



COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN

OVERVIEW

Country: Botswana

Planning Year: 2006

2006 COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN **BOTSWANA**

Part I: OVERVIEW

1. Protection and socio-economic operational environment

Botswana is a stable democratic middle income country, which hosts approximately 2,800 camp-based refugees and approximately 1,000 asylum seekers. Since 2000, Botswana has seen a large illegal influx of Zimbabweans into its territory. This has led to widespread outcry in the country against the influx.

Relationship between Botswana and Namibia which had been complicated by the secessionist flare-up in Namibia's Caprivi Strip in 1999 has improved dramatically. In turn this will provide increased opportunity for voluntary repatriation of the remaining refugees from Botswana to Namibia in 2005/2006.

International groups such as Survival International have waged a long campaign against the policy of the Government of Botswana to relocate the Basarwa (san) or indigenous Bushmen from their traditional homeland in the central Kalahari district. The relocation case is before the High Court.

The Government of Botswana has been in the forefront of the fight against the high prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS in the country. In addition to education, a central plank of the government's effort to bring the pandemic under control is the provision of anti-retroviral drugs (ARVs) to its citizens as well as the Prevention-of-Mother-to-Child-Transmission (PMCT). Unfortunately, refugees are excluded from ARV treatments; and since 2004, refugee women do not benefit from PMCT programme. No change is anticipated from the government to this policy in 2006. The implication of this policy for UNHCR is that HIV/AIDS will continue to remain a serious problem for refugees with no possibility of controlling the spread or mitigating the impact of the pandemic in the refugee camp.

Background and rationale for UNHCR's presence in Botswana

Botswana is a signatory to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol. Therefore, the overriding rationale for UNHCR's presence in the country is to support the Government's obligation to provide international protection to refugees. UNHCR programme in Botswana provides international protection and material assistance to approximately 2,800 camp-based refugees and approximately 1,000 asylum seekers.

Given the large number of Angolan refugees who have registered for voluntary repatriation in 2005, and the recent positive response by Namibian government for the return of Namibian refugees, the numbers of refugees in Botswana will in most likelihood show a marked decrease in 2006. There will be continuing need for UNHCR's presence in 2006 to provide international protection and assistance to the estimated 2,000 refugees who will remain in the country.

The planning process for the COP included substantive evaluation of UNHCR programmes carried out in close consultation with all UNHCR stakeholders including UNHCR beneficiaries. The stakeholders' consultation identified several gaps and constraints that are likely to affect implementation of UNHCR protection and assistance programmes negatively in 2006. The yardstick for the evaluation and setting of the 2006 targets were: UNHCR indicators and minimum standards, baseline data, and identified sectoral objectives.

An important rationale for UNHCR continued presence in Botswana in 2006 is to ensure that adequate sustainable protection framework is in place. From past experiences, this is not likely to be an easy process. The outlook for asylum seekers and refugees will remain the same in 2006 with little prospect for them to be integrated locally, work, or move freely in the country. For example, asylum seekers will continue to be detained at the Francistown Detention Centre for Illegal Immigrants pending the outcome of their asylum applications. At the beginning of 2005, the government announced in Parliament that it is planning to build a second centre at Molepolole to be operational by 2006.

Finally, it is anticipated that in 2006 the number of refugees in Botswana will fall drastically as a result of voluntary repatriation of the majority of Angolan refugees in Botswana as well as substantial increase in the number of voluntary repatriation to Namibia. The year 2006 will therefore be the year of consolidation, beefing up the capacity of UNHCR implementing partners to enable UNHCR to scale down and eventually exit Botswana by the end of 2007.

2. Operational goals and potential for durable solutions

Main operational goals for the populations of concern

Four major policy issues and operational goals for UNHCR's populations of concern in Botswana will be addressed during the course of 2006.

- Intense search for 'durable solutions' for refugees. The priority will be to focus on the development of multi-sectoral measures for local integration and self-sufficiency of refugees that will include vocational training, technical infrastructure support for agriculture. At the same time, the

- Office will continue to pursue voluntary repatriation and resettlement components of durable solutions.
- Address the prevailing sense of helplessness and frustration among the camp-based refugees active refugee community participation in the physical improvements in the camp infrastructure. Similarly, support structures will also be developed and put in place for urban based refugees.
 - Continue and intensify its efforts in developing effective self-sustaining protection mechanisms and legal framework for the protection of asylum seekers in order to ensure that refugees (both camp-based and urban refugees) enjoy basic rights in Botswana.
 - Undertake preparatory down sizing activities such as: development structures for increased effective and functional co-operation between government and implementing partners, building sufficient capacity of the Government and Implementing Partners.

The overall strategy/vision for 2006, in line with UNHCR's Global objectives and with the Africa Bureau regional strategy, is to continue to build the capacity of the government to enable it to implement their international commitments and responsibilities to refugee, and to continue to promote self-reliance opportunities for refugees. Continue to promote durable solutions using the three pronged approach of re-integration, resettlement and repatriation. Build the capacity of local NGOs with the aim to handover activities to them and the Government during the re-orientation phase of HCR management in the country.

Refugee women/gender equality:

The guiding principle for OCM is the High Commissioner's five commitments to refugee women: 50% women representation, individual registration and documentation; combating SGBV; participation in management and distribution of food and non-food-items; and provision of sanitary materials.

Effective involvement of women in all aspects of UNHCR programme issues and participation in camp management activities will continue through several activities designed and implemented by UNHCR Community Service officer based in Dukwi. The Programmes include involvement in Girl Guide activities. Solicitation of funds from local companies; it is expected that these projects will be sustainable in 2006 and beyond without day to day involvement of UNHCR officers.

Children and adolescents

Refugees should have full access to schools and health structures in Botswana. UNHCR will continue advocating (a) access to local schools (b) school feeding (c) sport activities to deal with boredom (c) including in PMCT programme

Older refugees

OCM will develop flexible protection and assistance activities to ensure response to the precise needs of identified older refugees. Efforts will be made to include them in local government programmes for older individuals e.g. food basket.

HIV/AIDS

OCM will continue to maintain its three-pronged approach: one, education, testing and changing cultural habits; two, advocacy and lobbying for PMCT and ARV; and three, support for the terminally ill through such programmes as home-based care and assistance to orphans.

Environmental:

Encourage refugee participation in tree planting to mitigate environmental damage, and provision of boreholes.