

SPCP – Kenya

March 2008

Background

The Strengthening Protection Capacity Project is entering its third year of implementation in Kenya. Through the SPCP process, UNHCR has engaged government, civil society, local communities and refugees in successfully addressing some of the persistent challenges in ensuring protection to the over 200,000 refugees residing in Kenya. The development of a comprehensive response is a continuing process, and SPCP has become an integral component to Kenya's operational planning cycle.

In 2007, the SPCP-Kenya benefited from generous financial support from the governments of the United Kingdom and of Switzerland.



Achievements 2007

Promoting Equal Benefit and Protection of the Law

Throughout 2007 UNHCR partnered with the Legal Resource Foundation for the training of twenty refugees and four Kenyan citizens who are active in refugee communities and were interested in providing legal assistance to refugees. The training comprised six one week sessions on a wide range of issues from the law pertaining to business associations to fundamental principles of democracy and good governance. The trainees have thereby been equipped to assist members of their respective communities in general legal matters and advocacy.

An un-anticipated and beneficial corollary to the project was the formation of the *Humanitarian Unity in Diversity Paralegal Programme*: a multi-national service organization established by refugees to assist refugees which is formally registered with the Government of Kenya. These new legal advocates will be supported in their services to refugees by UNHCR and partners who intend to continue the training programme in 2008.

Refugee Identification Cards

A critical gap in refugee protection in Kenya has been the absence of government issued ID cards to all registered refugees. Throughout 2007, UNHCR worked with the Kenyan National Bureau of Registration for the verification of UNHCR data on registered refugee populations with those of the government. This time intensive process was completed, and sample cards were printed by the NBR. The SPCP-Kenya includes funding for the printing and distribution of 100,000 refugee ID cards, with the expectation that the printing of the cards to the remaining 60,000 verified refugees will be modest. The distribution of an initial 20,000 ID cards to Somali refugees in Nairobi started in January 2008, and will be followed by additional distributions in Dadaab refugee camps.

Strengthening UNHCR Refugee Status Determination Capacity

Through this SPCP-Kenya funded project, the Office was able to take measures and introduce new procedures that appreciably improved the quality of first instance and appeal procedures and significantly reduced the backlog of cases pending in Kakuma, Dadaab and Nairobi. Among the improvements introduced to the RSD procedures in all three locations was a fast track mechanism to give priority to vulnerable individuals, written reasons for negative decisions, an appeal review system, and measures to combine registration and RSD interviews where possible. In addition, in Dadaab, the project supported the identification of over 10,000 persons who were found to be

Kenya citizens. The de-registration of the Kenya citizens is in process and will be completed in the following months.



Training and Capacity Building for Refugee Governance

The passage of “The Refugees Act, 2006” in the latter part of that year was a welcome development. The new Act shifts the management of refugee affairs to the Government and opens many avenues for heightened capacity building efforts. To that end, the SPCP-Kenya has helped to support a comprehensive training programme to ensure that the many officials charged with implementing the provisions of the new Act, receive the necessary training to discharge their responsibilities in accordance with international protection principles.

In particular, SPCP-Kenya has facilitated a comprehensive programme of training to ensure a practical understanding of the key principles of refugee protection. The initial focus was to address those government agencies directly in contact with refugees and asylum seekers in Kenya, most notably the police and Provincial Administration. In total, over 500 government officers received three days training on international protection and domestic refugee management. Furthermore, the project expanded training sessions to include military personnel, NGOs and refugee communities for another 270 persons.

The general body of knowledge on refugee issues amongst government officers is very low, and capacity building projects will remain an integral part of future SPCP

funding submissions to strengthen the respect for protection principles.

Creating a safe and healthy environment

SPCP projects are helping to reduce risks of violence and exploitation faced by refugees in Kenya, in particular by refugee women and children. These include projects aimed at enhancing information and awareness of SGBV in urban settings and taking practical measures to reduce risks in refugee camps, such as improving access to education for refugee girls and improving medical care for SGBV survivors. For instance, the project “Take us to school” resulted in over 2000 urban refugee children enrolling in schools, and the local schools welcoming the children.

SPCP Kenya is also helping to empower refugee women by expanding their opportunities for self-reliance. With additional UNCHR funding from the High Commissioner’s special projects, urban refugee women are provided skills development and literacy training.



Way forward

SPCP is mainstreamed into UNHCR Kenya’s regular programme from January 2008. The office will continue to seek partnerships and funding for initiatives designed to respond to protection gaps, not sufficiently covered by the annual programme budget. Priority areas include projects to **improve access to health, education and social services**, projects to combat and prevent **sexual and gender based violence**; and projects to improve **refugee self-reliance** in ways

which would also benefit local communities. In addition, the efforts to **capacitate government** institutions in preparation for the eventual handover of all aspects of refugee management to the Government will remain as a high priority.

More information on the Strengthening Protection Capacity Project, including its Kenya initiative, can be found at www.unhcr.org/spcp