
Update on UNHCR's operations in Africa

A. Situational analysis including new developments

In 2016, the Africa region¹ continued to host the largest number of persons of concern to UNHCR. Multiple crises across the continent remained unresolved, with some 1.5 million refugees and asylum-seekers newly displaced since the beginning of 2015. In the past five years, the total number of displaced and stateless people in Africa doubled from 10.2 to 20.5 million.

Despite growing insecurity, extreme poverty in refugee-hosting areas and communities and funding shortfalls, Africa – where half of the world's top ten refugee-hosting countries are located – continued to demonstrate exceptional hospitality towards growing numbers of displaced people.

Food insecurity remained a key concern on the continent. Funding shortages at the global level and climate-related events precluded the provision of adequate food supplies to refugees, approximately 74 per cent of whom saw their food rations reduced between September 2015 and February 2016. While levels of food assistance improved in some operations, significant cuts continued to be carried out. Nutrition monitoring, which was conducted in 71 refugee sites in Africa in 2015, found that levels of malnutrition were above the emergency threshold in 25 per cent of the sites surveyed, elevating the risk of acute malnutrition, stunting and anaemia.

Central Africa and the Great Lakes

The Central African Republic experienced renewed violence and displacement ahead of the presidential elections, which culminated in the inauguration of a new President in March 2016. Refugees hosted in three out of four neighbouring countries (Cameroon, Chad and the Republic of the Congo) were able to participate in the elections. However, despite hope for stability, insecurity prevailed in parts of the country, and some 391,000 Central Africans remained internally displaced. A total of 451,000 refugees continued to be displaced in Cameroon (259,000), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (95,000), Chad (69,000) and the Republic of Congo (28,000).

Crises in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo continued to have an impact on the Great Lakes subregion. Election-related violence that began in April 2015 triggered the flight of 295,000 Burundians to the United Republic of Tanzania (157,000), Rwanda (81,000), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (28,000), Uganda (28,000) and Zambia (1,000). While the number of arrivals in countries of asylum decreased slightly in the first half of 2016, an increase in outflows was reported in July and August 2016, when some 20,000 Burundians fled the country, mainly to the United Republic of Tanzania. With respect to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, insecurity and violence against civilians in the east of the country triggered further displacement. Some 1.7 million

¹ In the present update, the Africa region refers to sub-Saharan Africa only.

people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remained internally displaced, and the number of Congolese refugees in neighbouring countries – over half a million – continued to rise, particularly in Uganda.

East Africa, including the Horn of Africa

In East Africa, including the Horn of Africa, the situation in South Sudan continued to deteriorate. Food insecurity and renewed conflict forced nearly 200,000 South Sudanese to flee to neighbouring countries in 2016, bringing the overall number of refugees from South Sudan to over 1 million in the subregion. Some 1.6 million individuals also remained internally displaced.

Insecurity in large parts of southern and central Somalia persisted, making prospects for the large-scale return of 1 million Somali refugees a daunting challenge. Since efforts to facilitate voluntary repatriation began in December 2014, increased stability and availability of basic services in some areas of origin made the return of more than 30,000 Somali refugees possible.

The crisis in Yemen also continued to affect the subregion. According to government and non-governmental organizations' sources, an estimated 90,000 refugees, returnees and third-country nationals fled to Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan since March 2015.

Southern Africa

In southern Africa, large numbers of individuals travelled in mixed migratory movements to South Africa, where processing large numbers of asylum claims remained challenging. In Mozambique, the escalation of violence resulted in the forced displacement of thousands of people fleeing to Malawi. Most have since returned.

West Africa

As the humanitarian situation in north-eastern Nigeria worsened, an internal level-3 emergency was declared to assist and protect nearly 1.8 million people displaced across Nigeria. Violence continued to escalate, with insurgents attacking civilian populations, including across borders, and some 156,000 Nigerian refugees remained in neighbouring countries. This also triggered internal displacement in Cameroon, Chad and Niger.

In Mali, insecurity continued to be a concern in the northern and central regions of the country. In 2016, some 5,000 Malians fled to Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger, while thousands were newly displaced inside the country. Slow progress in implementing the peace agreement, which was signed in June 2015, hindered large-scale returns, even though approximately 3,000 refugees and small numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) returned spontaneously.

B. Progress and challenges in achieving the global strategic priorities

Redoubling efforts in the search for durable solutions

With the support of the government authorities of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Uganda and Yemen, the High Commissioner's Global Initiative on Somali Refugees (GISR) continued to create opportunities for dialogue and generate ideas to seek sustainable solutions for Somali refugees. Efforts focused on mobilizing the Somali diaspora and the private sector to ensure the sustainability of return to Somalia. Within the framework of the GISR, the Office designed a regional solutions strategy for Somali refugees, which subsequently formed the basis of the enhanced plan that was developed in June 2016 for the voluntary return of Somali refugees from Kenya.

In the context of the comprehensive durable solutions strategy for Rwandan refugees, the implementation of the cessation clauses is ongoing. Voluntary repatriation and engagement

with countries of asylum on durable solutions, including local integration and permanent residency, is also continuing, with many host countries carrying out information campaigns on solutions.

A regional meeting was convened in Abidjan in July 2016 to help strengthen efforts to achieve durable solutions for some 40,000 Ivorian refugees in West Africa and ensure the sustainable reintegration of returnees in Côte d'Ivoire. With repatriation from Liberia resuming in December 2015, approximately 19,000 Ivorians had returned home by mid-September 2016.

Voluntary repatriation

Due to greater stability in some parts in the Central African Republic, more than 6,500 Central African refugees spontaneously returned. Regarding Rwandan refugees, 4,600 individuals returned to Rwanda between October 2015 and August 2016, bringing the total number of returns to more than 202,000 since 2001.

Following the Government of Kenya's announcement in May 2016 to close the Dadaab refugee camps, UNHCR enhanced efforts to identify solutions for Somali refugees in Kenya, including through voluntary return to Somalia. In June 2016, UNHCR presented an enhanced plan of action to the Governments of Kenya and Somalia, which outlined a process aiming to decrease by 150,000 the number of refugees in the Dadaab camps that stood at 343,000, including 327,000 Somalis, as of June 2016. The planned reduction will be achieved including through the relocation of non-Somalis, the resettlement of vulnerable refugees, and the voluntary repatriation of an estimated 50,000 Somalis. In this regard, the Government of Kenya has reaffirmed that returns to Somalia will be voluntary and dignified, in line with the tripartite agreement signed by UNHCR and the Governments of Kenya and Somalia in November 2013.

Local integration

UNHCR continued to support local integration, particularly in situations where cessation clauses have been invoked (Angolans, Namibians and Rwandans). In general, instances where local integration was fully achieved remained limited, with a few exceptions, namely in the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. Nevertheless, a number of countries are continuing to develop programmes to promote the inclusion of refugees in national structures, such as education, health and employment. With respect to southern Africa, integration has become increasingly difficult in some countries due to a resurgence of xenophobia and related violence.

Resettlement

Over 39,000 resettlement submissions for refugees in sub-Saharan Africa were processed in 2015, which represents an 11 per cent increase when compared to 2014. In the first half of 2016, the cases of over 19,000 refugees were submitted for resettlement, mainly from first countries of asylum, including Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania, and there were 14,600 departures.

In 2015, more than 24,000 refugees departed for resettlement, including over 11,000 refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and nearly 7,000 Somali refugees. By mid-2016, UNHCR had surpassed its goal of referring at least 50,000 refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo for resettlement by 2017.

Promoting a favourable protection environment

The protection landscape in Africa continued to be largely favourable, despite growing concerns over shrinking asylum space, mainly due to measures taken by some governments to address national security threats. Of particular concern in the region were the protection challenges associated with the forced return of Nigerian refugees. In June 2016, the Government of Nigeria, with UNHCR's support, hosted a Regional Protection Dialogue on

the Lake Chad Basin with a view to addressing protection concerns. At the close of the Dialogue, the Governments of Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria adopted the “Abuja action statement”, reaffirming their commitment to respecting the principle of non-refoulement and promising to take concrete steps to address the most pressing protection needs of affected populations.

Most countries on the continent continued to face challenges related to mixed movements. In southern Africa, mixed flows included Burundians, Congolese, Ethiopians, Malawians, Mozambicans, Somalis, Zambians and Zimbabweans. In West Africa, although movements were largely intraregional, those taking place across Niger and Libya towards Europe remained significant. In East Africa, including the Horn of Africa, high numbers of people travelled to Yemen by taking dangerous sea journeys, while trafficking and smuggling increased protection risks for populations on the move from Ethiopia and Sudan, including unaccompanied and separated children. The United Republic of Tanzania continued to be a country of transit and destination for mixed movements, which originate mainly from Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia. Some individuals also continued onwards to southern Africa.

A proliferation of criminal networks involved in trafficking continued to be reported along migratory routes in Africa. The limited capacity of border officials to effectively identify people with international protection needs moving across borders and the lack of appropriate referral mechanisms hindered access to protection and solutions.

In order to provide a meaningful alternative to onward movement, UNHCR offices in Africa aimed to improve services available, including access to quality secondary and tertiary education, as well as vocational training and livelihood opportunities. Enhancing support for victims of trafficking, abuse and violence remained a priority. Legal pathways for admission, including extended family reunification, student visas and labour mobility schemes, were also explored and pursued to help secure durable solutions for refugees. UNHCR also remained actively engaged in regional processes to promote refugee protection in situations of mixed movements.

There is growing momentum to address statelessness in Africa. Following the adoption of the draft protocol on the right to nationality in Africa by the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights in August 2015, African Union Member States approved, during the African Union Summit in Kigali in July 2016, the examination of the protocol by a technical committee. This was a critical step towards the formal adoption of the protocol.

In addition to regional efforts led by the Economic Community of West African States, several States took concrete steps towards addressing the risk of statelessness. In Côte d’Ivoire, approximately 4,600 stateless persons acquired Ivorian nationality by mid-2016, and the processing of applications continued, with thousands of others expected to obtain Ivorian nationality by year end. As of 31 July 2016, 22 sub-Saharan African States were party to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and 14 to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. Mali and Sierra Leone acceded to both conventions in May 2016.

With respect to internal displacement, the development of national legislation and policies to assist and protect IDPs progressed slowly. Out of the 54 members of the African Union, 40 are signatories to the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (the Kampala convention), and by the end of June 2016, 25 had acceded to it. Of the State parties, however, none have yet to incorporate the dispositions of the Kampala Convention into their national laws.

C. Financial information

In October 2015, the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner’s Programme approved the budget of \$2.2 billion for Africa. Due to new and ongoing emergencies, the budget increased to \$2.7 billion by end-August 2016. This was mainly due to

supplementary budgets established for the emergencies in Burundi, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen situations. As at 31 August 2016, contributions for UNHCR's operations in Africa amounted to \$847 million.
