

Southern Sudan (Supplementary Programme)

Main objectives

Assist the spontaneous and organized voluntary repatriation of 110,000 refugees in 2004-2005 to facilitate their return from neighbouring countries and ensure their sustainable reintegration in southern Sudan; assist some 80,000 IDPs returning to the same areas as refugees; verify and promote conditions that are conducive to voluntary return in safety and dignity; address legal and protection issues before departure to facilitate repatriation; and identify needs and durable solutions for specific groups.

Impact

- After almost 15 years of absence from south Sudan, UNHCR re-established its presence in the strategic locations of Juba, Rumbek and Yei in August 2004 to assist spontaneous returnees and to prepare the ground for organized returns from countries of asylum. A regional operations plan was established for the repatriation and reintegration of Sudanese refugees.
- Logistics assessments were completed and a regional logistics report was compiled. It determined the feasibility and indicative requirements for providing transport convoys to take Sudanese refugees to areas of origin in Sudan (mainly from neighbouring countries). It also defined the supply chain on seven road transport corridors linking camps and settlements in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda.
- Given the poor state of infrastructure and the destruction wrought by decades of war in southern Sudan, community-based reintegration projects were identified during the last quarter of 2004 in the areas of education, health, water, livelihoods activities, co-existence and capacity building.
- UNHCR developed key partnerships with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) secretariats and the humanitarian community in

order to ensure sustainability of returns and reintegration.

- UNHCR had free access to most return areas and protection monitoring was undertaken.
- UNHCR initiated a process to establish a UN-wide protection strategy for the return to south Sudan.
- UNHCR, in collaboration with FAO and an international NGO, commissioned a comprehensive land tenure and property study to prepare a clear picture of a complex socio-legal situation, including practical options for securing land rights and resolving property and related disputes.

Working environment

The context

At the end of 2004, there was a sense of optimism that the Naivasha peace negotiations would finally result in the signing of a comprehensive peace agreement between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM/A). This historic event was expected to herald an end to the long-standing humanitarian crisis in south Sudan and the start of recovery and reconstruction programmes in the area. The presence of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) around southern Sudan continued to complicate the situation (though towards the end of the year, LRA's activities were observed to have reduced in intensity). According to authorities in south Sudan, there were 200,000 spontaneous returns to safe zones, with significant numbers settling around urban areas.

In the context of a joint planning and implementation mechanism, UNHCR pursued a reintegration strategy based on the development of framework agreements with UN agencies and NGOs. It was based on the concept of the 4Rs initiative (Repatriation, Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction). In the case of Sudan, the principle of the 4Rs

was adapted to include Resettlement (5Rs) and was specifically referenced in a number of the Peace Protocols and promoted by the Government of Sudan, SPLM/A and UNHCR's implementing partners. The 5Rs programming approach will ensure linkages between emergency return/reintegration of displaced populations and recovery/development activities – drawn from and integrated into the UN Area Based Planning and Community Driven Recovery Process.

To this end, UNHCR devised a dual approach to address the needs of spontaneous returnees and residents in areas of origin while developing the absorption capacity of receiving communities and strengthening protection programmes. The two cornerstones of UNHCR's planned activities are thus: quick-impact Community-Based Reintegration Projects (CBRPs), and protection interventions to prevent renewed displacement.

Constraints

In the implementation of activities in south Sudan, UNHCR encountered many problems of access, owing to insecurity in certain areas and the poor state of the roads nearly everywhere. The presence of landmines, as well as LRA activities in the western Equatoria area were further unwelcome obstacles.

Funding

Limited funding for UNHCR's South Sudan operation in 2004 severely affected UNHCR's capacity to complete a number of preparatory activities under Phase I of its Regional Operations Plan. These included surveys, assessments in Sudan and countries of asylum, the establishment of a presence in southern Sudan, registration and profiling exercises in six countries of asylum (Central African Republic, DRC, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda), installation of appropriate telecommunications equipment and Minimum Operating Security Standards (MOSS) compliant logistical support, and community-based projects to improve the long-term absorption capacity of receiving communities.

Achievements and impact

Protection and solutions

UNHCR supported the Sustainable Return Teams structure – a forum comprising the Government of Sudan, SPLM/A, UN agencies and NGOs to facilitate the return process in the areas of protection and coordination. In this regard, UNHCR chaired the inter-agency Protection Working Groups in Khartoum and Rumbek. The Office provided protection advice and leadership to the working group on protection-related challenges, thereby contributing to the establishment of a single set of clearly understood and universally respected standards for the protection of refugees and IDPs. In 2004, UNHCR continued to monitor protection activities and to provide protection training for authorities and others, both in Khartoum and in the south.

Activities and assistance

In south Sudan, UNHCR concentrated on the development of the humanitarian assistance intervention strategy and assessment of needs in accessible areas. Potential implementing partners were identified and community-based projects were developed. Due to the uncertainty of the peace process, however, little was done on sectoral interventions. In the education sector, through joint and collaborative action, the key stakeholders in the region developed a comprehensive strategy to provide education services to Sudanese refugees. UNHCR participated in the regional INSPIRE initiative (Innovative and Strategic Partnerships for Refugee/Returnee Education). Through a Norwegian Refugee Council deployment, 330 school desks for four schools in Juba city were manufactured by UNHCR, in collaboration with UNICEF, OCHA and the Ministry of Education. Non-food items for 40,000 refugees were purchased and stored at Rhino camp in Uganda in readiness for emerging needs.

Organization and implementation

Management

UNHCR opened two new offices in south Sudan, a suboffice in Rumbek and a field office in Yei. Three international staff were appointed and five international staff were on mission status. Six national staff and one SURGE deployee were also recruited.

A special operations unit for Sudan was established in May 2004 to support the repatriation operation. In August 2004, in view of the deteriorating situation in Darfur and Chad, High Commissioner Ruud Lubbers appointed a Director of Operations for the Sudan Situation, which included Chad/Darfur. He is based in Khartoum and supported by a unit at Headquarters.

Working with others

UNHCR in south Sudan continued to involve UN, donor and NGO partners in assessments, planning and monitoring of the situation in the south. The major focus during the year was on assessment and planning for sustainable return, reintegration and protection. Other collaborative activities included participation and involvement of UNHCR in key forums such as INSPIRE and UNDP/World Bank-led Joint Assessment Mission (JAM) processes.

Overall assessment

UNHCR's preparatory activities in 2004 remained limited due to the lack of donor response in the absence of a comprehensive peace agreement. Nevertheless, the appointment of key staff and the missions undertaken by multi-disciplinary UNHCR experts in key sectors strengthened UNHCR's role in protection and reintegration planning processes.

The Office also strengthened its ability to uphold its protection mandate through improved monitoring and coordination with all stakeholders. The office also strengthened its presence by opening three offices in strategic locations to be able to liaise closely with key players in south Sudan, including the SPLM/A, NGOs and other UN agencies operating in the area.

Offices

Juba

Rumbek
Yei

Partners

Government agencies

SPLM/A Secretariats
SRRC

NGOs

No agreements with NGO partners were signed in south Sudan during the reporting period. However, the following partners worked closely with UNHCR on protection and assistance assessments:

Comitato Collaborazione Medica
Norwegian Peoples Aid
Norwegian Refugee Council

Others

ILO
IRC
UNDP
UNICEF
UNOCHA
WFP
WHO