

**COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN**

**Country: Egypt**

**Planning Year: 2002**

## **Part I: Executive Committee Summary**

### **(a) Context and Beneficiary Population(s)**

- **Political Context:**

Egypt has continued to play a major role in the region as a peace mediator in the on-going peace negotiations and diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict in the Middle East and in some neighbouring African countries. Due to the relatively better security conditions, political stability and the generous attitude of the authorities, Egypt continues to be a favourite safe haven for asylum seekers from the neighbouring countries. Large-scale displacements of civilian population in search of safety and welfare have continued due to on-going conflicts, drought and destabilisation in some countries in the area. Despite the initiatives to accelerate the reconciliation process, the leaders of opposing groups are yet to form national alliances to have control on the overall situation. The effect of these on-going moves towards peace together with continued internal opposition remains to be seen on the continued level of asylum seekers approaching Egypt and other countries in the region. In view of the volatile situation in the neighbouring countries, an increasing number of asylum seekers continue to approach RO Cairo. In recent months an average of nearly 1,000 asylum seekers per month have been registered for status determination. Some 13,191 asylum seekers are currently registered for interviews. Around 78% of the asylum seekers are from Sudan and 13% are from Somalia.

- **Protection issues:**

The Arab Republic of Egypt is party to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. Egypt is also party to the 1969 OAU Convention. However, there is no legal framework or national legislation governing the granting of asylum in the country. In the absence of a national legislation and an institutional capacity of the host government, UNHCR provides the necessary protection to refugees under its mandate for international protection through conducting RSD and coordinating with the relevant authorities to prevent detention, deportation or refoulement. As the refugees do not enjoy all the socio-economic rights due to Egypt's reservation on certain articles of the 1951 convention, UNHCR ensures their basic rights by addressing their life-sustaining and basic needs. There is no immediate prospect of voluntary return for the majority until the situation in countries of origin improves. This is only possible through lasting political solutions which are not yet in sight.

- **UNHCR's role:**

UNHCR assures reception of asylum seekers and processing of their refugee applications. In view of the lack of self-reliance opportunities and local integration, UNHCR will continue to assist the most needy refugees, including vulnerable groups, while exploring durable solutions for them. The assistance will be provided to promote protection of refugees in the context of burden sharing with the host government. Since the Government and the NGO partners in the country do not have the necessary resources and the sufficient capacity to provide life-sustaining and basic assistance to refugees, UNHCR will continue to cover their basic needs while identifying and pursuing appropriate durable solutions for them.

RO Cairo as a designated Area Service Centre will provide technical backup and support services to the countries in the region as appropriate. Harmonisation of criteria for protection, assistance and durable solutions in the region will be pursued, in line with CASWANAME strategy. UNHCR through public information and promotional activities and co-operation with the Arab League and other inter-governmental organisations will gain support for the refugee cause and mobilize partnerships with Governments, NGOs and the civil society at large.

- **Overview of each beneficiary population/theme:**

#### **Beneficiary population:**

As at 31 December 2000 the total urban refugees and elderly stateless persons amounted to 6,840 persons, consisting of Sudanese (41%), Somalis (38%), Yemenis (10%), Sierra Leonians (2%), Stateless Persons (2%) and a smaller number of refugees of various other nationalities. Around 47% of this population are female. Around 34% of the total population are children between age of 0-17 including boys and girls. The 137 elderly stateless persons included in this

population are of Armenian origin majority of whom are single females / widows and over 60 years old.

**Theme:**

Through regular contacts and missions, ongoing efforts will continue to develop a consistent and co-ordinated approach with those countries in the region that are dealing with similar caseloads. Through harmonisation of criteria and practices in the region irregular movements will be limited and their impact mitigated. External relation and public information activities will continue to be co-ordinated in the region to create greater awareness of and support for UNHCR and refugees and persons in need of international protection. Technical and administrative support services will be provided in the capacity of an Area Service Centre to the countries in the region.

• **Policy issues:**

The UNHCR policy on refugees in urban areas with appropriate adaptation, resulting from the ongoing evaluation, conducted by EPAU (Mr. S. Sperl's study on Egypt), will permit the development of specific guidelines for the protection, assistance and durable solutions for urban refugees in Egypt. The appropriate understanding and endorsement of such central policy by the government counterpart and NGO operational partners would be one of the main challenges for a meaningful and successful implementation. The UNHCR policies on refugee women, gender equality, children and older persons would remain other major guidelines for the planning, the implementation, the monitoring of the office activities and overall operations. However, it is difficult to launch special projects to meet the specific needs of women and children in addition to mainstreaming these needs under the annual programme when funding is below requirements. Other alternatives are being explored i.e. Sheikha Fatma Fund, Private Sector for contributions etc..

• **Linkage to other countries within a defined "situation":**

RO Cairo will continue, as before, to co-ordinate with countries in the Middle East and North Africa. In line with the recommendations adopted at the sub-regional meetings held in Cairo, Damascus and Amman, further consultations and meetings will be organised in the region to discuss issues and themes leading to more harmonised protection, assistance, gender mainstreaming and external affairs policies and orientations.

• **Capacity and presence of implementing partners:**

The main implementing partner Caritas Egypt will be responsible, in co-ordination with UNHCR, for assessing the needs of individual refugees and for providing care and maintenance assistance. In view of the large number of refugees, spread across a wide urban area with varying degree of needs and social discrepancies, the current capacity of Caritas is regarded as being limited to enable effective and comprehensive need assessment and social counselling. The other implementing partner with a much smaller project will be Family Planning Association (refugee women and reproductive health). The existing implementing partners have limited capacity to promote refugee self-reliance due to the lack of adequate expertise, own resources and appropriate mandate under the NGO national framework in Egypt. There are no national or international NGOs known to have the capacity of assisting refugees from their own resources. Partnership with other competent agencies or institutions will however be sought in the future to reach a common understanding for alternative solutions for selected refugees to create conditions conducive for a certain reasonable degree of self reliance.

• **Presence and roles of other UN agencies and international organisations:**

RO Cairo will continue to participate in the UN inter-agency forum, under the Resident Co-ordinator system, to consolidate the results already achieved and to explore further co-operation to improve cost-effectiveness. No UN agencies are involved yet in assisting refugees under their programmes in Egypt. With the signature of the Co-operation Agreement between UNHCR and the League of Arab States (LAS), RO Cairo will maintain a high level representation with the LAS Secretariat and diversify contacts to cover other departments. The objective will be to explore collaborative arrangements and co-operation to improve the situation of asylum seekers and refugees in the Arab region. The major resettlement countries will be approached to provide funding and support for the resettlement operation to be co-ordinated by UNHCR.

**(b) Selected Programme Goals and Objectives**

**Name of Beneficiary Population: Urban refugees of various nationalities and elderly stateless persons.**

Main Goal(s): Protect, assist and identify durable solutions.

Principal Objectives	Related Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All asylum seekers have access to RSD procedures in conformity with UNHCR highest standards, including a fast track procedure for vulnerable cases, and are adequately protected under current arrangements with GOE.</li>   <li>• Vulnerable / most needy refugees and elderly stateless persons are protected and granted life-sustaining and basic assistance as appropriate.</li>   <li>• Refugee women and children benefit from special measures designed to ensure their well being and to meeting their specific needs.</li>   <li>• Refugee children benefit from the new arrangements on access to public education. Children of asylum seekers also admitted to some benefit as per agreement with Ministry of Education.</li>   <li>• Selected refugees, particularly needy women improve household income and/or prospects for self-help.</li>   <li>• Gain more support from public at large and widen up scope for partnership to include NGOs, civil society and private sector.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RSD procedures streamlined and eligibility interviews carried out efficiently with adequate and well-trained RSD staff.</li>   <li>• Registration/Verification successfully undertaken.</li>   <li>• Refugee and asylum seekers respective cards issued and residence status regularised.</li>   <li>• Government and law enforcement officials trained.</li>   <li>• Technical assistance in drafting national legislation and establishing national registration of asylum seekers/refugees provided.</li>   <li>• Regular subsistence allowances and one time financial assistance provided to vulnerable and most needy cases according to need assessment.</li>   <li>• Medical assistance provided according to criteria on a cost-sharing basis.</li>   <li>• Assistance provided to needy refugee children to attend primary and lower secondary schools. Girls participation ensured.</li>   <li>• Skill training, reproductive health, hygiene and other courses organised for selected cases.</li>   <li>• Various external relations, promotional and private sector fund raising activities carried out in the region building up on the role of the Goodwill Ambassador.</li> </ul>

Goal(s): Pursue and facilitate durable solutions for refugees.	
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Output</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refugees meeting resettlement criteria are accepted by resettlement countries.</li> <li>Refugee requesting voluntary repatriation assisted to repatriate in conditions of safety.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resettlement submission made with the help of recruited and well-trained staff.</li> <li>Emergency and special categories of protection cases given priority.</li> </ul>
<b>Theme: Regional Co-ordination and Support Services.</b>	
Goal(s): Attain a harmonised regional approach and improve conditions of asylum in the region.	
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Outputs</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refugees of same origin and situation enjoy similar treatment resulting in limited irregular movements.</li> <li>Conditions of asylum seekers and refugees in the Arab region improved through strengthening of the protection space and increased commitment from governments to fundamental principles of international protection.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional consultations conducted leading to consistency in criteria and practices for protection, assistance and durable solutions for similar refugees and situations.</li> <li>Collaborative arrangements and co-operation with League of Arab States established.</li> </ul>
Goal(s): As an Area Service Centre provide support services to the region.	
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Outputs</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Countries in the region lacking adequate technical abilities and manpower are able to overcome difficulties in meeting operational challenges.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Technical back up and advisory services provided through missions, consultations, training and exchange of staff.</li> </ul>