



COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN

Country: Jordan

Planning Year: 2004

Country Operations Plan
UNHCR Branch Office in Jordan

1 January – 31 December 2004

Executive Summary

- **Protection Issues**

UNHCR Jordan's primary responsibility is to support the Hashemite Kingdom Government of Jordan (GoJ) in providing protection and assistance to individual asylumseekers, refugees and other persons of concern.

Given the government's humanitarian commitment to Palestinian refugees and the presence of an estimated 250,000 Iraqis in Jordan since the First Gulf War, it grants asylum to non-Palestinian UNHCR-recognised refugees for a limited period of six months. This six-month period, during which UNHCR is expected to identify durable solutions, is mandated by the MOU between GoJ and UNHCR signed in 1998.

UNHCR Jordan is seeking to develop national capacity legal and institutional mechanisms to process the claims of persons seeking asylum. This process was initiated following the signature of the MOU in which it is hoped will lead to Jordan's eventual accession to the international refugee instruments. As such, local capacity building and the development of an institutional refugee framework are prerequisites for an eventual gradual reduction of UNHCR's operational responsibilities in Jordan.

The war in Iraq, which started on 20 March 2003, has drastically changed the asylum map in Jordan as far as non-Palestinian refugees are concerned. While the expected large-scale outflow of Iraqis leaving their country as a result of the war did not materialise, Jordan was the destination of small groups of refugees and third country nationals. These include a group of Palestinians who had been living in Iraq for many years. They are staying in the camp claiming disruption of the protection system in Iraq. A residual group of some 400 Palestinians remain in the refugee camp at Ruwayshid in Jordan. A larger group of some 1200 Iranian refugees of Kurdish ethnicity, formerly resident in Al Tash camp in Iraq, also headed for Jordan claiming security threats, looting and disruption of basic services in that camp. This group remains stranded in the No-Man's Land between Iraq and Jordan and UNHCR is striving to find solutions for them.

UNHCR Amman has recently made considerable improvements to the international procedures to ensure more effective processing of non-Iraqi asylum seeker claims. These changes include direct registration, interviews and decision-making under the supervision of international protection staff. UNHCR has invested considerable resources in training protection staff hired under an agreement with UNDP.

In summary, UNHCR Jordan's activities include: the registration of asylum seekers and other persons of concern under the temporary protection regime; Refugee Status Determination (RSD) for non-Iraqis and high profile Iraqis; securing asylum and

protection of refugees as well as appropriate standards of treatment; provision of care and maintenance; processing resettlement and voluntary repatriation as the main durable solutions; promoting accession to international instruments regarding refugees; enhancement of protection space through the establishment of a legal infrastructure on asylum at government level while creating legal capacity at governmental and NGO level; and harmonisation of procedures and treatment with other offices in the region dealing with similar populations.

Planning assumptions for 2004 are that while the ongoing work with urban asylum seekers will decrease as a result of the recent developments, UNHCR's care and maintenance activities in camp situations (Ruwayshid and NML) and its work on seeking durable solutions (notably voluntary repatriation to Iraq) will increase substantially.

Main Programme Goals and Principal Objectives:

Goal 1: to promote durable solutions for non-Palestinian refugees/asylum seekers in Jordan through resettlement and voluntary repatriation.

Goal 2: to provide counselling, assistance, medical care, educational assistance for children, language and vocational training to non-Palestinian refugees asylum seekers to facilitate durable solutions.

Goal 3: to conduct Refugee Status Determination in a timely manner; and registration of asylum seekers and persons of concern.

Goal 4: to promote awareness of refugee law in the Government of Jordan and among law enforcement personnel to strengthen capacity with an overall view to promote accession to the refugee convention.

- **Policy Issues**

Despite the continued pressure posed by the unresolved Palestinian question and other challenges inherent to the region, there is a high, albeit informal, level of co-operation on refugee matters with operational partners.

UNHCR discharges its protection mandate through Refugee Status Determination, monitoring of asylum/non-refoulement, standards of treatment, and resettlement. At the same time, UNHCR pursues the development of a domestic protection regime through institution building in collaboration with the main departments responsible for protection within the Ministry of Interior, including the Refugee Unit, the Residency and Borders Department (RBD), Public Security Department, and the General Intelligence Department.

To further enhance its effort to strengthen institutions, UNHCR will continue to host seconded staff from government departments to provide in-depth training and strengthen liaison with relevant Government entities.

The respective focal points in the competent authorities are responsible for the printing of documentation for both recognised refugees¹ and asylum seekers and to issue instructions and provide guidance to governorates and police points to ensure that the provisions of the MOU are respected.

- **Capacity and Presence of Implementing Partners**

UNHCR has developed an extensive network of NGOs involved with medical assistance and counselling and particularly concerning women and children. UNHCR has also secured alternative funding sources for interested NGO's to provide legal counselling to asylum seekers.

¹ Ministry of Interior and UNHCR jointly issue Refugee Attestation Cards.