



COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN

OVERVIEW

Country: Djibouti

Planning Year: 2006

2006 COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN FOR DJIBOUTI

Part I: OVERVIEW

1. Protection and socio-economic operational environment

Djibouti is the smallest country in the Horn of Africa (23 000 square kms) and has common borders with Eritrea to the North/East, Ethiopia to the North/West and South/West and Somalia to the South/East. The total population of the country is estimated to be 500. 000 persons with two thirds of the population living in the capital city (Djibouti) where all the administrative, commercial and political activities are concentrated. The majority of the population belongs to the Somali ethnic group (essentially Issa; Issak and Gadaboursi clans) that lives alongside the Afar (a sizeable group) and a small community of Arabs of Yemeni origin (between 5 to 8% of the population).

Although no major geological surveys have been carried out, the country is said to be endowed with almost no exploitable mineral deposits or natural resources, which seriously limits any significant industrial development. The country is also prone to natural disasters such as drought, floods, with an extremely limited capacity for disaster prevention or management. On the other hand, the vast majority of the land is rocky desert and less than 1% of it is currently used for agricultural purposes. Agriculture represents only 3% of the GDP.

An embryonic industry has however been initiated during the last five years (cement factory under construction; processing of stones for construction, marble and tiles factories, water purification and bottling plant) that could slightly improve macroeconomic conditions in parts of the country. Djibouti's economy is thus mainly based on income from bilateral and multilateral agreements and the tertiary sector services (port/airport and banking services) that it provides to neighbouring Ethiopia mainly, a landlocked country, and international investors (the income generated by the service sector accounts for 80% of the GDP).

The continued presence in the country of foreign military contingents (troops from the US Army and Germany in addition to the longstanding French contingent stationed in the country) within the framework of the global fight against international terrorism also worked as a stabilizing factor in an often troubled region and also contributed to boost the local economy and infrastructure through the provision of financial subsidies, employment opportunities to thousands of unemployed youth and technical expertise as required.

Despite noteworthy increase and improvements in the country's investments in economic infrastructure, essentially concretised in the strategic economic alliance with the Dubai Ports and Airports Authorities entrusted with the management of the Port and the Airport of Djibouti as well as the construction of a brand new state of the art sea port integrating an oil terminal and a huge commercial free zone, Djibouti still remains an underdeveloped country, with a sizeable proportion of its people living with scarcities as regards all kind of resources. 42% of the population is said to be living with less than \$ 1.8 a day while one third of the local population does not have adequate access to most basic services to sustain their lives (Health; Education; clean water...).

It is amid this relatively gloomy economic conditions that Djibouti has hosted around 30 000 refugees, most of them from Somaliland, over the past decade. Djibouti has also been host to large migrant populations from neighboring countries (Ethiopia/Somalia/Eritrea) attracted by the relatively better economic opportunities offered by the country, its proximity to the Arab Gulf states and Emirates or as a hub to the more developed countries of Europe and North America. These

migrant populations (most of whom resided irregularly in the country) have at all time represented around 20% of the total population of the country, thus exerting tremendous pressure on the country's scarce resources.

Since 2002, the progressively stable and conducive conditions in parts of Somalia (namely Somaliland) has enabled UNHCR, in collaboration with authorities from Djibouti and Somaliland, to promote and implement a successful repatriation program in safety and dignity thus bringing down the total refugee population from about 26,000 in early 2004 to around 18,000 persons (including 13,000 refugees from Somaliland) by the end of 2004. With the planned repatriation of an additional 8,000 persons during 2005, the 2006 Somaliland refugee population should stand at around 5,000 individuals. The long planned camp consolidation (closure of Aour-Aoussa by mid 2005 and Holl-Holl by end 2005) could hopefully materialize leaving only one refugee camp under the UNHCR care and maintenance program in 2006.

An estimated 5,000 refugees originating from South/Central Somalia (Bossaso, Galkayo, Mogadishu, Kismayo, Baidoa) continue to be of concern to UNHCR in 2005 and should so remain in 2006 with limited prospects to benefit from a large scale repatriation program to areas still largely un-conducive for sustained returns.

At the end of 2004, however, a Transitional Federal Government was formed following the two-year long Somali National Conference in Kenya. Although the TFG had still not relocated in Mogadishu by the end of 2004, this political breakthrough after a 14 year civil war could hopefully pave the way to the return of peace, stability and reconstruction in Somalia (more specifically in the southern regions which are still plagued by lawlessness and civil strife) that would permit appropriate durable solutions to refugees originating from those areas.

Finally, a small number of refugees (less than 1,000 individuals) from various nationalities, among whom 500 pre-1991 Ethiopian refugees and 74 more recently arrived Eritrean refugees, would require the identification and implementation of durable solutions in 2006. The promotion of voluntary repatriation could obviously remain the cornerstone of the office's policy. However, from 2006, resettlement will, most probably, also be implemented where neither repatriation nor local integration will prove reasonable options.

While providing protection and assistance to the various groups of refugees still under the office's mandate, UNHCR will continue working closely with the national authorities in order to set up sustainable asylum institutions capable of dealing with new arrivals and future refugee situations in accordance with relevant international standards.

2.Operational goals and potential for durable solutions

The following operational goals for the year 2006 were inspired by the commitment of Djibouti government to safeguard peace in the Sub-region; ensure protection of refugees and asylum seekers, to advocate for and provide durable solutions to persons of concerns as well as UNHCR's Global Strategic Objectives and the Regional Objectives of Africa Bureau:

2.1.Pursue efforts in enhancing International protection assistance provided to all persons of concern to UNHCR in Djibouti:

- Raise refugee awareness regarding their rights and responsibilities, durable solutions and inform them of projects being implemented in their countries of origin towards reintegration of returnees and rehabilitation/reconstruction of the said countries

- Ensure that refugees continue to enjoy legal status, rights and physical protection according to international refugee protection principles
- Promote respect for international refugee, human rights and humanitarian law.
- Encourage the government to adopt appropriate legislative and/or administrative measures, including institutional frameworks, for the effective implementation of international refugee protection/legal instruments
- Reinforce/consolidate local capacity building of concerned governmental entities/departments or institutions.

2.2. In the context of Agenda for Protection, with special attention to Convention Plus and the Framework for Durable Solutions, BO Djibouti will endeavor to ensure implementation of the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Somali Refugees (CPA) through joint programming with local authorities, UN agencies, NGOs, Donor country representations based in Djibouti and all other actors. Joint programming will attempt to address assistance gaps identified in the context of country team work and spirit.

2.3. Pursue promotion of voluntary, safe and dignified repatriation of Somali Refugees to safe areas of Somalia : Somaliland and Puntland, taking into account gender-sensitive issues and vulnerability concerns:

- Complete voluntary repatriation of Somalilanders and Puntland refugees
- Continue to facilitate voluntary repatriation of South and Central Somali refugees

2.4. Consolidate the three refugee camps in one by the first quarter of the year 2006 at the latest.

2.5. Provide Life-sustaining assistance to the remaining caseload (consolidated in one camp) that :

- meet the standards in all sectors of assistance,
- preserve their dignity, encourage self-sufficiency and self support,
- promote refugee community participatory approach,
- address mainstreaming of gender and environment issues,
- ensure access to food assistance to the genuine refugees and for whom conditions are not yet conducive for a promoted voluntary repatriation,
- ensure access to primary education of all refugee children camp residents and of going age school,
- ensure access of all camp residents to primary health care, reproductive health care, HIV-SIDA awareness campaign and/or ARV treatment,
- ensure access to water points/drinking water that meet the required standards,
- enhance recreational activities for the youth, support the literacy programme for adults particularly women,
- ensure special care to vulnerable on an individual bases, provide support group to victims of SGBV
- Ensure a better service delivery for women and children in accordance with UNHCR policy priorities
- Pursue HIV/AIDS related projects and activities

2.6. Pursue the implementation of a phasing out strategy as regards the provision of assistance to Somaliland and Puntland refugees in Djibouti :

- Promote voluntary repatriation of overwhelming majority of camp based refugees
- NFI distribution limited to identified vulnerable cases and victims of natural disasters

2.7. Resettlement programme

Advocate for implementation of a resettlement programme for genuine cases among recognized refugees from entire refugee population in Djibouti. A target of 301 refugees may be resettled :

- 59 %: 180 Ethiopians
- 10% : 30 Eritreans
- 20% : 60 S/C Somali
- 10% : 31 Somalilanders (30) and Sudanese (1)

2.8. Pursue the implementation of BO Djibouti Exit Strategy which will start in 2005 through:

- environmental activities such as the clean up of closed camps, tree planting, training on use of energy saving stoves, etc.,
- rehabilitation of infrastructure and equipment such as refugee health centers, refugee schools, water points, etc. prior to their handing over to the local authorities,
- Local Capacity building of local authorities (such as Commissaire de District and Deputies, Chef de poste in refugee hosting areas, camp administrators, etc.), Refugee Entities (ONARS and Eligibility bureau), UNHCR Implementing partners and UNHCR local staff likely to manage the Office in the near future.
- Advocacy for the taking over of UNHCR activities by development agencies, other UN agencies such as UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, etc. in order to bridge the gap between Humanitarian assistance and Development assistance and ensure sustainability of UNHCR achievements.

2.9. Ensure UNHCR Djibouti membership and active participation in various partnerships or working groups set up at the national/country level and UN Country Team (e.g.: joint programming/projects) in order to guarantee inclusion of refugee concerns in national strategies, Contingency planning, in CCA/UNDAF activities (e.g.: “groupe des partenaires de l’Education” et “groupe des partenaires de la Santé”) and ODM related programmes. Foster partnership and complementarities between UNHCR and other bodies while enhancing the role and capacity of the Government to assume a primary management and delivery role in protecting and assisting refugees; avoiding duplication and waste of resources, focusing on result based management (RBM)**2.10. Enhance sensitization of IPs in relation with RBM and consolidate the participatory stakeholders approach of all stakeholders in planning, programming, implementation, need assessments, evaluation of programmes implemented and funds raising .**