

Evaluation Service



Evaluation of UNHCR's country  
operations in Angola, Botswana and  
Namibia:  
Assessment of phasing down UNHCR  
presence during the period 2012-2016

June 2018

Full Report

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Conducted by Fedde Groot, Sarah Deardorff Miller

## UNHCR Evaluation Service

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The views expressed in this evaluation are those of the authors only, and do not represent UNHCR.

Evaluation information at a glance	
<b>Title of the evaluation:</b>	Evaluation of UNHCR's country operations in Angola, Botswana and Namibia: Assessment of phasing down UNHCR presence
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## Executive summary

### Overview and approach

In 2013, against the background of a growing funding shortfall, UNHCR decided to reduce its footprint in Southern Africa. Per a series of decisions, UNHCR's operations in Angola, Botswana and Namibia were intended to significantly phase down and/or close. In the years that followed, phasing down was realized in significantly different ways in each of these countries. The Namibia country office closed. In Botswana, the phasing down process stalled. In Angola, a new refugee influx caused the reversal of the downscaling.

The present external evaluation was commissioned by the Regional Office for Southern Africa in Pretoria (ROSA) and managed by the UNHCR Evaluation Service. The evaluation explored four main areas of interest, and this report is structured accordingly. First, it clarified, analysed and assessed the decision-making process to phase down UNHCR's operation and/or presences in the three countries concerned. Second, it examined the planning for phasing down and third, implementation of these plans through 2016. Finally, based on the findings, this evaluation highlights lessons learned and specifies recommendations that apply to the countries concerned and ROSA. They are also relevant to UNHCR in the preparation and planning of phasing down operations and closure of office presences elsewhere, and relate to broader questions regarding the global role of UNHCR.

These four main areas of interest were explored with the help of a set of pre-established key evaluation questions. Information was gathered mainly through the review of documents and other records, as well as interviews with a variety of stakeholders, including UNHCR staff and former staff at Headquarters and in the Field, government officials and other partners, as well as refugee representatives. In addition, a workshop was held in Pretoria with senior UNHCR staff from ROSA and the Southern Africa sub-region to present and test preliminary findings, and to sharpen conclusions and recommendations.

### Findings and conclusions

The evaluation found that UNHCR's decision to consider phasing down operations and its presence in Angola, Botswana and Namibia ***implicitly leveraged specific opportunities for phasing down*** that these countries offered at the time. In particular, numbers of persons of concern had already decreased in preceding years and a significant additional decrease was anticipated, as the majority had found, or were about to realize, a durable solution.<sup>1</sup> There were ***assumptions made about the ability and willingness of governments and other partners to assume responsibilities and take over from UNHCR, as well as about the transfer of residual responsibilities to the Regional Office in Pretoria*** in the context of the regionalization policy.

Nevertheless, when the 2013 decision was made, ***the intended outcomes were formulated only in terms of office structures and presences***. The decision did not include a transparent analysis of underlying assumptions and preconditions that could have guided field offices; as a result, ***appropriate strategies, with clear indicators, operational milestones and roadmaps were not developed*** based on such analyses; and could not be used to support the review of progress in subsequent years. Furthermore, translating UNHCR's mandate, and role, into more tangible standards or benchmarks proved challenging, and in the absence of strategies and roadmaps, ***offices came up with their own interpretations of the decision, and defined their own benchmarks and plans and processes for implementation***. Where offices developed comprehensive phase down plans, there was no agreed, robust mechanism to monitor progress. Finally, the ***phase down was planned without the full buy-***

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<sup>1</sup> Planning figures in Angola had decreased as a consequence of UNHCR's phase out of operational involvement with return and reintegration of Angolan refugees.

*in from governments and others* that would take over key protection and durable solution roles and responsibilities.

The available organizational planning guidance did not provide sufficient support to the offices on this issue, including on what standards for protection and assistance could be agreed with governments. In practice, most planning assumptions did not hold up. The numbers of persons of concern did not decrease, anticipated durable solutions did not materialize, and major gaps remained in the creation of conditions for hand-over of responsibilities to governments and other partners. While concerns about protection and solutions benchmarks were raised by different staff and stakeholders involved in the phase down process, the main focus remained on reducing expenditures regardless of whether it affected protection or durable solutions outcomes. By 2016, UNHCR was less able to carry out protection and solutions activities for persons of concern, directly and through partners. Refugees felt frustrated and abandoned, protection risks had increased, and phasing down left UNHCR less able to respond to new emergencies.

Given the absence of an articulated analysis of the conditions leading to the decision to phase down and the absence of available monitoring information on the implementation, it is difficult to say whether objectives for the phasing down were met. The ***extent to which reduction in overall expenditures was attributable to the 2013 decision cannot be calculated due to limited tracking of resources*** that went toward the phasing down process and of the ***unintended additional costs and liabilities it generated***.

## Overview of lessons learned and recommendations

In terms of lessons learned, the evaluation has shown that a decision to phase down UNHCR presence ought to be preceded by a robust situational analysis, assessing international commitments and obligations together with capacities and abilities of different stakeholders, and that these should benefit from government and partner consultations and include an agreed-on time frame. Furthermore, there are strong indications that closing down UNHCR's presence in a country may require a concentrated and controlled deployment of additional resources before and during the transition. In other words, ending UNHCR's presence per se should not be seen necessarily as a cost-saving measure in the short term. Rather, in operational terms, the phasing out of office presence should mirror the opening of a country presence which is often part of an emergency response: costly, tightly monitored, involving additional experienced staff and resources, following an agreed basic planning scenario, with a clear vision of end results (including measurable indicators, benchmarks and other progress measurements) and implemented with the appropriate level of transparency and accountability. As such, the evaluation is recommending further guidance for phasing down which should support offices to sufficiently capture the complexity and organizational choices for engagement in each context and go beyond numerical calculation of persons of concern/staff ratios as a parameter for decisions on budgeting and staffing.

Informed by these experiences with phasing down, it is recommended that UNHCR should reconsider the issue of responsible closure of country presence not as a sudden decision, often precipitated by a lack of funding, but rather as an essential and natural part of its operational life cycle globally, and a reflection of States' responsibility for international protection. For this to happen, UNHCR should re-focus on the essentially temporary and time-limited nature of its presence in a country in the context of supporting the development of the responsibilities and capabilities of the host State. It should ensure that, in time, closure of its presence is conducted in a transparent, accountable and respectful manner, where international protection norms are respected and refugees are protected and assisted in their country of asylum while on a path to a durable solution.

Therefore, from the outset of establishing a country presence, phasing down should be perceived as the appropriate and intended result of a multi-year process by agreeing and adjusting outcomes and parameters, internally but in particular also with the government. In the current context of the three countries ***in Southern Africa, this would mean an engaged high level dialogue with the respective host governments, both nationally and as part of the international community, to clarify the***

**rationale and long-term objectives of UNHCR's country presence**, in the context of the international protection framework, and to refocus operations appropriately.

<b>SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	
<b>I. DEVELOPING FURTHER PLANS IN ANGOLA, BOTSWANA and NAMIBIA</b>	
<b>Recommendation 1: ROSA and the Bureau for Africa</b>	<b>Develop a clear, shared, well-articulated, and evidence-based multi-year strategy that focuses on protection of persons of concern in the three countries, with clear roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders over time, including as needed, a reduced UNHCR presence.</b>
<b>Sub-Recommendation 1.1:</b>	Consider opportunities for high-level engagement of Governments to agree on the overall parameters for UNHCR's presence in the countries.
<b>Sub-Recommendation 1.2:</b>	Develop a MYMP plan along three strands of: advocacy; government capacity development; and any humanitarian response where still required.
<b>Sub-Recommendation 1.3:</b>	Align resources, staffing and structures for the countries and ROSA to such plans with due consideration of the regionalization policy.
<b>Sub-Recommendation 1.4:</b>	Include pre-established and agreed operational milestones on protection, programme, durable solutions, handovers and coordination in the plans, as well as milestones for human resources management, financial and asset management.
<b>II. ORGANIZATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PHASING DOWN AS PART OF GENERAL OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT</b>	
<b>Recommendation 2: Senior Management UNHCR HQ</b>	<b>Provide policy guidance on responsible, thoughtful phasing down as a natural part of operational management.</b>
<b>Recommendation 3: Senior Management UNHCR HQ</b>	<b>Develop clear organizational planning guidance and tools on how and when to phase down presence.</b>
<b>Sub-Recommendation 3.1:</b>	Consider a review of existing planning tools and guidelines to ensure that they provide sufficient guidance to offices on how to plan—even from the outset of opening a country presence—for an eventual phase down approach. The guidance could include on involvement of External Relation staff and points concerning administrative and financial management.
<b>Sub-Recommendation 3.2:</b>	Develop capacity of Bureaux and operations on how to prepare phase down plans.
<b>Recommendation 4: Senior Management UNHCR HQ</b>	<b>Develop organization-wide roles and responsibilities with clarified areas of authority, accountability and decision making, and clear processes for which stakeholders need to provide input or be consulted on decisions on the closure of country presences.</b>
<b>Recommendation 5: Senior Management UNHCR HQ</b>	<b>Develop a model for teams of technical support to country and regional entities as they phase down.</b>
<b>III. ORGANIZATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO CONSIDER DURING THE PROCESS OF PHASING DOWN AN OPERATION</b>	

<b>Recommendation 6: Senior Management UNHCR HQ, Bureaux, Regional and Country Offices</b>	<b>Ensure that there is early alignment with government and national stakeholders on the parameters for phasing down presence.</b>
<b>Sub-Recommendation 6.1:</b>	Ensure dialogue at the highest level between UNHCR and the government to agree to the overall parameters for a responsible phase down of UNHCR presence.
<b>Sub-Recommendation 6.2:</b>	Provide sufficient time for high-level meetings between government, other partners (incl. development actors) and UNHCR senior managers to communicate, discuss and explain the decision and steps moving forward.
<b>Recommendation 7: Senior Management in Bureaux, Regional and Country Offices</b>	<b>Ensure that there is an analytical, evidence based plan with clearly defined, shared outcomes, a risk assessment, and standards for protection and assistance</b>
<b>Sub-Recommendation 7.1:</b>	Dedicate time and resources for a comprehensive assessment of the situation, including risk analysis, using for instance research and evaluation data for analysis of political and longer term ramifications of phasing down.
<b>Sub-Recommendation 7.2:</b>	Articulate clear objectives for the phase down and incorporate a thorough, transparent analysis of underlying assumptions in a participatory manner and agreed with the government and other stakeholders as appropriate.
<b>Sub-Recommendation 7.3:</b>	When preparing for the closure of country presence, UNHCR should support an historical account of its presence and accomplishments as a lasting testimony to its involvement in the country and its partnerships with the government and national civil society.
<b>Recommendation 8: Bureaux, Regional and Country Offices</b>	<b>Ensure that the process of phasing down is well-managed, monitored and accountable to all stakeholders concerned.</b>
<b>Sub-Recommendation 8.1:</b>	Ensure the proper functioning of an agreed mechanism of joint monitoring of implementation and adjust course if needed.
<b>Sub-Recommendation 8.2:</b>	Take appropriate steps, at management level, to ensure that staff whose positions are eliminated will continue to be advocates for refugees.
<b>Sub-Recommendation 8.3:</b>	Consider embedding a UNHCR-funded staff member within government office to ensure a smooth handover during the phasing down period.
<b>Sub-Recommendation 8.4:</b>	For accountability, ensure the systematic documentation and archiving of all relevant communications, correspondence and reports in relation to the phasing down process.

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## List of abbreviations

ABOD	Administrative Budget and Obligation Document
AHA	African Humanitarian Agency (Namibia)
AHC (O)	Assistant High Commissioner (Operations)
AHC (P)	Assistant High Commissioner (Protection)
APR	Annual Programme Review
BRCS	Botswana Red Cross Society
CII	Centre for Illegal Immigrants (Botswana)
COP	Country Operation Plan
CoM	Chief of Mission
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
DIP	Division of International Protection
DPSM	Division of Programme Support and Management
DHC	Deputy High Commissioner
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
DRS	Division for Resilience and Solutions
ExCom	Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme (UNHCR)
FO	Field Office
HC	High Commissioner
HQ	Headquarters
IGO	Inspector General's Office
JRS	Jesuit Refugee Service
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex
MDJS	Ministry of Defence, Justice and Security (Botswana)
MHAI	Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration (Namibia)
MINARS	Ministry of Social Services (Angola)
MINFAMU	Ministry of Family and Promotion of Women (Angola)
MYMP(S)	Multi-Year Multi-Partner (Strategy)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NYD	New York Declaration
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OCM	Office of the Chief of Mission
ODMS	Organizational Development and Management Service
OECD-DAC	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development –Developing Assistance Committee
RBA	Regional Bureau for Africa
RMFT	Regional Multi-Functional Team
ROSA	Regional Representation for Southern Africa
RSD	Refugee Status Determination
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SMC	Senior Management Committee
SURGE	Supporting UNHCR Capacity on the Ground with Experts on mission
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNRC	United Nations Resident Coordinator
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
USD	United States Dollar
WFP	World Food Programme

# 1 Introduction, background and context

## 1.1 Introduction

1. In 2013 a decision was taken at UNHCR Headquarters to gradually phase down/out the Agency's presence in Southern Africa. The decision entailed the reduction in staff and administrative budgets in all countries of the sub-region with country office presence, with the exception of the regional office (ROSA) in Pretoria; and the closure of field offices in Zimbabwe and Namibia. However, in the case of the three countries included in this evaluation, Angola, Botswana and Namibia, the decision was more far-reaching. In Angola the reduction in staffing was to be significant, whilst Botswana was considered for nationalization and Namibia, ultimately, for full closure.<sup>2</sup> Key assumptions underpinning the decision included the anticipated achievement of durable solutions for most refugees and the establishment of coordinated arrangements for the transfer of selected responsibilities to respective governments, as well as the assurance of UNHCR's continued accountability for its mandated responsibilities and management due diligence.<sup>3</sup> The process was to take place during a period of one to two years, with staffing levels decreasing over time.<sup>4</sup>
2. In the years that followed, the decision was realized in significantly different ways in the three countries concerned, with UNHCR closing its presence in Namibia, scaling down its presence in Botswana with a view to an eventual full phase-out, and a phasing down in Angola that preceded a subsequent scaling up in response to a new refugee influx. In recent years there was concern with the impact of the decision on persons of concern and uncertainty on the way forward. In response, an evaluation was initiated that looked at the three country operations and the phasing down, between 2012-2016.
3. Since 2016, there have been significant developments both in the region—with the onset of a larger influx of refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) into Angola as of July 2017—and more globally in relation to ongoing refugee situations. As such, recommendations made in this evaluation may be confirming and/or complementing actions and ways of working already adopted or under discussion within UNHCR and among governments, UNHCR and a range of development and humanitarian actors, including as expressed in the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and efforts in UNHCR to have multi-year multi-partner strategies (MYMPS).
4. This evaluation, managed by the UNHCR Evaluation Service, was commissioned by ROSA in 2017 to assess the process of phasing out/closing down in Angola, Namibia and Botswana, and the implications and expectations for government capacities, refugee protection, and ROSA management. The evaluation was carried out from October 2017 to April 2018 by a team of two external consultants in line with UNHCR's Evaluation Policy, and with quality assurance provided by UNHCR's Evaluation Service. To answer the key evaluation questions, the evaluation clarified, analysed and assessed the decision-making process to phase down UNHCR's presence and/or to close operations, the phase down planning and programming, as well as implementation of the plans for the phasing down.<sup>5</sup>
5. The objectives of the evaluation were to:
  - Provide an evidence informed assessment of the decision making process to phase down and/or close operations and UNHCR's presence;
  - Assess the relevance and appropriateness of the objectives set and strategies pursued in the phase down programmes in the three countries concerned;
  - Assess the achievement of the set objectives and the implications and effects on overall programme objectives in the three countries concerned;

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<sup>2</sup> Troika 2014 OL confirmation detailed decisions (pages 4 and 5), attachment to memorandum HC00 "Troika Conclusions on the 2014 OL Confirmation" dated 18 October 2013 from the AHC (O), the DHC and the Director of DIP to the Bureau Directors.

<sup>3</sup> Memorandum AF/00/DIR/011/13 dated 16 May 2013 from the Director RBA to the AHC (O), paragraph 51.

<sup>4</sup> Troika, op.cit., 2014.

<sup>5</sup> TOR, paragraph 2.

- Using the three countries as examples, review existing operational guidance used to phase out/phase down UNHCR's presence.
- Provide learning on what worked well and what did not work well in the planning and implementation of the phase-outs, and make recommendations based on findings and conclusions drawn; and

6. The key evaluation questions were<sup>6</sup>:

- Were UNHCR's strategies and objectives (2012-2016) relevant and appropriate, considering the downscaling?
- Were the objectives achieved? What were facilitators/constraints?
- Was the implementation of the phase-out decision adequate, appropriate and effective? Within this: how was the decisions planned, implemented and communicated? Was ROSA equipped to extend the coverage and provide support?
- What are lessons learned?

7. To inform the key evaluation questions, the evaluation explored four areas in more detail.

- What was the decision making process for the phase down of presence in Botswana, Angola and Namibia?
- How was the implementation of the decisions planned?
- How was the decision to phase down implemented, and what were the results?
- What are lessons learned?

8. The evaluation's primary audiences are managers in the Regional Bureau for Africa (RBA) and ROSA but findings, conclusions and recommendations are also relevant more broadly for Senior Management, Divisions and Bureaus involved in decisions around guidance, design and implementation of phasing down UNHCR's presence. In particular, recommendations are directed at DIP, DPSM, DRS and ODMS. The evaluation is also relevant to broader conversations relating to UNHCR's role in protracted situations, exit strategies, development of government capacity and handovers, and other issues being discussed in the context of the CRRF as annexed to the New York Declaration (NYD).<sup>7</sup> The results of the evaluation are also expected to be of interest to a broad range of partners and donors, including the governments of Angola, Botswana and Namibia.

9. The report has six chapters including this Introduction. **Chapter Two** offers an overview of the methodology used in this evaluation and the evaluation questions. In **Chapter Three** the evaluation findings are presented relating to the phasing down decision making and its context. **Chapter Four** examines the evaluation findings relating to the implementation of the decision. **Chapter Five** lays out the evaluation findings regarding the implementation and results against the protection, assistance and solutions objectives for persons of concern. Finally, **Chapter Six** discusses conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations.

10. **Annex A** presents the TOR of the evaluation. **Annex B** provides the matrix of evaluation questions. **Annex C** offers overviews of the operational context and the research conducted in each of the three countries concerned. **Annex D** provides a list of the documents consulted and **Annex E** has an overview of key evaluation dates and activities.

## 1.2 Background and context

11. UNHCR's overall objective is:

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<sup>6</sup> See Annex B for matrix of key questions with sub-questions.

<sup>7</sup> UN General Assembly, New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants : resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, 3 October 2016, A/RES/71/1, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/57ceb74a4.html>

“...to ensure international protection to refugees and others of concern to the Office of UNHCR and to seek permanent solutions to their problems in cooperation with States and other organizations, including through the provision of humanitarian assistance.”<sup>8</sup>

12. At the end of 2016, there were 67.7 million people of concern to UNHCR worldwide, of these 498,817, mainly refugees, were in the Southern African region and 52,020 in the three countries considered in this evaluation.

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Angola</b>	63,473	45,488	59,970	50,337	45,698
<b>Botswana</b>	3,440	2,995	2,847	2,265	2,832
<b>Namibia</b>	2,895	5,182	4,264	4,576	3,490
<b>Total</b>	69,808	53,665	67,081	57,178	52,020

Table: Persons of Concern to UNHCR in the three countries included in this evaluation during the period under evaluation (2012-2016) and in 2017. Source: Global Trends Report, UNHCR.

13. In the exercise of its mandate responsibilities on behalf of refugees and asylum-seekers, returnees and stateless persons, UNHCR has played an important role in Southern Africa for decades.<sup>9</sup> It has collaborated with governments and developed partnerships with other international agencies and civil society organizations in providing international protection and in seeking permanent solutions for refugees and stateless persons in a large variety of situations and operations across the sub-region. While initially focused on refugees who fled colonial oppression, anti-colonial wars, post-independence civil wars and Apartheid in countries in the Southern Africa sub-region, UNHCR’s operations later responded to new arrivals from outside of the Southern Africa region (now mainly from the Great Lakes, Horn of Africa, West Africa, and even further afield). As of year 2000, UNHCR operations in the region have increasingly been characterized by mixed-migration flows as well as by the gradual decrease in the overall numbers of persons of concern in the wake of durable solutions.<sup>10</sup> The different character of the more recent movements put an end to the previous reliance on prima facie refugee status determination, and presented a different set of response needs. This resulted in programmes that had, in addition to ongoing assistance activities, an enhanced emphasis on the improvement of refugee legislation and individual refugee status determination procedures, capacity building of governments and civil society, and support to durable solutions.<sup>11</sup>
14. UNHCR’s programme budget is a consolidation of the organization’s financial requirements based on a global needs assessment. It is calculated on projected figures of people of concern and giving due consideration to the Office’s estimated capacity to implement the planned programmes with available resources. The budget is based on the needs identified by field operations and is guided by UNHCR’s Global Strategic Priorities, which represent a common set of key priorities for planning in UNHCR’s operations worldwide.<sup>12</sup> Guidance and instructions are provided to UNHCR’s offices on how to carry out needs assessments and plan accordingly.
15. During the period under evaluation, field operations followed planning instructions and submitted their country plans for internal review on a yearly basis. Based on a needs assessment and a standardized results framework against objectives and global strategic priorities, operations formulate both the comprehensive needs of the operation and the prioritised results with the available funding in mind. An Annual Programme Review (APR) process followed whereby plans were reviewed by Bureaux and Divisions, and decisions and recommendations were subsequently taken by the Troika.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> UN, Biennial programme plan and priorities for the period 2014-2015 (A/67/6/Rev.1\*), New York, 2013.

<sup>9</sup> On UNHCR’s mandate see UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Note on the Mandate of the High Commissioner for Refugees and his Office, October 2013, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5268c9474.html>

<sup>10</sup> A significant recent development was the coming into effect of the Cessation Clause for Angolan refugees in June 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Review of COPs.

<sup>12</sup> UNHCR Global Appeal 2016-2017 <http://www.unhcr.org/564da0e20.html>

<sup>13</sup> The Troika in UNHCR consisted of the Deputy High Commissioner and the two Assistant-High Commissioners.

16. Throughout the years, there was natural fluctuation of country-level management structures and office configurations in response to evolving operational needs. More recently, the regionalization policy and resource considerations became additional factors that influenced the decision to gradually phase down and ultimately close some offices in the region, with the transfer of remaining oversight and operational management responsibilities to ROSA.
17. While there were expectations that the numbers of persons of concern in the three countries concerned would further decrease in the years following the 2013 decisions, States and others assumed that UNHCR's mandate responsibilities to ensure international protection for refugees would not end. Concerns were raised about UNHCR's ability to ensure that the continued delivery of protection, including durable solutions for remaining and newly arriving persons of concern, remained fully adequate and in line with international standards. States and partners also raised concerns about protection when overall management responsibility is transferred away from the point of delivery. Finally, concerns were raised about maintaining good relations and partnerships with governments and local humanitarian partners built up over decades, and how best to keep those relationships intact and effective, despite ending UNHCR's presence and moving responsibilities to a Regional Office.
18. In a wider sense, considerations about the duration and evolving nature of UNHCR's presence in a country to fulfil its protection mandate remain important themes, not least amidst conversations following the NYD, the Global Compact on Refugees and the CRRF, where questions around protracted displacement, and more specifically how and when to phase down UNHCR's operational responses in a country are relevant. UNHCR, donors, partners, and others have paid a lot of attention to how to scale-up in a new or ongoing refugee emergency. However, considerably less attention has been paid to phasing down or closure decisions, including the rationale for a continued presence and what disengagement processes should look like in the context of a protracted refugee situation that is gradually being resolved. Indeed, UNHCR has produced considerably fewer documents on phasing down, closure and disengagement.
19. The ROSA office currently provides support and guidance to 14 countries in Southern Africa: Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. At the beginning of the period under review by this evaluation (2012), UNHCR maintained an office in eight of these 14 countries: Angola, Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. ROSA has generally been tasked with offering support and guidance to all operations in the region, but since the phase down plans of 2013, ROSA is also tasked with helping to phase down and eventually close offices. In addition, it has absorbed responsibilities that were transferred from the UNHCR Offices in these countries as staff positions were discontinued.
20. At the start of this evaluation's period of review (2012), UNHCR maintained a Branch Office in the capital Luanda in Angola; an Office of Chief of Mission in the capital Gaborone and a Field Office (FO) in the Dukwi Refugee Camp in Botswana; and a Branch Office in the capital Windhoek and a FO in the Osire Refugee Settlement in Namibia. Annex C offers more details on the history of UNHCR's presence, the legal framework, and the refugee operation in each of the three countries as well as the research conducted.

## 2 Methodology and evaluation questions

### 2.1 Evaluation questions

21. As set out in Chapter 1, the evaluation TOR outlined four key evaluation questions in relation to: 1) the relevance and appropriateness of UNHCR's strategies and objectives (2012-2016), considering the downscaling; 2) whether the objectives were achieved and what the facilitators/constraints were; 3) the implementation of the phase-out decision and whether it was adequate, appropriate and effective and within this: how the decisions were planned, implemented and communicated and whether ROSA was equipped to extend the coverage and provide support; and 4) what lessons learned were.
22. Within a tight timeline for the evaluation, the inception phase included a review of the TOR, which led to a prioritization of questions that focused on the decision making, planning for and implementation of the decision (including the strategic objectives), and only explored the results and achievements against objectives, as far as these were linked to the factors and assumptions influencing the decision. An evaluation matrix was developed and presented in the Inception Report along four lines of enquiry:
  - 1) How the decision to phase down was made, including how, and through which processes, the decision was taken and on what basis the decision was taken;
  - 2) How the decision to phase down was planned to be implemented;
  - 3) How the decision and the plans were implemented and with what results; and
  - 4) The lessons learned.

### 2.2 Overview of the evaluation methodology

23. The evaluation employed a mixed methods approach, including an extensive document review, focus group discussions with refugees and semi-structured interviews with UNHCR officials, governments, implementing partners and other stakeholders. It drew on qualitative techniques to ensure reliable and relevant findings, conclusions and recommendations as well as a robust understanding of the phase down decision, the process of the decision (its design and implementation) and its implementation in each of the three countries.
24. The evaluation was evidence-informed, with findings and conclusions triangulated from documents, interviews and first hand sources. At regular intervals, the consultants exchanged and compared findings to ensure a continual common basis on which appropriate conclusions could be drawn and recommendations formulated. The purpose of the evaluation was not to review the decision, but to fully analyse and assess its evolution, implementation and outcomes.
25. *Document Review.* The consultants conducted a thorough review of external, internal and confidential documents from UNHCR and other key stakeholders, including governments, other UN agencies, partners and NGOs. These documents included letters and memorandums, notes for the file, mission reports, minutes of meetings, Country Operations Plans, Annual Programme Review (APR) and Budget Committee or Troika Conclusions, Protection Needs Assessments, Participatory Assessment Reports, program documents, budget/indicator data, End of Year Reports, partner reports, policy documents, guidance material, statistics, maps, and organograms.
26. *Timelines.* Initial conversations, document review and scoping revealed that there was uncertainty about when the decision to phase down in the three countries took place, as well as how it was communicated, what it meant, and how it was decided. There was a need to get a clear picture of the facts and timelines, triangulated by the documents and interviews. Detailed timelines were therefore made for the sequencing of the general decision. This included what previous planning was made for the phasing down decision, what consultations and discussion went into it, when it was finally taken, when it was communicated, how and to what extent it may have been revised and adjusted, and when implementation was to begin. Similar timelines were prepared for each of the three phase down countries. Timelines also include what was communicated when and to whom, such as staff, governments, other partners, and refugees.
27. *Terminology.* The consultants also explored how terms were used as a way of understanding the phasing down. The document review and interviews showed a lack of clarity around terms including "phase down,"



“closure,” “disengagement,” “realignment,” and other phrases. In this report, the umbrella term “phasing down” is used to refer to the different objectives and processes of UNHCR phasing down both its physical presence and its operational engagement.

28. *Semi-structured interviews.* Interviews with stakeholders, including ROSA staff, staff at UNHCR’s Headquarter in Geneva (such as in the Executive Office, the Africa Bureau, DIP, and ODMS) and Field staff were at the heart of the data collection for the evaluation. ROSA, Country Offices and the Evaluation Service identified an initial list of interviewees and supported the arrangement of interviews throughout. Interviewees included those in current posts, but also those who had been in the relevant positions during the period evaluated (2012-2016). To a considerable extent, snowballing also took place—if an interviewee had suggestions for the consultants of others that should be interviewed who may not have been on the list, the consultants sought those individuals out. This was particularly important because of the nature of the phase down, and considering that many staff in UNHCR had rotated to other positions outside the sub-region. This was also important for interviews with stakeholders outside UNHCR, including NGO implementing partners and the UN system in each country concerned, and civil society and other partners that would have knowledge of the phase down decision, implementation and impact.
29. Both consultants undertook two missions to Pretoria, at the beginning and at the end of the evaluation. One consultant conducted a mission to Angola, the other to Botswana and Namibia. A total of 73 persons were interviewed: UNHCR staff at HQs (13), UNHCR ROSA staff (17) and UNHCR Country Offices staff (13), Governments employees (16), implementing partner staff (11) and UN Representatives (3). This included staff with the Serviço de Migração e Estrangeiros de Angola (SME/Immigration) and the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) in Angola; staff with the Ministry of Defence, Justice and Security (MDJS) as well as staff with the Skillshare and Red Cross Society NGOs in Botswana; and staff with the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration (MHAI) (Namibia), with Komeho Namibia Development Agency and IOM (Namibia). Most interviews with key informants in UNHCR were conducted remotely via Skype and/or phone, whilst some were held in person. A few interviewees were interviewed multiple times to obtain additional clarifications.
30. During the Field missions, participatory interviews and focus group discussions with persons of concern in refugee camps and settlements were held and visual observations carried out to obtain information on their current situation. Selection of participants in focus groups was arranged by UNHCR and comprised: 25 persons of concern in Viana in Angola, ten in Bairro Popular in Angola, 35 in Botswana, and 40 in Namibia. In most meetings, UNHCR staff that organized the focus groups were not present during the meetings so as to ensure confidentiality and that refugees felt are able to speak openly. At the start of most focus groups, the consultant verified that the following selection criteria had been applied: gender parity, adequate representation of the elderly as well as of the youth, and approximate proportional representation of countries of origin. In general, participants were drawn from the membership of the various refugee community management committees and selected by the committees themselves.
31. Preliminary findings were presented and discussed at a workshop in Pretoria held with UNHCR staff working in ROSA, the three country offices and the Bureau for Africa. A draft of this report was further circulated for comments to the ROSA office, the Bureau for Africa and the ODMS, and was shared and presented to a wide range of staff from HQ divisions as a final draft. Where factual issues were raised, these were verified and triangulated against other evidence and corrects made as appropriate. More general comments were treated as advisory in the preparation of the final report and its recommendations.

## 2.3 Constraints and limitations

32. The evaluation encountered a number of constraints that posed limitations on data gathering. This included the fact that many of the senior level UNHCR staff that were operational during the evaluation’s period of review have moved to other postings or have left the organization. The same applied to government counterparts, as well as implementing and other partners. Likewise, not all senior government representatives, who had been approached for an interview made themselves available. Accessing documents represented another challenge, as files were often not retained in an accessible or official archive, but kept by individual staff in an ad hoc manner. In addition, the authorities in Botswana did not authorize a planned visit to a detention centre to interview asylum-seekers and assess their living conditions and protection situation.



33. This evaluation was cautious to avoid endogeneity and selection bias, which could invalidate findings. This includes using triangulation as noted above, to determine that evidence drove all conclusions. It also required the consultants to be aware of their own biases—the senior consultant having worked with UNHCR for many years, and the junior consultant having studied UNHCR extensively.

## **2.4 Quality assurance**

34. The evaluation was guided by the 2016 UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN System and the UNEG Ethical Guidelines and Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System. The evaluation consultants signed the UNHCR Code of Conduct, and completed UNHCR’s introductory protection training module; they also followed UNHCR’s confidentiality requirements closely. The Evaluation Team committed to protecting sources and data, obtaining informed consent, ensuring respect for dignity and diversity and the minimization of risk, harm and burden upon those who are the subject of or participating in the evaluation, while at the same time not compromising the integrity of the evaluation. This evaluation also adhered to UNHCR pilot “Evaluation Quality Assurance” guidance.

## 3 The Phasing down process: decision making and its context

### 3.1 Introduction

35. The decision to phase down UNHCR's presence in Angola, Botswana and Namibia was part of ongoing efforts of UNHCR to consider how the organization can achieve its international protection, assistance and solutions objectives while reducing expenditure for the organization. In an environment where funding is insufficient to meet sometimes even the basic needs of refugees, the organization is often faced with serious dilemmas regarding prioritization and meeting both immediate and life-saving needs, and longer term requirements relating to protection capacity and solutions. Keeping in mind States' obligations to provide protection under international law to refugees, as well as their ability to do so, and the broader landscape of partners and support, UNHCR presents its Global Needs Assessment to its Executive Committee and the donor community each year in order to raise funds for addressing the needs. However, relying almost entirely on voluntary contributions of funds, UNHCR experiences significant global funding shortfalls each year, thus requiring considerable prioritization of resources and reduction of expenditure. The decisions to phase down presence in operations like Angola, Botswana and Namibia were part of such ongoing efforts to look for opportunities for reduction in UNHCR's expenditure.

### 3.2 Conclusions and key findings

**In all three countries, the main driver and rationale for the decisions to plan for phasing down was to reduce expenditures for UNHCR.** Phasing down was considered possible in the three countries due to expectations and assumptions concerning: a reduction in the number of persons of concern (including returnees); the ability to find durable solutions for any residual caseload; the ability and willingness of governments and others to take on responsibilities; and the ability of ROSA to provide necessary support as part of the regionalization policy.

**The regionalization policy in particular played an important role,** with expectations that the ROSA office had the capacity to provide sufficient support for UNHCR to deliver on its mandate, even with a phased down presence.

**The pivotal moment in the phasing down of UNHCR's presence in the three countries concerned can be traced back to the 2013 Annual Programme Review decision and its confirmation by the Troika.** It initially did not entail closure of offices in Angola or Botswana; many of the more substantive aspects of the decision were taken in later years.

In all three countries, however **considerations of phasing down UNHCR's presence preceded the 2013 Annual Programme Review,** based on similar assumptions for reduced expenditure, but with significantly different backgrounds and context.

**An analysis of expectations, considerations and criteria was not clearly articulated** in the COPs, nor in the APR documents. Concern in this regard was raised during the APR in 2013, and the absence of clear general markers on office closure, including preconditions that demonstrate achievements and strategy, was noted.

**The decision-making was found to be protracted, inconsistent and unable to project a clear and detailed vision of the ultimate objective.**

The evaluation found five main factors influencing this. Firstly, the *planning assumptions and the analysis underpinning the decision were not clearly articulated*, placing the decision itself in question and leading to staff not understanding why or how the decision was taken. Secondly, the *absence of specific and clear procedures, criteria and operational guidance for phasing down* left significant scope for developing these after the decision was taken. Thirdly, *the shift required by the operations from more operational responses to larger refugee situations to mainly advisory, or advocacy, operations for international protection and inclusion in national systems posed challenges to the offices.* This led to an articulation of benchmarks or pre-conditions rather than new strategies and plans. Fourthly, there was only *limited consultation with external stakeholders* in the analysis of the conditions for phasing down. And fifthly, *the articulation of the*

*reasons for and the decision of phasing down were multi-faceted, eventually leading to confusion both within UNHCR and with external stakeholders.*

The evaluation found that the **lack of guidance for office closure became a continuous challenge** in the years to follow where different attempts were made to fill this gap.

The evaluation also found that **the lack of clarity in the rationale, assumptions and drivers for the decision influenced both the planning and implementation of the decision**, and assumptions were challenged almost immediately after decisions were made. Over time both the rationale and the underlying drivers and assumptions also became increasingly unclear to those involved in the implementation. One contributing factor to this is found to be the limited input from stakeholders and consultation both within UNHCR and with external partners in the Government, the UN or amongst partners to inform the decision. Consequently, there was confusion among partners and staff in Angola, Botswana and Namibia as to how the decision was made, what was decided, who took part in it and whether it could be questioned or adjusted.

### 3.3 Decision timeline

Timeline of important events in the phasing down in Angola, Botswana and Namibia:

<b>2012</b>	<p>Large-scale return of Angolan refugees (cessation clause invoked July 2012).</p> <p>Instructions and Guidelines on planning for 2014 and 2015 to offices had no mention of phasing down, though funding challenges noted (December).</p>
<b>2013</b>	<p>Stakeholders' meeting in Namibia with Government, UNHCR and AHA; UNHCR announces plans to gradually phase-out in Namibia (February).</p> <p>APR: 2014/15 Country Operations Plans (April/May).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Planning instructions focused on the need to look for opportunities to phase down presence</li><li>• COPs for Angola, Botswana and Namibia complied with the planning instructions suggesting reduced presence in Angola, discontinuation of presence in Namibia and phasing down in Botswana with only local posts by June 2014.</li><li>• Troika decision confirming APR 2014 phase down instructions (May).</li></ul> <p>ODMS mission to Botswana (April).</p> <p>Follow-up stakeholders' meeting UNHCR /government departments and AHA in Namibia; plan to set out hand-over activities to line ministries (August).</p> <p>Cabinet approved local integration of 2,400 former Angolan refugees in Namibia (November).</p>
<b>2014</b>	<p>ROSA (RMFT) mission to Namibia, planning hand-over, RSD and an Action Plan agreed with all partners (February).</p> <p>3-6 February. (Based on agreement with all partners in August 2013) Meeting in Geneva between Namibian Government and RBA in margins of the Standing Committee; concerns discussed over UNHCR's plan to close in Namibia as of 2015 (March).</p> <p>Troika endorsed proposal for development of a plan by ROSA in the second half of 2014 for responsible disengagement in Botswana to include representational coverage by ROSA no later than 1 July 2015, with UNHCR retaining presence only in Dukwi.</p> <p>Communication between UNHCR and MHA and Immigration about March meeting and UNHCR's responsibilities in Namibia (via ROSA) (June).</p> <p>RMFT undertook mission to Botswana, identifying benchmarks and preconditions for phasing down. The mission recommended closure of UNHCR FO Dukwi by end of 2015 or middle of 2016 (September).</p> <p>Mission to Namibia Director RBA, Regional Rep ROSA, and Senior Legal Advisor, RBA); includes point where UNHCR is committed to provide shelter and food for remaining refugees in Namibia (September).</p>

<b>2015</b>	<p>Namibian government request to UNHCR to extend closure plans for another six months; Troika decided UNHCR would retain presence until end of 2015 (May).</p> <p>APR reiterated that FO-Dukwi and Gaborone would be closed as of 1 January 2017, conditional on repatriation of Namibian refugees in the country. (May)</p>
<b>2016</b>	<p>2016 APR decided “accelerated phase down” in Angola.</p> <p>Bilateral meeting on phasing down in Angola (February).</p> <p>UNHCR informed Botswana government for the first time of its plans to phase down (at meeting in Gaborone between CoM and the MDJS Director in May).</p> <p>Meeting in Gaborone between UNHCR, the UNRC and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; reluctance from Botswana officials (June).</p> <p>Mission by Deputy Regional Representative (Protection) to Angola, including meetings with government where phasing down was discussed (June).</p> <p>UNHCR-Botswana issued a “Disengagement (Phase-out) Plan” (July).</p> <p>Decision to nationalize Gaborone Office in Botswana with three staff and to nationalize it; closure of FO-Dukwi planned by 1 July 2016 (September).</p> <p>Mission takes place to Windhoek and Osire; Country Representative leaves Namibia and Office presence formally ended (December).</p>
<b>2017</b>	<p>New influx of Congolese into Angola, subsequent scaling back up of UNHCR in Angola and no further discussion of phasing down (April).</p>

### 3.4 Detailed findings

36. **In 2013, the planning instructions for 2014 focused on the need for country offices to identify and make use of opportunities for phasing down staffing and streamlining presences, particularly in the context of UNHCR’s regionalization policy.** A review of yearly global planning guidance issued during the years prior to the 2013 APR showed a consistent focus on the need for austerity and financial constraint. In 2013, planning instructions for 2014 conformed to this trend, but this time specific opportunities to reduce budgets had been identified and communicated to the Field.<sup>14</sup> Most were of relevance to the sub-region. The instructions emphasized the importance of timely streamlining, consolidation and phasing down of staffing and presence where durable solutions had been achieved; where UNHCR was phasing down its operational involvement; where numbers persons of concern had come down and were coming down; or in situations where the policy of regionalization applied (i.e. where coverage and monitoring could be provided effectively from a Regional Office). Most if not all of these considerations applied to the sub-region. The importance of the regionalization policy in the decision-making at the 2013 APR was confirmed by interviews with senior managers.
37. **UNHCR Offices in the three countries complied with the phasing down planning instructions for 2014, acknowledging decreased operational needs and making efforts to reduce costs and presence. At the same time, they also raised protection concerns.**
38. **The 2014 COPs submitted by all three country offices as well as other documents available to the 2013 APR, reflected the potential for phasing down.**<sup>15</sup> However, the COPs for Botswana and Namibia

<sup>14</sup> Email message AHC(O) to all Directors of Regional Bureaux, 23 February 2013; Memorandum Director RBA to Regional Representatives and Representatives in the Africa region (AF/00/DIR/005/13, 6 March 2013); Email Regional Representative, 18 March 2013 (attachment with overview of allocations by country not available). Namibia folder/email chain on Namibia closure. See also Memorandum Director RBA to Regional Representatives and Representatives in the Africa region (AF/00/DIR/005/13, 6 March 2013).

<sup>15</sup> Angola Country Operations Plan (COP) for 2014, Namibia COP for 2014 and the Botswana COP for 2014.

did not articulate explicit planning scenarios for closure, nor any clear markers on how to implement it.<sup>16</sup> UNHCR-Angola referred to the completion of the returnee programme in 2012 and did not include a Population Planning Group for returnees in its Country Operation Plan (COP) for 2013, resulting in a significant drop in requirements. For 2014, while emphasizing the need for continued efforts to improve the overall refugee protection environment, Angola highlighted opportunities for durable solutions for major groups of refugees in the country, noting that any continuing needs of returnees would be met through expanded responsibilities of partners, particularly the government. As it emphasized continued refugee protection needs, the prospect of phasing-out of presence or office closure was not raised. The UNHCR-Botswana COP anticipated that it could be significantly downsized (retaining only local posts by June 2014) as important numbers of persons of concern were expected to find a durable solution. This was a significant change in approach from previous years, the Botswana Office had consistently argued for additional posts as well as for the upgrading of existing (local staff) ones (COPs 2012 and 2013). In another part of the same COP for 2014, the Office did argue strongly for an increase of staffing. UNHCR-Namibia, having already raised the possibility of handing over its activities to line Ministries and the closure of its Namibia Office in January 2013, outlined concrete opportunities to discontinue its presence in the country.<sup>17</sup> A few months later, at a stakeholders' meeting in August 2013, UNHCR pinned full office closure to a time frame: sometime in 2014.<sup>18</sup> This was considered feasible because it anticipated that virtually all persons of concern would have found a durable solution, through voluntary repatriation (in the case of some 1,700 former Angolan refugees in 2012), local integration (the remaining Angolan former refugees) and through plans to resettle about 2,000 Congolese refugees by 2014.<sup>19</sup> This implied hardly any persons of concern would remain in Namibia by 2014.<sup>20</sup>

39. **The overall rationale for the decision was to reduce UNHCR expenditures in the sub-region, in line with the planning instructions.** This was confirmed by interviews with senior managers and programme officers, and supported by documents. The decision was triggered by expected funding shortfalls in the wake of several large-scale new emergencies occurring in other parts of Africa and in the Middle East during 2012 and 2013. This was also confirmed by UNHCR's annual Global Reports for these years that show that UNHCR had been experiencing a growing funding shortfall ever since 2007.<sup>21</sup> In the case of the Southern Africa sub-region, these global trends were compounded by the ongoing reduction in unrestricted (i.e. non-earmarked) contributions: from 24 per cent of total contributions (2011), to 20 per cent (2012), to 16 per cent (2013). Interviews confirmed that longstanding, protracted operations, such as most of UNHCR's programmes in the Southern African sub-region, depend on unrestricted funding. Interviews also confirmed that these financial and funding trends created a heightened sense of urgency for UNHCR managers at the APR of 2013 and following years to identify opportunities to reduce budgets in the Southern Africa sub-region.–

40. **While not clearly spelled out in the documents, the plans and reports submitted by the country offices emphasize four main planning assumptions that underpinned the 2013 APR decision:**

- The real and/or anticipated reduction in the number of persons of concern (including returnees);
- The ability to find durable solutions for any residual caseload;
- The ability and willingness of governments and others to take on responsibilities; and
- The ability of ROSA to provide necessary support as part of the regionalization policy.

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<sup>16</sup> See Troika Review of Bureaux 2014-15 Field Plans, Africa Bureau (21 May 2013). The evaluation review of the COPs concerned done for this evaluation confirms this: whilst the (future) development of phasing down strategies and associated requirements were mentioned the documents did not offer explicit planning scenarios.

<sup>17</sup> Minutes of the meeting between the Government of Namibia, UNHCR and Africa Humanitarian Action (AHA), 15-16 August 2013, Otjiwarongo, Namibia.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> There were 5,182 persons of concern in Namibia at the end of 2013, of which 2,332 were refugees and 1,162 asylum-seekers. UNHCR, Global Trends 2013, War's human cost. Available at:

<http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/country/5399a14f9/unhcr-global-trends-2013.html>

<sup>21</sup> UNHCR Global Report 2012; Funding UNHCR. Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/51b1d6210.html> and UNHCR Global Report 2013, Funding UNHCR. Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/539809dc0.html>

41. **The decision to phase down a considerable part of UNHCR's presence in Southern Africa was taken during the 2013/14 Annual Programme Review (APR) and confirmed by the Troika later that year.**<sup>22</sup> However, while the decision mentioned in the TOR can be traced to the 2013 APR and Troika recommendations, "the decision" was rather a series of decisions that took place over time linked to the APR process. As such, the considerations for phasing down had been discussed during APR sessions also in prior years, but this had not led to significant changes in the COPs or inclusion of analysis of opportunities or formulation of a phase down strategy or plan.
42. **More specifically, the 2013 APR decision was for UNHCR's presence to be reduced in Angola and Namibia, and further considered, after a review, for Botswana. Importantly the background, context and phasing down modalities varied in each of these countries.** Angola had to implement a "significant reduction of staff and ABOD in 2014." With respect to Botswana, the APR requested ODMS to present the results of the ongoing regional structural review before a decision would be taken regarding "nationalization" of the Office (in February 2013, ODMS had started to undertake the exercise in countries across the sub-region). Following recommendations of a recent IGO Inspection mission, the Botswana Office had proposed the creation of a limited number of staff positions for the purpose of maintaining capacity for mandate protection activities and for preparing for phasing down. However, this was not accepted in the APR. The Namibia Office was selected for "closure": FO Osire at 30 June 2014 and the country office as at 30 June 2015 while the results of the ODMS review would further inform the process.<sup>23</sup>
43. These findings are supported by a Note for the File on a pre-APR review of the COP submissions as well as by the official report of this exercise.<sup>24</sup> The report of the structural and staffing review was issued only at the end of 2014,<sup>25</sup> but some preliminary conclusions were available when the 2013 APR was in session, although it is not clear what these were.<sup>26</sup> In June 2013, a few months after this submission, the IGO issued its final report on the Inspection of the Botswana operation in which it expressed concern about the protection capacity of the UNHCR Office after the partial implementation of an exit strategy.<sup>27</sup> The Inspection Team emphasized the need to reinforce national protection capacity while scaling down involvement in operational tasks and handing these over to the government and implementing partners. Furthermore, it was recommended that the Botswana office should make a better use of the capacities of ROSA. To that end, the two offices were instructed to jointly clarify and define the division of labour between them, and to identify areas for support to the Botswana operation that require qualitative improvement. ROSA was instructed to provide support in an effective and timely manner. In Namibia, the closure of FO Osire that had already been proposed by the country office was supported but was also allowed a more generous time frame. While full closure of the country office as of 30 June 2015 was endorsed, the closure of FO-Osire was postponed by six months to 30 June 2014. Meanwhile, ODMS was requested to present the results of the structural review of the Southern Africa sub-region, which in the case of closure of the Namibia Office, provided the potential for adjustments or change of plans.
44. **There was precedent to the phasing down decision.** According to interviewees and document review there were phase down processes in Angola at different times prior to 2013: 1995-1996, 2002-2003, and

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<sup>22</sup> Several memorandums and NFFs in relation to the 2013/14 Annual Programme Review (APR). Troika 2014 OL confirmation detailed decisions, 7-10 October 2013; attachment to memorandum of 18 October 2013 from DHC, AHC(O) and Director DIP to Bureau Directors "Troika Conclusions on the 2014 OL Confirmation", HC00, 18 October 2013.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Bureau led APR with Divisions, 30 April-2 May 2013; Note for the File, Regional Bureau for Africa and Memorandum Director RBA to AHC-Ops, 16 May 2013 (AF/00/DIR/011/13).

<sup>25</sup> "Priority Review of the Management Structure of the Regional Representation for Southern Africa and other Aspects" (ODMS-led structural review), ROSA, 23 December 2014.

<sup>26</sup> Prior to the issuance of the report of the regional management structural review at the end of 2014, the RBA had already given effect to ideas and recommendations that had evolved as the review was taking place. Memorandum HC00-OPS-AF00, HC00-HCM-3 dated 15 December 2015, AHC (O) to the High Commissioner. Troika 2014 OL confirmation detailed decisions, 7-10 October 2013; attachment to memorandum of 18 October 2013 from DHC, AHC(O) and Director DIP to Bureau Directors "Troika Conclusions on the 2014 OL Confirmation", HC00.

<sup>27</sup> Final Report of the Standard Inspection of UNHCR's operation in Botswana, 25 November to 1 December 2012. Inspector General's Office (IGO), INS/12/07. Date of issuance mentioned on report's cover is June 2012, but after review it is considered more likely that it was June 2013.



in 2008-2012.<sup>28</sup> Likewise in 2006 there was an Action Plan for scaling down UNHCR's operations,<sup>29</sup> and in 2007 SMC meeting notes discussed exit strategies to be implemented by 2013.<sup>30</sup> Refugees interviewed for this evaluation also highlighted reductions in assistance in 2007 that were viewed as phasing down.<sup>31</sup> Regarding Botswana, interviews established that the issue of phasing down had been discussed during APRs of previous years, but without reaching a decisive conclusion. Particularly in Namibia, the 2013 APR decision did not usher in the phasing down from the ground up. UNHCR\_Namibia had already started its own strategy to scale down UNHCR's presence and ultimately close the Office. However, there are contradictory accounts regarding whether this had been initiated by UNHCR's office in Namibia, by ROSA or the RBA Director. Initially, the outcome appears to have been to phase down in the wake of the mass voluntary repatriation of a significant part of the refugee community, as is standard practice in UNHCR. But plans and other documents show that the notion of closure of the office was part of the process at an early stage. Already in 2011, UNHCR-Namibia internally announced its intention to plan a withdrawal from direct involvement in the refugee programme by transferring responsibilities to the government.<sup>32</sup> That initiative was presented as a logical continuation of partial transfers to selected government departments that had been implemented during previous years: to the Ministry of Education (2008) and the Ministry of Health and Social Services (2009). Between 2009 and 2012, responsibility for RSD had been fully absorbed by the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration. Based on information in the 2012-2013 COP, it was UNHCR's understanding that as part of these transfers, the departments had also made the required financial provisions in their budgets. In early 2012, the Office had announced plans to close FO-Osire, subject to the completion of the voluntary repatriation of Angolan refugees.<sup>33</sup>

45. The "Priority Review of the Management Structural Review of the Regional Representation for Southern Africa and other Aspects" document also suggests that the present phasing down planning references past examples, including Lesotho and Swaziland. It notes that Botswana and Namibia "have been on the agenda for possible 'phase-out' for quite some time," and that the call for phasing down in Angola, where solutions for Angolans were expected to reduce the number of persons of concern, "grows louder."<sup>34</sup>
46. **While a pivotal decision to phase down was taken in 2013, the decision making in relation to the phasing down of UNHCR's presence in the three countries continued intermittently during 2014, 2015 and 2016.** In 2014, the APR supported closure of the Namibia Office by mid-2015. But for the other two countries, no decisions on full closure or design of the phase down were taken. For Botswana, it supported closing the Office of the Chief of Mission (OCM) in the capital and moving representational coverage to the Regional Representative in Pretoria by 1 July 2015, but retaining a presence in Dukwi.<sup>35</sup> Angola was merely requested to clarify the continued need for a UNHCR presence.<sup>36</sup> In 2015, of the three countries, only Botswana and Angola were discussed: the APR then endorsed the closure of FO -Dukwi and the nationalization of the Gaborone Office by 1 January 2017, subject to the achievement of certain preconditions. <sup>37</sup> These included the satisfactory completion of ongoing legal reforms and a reduction in the number of persons of concern following the implementation of durable solutions strategies. The Bureau for Africa at the time requested the creation of additional posts at ROSA in order to ensure that it would have adequate capacity to assume responsibilities for supporting the countries where UNHCR was in the

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<sup>28</sup> For example, "2006-2008 Plan of Action for Scaling Down: Angola." (undated)

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> SMC Principals Meeting 13 July 2007: "Defining effective exit strategies and establishing criteria that UNHCR should follow to phase-out of operations"; "Note on Protection Considerations for Phasing Down or Phasing Out of UNHCR's Operations", draft as of 1 November 2012, Comprehensive Solutions Unit, DIP, March 2013.

<sup>31</sup> Interviews with refugees in Viano and Bairro Popular, December 2017.

<sup>32</sup> COP Namibia 2012.

<sup>33</sup> COP Namibia 2013.

<sup>34</sup> "Priority Review of the Management Structural Review of the Regional Representation for Southern Africa and other Aspects."

<sup>35</sup> Troika APR conclusions, Africa, 12 June 2014 (Annex III).

<sup>36</sup> Extended APR Secretariat recommendations on 2015 operations plans (undated). There is no mentioning of Angola, Botswana or Namibia in the Report of the Troika meeting on the Status of 2015 APR conclusions, 24 September 2014.

<sup>37</sup> APR recommendations on 2016-17 Plans (Africa) – AHC (O) / AHC (P) review, 12 May 2015. Also: Memorandum AF/DIR/021/15 of 29 April 2015 "Annual Programme Review of 2016-17 Plans"; Director RBA to AHC (O).

process of phasing out. This was in line with the ODMS recommendation, as the ODMS review had proposed the creation of nine posts in December 2014.<sup>38</sup> This proposal was endorsed by the HC, but the Budget Committee had not approved it and thus a reexamination of the proposal was requested.<sup>39</sup> In 2016, the RBA proposed the closure of FO-Dukwi and the nationalization of the Gaborone Office in Botswana by July 2016. It was also proposed to nationalize the Office in Angola by December 2016.<sup>40</sup>

47. **Decision making was protracted, sometimes inconsistent and unable to project a clear and detailed vision of the ultimate objective.** There were several factors influencing this, including the lack of specific and clear procedures, criteria and operational guidance to support decision making and strategy development in the context of phasing down and office closures. Existing guidance on phasing down was worded in appropriate and relevant, but general words. Appraising the topic of phasing down of activities and presence from a general perspective, the Bureau outlined that any disengagement process should not allow the Office to “fall below the threshold of accountability for both its mandated responsibilities and for management due diligence.” In addition, “such disengagement [...] would be linked to the achievement of durable solutions and measurable benchmarks and based on arrangements to be established in close coordination with the respective governments.”<sup>41</sup> In 2013, the RBA noted a need for general markers on office closure when it assessed COP plans.<sup>42</sup> In response, the Troika tasked ODMS with the preparation of guidance on the necessary procedures for closing an office, as well as DIP/DPSM for guidance and benchmarks on self-reliance.<sup>43</sup> The evaluation did not find additional, more detailed, procedural guidance or evidence of follow-up to this decision.
48. **A contributing factor to the protracted nature of the decision-making was that the different planning assumptions underpinning the 2013 APR decisions were not clearly articulated.** Despite the fact that these assumptions were varied and had been informed by detailed reports and plans prepared and submitted by the UNHCR Offices in the respective countries and available to the 2013 APR, they were not clearly articulated as part of the APR decisions. The decisions made no reference to the carefully worded preconditions that these reports and plans had provided, such as the implementation of durable solutions for major groups of persons of concern or other specific achievements in the refugee programme. Consequently, the decisions were detached from any future analysis of the operational dynamics and context in which they were supposed to be implemented. As illustrated by the 2015 proposals for Botswana, benchmarks for phasing down were sometimes formulated during (pre-) APR discussions.<sup>44</sup> However, there is no evidence that this was done more than incidentally and in most cases was not accompanied by an agreed mechanism for regular monitoring and review.
49. Furthermore the assumptions underpinning the decision were not based on consultations with a wide range of individuals or groups, which contributed to them lacking in analysis and clarity. There is little documentation on who had input into the analysis for the assumptions, and there was a lack of clarity on who needed to be involved in a decision of this nature (phasing or closing down), and who should be consulted.
50. **The UN Resident Coordinators (UNRC) in the three countries had little input into the phasing down decision and were not well informed of it. Comments made and concerns that were raised by UNRCs did not affect the decision.** In Botswana, the UNRC and other local diplomats advised against

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<sup>38</sup> Memorandum AF00/RMU/AD/BK/15/005 dated 13 February 2015 “Request for an Increase of Staffing Operating Level by USD 870.916 for the Implementation of the Review of the Management Structure of the Regional Representation for Southern Africa and Other Aspects”, from the Director a.i. RBA to the Chairperson of the Budget Committee (through the AHC (O)).

<sup>39</sup> Budget Committee decision, email of 10 March 2015 from BC Secretariat in PBS to the Director a.i. RBA; and Memorandum AF00/DIR/021/15 dated 29 April 2015 “Annual Programme Review of 2016-17 Plans” from the Director RBA to the AHC (O).

<sup>40</sup> Memorandum AF/DIR/029/16 of 27 April 2016 “Annual Programme Review of 2017 Plans”; Director RBA to AHC (O). This finding is based on documents related to proposals and discussions in preparation of formal APR sessions; an uninterrupted document trail of final APR decisions was not available.

<sup>41</sup> Memorandum AF/00/DIR/011/13 dated 16 May 2013 from the Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa to the AHC(O), paragraph 51

<sup>42</sup> Troika Review of Bureaux 2014-2015 Field Plans, Africa Bureau (report of meeting 21 May 2013). A similar request had been made by the Regional Bureau for the Americas and the Caribbean (RBAC).

<sup>43</sup> Troika Review of Bureaux 2014-2015 Field Plans, Conclusions and Next Steps (report of meetings 23 and 31 May 2013).

<sup>44</sup> Memorandum AF/DIR/021/15 of 29 April 2015 “Annual Programme Review of 2016-17 Plans”; Director RBA to AHC (O).



UNHCR considering closure of its Office in Botswana.<sup>45</sup> This was true in Angola as well, where the UNRC and other UN bodies had little to no input to the analysis of the gaps and the capacity to respond, which could have informed the decision.<sup>46</sup>

51. **Another factor contributing to the lack of clarity was that different explanations were emphasized by UNHCR to justify its decisions regarding phasing down internally and externally.** The communication with different stakeholders on the decision was varied and over time staff became increasingly confused over the contents of the decision and whether it could be questioned or delayed.<sup>47</sup> In external communications, rationales around the achievement of durable solutions and the related decrease in the numbers of persons of concern were used to explain UNHCR's decisions. Additional rationales were sometimes provided, most notably in exchanges with governments. These included the socio-economic status of the country and the assumption of the governments' ability to take increased financial and operational roles to honour their existing international obligations and responsibilities. Particularly Angola and Namibia were considered to possess adequate financial resources to support refugees on their territories. In addition, there was the suggestion of a maximum threshold in the numbers of persons of concern below which an obligation exists on the part of UNHCR to commence phasing out. Particularly in Namibia, the government had understood that there was a rule or policy in UNHCR requiring it to close its presence once refugee numbers fall below a certain threshold. When the government was later informed that no such rigid numerical rule exists, it felt it had been denied negotiating space. It is a perception on the part of the Namibian government, expressed by several interviewees independently of one another, but it also finds some support in documents and the language used by UNHCR in meetings with government officials. For example, the adjustment of presence following the reduction in refugee numbers was presented as "automatic" and, in the light of this, the closure of its Office in Namibia as "imperative."<sup>48</sup>
52. The evaluation showed that UNHCR had considered the operational requirements in light of changes in the number of persons of concern when deciding to phase down presence in the three countries, but that other factors also influence the need for UNHCR's presence in a country. It found that in light of UNHCR's international protection mandate, UNHCR's physical presence can be required where refugee numbers are small if the State and its institutions lacks some capacity to protect, as well as where legal complexities or relational imperatives are present.
53. The evaluation also found that while the considerations of reducing expenditure in the Southern African region and to explore opportunities for this in Botswana, Namibia and Angola had some foundation in the operational reality, the complexities of the context and the vision for moving from what was essentially an operational engagement to a more advocacy and supervisory role for international protection was unclear.
54. Chapter 4 and 5 will explore how subsequent planning for the implementation and the actual implementation also influenced the outcomes and ability to reach the objectives. However, the lack of stakeholder informed analysis to underpin the assumptions prior to the decisions and the protracted and inconsistent decision making process contributed in important ways to some of the difficulties experienced.

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<sup>45</sup> Mission report prepared by the RMFT.

<sup>46</sup> Interviews, Luanda, December 2017.

<sup>47</sup> Staff interviewed in Angola cited a range of reasons for the decision, and were unclear on how it was made. All but a few expressed confusion regarding how the decision was taken to phase down, including what criteria were used. Many offered speculation, including dwindling numbers and the financial burden of operating in Angola, but others expressed explicit confusion, particularly given the ongoing conflict in neighbouring DRC, the protracted caseload in Luanda, and the lack of mechanisms to implement the new asylum law (interviews Luanda, December 2017).

<sup>48</sup> Summary Note on the Meeting with the Namibian Delegation Standing Committee, 30 June 2014.

## 4 The phasing down process: Planning for the implementation of the decision

### 4.1 Introduction

55. This chapter considers how the implementation of the decision to phase down was planned for, including who led this process, who were consulted and included in the planning, what was planned for the implementation and how was this formulated, including in the COPs. It therefore speaks to key evaluation questions concerning the relevance and appropriateness of UNHCR's strategies and objectives.
56. After the decisions were confirmed by the Troika at the end of 2013, ROSA led a process of further articulating benchmarks and mapping outcomes along the lines of the general set of criteria that had emerged during the 2013 APR process. These initial benchmarks formulated by ROSA included the achievement of durable solutions, reduction of the numbers of persons of concern, outstanding challenges regarding ensuring international protection (upholding non-refoulement obligations, enabling an asylum claim), ensuring enjoyment of rights and improving the legal frameworks. It further spoke to ensuring the capacities of respective governments and of the Regional Office to assume residual responsibilities. Following this, the design of the corresponding phasing down strategies, the planning, the consultation with counterparts and the decisions around to whom and what to communicate about the decision and its implications largely followed separate individual tracks for each of the three countries.

### 4.2 Conclusions and key findings

After the decision in 2013, and in line with the usual roles and responsibilities, **ROSA took the lead on the planning for implementing the phase down**. A Regional Multi-Functional Team (RMFT) was established, which supported the process in both Botswana and Namibia, while in Angola a leaner approach from ROSA was taken with only a mission from the Assistant Regional Representative (Programme).

**The RMFT established benchmarks and pre-conditions for the phase down**, which they linked to outcomes and objectives and used to design activity plans for the phase down, mainly for UNHCR, but also for government counterparts in the case of Namibia. The decision to phase down had mainly considered the potential for a reduction in UNHCR's operational response as the number of persons of concern had reduced, or would reduce. However, the RMFT's benchmarks and pre-conditions were mainly related to ensuring respect for international protection, particularly that actual protection and assistance would be up to standards for new or remaining refugees.

The RMFT approach was found to be an important initiative by ROSA to ensure consistency in the approach to phasing down and to map gaps in relation to meeting protection and solutions outcomes. However, the efforts of the **RMFT to create consistency and a 'roadmap' for implementation of the phase down had challenges**. A significant challenge was the disassociation from the existing planning tools of UNHCR, including the COP process and the results framework, and the introduction of new parameters like benchmarks and pre-conditions. As such **the phase down 'roadmaps' did not benefit from the links to resource allocations and did not form part of the planning process also linked to budget review and resource mobilization**.

While the results framework may not have provided the necessary flexibility to design a suitable strategy and plan, the formulated benchmarks did not distinguish sufficiently between the desired results or impact, the linked outcomes, including those shared by the government, and the strategies and output for UNHCR to achieve these. The plans developed for phase down, based on the RMFT and other initiatives, also remain incomplete and without a clear 'end visions' which the governments supported. Progress therefore remained challenging to monitor and there was no process for course-correction.

Furthermore, there were indications that the **staffing challenges, including rotation, both in country offices and ROSA may have played a role in the efforts to ensure consistency in the planning for and implementation of the decision to phase down**. In Angola for instance efforts were curtailed by the

lack of sufficient Portuguese speaking staff in ROSA and staffing issues were a key contributing factor for financial losses in Botswana.

**Planning was adapted to the situation in each of the countries**, taking into account how phasing down had already been planned for prior to the 2013 decision. While the Government of Namibia was involved from the outset, neither the Government of Botswana nor the Government of Angola was significantly included in the discussions of how to plan for the implementation. **In all three countries however, lack of government buy-in became a hindrance to the process.** In Botswana, an ODMS structural review was to inform the decisions on the modalities for and design of the phase down. This process suffered from lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities between ODMS and ROSA.

While governments had been involved in discussions about phasing down, to varied degrees, in all three countries, this did not lead to situations where governments were ready to take on full responsibility. Unarticulated expectations in relation to the standards of protection and assistance and how to fund this were found to contribute to this. This was further hampered by the lack of organization-wide guidance on how to plan for phase down of presence and the inconsistent use of language in relation to the final situation.

## 4.3 Planning for the implementation of the decision

### 4.3.1 Regional Office for Southern Africa (ROSA)

57. **The planning for the phase-down and the APR and Troika decisions was done by ROSA and the country offices.** The Regional Representative in Pretoria initiated the planning and consulted with senior managers at ROSA and the relevant Representatives or Chief of Mission, as well as other staff both in Country Offices and ROSA. Subsequently, ROSA initiated phasing down planning by developing plans specific for each of the countries concerned. These efforts included the identification and articulation of detailed outcomes and benchmarks based on reviews of protection, programme, administration and staffing objectives, but the process remained internal. The benchmarks were formulated as specific outcomes that needed to be achieved to create conditions for the phasing down. However, the plans had no roadmap formulating how to achieve the outcomes. This was therefore left to the country offices, which struggled to develop these. During the early stages of this planning the Governments were not fully included in the planning for implementation, which led to misunderstandings and incorrect assumptions regarding what governments were capable or willing to take over later.
58. **The first step by ROSA was to assign a Regional Multi-Functional Team (RMFT) comprised of senior staff with regional functions to develop plans for the phasing down.** Starting with a mission to Namibia in February 2014, the RMFT involvement was grafted onto the already ongoing phasing down planning process that had been initiated by the Namibia Country Office in 2012 when ROSA had supported its proposals to work towards the closure of the country Office.<sup>49</sup> As early as January 2013, UNHCR had organized a meeting with all stakeholders (i.e. its main government counterpart and the implementing partner African Humanitarian Agency (AHA)) where a plan was agreed to set out modalities for a hand over to the government “when UNHCR leaves Namibia.”<sup>50</sup> This event marked the first time UNHCR had raised the prospect of office closure with the government. At a follow-up meeting in August 2013, a set of benchmarks for phasing down had been agreed with the same partners that included strengthening government capacity (including of various line Ministries) and the achievement of durable solutions. At this stage, the Government raised concerns about the timing of the plans to phase down, but these were not addressed.

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<sup>49</sup> Interviews, Namibia, November 2017.

<sup>50</sup> Minutes of the stakeholders meeting between the Government of Namibia, UNHCR and AHA, 15-16 August 2013.

59. **During their mission in 2014, the RMTF developed a set of comprehensive matrices of objectives and outcomes, actors and timeframes for Namibia.** A Disengagement Plan and a joint Action Plan agreed with the government detailing twenty joint actions areas within which approximately 75 specific actions were identified to complete a full hand over of UNHCR's operational activities.<sup>51</sup> With respect to each of the joint actions, responsibilities for implementation were clearly assigned to entities within the government and UNHCR, and dates for monitoring and review were specified. However, no regular monitoring reports have come to light. Ultimately, by the time the office was closed, the majority of the planned outcomes of the matrices had not been achieved.
60. Regarding **Botswana**, during 2013, no steps towards phasing down, nationalization and eventual closure of the Office in Botswana were evident in documents, emails, or the comments of interviewees. In March 2014, during bilateral planning meetings for 2015 between CoM-Botswana and ROSA, it was agreed that a mission would take place to conduct "an operational review to define parameters for the operation and its support structures".<sup>52</sup> It is not clear whether phase down, nationalization and/or office closure were explicitly raised at this stage.
61. By June 2014, the objectives for phasing down had become increasingly concrete and the Troika endorsed the proposal for the development of a plan by ROSA in the second half of 2014 for responsible disengagement from Botswana. This plan was to include representational coverage by ROSA no later than 1 July 2015 with UNHCR maintaining an in-country presence only in Dukwi.<sup>53</sup>
62. The first operational attempt to plan for a phasing down process in Botswana was the fielding of the Regional Multifunctional Team (RMFT) in September 2014 to identify benchmarks and preconditions for operational steps in the phasing down process.<sup>54</sup> The RMFT produced a matrix<sup>55</sup> providing a list of recommendations that constituted a UNHCR step-by-step plan towards closure or UNHCR country presence, including in relation to objectives such as refugee law reform, reception center construction, durable solutions by country of origin, a re-verification and profiling exercises, detailed sectoral plans and other additional support structures needed by the OCM to implement the plan. The relevant operational objectives were broken down into detailed operational activities. Responsibilities for implementation and follow-up (between UNHCR staff in Botswana and at ROSA) for each activity were allocated and specific time frames agreed: short-term (until the end of 2014), mid-term (end of 2015) and long-term (2017). The Botswana RMFT considered the provision of technical expertise to the government in support of the revision of the existing refugee legislation, while pursuing the hand-over of service delivery to government departments as operational priorities.
63. The RMFT articulated a series of circumstances and factors deemed to be favourable for the creation of improved refugee legislation. The mission recommended the closure of UNHCR FO Dukwi by the end of 2015 or the middle of 2016, subject to the definition of benchmarks and indicators and the review of adequacy of their progress. It recommended that the OCM in Gaborone should be maintained until the Refugee Law Reform had been adopted, systems and structures put in place for implementation of the Law. The final stages of disengagement of the Gaborone Office was to be through nationalization and then was to be comprised of a National Officer Protection who in appropriate time could be relocated to be based in the Office of the Resident Coordinator. The estimated time frame for the nationalization was mid 2016 till end 2017. The above described activities remained strictly internal to UNHCR, and were not part of conversations with other stakeholders. Regarding its approach to the government, the focus at the time was the restoration of constructive relations, support to the government's efforts at reforming the outdated asylum legislation, and strengthening the national protection system. The issue of phasing out and/or office closure was not raised.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Mentioned in the Report of the ROSA mission to Namibia, 2 -5 February 2014. It is assumed that this is the document entitled "Namibia, Government of Namibia and UNHCR Action Plan for UNHCR Phase-Out."

<sup>52</sup> Mission Report RMTF to Botswana (8-12 September 2014), page 2 ("pre-mission activities").

<sup>53</sup> Troika APR conclusions, 12 June 2014.

<sup>54</sup> Mission Report, Regional Multifunctional Team, 8-12 September, 2014.

<sup>55</sup> Matrix of Recommendations and Follow-up, Mission by Regional Multifunctional Team (RMFT), 8-12 September, 2014.

<sup>56</sup> Hand-over Note, interim Chief of Mission, 13 August 2014.

64. **As requested by the 2013 APR decision, a structural review was undertaken by ODMS in Botswana in 2013/ 2014 but its conclusions were contested by ROSA.** The final report on the structural review was released only at the very end of the following year, in 2014, after the RMFT had been set up and a plan developed.<sup>57</sup> However, earlier reports and interviews indicate that preliminary findings had been made available to managers at their request during the 2013 APR exercise. The substance of this advice is not available. According to its final report issued more than a year later, the structural review found that the working relations with the government of Botswana were difficult on protection matters, “leaving UNHCR with a fairly restricted *marge de manoeuvre*.”<sup>58</sup> For these reasons, it considered discontinuation of the two international posts “premature.” It considered continued advocacy with the government by international staff “necessary” and recommended that the proposed staffing and structure in Botswana be re-examined in a separate exercise, “given the developments in Botswana following the ODMS-led mission.” Conversations with interviewees and the document review did not confirm whether this was done or not.
65. Moreover, the respective roles, weight, and authority between ROSA and ODMS for the “ODMS-led” structural review were unclear from the outset. In December 2014, the final report of the structural review was issued.<sup>59</sup> This review had been requested by the APR in 2013 as a condition for the implementation of the APR-decision regarding the “nationalization” option for the Botswana Office.<sup>60</sup> The review has often been referred to as “ODMS-led,” but through the interviews with those involved the evaluation found that there was a lack of clarity on leadership roles between ODMS and ROSA from the outset. Discussions before the start of the review on this issue between the Bureau for Africa and ODMS were inconclusive, but both decided to proceed nevertheless.<sup>61</sup> While it was agreed that ROSA would undertake its own internal review, ODMS conducted its mission to the sub-region from 7-16 April 2013 and, a few weeks later, produced a report with conclusions and recommendations. The ODMS report was not released but was submitted to ROSA to be incorporated into a combined, final report together with the results of ROSA’s internal review. It took ROSA until the end of the following year (23 December 2014) to complete and issue the report.
66. By the time of the release of the report on the structural review in Botswana, it became clear that ODMS and ROSA had opposing views on the phasing down of the operation and the future of the UNHCR presence, particularly on the issue of nationalization. While ODMS had recommended the nationalization of the Botswana Office in accordance with ROSA’s views of the time, during the year and a half that followed, ROSA changed its position and in December 2014 insisted on the need for continued presence of international staff in the country. The original proposals crafted by ODMS would have created a nationalized office in which the discontinuation of the two international posts would be offset by the upgrading of several existing national posts, the retiling of others and the creation of two additional (national) posts. In December 2014, ROSA suggested that “given the developments in Botswana following the ODMS-led mission [...] the proposed staffing and structure in Botswana should be re-examined and presented separately from this [...] review”.<sup>62</sup> The recommendation made by ROSA did not clarify what these developments were.
67. For **Angola**, ROSA did not send a RMFT, but initiated the planning process with a mission by the Assistant Regional Representative (Programme) in October 2014.<sup>63</sup> The outcome of the mission emphasized that in addition to completing engagement with returning Angolan refugees, there was a need to develop clear benchmarks for phasing down. It built on the conclusions of bilateral COP planning discussions with ROSA that had taken place the year before (March 2013) where the potential for budget reductions and phasing

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<sup>57</sup> “Priority Review of the Management Structure of the Regional Representation for Southern Africa and other Aspects” (ODMS-led structural review), ROSA, 23 December 2014.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* paragraph 109.

<sup>59</sup> “Priority Review of the Management Structure of the Regional Representation for Southern Africa and other Aspects” (often referred to as the ODMS-led structural review), ROSA, 23 December 2014.

<sup>60</sup> Troika 2014 OL confirmation detailed decisions, 7-10 October 2013.

<sup>61</sup> Interviews, November 2017.

<sup>62</sup> Priority Review of the Management Structural Review of the Regional Representation for Southern Africa and other Aspects, ROSA, paragraph 113, page 24.

<sup>63</sup> Interviews; Mission Report, Assistant Regional Representative (Programme), 20-24 October 2014.



down had been discussed, including defining an exit/disengagement strategy. The initial assessment of the benchmarks that had been formulated during a regional protection meeting later the same year<sup>64</sup> deemed that these were largely unmet. It was concluded that the situation in Angola was not ready for a phasing out: protection benchmarks would take years to achieve and there was a need to first create a strong national partner to take on legal assistance and advocacy for UNHCR's mandate.<sup>65</sup> A new strategy was thus suggested, which intended for the country office to maintain its capacity for outcomes. The new strategy prioritized asylum space, development strategies, protection and assistance for persons of concern, and improved standards of assistance. It provided detailed proposed plans for moving forward on protection and solutions, including as related to staffing, timing, budget and knowledge.<sup>66</sup> In 2015 there were also to be increased resettlement submissions.<sup>67</sup>

#### 4.3.2 Country Offices: Angola, Botswana and Namibia

68. **In the three countries, planning for phasing down was linked to the RMFT planning process initiated by ROSA or other processes where the COPs planning framework was not used.** A review of the 2012-2017 COPs for ROSA, Angola, Botswana and Namibia revealed that while planning for implementation of the phasing down was sometimes mentioned, it was not comprehensively reflected in terms of strategies, objectives, activities, staffing and budgets. The extent to which the COP planning framework was used for the planning of the phasing down processes was fragmentary and extended only to requests for resources that were to be specifically applied in the phasing down process. Annual country operational planning frameworks were not used to articulate comprehensive, integrated phasing down strategies. Opportunities that these frameworks offered to consider year-upon-year adjustments of objectives and plans in light of obstacles encountered in implementation or of changes in the operational environment were thus not seized.
69. In **Angola**, annual planning in the years following the 2013 APR decision revolved largely around identifying opportunities to reduce budgets and staffing, and the COPs reflected this, but other than mentioning the completion of the large-scale returnee operation in mid-2012 (enabling a sharp reduction of 2013 requirements) there is no evidence in the COPs of specific proposals to create the conditions that would make further reductions possible with the explicit aim of phasing down. In 2015, the COP for 2016 referred to the development of a phase-down strategy, which had been developed outside of the COPs process. This strategy came in light of the decision in 2015 to accelerate the phasing down.
70. The relationship between ROSA and Luanda affected the process and planning, as well as the implementation of the phase down. Overall, interview data from Luanda and Pretoria denote a somewhat strain relationship with the country and regional office. Interviewees highlighted in particular the perceived distance with the ROSA office. In addition to a physical distance from Pretoria, interviewees in Luanda noted the importance of having missions from ROSA and HQ staff, a lack of cultural understanding, including the importance of Portuguese language when communicating with the Angolan government, and challenges in communication between Luanda and Pretoria. This affected how the phasing down decision was communicated and executed, and there were misunderstandings and incorrect assumptions on the part of some staff regarding how the phasing down was decided upon (e.g. many interviewees thought ROSA initiated the idea of phasing down). The country office resisted the phase down at nearly every opportunity, indicating that it was premature.<sup>68</sup> One concern raised with the office in Luanda was about whether and how UNHCR had briefed the Angolan authorities about the phasing down and whether a joint

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<sup>64</sup> Proposed in Exit Strategy document of the 2014 Regional Protection Meeting. These include: State acceded to international protection instruments; authorities willing and have capacity to provide international protection; human rights and rule of law generally prevail in the country; cessation implemented; durable solutions are attained and are sustainable; refugee needs integrated in development programs; stable regional environment; UNHCR regional presence; innovative partnerships; monitoring and continued capacity building and other assistance activities.

<sup>65</sup> Interviews, confidential sources.

<sup>66</sup> Interviews, internal emails and confidential sources; based in Regional Priorities and Vision for 2016-2017; Regional Strategic Outlook for 2016 and Beyond.

<sup>67</sup> COP 2016.

<sup>68</sup> Interviews in Luanda, December 2017.

plan of action was clearly discussed. It was proposed that a high-level headquarters mission to Angola might help authorities be more open to assuming responsibilities, given their lack of willingness to take on additional activities.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, at the time Angola was experiencing a severe financial crisis and as such, was less open to allocating funds for a joint plan of action.

71. In **Botswana**, the COPs reflected the mixed views of the OCM regarding phasing down. This was evidenced in the inconsistent use of the COPs and the sometimes contradictory planning year on year. However, from 2015 onwards, COPs did acknowledge and make explicit reference to the separate ROSA-managed planning process. The COPs did propose, each year after this, to push backwards target dates for office closures but without explaining the reasons for these pushbacks or making reference to the extent to which benchmarks for phasing down were or were not being met. In relative terms, UNHCR-Namibia has made the most use of the COPs planning process, but only in respect of selected activities. In 2014 (COP for 2015) additional TA positions were proposed to increase the number of resettlement submissions as well as to help the overall transformations in the fields of supply management, admin, finance and human resources.

#### 4.4 Stakeholder involvement in planning for phasing down

72. **Partners were uncertain about which responsibilities they were expected to take over, and weather and how they could make input in to the phasing down design and process.**

*Angola*

73. **In Angola, there was no clarity that the main NGO partner, JRS, was expected to take on responsibilities.** The October 2014 ROSA mission had suggested that UNHCR strengthen partnerships with others, like the Church, UN agencies, NGOs and others.<sup>70</sup> It also emphasized early engagement overall with refugees, partners, and the government, and called for a Joint Action Plan for 2015 that detailed steps for the phase-out in 2015. It estimated the phase out to take at least three years, but stressed that it would need to be guided by benchmarks with joint reviews. When it was clear that benchmarks would not be met, particularly with respect to government capacity, a new strategy was suggested, which kept one senior person with Portuguese language skills in ROSA to oversee Angola within the already established Country Focal Point system there. It then suggested a P3 level national Head of Office in Angola, with missions from Pretoria as needed. It proposed doing this by 1 January 2017, with savings already in 2016 through eliminating positions.<sup>71</sup>

*Namibia*

74. **In UNHCR's view, the planning process for Namibia was initiated jointly with the government and other partners. However, the government felt that office closure/phasing out plans were presented as a *fait accompli* and that its participation was only required to make the implementation of the decision run smoothly.** In other words, the government did not consider itself an active participant in the phasing out process, in contradiction to UNHCR's perception. Although reports show that there were periods of convergence and mutual agreement of the objective of the exit strategy, the government expressed that they had not felt ready for a handover by the time UNHCR closed its presence. This is based on documents, reports and notes, as well as interviews both with UNHCR staff that accompanied the process and government representatives.
75. **Within UNHCR, a discussion on which part(s) of the assistance programme the Government of Namibia could reasonably be expected to fund and the standards to which it would be held were sidestepped by the decision to continue funding food, non-food, shelter and water supply.** No evidence has come to light from within UNHCR of a systematic reflection on the fundamental question as to whether or not the Namibian government would be prepared to fund assistance to refugees as well as to determine which standards would apply. In practice, for instance, if it would be assumed that UNHCR's emergency standards for refugee camp settings would apply, this may have meant that the government

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<sup>69</sup> ExCom Bilateral meetings in 2016; also October 2016 teleconference.

<sup>70</sup> 2014 Mission Report, 20-24 October, Assistant Regional Representative (Programme).

<sup>71</sup> Interviews, internal emails and confidential sources; based in Regional Priorities and Vision for 2016-2017; Regional Strategic Outlook for 2016 and Beyond.

would afford refugees a privileged status in comparison to a considerable portion of its own citizens. The exit strategy explored questions about what the different Ministries could do and take over, but stopped short of a transparent discussion on the sustainable funding of these activities.

76. **UNHCR attempted to formalize an agreement on the phasing out with the government of Namibia.** Several documents referred to the need to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the government on the phasing out process. A draft Exchange of Letters between UNHCR and the Government was prepared, but a signed version is not available. This document was intended as a framework for cooperation on the technical implementation modalities of the conditions of the phase out strategy.<sup>72</sup>

#### *Botswana*

77. **The first time UNHCR informed the Government of Botswana of its plans to phase-down the operation was in May 2015.** This finding is supported by a report of a meeting in Gaborone between the CoM and the MDJS Director on 5 May 2015. On this occasion, UNHCR also raised the need to have a joint government/UNHCR planning meeting as early as possible in order to guide the phase-down process.<sup>73</sup> On previous occasions, such as at a meeting in the margins of ExCom in October 2014 between the Africa Bureau and the Botswana delegation, UNHCR's intentions towards phasing down and office closure were not mentioned. Although the mission report highlighted the need for close coordination with the government and other partners, during the mission these plans were not discussed with either. Rather, during the entire first year of planning for the phasing down in 2014, the governments, the UN Resident Coordinator and NGO partners were not engaged. Reports support later government claims that UNHCR's decision to close the office had been unilateral, and that any joint planning had been only in relation to the implementation of that decision. Documents show that there were also delays in sharing the plans formally with the government, but also that UNHCR's messages on intentions and rationale were inconsistent.<sup>74</sup> This emphasized the progress in the situation as a reason for phasing down presence. In contrast a June 2016 UNHCR message to the government referred to the Agency's financial situation as the rationale for the decision, and the phasing down of its operation as the objective.<sup>75</sup>
78. **In Botswana, there was no indication that the government and other stakeholders actively participated in the elaboration of the Revised Disengagement Plan of April 2016.**<sup>76</sup> However, the plan was shared with the government. In its response, the government expressed concern over UNHCR's move and stated, in strong terms, that UNHCR's decision was unilateral and that the government's concerns had not been taken into consideration. In addition to not having been offered active participation in the entire planning process, the government's concerns centered around envisaged budgetary implications and the level of any continued representation by UNHCR in the country.
79. The importance of engaging the Government of Botswana in the phase down had been identified early in the process by ROSA. Exchanges between ROSA and the Bureau for Africa from August 2014 show that already before the RMFT was deployed to Botswana, in September 2014, ROSA indicated to the Bureau the necessity for early and transparent involvement of the government in any decision regarding closure or exit strategy and not only in the subsequent implementation of a decision was paramount. The government was to fully agree before any steps towards disengagement could be considered responsible. This was further supported by the report of the RMFT that recommended that UNHCR should ensure close coordination with the government and other partners in the planning and preparation of a phasing down. Interviews and documents did not paint a clear picture of the reasons why UNHCR took a less participatory approach, but there are indications that issues in relation to the law reform and ensuring international protection for refugees seeking asylum were points of some disagreement. Following the RMFT mission,

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<sup>72</sup> Draft Exchange of Letters, 2014.

<sup>73</sup> Aide-mémoire, UNHCR, 16 May 2016 referring to a session of the 2015 APR on 12 May 2015.

<sup>74</sup> Exchange between UNHCR and Government of Botswana September 2015

<sup>75</sup> Minutes of Meeting between UNHCR and the MDJS, 8 June 2016.

<sup>76</sup> Minutes of the Meeting between ROSA and the Minister MDJS, 8 June 2016; Aide-mémoire, UNHCR, 16 May 2016; Letter Director RBA to the Government of Botswana, 23 May 2016.



additional preparatory actions were identified for the hand-over to line ministries of community and child protection.<sup>77</sup>

80. During 2013 and during the first half of 2014, ROSA had to address several tensions that had erupted between UNHCR-Botswana and the government. This finding is supported by interviews with relevant senior managers as well as by documentary references, which also described the “fairly tense” relations with the government.<sup>78</sup> The report of the first Regional Multifunctional Team (September 2014) highlighted the absence of a disengagement plan for the country and other examples of lack of progress that it ascribed to the “volatile staffing situation of UNHCR Botswana over the past few years.”<sup>79</sup> The difficulties were resolved by deploying an interim Chief of Mission as from May 2014, followed by the appointment of a new Chief of Mission in August 2014.
81. Without a clear articulation by the 2013 APR decision of planning assumptions and planning benchmarks (or the underlying analysis for this), and in the absence of roadmaps guiding managers in ROSA, Botswana, Namibia and Angola, there were significant variations in approaches to dealing with governments, stakeholders, protection responsibilities and handling of assets/offices, human resources management and other issues. In some cases, this led to significant losses or risk of losses to the organization, in terms of human resources, asset loss, and increased risk of potential fraud, with overall high reputational risk for the organization.<sup>80</sup> For example, UNHCR bore some \$60,000 in losses in Namibia due to challenges with VAT refunds not obtained because there was no staff in the country to follow up.<sup>81</sup> Likewise, supplier contracts were not cancelled in a timely fashion, which also led to costs for UNHCR.<sup>82</sup> In other cases data was not transferred properly, cash was misused, previous years’ projects were not properly closed, leading to a lack of accountability by UNHCR and partners. It also led to the loss of qualified, experienced staff, which led to poor reporting, accountability, and oversight of partners.<sup>83</sup>

## 4.5 Monitoring and revision of plans

82. **The lack of clear analysis of the situation and of the assumptions for the phase down prior to the 2013 APR decision, which could have been used for the planning of the phase down, meant that offices revisited the planning assumptions, formulated benchmarks and came up with their own interpretations of the decision and how to implement it.**
83. **Phase down plans were mainly formulated ‘outside’ the planning tools of UNHCR offices**, and there were no clear mechanisms for the regular and systematic assessment of progress of the implementation, and hence no accessible way to adjust course, change objectives, plans and timelines as needed. The planning matrices for Botswana and Namibia included space for updates and comments on the implementation status of each step, but the evaluation team found no evidence of a systematic review and/or intermediate updates.
84. **There is no evidence that in developing these country-level plans, available guidelines for planning of operations or planning frameworks were used.** There is no evidence that organization-wide roadmaps, benchmarks, or instructions were available or developed, whether for handling the phase down with government/stakeholders, or protection or administration/finance.<sup>84</sup> While planning guidance was available in the UNHCR Manual—and indeed, many of the general concepts were drawn upon in the

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<sup>77</sup> Mission Report Senior Regional Community Service Officer, 30 November-5 December 2014.

<sup>78</sup> “Priority Review of the Management Structure of the Regional Representation for Southern Africa and other Aspects” (ODMS-led structural review), ROSA, 23 December 2014.

<sup>79</sup> Mission Report, Regional Multifunctional Team, 8-12 September, 2014.

<sup>80</sup> Based on interviews with ROSA staff as well as a 2017 PowerPoint presentation prepared by the ROSA Administration Section.

<sup>81</sup> “Phase-down and Phase-out in the Region – Lessons Learnt and Next Steps/Recommendations,” Administration/Finance (undated).

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Planning documents with benchmarks were drafted and discussed, but were never implemented.

planning for the implementation (e.g. developing a hierarchy of objectives, developing an implementation strategy, work planning and budgeting)—this guidance is general and did not have direct bearing on carrying out a phase down.

85. When governments raised objections to phasing down plans, UNHCR initially left these largely unanswered. In **Namibia**, the government had opposed UNHCR plans from the outset, but their reasoned arguments had not been responded to. The government reacted on several occasions to UNHCR's rationales used to explain and justify its decision to close the office. The Refugee Commissioner declared that "UNHCR's exit strategy came at a wrong time, when Namibia is experiencing the calamity of food insecurity and water scarcity." He expressed concerns over the argument, presumably presented earlier by UNHCR, that Namibia had recently been classified as an Upper-Middle Income country, which he called a "misconception."<sup>85</sup> There is no evidence that these comments prompted UNHCR to review and make adjustments to its exit strategy. Only in 2014 did UNHCR made fundamental adjustments to its plans in response to government concerns by agreeing to continue funding basic assistance (food and non-food assistance, shelter and water supply) to persons of concern. In a draft Exchange of Letters (undated) between UNHCR and the Government of Namibia, UNHCR committed itself to continued financial support.<sup>86</sup>
86. When the Multifunctional Team reported that UNHCR's longstanding counterpart, the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration in Namibia, was "not on board"<sup>87</sup> more than a year into the supposedly joint planning process with the government UNHCR did not adjust its approach or alter any handover coordination among sectors in the refugee programme.
87. There is no evidence that UNHCR has reflected on the fundamental question posed by the government, which was whether or not the government would be prepared to fund assistance to refugees at the level of international standards, which in practice would have meant affording refugees a privileged status in comparison to a large portion of its own citizens. The supposedly joint exit strategy explored questions about what the different Ministries could do and take over but stopped short of a transparent discussion on the sustainable funding of these activities.
88. In **Angola**, there was concern expressed by UNHCR both at the country and ROSA level about phasing down amidst a residual population of 15,000 refugees still in need of assistance, and because the asylum law had yet to be fully implemented.<sup>88</sup> Likewise the geographic reality of bordering the DRC made a new influx likely, and thus additional concerns about lessening UNHCR's in-country capacity were raised by the country office through email correspondence, meetings and phone calls.<sup>89</sup>
89. In **Botswana** there was a prolonged process and changing decisions on the question of phasing down presence and on how to do this best. In June 2014, the APR decided that the Gaborone Office would be closed by 1 July 2015 and that Dukwi would remain open. In September 2014 it was concluded that Dukwi should close at the end of 2015 or mid-2016, whilst the closure of the Gaborone Office was estimated to take place at the end of 2017, subject to the achievement of a number of specified benchmarks (report RMFT). In December 2014, in the final report of the structural review, ROSA expressed the need for continued expatriate staff and thus no nationalization (Report Structural Review). In May 2015, the APR decided that the Gaborone Office would be nationalized at 1 January 2017, conditional upon decisive steps being taken on the repatriation of Namibian refugees in the country and the closure of that situation.<sup>90</sup> Not long after that decision, the AHC (O) instructed that the phasing down needed to be accelerated. There

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<sup>85</sup> Minutes of the meeting between the Government of Namibia, UNHCR and Africa Humanitarian Action (AHA), 15-16 August 2013, Otjiwarongo, Namibia. The Namibian of 30 September 2013 carried an article that explained this context: In 2009, the World Bank upgraded Namibia from Lower to Upper Middle Income country but the Government expressed displeasure as severe social imbalances were not considered. See, The Namibian, "Geingob not happy with Namibia's middle income status", 30 September 2013. Available at: <https://www.namibian.com.na/index.php?id=114655&page=archive-read>

<sup>86</sup> Draft Exchange of Letters (2014).

<sup>87</sup> Note for the File, Meeting on Namibia, ROSA, with representatives from UNHCR-Namibia and RBA-Geneva, 14 February 2014.

<sup>88</sup> October 2016 teleconference.

<sup>89</sup> Interviews, Luanda, December 2017.

<sup>90</sup> Introduction to the Disengagement (Phase-out) Plan, UNHCR Botswana, July 2015.

were two options: closing down FO-Dukwi on 30 June 2016 and keeping a limited presence in Gaborone, or closing the Gaborone office on the same date and keeping Dukwi open.<sup>91</sup> It was not clear what would ultimately happen with the country presence as such; the intention possibly was a six-month transition period until final closure, but there is no documentary evidence. In July 2015, UNHCR-Botswana issued a “Disengagement (Phase-out) Plan”<sup>92</sup> “following the decision made by Headquarters to phase down by June 2016 and the phase-out (disengage) by December 2017.” The quoted planning date of June 2016 for phase down of June 2016 was in line with the APR conclusion of June 2015, but it is unclear where the final phase-out date of December 2017 comes from. In September 2015, a decision was taken to nationalize Gaborone and close Dukwi by 1 July 2016.<sup>93</sup> Then, in February 2016, ROSA proposed to keep Dukwi open, which is what happened while no formal decision in this regard was evidenced in the evaluation. Currently, there is a National Office in Gaborone and a FO in Dukwi.

90. **With the exception of the commitment to continue funding basic assistance mentioned above, major revisions of plans were limited to postponing planning dates for closure and/or phasing down and the envisaged structural arrangements.** This finding is based on reports of meetings and missions and confirmed by interviews with senior UNHCR staff members.
91. **Finally, there was an inconsistent use of terminology in reference to the ultimate objectives throughout the decision-making and implementation processes.** ‘Exit,’ ‘scaling down,’ ‘rightsizing,’ ‘phasing down,’ ‘phasing out,’ ‘phasing down,’ ‘closure,’ ‘disengagement,’ ‘realignment,’ and ‘departure’ each carry a different meaning but were often used indiscriminately. This finding is supported by a review of all internal and external communications issued by ROSA and/or the UNHCR Offices concerned during the period under review. The same finding was confirmed by the majority of the interviews.

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<sup>91</sup> Disengagement (Phase-out) Plan, July 2015. APR Recommendations on 2016-17 Plans – AHC (O) / AHC (P) review 12 May 2015. The first option was chosen; it is not clear when and by whom.

<sup>92</sup> Disengagement (Phase-out) Plan, UNHCR Botswana, July 2015.

<sup>93</sup> Memorandum AF00/DIR/038/16 of 26 May 2016 from Reg. Rep. ROSA to Dir. RBA

## 5 Implementation and results against the protection, assistance and solutions objectives

### 5.1 Introduction

92. This section presents the findings on the implementation of the phasing down in Angola, Botswana and Namibia against the protection, assistance and solutions objectives for persons of concern. It addresses the final key evaluation question, following the previous chapters on how the decision was taken and how implementation was planned. It considers the extent to which the planning assumptions held up, and how well indicators of progress were devised and used during the implementation of the phase down. It also presents findings on the assumption that governments were able and willing to take over responsibilities for persons of concern, and the extent to which protection and durable solutions objectives were prioritized in relation to the need for reductions in expenses.

### 5.2 Conclusions and key findings

Among the key findings relevant to the implementation of the decision to phase down, some important things stood out. Most notably, **interviews and documents demonstrate that the majority of the assumptions underpinning the decisions did not hold up.** This is closely related to the fact that there was no transparent analysis of these assumptions and this affected the understanding of both the motivation and the content of the decision. How the decision was understood and then planned for further affected how it was implemented. This was found to also have influenced the development of benchmarks and conditions for phasing down as well as the absence of better defined roadmaps with indicators and milestones for the implementation of the phase down.

**Overall the number of persons of concern did not reduce significantly in any of the three countries, but remained more or less stable, even before the large influx into Angola from DRC in April 2017.** This was further exacerbated by the lack of reduction of refugee numbers through finding durable solutions. Assumptions both in relation to return of Namibians and Zimbabweans, resettlement of various residual caseloads and local integration prospects fell short of materializing and efforts in support of these were found insufficient in all three countries.

In all three countries, **governments were reluctant to take over key responsibilities.** At the end of the period of review, gaps were found in the creation of conditions for handing over to governments. In Namibia, this was further influenced by a somewhat abrupt change in strategy from an assistance model to a more development-oriented model focused on self-reliance and implemented with new partners.

While there were planning-activities and discussions on how ROSA should support countries in phasing down, implementation was incomplete. And while there were efforts to ensure continuation of protection and assistance and identification of specific operational responsibilities for hand over to governments and partners, **ROSA was unable to allocate sufficient time and resources for the completion and implementation of a full plan for the phase down.** In particular, capacity to plan for working with the UN development actors and develop government capacity in line ministries was found lacking.

Consequently, UNHCR's relationships with governments, other partners, and with the refugee communities were overall negatively affected by the phasing down decision, the planning and the implementation. This meant that UNHCR was less able to carry out protection and solutions activities for persons of concern, directly or through partners. This already started to manifest itself during implementation of the phasing down as experienced staff left and the morale of remaining staff dropped. Refugees felt frustrated and abandoned and phasing down left UNHCR with a reduced ability to respond to new emergencies.

**It is not possible to assess whether or not the phasing down processes have resulted in a reduction of expenditure, but the phasing down did generate additional, unforeseen costs as well.**

### 5.3 Outcomes against the planning assumptions and objectives

93. **The majority of the planning assumptions underpinning the decisions did not hold up.** These assumptions were centered around reduced numbers of persons of concern, the finding of durable solutions, the ability and willingness of governments and other partners to take over responsibilities for protection and assistance of persons of concern and for ROSA to assume residual oversight and representational responsibilities. However, very little evidence was found in relation to the analysis behind the assumptions.
94. **A key planning assumption was the reduction in the numbers of persons of concern but the numbers did not come down significantly during the period of review.**
95. In **Angola**, a 28 percent reduction reported for 2013 was entirely on account of the completion of the returnee operation in 2012/13. It resulted in significant cutbacks in staff and budgets, but these were implemented before the 2013 APR decision. The following year, the number of asylum-seekers increased sharply (by 50 percent). During the remainder of the period of review of this evaluation, the overall number of persons of concern remained virtually unchanged. In **Botswana**, the number of persons of concern did not show a significant decrease, but remained stable around 3,000. Also in **Namibia**, numbers did not decrease. Rather, during the first year after the closure of the UNHCR Office, the number of asylum-seekers showed a marked increase. The decrease in the overall number of persons of concern stemmed from the decision to remove a group of former Angolan refugees awaiting local integration from the statistics. However, at the end of the period of review, the majority of this group was still accommodated at the Dukwi Refugee Settlement and UNHCR continued working with the government to implement a durable solution plan.<sup>94</sup>
96. **A second planning assumption was founded on the anticipated ability to find durable solutions for any residual caseload, but enhanced efforts to find durable solutions for the largest groups of refugees and former refugees were largely unsuccessful.**
97. Increased refugee resettlement was a key expectation of the phasing out strategy. For instance, in **Namibia** UNHCR announced plans to resettle virtually the entire Congolese refugee community in Osire (some 2,000 persons) by 2014.<sup>95</sup> However, in practice the anticipated impact of resettlement on the volume of the refugee population fell considerably short. A comparison between planning documents and resettlement statistics reveals that UNHCR's stated expectations regarding resettlement were consistently unrealistic, even if the above-mentioned figure of 2,000 resettled Congolese is taken as a once-off outlier. For 2013, the planning figure was 500 refugees submitted for resettlement, but the actual number was 319. During 2014, 460 refugees were submitted, considerably less than the 740 planned for that year.<sup>96</sup> During the final year of UNHCR's presence in Namibia (2015), UNHCR had hoped to submit over 1,000 persons for resettlement, but only 299 refugees were submitted. Departures for resettlement spiked to over 500 in 2015, but decreased again to 149 in 2016. After the closure of the UNHCR Office, a mission report detailed how the absence of an office presented ROSA with hitherto unseen complications and challenges in the field of resettlement, further dimming the hopes that this durable solution would be able to help further reduce the refugee numbers in Namibia.<sup>97</sup> In addition, interviewees raised concerns that increased resettlement activities may have served as a pull factor. While this was also supported by reports, the evaluation was unable to prove or disprove this.<sup>98</sup> However, it may be that not only were efforts in support of resettlement not reducing refugee numbers in Namibia, they may have had the opposite effect.

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<sup>94</sup> All population statistics from UNHCR Global Trends.

<sup>95</sup> Minutes of the stakeholders meeting between the Government of Namibia, UNHCR and AHA, Otjiwarongo, August 2013.

<sup>96</sup> COP 2014 Namibia.

<sup>97</sup> "Details on the gaps in protection/assistance provision since UNHCR departure". Addendum for a meeting of the Regional Bureau for Africa with the Namibian government delegation, ExCom, October 2016.

<sup>98</sup> Planning matrix "Namibia Phase-out Priority Areas."



98. In Namibia, local integration was also not leading to the smaller numbers as expected. At the time of closure of the UNHCR Office, the local integration of the remaining former Angolan refugees had not been completed; most remained in the Osire Refugee Settlement and continued to benefit from the assistance programme. This finding is derived from interviews with senior managers and reports. Only part of the 2,400 Angolans accepted by the government have been locally integrated, and the process appears to be stalled as the government considers UNHCR financial support inadequate.
99. There is no evidence of a discussion within UNHCR on the fundamental question of whether a phasing down process can continue if some of the assumptions for phasing down are not holding up.
100. In **Botswana**, a Comprehensive Solutions Team was deployed to Dukwi in 2016, but it did not produce clear durable solutions outcomes. While there was no TOR for their deployment, it is understood that the team was deployed to assist the office increase the numbers of refugees finding durable solutions. There is no evidence of the Team's composition.<sup>99</sup> Reports indicate disagreement on the required capacity needed from the Team. While initial plans foresaw the deployment of a five-person team, this was later reduced to three, but eventually only two were deployed. Lack of clarity on timing and purpose was confirmed in interviews.<sup>100</sup> There is also no evidence that the prospects for local integration of refugees were improved during 2016. During the same year, a total of 64 refugees were submitted for resettlement, which is half the average annual number submitted during the previous four years.<sup>101</sup>
101. With respect to voluntary repatriation from Botswana, very few Namibians returned to their country of origin and, if they did, they did so spontaneously, i.e. in unorganized movements of individuals and single families. This drop in interest in return followed the verdict of the High Court in March 2016 that halted any forced deportation of Namibians. The decision had the effect of strengthening the position of the leaders of the Namibian refugee community in Botswana who were fiercely opposed to the voluntary return of any member of their community. Prospects for voluntary repatriation of former Namibian refugees were also dashed by reports indicating that the Namibian government had refused certain Namibians to return home. According to interviews, if UNHCR had intervened to have this practice stopped, it would likely have removed a major obstacle to the mass return of the remaining Namibians. There was also no mass voluntary repatriation of Zimbabweans. This was largely due to a dispute over the amount of repatriation grants that remained unresolved. UNHCR informed the government that it was reviewing a possible increase of the return package for Zimbabweans, but the evaluation has found no evidence of a successful and effective resolution of this issue.<sup>102</sup>
102. In **Angola**, despite a UNHCR's focus on returning Angolans in 2012, durable solutions and local integration or voluntary repatriation objectives were not identified in COPs in the following years.<sup>103</sup> There was also lack of solutions strategies for the protracted urban caseloads of refugees (mainly in Luanda and originating from DRC (Katangese), Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Sudan and Somalia). Amidst large numbers of Angolans reintegrating, smaller numbers of others chose to voluntarily repatriate: just eight individuals from Rwanda and the DRC in 2013. Profiling was thus determined as a way to identify durable solutions for other cases like the Katangese, with the intention of having better information on the remaining refugees and which durable solutions would be most appropriate for their situation.<sup>104</sup> There was a mission by the Senior Regional Resettlement Officer in August 2016, which examined the need for a Protection Needs Assessment to target the Congolese community in particular.<sup>105</sup> In the end, however, these efforts did not result in significant reductions in refugee numbers.

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<sup>99</sup> A draft report exists of the deployment of two SURGE deployees (dated 2 May 2017), but they appear to have been working mainly on regular, ongoing protection issues.

<sup>100</sup> Talking points for the meeting with the Minister, MDJS, 8 June 2016; Note for the File, ROSA, 29 May 2016. Note for the File, ROSA, 29 May 2016.

<sup>101</sup> Resettlement statistics.

<sup>102</sup> Talking points for the meeting ROSA delegation with the Minister, MDJS, 8 June 2016 and report of the meeting on 9 June 2016.

<sup>103</sup> 2015 COP Comments Durable Solutions.

<sup>104</sup> 2015 COP Comments Durable Solutions.

<sup>105</sup> Mission Report, Senior Regional Resettlement Officer, 2016.

103. **Another assumption was that governments and other partners would be able and willing to take on responsibilities but this was not fully realized and, at the end of the period of review, major gaps remained in the creation of conditions for these hand-overs.**
104. **In all three countries, governments were reluctant to take over key responsibilities.** There were, however, efforts that sought to ensure continuation of protection and assistance, while identifying avenues for handing over to governments and NGO partners. Stakeholders were engaged, to varying extents, in the implementation. As such, some NGO and government counterparts were given some information on how phasing down would be planned for and carried out, while others were included early on. In Namibia, for example, hand-over of responsibilities to line ministries formed a key part of the exit strategy, even as crucial aspects remained unresolved after the Office had been closed. This tested the underlying assumptions about the ability and willingness of governments to take on responsibilities upon UNHCR's phasing down.
105. In **Angola**, government officials expressed concern of UNHCR pulling back, insisting on revisions to any timeline, visits from senior UNHCR officials, and a closer look at the situation. In a 2016 meeting, for example, the Minister of Social Assistance and Reintegration expressed concern and dissatisfaction at the possible reduction in UNHCR's presence in Angola, in turn requesting additional assistance for some 160,000 persons of concern.<sup>106</sup> UNHCR also continued to advocate that the government put the new asylum law into practice via implementation mechanisms—advocacy that continues to date. This includes the need for Angola to create a new Refugee Status Determination (RSD) body—yet another mark of the country's lack of preparedness to take on responsibilities.
106. In **Botswana**, the government made clear that the transfer of responsibilities could be considered only in accordance with its internal budgetary planning cycles and Parliamentary approval of future National Development Plans, which effectively pushed back any hand-over plan by several years. Other key outcomes were linked to government participation but not dependent on budget allocations, for instance the crucial issue of legislative reform. In addition, there were plans for a UNHCR-funded construction of a reception center for asylum-seekers inside the Dukwi Refugee Camp—as a result of which the government had indicated it would discontinue the practice of detaining asylum-seekers at the Centre for Illegal Immigrants (CII) in Francistown, however this was still pending at the end of the period for review.
107. In **Namibia**, the engagement of line ministries and their introduction into the refugee programme constituted a key element in the phasing out strategy. However, implementation encountered delays and, as it was feared that the objectives would not be met by the time the Office would be closed at the end of 2015, UNHCR offered to second a staff member to the coordinating Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration for the first six months of 2016.<sup>107</sup> However, reports indicate that by July 2016,<sup>108</sup> the planned hand-over by January 2016 of AHA's activities in social and community protection to the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare and the Ministry of Youth, National Sport and Culture, had remained unsettled. This was partly attributed to the unfamiliarity of both ministries with the refugee situation. In general, according to mission reports of ROSA senior staff, the concerned line ministries did not fully understand their new responsibilities. Community groups reported an increase in child transactional sex, teenage pregnancies and school dropouts as direct consequences of the absence of support and the discontinuation of the programme. Other reports outlined similar problems regarding water supply and sanitation. For example, by the middle of 2016, there was still no clarity on which ministry was to be responsible for water and sanitation at Osire. In view of the potential health implications of continued uncertainty over who was in charge of health provisions for refugees, UNHCR ensured the delivery of services in these sectors. In the health sector, engaging the Ministry of Health was not a problem because it had already been active in the refugee programme for years. However, in 2016 a mission found that since UNHCR had stopped funding, this Ministry had discontinued most preventative health activities. The

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<sup>106</sup> Note for File 2016, "Meeting with the new minister of social assistance and reintegration," 1 December 2016. The 160,000 persons of concern was a number cited by the government, not a UNHCR-verified number.

<sup>107</sup> Letter Regional Representative to the Deputy Minister of Home Affairs and Immigration, 18 December 2015 (015/HCR/RSA/ADM/664).

<sup>108</sup> Mission Report Senior Regional Community Service Officer (27 June-1 July 2016).

hand-over to the government of responsibility for refugee registration and maintenance of the refugee database was also considered incomplete.<sup>109</sup>

108. Other operational objectives/outcomes of the exit strategy in Namibia involving the government were also only partially achieved at the time of office closure. This finding is based on interviews with senior managers and government officials. Detailed written reports on the status of implementation of each of these plans are scarce. For example, while the Transit Centre at Katima Mulilo had started to function, the Centre's exact purpose has remained unclear.<sup>110</sup> As the original plans for the Centre are not available, it has not been possible to properly assess its current functioning against originally agreed objectives. Records and interviews show that the government has not fully assumed the funding of the functioning of the Centre. Increased efforts by UNHCR to build staff capacity at the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration through training were implemented to the satisfaction of the government, but the funding of staff positions has remained under discussion. Reports indicate that the government-managed refugee registration database remains weak and the quality of data low. No reports and updates were available on key protection objectives such as the outcomes of the refugee verification exercise, the voluntary repatriation of Rwandan refugees following cessation, and the management of rejected cases. Also, the introduction of cash based assistance remained unresolved.
109. **At the level of the refugee settlement in Namibia, several fundamental transitions coincided: the closure of the UNHCR Branch Office, the introduction of a new implementing partner, and the increased emphasis this partner agency put on refugee self-reliance.** The coming together of these three crucial changes posed challenges for the development of good relations between the refugee community, government refugee administration officials and the new implementing partner. Each of the changes on its own would have had important effects on the daily lives of the refugee community and the work of all partners, but their concurrence multiplied the impact. By ensuring a temporary overlap between the outgoing AHA and the incoming Komeho Namibia Development Agency, UNHCR had tried to facilitate the transition. But when Komeho took over full responsibility, UNHCR was no longer present to help manage and guide the process, particularly in relation to Komeho's increased emphasis on a model of assistance that the refugee community had already shown it was reluctant to accept. The prospect of these three changes concurring should have triggered a more careful preparation on the part of UNHCR.<sup>111</sup>
110. After the closure of the office in Namibia, UNHCR continued to be responsible for the funding of a large part of the assistance programme, including food, NFI and shelter for the refugees and committed this to the Government for "as long as there will be refugees in Namibia".<sup>112</sup> Furthermore, due to an unresolved lack of clarity on which line ministry should be responsible for the water sector, UNHCR continues to be responsible for the water sector in Osire.
111. **Finally, the ability of ROSA to provide necessary support as part of the regionalization policy was not realized.** The assumptions regarding the ability of ROSA to provide necessary support as part of the regionalization policy, to continue providing support and guidance, but also to take on some operational functions, were not fully fleshed out in the plans to phase down. Regional offices and country operations alike were to contribute to an internal planning document that addressed actions and time frames for making a comprehensive plan according to different areas (e.g. administration, staffing, durable solutions, government letters, archiving etc.).<sup>113</sup> In reality, these were never completed internally, as staff did not have time. They were thus never shared with governments, partners and others as part of a joint external plan as intended. Overall, this incomplete unpacking of what it would mean for ROSA to provide additional

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<sup>109</sup> "Details on the gaps in protection/assistance provision since UNHCR departure." Addendum for a meeting of the Regional Bureau for Africa with the Namibian government delegation, ExCom, October 2016.

<sup>110</sup> Records show contradictory expectations: was the Katima Mulilo Transit Centre merely intended to accommodate asylum-seekers awaiting their organized transportation to the Osire Refugee Settlement; was it to serve as a Reception Centre for an initial screening of asylum-seekers; or was it to be a fully-fledged RSD processing centre.

<sup>111</sup> Based on interviews in 2017 and direct observation.

<sup>112</sup> Mission to Namibia 7–10 September 2014; results reflected in a letter from the Director, RBA to the Government of Namibia (AF00/DIR/052/14) of 26 September 2014.

<sup>113</sup> Interview with ROSA staff.



support was reported, in interviews, as being due to staffing shortages; ROSA staff simply was unable to devote the necessary time to plan and carry out new ROSA functions.

- Thus, while there was planning and discussions on how ROSA should support countries in phasing down the implementation of this was incomplete.
- There were staff changes at ROSA, particularly in 2016. Overall, these changes resulted in a decrease staff cost of \$284,433.<sup>114</sup> However, it is not clear how these were linked to the phasing down. One would expect an increase if ROSA were absorbing new responsibilities from country offices.
- An October 2016 “Tentative Work plan” was also created, which included country-specific and ROSA-specific strategies for the phasing down. These did not go in-depth, however, but generally mentioned ROSA assisting countries in developing monitoring and review, for example, or carrying out a stakeholder analysis.<sup>115</sup>
- The “Regional Strategic Outlook for 2016 and beyond” document from September 2016 makes little mention of phasing down, save to ensure that monitoring and support can be adequately provided, and that partners (and governments in particular) provide refugee assistance and physical security.<sup>116</sup>
- The Regional Protection Strategy as of February 2016 also includes a range of related issues and concerns, but does not filter any through the lens of phasing down.<sup>117</sup>
- Priority Review of the Management Structural Review of the Regional Representation for Southern Africa and other Aspects also recognizes the pursuit of strategies where phasing down is possible, and reference learning from past phase-out models like Lesotho and Swaziland.<sup>118</sup>

112. **Despite these efforts, ROSA was not able to fully support the countries phasing down because it lacked resources, capacity, including in working with development actors and government capacity development, and staff, and could not carry out the necessary functions without being in-country.** Both the geographic distance and relational aspects of having an in-country presence (including relationships with government, NGO, persons of concern and other UN staff) proved to be key obstacles noted by interviewees with regards to why ROSA could not offer the full gamut of support needed to absorb responsibilities from countries phasing down.

## 5.4 Effects on UNHCR’s ability to meet protection and assistance objectives

### *Angola*

113. **Phasing down of staff and resources in Luanda left UNHCR less capable of responding to the emergency influx in April of 2017. In the wake of some scaling down, UNHCR Angola had to rapidly scale up in response to an emergency influx.** In April of 2017, Angola received a large number of refugees, some 30,000, from the DRC, which some interviewees refer to as what “saved UNHCR in Angola,” referring to the subsequent scaling up that was necessary to respond to the influx. There was a rush to respond with additional staff in Luanda and a new office in Dundo Norte in May 2017. At this point,

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<sup>114</sup> Position changes annex.

<sup>115</sup> “Tentative Workplan with Budget: Development of Regional Multi-Year Multi-Partner Protection and Solutions Strategy,” UNHCR Regional Office-Southern Africa, October 2016-March 2017.

<sup>116</sup> “Regional Strategic Outlook for 2016 and beyond” 13 September 2016.

<sup>117</sup> Regional Protection Strategy-February 2016.

<sup>118</sup> Priority Review of the Management Structural Review of the Regional Representation for Southern Africa and other Aspects.

Angola became a dichotomous story: there was scaling up in response to the emergency amidst planned phase down of work with the “old caseload” in Luanda.<sup>119</sup>

114. All but one interviewee thought that the phasing down—including cutting back staff—had a detrimental effect on UNHCR’s ability to respond to the Congolese influx in Dundo Norte. Interviewees gave the impression that UNHCR was unprepared in its response to the emergency, and that other UN agencies were concerned that UNHCR was unable to respond appropriately.<sup>120</sup> In a recent real-time review UNHCR found that phasing down (or “downsizing”) had directly contributed to an inadequate response to the emergency influx. UNHCR Angola had inadequate staff, operational preparedness, and strategic plans for scaling up in the emergency.<sup>121</sup> It also lost institutional memory and knowledge, and in turn had to train new staff, which took time and resources.
115. **There was a contradiction in UNHCR’s role as a leader in the emergency response, while at the same time phasing down its presence in Angola.** This was found in the real-time review<sup>122</sup> and interviewees also voiced concern and confusion that UNHCR would consider scaling down given its proximity to the DRC, a major refugee-producing country. UNHCR did not have adequate stockpiles, had rapid turnover of staff, had less ability to influence stakeholders like the government and UN, and had to redefine emergency roles and responsibilities during the crisis.<sup>123</sup> Long-term refugees in Viana and Bairro Popular also felt increasingly abandoned, frustrated, and without information in the midst of UNHCR’s response to the influx and phasing down.
116. While it is not realistic to link today’s situation solely with the phasing down, it is important to consider the present context after the phasing down process was undertaken and completed (in the case of Namibia), put on hold (Botswana), and reversed (Angola). Following the decision, planning and implementation, the current situation is challenging.

#### *Botswana*

117. **Despite concerted efforts during the period 2014-2016 to create conditions for responsible phasing down and/or disengagement in Botswana, currently the protection situation has deteriorated, government capacity in key areas such as RSD and data management remains lacking, and basic protection and assistance have suffered critical failures.** This includes the two-year detention of some 500 asylum-seekers in Botswana until a court verdict brought on by the refugees themselves ordered their release in November 2017.<sup>124</sup> **The current staffing at FO Dukwi is considered insufficient.** The small team of affiliate workforce at FO Dukwi assumes/performs most, if not all of, the responsibilities and accountabilities of the previous FO, which have not been readjusted.<sup>125</sup>

#### *Namibia*

118. **There are indications that important aspects of the protection situation have deteriorated during the time since the UNHCR Office in Namibia was closed.** Reports indicate major gaps left in community and child protection (see para 107) as well as in the level and quality of assistance. In addition, direct observation and interviews have shown a lack of clarity among government officials and NGO partner staff on who is responsible for operational coordination and maintaining minimum standards of assistance and treatment in the refugee settlement. As a result, several priority needs were left unaddressed, such as the living and shelter conditions of new arrivals. While not further verified, refugees complained that the enhanced responsibilities of the Ministries of Education and Health have resulted in a loss of refugee employment, as many are no longer hired to carry out work in Osire.

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<sup>119</sup> E.g. see Note for the File 1 December 2016, where in the same meeting where the government asked for funds and preparations for the new influx of refugees, the Representative told the Minister of Social Assistance and Reintegration about the reduction of UNHCR’s presence in Angola.

<sup>120</sup> Interviews and ‘UNHCR’s Emergency Response in Angola: A Real-Time Review,’ September 2017

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid and confirmed in interviews with the RC and UNHCR staff.

<sup>124</sup> Interviews, including with refugee representatives, and direct observations.

<sup>125</sup> Based on interviews.

119. After the closure of the UNHCR Office, a mission report detailed how the absence of an office presented ROSA with hitherto unseen complications and challenges in the field of resettlement, further dimming the hopes that this durable solution would be able to help further reduce the refugee numbers in Namibia.<sup>126</sup>
120. **As the final stages of the phasing-out/closure process progressed in Namibia, staff morale dropped as staff faced being laid-off, resulting in an accumulation of unresolved matters at ROSA.** The Office continued from 1 July 2015 with one National Officer, a Resettlement Expert and a driver until it completely closed on 31 December 2015. Reports show that, during this period, preparing for closure became increasingly difficult. There were complaints that some ROSA staff were spending their time not on implementation of the Namibia programme, but on “cleaning up” unfinished issues in the fields of programme, admin, finance, supply, etc., some dating back to 2012 or even earlier. This necessary work was reportedly being handicapped by the absence at ROSA of documents to verify invoices, commitments, claims and payments. In addition, it was often challenging to settle these long-standing issues, such as unpaid bills, because funding was not foreseen. This issue was further compounded during the final year because of the departure of competent national staff during the transition phase down period, as they left for other employment. Likewise the recruitment of non-UNHCR staff without training and guidance was a further complication. This resulted in the accumulation of unresolved matters at ROSA. This supports the view reported by interviewees that there is a need for additional trained workforce to be deployed for a continuous period of time to offices that are in the process closing down.
121. Interviewees in **Angola also reported a drop in staff morale during the phase down and prior to the scaling back up for the influx.** They noted in particular the purging of long-time qualified staff, who then moved on to other opportunities and were unavailable for hire when the emergency influx occurred, and the frustration felt by and among staff working in an environment with high uncertainty about job security.<sup>127</sup>
122. **At the time of the evaluation mission, there was a common and widespread lack of clarity on UNHCR’s current plans regarding closure.**

## 5.5 Financial implications

123. **It is not possible to calculate UNHCR’s expenditure in relation to achieving its protection, assistance and solutions objectives during the period. It is therefore also not possible to verify if expenditures reduced as a result of the phasing down.** There was no system in place to trace expenses relating to the phasing down planning and implementation, or to track whether expenditures were indeed reduced as a direct consequence of the phase downs. In order to fully examine costs and savings related to the phasing down, one would need to look not only at the expenditures in the three offices, but also what was transferred to ROSA, including:
- Variations in the number and cost of missions between ROSA and the country offices.
  - Work undertaken by ROSA in relation to reaching objectives in the three countries, including working hours of ROSA staff and time dedicated to such tasks. UNHCR does not as such pay overtime for staff in the professional category,<sup>128</sup> nor do employees track working hours in function of the country programme attended to, so such calculation is not possible to make. Furthermore, it is not possible to identify where work in different locations may overlap and what costs are associated.
  - Unintended additional costs through mistakes, increased opportunities for misappropriation of funds due to reduced oversight, and a variety of unanticipated costs and expenses (e.g. unreceived VAT refunds; disgruntled employees destroying files or property upon leaving; incorrect procedures followed for archiving documents, etc.)

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<sup>126</sup> “Details on the gaps in protection/assistance provision since UNHCR departure.” Addendum for a meeting of the Regional Bureau for Africa with the Namibian government delegation, ExCom, October 2016.

<sup>127</sup> Interviews, Luanda, December 2017.

<sup>128</sup> UNHCR, Staff Administration and Management Manual, Chapter 3.15, internal.

124. In addition, there was no process in place to monitor progress and to change direction or adjust course if the implementation process needed alteration. There were indeed examples of staff pushing back on the timeline and overall decision—some of which resulted in delaying cuts to personnel. But generally speaking, concerns went unheard to have major change.

## 6 Conclusion, lessons learned and recommendations

125. In addition to the findings, this evaluation provides a number of lessons for UNHCR's work in the three countries concerned, in the Southern Africa region, and globally. This section unpacks these lessons learned, and then provides recommendations for UNHCR for follow up.

### Lessons learned

126. The evaluation concluded that a thorough situational assessment and analysis is required to inform robust strategic approaches with clear plans for implementation linked to budgets for phase down of UNHCR office presence. Such analysis should include the outcome of discussions with governments and other stakeholders, including the donor community (as appropriate). While this should be considered as a general approach in UNHCR's operations, this should be particularly strengthened prior to taking decisions of phasing down the entire presence in a country.

127. Where States are expected to take, or take back, responsibilities as UNHCR is phasing down its presence, this evaluation found that engagement at a very high level with the government is required to ensure government buy-in, and concluded that the process could advantageously mirror the process of opening UNHCR's presence in a country. Such a process should include careful considerations of allocation of additional resources, including staff with particular competencies. Among the competencies, the evaluation found that protection advocacy and government capacity building, including with line ministries, and working with development actors, are of particular relevance. Furthermore clear and well-articulated plans should be developed with relevant stakeholders, including with transparent indicators and milestones for assessing progress and allow for course correction.

128. The evaluation further found that during the intervening years, in all three countries, the implementation of the phasing down decision resulted in deficits in UNHCR's ability to undertake its responsibilities regarding persons of concern. Relations with governments were strained. Reducing expenditures became a singular focus to the exclusion of protection and durable solutions objectives. Inadequate consideration of reputational and legal risks from the outset led to challenges later that required additional efforts and expenditures to address and solve. As such, at the time of data collection for the evaluation (at the end of 2017), UNHCR was found to have difficulties in carrying out its protection and solutions activities for persons of concern in each of the three countries, either directly or through partners. Experienced staff had left and the morale of remaining staff had dropped. Refugees felt frustrated and abandoned, and phasing down left UNHCR with a reduced ability to respond to new emergencies.

129. In addition to the issues found in relation to decision making, these outcomes should be ascribed in particular to the lack of consultations with, and insufficient consideration of inputs from, governments and other partners, as well as UNHCR's own inability to trace progress and to reverse or adjust its course when needed. A further contributing factor was found to be difficulties related to human resource management. The evaluation found some indication that the rotation of senior staff, both in country offices and ROSA, may have played a role in the efforts to ensure consistency in the planning for, and implementation of, the decision to phase down. In addition, the loss of qualified, longer term serving national and local staff posed a particular challenge to the phase down.

130. The evaluation found that linking phasing down plans with existing planning tools of UNHCR is important to ensure alignment of resources and consistency in approaches. The lack of reflecting the phase down plans in the COPs was found to have had a particularly negative influence on the planning and implementation. Nevertheless, the RMFT initiatives in Botswana and Namibia by ROSA to formulate benchmarks could serve as starting point for what to include as considerations when analysing the potential for phasing down presence in the future.

131. Although a detailed analysis of the financial benefits of these phasing down processes was not possible, interviewees—particularly those with backgrounds in programme and administration—emphasized that closing down UNHCR's presence in a country requires a concentrated and controlled deployment of additional resources. In other words, ending UNHCR's presence per se is not an effective cost-saving measure.

132. Given the conclusion that ending UNHCR's presence is not an effective cost-saving measure per se, in operational terms, the phasing out of office presence should mirror the opening of a country presence which is often part of an emergency response and will require: sufficient, and often additional, resources; tight monitoring, involving experienced additional staff with particular competencies, for instance in relation to working with development and/or advocacy; following an agreed basic planning scenario (including transparent and measurable indicators or milestones) and implemented in an accountable manner.).

## Recommendations

The recommendations from this evaluation are targeted to:

- 1) ROSA and Regional Bureau of Africa for actions that could be taken in the coming months to strengthen forward planning in Namibia and Botswana, and to a lesser extent in Angola
- 2) UNHCR's HQ, specifically Senior Management: Given the upcoming HQ organizational changes, recommendations have not specified Divisions such as DPSM, Change Management, DHRM and ODMS that need to take action. Instead, HQ Units involved in planning, staff capacity development, regionalization, and monitoring would need to look at these recommendations holistically.

### DEVELOPING FURTHER PLANS IN THE THREE COUNTRIES

**Recommendation 1: ROSA and the Bureau for Africa: Develop a clear, shared, well-articulated, and evidence-based multi-year strategy that focuses on protection of persons of concern in the three countries, with clear roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders over time, including as needed, a reduced UNHCR presence.**

**Sub-Recommendation 1.1:** Consider opportunities for high-level engagement of Governments in the three countries in order to agree on the overall parameters for UNHCR's presence in the countries as well as expectations in relation to roles and responsibilities of other actors, including government institutions and development actors in line with international commitments. Based on the NYD and the SDGs, initiate a multi-stakeholder process in each country in order to map and analyse the situation for persons of concern, with a view to establishing shared or sectoral protection and assistance outcomes with line ministries and relevant development actors.

**Sub-Recommendation 1.2:** Based on the consultations with the government, consider the development of a MYMP plan along three strands. Firstly, an advocacy strategy for achieving international protection goals. Secondly, a strategy for government capacity development in cooperation with development actors, and for the inclusion of refugees in the NDP. And, finally, a plan for any humanitarian response where still required, such as in Angola, or for outstanding operational needs of residual caseloads in other countries.

**Sub-Recommendation 1.3:** It is recommended that decisions regarding resources, staffing and structures for the countries and ROSA are aligned with such plans and take due consideration of the regionalization policy by building regional capacity where appropriate.

**Sub-Recommendation 1.4:** The phase down plan, or MYMP plan as mentioned above, would benefit from being based on pre-established and agreed operational milestones on protection, programme, durable solutions, handovers and coordination. Plans should also include milestones for human resources management, financial and asset management. Handing over to new partners with little experience in refugee operations, without a plan for support, capacity development and close monitoring, should be avoided.

### ORGANIZATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO CONSIDER FOR GENERAL OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT

**Recommendation 2: Senior Management UNHCR HQ: Provide policy guidance on responsible, thoughtful phasing down as a natural part of operational management.**



UNHCR should consider the issue of responsible phasing down of its country presence in all of its operations as a natural part of the life cycle of its operations by engaging continuously with the relevant governments on respective roles and responsibilities taking into consideration existing international refugee protection frameworks. Meaningful planning for phasing down and the closure of office presence should be considered from the outset by UNHCR, from the time of opening a country presence.

### **Recommendation 3: Senior Management UNHCR HQ: Develop clear organizational planning guidance and tools on how and when to phase down presence.**

**Sub-Recommendation 3.1:** Consider a review of existing planning tools and guidelines to ensure that they provide sufficient guidance to offices on how to plan—even from the outset of opening a country presence—for an eventual phase down approach. The guidance should consider phasing down processes in relation to different aspect of UNHCR’s work, such as advocacy for international protection, capacity development for government counterparts and partners, for protection and assistance responses, and for work in relation to finding durable solutions. To benefit from the organizational accountability steps and existing resource allocation framework, such planning should be fully reflected in the operational plans, using the relevant Results Framework and planning processes:

- The guidance could also cover how to ensure close involvement of External Relations staff and the development of an appropriate communications strategy, including with affected people and communities, in support of the phasing down process.
- Administrative and financial management guidance for closure could include various risk management areas including due diligence, oversight of partners, assets and inventory, as well as how to strengthen warehouse management and monitoring during transition phases and other controls and financial oversight mechanisms.

**Sub-Recommendation 3.2:** Develop capacity of Bureaux and operations on how to prepare phase down plans, including considerations on how to involve not only Governments, UN agencies and other stakeholders, but also how to plan for human resource management, advocacy and communication, as well as financial closure of country presence.

### **Recommendation 4: Senior Management UNHCR HQ: Develop organization-wide roles and responsibilities with areas of authority, accountability and decision making clarified, and clear processes for which stakeholders need to provide input or be consulted on decisions on the closure of country presences.**

Clarify authorities, responsibilities and accountabilities of the various levels of management involved in decisions on the closure of country presences and their implementation, particularly between the Senior Executive Team, Regional Bureaux and Regional Offices. UNHCR should examine how the regionalization is expected to inform phase down decisions and further review ARAs in relation to phasing down processes. This should include clarified process steps and decisions points with related documentation kept for central record keeping of the process.

### **Recommendation 5: Senior Management UNHCR HQ: Develop a model for technical support and guidance to country and regional entities as they phase down.**

UNHCR should consider creating dedicated specialized multi-functional transition teams tasked with the preparation and implementation of phasing down office presence, while ensuring continued delivery against UNHCR’s international protection mandate. Considerations in relation to the assessments and management of various risks, to monitoring, supervisory responsibilities and standards for protection and assistance delivery, as well as how to partner with development actors could be included in the team’s TOR.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO CONSIDER DURING THE PROCESS OF PHASING DOWN AN OPERATION**

**Recommendation 6: Senior Management UNHCR HQ, Bureaux, Regional and Country Offices: Ensure that there is early alignment with government and national stakeholders on the parameters for phasing down presence.**

**Sub-Recommendation 6.1:** Ensure dialogue at the highest level between UNHCR and the government to agree to the overall parameters for a responsible phase down of UNHCR presence. Where responsibilities are expected to be transferred to State institutions this is aimed at ensuring ownership by governments, and, as appropriate, other stakeholders.

**Sub-Recommendation 6.2:** Provide sufficient time for high-level meetings between government, other partners and development actors, and UNHCR senior managers to communicate, discuss and explain the decision and steps moving forward. This could include leveraging other actors in the international community, such as donors and ExCom members. Do the same for communication with UNHCR staff, donors, partners, and persons of concern.

**Recommendation 7: Senior Management in Bureaux, Regional and Country Offices: Ensure that there is an analytical, evidence based plan with clearly defined, shared outcomes, a risk assessment, and standards for protection and assistance.**

**Sub-Recommendation 7.1:** Dedicate time and resources for a comprehensive assessment of the situation, using for instance research and evaluation data for analysis of political and longer term ramifications of phasing down, so as to minimize tensions with persons of concern, partners and the host government. This should include a risk assessment in relation to, for instance, reputational risk, relational risk and legal or mandate accountabilities. Engage development actors, in particular the UNRC, in dialogue around the longer term plans to ensure that international protection is provided to refugees and that their needs are included in National Development Plans, as also supported by the UN.

**Sub-Recommendation 7.2:** Articulate clear objectives for the phase down and incorporate a thorough, transparent analysis of underlying assumptions in a participatory manner and agreed with the government and other stakeholders as appropriate. This should include clarity in relation to agreed standards for protection and assistance, and use consistent and thoughtful language in relation to the final situation (e.g. “phase down” vs. “disengagement” vs. “closure” etc.). A better analysis and reasoned decision reflected in clear objectives may further mitigate effects of subsequent senior staff rotation during the implementation.

**Sub-Recommendation 7.3:** When preparing for the closure of country presence, UNHCR should support an historical account of its presence and accomplishments as a lasting testimony to its involvement in the country and its partnerships with the government and national civil society.

**Recommendation 8: Bureaux, Regional and Country Offices: Ensure that the process of phasing down is well-managed, monitored and accountable to all stakeholders concerned.**

**Sub-Recommendation 8.1:** Ensure the proper functioning of an agreed mechanism of joint monitoring of implementation and adjust course if needed. The process should be flexible enough to change plans as needed, including delaying reductions in staff or changing hand-over plans. Likewise, when governments or others raise concerns, UNHCR should adequately respond to these concerns by considering the adjustment of plans, particularly in relation to ensuring the continued protection of persons of concern.

**Sub-Recommendation 8.2:** Senior managers need to take appropriate steps to promote that staff, whose positions are eliminated, will continue to be advocates for refugees as well as for the interests of UNHCR after they have left the Agency by actively supporting their welfare, active participation and future employment.

**Sub-Recommendation 8.3:** Consider placing a UNHCR-funded staff member with the government office to ensure a smooth handover during the phasing down period. This was done in Namibia, where a staff member was embedded in the Refugee Commissioner’s Office during the final six-months prior to the full closure of the Office. This model could be reviewed for lessons learned.

**Sub-Recommendation 8.4:** For accountability, ensure the systematic documentation and archiving of all relevant communications, correspondence and reports in relation to the phasing down process. Expert support should be provided to ensure proper archiving and backing up of all data.

## Conclusions

133. While this evaluation has remained narrowly focused on the three countries concerned in Southern Africa, it raises important lessons and recommendations that carry broader relevance to UNHCR. This evaluation also speaks to an ever-evolving understanding of the most effective way to carry out UNHCR's work, including whether and how a regionalization policy should inform plans for UNHCR's country presence. The evaluation also suggests that UNHCR further research how regionalization relates to phasing down presence in countries.
134. The importance of political ramifications of phasing down cannot be overstated. While UNHCR's work is recognized as non-political and humanitarian in nature, it requires political will from, and cooperation with, States for UNHCR to carry out its mandate most effectively. Phasing down has the potential to be highly detrimental to working relations with States, partners, persons of concern, and even donors. Having looked closely at UNHCR's reputation and relationships with actors in Botswana, Namibia and Angola—all countries where it has had a long-standing presence—this evaluation points to the potential political ramifications and risks when communicating and executing a phasing down decision.
135. At its core, this evaluation highlights an inherent tension for UNHCR in relation to its role both as convener of States to ensure international protection, and as an agency delivering protection and assistance to persons of concern in partnership with others. In weighing the costs/ benefits/ risks/ challenges to phasing down, UNHCR is faced with a dilemma regarding reducing expenditures and ensuring protection to persons of concern, as well as other aspects related to access, including reputation, and future planning if re-entry is needed upon another influx (as was the case in Angola).
136. In sum, this evaluation has focused narrowly on the phasing down of UNHCR's presence in Angola, Botswana and Namibia, per the 2013 APR/Troika decision. It has laid out a series of findings per the key questions, which related to the planning that went into the decision (and the key assumptions underpinning the analysis that preceded the decision), the planning for the implementation of the decision, and the implementation of the decision. This section has outlined the lessons learned and recommendations for future planning on phasing down. Exit strategies and operational phase down are implied in UNHCR's mandate role, but as this evaluation shows, this does not ensure that the modalities are considered at an early stage, or that they are planned for with the necessary resources (and certainly not with the effort and resources that go into planning an entry into a new emergency). Thus, there is a gap in knowledge regarding how UNHCR can and should phase down—what reasons are acceptable drivers and how to weigh ongoing protection needs and durable solutions needs against requirements to reduce expenditure. The complexity is clear, and UNHCR is advised to devote greater study on how to carry out these activities in the future.

## Annex A – TOR

TITLE OF THE EVALUATION	INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF UNHCR'S COUNTRY OPERATIONS IN ANGOLA, BOTSWANA AND NAMIBIA
Commissioned by:	Sharon Cooper, Regional Representative, Regional Representation for Southern Africa (ROSA).
Evaluation Manager:	Machiel Salomons
Date of publication:	17 August, 2017

### INTRODUCTION

1. UNHCR's operations in Southern Africa are managed by the Regional Representation (ROSA) based in Pretoria. ROSA has oversight over fourteen countries, of which seven have in-country presence. Over the past several years, as the number of persons of concern (PoC) in some of the other countries have become smaller, and as earmarked contributions for operations in this part of Africa declined, a decision was taken by UNHCR Headquarters to gradually phase-out/close down country presence and to transfer management responsibility to the Regional Representation.
2. The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the process of phasing out/closing down in Angola, Namibia and Botswana and the implications and expectations for government capacities, refugee protection, and ROSA management; to examine what worked well and what worked less well with these phase out; and to consider the potential requirements for rapid scale up in case of emergencies in countries where UNHCR has phased out.
3. This evaluation is scheduled to start by mid or end September and last for six months. A team of two consultants will conduct this evaluation. After a preliminary inception phase, taking place over a period of approximately one month, a field mission is anticipated to take place end of October, which includes field visits to South Africa, Angola, Namibia and Botswana. Specific dates and timing of field visits will be finalised during the inception phase in close consultation with the Regional Representative in Pretoria.

### EVALUATION CONTEXT

4. The decision to phase down/out UNHCR's presence in the region was taken at the 2013/14 Headquarters Annual Programme Review meeting. The decision appears to have mainly been informed by financial considerations, and cites factors such as the relatively stable and limited number of Persons of Concern to UNHCR. It was decided to gradually reduce UNHCR's presence, with ROSA assuming more direct responsibility for operations in the countries concerned.
5. According to minutes of APR meetings, the phase down/out period was scheduled to take place over a three to five year period. As indicated in table 7 below, depicting the evolution of UNHCR's presence in Angola, Botswana and Namibia, the decrease in staffing levels demonstrates how the Regional Representation implemented the relevant APR decisions. The tables below reflecting the total number of persons of concern in the respective countries shows a more or less stable situation with Namibia actually seeing a slight increase in 2016.
6. Notwithstanding the decision to phase-out UNHCR's presence over a three/five year period, the Regional Representation as well as the countries covered by this evaluation pursued the following strategic objectives:

#### **Promote a favourable protection climate for persons of concern to UNHCR.**

- UNHCR promoted access to the territory and monitored the implementation of refugee status determination procedures. To this effect, UNHCR continued efforts to build Government capacities to determine refugee status in a viable and credible manner. In addition, advocacy efforts focused on the timely registration of asylum-seekers and sought to ensure access to documentation.
- Where relevant, UNHCR offered comments and advice on refugee legislation, with the aim of having legal and administrative frameworks in place across the region for persons of concern, in particular but not limited to the effective enjoyment of a) access to social services and to justice; b) fair and effective asylum systems; c) access to the labour market; and d) free movement.
- Training programmes were offered to government officials with the aim of strengthening the government's capacity to take responsibility for the protection of refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons in line with its international obligations.
- The Regional Representation changed its regional strategy for Fair Protection Processes and Documentation (RSD) in 2015/2016, and moved gradually from traditional capacity building to support country operations and governments in the region with small scale RSD projects, and training activities addressing specific protection gaps. In 2017, small scale

RSD projects were prioritised for operations where refugee status granted by the government brings an added value in terms of durable solutions.

#### **Reinforce efforts to promote durable solutions for the existing persons of concern.**

- Implementing comprehensive solutions strategies” for longstanding cases, mainly for Angolan and pre-1998 Rwandan situations.
- Local integration efforts were promoted by advocating for access to basic rights and services, access to the labour market and by pursuing livelihood options. The aim was to have all persons of concern to UNHCR included in the national development planning programmes.
- Voluntary repatriation was to be pursued where appropriate, while resettlement was pursued for a number of refugees with specific needs, in particular women-at-risk, survivors of violence and torture, and also for mandate refugees detained for prolonged periods of time.

### **[Country Background information see Annex C]**

#### **PURPOSE AND RATIONALE**

19. The main objective of this evaluation is to provide the Africa Bureau and ROSA with an evidence-informed assessment of the 2013/14 decision-making process to phase down operations, and related implications and effects on programme objectives. In doing so, the evaluation will also examine management expectations (particularly of ROSA), the perspective of partners as well as the persons of concern, and national government capacities to ensure adequate and full protection, assistance and programming for persons of concern in the three countries. More particularly the evaluation will:

- Provide an assessment of the relevance and appropriateness of the objectives set and strategies pursued to phase down or close operations within the prevailing operational context, and based on this assessment, provide insights into the criteria used, risks assessed and processes followed that led to strategies being pursued in the phase out/down process;
- Assess the extent to which UNHCR was able to achieve the programme objectives set for the three country programmes including the main facilitating or constraining factors that influence achievement of these objectives, and whether such programmes contributed adequately to ensuring protection, assistance and seeking durable solutions for persons of concern, including intended and unintended results;
- Using the three countries as examples, review existing operational guidance used to phase out/phase down UNHCR's presence, including assessing the usefulness and relevance of benchmarks that must be met, and determine strengths/weaknesses and implications of following such guidance for current and future programming;
- Provide recommendations, based on findings and conclusions drawn.

20. The primary users of the evaluation will be the UNHCR stakeholders in Angola, Namibia, Botswana and ROSA, as well as the UNHCR Regional Bureau for Africa. Currently, the Regional Bureau for Africa (RBA) and ROSA are developing a multi-year, multi-partner protection and solution strategy (MYMPPSS) covering engagement with all countries in the ROSA region, and the findings of this evaluation are expected to feed into the drafting or revision of the MYMPPSS.

21. Other UNHCR users will be the Division of Programme Support and Management (DPSM) and the Division of International Protection (DIP). The results of the evaluation are also expected to be of interest to a broad range of partners and donors, including the governments in Angola, Botswana and Namibia. The findings and conclusions will feed into the strategies for the countries concerned, as well as the priorities for ROSA. It should also provide lessons learned, which may be of interest to other operations slated for down-sizing and/or closure.

#### **KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND RELATED EVALUATION CRITERIA**

22. Recognizing the evolving level of UNHCR's presence and operations in the three countries concerned, the evaluation should seek to draw evidence-informed conclusions, which emphasizes the established evaluation criteria of Relevance/Appropriateness, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Sustainability. The evaluation will focus on a number of key evaluation questions below and sub-questions, (see Annex) which in particular the latter to be refined and finalized during the inception phase.

- Key Evaluation Question 1: To what extent were UNHCR's objectives and strategies (including as articulated in Country Operations Plans and regional strategies) during the period 2012-2016 relevant and appropriate, taking into account the on-going downscaling of presence?**
- Key Evaluation Question 2: To what extent were the objectives achieved during the period 2012-2016, taking into account the ongoing downscaling of presence? What were the key facilitating and constraining factors?**
- Key Evaluation Question 3: To what extent was the implementation of the phase-out/close down decision adequate, appropriate and effective? How was the decision resulting from the downsizing policy planned, implemented and communicated, taking into account prevailing risks, challenges, and benefits? To what extent is ROSA equipped, given its current configuration, to extend coverage over Namibia and support the Angola and Botswana operations?**

**Key Evaluation Question 4: What lessons can be learned from the three country examples about downscaling UNHCR presence? What are the main considerations for future implementation of such a policy? What different options might be considered to continue providing support to countries with a minimal/no physical UNHCR presence?**

## **METHODOLOGY, DATA AND INFORMATION SOURCES**

23. Interested prospective consultants are invited to present a proposed methodology to answer the above evaluation questions, including a plan for data collection and analysis. The evaluation is expected to employ a mixed-method approach incorporating qualitative and quantitative methods, including analysis of monitoring data as available per country concerned. Qualitative methods could include observations, interviews and focus group discussion (FGD) with a range of key stakeholders including UNHCR staff at country-level and ROSA and at Headquarters, partner agency staff, NGOs, donors, national authorities, and affected populations with an Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) approach. Additional qualitative methods may be proposed.

24. Data from a wide range of sources (e.g. mission reports, coordination groups meetings, Country Operations Plans narratives, budgetary and indicator data) will need to be triangulated and cross validated so as to ensure the credibility of evaluation findings and conclusions. The evaluation will draw upon information and analysis collected from a wide range of sources and a representative range of stakeholders. In addition, although a number of key stakeholder agency staff may have rotated or departed, it will be important to capture their views as they may provide valuable insights to help interpret events and decision-making over the evaluation period, although it is acknowledged that there will be challenges in accessing some former agency staff. The UNHCR Evaluation Manager will ensure that the Evaluation consultants have access to relevant documents and personnel, and will assist in the organization of field missions.

25. Access to the refugee population in all three countries is a sine qua non. Participatory interviews with persons of concern have to be organised. Travel time to refugee camps must be factored into the proposed plan.

26. Prospective consultants are requested to provide an analytical framework or methods of analysing the data collected. Given that much of the data will be qualitative, UNHCR is particularly interested in such frameworks and methods that ensure that the final product is not merely descriptive, but is able to draw out major themes, implications and connections between different pieces of data.

27. The evaluation will be guided by OECD-DAC Evaluation Quality Standards for Development Evaluation, the 2016 UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN System, the UNEG Ethical Guidelines and Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System. The Evaluation consultants will be required to sign the UNHCR Code of Conduct, complete UNHCR's introductory protection training module, and respect UNHCR's confidentiality requirements. Evaluation in UNHCR is founded on the principles of independence, impartiality, credibility and utility. The evaluation team will be required to protect sources and data, obtain informed consent, ensure respect for dignity and diversity and the minimisation of risk, harm and burden upon those who are the subject of or participating in the evaluation, while at the same time not compromising the integrity of the evaluation. This evaluation is also expected to adhere to UNHCR pilot 'Evaluation Quality Assurance' guidance, which will be overseen by the UNHCR Evaluation Manager.



## Annex B – Matrices for the Evaluation Questions

### THE DECISION TO DOWNSCALE (WHAT WERE THE DESIGN ASSUMPTIONS, WHAT WENT INTO IT, HOW IT WAS COMMUNICATED)

Evaluation Questions/Sub-questions	Indicators/How judgment formed to answer the question	Data sources	Analytical methods
<p>KEY EVALUATION QUESTION 1: <b>The making of the decision to downscale.</b> This includes how, and through which processes, the decision was taken; on what basis was the decision taken; what did the decision consist of (i.e. what was planned to happen); and how was it communicated internally and externally to those involved.</p>			
<p>How was the decision taken? What were the chronological / consecutive steps and events that constituted the decision making process?</p> <p>How was the decision and the assumptions/parameters for the decision communicated?</p> <p>Internally in UNHCR (between HQs and field offices; within Offices) as well as externally (governments, UN agencies and other international organizations, NGO partners and the persons of concern)?</p> <p>What assessments/considerations were made in the planning of the decision? To what extent have medium and longer-term considerations been reflected in prioritization, design and planned implementation of activities?</p> <p>Who was consulted in the process? Were all relevant HQS entities, ROSA and the Offices in the countries concerned appropriately involved in preparing, planning and implementing the phasing down and phasing out strategies for the three concerned countries (plus ROSA)? Was each entity duly consulted and what was/were the role(s) of each in all phases of the process? Was there a shared understanding of purpose and objectives of the downscaling process and its terminology? What</p>	<p>Assumptions made about the outcomes of the intervention (to downscale in the countries, to support the government/partners and to strengthen ROSA).</p> <p>Indications of the intervention logic—what will happen—what is the desired outcomes?</p> <p>Evidence of communications regarding phasing out prior to the decision</p> <p>Evidence of consultations with a range of stakeholders prior to phasing out</p> <p>Evidence of missions, meetings or events that focused on or touched on phasing down operations</p> <p>Analysis of planning reports, strategies and policy memos relating to phasing down</p> <p>Analysis of mission reports prior and during the down phasing process</p>	<p>Decisions related documents (ODMS/APR/BC decisions/memo's etc.)</p> <p>Exit strategies in country operations plans</p> <p>Regional strategies</p> <p>Interviews with ROSA and field staff</p> <p>Interviews with Africa Bureau, ODMS, DPSM, and others</p> <p>Mission reports</p> <p>Policy guidance on closing offices</p> <p>Persons of concern figures and trends; budget documents that might have been used to justify the decision</p> <p>Minutes from staff meetings where announcements/discussions took place</p>	<p>Qualitative analysis of semi-structured interview notes</p> <p>Document review (coding)</p> <p>Country context analysis</p>

<p>guidance was available/used? E.g. is there evidence that UNHCR used Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) dimensions and perspectives to design the strategies? Were UNHCR's objectives and strategies tailored to the specific needs and priorities of persons of concern? Were UNHCR's existing policies on the authorities and responsibilities of Regional Offices and Country Representations considered?</p> <p>What were the challenges and what worked well?</p>		Correspondence from partners (governments, NGOs etc.)	
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## DESIGN OF DOWN PHASING

Evaluation Questions/Sub-questions	Indicators	Data sources	Analytical methods
<p>KEY EVALUATION QUESTION 2: Regarding the <b>design of the downscaling programme</b>: In response to the decision (or series of decisions), what plans were made in response including budgets, capacity building and inclusion of stakeholders and the role of ROSA in management, implementation and monitoring? Were UNHCR's objectives and strategies (including as articulated in Country Operations Plans and regional strategies) during the period 2012-2016 relevant and appropriate, taking into account the ongoing downscaling of presence? How was the decision resulting from the downsizing policy implemented, taking into account prevailing risks, challenges and benefits? To what extent is (was) ROSA equipped, given its current configuration, to extend coverage over Namibia and support the Angola and Botswana operations?</p>			
<p>How was the downsizing programmed/planned?</p> <p>Was the inclusion of interim reviews considered as well as agreed mechanisms for correction of course under specified conditions? Were these conditions identified and agreed upon?</p> <p>Were governments, UN agencies and international organizations, and NGO partners consulted during the implementation process and were their views sought? If so, how were their views reflected in the implementation process?</p> <p>Who decided on the follow up plan (ROSA/Bureau/APR)?</p> <p>How were budgets prepared to reflect this?</p> <p>How was stakeholder buy-in foreseen and planned?</p> <p>How were objectives selected, and were they appropriate and consistent with UNHCR policy guidance and/or needs assessments?</p> <p>How did plans reflect that objectives were to be achieved through partners and the ROSA office?</p> <p>Were there resources/staff/budget in ROSA for all the objectives (protection/assistance/solutions/admin)?</p>	<p>Evidence of communications between stakeholders on the phasing down (including with respect to planning for handing over responsibilities and transition roles)</p> <p>Evidence of communications regarding phasing out prior to the decision</p> <p>Evidence of consultations with a range of stakeholders prior to phasing out</p> <p>Evidence of missions, meetings or events that focused on or touched on phasing down operations</p> <p>Analysis of planning reports, strategies and policy memos relating to phasing down</p> <p>Analysis of mission reports prior and during the down phasing process</p>	<p>Analysis of planning documents, reports, strategies and policy memos relating to phasing down</p> <p>Evidence in plans of intervention logic – how did the plans reflect how ROSA and the countries would ensure the desired protection, assistance and solutions logic? Were the plans relevant and coherent – considering assumptions and UNHCR's mandate as reflected in policy guidance?</p> <p>Exit strategies in country operations plans</p> <p>Regional strategies</p> <p>Interviews with ROSA and field staff</p> <p>Interviews with Africa Bureau, ODMS</p> <p>Mission reports</p>	<p>Qualitative analysis of semi-structured interview notes</p> <p>Document review (coding)</p> <p>Country context analysis</p>

<p>What were the constraints/challenges/things that worked well?</p> <p>What factors have been considered during the decision-making process?</p> <p>How well did HQs and ROSA discuss, plan, implement, monitor, evaluate and communicate the phase down process?</p> <p>To what extent was an Enterprise Risk Management assessment made prior to the downscaling and informed priority-setting?<sup>129</sup></p> <p>To what extent were phasing down strategies able to build on durable solutions initiatives/strategies implemented in each country concerned during previous years?</p>		<p>Policy guidance on closing offices</p> <p>Persons of concern figures and trends; budget documents that might have been used to justify the decision</p> <p>Minutes from staff meetings where announcements/discussions took place</p> <p>Correspondence from partners (governments, NGOs etc.)</p>	
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<sup>129</sup> Keeping in mind that this was only put in place in 2014.

## HOW WELL THE DOWNSCALING WORKED (IMPLEMENTATION, OBJECTIVES ACHIEVED/OUTCOMES)

Evaluation Questions/Sub-questions	Indicators	Data sources	Analytical methods
<p>KEY EVALUATION QUESTION 3: To what extent were the planned protection, assistance and solutions <b>objectives achieved</b> during the period 2012-2016, taking into account the ongoing downscaling of presence? What were the key facilitating and constraining factors? To what extent was the <b>implementation</b> of the phase-out decision adequate, appropriate and effective?</p>			
<p>What were the protection/assistance/solutions objectives?</p> <p>What data was used for baselines/monitoring?</p> <p>What were the facilitators/constraints?</p> <p>How did the scale down presence of UNHCR influence this, if at all?</p> <p>To what extent have durable solutions for refugees been achieved? What were the key facilitating and constraining factors? Have options for voluntary repatriation, resettlement and local integration been pursued to the extent feasible and appropriate?</p> <p>What activities have been undertaken by all Offices to ensure that existing legal and administrative frameworks are in place in the respective countries to secure minimum levels of protection and assistance for persons of concern (refugees/asylum-seekers, stateless persons, and IDPs)? What are the results of these activities?</p> <p>Have the capacities of partners (government and NGOs) to provide protection and/or assistance been assessed and were appropriate and effective capacity building activities undertaken prior to downscaling?</p> <p>Are they capable, able and/or willing to provide protection and/or assistance to persons of concern?</p>	<p>Evidence of the actual outcome of the interventions – government is capacitated and providing adequate protection and assistance; partners have the support and capacity to provide protection and assistance; ROSA has the capacity to provide support?</p> <p>Evidence that solutions were found for refugees (return/resettlement/local integration).</p> <p>Evidence that refugees and asylum-seekers are protected and assisted in accordance with international standards.</p>	<p>Interview and meetings with refugees and partners.</p> <p>Interview with government counterparts.</p> <p>Review of activity and results reports – FOCUS, mission reports, partner reports, external reports indicating protection situation</p> <p>Statistics on resettlement, return.</p> <p>Review of protection assessment indicating level of protection and local integration prospects.</p> <p>Interviews with ROSA and field staff</p> <p>Interviews with Africa Bureau, ODMS</p> <p>Mission reports</p> <p>Persons of concern figures and trends; budget documents that might have been used to justify the decision</p>	<p>Qualitative analysis of semi-structured interview notes</p> <p>Document review (coding)</p> <p>Country context analysis</p> <p>Analysis of statistics and results data</p>

<p>Are there any unintended results, positive or negative, of the downscaling?</p> <p>What has been the effect on a country's and UNHCR's preparedness to ensure a timely, appropriate and adequate response to any forced displacement emergency in the region?</p> <p>Did ROSA do what was planned?</p> <p>Did partners and governments do what they were supposed to do?</p> <p>What were the activities planned and have they been done?</p> <p>Were staff hired and resources made available for ROSA to do its job?</p> <p>What were the constraints/challenges/things that worked well?</p>		<p>Minutes from staff meetings where announcements/discussions took place</p> <p>Correspondence to/from partners (governments, NGOs etc.)</p>	
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## LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

Evaluation Questions/Sub-questions	Indicators	Data sources	Analytical methods
<p>KEY EVALUATION QUESTION 4: What <b>lessons can be learned</b> from the three country examples about downscaling UNHCR presence? What are the main considerations for future implementation of such an approach? What different options might be considered to continue providing support to countries with a minimal to no physical UNHCR presence?</p>			
<p>Regarding decision-making, what worked/what did not work and do we have evidence on how this affected protection/assistance/solutions outcomes?</p> <p>What were the rights/wrongs in the decision-making – including assumptions etc.?</p> <p>Why? What can we therefore learn for the future? Was there guidance? Was the guidance used/useful why/why not?</p> <p>Regarding planning, what worked/did not work? Was there guidance? Was it followed? Why/why not?</p> <p>Were the planning assumptions and objectives relevant? Coherent? Etc.</p> <p>Why/why not? How did this affect outcomes?</p> <p>Regarding the implementation, what worked? What did not work? Why?</p> <p>How did this influence outcomes? What could have been done differently?</p>	<p>Policy guidance on staffing for offices.</p> <p>Evidence on unintended outcomes concerning protection, administration, management of the country offices due to the downscaling due to lack of human resources.</p> <p>Evidence that the downscaling in Angola affected the ability to respond effectively to the new influx.</p> <p>Evidence of outcomes related to the downscaling more generally and evidence on what impacted these outcomes – concerning the design of the decisions, the planned scale down and the implementation.</p>	<p>Findings from the evaluation – also in relation to intended and unintended outcomes.</p> <p>Interviews with ROSA and field staff</p> <p>Interviews with Africa Bureau, ODMS</p> <p>Mission reports</p> <p>Policy guidance on closing offices</p> <p>Persons of concern figures and trends; budget documents that might have been used to justify the decision</p> <p>Minutes from staff meetings where announcements/discussions took place</p> <p>Correspondence from partners (governments, NGOs etc.)</p>	<p>Qualitative analysis of semi-structured interview notes</p> <p>Document review (coding)</p> <p>Country context analysis</p> <p>Policy guidance review</p>

## Annex C – Country overview

### Angola

#### Overview of the research

An evaluation team member visited Angola from 4 to 8 December 2017, and remained in Luanda for the duration of the visit. The consultant carried out interviews with UNHCR staff, NGO partner staff (Jesuit Refugee Service, JRS), officials with UNHCR's government counterpart MINARS (Ministry of Social Services) and refugees in Viana and Bairro Popular.

#### Operational context in Angola

##### *Historical overview*

Like the other two country cases, Angola has its own unique history and context that is relative to the phasing down process. Angola achieved independence in 1975 after a protracted anti-colonial struggle. UNHCR has had a presence in Angola since 1976 to facilitate the repatriation of Angolans and to support their reintegration, as well as to provide international protection to refugees and asylum-seekers (mainly from DRC) in accordance with the organization's mandate. During the civil war from 1975 to 2002 thousands of Angolans fled to neighboring countries, and during the immediate post-colonial years, thousands crossed the border from neighboring countries seeking asylum in Angola. Angola has thus been both a country of origin and a country of asylum for refugees. After the signing of the 2002 peace accords, Angola slowly moved from a conflict situation to a phase of recovery and development. There is a weak civil society and limited NGO capacity support and/or carry out protection activities. Over the last decade, mixed groups of asylum-seekers and migrants arrived mainly from the DRC. In 2012, the operation to support the return and reintegration of Angolans from neighboring countries was undertaken, though many remained in exile—as of October 2015 the process of repatriation remained unfinished and between 30,000 and 40,000 Angolan former refugees were still awaiting Angolan documents in Zambia and the DRC.

##### *Legal framework and practices*

Angola is signatory to the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees, its 1967 Protocol and the 1969 OAU Convention Governing Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. A new Asylum Law was adopted in 2015. While it has been formally promulgated, the mechanisms for implementation have not been created and this has meant that no asylum claims have been processed in recent years. Monitoring the application of the new Asylum Law has been identified as an ongoing critical issue for UNHCR in the foreseeable future, as it could impact access to the territory, the conduct of RSD procedures, and the reduction of the backlog of existing asylum-seeker cases awaiting adjudication.

In addition, long-term refugees in Angola continue to face a range of rights denials and protection concerns, including lack of documentation, arbitrary arrest, lack of access to education, health facilities and livelihood opportunities, including the right to work. Angola is not a party to the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Person nor to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

##### *The refugee operation*

During the period for this evaluation, UNHCR's strategy in Angola has focused on advocacy around the implementation of the Asylum Law, which was updated in 2015. Given that the government is lacking the mechanisms to implement the new law, this has been a major priority and focus area for UNHCR's efforts in Angola. UNHCR also facilitated and promoted the voluntary return of refugees from Angola and in 2013, and 2014 in particular, was very involved with protection monitoring of returning Angolans from neighboring countries. It has also conducted ongoing sensitization activities on SGBV and sought to reduce the risks of SGBV through trainings of law enforcement officials. There were an estimated 50,337 UNHCR persons of concern in Angola as of the end of 2015, of which 15,555 were refugees; 30,143 were asylum-seekers, and 4,639 were Angolan returnees.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Angola COP 2012, 2014, 2017, and UNHCR Global Trends reports.

UNHCR works closely with JRS, which helps to collect information among the refugee population, and provides some legal services. There have been more recent shifts, but during the evaluation period, UNHCR's main Angolan government counterparts were the SME (Serviço de Migração e Estrangeiros de Angola) and the MINFAMU (Ministry of Family and Promotion of Women).<sup>131</sup> UNHCR is engaging more with the Ministry of Interior, as it now has responsibility for RSD under the new Asylum Law.

*Table: Persons of concern in Angola (end of year)*

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Refugees	23,413	23,783	15,474	15,555	15,555
Asylum-seekers	20,336	20,039	30,212	30,143	30,143
Returnees	19,724	1,666	14,284	4,639	-
Total	63,473	45,488	59,970	50,337	45,698

Source: UNHCR Global Trends

## Botswana

### Overview of the research

The evaluation team jointly proceeded to Botswana on 9 November 2017, but due to a series of unfortunate circumstances were unable to complete their work. An evaluation team member returned to Botswana from 27 November to 2 December 2017 to conduct interviews and for observations, including at the Dukwi Refugee Camp. The evaluation team had wished to visit the Centre for Illegal Immigrants (CII) in Francistown, but were formally denied permission by the authorities. Interviews were held with government officials in the Ministry of Defence, Justice and Security (MDJS) in Gaborone and Dukwi, including the Refugee Settlement Commandant in Dukwi and his deputy, with UNHCR staff and affiliate workforce, with the UN Resident Coordinator, as well as with the Director of Skillshare and staff of the Botswana Red Cross Society (BRCS), UNHCR's two implementing partners. In Dukwi, a meeting was also held with refugee leaders.

### Operational context in Botswana

#### *Historical overview*

Botswana gained independence in 1966, shortly after which UNHCR established a presence there. Botswana has a long history of hosting refugees going back to the 1970s and 1980s; the Dukwi Refugee Camp was established in 1978. At its peak, Dukwi accommodated some 23,000 refugees who had fled persecution and violence during the anti-colonial and anti-apartheid struggles in neighbouring Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa. Following the independence of Zimbabwe (1980) and Namibia (1990), as well as the arrival of democracy in South Africa (1994), the refugees repatriated and Dukwi was closed. In 1998, it was reopened<sup>132</sup> to receive a modest but steady flow of persons of concern arriving from different countries. Since its reopening, the camp has hosted a relatively stable number of around 3,000 persons<sup>133</sup> with moderate fluctuations as refugees repatriated voluntarily or were resettled and new asylum-seekers arrived. The current population is mainly from Namibia and Zimbabwe; smaller numbers originate from Somalia, DRC, or Burundi.

#### *Legal framework and practices*

Botswana is signatory to the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees, the 1967 Protocol, and the 1969 OAU Convention Governing Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. However, the country made reservations to Article 26 (on freedom of movement) and Article 17 (on the right to work), requiring refugees and asylum-seekers to reside in the Dukwi Refugee Camp and prohibiting access to wage-earning employment. Together with several additional reservations, such as to Articles 31, 32 and 34 (the latter on the

<sup>131</sup> Angola COP 2012, 2014, 2017.

<sup>132</sup> Report Standard Inspection of UNHCR's Operation in Botswana, IGO, June 2012 (INS/12/07).

<sup>133</sup> See Table 2 on page 7.

naturalization of refugees) these effectively exclude the local integration of refugees, only leaving voluntary repatriation and resettlement as durable solutions. Botswana is party to the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons but has not acceded to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

Government polices require all asylum-seekers to be detained at the CII in Francistown during the asylum process. For many years, implementation of this policy was relatively lenient and most asylum-seekers were detained only during the first 28 days and were then released into the Dukwi camp. This changed in 2015 when a relatively large group of some 500 asylum-seekers arrived. They were detained and were held until 2017. Otherwise, the majority in detention are rejected asylum-seekers from DRC, including eastern DRC (UNHCR considers that it is likely that persons fleeing the conflict in the Kivus and similarly affected areas are in need of international refugee protection).<sup>134</sup>

#### *The refugee operation*

In 2012, at the start of this evaluation's period of review, UNHCR's strategies in Botswana focused on improving the protection and asylum space through advocacy efforts.<sup>135</sup> Other activities included the promotion of durable solutions through voluntary repatriation and resettlement, and the provision of essential assistance. The camp population was composed of 2,785 refugees and 212 asylum-seekers (29 percent Namibians, 29 percent Zimbabweans, 15 percent Somalis, 13 percent Angolans, and the remaining 14 percent from other countries, mainly DRC)<sup>136</sup>. There was a small assisted urban refugee population of some 50 persons accommodated in a compound in the capital Gaborone. Although cessation of their refugee status had been declared in June 2012<sup>137</sup>, the Angolans had remained in Dukwi and had not shown interest in returning to their home country<sup>138</sup>.

UNHCR's main government counterpart was, and still is, the Ministry of Defence, Justice and Security (MDJS). The responsibility for the day-to-day coordination and management of the Dukwi camp was shared between the Office of the Settlement Commandant under the MDJS and UNHCR. Specific responsibilities of the Settlement Commandant included security, the police and legal matters such as handling applications for permissions to leave the camp. Other line ministries also carried responsibilities, including the Ministry of Education (including primary and secondary education) and the Ministry of Health (including a clinic and a medical doctor in Dukwi Refugee Settlement). NGO partners comprised the Botswana Red Cross Society (BRCS), which focused on access to education, services for persons with specific needs including prevention and coordination of the response to SGBV and issues of child protection, reproductive health programmes, and access to energy; and Skillshare (which focused on livelihood and self-reliance activities). In addition to the programme in the Dukwi camp, UNHCR assisted, through implementing partners, the small group of urban refugees with accommodation, food allowances and health care.<sup>139</sup>

*Table: Persons of concern in Botswana*

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Refugees	2,785	2,773	2,645	2,130	2,093
Asylum-seekers	212	173	202	135	80
Others	443	459	69	-	659
Total	3,440	3,405	2,916	2,265	2,832

<sup>134</sup> UNHCR position on returns to North Kivu, South Kivu and adjacent areas in the Democratic Republic of Congo affected by on-going conflict and violence in the region - Update I, September 2014, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5400755a4.html>

<sup>135</sup> Botswana COP 2014.

<sup>136</sup> UNHCR Global Trends

<sup>137</sup> Memorandum AF/00/DIR/011/13 of 16 May 2013.

<sup>138</sup> Botswana COP 2014.

<sup>139</sup> Mission Report Senior Regional Community Service Officer, 30 November-5 December 2014.

## Namibia

### Overview of the research

An evaluation team member visited Namibia from 20 to 24 November 2017 to conduct interviews and for observations, including at the Osire refugee settlement. Interviews were held with government officials in the Office of the Refugee Administration Directorate, with the UN Resident Coordinator, the IOM Head of Office, as well as with UNHCR's implementing partner. In Osire, meetings were held with government officials, refugee leaders, UNHCR personnel, and implementing partner staff. Both evaluation team members conducted interviews with current and former ROSA and UNHCR-Namibia staff.

### Operational context in Namibia

#### *Historical overview*

Against the background of Namibia's imminent independence from South Africa (1990), UNHCR opened its first presence in the country in 1989 to play a key role in the return and reintegration of some 74,000 Namibian exiles. The operation was completed in 1991. However, the Agency had to maintain a small presence, initially hosted by UNDP, to ensure protection and find durable solutions for a small number of newly arriving asylum-seekers and refugees. During the following years refugee numbers increased and a fully-fledged Branch Office was opened (1992). Supporting the development of refugee legislation by the newly independent State became a crucial strategic focus. The refugee caseload continued to grow until it reached some 31,000 (mainly Angolans) in 2002. As attendant operational challenges increased, UNHCR gradually strengthened the number of staff and opened a field office in the Osire Refugee Settlement, located some 250 kilometers from the capital Windhoek.

#### *Legal framework*

Namibia acceded to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol in 1995. It incorporated provisions of this Convention into its domestic refugee legislation, the Namibia Refugee (Recognition and Control) Act of 1999. Implementation of the Act, including refugee status determination, is the responsibility of the Refugee Administration Directorate, which is part of the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration (MHAI) and is UNHCR's main government counterpart.

Meanwhile, Namibia has continued to maintain its reservations to Article 26 of the Convention (on freedom of movement) and has required all refugees and asylum-seekers to reside in the Osire Refugee Settlement. The country has also incorporated provisions of the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa into its domestic legislation, but has not yet acceded to that Convention. Namibia is also not a party to the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, nor to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, but in 2016 has accepted a UPR recommendation to accede to the 1961 Convention.

#### *The refugee operation*

In 2012, at the start of this evaluation's period of review, UNHCR and its governmental and non-governmental partners in Namibia had just completed the mass voluntary repatriation of some 3,000 Angolan refugees (2012). The government was considering offering local integration to the remaining Angolan former refugees<sup>140</sup>. After the achievement of durable solutions for the Angolans, in 2013, some 3,000 persons of concern remained behind comprising 1,800 refugees and 1,200 asylum-seekers (77% Congolese, 10% Burundians, 6% Rwandans; 7% other countries of origin). The majority were accommodated in the Osire Refugee Settlement; approximately 300 persons were living at a single urban compound in the capital Windhoek. Following the decrease in numbers of persons of concern to below 5,000, the World Food Programme (WFP) withdrew (2013)<sup>141</sup>. The UNHCR operation focused on finding durable solutions for the remaining population of concern, mainly through voluntary repatriation and resettlement.<sup>142</sup> Meanwhile,

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<sup>140</sup> "Former refugees" after application of the Cessation Clause in June 2012.

<sup>141</sup> Briefing Notes, Namibia; 67<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Committee.

<sup>142</sup> COPs 2014 and 2015.

asylum-seekers and refugees in the settlement received multi-sectoral assistance. Access to education and health was ensured in cooperation with the Ministries of Education and Health and Social Services respectively that had taken over responsibility for major parts of these sectors in 2006. When WFP had moved out, UNHCR took over food assistance. UNHCR's main NGO implementing partner was African Humanitarian Agency (AHA). In addition to its other tasks, AHA was in charge of social and community based protection activities. The operation was attempting to gradually increase its emphasis on refugee self-reliance, in preparation for a phasing down of the operation. In this context, since 2012 UNHCR-Namibia had been considering shifting to a cash and/or voucher based system of delivery of food and non-food assistance (Cash Based Interventions) and it saw scope to explore this idea further.<sup>143</sup> AHA phased out its operations and presence in the country at the same time as UNHCR. AHA was replaced by Komeho Namibia Development Agency, a Namibian NGO.

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*Table: Persons of concern in Namibia*

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Refugees	1,806	2,332	1,767	1,737	1,757
Asylum-seekers	1,089	1,162	821	1,112	1,675
Returnees	-	28	14	21	8
Others	-	1,660	1,662	1,706	50
Total	2,895	5,182	4,264	4,576	3,490

*Source: UNHCR Global Trends*

<sup>143</sup> Report of the "Feasibility assessment of cash-based interventions for refugees in the Osire refugee settlement, Namibia", UNHCR, Government of Namibia, WFP, July 2013.

<sup>144</sup> Based on COP 2014.



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## Annex E – Table with key evaluation dates and activities

Tasks/Activities	Deliverables	Notes
Inception phase - Late October – Early December 2017		
Briefing with Evaluation Team to discuss and jointly review the Terms of Reference		Via conference several calls in early October 2017
Evaluation Team submitted draft inception report, including evaluation question matrix, proposed methodology, and work plan (with agreed upon deliverables and timeframe)  Multiple drafts complete	Inception report (draft) (mid-November)	This report was used as an initial point of agreement and understanding between the Evaluation Team and the Evaluation Manager
Evaluation Team submitted final inception report with finalized methodology, questions and work plan	Inception report final (January)	
Research and data collection - Mid-November 2017 – January 2018		
In-depth document review as well as interviews		
Online survey		
Travel on mission to Pretoria, Angola, Botswana, and Namibia		
Data Analysis, Drafting of Final Report - <b>January 2018 – April 2018</b>		
Evaluation Team submitted first draft evaluation report to the Evaluation Manager and incorporated comments from the Evaluation Manager and the Evaluation Service Head	First draft of report of findings (January/early February 2018)	The first evaluation goes through review and approval by the Head of Evaluation Service and/or Regional Representative of ROSA
Interactive presentation/workshop by consultants on preliminary finding, main recommendations, challenges, opportunities, and lessons learned.	Power point presentation with findings (February 2018)	
Submission of final evaluation report  Presentation at Headquarters (with ROSA via teleconference)  Final report	Final evaluation report (May 2018)  May 2018  June 2018	This final report includes a concise executive summary and annexes detailing the methodological approach and any analytical products developed during the course of evaluation.