

# ERITREA

## INITIAL OBJECTIVES

- Protect and assist Sudanese and Somali refugees. Seek durable solutions for these groups.
- Promote and facilitate the voluntary repatriation of some 90,000 Eritrean refugees from Sudan and smaller numbers from Yemen and Djibouti.
- In co-operation with the Government of Eritrea, UN Agencies and NGOs, provide initial reintegration assistance to returnees and returnee-receiving communities, simultaneously engaging development actors to address medium to long-term reintegration needs.
- Ensure that returnees enjoy basic rights and equal access to services.
- Maintain a focus on vulnerable persons such as female heads of household, children, adolescents, the disabled and the elderly.

## MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS, PROGRESS ACHIEVED, AND CONSTRAINTS

### Somali and Sudanese Refugees in Eritrea

The security situation in some areas of Somalia deteriorated in the second half of 2001 and also in the first half of 2002. Hence, the voluntary repatriation operation initiated last year was suspended. Furthermore, Eritrea saw an increase in the number of new

Somali arrivals by an average of 50 persons per week in January 2002. However, this number levelled out to some 50 persons per month by the second quarter of 2002. The current population of Somali refugees at the Emkulu camp has therefore grown to some 2,530. Although the majority of new asylum-seekers are claiming to have originated from Mogadishu and the southern areas of Somalia, a limited number of newly arrived families are coming from Northwest Somalia and are being accepted by the Government of Eritrea on a *prima facie* basis. In addition, UNHCR noticed that a significant number of the 60 Somalis who repatriated on a voluntary basis last year returned to Eritrea.

As in 2001, there are still no prospects for voluntary repatriation for the Sudanese refugees accommodated in the Elit Camp in the Gash Barka region in 2002. Due in part to the successful resettlement programme, the number of refugees in the camp fell to some 462 persons at the end of June 2002. During the first part of the year, UNHCR concentrated its efforts on life-sustaining assistance, international protection and the improvement of social conditions in the camp. UNHCR raised serious security concerns, especially focusing on the civilian character of the camp with regard to protection issues for the Sudanese refugees.

### Progress as measured against indicators

Impact Indicators	Actual Progress
Somali and Sudanese refugees, including new arrivals, receive life-sustaining assistance.	All new arrivals were accommodated in camps and received material assistance in a timely manner.
Basic rights of refugees are respected.	Gradual progress in improving awareness on the rights of refugees and in setting procedures according to international standards.

Performance Indicators	Actual Progress
Somali and Sudanese refugees have access to basic assistance.	All Somali and Sudanese refugees received food rations and non-food item packages.
Undertake a nutritional status survey in both camps to ensure the well-being of the refugees.	The Government agreed to the implementation of a nutritional status survey with the involvement of an international NGO. The survey will be conducted during the second part of the year.
Transport Somali new arrivals from the point of entry to the Emkulu camp.	707 Somali asylum-seekers were transported from the point of entry to the camp, registered, and provided with initial assistance.
Relocate the Somali refugee camp from Emkulu to a new location.	Not yet achieved, however, discussions with the Government are continuing.
Install and update a database containing essential information on refugees and returnees.	Database installed and will be updated regularly.

### **Voluntary Repatriation Operations for Eritrean Refugees in Sudan, Yemen and Djibouti**

Two tri-partite meetings took place during the first half of 2002. The main topic of the second tri-partite meeting in Geneva was to discuss the implementation of the Cessation Clause for Eritrean refugees announced by UNHCR in April 2002. This clause stated that Eritrean refugees will lose their *prima facie* refugee status as of 31 December 2002, implying that all refugees willing to repatriate to their country of origin will have to register for voluntary return by the end of the year, at the latest.

The Eritrean refugees who do not opt for voluntary repatriation will have two choices; they can file a claim for refugee status, which will have to be determined on an individual case-by-case basis; or they can choose to remain in the country of asylum and regularise their status through the national legal mechanisms (migration, naturalisation, etc.). During these meetings, all parties reaffirmed their commitment to the repatriation process and agreed that the goal of repatriating 162,000 refugees must be achieved. Several key decisions were made at these meetings. The parties agreed to expand the scope of the voluntary repatriation programme to include both camp-based and urban refugees, and also set 31 December 2002 as the deadline for all Eritrean refugees in the Sudan to register for one of the aforementioned two options.

In this context, the binding decision taken by the Ethiopia and Eritrea Border Commission in April 2002 was of great importance. The

decision was accepted by both parties and should contribute to stabilising the region to which most refugees are returning.

From January to June 2002, UNHCR in co-operation with the Government of Eritrea and partner NGOs facilitated the voluntary return of 18,100 refugees in 45 convoys. These figures were lower than expected, as the target of 90,000 persons to be repatriated during 2002 was reduced to 60,000, and this number will most likely not be reached. There are several reasons for the lower numbers. The personal considerations of the refugees with regard to when to return (e.g. children's school terms and continuation of income-generating activities including the seasonal harvests in Sudan) is one of the issues. In addition, the differences between the available social infrastructure and assistance in the camps and in the areas of return, and a lack of accurate and timely information on conditions in Eritrea, also contributed to the lower numbers.

Very few refugees opted to repatriate from Yemen and Djibouti during the first half of the year.

On the Eritrean side, the repatriation assistance programme has three components: transportation, distribution of a reinsertion package of food and non-food items, and initial reintegration assistance. Returnees were transported by bus and truck from the camps in Sudan to the reception/transit centre in Tesseney. After registration and medical screening, they were then transported to their final destinations by some 150

trucks/buses and escorted by two ambulances. During their initial stay in the reception/transit centre (an average stay of two days per family), the 18,100 returnees received hot meals, HIV/AIDS and mine awareness sensitisation, and other assistance from the concerned governmental and UN agencies.

The 18,100 returnees all received a reinsertion package, which, compared to last year, was improved and included some additional items to address needs identified through assessments and consultations with the returnees. Each family also received a reinsertion cash-grant to start small income generation or agricultural activities. Non-food items were fully available and all families were able to receive their packages in a timely manner. The only setback was with the distribution of local mats, which experienced some delays in the production pipeline. The mats were first included in the packages at the beginning of the year.

Systematic returnee monitoring continued and provided UNHCR with useful information on the situation of the returnees in both the reception/transit centre upon arrival, and in their areas of final destination (within eight weeks of arrival). Some 20 per cent of the returnee population were covered through sampling, and results clearly showed that returnees did not face any major protection problems. Although the delay of land allocation to returnees was cited as a problem, this delay was due to the limited capacity of the local administration, rather than to discrimination.

97 per cent of the returnees chose to return to the Gash Barka region. Among this 97 per cent, some 40 per cent decided to return to the Goluj Sub-Zoba, and another 40 per cent returned to the Tesseney Sub-Zoba. This gave rise to serious problems related to the absorption capacity in affected areas. The regional administration, with UNHCR support, intensified efforts to enhance the absorption capacity in the affected areas and to identify other areas to which refugees could return. Compounding the difficulties

of limited absorption capacity was the severe lack of implementation capacity at the national and regional level. This hampered project implementation and delayed support to the reintegration process.

The decentralised government-led reintegration mechanism, which was put in place in September 2001, has advanced both procedurally and practically. At the end of June 2002, 47 reintegration projects were approved by the Zonal Recovery Committee (ZRC) and were ongoing in the following sectors: water, sanitation, health, education, community services, income generation and agriculture. The Gash Barka Regional Administration and national and international NGOs are implementing these projects. In addition, UNHCR proceeded with direct procurement in water equipment for key projects, and also drugs, which are still lacking in health centres in returnee areas. In regards to project implementation, the major constraint was the lack of implementation capacity in the country due to the shortage of personnel and equipment. This resulted in slow execution, particularly with the construction projects.

Co-ordination of reintegration programming and implementation also improved. In February 2002, UNHCR, UNDP and the Gash Barka Zonal Administration (GBZA) signed a Letter of Understanding (LOU) formalising their joint commitment to a comprehensive, co-ordinated reintegration strategy for Gash Barka recovery activities. UNDP became an official participating member of the ZRC. UNHCR and UNDP are evaluating the possibilities for joint programming and implementation of reintegration and recovery activities in Gash Barka. In April 2002, a similar tri-partite LOU was signed with UNICEF. Since the signing of the LOU, UNICEF has committed human and financial resources, and identified reintegration activities in the sectors of water and sanitation, and health and child protection. These programmes will be implemented to complement or support UNHCR activities in the areas of return. In June 2002, the Government of Eritrea and

the UN Country Team adopted a “Joint Strategy for the Reintegration of Returning Refugees within the Overall Scheme of Eritrean Recovery.” The first phase of this

strategy foresees a multi-disciplinary needs assessment and programme formulation mission, which is tentatively scheduled for September to October 2002.

**Progress as measured against indicators**

<b>Impact Indicators</b>	<b>Actual Progress</b>
Eritrean refugees are repatriated in safety and dignity.	18,100 Eritrean refugees were repatriated to their final destinations of return.
Eritrean refugees benefited from initial reinsertion assistance.	18,100 (5,745 families) received reinsertion packages, including cash-grants.
Returnees have adequate access to essential services.	Mechanisms for approval and implementation of reintegration projects improved with greater government, UN and NGO participation and co-ordination at the regional level, particularly with the development of the ZRC process. Overall involvement of international NGOs increased.

<b>Performance Indicators</b>	<b>Actual Progress</b>
9,000 returnees transported per month.	An average of 3,000 returnees were transported per month.
No delay in the distribution of the reinsertion package and cash-grant.	18,100 (5,745 families) received the reinsertion package and cash-grant upon arrival at the reception/transit centre in Tesseney, with the exception of local mats.
Number of reintegration projects approved and implemented in the first months of 2002.	47 reintegration projects approved by the ZRC and ongoing.
Development actors are involved and actively participating in the reintegration.	The signatures of LOUs with UNDP and UNICEF, and agreement with the Government and UN Agencies on a joint strategy for Reintegration of Returning Refugees established.
Comprehensive monitoring system developed to assess the situation of returnees in Eritrea.	The system is in place and the conditions of a representative sample of 3,620 (20 per cent) returnees assessed.

**REVISED OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES FOR JULY - DECEMBER 2002**

**Somali and Sudanese Refugees in Eritrea  
Somali Refugees**

UNHCR will continue to provide life-sustaining assistance and international protection to Somali refugees, with special attention to the needs of women and children. This will imply implementation of income-generating activities targeting women, such as skills-training and the improvement of education services in the camp. To this effect, UNHCR will fund the training of refugee teachers and the upgrading of educational facilities. In addition, the estimated 50 new arrivals per month will receive basic assistance until the end of the year.

**Sudanese Refugees**

Although special attention will be given to the women in the camps through community service activities, the main objective will be to reach an agreement with the Government of Eritrea on the terms for individual refugee status determination in the Elit Camp.

A nutritional survey will be undertaken for both populations during the second half of 2002.

### **Voluntary Repatriation Operations for Eritrean Refugees in Sudan, Yemen and Djibouti**

The main revision in objectives will be to reduce the number of returns expected in 2002 from 90,000 to 55,000 camp-based refugees. This figure appears to be more realistic given the current trend. In addition, UNHCR will also focus its attention on the return of the urban caseload from Sudan whose registration will commence in August 2002. If the registration and logistical movements start simultaneously, it is expected that some 15,000 urban returnees will opt for voluntary repatriation between

September and December 2002. Limited assistance, such as transportation, distribution of food (to be agreed upon with WFP) and a cash-grant, is foreseen for urban returnees.

The focus of the reintegration programme will be on increasing the implementation capacity of the concerned governmental departments. The joint Government/UN multi-sectoral needs and programme formulation mission will further engage recovery and development actors in addressing the reintegration needs of returnees.

### **Financial Data (USD)**

<b>Annual Programme Budget and Trust Funds</b>			
<b>Initial Budget</b>	<b>Revised Budget</b>	<b>Total Funds Available</b>	<b>Obligation Level</b>
28,145,330	27,762,873	13,702,252	13,612,775