



COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN

OVERVIEW

Country: Namibia

Planning Year: 2006

2006 COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN - NAMIBIA

Part I: OVERVIEW

1. Protection and socio-economic operational environment

As of 01 January 2005, the registered camp-based refugee population in Namibia is 8,773 individuals of whom 6,618 are Angolans. Others are mainly from the Great Lakes countries of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, Burundi and Congo-Brazzaville, and from various African countries such as Ethiopia, Somalia, Uganda, Sudan, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cameroon, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. There are also other persons of concern who registered once in the camp as refugees but decided to live elsewhere, with or without permission. Their number would be approximately six thousands, according to estimates.

Following the end of the civil war in Angola and the series of peace building events that unfolded in that country during 2002. Most of the Angolan refugees residing in Osire camp had indicated their wish to repatriate voluntarily. In this context, a Tripartite Agreement was signed in November 2002 between the Governments of Angola and Namibia and UNHCR, for the voluntary repatriation of Angolan refugees from Namibia. This Agreement provides the legal framework for the repatriation, and constitutes the basis for the operational plan that was developed within the overall UNHCR regional repatriation strategy to Angola.

The UNHCR organised repatriation operations from Namibia started in July 2003. A total of 9,698 Angolan refugees have been repatriated from Namibia by the end of year 2004. In addition, some 1,317 Angolan refugees from Namibia are estimated to have spontaneously repatriated during the same period. The major constraints facing the repatriation were initially the limited absorption and reintegration capacity in Angola. This was later aggravated by the reluctance of refugees to repatriate, invoking, among other things, the presence of landmines as well as the destructions or non-existence of basic community infrastructures in areas of return. Bad roads further complicate logistical arrangements particularly during rainy season.

A house-to house survey was conducted by UNHCR in Osire on 01 February 2005 to update the camp-based refugee population data in Namibia. It resulted from the survey that the total number of refugees in Osire camp was 6,375 of whom 5,261 were Angolans. In addition, 278 Angolan refugees who own cattle were residing at the Kassava transit Centre at that date.

With the basic assumptions that peace will continue to prevail in Angola, the IOM-operated air transportation from Namibia to non-bordering provinces inside Angola, which started in September 2004, will be pursued during 2005. It is thus expected that the majority of Angolan refugees from Namibia will repatriate by the end of 2005. As a result, the camp-based refugee population in Namibia will be significantly reduced by the beginning of 2006, and any remaining Angolan refugees will then be dealt with on a case by case basis in accordance with the tripartite agreement.

Consequent to the reduction of the refugee population, the process of gradual phasing down of UNHCR presence, which started with the closure of UNHCR Field Office in Rundu in 2005, will be pursued during 2006. In this connection, the Government of Namibia has already expressed its willingness to take full responsibility for the primary education and health services programme in Osire refugee camp in 2006. UNHCR will need to strengthen the capacity of the Government to implement this commitment.

During 2006, it will also be important for UNHCR to continue its institutional support to the Government of Namibia for the handling of the residual Angolan caseload, together with refugees from other countries. A corresponding programme of care and maintenance will have to be maintained for the reduced caseload. As their number will be less than 5,000 and in accordance with the MoU signed between UNHCR and WFP, WFP will cease to provide food for them, and UNHCR will have to purchase basic food for this caseload in 2006.

A number of Angolan refugees from the camps in Zambia spontaneously transit through Namibia on return to Angola. Due to the non-existing roads network and the heavy presence of mines in the Eastern Angolan regions bordering with Zambia, the route through Namibia is perceived as safer and faster. Whenever necessary, Namibian soil will continue to be used as a transit for refugees from Zambia, Botswana and South Africa returning to Angola.

With regards to Rwandan refugees, another related Tripartite Agreement was also signed in November 2003 between the Governments of Namibia and Rwanda and UNHCR, governing the voluntary repatriation of Rwandan refugees from Namibia. This agreement also provides the legal framework for the voluntary repatriation of this group. However, refugees have not repatriated, expressing fear and concerns for their security if they return to Rwanda.

During 2006, UNHCR Namibia will also continue to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of refugees from the DRC and Burundi on individual basis to “safe areas of return” in these two countries. As in previous years however, this strategy will be reviewed periodically in light of the political and security developments in those countries.

Namibia continues to receive new refugees from various countries in small numbers. The main entry point for new arrivals into Namibia currently is in the North-eastern regions of Kavango and Caprivi. Asylum-seekers are received directly by Immigration Officials in Katima Mulilo who refer them to the UNHCR Field Office in Rundu. In view of the closure of the UNHCR Field Office in Rundu in 2005, the UNHCR Branch Office in Windhoek will have to monitor this activity directly with the Katima Mulilo authorities during 2006.

The reception of the refugees and asylum-seekers is largely without incident in Namibia. The Government has continued its open door policy in regards to admission of refugees into the country. In 2006, however, UNHCR will still need to continue to advocate for the safeguard of the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers to freedom of movements, access to refugee documents, access to work and to study permits outside the refugee camps.

The Namibia Refugee Committee is tasked with the refugee status determination in Namibia. However, frequent lack of quorum had generally delayed the decisions by this Committee. UNHCR will have to continue to strengthen the capacity of the Namibian Refugee Committee to determine refugee status in a fair and speedy manner during 2006.

After the successful repatriation in 2002 of more than one thousand Namibian refugees from Dukwe refugee camp in Botswana, about 1,200 Namibian refugees remained in that camp, who will still need UNHCR assistance for repatriation. It is assumed that the Tripartite Commission between UNHCR, GRN, and GRB will revive the repatriation movements from Botswana to Namibia, within the spirit and framework of the durable solution efforts and strategies of UNHCR.

The NGO presence and capacity in Namibia remains limited, thus narrowing UNHCR’s choice in the selection of implementing partners. In an attempt to address this challenge, UNHCR needs to

continue training NGO partners in order to ensure maximum impact of the UNHCR funded programmes on the population of concern.

UN Agencies in Namibia operate under the co-ordination of the UNDP Resident Representative. Good working relations are maintained. A joint security co-ordinator operates the zone warden system and provides security advice and information. No UN security phase is currently observed throughout Namibia, and the same situation is expected to remain in 2006.

In 2006, BO Namibia will continue to act and implement protection and assistance in co-ordination with neighbouring offices within the framework of the regional repatriation programme. Close co-ordination with UNHCR Botswana will be maintained on issues related to the residual Namibian refugees in Dukwe.

2. Operational goals and potential for durable solutions

Derived from UNHCR Mandate Objective, in relation with global strategic objectives 1 and 3, and in line with regional objectives 1 to 6, following are the overall strategic goals for the Namibia 2006 programme:

- To facilitate repatriation of any individual or small groups of refugees who freely apply for voluntary repatriation to their country of origin.
- To support the Government in the case by case review of the status situation of the remaining camp-based Angolan refugees in Namibia in accordance with the tripartite agreement.
- To continue to actively promote the voluntary repatriation of Rwandan refugees based on the Tripartite Agreement of November 2003.
- To continue facilitating the voluntary repatriation of refugees from DRC and Burundi, on individual basis, in close co-operation with the UNHCR Offices in these countries.
- To continue advocating for refugees' rights such as issuance of work permits for deserving employment cases.
- To continue identification and submission of deserving resettlement cases, such as women at risks, security or family reunion cases, or on medical grounds, and in view of the very limited prospects for local integration in Namibia.
- To provide institutional support to the Government of Namibia particularly on protection matters. Government Officials will be trained and made aware of international protection standards. Joint eligibility interviews will be conducted and the Government will be encouraged to maintain appropriate system for monitoring the refugee status determinations (RSD). Refugee awareness campaigns will continue to be conducted for the general Public and Government Officials alike.
- To continue providing multi-sector care and maintenance assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers within acceptable standards in the camp. While the Government line ministries will take responsibility for health and primary education services in the camp, UNHCR will still need to build and strengthen the Government capacity in its implementation.

- To strengthen gender mainstreaming in all sectors of protection and assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers in Namibia. Refugee women empowerment will be pursued. Women will be encouraged to take active participation in the camp management and in the distribution of food and non-food items. Unless there are no women in the family, ration cards will continue to be issued to women as the primary beneficiaries. Women will continue to enjoy unhindered, informed and safe access to all services, infrastructure and material assistance. Sanitary materials will continue to be provided to all refugee women of reproductive age. The Women Centre will continue to be used for various group meetings and as a safe place for women to congregate and discuss issues of importance to them.
- To undertake refugee awareness campaigns on SGBV and HIV/AIDS, on vulnerable groups such as the elders and the handicapped, as well as on environment and security.
- To increase school attendance and school retention of all children, particularly girls. The kindergarten services will continue to be provided to the children and their mothers.
- To pay special and appropriate attention to unaccompanied minors (UAMs), physical or mentally disabled persons. Any identified special needs and/or treatment will be provided such as supplementary food, vaseline creams, crutches, wheel chairs and others based on the need of the individual refugee.
- To increase the skills of adolescent and adult refugees through language training in English, Portuguese and French, as well as vocational training. In order to increase students' talents and prevent idleness different types of sports will continue to be organised at the camp including soccer, basketball, volleyball, boxing, karate and athletics.
- To continue distributing paraffin to refugees for cooking and lighting, for environmental purpose, in order to prevent refugees from cutting trees outside the camp for firewood. The tree-planting project initiated in 2001 will continue to be implemented. The Ministry of Forestry is expected to continue to provide seedlings for planting by the refugees. Other issues concerning the environment, such as refuse disposal, will continue to be addressed through community mobilisation and awareness campaigns. The monthly clean up campaign will continue under the supervision of AHA.
- Like in previous years, it is anticipated that the Government will continue to provide security personnel in the camp and to deal with security issues with high alertness, speed, and commitment in 2006. Government line ministries will be required to phase in, as UNHCR and its Implementing Partners will have to phase down their presence in 2006.