

AT A GLANCE

Main Objectives and Activities

Contribute to meeting the immediate emergency relief needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returning IDPs in areas of potential refugee return; in close co-operation with other organisations, create an environment conducive to the sustainable return and reintegration of Eritrean refugees by improving access to vital services like health and education; facilitate the voluntary repatriation from Sudan of Eritrean refugees who fled during 2000; provide protection and assistance to Somali and Sudanese refugees; promote resettlement to third countries as appropriate.

Impact

- Following the cessation of hostilities agreement and based on a specific tripartite framework, UNHCR facilitated the voluntary repatriation of 25,431 recent Eritrean refugees from Sudan, and assisted them and many others who returned spontaneously upon their return to Eritrea. In addition to swiftly attaining a durable solution for these new refugees and helping them to reintegrate rapidly, this also prepared the ground for the planned repatriation of some 62,000 Eritrean refugees from Sudan, Yemen and Djibouti in 2001.
- The early and accelerated repatriation of the new Eritrean refugees from Sudan allowed many returnees to take advantage of the planting season, thus helping to abate the impact of war on national food production.



Main Refugee Origin/Type of Population	Persons of Concern			
	Total in Country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent Female	Per cent under 18
Eritrea (IDPs)	1,100,000	250,000	65	-
Eritrea (Returnees)	68,000	68,000	-	-
Somalia (Refugees)	1,300	1,300	48	60
Sudan (Refugees)	730	730	34	41

	Income and Expenditure (USD)				
	Annual Programme Budget and Trust Funds				
	Revised Budget	Income from Contributions ¹	Other Funds Available ²	Total Funds Available	Total Expenditure
AB	4,744,550	1,642,377	2,540,189	4,182,566	3,982,566
SB	10,895,837	2,958,555	4,455,689	7,414,244	7,400,439
Total	15,640,387	4,600,932	6,995,878	11,596,810	11,383,005

¹Includes income from contributions earmarked at the country level.

²Includes allocations by UNHCR from unearmarked or broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

The above figures do not include costs at Headquarters.

- As part of the Government/inter-agency relief effort, UNHCR provided vital shelter and non-food assistance to an estimated 250,000 IDPs. Recipients were mostly female heads of households, children or the elderly, who were either still displaced or who had returned to damaged or looted homes. Rapid and coordinated action by the Government, UN agencies, NGOs and bilateral donors saved hundreds of thousands of lives, averting a humanitarian catastrophe.

- UNHCR played an active role in the co-ordination of the emergency response, as co-chair, together with the Government, of the Sectoral Working Group on Shelter and Household Items. Priority needs and assistance gaps were rapidly identified, ensuring optimum use of scarce resources.
- Although the adverse effects of war on the areas hosting Somali and Sudanese refugees seriously threatened their protection and well-being, loss of life and prolonged suffering were avoided by relocating them to safer areas, where they received adequate assistance.
- Ten Sudanese refugees voluntarily repatriated to Sudan, while 31 Sudanese were helped to resettle in other countries.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

The Context

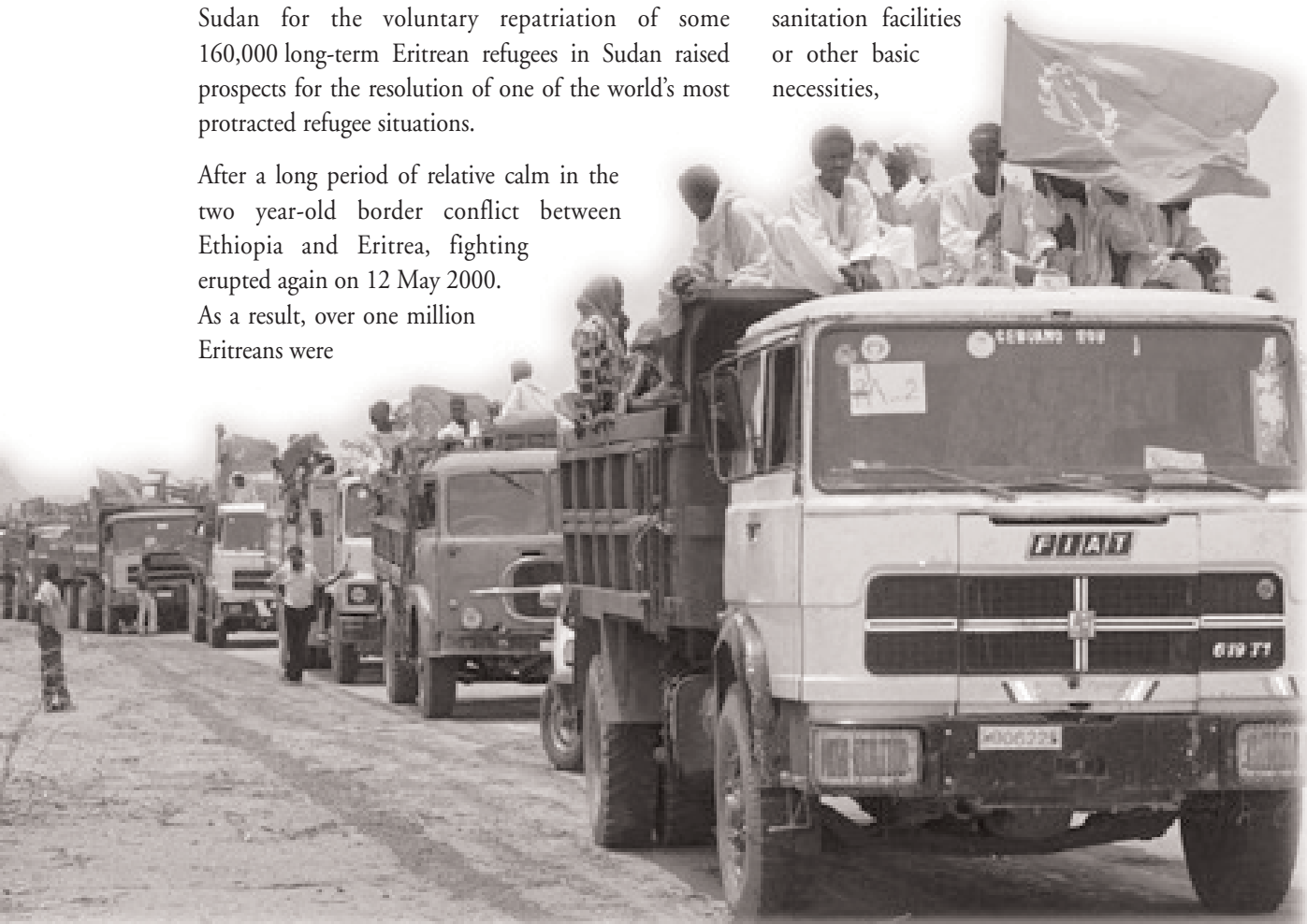
UNHCR resumed an international presence in Eritrea in early 2000 after an absence of nearly three years. This followed the articulation by the Government of Eritrea of a new, more welcoming attitude towards international development and humanitarian aid agencies, and UNHCR in particular. A break-through agreement between UNHCR and the Governments of Eritrea and Sudan for the voluntary repatriation of some 160,000 long-term Eritrean refugees in Sudan raised prospects for the resolution of one of the world's most protracted refugee situations.

After a long period of relative calm in the two year-old border conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea, fighting erupted again on 12 May 2000.

As a result, over one million Eritreans were

displaced internally, while, according to the Government of Sudan, some 95,000 fled to Sudan. In addition, Djibouti and Yemen received an estimated 1,000 refugees each. All these countries were already hosting Eritrean refugees who had left during Eritrea's thirty-year war of independence. UNHCR therefore had to rapidly shift gear: instead of preparing for repatriation and reintegration, it now had to provide emergency assistance to a new wave of Eritrean refugees in neighbouring countries and to IDPs inside Eritrea.

The High Commissioner's decision to get involved with IDPs in areas of anticipated refugee return (Gash-Barka and Anseba Zones) was based on guidelines adopted in March 2000. The stabilisation of conditions in areas of expected refugee return, including assistance to IDPs in these areas, was considered a prerequisite for the voluntary repatriation of refugees. Therefore, apart from the immediate objective of saving lives through emergency assistance, UNHCR began, in collaboration with other UN agencies, to prepare for the sustainable return of refugees and IDPs. Besides, many of the IDPs had formerly been refugees in Sudan, thus making any distinction between returnees and IDPs difficult. As the majority of IDPs had gathered along dry riverbeds, in valleys and mountains, without shelter, access to clean drinking water, sanitation facilities or other basic necessities,



UNHCR's intervention saved lives and prevented further flight into Sudan.

The cease-fire agreement signed by the conflicting parties on 18 June 2000 and the subsequent decision by the UN Security Council to deploy a peace-keeping mission to the two countries changed the operational context for UNHCR in Eritrea. The new overall aim was to contribute to the peace process by emphasising return, recovery and rehabilitation programmes. Urged by the Government of Eritrea, UNHCR embarked on a voluntary repatriation operation for those who had fled to Sudan in 2000. Concurrently, IDPs who were able to return to their homes were assisted in doing so, while emergency relief aid continued to be delivered to those for whom return was not yet an option. Especially since the conclusion of a comprehensive peace agreement between the Governments of Eritrea and Ethiopia on 12 December 2000, UNHCR's protection and assistance activities in Eritrea were an integral part of the overall peace-consolidation and normalisation process, in coordination with the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE).

Eritrea also hosted refugees from Sudan and Somalia, whose protection and assistance needs had to be met, even under complex war-time conditions. Furthermore, Eritrea received significant numbers of people expelled from Ethiopia, some of whom were potentially at risk of becoming stateless. UNHCR carefully monitored developments and offered technical assistance to the Government for the development of legislation addressing issues of statelessness.

Constraints

The war between Eritrea and Ethiopia in May/June made returnee areas unsafe for the previously planned repatriation and reintegration of long-term Eritrean refugees. Large-scale internal displacement caused a major humanitarian crisis. In addition, landmines and unexploded ordnance posed a threat to both returnees and aid workers in some areas of return. UNHCR was thus obliged to completely revise its initial objectives and develop a new plan of operation.

Eritrea is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention or its 1967 Protocol, nor to the 1969 OAU Convention, or the two conventions relating to statelessness, which UNHCR is tasked to promote. It also has no domestic legislation governing refugee issues. UNHCR's protection activities were thus defined solely by its mandate and relevant General Assembly resolutions. Largely as a consequence of the prolonged absence of UNHCR international protection staff from the country, recogni-

tion and understanding of UNHCR's protection mandate on the part of relevant Government departments needed strengthening. Eritrea's administrative arrangements for asylum-seekers, including refugee status determination procedures, remained weak. Unfortunately, capacity-building and institution-building efforts were impeded by the war. Even recognised refugees enjoyed only limited civil, social and economic rights, leaving no room for local integration. At the same time, voluntary repatriation was not a viable option for most refugees on account of security problems in Sudan and Somalia. With the exception of some Sudanese refugees who were resettled for pressing protection reasons, and a few Somali refugees who wished to repatriate, there were no durable solutions available for the majority of refugees.

Funding

In the initial emergency stage, almost all basic inputs for a humanitarian response were lacking, leaving displaced women, children and the elderly at the mercy of the elements with little or no assistance. However, a comparatively speedy response averted loss of life from exposure, disease or malnutrition. To cover initial needs, UNHCR drew funds from its Operational Reserve and re-allocated available resources from other programmes in the area. Thereafter, as contributions were made towards UNHCR's regional Supplementary Programme, the funding situation improved. Nevertheless, by year's end only 68 per cent of UNHCR's Supplementary Appeal had been funded, thus forestalling the implementation of important parts of the programme. Planned activities in the sectors of crop production and income generation had to be delayed, to a point where they could no longer be implemented before the end of the year. In addition to drawing on emergency stockpiles, airlifting urgently needed supplies and procuring relief items internationally, regionally and locally, UNHCR's programme also benefited substantially from the re-deployment of assets and relief items from the Kosovo operation. Pending the receipt of donor contributions, this greatly enhanced UNHCR's response capacity.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

Protection and Solutions

Eritrean refugees who repatriated in the course of the year, either with UNHCR's assistance (25,431 people) or spontaneously, were welcomed by the Eritrean authorities and regained national protection without difficulty.

UNHCR did not note any protection-related impediment to mass voluntary repatriation. The Eritrean authorities committed themselves in several tripartite meetings to full co-operation in the repatriation operation on the basis of generally recognised protection principles. Similarly, no major protection issues arose with regard to IDPs as they were not displaced by human rights violations or Government persecution. UNHCR nonetheless monitored the protection situation of IDPs and, where necessary, intervened on their behalf with the Government. A significant achievement was the successful strengthening of the Government's local and national protection and emergency response capacity through UNHCR's assistance. As a member of the inter-agency child protection working group, UNHCR also provided technical advice and support for an assessment of the situation of unaccompanied children in Eritrea with a view to finding durable solutions for them.

The armed conflict had a serious impact on Sudanese and Somali refugees whose well-being was adversely affected by a range of protection problems. UNHCR and the Government had to transfer some of the Sudanese refugees to Asmara where conditions were safer. Furthermore, Somalis residing near Assab needed to be relocated up north. UNHCR also launched an emergency resettlement programme targeting some 150 especially vulnerable persons. Obstacles to local settlement, such as restricted freedom of movement and limited access to public education and other services, continued to impede the refugees' self-reliance.

Activities and Assistance

Community Services: Both Somali and Sudanese refugees benefited from the provision of recreational and sports facilities, as well as special assistance for the culturally acceptable conduct of certain occasions (e.g. funerals). Particular effort was made to identify unaccompanied minors among the Sudanese refugees and to trace relatives. Various problems were openly discussed with the Sudanese community and with the authorities. These included domestic violence and alcoholism and the abduction of girls for early marriage. Corrective measures were taken whenever possible, within the limited financial means of the Office. From the onset of the emergency, UNHCR deployed a Gender Advisor to ensure that UNHCR's interventions benefited all segments of the beneficiary population equally, and that programmes adequately reflected the demographic structure of the IDP and returnee population, which predominantly comprised families headed by women.

Domestic Needs/Household Support: Following their relocation, refugees were in need of shelter and household items, which were covered partly by the refugee programme and partly by the emergency project. IDPs, returning IDPs and refugees received a total of 271,065 blankets, 29,870 jerrycans, 428,206 packs of sanitary items, 42,031 sets of kitchen items, 55,000 kerosene stoves, a three-month supply of kerosene per beneficiary family, 32,000 griddles and trays for traditional food, 150,000 sleeping mats, 46,993 hygiene parcels, 400,000 metres of fabric for women's clothing, 129,795 T-shirts and soap. This direct material assistance benefited an estimated 250,000 persons. The provision of kerosene stoves and kerosene not only enabled women to prepare meals for their families without having to spend hours searching for firewood, but also helped to protect the already seriously degraded environment. Towards the end of the year, the provision of fabric and clothing became a priority, as people still had nothing to wear but the (now tattered) clothes they wore when they fled. Priority was given to women, to allow them to be active outside the home and participate with dignity and confidence in numerous community activities. Given traditional eating habits in Eritrea, the provision of traditional griddles and trays to prepare and serve food was much appreciated by women.

Education: In the two refugee camps, 652 children (244 of them girls) attended primary school. UNHCR provided classrooms, furniture, school supplies, as well as stipends for 11 refugee teachers. Although the education of refugee children had been disrupted by the war and subsequent relocation, it was swiftly resumed when the situation stabilised. Textbooks for Sudanese refugee pupils were procured through the Regional Service Centre in Nairobi, and the procurement of books for Somali pupils was initiated. With UNHCR's support, the Ministry of Education procured basic school supplies for the Gash-Barka Zone, enabling 21,000 schoolchildren to resume their education, which had been disrupted by the war. Furthermore, UNHCR provided wooden poles and plastic sheeting for numerous IDP sites and areas of refugee and IDP return, so that classrooms could be built or damaged schools repaired. This protected pupils against exposure to the elements.

Food: UNHCR initially provided food rations, in line with WFP standards, to 3,050 refugees. After the war-related departure of some 1,000 Somali refugees, the remaining 2,000 refugees continued to receive their rations on a fortnightly basis. Provisions included wheat flour, lentils, oil, sugar, salt and fresh vegetables. Wheat grain was milled in Asmara in order to reduce the workload of women, giving them more time to care for their

families and participate in community activities. The distribution of food through refugee committees (36 per cent female participation) helped to empower women by involving them in the decision-making process.

Forestry: The Ministry of Agriculture received support for the construction of 149 km of hillside terraces, 1,151 cubic metres of check dams, and 4,066 micro basins, in order to contain environmental degradation and prepare the land for tree planting. Environmental awareness-raising was carried out in four sub-zones of Gash-Barka.

Health/Nutrition: In the Somali refugee camp of Emkulu, a senior nurse ran a primary health care clinic, and patients could, if necessary, be referred to Massawa Hospital. For lack of a camp-clinic in the Sudanese refugee camp in Elit, an arrangement was reached with the Ministry of Health to allow refugee patients access to a nearby government-run clinic and to admit them to referral hospitals as required. Supplementary feeding centres in both camps catered for malnourished children, expectant and nursing mothers and the sick. Emergency medical supplies worth USD 150,000 were procured for IDPs and returnees in Gash-Barka. This was supplemented by reproductive health kits worth USD 150,000, procured in co-operation with UNFPA. In this manner, seriously disrupted health services were gradually rehabilitated. Furthermore, IDPs and returnees had access to emergency health services, while mobile medical teams escorted returnees travelling from the border to their respective destinations. UNHCR's also worked with the National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students to raise awareness among humanitarian staff, IDPs, returnees and other segments of the population about harmful traditional practices and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS. These campaigns reached more than 30,000 people, by means of orientation seminars, focus group discussions, music, theatre and puppet shows. The campaigns stressed protective measures, and included objective information on the pros and cons of traditional medicine. Outreach sessions were organised in an age- and gender-sensitive manner. In addition, special HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns were carried out in both refugee camps. Information was also supplied to the military.

Legal Assistance: Refugee identification cards were replaced as necessary, and birth and death certificates issued. UNHCR assisted the Eritrean Relief and Refugee Commission (ERREC) in the registration and reception of IDPs and returnees. Together with UNICEF, the UN lead agency for mine awareness activities, and a local demining and mine awareness agency,

posters and leaflets on mine awareness were developed, printed and distributed in Gash-Barka Zone. Mine awareness education was conducted in schools, in market places, during public gatherings and on other occasions, reaching over 30,000 persons.

Operational Support (to Agencies): UNHCR assisted ERREC in the management of activities under the emergency programme for IDPs and returnees. It also co-chaired with ERREC the Sectoral Working Group on Shelter and Household Items. Operational support was provided to implementing partners.

Sanitation: In both refugee camps, camp sanitation committees organised regular cleaning campaigns while UNHCR provided garbage collecting barrels and cleaning agents, and paid stipends to sanitation workers. As a result, no sanitation-related diseases were observed in the camps.

Shelter/Other Infrastructure: UNHCR provided shelter assistance to the refugees. The added shelter needs of the Somali population, which had to be relocated from Harsile camp near Assab to Emkulu, were met through the provision of tents drawn from the emergency programme. Shelter for IDPs posed a formidable challenge, not least because the peak of the crisis coincided with the onset of the rainy season. At the same time, the international market for tents had been depleted following major crises in Kosovo and Timor, making procurement nearly impossible. In an already damaged environment, where trees and shrubs were scarce, the provision of plastic sheeting without support structures was not a viable option. In an effort to find creative solutions, and in consultation with other agencies, UNHCR developed a temporary shelter concept. This involved the provision of imported planks and other materials with which to assemble an A-frame structure to be covered with plastic sheeting to form a tent-like structure. While the construction of such shelters required community training and a support system to help women and vulnerable beneficiaries, it provided a relatively low-cost, immediate solution. UNHCR supplied some 20,000 families with the necessary materials, in addition to providing 15,000 plastic sheets in areas where they could be used without support structures. Community and commercial support were mobilised so as to help women and vulnerable individuals set up the A-frame structure.

Transport/Logistics: At the height of the emergency, the commercial transport capacity available for the humanitarian effort was close to zero as most trucks had been mobilised for the war. To alleviate the situation, UNHCR re-deployed 19 trucks and some light vehicles

from its Kosovo operation. This greatly facilitated the emergency and voluntary repatriation operation.

Water: In order to ensure an adequate supply of potable water, UNHCR improved the water system in Elit by installing a new generator for the water pump. It also covered the cost of water distribution points in Emkulu camp and Haz Haz transit centre in Asmara. Water distribution points were established within a reasonable distance of refugee residences in order to reduce the time spent by women fetching water. Fourteen containers with water equipment worth over USD 500,000 were re-deployed from the Kosovo operation and used by NGOs for the improvement and rehabilitation of water supply systems in IDP camps and areas (especially in Gash-Barka Zone).

ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Management

In addition to the country office in Asmara, UNHCR opened offices in Agordat and Tesseney. The office in Assab was closed in November 2000 following the relocation of refugees to Massawa. A total of 29 local and 18 international staff were recruited or brought on mission to Eritrea. Some of the international staff were seconded from NGOs, others dispatched by UNHCR's Emergency Unit in Geneva or the Regional Service Centre (RSC) in Nairobi. The RSC also rendered valuable support and advice on technical and security issues. Given the proximity to the conflict zone and the presence of landmines and unexploded ordnance, UNHCR also deployed a Field Staff Safety Advisor, who gave security advice to staff and provided mine awareness information.

Working with Others

Inter-agency co-ordination in Eritrea was led by the Resident Humanitarian Co-ordinator (who was also the UNDP Country Representative) supported by OCHA. Humanitarian co-ordination meetings were held once a month, involving the Government, UN agencies, NGOs and donors. This monthly forum, which was crucial for the purpose of information sharing and joint priority setting, was kept informed by the sectoral working groups, which met fortnightly. In the implementation of its programme, UNHCR worked directly with six governmental partners, two international NGOs and one local NGO, and, for the first time, signed direct agreements with line ministries and local NGOs for the implementation of project activities.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Because of the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, the envisaged repatriation of the long-term Eritrean refugees in Sudan, Yemen and Djibouti had to be postponed. However, activities were scheduled to resume in 2001. As the focus of UNHCR's operation underwent a rapid reorientation in response to the IDP crisis and the voluntary return of refugees who had fled in May/June 2000, programmes and resources were swiftly redirected. Excellent co-operation with governmental and non-governmental partners greatly helped in dealing with a complex and ever-changing situation. UNHCR's programme for IDPs was successful in averting further flight, saving lives, stabilising the situation in areas of refugee return and preparing the ground for voluntary repatriation in 2001 and beyond. The early repatriation of new Eritrean refugees, who had fled the most recent round of fighting, constituted an appropriate and timely durable solution. Despite the difficulty of returning to damaged and looted homes, they were at least returning to a familiar environment and many could begin to re-establish a livelihood by planting in time for the next harvest.

Despite the complex protection challenges caused by the war and related factors, the Somali and Sudanese refugees could be relocated to safe areas, and the concerns of those with continuing protection problems were addressed.

Offices

Asmara
Agordat
Assab (closed in November)
Tesseney

Partners

Government Agencies

Eritrean Relief and Refugee Commission
Institute for Humanitarian Demining
Ministry of Agriculture
Ministry of Education
Ministry of Health
Office for Refugee Affairs

NGOs

International Catholic Migration Commission
International Medical Corps
National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students

Other

United Nations Development Programme
United Nations Children's Fund

Financial Report (USD)						
Expenditure Breakdown	Current Year's Projects			Prior Years' Projects		
	AB	SB	Total	notes	notes	
Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination	115,080	289,398	404,478		5,517	
Community Services	5,680	0	5,680		1,968	
Crop Production	0	0	0		0	
Domestic Needs / Household Support	544,057	1,076,620	1,620,677		35,586	
Education	14,855	126	14,981		5,190	
Food	293,001	8,664	301,665		54,543	
Forestry	0	0	0		0	
Health / Nutrition	33,906	213,068	246,974		15,091	
Income Generation	0	0	0		0	
Legal Assistance	44,784	80,848	125,632		403	
Operational Support (to Agencies)	160,693	45,472	206,165		25,146	
Sanitation	3,562	0	3,562		1,476	
Shelter / Other Infrastructure	399,761	967,145	1,366,906		45,115	
Transport / Logistics	1,232,181	1,471,734	2,703,915		21,187	
Water	35,763	24,914	60,677		23,025	
Transit Accounts	8,289	0	8,289		0	
Instalments with Implementing Partners	340,968	1,091,362	1,432,330		(205,795)	
Combined Projects	0	0	0		0	
Sub - total Operational	3,232,580	5,269,351	8,501,931		28,452	
Programme Support	308,380	421,910	730,290		11,761	
Sub - total Disbursements / Deliveries	3,540,960	5,691,261	9,232,221	(3)	40,213	
Unliquidated Obligations	441,606	1,709,178	2,150,784	(3)	0 (6)	
Total	3,982,566	7,400,439	11,383,005	(1) (3)	40,213	

Instalments with Implementing Partners

Payments Made	1,350,414	2,175,420	3,525,834		0
Reporting Received	1,009,446	1,084,058	2,093,504		205,795
Balance	340,968	1,091,362	1,432,330		(205,795)
Outstanding 1 January	0	0	0		317,290
Refunded to UNHCR	0	0	1,432,330		39,470
Currency Adjustment	0	0	0		6,511
Outstanding 31 December	340,968	1,091,362	1,432,330		78,536

Unliquidated Obligations

Outstanding 1 January	0	0	0		160 328 (6)
New Obligations	3,982,566	7,400,439	11,383,005	(1)	0
Disbursements	3,540,960	5,691,261	9,232,221	(3)	40,213 (6)
Cancellations	0	0	0		120 115 (6)
Outstanding 31 December	441,606	1,709,178	2,150,784	(3)	0 (6)

Figures which cross reference to Accounts:

(1) Annex to Statement 1

(3) Schedule 3

(6) Schedule 6