

## **Update on UNHCR's operations in Africa**

### **A. Situational analysis including new developments**

Over the past year, the African continent saw the eruption of two new refugee emergencies triggered by pre-election violence in Burundi and the conflict in Yemen, which affected the Horn of Africa region. Meanwhile, the situations in north-eastern Nigeria and South Sudan continued to deteriorate, resulting in continued influxes of refugees into neighbouring countries. Unresolved conflicts in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia, generating large numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, also dominated UNHCR's emergency responses in the region.

African governments and local communities continued to generously host almost 4 million refugees and over 11.4 million IDPs across the continent. However, the shrinking of asylum space has been observed in some countries, mainly linked to more restrictive policies put in place to safeguard national security amid the growing number of terrorist attacks across Central, East and West Africa.

Food insecurity has been an increasing concern, with rations cut in Cameroon, Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, South Sudan, the Sudan and Uganda. Additional breaks in the food pipeline are foreseen by the World Food Programme before the end of 2015 in other countries, unless the financial situation drastically improves in the last quarter of the year. In an effort to bolster support for refugees and make them less dependent on food assistance, multi-year livelihoods strategies have been developed in Cameroon, Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Zambia. Cash assistance was introduced in Zambia, and advocacy for access to land for agricultural purposes was boosted in a number of countries, including Chad, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

#### *Central Africa and the Great Lakes Region*

The Central Africa and Great Lakes subregion was affected by the political crisis and violence linked to the presidential elections in Burundi. Since March 2015, almost 200,000 Burundian refugees fled to the United Republic of Tanzania (87,000), Rwanda (76,000), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (15,000), Uganda (14,000) and Zambia (600).

In the Central African Republic, the situation remains tense, despite the presence of United Nations peacekeeping forces, the achievements made in the consolidation of the peace process at the Bangui Forum in April 2015, and the progress made in organizing the presidential elections to be held in October 2015. IDPs have begun returning to some areas secured by the international forces. However, insecurity still persists in many areas of the country, as demonstrated by the fresh fighting between rival militia forces that erupted mid-August in Bambari town, triggering new waves of displacement. Over 370,000 persons remain internally displaced, and UNHCR is concerned over the fate of 1,800 Sudanese refugees trapped in Bambari. As of August 2015, more than 471,000 refugees from the Central African Republic were hosted in Cameroon (251,000), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (99,000), Chad (91,000) and the Republic of the Congo (30,000).

In the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, the situation in the Kivus remains volatile due to the heavy presence of armed groups. Civilians continue to be subject to serious human rights violations in the Kivus, Province Orientale and Katanga. An estimated 1.5 million people are internally displaced, and 443,000 Congolese refugees remain in the neighbouring countries.

#### *East and Horn of Africa*

The attack at Garissa University in Kenya in April 2015 heightened concerns about national security. UNHCR and the Governments of Kenya and Somalia are working together on the enhancement of security in the Dadaab refugee camps (hosting 350,000 Somali refugees) and on expanding the pilot project for voluntary returns to nine areas in Somalia, ensuring that they take place in conditions of safety and sustainability. A portfolio of cross-border projects is being developed to support these endeavours.

The ongoing level-3 emergency in South Sudan continues to pose challenges for the humanitarian community. Access remained difficult in many parts of the country and humanitarian workers faced rising insecurity. Meanwhile, movements across borders continue, especially to the Sudan (where almost 100,000 South Sudanese were received in 2015 alone). The signing of a peace agreement in August 2015 brought about hope for the stabilization of the situation.

The drastic deterioration of the security situation in Yemen beginning in March 2015, led to outflows of both Yemenis and refugees of other nationalities that had previously sought safety in the country. Many fled across the Gulf of Aden to the East and Horn of Africa, mainly to Djibouti and Somalia. Prior to the crisis, there were nearly 258,000 refugees in Yemen, most of whom were from Somalia. As of the end of August, over 22,000 Yemenis, Somalis and third-country nationals were registered by UNHCR in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia and the Sudan. According to other sources, including governments, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and NGOs, the number of arrivals from Yemen to Africa exceeds 55,000.

#### *Southern Africa*

Increased xenophobia in several countries of southern Africa affected populations of concern to UNHCR. In South Africa, xenophobia and incidents of violence against foreigners, including refugees and asylum-seekers, in April 2015 resulted in the loss of lives, property damage and the displacement of an estimated 5,400 people. While many of the displaced remained in temporary shelters until June 2015, some 2,000 foreign nationals returned to Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. In June 2015, UNHCR provided a reintegration package for an estimated 3,000 people affected by the incidents.

#### *West Africa*

The West Africa region continued to be affected by the ongoing conflict in north-eastern Nigeria, with violence spilling over into Cameroon, Chad and Niger, causing internal displacement in these countries. As of the end of August 2015, 1.7 million people had been displaced by the conflict. This includes 1.5 million IDPs in Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria and over 170,000 refugees and others of concern in neighbouring countries. The peaceful presidential election in Nigeria held in March 2015 encouraged some spontaneous returns to stable areas of the country.

Over 136,000 Malian refugees still live in Niger (51,700), Mauritania (49,900), Burkina Faso (33,700) Algeria (1,300). In addition, some 90,000 Malians continue to be internally displaced. Both positive and negative developments unfolded in Mali over the past year. Continued insecurity in the northern regions has pushed over 4,000 people to seek asylum in neighbouring countries during 2015, while 1,800 Malian refugees repatriated so far in 2015, bringing the total number of spontaneous refugee returns to

35,000 and IDP returns to 327,000 since mid-2014. The peace agreement signed in June 2015 gives hope for higher numbers of returns in the coming year.

Following the successful efforts to contain the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, since the second quarter of 2015, UNHCR operations have been resuming normal activities in all affected countries, with the exception of the voluntary repatriation programme to Côte d'Ivoire from Liberia, which is still on hold. In total, 12 refugees were victim of the disease, 5 Liberian refugees in Sierra Leone and 7 refugees in Liberia, all living outside refugee camps.

## **B. Progress and challenges in achieving the global strategic priorities**

### **Redoubling efforts in the search for durable solutions**

Following the ministerial meeting on the “Global initiative for Somali refugees” held in Addis Ababa in August 2014, progress continues to be made in implementing the “Addis Ababa commitment towards Somali refugees,” which was signed at the meeting by the Governments of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Uganda and Yemen, along with the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), UNHCR, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). A report on education was commissioned under the global initiative. The report identifies gaps and recommends that a regional approach be adopted to enhance the quality of education for Somali refugees and ensure a consistent approach in the concerned countries. UNHCR will facilitate a discussion with relevant partners in the second half of 2015 to agree on the way forward.

#### *Voluntary repatriation*

Voluntary returns from the Dadaab refugee camps in Kenya to Somalia continue. As of the end of August 2015, almost 3,500 Somali refugees had repatriated to southern Somalia since 8 December 2014 (Baidoa, Luuq, Kismayo and Mogadishu). Meanwhile, in April 2015, over 1,000 Kenyan refugees, who had been hosted in Uganda since the 2007 post-election violence, repatriated.

In the context of the comprehensive solutions strategy for Rwandan refugees, progress continued to be made with respect to voluntary repatriation. Between 2014 and 2015, almost 5,300 Rwandans voluntarily returned home, bringing the total number of returns since 2001 to 136,600. The biometric registration of Rwandan refugees in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is ongoing (despite a temporary suspension in July in North Kivu due to insecurity). Pending the results of this exercise, the number of Rwandan refugees in the country stands at about 100,000.

Some 500 Congolese refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo returned from Zemio in the Central African Republic to Equateur Province. In the context of the comprehensive solutions strategy for Angolan refugees, over 16,000 former Angolan refugees have been assisted to return from the Democratic Republic of the Congo since August 2014. In addition, some 1,800 repatriated from Zambia and the Republic of the Congo. The return of Angolans from the Democratic Republic of the Congo is drawing to a close.

#### *Local integration*

Following the decision by the Tanzanian Government in October 2014 to resume the process of local integration of more than 162,000 former Burundian refugees (and their children born after the last registration in 2010), citizenship certificates have now been issued to all newly-naturalized Tanzanians. UNHCR's support to the Government in all

legal aspects of the naturalization process continues, while coordination with the authorities and development partners on addressing the long-term socio-economic implications of the programme is being strengthened, despite the Burundian refugee emergency currently facing the country. In May 2015, the Ugandan Government decided to naturalize more than 2,300 refugees of various nationalities who have been in Uganda for over twenty years.

In the West Africa region, durable solutions strategies have been developed for Mauritians (in Mali and Senegal), Togolese (in Ghana), Ghanaian refugees (in Togo), Senegalese (in both the Gambia and Guinea-Bissau), and Ivorian refugees (in Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria and Togo). Following the implementation of the cessation clause for Liberian refugees, the last passports and residence permits are being distributed to former Liberian refugees in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Mali and Sierra Leone after delays caused by the Ebola crisis.

In Zambia, the local integration of former Angolan refugees is in progress. The Angolan Government has issued some 2,200 passports to the refugees, which are required for obtaining resident permits. More than 1,200 plots of land have been demarcated in the new settlements. To reach the goal of 10,000 Angolans targeted for local integration, the Government of Zambia has, in principle, agreed to expand the existing criteria for the local integration of former Angolan refugees. The Government is also in the final stages of approving local integration criteria for former Rwandan refugees.

#### *Resettlement*

Over 35,000 resettlement submissions were made by UNHCR for refugees in Africa in 2014, a 23 per cent increase compared to 2013. In the first half of 2015, some 13,500 cases were submitted, mainly from Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. More than 19,000 African refugees departed for resettlement in 2014 from Somalia (12,000) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (7,000). Thus far in 2015, 9,450 have departed. Progress continues to be made in implementing the enhanced resettlement programme for at least 50,000 refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo out of the Great Lakes region, with over 33,000 submissions already finalized. In the first half of 2015 alone, UNHCR processed over 6,500 cases of Congolese refugees.

#### **Promoting a favourable protection environment**

Much progress has been made in the past year to end statelessness before 2024 in Africa. A ministerial conference on statelessness in West Africa took place in February 2015 in Abidjan. The ministerial declaration, endorsed by the 15 Member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in May, contains 26 commitments related to the prevention of statelessness, the identification and protection of stateless persons, and the resolution of existing situations, as well as the implementation of strategies and partnerships to fight against statelessness. Another major development was the adoption of the draft protocol on the right to nationality by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights at its eighteenth Extraordinary Session in July-August 2015 in Nairobi. The next step foreseen in the process is the submission of this draft protocol to the African Union Commission on International Law, planned in October 2015. As of August 2015, 22 out of the 54 African Union Member States were parties to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and 15 were parties to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

Many African countries made significant progress on developing laws and policy frameworks for international displacement. The Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nigeria are in the process of strengthening protection for IDPs through the implementation of such national laws and policies.

To help mitigate the risks associated with people smuggling, trafficking and irregular migration in Africa, UNHCR continued to collaborate with governments and operational partners, including IOM, to build capacities and strengthen access to protection for persons of concern. Operations in countries of asylum and transit (Ethiopia, Niger, Kenya and Sudan) improved reception facilities, strengthened registration and refugee status determination processes and implemented measures aimed at the early identification of and assistance to unaccompanied minors and victims of trafficking.

## **C. Financial information**

The 2015 comprehensive needs assessment budget for Africa approved by the Executive Committee at its sixty-fifth session in September 2014 was US\$ 2.2 billion. Due to additional emergencies and deepening crises requiring UNHCR's response, the budget increased to US\$ 2.8 billion by the end of August 2015. The increase is mainly due to supplementary budgets established for the emergencies concerning Burundi, Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen.

New as well as ongoing emergencies, such as the Central African Republic and South Sudan, account for some 50 per cent of UNHCR's budget in Africa. As of early September 2015, contributions for Africa amounted to US\$ 846.3 million.

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