

YEMEN

INITIAL OBJECTIVES

- Protect refugees from Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan, Iraq and several other neighbouring countries.
- Care for and assist 12,600 destitute and vulnerable groups of Somali refugees living in Al-Gahine camp, pending their relocation to a new permanent facility named Al-Kharaz camp that will allow them a degree of self-sufficiency.
- Run basic health care and education facilities as well as provide training for increasing numbers of refugees in major urban centres, notably 25,200 Somali refugees in Aden and Sana'a.
- Help develop appropriate government policy on asylum-seekers and refugees by providing training and equipment to relevant government institutions.
- Facilitate voluntary repatriation to countries of origin and seek resettlement opportunities for vulnerable and security cases. In this context, facilitate the voluntary repatriation of 1,200 Somalis to different areas in their country of origin.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS, PROGRESS ACHIEVED AND CONSTRAINTS

Somali Refugees

A monthly average of 570 Somali asylum-seekers entered Yemen during the first half of 2000. By end June, 3,404 asylum-seekers (2,424 male, 768 female and 212 children) had been registered at the Mayfa'a Transit Centre in the south. The number of Somali refugees registered in the country at that time stood at some 58,400. New arrivals received lodging, food and medical care, pending screening, registration and transfer to Al-Gahine camp. The influx of Somali asylum-seekers is expected to continue, although at a slower pace. The repa-

triation of Somali refugees continued, albeit at a slower pace compared to same period in 1999. UNHCR screened applicants thoroughly to ensure that the desire to repatriate was genuine and thereby minimise the number of refugees who simply return to Yemen following repatriation. UNHCR assisted a total of 206 refugees to repatriate to Mogadishu in four flights.

UNHCR continued implementing a programme for the provision of basic humanitarian assistance in Al-Gahine camp, in co-operation with three locals and four international NGO partners. The programme aims to meet the basic needs of refugees, including health care, education, income generation, counselling and the provision of water and sanitation services. Among activities implemented for women and children are supplementary feeding, provision of one meal for school children, vaccination and distribution of sanitary pads. A regular supply of kerosene for cooking purposes was distributed in the camps. Non-food items, such as blankets and mattresses, were distributed to selected refugees in January. UNHCR funding covered the costs of hospitalisation of 280 refugee patients who required special treatment.

Construction of the new permanent camp in Al-Kharaz began in November last year. By the end of June, 150 shelters (together with latrines and water-supply connections), as well as infrastructure including an office, staff accommodation, a warehouse for food and non-food items, a power generator, a school and a health clinic (first phase) had been completed. A total of 147 refugee families have moved into the camp.

Budget reductions during the year had a negative impact on durable solutions, capacity-building measures and efforts to encourage self-sufficiency of the refugees. Owing to budget cuts, for example, the pace of construction at Al-Kharaz slowed during the second quarter and technical standards for shelter

were modified. There is no guarantee that funding can be made available to complete the camp in 2000. Construction may come to a halt by early October when available funds will run out, at which time the two camps will have to be serviced and managed for an extended period, since the planned closure of Al-Gahine Camp may not be feasible. Budget cuts also mean that, as from 1 July, several activities may have to be discontinued, including income generation, assistance to the Immigration Authority and maintenance of camp facilities. Other activities will have to be implemented at a considerably slower pace, such as voluntary repatriation. The Government of Yemen may view the delay in the relocation of refugees from Al-Gahine to Al-Kharaz as a breach of UNHCR's commitment, as the site was handed over to UNHCR specifically for this purpose in September 1999.

In the urban areas of Aden and Sana'a, health, education, counselling, income generation services and limited individual cash assistance continued according to plans. Counselling plays an important part in the protection of the urban group of refugees, as it addresses a variety of social and work-related problems they face.

Non-Somali Refugees

While the Government of Yemen recognises Somali asylum-seekers on a prima facie basis, it accepts non-Somalis only on a temporary basis. The total number of non-Somali refugees and asylum-seekers rose to some 6,800, including Eritreans (43 per cent), Ethiopians (40 per cent), Sudanese (8 per cent), Iraqis (5 per cent) and other nationalities (4 per cent). UNHCR's activities on behalf of non-Somali asylum-seekers concentrated on individual status determination, counselling, provision of health care and finding durable solutions, including resettlement and repatriation. UNHCR's limited interviewing capacity in the face of increased demand remained a problem. By the end of June, there was a backlog of over 300 cases awaiting interviews. Government reluctance to accept refugees from other Arab countries remained unchanged, leading UNHCR to pur-

sue a proactive resettlement policy for deserving cases. During the period under review, a total of 53 cases (196 persons) were accepted for resettlement, mainly Iraqis and Sudanese, mostly on protection and physical safety grounds. UNHCR's co-operation with the Immigration Authority and jail visits continued to secure prompt release from detention of asylum-seekers and refugees. One-time cash assistance was provided to selected vulnerable cases. In addition, an implementing partner distributed food assistance following individual need assessments. In co-operation with an international implementing partner and UNHCR's Regional Office in Egypt, several refugees were sent to Cairo for medical treatment. UNHCR also co-operated closely with WHO/UNAIDS to ensure that national policies do not lead to discriminatory practices towards refugees on account of their health status.

Finally, UNHCR may be called on to facilitate the repatriation of a group of 2,500 Eritrean refugees settled in Al Khowkha port. Although considered to have integrated locally, those wishing to repatriate will be assisted to do so in the framework of a recent regional initiative for the return of Eritrean refugees.

Emergency Assistance to Eritrean Refugees

Following the intensification of the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea, UNHCR responded to an influx of Eritrean, Ethiopian and Somali nationals arriving from the Port of Assab towards the end of May. Six hundred new arrivals received emergency assistance in Al Mokha. UNHCR improved its capacity to protect Eritrean refugees in Yemen by deploying additional protection staff. UNHCR has been concentrating on protection, particularly on implementation of speedy refugee status determination procedures, while a local NGO in Taiz has provided material assistance to this group. The majority of the Ethiopian new arrivals were workers in Assab and can go back safely to their country of origin. The Somalis, numbering 124 persons, were temporarily accommodated in the Al-Gahine camp, pending the completion of shelter for them in Al-

Kharaz.

Capacity-Building of Government Institutions

Support to government agencies continued both for registration and the maintenance of a database on Somali refugees. UNHCR also began to lay the ground to hand over registration to the Immigration Authority. An agreement in principle on this issue has been reached and would include the hand-over of screening and registration at Mayfa'a Transit Centre. Training was provided to immigration personnel in Sana'a on the use of the database on registered Somali refugees.

The Government announced its intention to establish a refugee commission to co-ordinate policy and achieve more effective collaboration with UNHCR. It is expected that the decision, endorsed by the Council of Ministers, will be implemented during the second half of this year. This is an important development for UNHCR as it will facilitate more focused discussion on policy issues and practices related to both Somali refugees and asylum-seekers from other countries.

REVISED OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITY ACTIVITIES FOR JULY – DECEMBER

Somali Refugees

- Maintain a minimum of essential services and continue constructing shelter in Al-Kharaz camp with available funds. The objective of closing the Al-Gahine camp by the end of the year may not be attainable in light of current funding constraints.

- Income generation, individual assistance and camp maintenance activities may have to be discontinued during the second half of the year. Assistance in the health and education sectors will also be affected due to the need to run two camp facilities in parallel, with obvious negative implications for women and children.
- The repatriation project will be slowed down and the original target of 1,200 persons may be revised downward during the second half of the year.

Non-Somali Refugees

- The initial objectives and activities will continue during the second half of the year.

Emergency Assistance to Eritrean Refugees

- Repatriate the Ethiopian new arrivals and protect those who have a well-founded fear of persecution or have become stateless persons; continued basic assistance to the Eritrean refugees, until the situation in Assab allows for their safe return.

Capacity-Building of Government Institutions

- Although a detailed plan, including budgetary requirements, to hand over registration to the Immigration Authority will be soon developed, implementation may have to be deferred until next year, owing to the reallocation of funding to the camp construction programme. Further assistance to the planned Refugee Commission will not be feasible.

FINANCIAL DATA (USD)

	Initial Budget	Revised Budget	Total Funds Available*	Total Funds Obligated
AB and TF	3,090,192	3,677,373	1,993,700	1,993,700
SP	0	400,00	0	0
TOTAL	3,090,192	4,077,373	1,993,700	1,993,700

*Includes income from unrestricted contributions, income from contributions restricted to the region/country, opening balance and adjustments.