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Update on UNHCR’s operations in Africa - 2011**A Introduction – critical challenges**

In 2010, UNHCR’s operations in Africa were dominated by new and ongoing complex emergencies. To address these situations, the Office has been working to bolster its response capacity in several regions with a particular emphasis on reinforcing emergency preparedness.

Côte d’Ivoire

In Côte d’Ivoire, the political deadlock that followed the elections of 28 November resulted in the displacement of tens of thousands of people within the country and across borders. More than 38,000 people fled to Liberia where they have settled among local communities in Nimba County, straining services and infrastructure. A further 38,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) have been registered inside Côte d’Ivoire, mostly in the area of Duékoué, in the western part of the country. Since December 2010, UNHCR and its partners have been responding to the needs of the refugees in Liberia, while in the other four neighbouring countries (Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guinea and Mali) the Office has been working mainly on preparedness measures. While these four countries have thus far received limited numbers of refugees, they could see greater numbers of people arriving should the situation in Côte d’Ivoire deteriorate. In Côte d’Ivoire, UNHCR has assumed the lead role in the protection and emergency shelter clusters and co-leadership in the camp coordination and management cluster with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), under the overall coordination of the Humanitarian Coordinator.

Sudan and Southern Sudan

In Sudan, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the Government and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) has taken centre stage as the main determinant of peace and stability. The country’s first national and State-level elections in 24 years were held in April 2010. In January 2011, the referendum on the independence of South Sudan was conducted successfully; nevertheless it resulted in a number of humanitarian consequences with which the Office continues to be engaged.

Somalia Situation

The Office’s working environment in the East and Horn of Africa region continued to be influenced by the complex situation in Somalia. The Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in Mogadishu has been seriously weakened by internal power struggles, and the recent decision of the Puntland authorities to suspend their cooperation with the TFG points to further instability in the future. Fighting between the TFG and radicalized armed groups in southern and central Somalia has caused new large-scale displacement both within the country and across borders. Some 100,000 Somalis were forced to flee to neighbouring countries in 2010, straining services and facilities in already overcrowded camps in Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Kenya. In Kenya, while considerable progress has been made for the expansion of Ifo II, UNHCR was asked in January 2011 to stop the construction of shelters for the refugees, risking the loss of investment made so far and delaying the relocation of newly arrived refugees who live in dire circumstances at the

outskirts of one of the existing camps. The Office has initiated discussions on the way forward but without progress thus far.

In Djibouti, the authorities have granted an additional site for refugees which will facilitate efforts to improve standards of assistance to new arrivals from Somalia and decongest the existing camp. In Ethiopia, an additional refugee camp has been opened in the Dollo Ado area to accommodate new arrivals from Somalia, and another site has been identified should the capacity of the two existing camps become overstretched.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Insecurity continues to prevail in many parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Military operations and activities by armed groups, including the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), have displaced more than 180,000 people in North Kivu in 2010 alone, bringing the total number of IDPs in the province to half a million people. This has in turn, created massive humanitarian needs in both North and South Kivu as well as in the Oriental Province, where the LRA has intensified attacks on civilians causing a humanitarian crisis along the border region.

Central African Republic

The political situation in the Central African Republic (CAR) remained volatile in 2010, and the security situation in the eastern part of the country has deteriorated due to an increase in LRA activities, making it difficult for UNHCR and its partners to assure protection and assistance for refugees and IDPs.

The withdrawal of the United Nations Mission in Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT), which had been critical for providing a security framework within which humanitarian activities could operate, has raised great concern among humanitarian actors. Since then, the security situation in the eastern part of the country has worsened, prompting the relocation of some 3,250 Sudanese refugees from Sam Ouandja to Bambari in November 2010. Following a request by the Chadian Government, UNHCR and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) agreed to implement a joint programme to extend direct support to the *Détachement Intégré de Sécurité* (DIS), a UN-trained Chadian national police force created to ensure the protection of refugees and IDPs in camps, as well as humanitarian staff.

The progressive drawdown of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) has had destabilizing repercussions, compounded by the absence of an effective State authority and of a well-trained army and police. In particular, access to people of concern has been negatively affected.

The reduction of humanitarian space in several countries in the region has made the delivery of protection and assistance more challenging for UNHCR. In addition, insecurity in many regions, notably in the East and Horn of Africa region, has put staff seriously at risk, as tragically illustrated by the death of a UNHCR staff member in Malakal, Sudan, in January 2011.

B. Analysis of challenges and response strategies

(i) Redoubling the search for durable solutions

The focus in West Africa and the Great Lakes regions continues to be on finding or putting in place durable solutions for the displaced. In 2011, efforts will focus on finding durable solutions for the remaining Liberian refugees, for whom the cessation of refugee status is foreseen to come into force at the end of the year.

In 2010, UNHCR moved ahead with the comprehensive strategy for Rwandan refugees including efforts to promote voluntary repatriation and secure local integration opportunities for those who are unable to return home. A similar approach will be pursued in 2011 to bring closure to the Angolan and Burundian refugee situations, as well as for refugees from the Republic of the Congo in Gabon.

Repatriation

The decade-long declining trend in the voluntary return of refugees continued in 2010 as a number of major voluntary repatriation operations have drawn to a close.

Progress on the return of Congolese (DRC) refugees was achieved in 2010 in the context of the tripartite framework with key neighbouring countries. Following the improvement of the security situation in some return areas, UNHCR, the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Republic of Tanzania have recently agreed to re-launch the facilitation of the voluntary repatriation programme. Since the signature of the Tripartite Agreement between the two countries in 2005, more than 87,000 Congolese (DRC) refugees have returned home. Today, the United Republic of Tanzania still hosts some 60,000 Congolese (DRC) refugees, a large number of whom have indicated their intention to return should the conditions in their home country be conducive to their reintegration.

A growing number of spontaneous returns from Uganda to the Democratic Republic of the Congo were observed towards the end of 2010. A recent verification exercise confirmed the presence of almost 6,200 spontaneous returnees and UNHCR anticipates that 10,000 Congolese (DRC) refugees will return home from Uganda in 2011. Voluntary repatriation between Burundi and the DRC also resumed in October 2010 and UNHCR will continue to facilitate this process in 2011. At the end of December 2010, some 3,600 Burundians and 1,100 Congolese (DRC) refugees had returned home.

With the organized voluntary return home of 40,000 Congolese (DRC) refugees from Zambia, the repatriation operation was concluded allowing for the closure of Kala and Mwanze camps and the phasing out of UNHCR's presence and operations in Zambia's Northern Province.

Some 20,000 refugees in the Republic of the Congo, who had fled violence in Equateur Province in the DRC at the end of 2009, have indicated their willingness to repatriate. UNHCR has strengthened its presence in Equateur Province to enhance protection monitoring in preparation for the return and reintegration of the refugees in 2011.

Although the intensification of fighting between the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) and other armed groups has caused further internal displacement within the DRC, more than 220,000 IDPs have returned to their villages in North and South Kivu in 2010. As a result of the returns, both in 2009 and 2010, 26 IDP camps have been closed in these provinces. The largest consolidation process occurred in December 2010, when the number of camps was reduced from 42 to 31.

At the end of 2010, some 160 Angolan refugees in Zambia returned home with the Office's assistance. This was the first substantial return movement facilitated by UNHCR in 2010. Some host Governments see further progress on repatriation to Angola as an essential condition to exploring local integration or alternative status for those opting to remain in their country of asylum. Moving forward on both tracks is essential, with the cessation of refugee status for Angolans foreseen in December 2011.

In Sudan, in the context of the referendum, between November 2010 and the end of January 2011, 200,000 southerners living in the north of Sudan moved to the south, most of them with the assistance of the authorities of Southern Sudan.

Local integration

The search for local integration opportunities for refugees in Africa was one of UNHCR's main objectives in 2010. UNHCR presented a multi-year self-reliance project for long-staying refugees in eastern Sudan at the International Donors and Investors Conference for East Sudan, which took place in Kuwait in December 2010. UNHCR, together with UNDP, has also been developing a Joint Transition Solutions Initiative which was presented to donors in February 2011.

In the United Republic of Tanzania, the local integration of the newly naturalized Tanzanians will remain a key priority in 2011. UNHCR's support for the final integration of the former Burundian refugees began in 2010 in the hosting regions, with the upgrading of transportation infrastructure and water facilities, and interventions in the areas of health, education and the environment. The donor response to the appeal that

was launched in Dar es Salaam in August 2010 for the implementation of the National Strategy for Community Integration Programme (NaSCIP), has however, been limited. UNHCR remains fully committed to promoting this programme which should benefit some 32,000 families.

Resettlement

Resettlement is now part of all protection strategies and durable solutions plans throughout the region. In 2010, more than 24,000 refugees were referred for resettlement from across the region, with the vast majority coming from the East and Horn of Africa. The top population groups in terms of resettlement submissions were Somalis, Congolese and Eritreans, followed by Sudanese and Ethiopians. In 2011, UNHCR will continue to focus on these populations, with a special emphasis on Somalis and Eritreans, for whom resettlement is often the only option.

(ii) Promoting a favourable protection environment

Ensuring peaceful coexistence between refugees and host communities remains central to a favourable protection environment and adequate standards of assistance. UNHCR is supporting projects to improve living standards for both populations, in an effort to build trust between the communities.

In 2010, UNHCR intensified its cooperation with Governments to strengthen their protection capacities and asylum systems. In Sudan, the revision of the 1974 Refugee Bill provided an opportunity for UNHCR to address longstanding concerns with regard to asylum practice, and strengthen the current domestic refugee protection framework. Following consultations with the Government, a draft asylum bill was presented to three stakeholders' workshops which were organized by UNHCR in cooperation with the Commissioner for Refugees, in Darfur, eastern Sudan and Khartoum. The conclusions fed into the draft asylum bill for introduction into the legislative process.

In Senegal, UNHCR provided technical support to the authorities for the revision of the asylum law, which is now before the Parliament for adoption.

In March 2010, the Parliament of Kenya adopted a new draft constitution which entered into force in August. UNHCR has been providing technical support to the Kenyan authorities, who are now reviewing the current refugee legislation so as to align it with the provisions of the new constitution.

Registering and documenting displaced people has remained a key priority for UNHCR in Africa and there were some positive developments in the East and Horn of Africa region in 2010. Phase two of the verification exercise for refugees in eastern Sudan has concluded and UNHCR will soon start the third phase, with the verification of asylum-seekers in Khartoum. In Ethiopia, a verification exercise has been completed for Afar refugees in the northern part of the country. Furthermore, the Government of Djibouti, together with UNHCR, recently resumed the registration of Ethiopian asylum-seekers and removed restrictions on Somali male asylum-seekers accessing asylum procedures. In Somaliland, UNHCR and the authorities are about to sign a Memorandum of Understanding for the resumption of registration and refugee status determination for asylum-seekers, which had been suspended in 2008.

Despite these positive developments, UNHCR has noted a growing trend of unilateralism on the continent, especially in matters where national security, immigration management, and law and order priorities are perceived to be at stake. The Office has seen a worrying rise in the arrest and detention without charge of asylum-seekers and refugees alike, as well as cases of *refoulement* - mostly involving Somalis, Eritreans, Ethiopians and, to a lesser extent, Congolese (DRC). In July 2010, 1,700 Rwandan refugees and asylum-seekers were forcibly deported from Uganda. Some 420 Congolese asylum-seekers were deported from the United Republic of Tanzania in November 2010 and a number of Congolese nationals, some of whom may be refugees, were expelled from Angola at the beginning of 2011.

In 2010, UNHCR enhanced its collaboration with States and other key stakeholders to address the challenges posed by growing mixed migration movements for the asylum and protection systems in transit and destination countries. In September 2010, the

Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, with the support of UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), convened a regional conference involving government representatives from the East and Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes and Southern Africa regions. The conference allowed States, civil society and international organizations to devise strategies for responding to mixed migratory movements in an effective, coordinated and protection-sensitive manner.

Rescue-at-sea has emerged as a key protection issue. The disembarkation of Ethiopian and Somali asylum-seekers and migrants rescued in the Gulf of Aden at the end of 2010 and the beginning of 2011 have demonstrated the challenges of finding timely and humanitarian solutions for such situations. UNHCR offices in Djibouti, Kenya, Somalia and Yemen are following events closely and taking up the situation of individual asylum-seekers with relevant counterparts to support negotiations amongst all concerned. In 2011, UNHCR is planning to organize a regional conference to mobilize support for addressing these situations in a systematic and predictable manner.

Operationalizing UNHCR's new policy for refugees in urban settings will remain a key objective in 2011. Kenya was selected as one of the pilot countries in which the policy would be implemented, and activities targeting the increasing needs of more than 43,000 refugees who are registered in Nairobi and reside outside camps, are under way.

Statelessness

In Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and southern Africa, UNHCR has worked closely with partners to map stateless situations, analyze existing legal frameworks and promote legal reform where necessary. In Côte d'Ivoire, UNHCR provided technical support to the authorities which resulted in the documentation of several thousand Ivorians.

In Sudan, citizenship will remain among the key post-referendum issues to be addressed. This question will be relevant for southerners in the north, northerners in Southern Sudan, nomadic groups in the transitional areas, Sudanese expatriates who may have difficulty proving their nationality, and refugees married to Sudanese nationals. In this context, UNHCR has been closely involved in a wide range of preventive activities.

The Office provided support to the negotiating parties as an institutional expert; undertaking legal analysis of the current legislation and future frameworks; organizing citizenship-related events; carrying out sensitization and training; facilitating secondments of international experts to key government agencies; and promoting accession to the statelessness Conventions. In 2011, UNHCR will provide technical assistance to both Governments for the drafting of new citizenship legislation in the context of the separation, as a new State, of Southern Sudan.

(iii) Ensuring an environment safe from violence and exploitation

While asylum remains strong and resilient in some countries in Africa, in 2010 UNHCR witnessed situations where gender-based violence, including all forms of sexual abuse, remain prevalent. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo mass rape and other human rights violations were reported in Fizi, in South Kivu, in January 2011. In 2010, UNHCR worked closely with the Government in co-leading the prevention and protection component of the national strategy against sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and carried out a number of interventions in this area. In 2011, UNHCR will enhance its protection response in eastern DRC through the deployment of 32 additional protection staff. The Office is also planning to implement a pilot project on firewood collection as a preventive measure to reduce SGBV. The pilot project aims to reduce exposure to sexual violence for women and children in returnee communities, limit environmental degradation, and reduce tensions among communities.

C. Financial information

For its ongoing programmes in Africa, UNHCR's Global Needs Assessment (GNA) budget for 2011 totals some US\$ 1.5 billion. The Office has continued to respond to new emergencies or changing situations resulting in new operational and budgetary requirements.

At the end of 2010, UNHCR made US\$ 3 million available from the Operational Reserve to deploy additional staff to countries affected by the situation in Côte d'Ivoire and to procure and pre-position basic relief items. An appeal of some US\$ 43.8 million in supplementary funding was launched in February 2011 to respond to the initial needs of the refugees, displaced persons and affected local communities.

In February 2011, UNHCR sought donor support to meet the US\$ 14.6 million needed to implement the joint UNHCR/UNDP programme to support the *Détachement intégré de sécurité*, in ensuring security in and around refugee and IDP camps in eastern and southern Chad. Also in February, UNHCR presented the financial requirements to respond to the situation in Sudan, which totalled US\$ 53.4 million.
