



# **COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN**

## **OVERVIEW**

**Country: Somalia**

**Planning Year: 2006**

## **2006 COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN FOR SOMALIA**

### **Part I: OVERVIEW**

#### **1. Protection and socio-economic operational environment**

After 14 years of civil war and instability (1991-2004), Somalia finally has a Transitional Federal Government (TFG). Since October 2002, the Somali National Reconciliation Conference was held in Kenya, under the auspices of the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD) with political and financial assistance of the wider international community, including the United Nations. The conference has successfully concluded by forming the Transitional Federal Institutions, consisting of the Transitional Federal Parliament, election of a Speaker and a President. The President appointed a Prime Minister, who created a cabinet comprising 42 Ministers, 42 Assistant Ministers and 5 State Ministers. Whilst the formation of the TFG continues, inside Somalia varying degrees of disorder and an absence of civil order continue to prevail. By February 2005, the TFG was preparing for its relocation from Kenya to Somalia so as to engage in grass-roots level peace building and reconciliation, establishment of regional and district administrations, encampment and retraining of militias and the formation of a police force.

At the height of the Somali crisis in the early 1990s, nearly half of the entire then 7.5 million population was either internally or externally displaced. Since then, over one million Somali refugees have returned home from exile, half of them with UNHCR assistance. An estimated 700,000 refugees have returned to *Somaliland* alone, while over 150,000 went home to the North-East. This leaves some 350,000 Somali refugees still in exile worldwide, 240,000 of them being hosted in the immediate region - Djibouti (18,000), Ethiopia (16,800) Kenya (157,700), Yemen (49,900). Of the 2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in 1992, 400,000 still live away from their original places of abode.

A protracted refugee situation, the refugee camps in the region host the most vulnerable of the exiled population, with many households being headed by women. In Kenya, 50% of households are estimated to be headed by women, while 49% of the population is children and adolescents. With the exception of the comparatively small residual groups of refugees from the North (Djibouti 8,000, Ethiopia 4,000, Kenya 3,000, Yemen 4,000-21,500)<sup>1</sup> refugees currently still in exile originate from South and Central Somalia, mainly from the regions of Gedo (Kenya 10,500), Lower Shabelle (Kenya 12,300, Yemen 1,000), Middle Shabelle (Yemen 2,500), Lower Juba (Kenya 92,000) and Middle Juba (Kenya 21,000), Banadir (Kenya 12,300, Yemen 21,500) as well as Bay (Kenya 6,000, Yemen 1,000). The origin of the refugees matches the

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<sup>1</sup> All figures referring to the number of refugees potentially returning to a certain area are estimates and subject to confirmation and adjustments at the time of voluntary repatriation. Figures for Yemen are extrapolated from a 2003 profiling exercise of a sample of 500 refugees/families and do not reflect data on all individual refugee families. Given that thus far Yemen has been an attractive country of asylum for Somali refugees, no major repatriation movements to the North have yet taken place. Thus the high figure for Yemen of refugees still hosted there, but potentially wishing to return to Bossaso/Bari region. The difference between an estimated 4,000 and 21,500 refugees who may intend to repatriate from Yemen to Bari region and other areas in the North is the difference between the percentage of refugees indicating that they originate from the North (4,000) and the percentage of the sample survey indicating that they would like to live there after return.

pattern of current insecurity and lack of governance. Their eventual return will depend on a tangible improvement in the security situation in these areas to allow for voluntary repatriation as a truly durable solution.

A large number of Somalis (informal estimates reach 1 million), who are not registered as refugees, live in all corners of the world and some of them may also want to return home, once conditions are conducive.

The voluntary repatriation from Djibouti and Ethiopia to the areas where reasonable levels of peace, security and governance prevail, namely *Somaliland* and North-East Somalia - *Puntland* - is in its final stages and expected to be completed during 2005 (Ethiopia) and 2006 (Djibouti). However, the large scale return of refugees to *Somaliland* and the North-East is placing great pressure on local authorities, resources and existing communities. Returnees from exile and IDPs who have gone home join already impoverished communities in their struggle for survival, while IDPs also struggle for protection. Data available for returnees from exile suggest that even years after return, their state of poverty is even worse than the Somali average. The voluntary return of thus far about one million refugees to Somalia continues to take place in one of the world's poorest countries, with nearly half the population living on less than US\$ 1 a day and only 10% rural literacy. Less than one-fifth of all children attend primary school and 20% of children die before five years of age. A quarter of the population has access to clean drinking water and over 60% of the population in urban areas is unemployed. Returnees are in an even worse situation than the population in general (90% without a regular source of income even years after return) and are joined in their vulnerable status by 400,000 IDPs displaced by the internal conflict, who, unlike the returnees, face serious protection problems due to lack of clan protection in addition to struggling for survival. Despite the tough daily efforts to make ends meet, returnees have stayed in Somalia rather than going back to free services and food rations in countries of asylum, because they feel that they enjoy more rights and respect at home. However, this situation is fragile. If not carefully supported in a community-based local area development framework aimed at alleviating poverty, fostering economic development as well as providing access to basic services, the voluntary return of large numbers of refugees could result in instability and conflict, rather than be an element of peace-building. No bilateral development aid is provided to the main areas of return due to the lack international of recognition of their authorities.

A devastating drought has affected the north and the riverine regions for the past five years, resulting in the collapse of the livelihoods of over 700,000 persons, with many others affected indirectly. The drought was followed by floods, hail storms and the Indian Ocean Tsunami, which affected 650 kms of the North East Somalia coastline as well as areas further south and made many of the already most vulnerable lose their last hopes of making a living. Environmental degradation results from charcoal making as a survival mechanism for the poorest and lack of rangeland management are major problems as well. High unemployment (60% in urban areas) and rampant under-employment, coupled with the drought leading to further urbanization, pose serious challenges to effective integration of returnees and IDPs in communities already facing great stress.

Despite its abject poverty, Somalia is host to thousands of foreigners, many real or potential asylum-seekers and refugees, mainly from Ethiopia, but also from countries as far afield as Iraq or Angola, who seek safety from persecution or work there. In *Somaliland*, a system for refugee status determination by UNHCR and search for durable solutions (mainly resettlement, in the absence of voluntary repatriation and local integration options) is in place. In *Puntland*, 2005 will see efforts to start establishing the same from scratch and 2006 will build on 2005 achievements to ensure international protection.

The rationale for UNHCR's presence is support to reintegration of returnees from Ethiopia, Djibouti and other countries, in close cooperation with country operations there, as well as ensuring compliance with international refugee and human rights law as well as the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

**Involvement with IDPs:** Due to the fact that UNHCR's interventions in the returnee programme in Somalia have always been community-based, IDPs have benefited from interventions, where they lived in returnee areas. Furthermore UNHCR Somalia actively participates in inter-agency work, based on the collaborative approach, to strengthen the protection and assistance response to the needs of IDPs. However, the latter already overstretches the limited staff capacity of UNHCR Somalia and proves a challenge. Often, when UNHCR staffs are on mission, MARS, leave or sick-leave, UNHCR's participation in this work cannot be upheld for lack of back-up staffing capacity.

It is true that UNHCR's role vis a vis IDPs in Somalia needs to be more clearly defined, beyond IDPs being beneficiaries of community-based projects in areas of return. In this regard, UNHCR Somalia is in the process of developing a policy paper for submission to Headquarters in line with IOM/46/2004-FOM/48/2004. A Senior IDP Advisor has been deployed to the field (in April 2005) to support the UNHCR Representation and the UN Country Team to strengthen and concretize strategies and action plans related to IDPs. In addition to the policy paper under preparation, the outcome of his work should result in a clearer definition of UNHCR's involvement with IDPs in Somalia. This being a process that will take several months to complete, a clearer definition of UNHCR's role in relation to IDPs cannot be included in the 2006 COP. As a strengthened involvement with IDPs would also have resource implications beyond the ceiling stipulated for the 2006 COP, this can also not be covered in this COP.

**Refugee Status Determination:** RSD in Somaliland will continue and its quality further improved, while in Puntland, based on the groundwork to establish an RSD system undertaken in 2005, 2006 will be the year when – based on the preparatory work undertaken in 2005 – RSD activities will increase, which is reflected in the 2006 Planning Figures table.