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## **Update on UNHCR's operations in Africa**

While new or escalating refugee emergencies continue to command a decisive part of UNHCR's attention and resources in Africa in 2012, the region has continued to present opportunities to bring long-standing refugee situations to a close. Some of these situations have been successfully resolved while others present a number of remaining challenges.

### **A. Situational analysis including new developments**

Since January 2012, when violence erupted in northern Mali, more than 450,000 people have been forced to flee internally or to neighbouring countries. UNHCR estimates that there are now almost 270,000 refugees in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger. Registration is ongoing despite difficulties in accessing and registering a mobile refugee population. The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) is estimated at some 186,000. Weak funding support for the Mali situation has obliged UNHCR to limit its assistance to life-saving interventions.

By the end of August 2012, some 175,000 people fleeing fighting in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states in the Sudan had sought refuge in Upper Nile and Unity states, in South Sudan, and an additional 35,000 had fled into Benishangul-Gumuz regional state in western Ethiopia, triggering a large-scale humanitarian emergency. In Unity state, despite efforts to encourage the refugees to move to areas of greater safety, some 60,000 refugees remained close to the border in Yida, where sanitary conditions deteriorated significantly since the onset of the rainy season. Substantial resources have been deployed to Unity and Upper Nile states, but challenges remain, such as the lack of basic infrastructure and local technical capacity and difficulties in transporting equipment during the rainy season.

In Darfur, while the general trend has been a reduction in violence, pockets of insecurity remained in areas under the control of rebel movements, where fighting continued. While more than 37,000 IDPs have voluntarily returned to their homes, there are still 1.75 million IDPs living in camps and mixed settlements in the five states. Restricted access to many areas in Darfur has seriously impeded the Office's ability to operate and respond to the needs of the displaced populations.

In the Horn of Africa, the month of August was marked by the conclusion of the Somalia political transition, with the swearing in of the Lower House of Parliament and the election of the Speaker of the new Somali Federal Parliament. Despite these developments, more than a quarter of Somalia's population remains displaced with some 1.36 million IDPs and one million refugees in the region, including some 55,000 who fled the country in 2012. In Dadaab, Kenya, the security situation deteriorated following the kidnapping of humanitarian workers in September 2011 and due to the use of improvised explosive devices. Three humanitarian workers abducted in Dadaab are still being held hostage. The situation deteriorated further in June 2012 with the abduction of four humanitarian workers and the killing of their driver. The four were released soon after the incident. The Kenyan Government's deployment of an additional 320 policemen,

combined with innovative security management approaches devised by UNHCR and its partners, have enabled essential operations to continue.

In Ethiopia, UNHCR continued to respond to two emergency situations involving more than 160,000 refugees arriving from Somalia and the Sudan since early 2011, as well as the ongoing arrival of refugees from Eritrea. The provision of health and nutrition services in all camps remained a key priority and has resulted in a decline in mortality rates, particularly in Dollo Ado.

Since violence erupted in North Kivu, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), in April 2012, an estimated 390,000 people have been internally displaced and more than 60,000 have fled into neighbouring Rwanda and Uganda. In Rwanda, all new arrivals have been registered and received assistance at the Nkamira Transit Centre, and nearly 14,000 refugees have been relocated to the new camp in Kigeme. By the end of August, more than 40,000 new arrivals from the DRC had been registered in the Nyakabanda transit centre in southern Uganda, in addition to the 81,500 Congolese refugees already hosted in the country. The majority of the new arrivals are relocated to a former refugee settlement called Rwamwanja, which needs to be entirely rehabilitated.

## **B. Progress made and challenges encountered in achieving strategic priorities**

### **(i) Redoubling efforts in the search for durable solutions**

#### *Comprehensive solutions*

UNHCR has been working closely with the Government of Angola, countries in the region, and other partners to bring the Angolan refugee chapter to a close. Significant progress has been made in 2012, with a large number of Angolans returning home and a number of countries in the region offering local integration opportunities. The cessation of refugee status for Angolans, who fled the war of independence and subsequent civil war, went into effect as of 30 June 2012. Despite these achievements, much remains to be done, in particular for those who have expressed their wish to return but have not yet done so.

While the vast majority of Liberian refugees have returned home since the end of the conflict in 2003, at the end of 2011 there were still nearly 60,000 remaining in West Africa. With their refugee status having formally ceased on 30 June 2012, UNHCR is working closely with host governments and other partners on the implementation of the three components of the comprehensive durable solutions strategy: the voluntary repatriation of more than 25,000 refugees; local integration for some 12,400 persons; and management of the situation for those who may have continuing international protection needs.

#### *Voluntary repatriation*

Between the beginning of the year and the coming into force of the cessation clause on 30 June 2012, some 20,000 Angolan refugees returned home. Another 24,000 Angolans in the DRC have expressed their wish to go back home but were unable to do so before the end of organized returns. While the Angolan Government, UNHCR and host countries have agreed that spontaneous, assisted returns would continue after 30 June 2012, new modalities still need to be defined.

In West Africa, more than 17,000 Liberian refugees were assisted with return, though UNHCR may not be able to repatriate the remaining 8,000 refugees before the end of the year due to a funding shortfall. Some 5,800 Ivorian refugees have been assisted with return since the beginning of the year, but the planned voluntary repatriation of Ivorian refugees from Liberia has stalled as a result of recent attacks by armed groups in Côte d'Ivoire.

Some 81,000 refugees in the Republic of the Congo expressed their wish to go back to the DRC. Of this figure, more than 17,000 have been assisted with return since the launch of the voluntary repatriation operation in May, but a lack of funding threatens the continuation of the programme.

The joint exercise undertaken by UNHCR and the Tanzanian Government to determine the continuing protection needs of the Burundian refugees in Mtabila camp was completed in July. The exercise established that between 2,500 and 3,000 refugees were still in need of protection. On 1 August 2012, the Government declared that the cessation clause would apply for some 35,400 refugees who were found not to be in need of international protection. The Office continues to work with the Tanzanian Government to pursue the closure of the camp through voluntary return and is simultaneously working with the authorities of Burundi to encourage return and ensure that returnees are supported in their reintegration.

#### *Local integration*

In eastern Sudan, the Transitional Solutions Initiative (TSI) has been launched by UNHCR, UNDP, and the World Bank, in cooperation with the Government, to support the transition of refugee camps to self-sustained settlements. While implementation has been slow, partly due to a lack of full funding, the initiative has helped bring three refugee camps to the final stages of self-sufficiency.

Sustained local integration efforts for up to 12,400 Liberian refugees continued in 2012. The high degree of cooperation among members of the Economic Community of West African States offered concrete possibilities for a number of refugees. Furthermore, the endorsement by the Government of Ghana of a concept paper on the establishment of a National Policy for Local Integration is a positive development.

UNHCR continued to work closely with the Zambian Government and others in the region on possible arrangements for the local integration of Angolans.

#### *Resettlement*

During the first six months of 2012, nearly 6,000 refugees in Africa were submitted for resettlement. This sharp decline, as compared to previous years, is mainly attributable to a decreased number of submissions from Kenya due to the deterioration of the security situation in the Dadaab refugee camps. While refugees from Somalia represented the largest nationality of refugees submitted for resettlement last year, in 2012 they fell behind refugees from the DRC. In line with a sub-regional approach to the resettlement of refugees from the DRC, a multi-year plan of action was initiated in 2012 to increase resettlement for Congolese refugees. In 2012, priority continued to be given to the resettlement of refugees from the Central African Republic, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and the Sudan.

## **(ii) Promoting a favourable protection environment**

A tenuous security environment for refugees and humanitarian workers remained a serious constraint in many operations in Africa. The security situation in Dadaab, Kenya forced UNHCR and its partners to reduce their presence and rely much more on refugee communities for the delivery of assistance and services. The relocation of refugees away from volatile border areas was a key priority in Ethiopia and South Sudan, as well as in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger.

In 2012, UNHCR has continued its activities to strengthen normative and institutional frameworks, ensure a proper functioning of asylum systems, and reinforce national capacities to handle the growing number of asylum-seekers and refugees. The Office has provided advice on national asylum legislation to a number of countries. In Malawi, UNHCR assisted the Government with a review of its refugee legislation, which led to the enactment of a new refugee policy. In Zambia, a new refugee bill was drafted and will soon be submitted to the parliament for approval. In South Sudan, the parliament recently approved a new Refugee Act, and UNHCR was asked to support the preparation of implementing regulations.

UNHCR established capacity to register Malian refugees in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger. In Côte d'Ivoire, a re-verification exercise of Liberian refugees was undertaken in support of the comprehensive durable solutions strategy developed for this group.

In 2012, UNHCR pursued its cooperation with concerned governments and partners to strengthen the protection response to mixed migratory movements. The Office continued to support the African Union in the development of border management training materials and implementation of its anti-trafficking campaign. In the Horn of Africa, technical advice was provided with growing attention to the issue of human smuggling and trafficking, in particular in the Sinai and the Gulf of Aden. In Southern Africa, where States have increasingly restricted access to asylum in response to mixed migratory movements, UNHCR continued to advocate for a more protection-sensitive approach at the national and sub-regional levels. A joint project, involving UNHCR, the United Nations Children's Fund, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), was developed to support the Zambian Government in preventing and responding to human trafficking and in managing mixed migration movements. In West Africa, the Regional Group on Protection in Mixed Migration, comprised of UNHCR, IOM and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, continued capacity-building efforts, including training.

In 2012, UNHCR continued to implement its policy on urban refugees. A mission of technical experts has been deployed to Cameroon to look at improving health services and livelihood activities for urban refugees.

Promoting the ratification of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa remained a key objective in 2012, so as to enable the coming into force of the Convention before the end of the year. Only one more ratification is needed in order to meet this objective. UNHCR will continue to support governments to transpose the provisions of the Convention into national law.

In 2012, UNHCR's advocacy efforts served to consolidate a number of pledges made by African States during the Ministerial Intergovernmental Event<sup>1</sup> of December 2011. Benin, Burkina Faso and Nigeria acceded to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and/or the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, and a number of other States are in the process of fulfilling statelessness pledges related to accession and law reform.

## **C. Financial information**

With the number of emergencies in Africa, the initial budget of US\$ 1.6 billion for operations in 2012 was revised to accommodate new demands and now totals some US\$ 1.9 billion.

Three Supplementary Appeals have been launched during the course of this year. The first appeal presented initial financial requirements of US\$ 144.8 million to respond to the Sudanese influx in South Sudan and Ethiopia. This appeal was revised in June to US\$ 219.8 million. The initial appeal for the Mali situation of US\$ 35.5 was also revised upward to US\$ 153.7 million.

A Special Appeal was launched to cover some aspects of the comprehensive durable solutions strategies for the Angolan and Liberian refugees affected by the cessation of refugee status. Budgeted requirements for these activities total US\$ 73.3 million. In mid-September, an appeal for some US\$ 39.7 million was presented for the emergency response to the needs of more than 400,000 people in the DRC who have been displaced

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<sup>1</sup> Intergovernmental event at the ministerial level of Member States of the United Nations on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 50th anniversary of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness

by recent violence in the east, and for some 75,000 Congolese refugees in Rwanda and Uganda.

UNHCR's operations in Africa continue to be confronted with new, recurring or expanding emergencies. As more resources are required for emergencies, less can be devoted to other activities, including education, and to finding solutions for refugee situations which might otherwise be brought to closure.

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