligibility issues.
- The media, NGOs, educational institutions, including schools and universities, faith groups, the general public and other stakeholders in civil society. These benefit from the dissemination of information and positions on UNHCR and UK/global refugee issues.
- Young graduates in law and social sciences who are trained under UNHCR London's internship programme. BO London trains 8 legal interns and 2 PI interns every year, the majority of whom are women.

***Selected Program Goals and Objectives***

<b>Theme1:</b> Quality asylum in a Uniting Europe	
<b>Main Goals:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to the territory</li> <li>• Harmonisation of asylum systems in conformity with international standards</li> <li>• Public Opinion will be receptive and supportive</li> </ul>	
<b>Principal Objectives</b>	<b>Related Outputs</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To enhance the quality of decisions on admissibility and observance of necessary safeguards in the return of those who have found protection elsewhere.</li> <li>• To enhance the quality of decisions on asylum claims and bring asylum policies (particularly on detention, gender and minors) and asylum support arrangements more in line with UNHCR's guidelines.</li> <li>• Adoption and implementation of legal positions in accordance with UNHCR standards, including in the determination of refugee status.</li> <li>• Ensure that the return of rejected asylum seekers are in accordance with UNHCR principles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immigration officers and NGOs deployed at ports of entry are trained on safeguards, benchmarks for admissibility and distinction between admissibility and accelerated procedures, and regular meetings are held with key Home Office officials to identify and address areas of difficulty.</li> <li>• Legal practitioners and decision-making authorities are provided with accurate and up-to-date advice on UNHCR positions regarding admissibility; the “safe third country” notion; interpretation of refugee criteria, and return of rejected cases.</li> <li>• Both formal and informal contacts are regularly arranged with senior government officials to inform them on UNHCR's positions on EU harmonisation issues</li> <li>• Regular advice/training is provided to government on best practice vis-à-vis separated children in line with Statement of Good Practice and other UNHCR guidelines</li> <li>• Compliance of IAA guidelines on gender-related asylum claims is monitored, and their adoption by IND caseworkers and immigration officers is advocated.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNHCR has a higher profile</li> <li>• Understanding of the difference between economic migrants and refugees</li> <li>• Reduced xenophobia and increased tolerance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The government's integration programme receives practical UNHCR support through partnerships with agencies that document refugee skills profiles and promote employment opportunities for refugees</li> <li>• Journalists (radio/print/TV) international media seek UNHCR's positions on national and international refugee and asylum issues.</li> <li>• Targeted briefing materials on migration and asylum are prepared and distributed widely.</li> <li>• Visits to regional dispersal areas, with coverage by local media, are organised with assistance of regional consortia.</li> </ul>
--	--

<p><b>Theme 2:</b> Europe's support to UNHCR and refugees world-wide</p>	
<p><b>Main Goals:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fundraising</li> <li>• Public Information</li> <li>• Political support</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Principle Objectives</b></p>	<p><b>Related Outputs</b></p>
<p><i>Fundraising:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The UK contributes more to UNHCR</li> <li>• Contributions are gradually secured from the private sector</li> </ul> <p><i>Public Information</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNHCR's image is recognised, respected and viewed as relevant.</li> <li>• The general public is better educated on global refugee issues and the protection needs of refugees.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information material prepared and distributed to key "establishment" allies and parliamentarians on UNHCR funding status and operational commitments.</li> <li>• Support, including advice on UNHCR and its operations, is provided to the national association RefAid, in its efforts to build partnerships with the corporate sector, trusts and foundations.</li> <li>• Regional, national and international media use UNHCR as a principal source for information on refugee and asylum issues.</li> <li>• A network of commentators who will counter misperceptions is established</li> <li>• Visits to schools of journalism are organised.</li> <li>• Posters, brochures, information leaflets, education packs are widely distributed to</li> </ul>

<p><i>Political support</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Influential stakeholders and actors within national authorities, institutions, the corporate sector and civil society support UNHCR and its protection concerns</li></ul>	<p>government, media, educational institutions and the general public.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Public awareness activities at the grassroots level (i.e. Refugee Week, exhibitions, and participation in seminars/conferences in the regions) are undertaken.</li><li>• Trade Unions, Religious leaders, the police, parliamentarians, MEPs are provided with information on specific caseloads and EU issues.</li></ul>
---	--