



COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN

OVERVIEW

Country: Bangladesh

Planning Year: 2006

2006 COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN FOR BANGLADESH

Part I: OVERVIEW

1. Protection and socio-economic operational environment

UNHCR established its presence in Bangladesh in 1992 upon the invitation of Government of Bangladesh (GOB) to assist the repatriation of over 250,000 Rohingya refugees from Northern Rakhine State, who had fled from Myanmar in 1991-1992. For a decade, UNHCR has assisted some 236,000 to repatriate which represents 95% of the original influx. Today, there remain some 20,000 refugees residing in two camps along the border, in addition to some 150 urban refugees of different nationalities. The projection is that the refugee population will remain stable in 2006. The average monthly birth rate is 70 which resulted in an annual increase of some 840 persons are likely to be offset by the small flow of repatriation. UNHCR over the years has continued its care and maintenance programme for these refugees. Efforts in finding an acceptable durable solution for this caseload have increased over the last few years, prompted by deteriorating living conditions in the camps as well as increased security concerns.

In January 2003, UNHCR submitted a Concept Paper on “temporary self-reliance” to the GOB for those who are unable to repatriate in the immediate future due to security and human right concerns. However, the response did not come until September 2004, where the Government rejected the proposal claiming that Bangladesh is over populated and economically unable to accept the 20,000 Rohingyas refugees. The debate that subsequently ensued led to a new negotiated programme for implementing development projects targeting affected communities, which aims to alleviate their economic burden. In 2006, UNHCR will move towards a more focused assistance in the camps, and will widen its operational approach to target those Rohingya communities outside of the camps with community-based development projects.

UNHCR will also implement environment project in 2006 to rehabilitate the surrounding areas of the camps from decade of encampment, soil degradation, erosion, and water contamination. Special focus will be made towards developing a natural resource management plans for each camp where it will assist to improve the physical protection (the welfare and well-being) of refugee while demonstrating to the GOB, UNHCR’s commitment to working towards a post-operation situation.

The Office will strengthen further its already good collaboration with the UN Country Team and will advocate for an expanded UN role in refugee hosting areas. Furthermore, UNHCR will liaise and link other NGOs and donors directly to draw them into the refugee operation to cover some programme activities in the camps, such as education, community services, sanitation, and health sectors. Through this approach and effort, UNHCR will gradually disengage itself from the major care and maintenance programme and concentrate on protection and promotional activities in the country. With the aim of building support in the government and at the grass roots, UNHCR shall increase the number of interlocutors both at the national and local levels.

UNHCR will continue to provide international protection for refugees residing in the camps and in urban areas, and will focus on the aspect related to human rights of refugees. UNHCR will monitor the situation directly, and through advocacy against violations/allegations such as physical and psychological harassment, gender-based violence and detention on inadequate grounds and forced repatriation. In addition, UNHCR will provide legal protection as required and monitor the security situation, timely and appropriate interventions with authorities, and conduct protection workshop to

raise awareness of the staff working in the camp, including government staff, on refugee laws and refugee protection.

As Bangladesh is not a signatory of 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol and with no national normative/administrative legal framework for asylum seekers and refugees, efforts will be made to promote and increase the awareness of refugee law, human rights, the plight of refugee and asylum seekers through further dialogue with stakeholders concerned, e.g., legislators, policy makers, and key government officials and expanding the contacts with lawyers, academic, and media. UNHCR will continue to encourage the GOB to establish a national legal framework in dealing with asylum seekers and refugees and accession to the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol. UNHCR will also increase its visibility vis a vis the public, government officials, and donors through the dissemination of promotional leaflets and PI materials. In the interim, UNHCR will fill the gap of asylum procedures for individual asylum seekers from other countries with RSD and other international protection and assistance. Resettlement would be considered for exceptional cases in 2006.

While UNHCR is gravely concerned with the current protection problems, (summary punishments, sexual and gender based violence) in the camps, including coercion and forced repatriation, relationship with the government remained relatively good and functional. Problems of security, beating of refugees, freedom of movement, management and maintenance work in the camps are solved through discussion. There is greater understanding of refugee problems at the national level. This is an area where improvements could be made. Appreciations of human rights should be more readily extended to the lives of the refugees, as human self-esteem and psychological and mental security are essential parts of human well being.

UNHCR Bangladesh will maintain close link with UNHCR Maungdaw where the process of reintegration programme is ongoing. Both sides will coordinate to ensure the facilitation of effective voluntary repatriation and monitor the border situation. On a monthly basis, cross border meeting will be continuing for the purpose of sharing/exchanging information and follow up on individual cases as well as any other operational issues.

2. Operational goals and potential for durable solutions

On the basis of UNHCR's Global strategic objectives and the Bureau for Asia and the Pacific's goals in the region, the operational goals of the 2006 refugee programme in Bangladesh are:

- Objective 1: Revitalize the protection policy and strategy relating to the impact of migration of Rohingya and other ethnic groups of residents from the Northern Rakhine State (NRS) in Myanmar, in the context of regional states through the forum of APC, ASEAN, Bali Process, and OIC.

This objective will be achieved and led to durable solutions in the following manners:

- Ensure that the ongoing migration movement of Rohingya residents from NRS in Myanmar to neighboring countries and in particular the secondary migration movement of this population from Bangladesh to other countries (Malaysia, Pakistan, Middle East and some European countries) for asylum or economic reasons are included in the agenda of regional meetings like APC, the Bali Process and the ASEAN summit.
- Address and ensure that the issue of stateless status of Muslim residents from NRS, including some 20,000 refugees in camps and undocumented caseload of 200,000 living in the local communities in Bangladesh are included in the agenda of APC and Bali process.
- Present the Rohingya caseload from NRS in neighboring countries to OIC along the line with

the protection strategy of burden sharing through the employment scheme required in OIC countries.

- Objective 2: Progress toward strengthening the acceptance of self-sustained temporary stay and facilitation of voluntary repatriation and resettlement initiatives as efforts towards durable solutions.

This objective will be achieved in the following manners:

- Develop a parallel comprehensive strategy and plan of action to ensure a more proactive strategy on facilitation of VOLREP between Myanmar and Bangladesh in 2006
 - Facilitate the repatriation movement by enhancing the information sharing campaign on repatriation cash grant/packages and updates of places of origin throughout the year 2006
 - Apply common durable solutions strategy for Rohingya residents from NRS who are seeking asylum in Bangladesh, Malaysia, Thailand, and India.
 - Strengthen the process of resettlement for urban caseload and ensuring inclusive of resettlement initiatives for compelling cases of refugees in two camps
 - Promote bilateral agreement and negotiation between GOB and GOUM for more simplified repatriation clearance procedures where sub-offices in Maungdaw and Cox's Bazaar play a positive mediating and supporting role.
 - Prepare strategy and plan of action to establish safety net in local community in Cox's Bazaar for de facto temporary stay and broaden partnership from UN agencies, government agencies, local and political groups, etc.
 - Develop an effective strategy in disengaging from direct implementation through identification and linkage with NGOs and donors.
- Objective 3: Enhance the quality and effectiveness of UNHCR programme through the adoption of Result Based Management (RBM), with a particular focus on institutionalizing comprehensive needs assessments, planning, implementing and monitoring.

This objective will be achieved in the following manners:

- Ensure the accuracy and quality of statistical and narrative data or report submitted to headquarters
- Incorporate the standard and indicators in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of programme activities to achieve the objectives
- Ensure that the protection and needs of vulnerable groups, i.e. women, children, and older refugees are met in accordance to the standard and indicators of UNHCR narrated for community services and development, food security, nutrition, sanitation, health, and education
- Special attention in this process will be given to vulnerable families (EVI), like Female Headed Households, and the elderly through the introduction of appropriate coping mechanisms that will underscore an assurance of income through cash generating activities and skill training.
- Enhance the refugees' participation and empowerment, especially women, in their communities (40% representation in the community activities).
- Strengthen the initiative of preventive and responsive approaches for the Sexual Gender Based Violence in the camps by focusing on women and girls through awareness sessions and relevant campaigns in collaboration with UNICEF and NGOs
- Conduct environment survey and implement its recommendation for prevention and remedial actions to minimize and rehabilitate environment degradation and destruction when exiting the operation
- Organize working participatory workshop with all stakeholders (refugees and implementing and operational partners) to introduce UNHCR Result Based Development in the project implementation

- Objective 4: Strengthen strategic partnerships (and promote UNHCR initiatives) within the UN system, NGOs, government authorities and civil society.
This objective will be achieved in the following manners:
 - Identify potential donors or interest groups as well as self-funded operational partners to participate in the refugee programme through working arrangement of MOU or LOU
 - Elicit potential donors or self-funded agencies to extend their coverage to the refugee operation, especially agency dealing with HIV/AIDs, family planning, TB, education, etc.
 - Establish working relationship with new partners, e.g. UN agencies, government, NGOs to complement and support activities relevant to UNHCR operation
 - Ensure the concept, principle and agenda of the Millennium Development Goals and UNDAF are incorporated in the COP and annual projects
 - Strengthen the relationship with the contact group of relevant agencies including major donors through a periodical meeting and briefing of the development including encouraging the field visit of agencies and donors concerned.
 - Tighten the field relationship with relevant UN and NGO in Cox's Bazaar in the form of organizing a regular information meeting and other forms of contacts (formal and informal)