

SPCP – Egypt June 2008

Background

In 2008, UNHCR introduced the Strengthening Protection Capacity Project (SPCP) in Egypt. It is part of the overall protection strategy for Egypt aimed at strengthening State and community capacities to protect refugees and improve migration management.

In 2008/9, with an overall financial contribution of € 400,000 from the European Commission, SPCP-E will support interventions focusing on strengthening capacity for registration and reception; enhancing the ability of NGOs and lawyers to provide legal aid to refugees and asylum seekers; enhancing the capacity of relevant governmental bodies through training and workshops; carrying out refugee protection courses in co-operation with several universities; increasing public awareness of refugee and asylum protection concerns; and expanding opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers to achieve self-reliance.

Improving Registration and Reception

UNHCR Cairo has strengthened its current capacity to register asylum seekers and identify at an early stage those in need of particular attention because of their specific risk. Referral mechanisms for providing necessary assistance including social medical, psycho-social care have been strengthened. Five UN Volunteers registration staff have been recruited and trained to support UNHCR and persons of concern are provided with translation services.

Contributions made through the SPCP-E will support improvements to reception facilities to ensure they are easily accessible to persons with physical disabilities; that they provide for the specific needs of women and children; and that confidentiality in the registration and interview process is assured. The work is scheduled to start during the second half of 2008.

The production of regularly updated leaflets is helping to ensure that that asylum

procedures and policy as well as available support mechanisms by UNHCR and partners are well understood by the refugee community.

Strengthening the capacity of legal aid NGO and lawyers

The SPCP-E is also contributing to the support provided by the Office to several NGOs to enhance their ability to provide legal advice and assistance to an increased number of persons of concern to UNHCR.

In this regard, UNHCR is providing on the job training to the NGOs as well as guidance through regular consultations and coordination for NGO legal staff to improve their knowledge and skills to effectively address refugee concerns. While working with individual lawyers for the provision of legal aid, UNHCR is in the process of identifying an implementing partner for the provision of legal aid to persons of its concern.



Enhancing the capacity of the government, UNHCR non-governmental partners, the refugee community and academia

Over the past six months several training workshops have been held with key government officials to increase general awareness of the international Refugee Convention, the OAU Convention and their relation to the protection of human rights of persons of concern to UNHCR. These include a three day workshop at the Giza Security Directorate, for 25 officials including



police and immigration officers; a training session in February for 33 military judges and general prosecutors; and a similar training workshop in April at the Cairo Security Directorate for 25 officials including police and immigration officers.

Additionally, in March 19 senior judges from the Cairo and Giza First Instance Courts were trained on the role of judges in refugee protection and the proper treatment of asylum seekers. In June, 30 Egyptian diplomats were provided training on international refugee law and, for the first time, a three day training workshop takes place at the police academy, targeting 22 police and immigration officials.



To maximize the impact of these training activities, the Office is also working with a group of government officials, in the framework of a Training of Trainer Programme to be able to conduct training on refugee protection principles to their colleagues, in co-operation with UNHCR. The government officials are provided with materials and training modules and have started providing training sessions.

UNHCR's also works closely with Cairo University and 6th of October University in the provision of refugee law courses, open to students of the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Political Sciences. UNHCR Cairo received approval from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the participation of a senior government officials as resource persons in the course which provides student with a means to hear and ask questions concerning government policy and practice towards refugees and asylum seekers.

From funding under SPCP-E, the Office printed and distributed to 22 Arab countries the newly issued and translated training modules on human rights and refugee protection.

Other capacity-building and training activities were undertaken, targeting UNHCR non-governmental partners and refugee community representatives.

Developing opportunities for economic reliance for refugee communities and individuals

In consultation with refugee communities and individuals, a comprehensive survey on employment and self-reliance opportunities for refugee communities and individuals will soon be carried out in partnership with the International Labour Organisation. The survey will lead to the formulation of a comprehensive livelihood and self-reliance strategy and will be undertaken with the dedicated support of an ILO technical expert and support from OSTs.

The aim of this work is to work with partners to enhance the professional skills of 700 to 860 men and women of concern to UNHCR. Depending on the results of the survey and the recommendations of the technical consultants, self-reliance opportunities could be expanded through the provision of adult education, employment orientated vocational and skills training as well as job placement services.

Strengthening public information in the Arab world

As a means of improving general understanding of refugees and to enhance awareness and dialogue on refugee migration and asylum in the Arab world, the SPCP-E is supporting efforts by the Office,

to maintain and further develop UNHCR's Arabic Website benefiting not only audiences in Egypt but also other countries in the Middle East and North Africa region. Relevant material on international protection, press releases and refugee stories are being regularly translated to Arabic and published on the website. Most recently, a corner for training materials in Arabic was added to UNHCR's Arabic WebSite.

In addition, UNHCR in partnership with the League of Arab States (LAS) and the Arab Parliament has begun preparation for a joint symposium and seminar for the representatives of 22 countries of the LAS. The symposium will target 44 parliamentarians and members of the Arab Parliament. The aim of the symposium is to increase the awareness and understanding of international refugee protection. The topics will include asylum and refugee law awareness, in addition to relevant migration issues in the Arab world and there will be time provided for discussions among the participants. The symposium and seminar is planned for October 2008.

More information on the Strengthening Protection Capacity Project, including the SPCP-Egypt initiative, can be found at www.unhcr.org/spcp