



COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN

Executive Committee Summary

Country : Arab Republic of Egypt

Planning Year : 2006

2006 Egypt Country Operations Plan

Part I: Executive Committee Summary

(a) Context and Beneficiary Populations

Political context

The Arab Republic of Egypt ratified the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol in May 1981. Upon accession to the 1951 Convention, Egypt entered into reservations to articles 12 (1) (personal status), 20 (rationing), 22 (1) (access to primary education), 23 (public relief and assistance) and 24 (labour legislation and social security). Egypt is also a state party to the 1969 OAU Convention governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa.

Egypt has yet to take steps towards the adoption of domestic refugee legislation to enable to put in place the necessary arrangements for the reception and registration of refugee applicants and determination of their refugee status. These important functions are still performed by UNHCR.

UNHCR's role

Refugees are mostly dependent on the assistance provided by UNHCR and non-governmental organizations to meet their subsistence, educational and material needs. In 2006, UNHCR will continue to provide assistance to the most vulnerable refugees in Egypt. Meanwhile, UNHCR will increase focus on achieving self reliance for refugees through vocational training, job placement activities, and building the capacity of refugee community groups to better assist refugees and asylum seekers.

UNHCR will continue to work together with the Egyptian Government to ensure the protection of refugees and asylum-seekers. UNHCR will conduct a number of joint workshops for government officials, lawyers, judges and journalists focusing on the implementation of the key principles and standards of the 1951 Refugee Convention, including the importance of refugee status determination procedures, issuance of documentation to refugees and asylum seekers, the principle of *non-refoulement* and UNHCR guidelines on detention of asylum seekers. Other initiatives will include enhancing protection networks, supporting legal aid schemes and providing protection monitoring at border points and detention facilities. With reference to public information, UNHCR will continue to disseminate information on its mandate and activities to a broader spectrum of the Egyptian population.

UNHCR Cairo will directly implement the registration of asylum seekers, refugee status determination and issuance of ID cards for refugees and asylum-seekers; protection training of Government officials, judges, NGO personnel and journalists; resettlement processing; identification of sustainable self-reliance activities; and public awareness information and education.

UNHCR and its implementing and operational partners will ensure that gender and age considerations are fully incorporated in all their operations, from registration and documentation to community services and durable solutions. The protection of women

and children will remain a programme priority and UNHCR will continue to work with local and refugee communities in the areas of advocacy, prevention, support, care, treatment, and training to improve UNHCR partners' capacity to respond to HIV/AIDS. UNHCR will also continue to provide support and assistance to survivors of SGBV.

Overview of beneficiary populations

At 1 January 2005, there were 20,300 refugees in Egypt recognized by UNHCR under its mandate. Sudanese constituted 73% of the refugee population, followed by Somalis at 18%. The remainder included refugees from 27 other countries mainly from Africa. In addition there were around 8,700 asylum seekers at 1 January 2005. With the anticipated repatriation of up to 2,000 Sudanese refugees in 2006 and the resettlement of some 4,000 refugees during the same year, the planning figure for 2006 is a total of some 24,000 refugees and asylum seekers.

In addition, an estimated 40,000 to 70,000 Palestinian refugees are reported to be in Egypt although only 245 of them are registered with UNHCR Cairo.

Despite the cessation of hostilities between the Government of Sudan and the SPLM/SPLA, southern Sudanese have continued to come to Egypt in large numbers. During 2004 UNHCR Cairo had registered some 8,000 new southern Sudanese applicants.

Somali nationals constitute the second largest refugee population in Egypt. The power struggle for control of the town of Kismayo starting in 1999, instability in Merka, fighting in some areas of the south, continued harassment of minority groups and the inability of the transitional national government to restore peace and order in Mogadishu are some of the main reasons leading to increased refugee flows into Egypt. At the beginning of 2003, there were some 1,600 Somalis recognized by UNHCR under its mandate. By 01 January 2005, that number more than doubled to reach 3,810 persons. Unlike in previous years, where a sizeable number of Somali refugees were coming to Egypt after having lived for some time in other countries (in particular, Libya, Saudi Arabia and Yemen), recent arrivals come directly from Somalia. The majority is from minority clans and come from a mix of rural and urban backgrounds, and have very little education. Because of cultural and linguistic differences, Somali refugees are generally isolated from the host society and rely on extended family relations and clan affiliation for support.

Refugee Population by age group and gender

Age Group	Female	%	Male	%	Total	%
0 - 4 Years	1068	5%	1292	6%	2360	11%
5 - 17 Years	2147	11%	2462	12%	4609	23%
18 - 59 Years	4559	22%	8607	42%	13166	65%
60 Years or Greater	115	1%	93	0%	208	1%
Total	7889	39%	12454	61%	20343	100%

Asylum-seekers by age groups and gender

Age Group	Female	%	Male	%	Total	%
0 - 4 Years	363	4%	397	5%	760	9%
5 - 17 Years	560	6%	577	7%	1137	13%
18 - 59 Years	1632	19%	5159	59%	6791	77%
60 Years or Greater	29	0%	35	0%	64	1%
Total	2584	30%	6168	70%	8752	100%

Policy issues

In the absence of national asylum legislation and the requisite institutional arrangements and capacity, the functional responsibilities for virtually all aspects of refugee protection are carried out by UNHCR under a framework agreement signed with the government in 1954 which requests the office to support the government by undertaking registration, refugee status determination, voluntary repatriation, resettlement and assistance activities on behalf of the Egyptian government. The 1954 agreement remains a useful framework in committing the Government of Egypt to maintain a generous admission policy; to observe the principle of *non-refoulement*; to grant UNHCR an unhindered access to any asylum seeker or refugee detained for illegal entry or stay in the country; and to provide temporary residence permits to recognised refugees and asylum seekers.

Since the mid 1990s, UNHCR Cairo has been facing a growing individual refugee status determination exercise which has entirely absorbed the attention of the office. Despite successive modest increases in human resources to keep up with the growing refugee status determination process and efforts to streamline the procedures, the volume of asylum applications has continued to grow. A number of “push” and “pull” factors have been in play, including the lure of resettlement. It has to be stressed, though, that resettlement from Egypt has served over the years as an indispensable protection measure and a durable solution for many refugees. Besides, resettled refugees would bring with them useful skills, resources and cultural diversity to the receiving society. It could also be argued that when refugees have access to orderly movements through predictable resettlement offers, the incentives for embarking on often dangerous irregular movement may be diminished, thus undercutting the criminal networks that strive on the predicament of desperate people.

Assisting the Government of Egypt in assuming responsibilities for refugee status determination and other related asylum process has topped UNHCR’s agenda for many years and continues to remain a matter of priority for the office.

Despite progress towards a peace settlement, the situation in Sudan continues to be problematic and to generate outflows of people who may be in need of international protection.

Linkages to other country operations

With the signing of the comprehensive peace agreement between the Government of Sudan and the SPLM/SPLA, there are now greater prospects for a large scale voluntary repatriation movement of Sudanese over the next two to three years. UNHCR Cairo foresees the return of up to 2,000 southern Sudanese refugees in 2005 and another 5,000 in 2006. The repatriation operation is expected to be completed in 2007. For other refugees with no prospect of local integration or voluntary repatriation in the foreseeable future, UNHCR will continue to rely on resettlement as the most appropriate durable solution.

Capacity and presence of partners

In 2006, Caritas Egypt will be responsible for assessing the needs of refugees and providing assistance, health care and community services in support of self-sufficiency and self-reliance within a new community-based approach as well as vocational training in the areas of sewing, carpentry, car and electrical repair.

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) will be responsible for the education sector as well as vocational training for refugees who are in a position to achieve self-reliance. It is planned that CRS will assist some 4500 refugee and asylum seekers students with education grants and some 500 refugees with literacy classes.

Refuge Egypt will be responsible for counseling and medical assistance for pregnant refugee women, victims of torture and TB cases.

The Refugee Ministry (church) of St. Andrews and All Saints Cathedral will provide individual education assistance to refugee children who are not able to enroll in Government or special refugee schools. English language courses will continue to be provided for adult refugees by St. Andrews.

El Mobadra will be responsible for managing a revolving loan fund to help refugees with small business development. El Mobadra opened a new office in Ard El Lawaa at the beginning of 2005 to serve the refugees residing in this area and will open a second office in Kilo 4.5 within the next two months. .

Family Planning Association will continue to provide basic health education (including AIDS/HIV prevention) and information on reproductive health.

The United Nations Volunteer (UNV) programme managed by UNDP Egypt will continue to recruit UNVs to provide essential support to UNHCR Cairo protection staff in a number of crucially important areas: refugee status determination interviewing, identification of resettlement needs, family reunification processing, registration and documentation, country of origin and legal research and protection monitoring.

MAAN will continue to co-operate with UNHCR in identifying SGBV cases and assisting on implementation of the HIV/AIDS project.

The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) will continue to support UNHCR's work by providing assistance to a medical clinic in a refugee

residential area which will serve refugees, asylum seekers and the local population. UNHCR is seeking to strengthen its partnership with NCCM to effectively address refugee education.

Sacred Heart Church will continue to run the special refugee schools that have been in operation for many years now. It will also continue to provide assistance to needy asylum seekers and displaced persons.

SOS Kinderdorf will provide assistance to separated refugee children.

SUDIA will provide vocational training and other support to refugees and asylum seekers.

UNAIDS will continue to work with UNHCR on assistance to refugees with HIV/AIDS.

The Forced Migration and Refugee Studies Programme of the American University in Cairo will provide research support on refugee and asylum issues.

Presence and roles of other UN and international organisations

The scope of the operational cooperation with other UN agencies is very limited as their programs are focused on areas outside of Cairo while UNHCR's assistance programmes are implemented in Cairo. Assistance to refugees is not included in the country programme of other UN agencies. Meanwhile, UNHCR has made increased efforts to ensure that refugee rights are addressed within the national agenda of the CCA/UNDAF and the Millennium Development Goals.

UNHCR will continue to participate in the UN Disaster Management Team and will work with UN specialized agencies such as WFP and UNICEF on issues related to provision of food to targeted refugee groups and refugee children. UNHCR will continue to liaise with UNRWA on issues related to contingency planning for the Gaza border area.

UNHCR will also continue its cooperation with the League of Arab States (LAS), notably through starting a refugee law course in Arabic at San Remo, through the establishment of an internship programme for LAS officials within UNHCR, the establishment of a Centre for Documentation on Refugees within the Secretariat of LAS, the provision of experts on refugee law within the Human Rights Department of the Secretariat and a joint research project on Palestinian refugees.

(b) Selected Programme Goals and Objectives

In line with UNHCR's global objectives, the following are the operational goals of UNHCR Cairo for 2006:

- Strengthening Egypt's implementation of the 1951 Convention/1967 Protocol by promoting the establishment of a national legislative framework on asylum and building asylum institution and the requisite capacity remains UNHCR Cairo's overall goal for 2006.

- Asylum seekers continue to have access to fair and efficient UNHCR refugee status determination procedures and are effectively protected against refoulement.
- Refugees for whom voluntary repatriation is not a real possibility in the immediate future are provided with targeted assistance to enhance their capacity to become self reliant in Egypt. In particular, refugee women and children benefit from special measures designed to meet their specific needs. Elderly stateless persons of concern to UNHCR are protected and continue to receive essential assistance as appropriate.
- Sudanese refugees registering for voluntary repatriation will be assisted to return home in safety and dignity through organized return programmes.
- Vulnerable refugees who are unable to return home or to remain in Egypt are properly identified for resettlement to a third country. Women-at-risk, survivors of torture, separated refugee children for whom resettlement has been found to be in their best interest, and the disabled or traumatized refugees who need specialized treatment unavailable in Egypt will remain the main beneficiaries of UNHCR's resettlement programme.
- Strengthening the organizational and operational capacity of NGOs for a more effective partnership for protection and solutions.
- Enhancing public awareness and understanding of the refugee problem and the value of asylum to generate active tolerance and strengthened community relations.

Local Settlement of Urban Refugees in Egypt

There are 107 elderly stateless persons in Egypt of concern to UNHCR. They are of mainly Armenian origin and came to Egypt between 1914 and 1926. Their ages range between sixty and ninety years old. The gender distribution is eighty per cent female and twenty per cent male. Despite all efforts by UNHCR over the years, they have been unable to obtain Egyptian citizenship.

Resettlement of Refugees from Egypt

UNHCR Cairo has continued to rely on resettlement both as a tool of international protection and as a durable solution. UNHCR's resettlement program in 2004 benefited over 4000 refugees and is likely to reach the same target in 2005. The vast majority, over 90%, of all refugees referred for resettlement continue to be Sudanese, stemming from both their share (72%) of the refugee population in Egypt and the high receptivity of resettlement countries to Sudanese refugees.

Assuming therefore that the recently concluded peace agreement between the Government of Sudan and the SPLM is effectively implemented in 2005, it is estimated that a maximum of 500 Sudanese refugees who present resettlement needs over and above lack of local integration prospects will be referred for resettlement. In addition, UNHCR expects that resettlement is likely to be employed as a protection response mechanism for an estimated 300 Somali refugees and 200 refugees of Ethiopian, Eritrean and other nationalities. All in all, UNHCR anticipates a need to refer a total of 1,000 refugees in 2006 capacity permitting.

Voluntary Repatriation of Sudanese Refugees from Egypt

In 2006, it is planned that some 5000 refugees will return to Sudan as the conditions improve in the south of the country.