

UNHCR 2003 Country Operations Plan

Executive Summary

Yemen

Context and Beneficiary Populations

Yemen signed the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol on 18 November 1978. It continues to accept Somalis as refugees on a *prima facie* basis. The continuation of civil conflict combined with economic hardship and drought in the southern and central parts of Somalia has led to continuous arrivals into Yemen. In addition to that, Yemen is hosting asylum seekers and refugees from Ethiopia (1,438), Iraq (193), Palestinians (123), Sudan (76) and Eritrea (75).

Yemen's proximity to the Horn of Africa makes the country vulnerable to population flows. The continuous precarious economic, security, environmental and social problems in the countries of the Horn of Africa has led to larger population movements from these countries into the Gulf Countries residing in or transiting through Yemen. Moreover, should the situation in Somalia further deteriorate, the number of asylum seekers may increase.

During the period 1 January – 28 March 2002, UNHCR registered some 3,287 Somali new arrivals. The new arrivals were received and assisted at Mayfa'a's Transit Centre before they were transferred to Kharaz Refugee Camp. Although, some 80% of the new arrivals leave the camp after few days from their arrival, the remaining 20% (300- 350 persons per month) represent a substantive increase in the total camp population of 9,446 (Dec. 2001). The camp population is expected to increase to 14,000 by the end of 2002. Many new arrivals eventually reach urban areas (Aden, Sana'a, Al Hodeidah and Taiz) and contact UNHCR seeking legal counselling, financial and medical assistance. A large percentage of this group leave Yemen illegally to the GCC countries seeking employment, education and/or medical treatment.

UNHCR expects that Somalis assisted and registered caseload in Yemen will increase by some 12,000 persons during 2002. This increase represents some 17% in the total number of Somalis registered and assisted with UNHCR (69,468 Somalis in Dec 2001). In view of the current tension at the Horn of Africa region UNHCR has also developed a contingency plan to assist up to 30,000 new arrivals in Yemen.

With regard to the Somali refugees 87% originated from the southern and central parts of Somalia. The group is consisted of some 39 % who are below the age of 18. In term of gender some 48% are women. 24% of the total number of Somali refugees registered with UNHCR are residing at Kharaz refugee camp.

In 2000 the Yemeni Government established an inter-ministerial National Committee for Refugee Affairs with view of co-ordinating its refugee policies. The Committee is to draft and develop a national refugee law and administrative procedures to deal with asylum seekers and refugees, co-operate with UNHCR to establish a sustainable registration system for urban refugees and advise the government on all refugee related issues. UNHCR has been working closely with the National Committee to provide technical assistance to draft the national refugee law as well as to finalize and implement the refugee registration system.

UNHCR Yemen will provide assistance to vulnerable refugees including primary education, health and vocational training to camp refugees, refugee status determination and basic health assistance for urban refugees in Aden and Sana'a. This is in addition to seeking third country resettlement for eligible cases, assistance to vulnerable urban refugees as well as assistance for voluntary repatriation.

Capacity building of national authorities and local NGOs has become a priority objective. Intensive efforts will continue provide training and technical assistance to the National Committee as well as to the Immigration and Passports Authority to facilitate their role in assuming responsibilities such as screening, registration and documentation of mandate refugees in urban areas as well as develop national refugee legislation.

With regard to the Somali refugees; assistance and repatriation policy are co-ordinated with UNHCR offices in the Horn of Africa and with the Branch Office for Somalia. Similarly for the non-Somali asylum seekers arriving to Yemen via third country. In this respect access to the country of origin information combined with regular up date and harmonization of policy with the relevant offices in the region provides the basis for harmonized criteria for refugee status determination and assistance.

The assistance programme in Yemen is implemented through eight NGOs comprising four internationals and four nationals. UNHCR Yemen will continue its work to enhance the capacity of local/ national NGO while working adhering to the basic operational modality of PARinAC.

The World Food Programme provides basic food ration for all refugees in Kharaz camp and supplementary food for the refugee-feeding centers in Kharaz refugee camp, Mayfa'a transit center and the primary school and clinic in Basateen (Aden).

Principal Programme Goals and Objectives

UNHCR Yemen's primary objectives include refugee protection and assistance, technical support to the Government of Yemen and seeking durable solutions. Durable solutions will be sought through repatriation and/ or local integration.

In formulating these objectives, several parameters will continue to be taken into account, namely:

- Addressing the special needs of refugee women and children. Including those related to basic rights in the areas of health, primary education, training on self sufficiency/ local integration, women representation in camp committees, participation /employment in facilities set up to serve refugees and prospects for durable solutions (voluntary repatriation and/ or third country resettlement as a member of vulnerable group);
- Upholding the principles of PARinAC in dealing with NGOs on the implementation of activities related to refugee protection, assistance and durable solution.
- Special emphasis will be put on raising additional resources through embassies of traditional donor countries and national NGOs in the GCC countries, for earmarked and un-earmarked donation to budgeted and unbudgeted assisted activities to finance and strengthen UNHCR assistance programme in Yemen;

- Capacity building of the government counterpart in the area of refugee law and urban refugee registration in order to enable the authorities to assume its responsibility in the protection of refugees while, continuing collaboration with locally based embassies of traditional resettlement countries to promote third country resettlement for eligible cases;
- Working closely with the Regional Coordinators for Refugee Women and Refugee Children, NGOs partners to develop and implement an effective programme aiming at providing maximum vigilance to legal protection of refugee women and children to prevent potential sexual exploitation.