



COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN

OVERVIEW

Country: Sudan

Planning Year: 2006

2006 COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN FOR SUDAN

Part I: OVERVIEW

1. Protection and socio-economic operational environment

Since 1960s, Sudan has been hosting large numbers of refugees from neighbouring countries. The composition of the refugee caseload, the causes of their flight, asylum, legal status and living environment in Sudan are varied and complex. Chronic humanitarian crises and conflicts in the region and the political situation in the country have contributed to the protracted presence of refugees in Sudan and the flight of Sudanese nationals to neighbouring countries.

The Government of Sudan (GoS) is a **signatory of the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol. It has adopted a National Asylum Act in 1974.** Despite the long history of the Asylum Act and refugee presence in Sudan, the national asylum system and its institutional capacity remain weak. UNHCR has been present in Sudan since 1967 providing, in most of the situations, direct assistance to ensure effective protection and care for refugees. In 2006, **UNHCR will focus on building a viable national capacity for the establishment of an effective and fully-fledged asylum system, while reorienting its assistance programme towards the seeking of viable and eventual durable solutions for refugees.**

The planning figure for 2006 of recognised **Eritrean refugees** in Sudan has been established at 116,000 and most of them **have been in the country since 1970s.** The **repatriation**, which was launched in the year 2000, has assisted 96,000 refugees to return to their home country. During 2004 and the beginning of 2005, repatriation has significantly dwindled to negligible numbers due to the situation in Eritrea. Increasing violations of human rights, a deteriorating political situation, coupled with drought, are believed to be the causes for the drastic reduction in the number of refugees willing to return. In 2004, out of the 9,892 who voluntarily repatriated, only 1,629 returned from camps. In addition, a significant number of the remaining refugees have expressed their desire to remain in Sudan due to their long presence in the country, intermarriage, family ties and other links. The chances for the voluntary repatriation of the remaining refugees, who have been in Sudan for a period of over 30 years, are likely to remain slim.

The implementation of the 2002 Eritrean Cessation Clause through the Refugees Status Determination exercise (RSD) was concluded in October 2004. Based on its outcome, some **60,000 refugees have been accepted and some 25,000 persons (5,319 cases)** are still pending adjudication. In view of the situation in Eritrea, UNHCR has recommended to GoS to consider the remaining cases as refugees without the need to go through individual status determination.

The situation is further compounded by the continued presence of the rejected applicants and those who had not applied for RSD in the locations where refugees reside. These 25,000 persons have family links with the recognised refugees, which pose difficulties for separating the accepted from the rejected cases, especially when providing humanitarian assistance. Currently, **the overall**

number of recognised Eritrean refugees stands at 113,000 persons and the beneficiaries (mixed status) at some 96,000 persons.

A wave of **new arrivals** from Eritrea, which began in 2003, saw the number of those who sought asylum in 2004 increase to 3,000. The arrival of new Eritrean asylum seekers continued in 2005 at a rate of 12-20 persons/day and increased over the Easter period to over 300 cases. The trend is however expected to persist at the same pace of 12-20 persons/day unless drastic changes occur.

The majority of the **Eritreans are hosted in camps** and rural areas in the eastern regions of Sudan. After the first cycle of repatriation, the nineteen refugee camps have been consolidated into thirteen sites in Eastern Sudan. During 2005, the number of camps will be further reduced to four. More than 5,000 recognised refugees remain in the former camps that have now been closed down. Most of the refugees have become **dependent on relief and humanitarian assistance**. Their protracted presence in the camps offers little viability for self-reliance. The Government of Sudan (GoS) has not yet adopted local integration as a priority solution for these refugees.

The situation might further deteriorate if the demands of the Beja Congress for autonomy turn violent and the tension on the Sudan-Eritrea border escalates, generating instability in the Eastern regions. Such developments might affect UNHCR operations in the area.

In addition to the Eritreans, there are also **refugees** of concern to UNHCR, mainly for protection reasons, **from Uganda, DRC, Somalia, Ethiopia and other countries, which currently number 29,000**. They live in Khartoum, Juba and other areas. Where return is found to be safe and the situation conducive, UNHCR in collaboration with respective country partners will **facilitate the repatriation** of some 6,500 persons, including Ugandans, Ethiopians, Congolese (DRC) and Eritrean refugees within the framework of the respective Tripartite Agreements. Similarly, the repatriation of the Somalis and other refugees will be sought. There are also **Chadian refugees**, who arrived in 1980s to West Darfur. In 2005, the Office will assist some 8,000 who have registered for repatriation to return.

Western Sudan has witnessed conflict and internal displacement of a major scale since 2003. It is reported that **the Darfur Crisis** has affected some 2,4 million people, of which 1,8 are **IDPs** and more that 700,000 are in West Darfur. Due to the long conflict in the south, **a large number of Sudanese IDPs had moved to other parts of the country, including eastern Sudan.**

The operating environment and the political situation have however, drastically changed in the Southern Sudan following the signature of the Comprehensive **Peace Agreement** on 9th January 2005. Currently, an interagency survey on IDPs is being conducted to ascertain their numbers, profile and intention to return. The outcome of the survey might have operational implications which will be included in later plans. The return to stability in the south has also triggered **spontaneous return of Sudanese refugees** from the neighbouring countries.

As briefly described above, the humanitarian situation in Sudan is complex and interrelated. The presence of Ethiopian, DRC and Ugandan refugees in the South and Chadian refugees in Darfur regions, as well as their eventual repatriation, are managed in relation with the “**Chad-Sudan Special Operations**”. The “**Annual Programme**” for the Sudan is therefore planned and implemented in the context of this “**Special Operation**” but it also relates to UNHCR’s East & Horn of Africa programme.

2. Operational goals and potential for durable solutions

The focus of the Sudan operation has been so far on the protection and provision of assistance for refugees. In the coming 3-5 years, in collaboration with GoS and other partners, UNHCR will pursue **a major shift in its focus, strategy and approach, from providing care and maintenance assistance and promoting repatriation to ensuing complementary durable solutions**; especially for those refugees who have been in the country for a long time; including promotion of refugees productive capacities, self-reliance, resettlement, local integration and other broader options of finding solutions.

The Commissioner for Refugees (COR) has been the main UNHCR government counterpart in the Sudan. In the coming 2-3 years, BO will **focus on building the capacity of a wider network of government counterparts and relevant NGOs** for enhancing their ability and greater assumption of responsibility for effective protection and sustainable assistance for refugees.

The summary of the main country objectives include:

■ **Shift from the protracted care and maintenance assistance to self-reliance as a critical step in the pursuit of durable solutions of the camp based refugees in Eastern Sudan.**

For more than thirty years, the majority of the Eritrean refugees have been living in camps, which have rendered them dependent on relief assistance. UNHCR, in collaboration with other partners, will support the GoS to mobilise the productive capacities of refugees through skills training, income generation and other activities in pursuit of enabling them to become self-reliant and participatory in finding solutions. BO will advocate with national and regional authorities for the provision of cultivable land.

■ **Promotion the local integration of the refugees who opt to remain in Eastern Sudan, including the rehabilitation of refugee hosting areas (Development through Local Integration).**

During the last years, repatriation has been pursued as the best durable solution option. The policy will remain in place as far as return is voluntary and the conditions are conducive. Nevertheless, a significant number of the refugees in the Eastern regions have developed coping mechanism and strong ties with local communities through their long presence, birth of the second generation, intermarriage, similarity of ethnicity and culture, economic transactions, etc. Many refugees consider local integration as their preferred option. The host communities in refugee areas also have developed deep relations with the refugees. Since 2004, UNHCR has been supporting refugee hosting areas with projects for improving the service and rehabilitation of the environment, particularly through the SOLSES programme. In consideration

of these issues, **UNHCR will advocate with GoS to adopt the local integration strategy as one of the complementary tools for durable solutions and development of refugee hosting areas.**

- **Facilitation and promotion of voluntary repatriation, when/where conditions are conducive for the refugees of different nationalities (Eritrean, Ethiopian, Ugandans, Congolese and Somali, and others).**

The implementation of this strategy will be pursued in line with the existing tripartite agreements with respective countries (TRC and modalities of 2005 for Eritrean refugees) as well for other refugees (Ugandan, Ethiopians and DRC refugees) while new tripartite agreements will be concluded with other countries of origin, especially for Somali refugees.

- **Resettlement of refugees in a third country as a complementary and mutual form of durable solutions, especially for the protracted refugee situations.**

Special mechanism and procedures will be set up to pursue resettlement as a strategic avenue for enhancing protection for selected numbers of refugees in urban areas and solutions for those in the camps.

- **Establishment of effective national asylum system that ensures all refugees and asylum seekers have appropriate legal status and protection in accordance with international standards.**

The Government of Sudan adopted the Asylum Act in 1974. GoS will be assisted to develop sustainable mechanisms, procedures and to train its cadre for regulating the Act and adequately responding to the protection needs of asylum-seekers and refugees in Sudan. This effort will include the hand over of the responsibility for Refugee Status Determination process to the GoS.

- **Special protection and assistance for those at risk and vulnerable refugees such as unaccompanied minors, teenage asylum seekers and refugees, elderly, women head of household, girls, children and others of those in camps and non-camp based refugees.**

Special monitoring, response and support systems will be developed to protect them from potential abuse, violence and exploitation due to their circumstances and social status.

- **Ensuring gender equality among the refugees and host in all programmes in Sudan.**

Specific indicators will be established to ensure this policy is implemented and women/girls and those in need of special assistance are addressed and women are given equal opportunity to access services and participate in the management of projects and other activities.

UNHCR in Sudan will strive to improve the quality and efficiency of its operations for supporting and effectively realising the above mentioned objectives through the following:

- Building effective partnership (GoS institutions, UN agencies, NGOs and Civil Society) to concentrate efforts and maximise resources for improved

quality of programme delivery and enhanced protection of refugees/ persons of concern;

- Improving the quality of services and protection in camps in accordance with international agreed standards. Measures to prevent SGBV will be mainstreamed in all interventions, as well as awareness on HIV/AIDS (health, education, sanitation etc.).
- Ensuring gender equality among the refugees and host population in all programmes in Sudan.
- Enhanced oversight, accountability and efficiency of UNHCR and its partners in Sudan to improve compliance with UNHCR's policies and standards.