



Lessons learned from the implementation of the Tanzania security package

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The security package: origins and objectives

1. Some three years ago, UNHCR established a 'security package' in refugee-populated districts of western Tanzania, an area that is host to more than half a million refugees, primarily from Burundi. The cost of the package amounts to around \$1.5 million per year.
2. The purpose of that package is primarily to ensure that the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee camps is maintained, but also to address the more general problem of law and order in and around the camps. This initiative was taken in the context of persistent allegations from Bujumbura that the camps were being used as bases, recruitment centres and training facilities for Burundian rebel groups. Such allegations not only acted as a serious irritant to relations between Tanzania and Burundi, but also threatened to disrupt the peace process, jeopardize the institution of asylum and place refugees at risk.
3. Under the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Tanzanian government, UNHCR meets the cost of posting police officers in and around the refugee camps of western Tanzania. Prior to the introduction of the package, it should be noted, no police officers were present in the camps.
4. UNHCR also provides those police officers (who are deployed on a rotational basis) with special allowances, equipment, vehicles, fuel and accommodation. Three international field security advisors with policing experience have been posted to the region to provide the Tanzanian police with training and support and to monitor their activities.
5. An additional security measure which has been taken in Tanzania, outside of the formal package, is to be found in the appointment of refugee watchmen and women, known as *sungu sungu*, who patrol the camps, report incidents to the police and generally assist in the maintenance of law and order. The *sungu sungu* are paid a modest allowance and provided with uniforms and equipment.
6. The rest of this paper provides a synopsis of the primary lessons learned from UNHCR's experience in Tanzania - lessons which may be of value in the design and implementation of security arrangements elsewhere. The paper should ideally be read in conjunction with an excellent article by UNHCR staff member Jean-Francois Durieux, 'Preserving the character of refugee camps: lessons from the Kigoma refugee programme in Tanzania', published in the South African journal *Track Two*, vol. 9, no. 3, November 2000.
7. This paper is based on a mission to Tanzania, undertaken by the author, together with UNHCR colleagues Roland L'Allier and Quang Bui (Field Safety Section) and Sten Bronee (Department of International Protection). The mission was accompanied by Christer Skarp, an international field security advisor based in Tanzania. Valuable inputs were also provided by Henry Domzalski, Ron Mponda and Brownie Samukai.

The impact of the package

8. Assessing the real impact of the Tanzanian security package is difficult for three reasons: because there is little precise data available concerning levels of crime, political and military activity in refugee-populated areas of the country; because it is impossible to know what the situation in those areas would be like if the security package had not been introduced; and because most of the people interviewed in the course of the assessment (UNHCR staff members, Tanzanian police and Home Affairs Ministry officials, for example) have a natural inclination to emphasize the positive aspects of the package.

9. That being said, there is a broad consensus amongst relevant stakeholders that the security package has had a beneficial effect in terms of:

- improving police morale and operational effectiveness;
- preserving law and order;
- introducing police officers to the principles of refugee protection and community policing;
- limiting the overt politicization and militarization of refugee camps;
- reinforcing the security of humanitarian personnel;
- averting conflict between refugees and local populations;
- enhancing relations between UNHCR and the Tanzanian authorities.

10. At the same time, the security package has been characterized by a number of constraints and limitations, many of which are summarized in the rest of this paper. As indicated in the list above, one of the primary limitations of the package is that it has addressed only the issue of overt militarization and that it only applies to the camps and their immediate vicinity. According to many informants, covert militarization, and military activities in other parts of the border area, take place on a fairly regular basis, although the exact extent is impossible to measure.

The Tanzanian context

11. While the Tanzanian package may provide a valuable model for other countries, it should also be noted that conditions in Tanzania were particularly propitious for the introduction of this approach to the security problem.

12. Tanzania is a peaceful country with a relatively functional state structure and disciplined police force. It has a long history of providing refuge to the victims of violence from neighbouring countries, and is eager to be seen as a state which respects its international obligations and which fosters peace in the Great Lakes region. The *sungu sungu* system is based upon a longstanding arrangement used to maintain law and order in Tanzanian towns and villages. Many other countries which have experienced major refugee influxes do not share these characteristics, making the introduction of similar security packages a more problematic undertaking.

The root causes of violence

13. UNHCR and its partners should have realistic expectations of what can be achieved by means of a security package. In Tanzania, the problems of crime, violence and the involvement of refugees in military activities are the result of many factors: the poverty of the area, the nature of the conflict in Burundi, the hardship and uncertainty of life for refugees in Tanzania, the absence of employment and education opportunities for refugees, and the location of camps in close proximity to the border. Unless these issues are addressed, the problems which the security package is designed to address are certain to persist.

14. At the same time, and as Jean-Francois Durieux points out, a security package that focuses exclusively on control and the repression of political activities amongst refugees (which are formally banned by the Tanzanian authorities) is likely to fail. "It would be irresponsible to claim that repression and control alone can enforce neutrality amongst refugee populations that are subjected to strong contrary pressures from various sources. These measures must, therefore, be supplemented by serious efforts to attenuate the intermediate causes of the refugees; inclination towards subversion. Most importantly, every opportunity must be seized to involve the refugee, *qua refugees*, in a constructive dialogue on peace."

The need for an integrated UNHCR approach

15. In accordance with the lesson identified above, security packages should not be regarded as a 'stand alone' activity, but should be supported by and integrated with UNHCR's whole range of protection, programme and community services activities. Information on security issues should be routinely exchanged between staff members who are responsible for these different functions.

16. Particular efforts should be made to ensure effective cooperation between UNHCR's field security advisors and its protection staff. Indeed, a weakness of the Tanzania initiative can be found in tendency for protection posts in western Tanzania to be left unfilled for many months at a time.

17. The introduction of security packages should also be accompanied by vigorous efforts to promote respect for national and international refugee law and, in Africa, the 1969 OAU Refugee Convention, which addresses the security issue in a very direct and comprehensive manner. In this respect, local experts have an important role to play. In Tanzania, for example, the presence of female Tanzanian lawyers in UNHCR's offices, employed through a Turner Foundation sexual and gender-based violence project, has provided the organization with a valuable channel of communication with the police, local authorities and judiciary.

18. The establishment and management of a security packages in a country of asylum should be undertaken in close coordination with the UNHCR office in the country of origin. A regular exchange of information and ideas between UNHCR personnel in the country of asylum and the country of origin is essential.

19. Ideally, an integrated approach should also be taken in relation to UNHCR's relationship with the security services. In Tanzania, the security package relates only to UNHCR relationship with the police, while the Tanzanian military has a

substantial presence in the area concerned and plays a major role in relation to security issues.

20. Finally, efforts to address the problems of insecurity and violence in the immediate vicinity of refugee camps must be supported by efforts to provide support and assistance to surrounding villages and areas, so as to mitigate the potential for friction between refugees and the local population.

The problem of dependency

21. In the peripheral areas of low-income countries where large refugee populations are most often to be found, local authorities and security services are likely to be extremely under-resourced and to have very limited operational capacity. Not surprisingly, they turn to apparently wealthy international organizations such as UNHCR for support.

22. The introduction of a security package, entailing the provision of scarce and highly valued items such as vehicles, fuel and telecommunications equipment, inevitably reinforces this tendency. Indeed, in Tanzania, UNHCR has received requests for a variety of goods and services from the authorities and the police force which are essentially unrelated to the presence of refugees.

23. While such requests cannot be entirely averted, they can be more easily dealt with if the MoU signed between UNHCR and the government provides a very clear indication of what UNHCR can and cannot provide. Such MoU's should specify with equal clarity the obligations of the government and security services, particularly in relation to reporting requirements, access to information such as crime statistics, and the invocation of disciplinary procedures against security personnel involved in abusive behaviour.

Allowances and incentives

24. In the refugee camps of Tanzania it has proved essential to provide special monetary allowances to police officers who are engaged on the security package, many of whom have been drafted in from other parts of the country and who have left their families behind. There is no doubt that incentives are required to attract police officers to the package. But the high level of the allowance - around 300 per cent higher than their regular salary, has created a number of problems.

25. It has led to resentment amongst non-security package police officers in the border region and amongst other public sector workers, all of whom deal with refugee-related issues on a regular basis. It has encouraged local police officers to become attached to and remain with the security package, and may also have prompted some of those responsible for recruitment to demand 'kickbacks' from police officers who wish to be deployed on the package. There is a broad consensus that if the allowances were now to be reduced police morale and standards would deteriorate.

26. In other situations where UNHCR intends to introduce a similar security package, the organization should look very closely at the level of allowance it agrees to pay. It should also examine the use of non-monetary incentives, such as food and

improved standards of accommodation, and vary the amount of the allowance paid according to the rank of the police officers concerned.

The police: quality and quantity

27. One of the primary lessons to be learned from the Tanzanian experience is that UNHCR must do everything possible to enhance the quality of policing if it is to establish a security package that is both operationally effective and consistent with humanitarian principles. To achieve these objectives, a number of steps might be taken:

- ensuring that an adequate number of suitably qualified international security advisors are present from the initial establishment of a security package, so as to undertake the tasks of training, monitoring and mentoring;
- placing particular emphasis on the introduction of community policing methods, and encouraging police officers to play an active role in the prevention of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence;
- encouraging the authorities to deploy an adequate number of female police officers on the security package;
- insisting that the authorities take disciplinary action against any police officer engaging in unprofessional or abusive behaviour;
- introducing a code of conduct for security package police, including provisions concerning the relationship between male police officers and refugee women.

28. Three comments are required in relation to the preceding observations. First, it is admittedly difficult for police officers to work in accordance with the principles of community policing when they do not actually come from the community they are policing. In this respect, good leadership and discipline is of particular importance.

29. Second, the Tanzanian government's inability to provide two female police officers per unit, as specified in the original MoU, is limited by the absolute shortage of female police officers in the country, coupled with the fact that many are reluctant to leave their children so as to work in another part of the country. In this context, the successful placement of one female police officer per unit appears to have been a reasonable, if not wholly satisfactory outcome. To maximize the value of such arrangements, female police officers should receive specialized training in relation to the issue of sexual and gender based violence.

30. Third, while the latest version of the MoU strengthens UNHCR's ability to remove police officers from the operation if they have acted in an unprofessional manner, there is already a feeling amongst the police that UNHCR exerts an excessive degree of control over the security package. It goes without saying that the involvement of an international organization in issues relating to state security and the rule of law will almost inevitably generate a degree of sensitivity on the part of the host authorities.

Complementary capacity building efforts

31. Experience in Tanzania suggests that the introduction of a security package should be supported with complementary capacity building efforts.

32. On one hand, the security package has led to a higher level of reported crime, arrests and detentions, a development which has placed considerable pressure on the local judicial and penal systems - with very negative consequences for both refugees and Tanzanians who have fallen foul of the law and been placed under arrest. On the other hand, the package has taken police officers away from their duties in other parts of the country and in non-refugee populated areas of the western region, a development which has reportedly led to a deterioration of the security situation in those areas.

33. While UNHCR evidently cannot assume responsibility for the general strengthening of a country's police force, prisons or prosecutor's office, donor states and other international organizations could be encouraged to lend appropriate support in such areas. Indeed, when establishing further packages of this type, UNHCR should seek the early support of other UN agencies with an appropriate mandate and the necessary resources.

Limitations of the *sungu sungu* system

34. The appointment of refugee watchmen and women is generally recognized to have assisted the Tanzanian authorities to maintain security in the camps. At the same time, the system has its limitations.

35. As members of the refugee population, the *sungu sungus* have their own political allegiances and may not always be willing to report on the activities of their compatriots. Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that they may on occasions report false information in order to incriminate members of rival political factions. In addition, the police have been known to misuse the *sungu sungus*, allowing them, for example, to make arrests, a function which they are not entitled or trained to carry out.

The question of separation

36. One element of the Tanzanian security package which is generally acknowledged to have met with relatively little success is the separation of armed elements and other exiles who can be excluded from refugee status by virtue of their past or present activities. Prior to the introduction of the security package, a special facility was established at Mwisu to accommodate individuals falling within this category. In practice, however, it has not been extensively used for its intended purpose.

37. In practice, and for a variety of legal, practical and political reasons, a considerable number of Burundian combatants and other excludable cases have been fined, detained or imprisoned, prior to being released. Of the 143 combatants identified in 2001, 58 per cent absconded.

38. As stated in UNHCR's 1999 Protection Report on Tanzania, "difficult questions remained concerning the legal framework under which the various categories of persons whom the authorities might wish to be segregated could be held."

39. One of the principal problems associated with this legal framework has been the length of time it takes (weeks if not months) for the Minister of Home Affairs to issue a detention order under the 1998 Refugees Act. Responding to this problem, in February 2001, UNHCR wrote to the Ministry of Home Affairs, strongly recommending that the Minister confirm the authority of the Regional Commissioners to act on his behalf in relation to this matter.