



COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN

Executive Committee Summary

Country: Morocco

Planning Year: 2007

Part I: OVERVIEW

1. Protection and socio-economic operational environment

Morocco acceded to the 1951 Convention on 7 November 1956 and to the 1967 Protocol on 20 April 1971. However, in the absence of a government agency specifically tasked for dealing with refugees and asylum seekers, UNHCR conducts Refugee Status Determination under its mandate. As such, UNHCR is involved in protection interventions whenever asylum-seekers or refugees are at risk of arrest, detention or *refoulement*. The Office advocates the issuance of residence documents by the authorities and the respect of UNHCR status determination decisions. UNHCR also provides limited financial and social assistance to vulnerable refugees to enable them to cover their basic shelter, health and education needs.

UNHCR in Morocco intends to be involved in capacity-building efforts with the authorities and the non-governmental sector in order to improve implementation of international refugee protection standards, establish a functioning asylum system supported by a proper legal framework, and implement durable solutions for refugees.

2. Operational goals and potential for durable solutions

UNHCR's main objectives in Morocco for 2007 are formulated within the Office's global strategic objectives to ensure that international standards of protection are met for all persons of concern to UNHCR, to support the government in the development and maintenance of an international protection regime, to enhance the host country capacity to undertake RSD and provide quality asylum, to strengthen local integration as a durable solution and to make use of resettlement as a strategic protection tool.

In 2007, UNHCR intends to reinforce its protection presence in order to process asylum applications within a reasonable timeframe, widen its scope of action to border regions, where asylum-seekers amidst irregular migrants are in need of identification and treatment of their claims, and invest in training and capacity-building of Government counterparts and NGO partners.

UNHCR's action in Morocco in 2007 should moreover aim at reaching common understanding and agreement on roles and responsibilities in managing effectively the various components of the migratory phenomenon. This would *inter alia* apply to co-operation with the authorities and IOM in making arrangements for the return of rejected cases, in an effort to preserve the integrity of the asylum process.

Part II: COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS AND PARTNERSHIP

1. Outcomes of joint planning and management of identified gaps

The UNDAF matrix for the period 2007 – 2011 for Morocco includes the establishment of a legal framework for refugee and asylum matters, the establishment of a Government procedure to register and process asylum applications, and the adoption of policies and strategies aimed at improved management of the mixed migratory flows.

Cooperation will be solicited from IOM in the return of irregular movers. The International Labor Organization (ILO) is expected to support Government strategies for the protection of fundamental rights of migrants, such as programs for economic self-sufficiency of skilled and unskilled migrant workers, as well as labor migration schemes towards European countries – both of which could include refugees.

Non-governmental organizations are active in identifying asylum-seekers in border zones and assist by referring them to the central UNHCR office in Rabat. NGOs are also vital partners in supporting vulnerable refugees in their search for employment, schooling for children, medical care, vocational training and income-generating projects. Refugee projects (community initiatives, small enterprises) will also benefit from funding programs run by semi-governmental foundations.

Morocco benefits from a well-developed non-governmental sector active in advocating and documenting human rights issues, and increasingly also issues related to migrants rights. However, there are no NGOs specialized in refugee and asylum issues. Also, there is little domestic NGO capacity in legal and social counseling of refugees and asylum-seekers, although it is hoped that in 2007 following a joint UNHCR/NGO project to strengthen NGO capacity will see the establishment of a NGO dedicated to this purpose.

In 2006, UNHCR identified more than 50 minors which were separated from their families prior to or during flight or migration. A number of girls were living with adult migrant men or even forced into prostitution. For these minors solutions were found in either family tracing, including voluntary repatriation with the support of ICRC, or the search for alternative accommodation through a local NGO. It is expected that these activities will be further developed in 2007. Similarly, a number of women in need of special assistance were identified during the registration process. Support included socio-medical and psychological treatment as well as alternative accommodations, education and vocational skills training.

2. Comprehensive needs and contributions

Legal Sector: In 2007, UNHCR will engage in capacity-building of Government institutions and NGOs through training workshops in registration and documentation and Refugee Status Determination procedures.

Operational support: Equipment for registration and documentation will be provided to Government agencies in border zones and in urban centers. NGO partners in border areas will be supported with training and technical assistance in order to identify refugees and asylum-seekers amidst the broader irregular migratory movements.

Shelter/Community services: Based on a needs-assessment exercise conducted in 2006, some 300 of the most vulnerable refugees will be assisted by UNHCR during 2007. UNHCR will mobilize funding with embassies, international organizations and domestic foundations to support initiatives for shelter, training and rehabilitation services to separated minors and/or women victims of sexual violence.

Income generation/training: UNHCR will prioritize its activities on female headed refugee households and refugee families with young children, involving vocational

training, programs for public health education, including HIV/AIDS awareness, and support for small enterprises and micro projects.

Resettlement (Transport and related costs): UNHCR will implement a limited and targeted program of resettlement as a durable solution for those refugees who have no prospects of return and/or local integration. In 2007, an average of 100 persons will be considered for resettlement.

Public Information/Public Awareness: UNHCR will disseminate public materials on the plight of refugees and asylum-seekers, the background and evolution of the institution of asylum, the role of UNHCR, and the contribution of the host society to refugee assistance - both in Morocco and in the global context. Embassies, other international organizations and private foundations will be asked to invest in community projects, including those for refugee women and children.