

A Somali refugee who crossed the Gulf of Aden is picked up by the Yemen authorities.





MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

- The global financial crisis has hit the major refugee-hosting countries in the region particularly hard, increasing the pressure on their fragile economies and overburdened infrastructure. Despite these difficulties, the governments of these countries have continued to be generous and hospitable to refugees and asylum-seekers.

- At the end of January 2009, some 310,600 Iraqi refugees were registered with UNHCR in the countries neighbouring Iraq. Of these, 31 per cent have specific protection or assistance needs. The generous support of the international community has allowed UNHCR to expand its programmes and preserve asylum space for Iraqi refugees in the region.

- The year 2008 witnessed a 70 per cent increase in the number of people involved in mixed migration movements to and through Yemen. More than 50,000 people, mostly Somalis and Ethiopians, made the perilous voyage across the Gulf of Aden in smugglers' boats. Some 950 persons were reported dead or

missing at sea. It was estimated that at the end of 2008 there were more than 140,000 refugees in Yemen. Of these, some 57,000 were registered with UNHCR. The situation deteriorated in October 2008, when severe floods led to the displacement of 25,000 people and brought the number of internally displaced Yemenis to 100,000.

- 2008 also saw a surge in the movement of asylum-seekers and migrants, mostly from Eritrea, Ethiopia and Sudan, to Egypt. Some of the migrants attempted to cross from Egypt into Israel illegally, raising serious protection challenges. UNHCR received reports of several returns from Israel without prior verification of protection needs, as well of hundreds of Eritreans detained and deported from Egypt. The Office is in talks with the authorities in both Israel and Egypt on ways to improve protection in such situations.

- The voluntary repatriation of Mauritanian refugees from Senegal continued in 2008, and by

the end of the year more than 7,500 refugees had returned with UNHCR assistance. Delays in the issuance of identification documents and the allocation of agricultural land slowed the pace of the repatriation. It is expected that the majority of the Mauritanian refugees remaining in Senegal (12,000) and Mali (1,500) will repatriate by June 2009.

- The implementation of UNHCR's 10-Point Plan of Action on Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration is increasingly recognized by governments and non-governmental entities as a valid framework for reconciling States' migration management interests with the imperatives of refugee protection.

- UNHCR continued to protect and assist the Sahrawi refugees in the Tindouf camps in Algeria. The Office worked with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara to implement the Confidence-Building Measures (CBM) programme aimed at facilitating contacts between the Sahrawi refugees in the Tindouf camps and their families in Western Sahara.

Working environment

In Iraq, where security is tenuous and absorption capacity limited, conditions are not yet conducive to mass voluntary repatriation. Nonetheless, as the situation is showing signs of improvement, an increasing number of Iraqis, particularly internally displaced persons (IDPs), are returning spontaneously to their original home areas. Refugee returns are expected to increase in 2009.

The humanitarian situation of people of concern to UNHCR in Yemen remained dire. Though additional international support in 2008 enabled the Office to expand its protection and assistance programmes in the country significantly, substantial gaps in the response to the basic needs of refugees and asylum-seekers remain. Security conditions in some parts of the country hindered the planned extension of the needs assessment survey to cover IDPs.

The Egyptian and Israeli authorities view irregular migration movements, accompanied by attempts to enter Israel illegally, as a major security issue. UNHCR has appealed to the authorities to adhere to the principle of *non-refoulement* and to grant the Office access to

the absence of national and regional strategies and refugee-protection safeguards.

UNHCR implemented a series of activities in 2008 under the framework of the Confidence-Building Measures (CBM) programme for Western Sahara. These included family visits and free telephone contacts between refugees in the Tindouf camps in Algeria and their family members in the Territory. By the end of 2008, the total number of applications for family visits since the beginning of the programme in 2004 stood at 41,000. Some 7,600 of those who applied, mostly women, children and the elderly, have already made family visits.

Achievements and impact

In 2008, UNHCR's objectives in the region were to:

- *Meet the basic humanitarian and social needs of refugees and other people of concern*

Refugees in need and other people of concern to UNHCR in the region were provided with basic material, medical and educational assistance as well as social support. The programme for Iraqi



detained asylum-seekers. Nonetheless, several asylum-seekers were returned by Israel and hundreds of Eritrean asylum-seekers were reportedly detained and deported from Egypt. With the exception of a group of 179 persons detained in the Aswan prison, the Office has not obtained access to the detained Eritrean asylum-seekers.

The mixed movement of asylum-seekers and migrants to and through North Africa continues to create serious challenges for governments, international organizations and non-governmental entities alike. The arrival of tens of thousands of people, mostly from sub-Saharan Africa, overstretched governments' limited migration management capacity and hurt the overall protection climate in the region. The situation was aggravated by

refugees covered a large spectrum of activities, including the provision of food, cash grants, non-food items, health care and education, interventions to prevent and address sexual and gender-based violence, and legal and social counselling.

Some 560,000 medical referrals were made on behalf of Iraqi refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic and Jordan. Approximately 20,000 particularly vulnerable families and some 39,000 individuals in the two countries benefited from monthly cash assistance. In Syria, another 178,000 refugees benefited from the distribution of food and non-food items. In the 2007-2008 academic year, 91,000 Iraqi children attended formal and informal schools or vocational activities in the region. About 82,000 pupils were

registered for educational activities in the 2008-2009 academic year.

UNHCR worked with WFP and other partners to provide food and non-food assistance to the Sahrawi refugees in the Tindouf camps. The Office also provided humanitarian assistance to Somali refugees, while IDPs in Yemen were assisted with basic non-food items, including tents.

○ *Protect Iraqi refugees in the countries neighbouring Iraq and refugees and IDPs in Iraq in accordance with international law and standards, including protection against refoulement and other forms of mistreatment*

Funding for activities in countries of asylum, the provision of more resettlement places, and host governments' commitment to the principle of *non-refoulement* have helped maintain a decent level of protection for Iraqi refugees in the region. The Office expanded its protection activities inside Iraq and some 14 protection and assistance centres (PACs) and 34 mobile teams were active on behalf of refugees, returnees and IDPs. Between March and December 2008, UNHCR visited 707 locations inside Iraq to monitor protection.

○ *Enhance the capacities of governments in the region, thus promoting the establishment of an international protection regime*

The relevance of the 10-Point Plan of Action on the protection of refugees in mixed migration movements was further strengthened. The Final Document issued by the 2008 General Coordinating meeting between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference referred to the 10-Point Plan as a valid framework for the reconciliation of refugee-protection imperatives with States' migration management interests.

Work continued in Mauritania to bring the country's recently established asylum procedure into full compliance with international standards. In Morocco, work on the establishment of a National Bureau for Refugees made significant progress. Finally, UNHCR organized a series of refugee law training activities for government officials and parliamentarians in a number of countries in the region.

○ *Develop dynamic partnerships with key stakeholders to address refugee and IDP issues in a comprehensive and collective manner*

UNHCR intensified its efforts to foster dynamic partnerships in the region. A joint UNHCR-League of Arab States conference on asylum and migration for Arab Parliamentarians was organized in Egypt in

October 2008, and a follow-up conference is planned for July 2009 in Tunisia. A partnership agreement was concluded with the Libyan NGO, the National Committee for Youth Voluntary Work.

The ongoing development of new partnerships in the region is aimed at ensuring a better response by governments and other partners to the protection and assistance needs of people of concern to UNHCR. In Iraq, Syria and Jordan, UNHCR worked closely with government counterparts as well as national and international NGOs to provide assistance and durable solutions to Iraqi refugees and displaced persons.

○ *Work in partnership with governments, NGOs and other stakeholders to find and implement durable solutions for refugees*

In 2008, more than 195,000 Iraqi IDPs and 25,000 Iraqi refugees returned home. UNHCR began reintegration activities to ensure the sustainability of return. More than 250,000 returnees and IDPs benefited from such activities in 2008.

UNHCR has developed and began using an individual case management strategy to ensure that Iraqi refugees who wish to repatriate, despite the prevailing security conditions in Iraq, are protected and assisted. In Mauritania, reintegration activities were carried out in partnership with the government agency, *Association pour la Lutte contre la Pauvreté et le Sous-développement* (ALPD), to ensure the sustainability of the voluntary repatriation of Mauritanian refugees.

In Yemen, the recommendations provided by a UNHCR-ILO assessment in 2008 on the local integration and self-reliance of urban refugees will be implemented in 2009. In Egypt, UNHCR worked with ILO on an analysis of self-reliance opportunities.

Furthermore, in 2008 the Office submitted more than 33,000 resettlement cases from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and other countries in the region to the major resettlement countries. Some 20,000 people departed for resettlement during the year. The Office estimates the number of registered Iraqi refugees still in need of resettlement at some 65,000.

Constraints

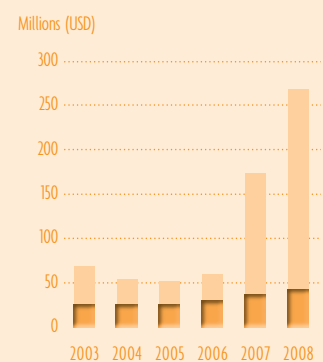
The absence of adequate national asylum systems, combined with wide-ranging security concerns, constrained refugee protection and assistance in the region. Several ongoing conflicts and deteriorating economic conditions in the Horn of Africa resulted in a sharp increase in mixed migration movements to Yemen. The situation in Yemen was further complicated by the absence of a national asylum

Financial information

Refugee operations in the MENA region were well-funded in 2008. The Iraq Operation received nearly 98 per cent funding against the approved supplementary budget of USD 271 million. However, in other operations, requirements grew in the course of the year and not all emerging needs could be covered by existing resources and staffing. In Yemen, requirements increased from some USD 9 million in 2007 to nearly USD 18 million in 2008. The low level of funding for the IDP programme in Yemen posed a major challenge to the operation.

Expenditure in the Middle East and North Africa 2003-2008

■ Annual budget
■ Supplementary budget



system capable of distinguishing between refugees and economic migrants. Furthermore, security risks hampered UNHCR's access to persons of concern in parts of the country.

Without a political solution to the Western

Sahara dispute, UNHCR will not be able to find durable solutions for the Sahrawi refugees in the Tindouf camps in Algeria. These refugees remain completely dependent on international assistance. ■

Budget and expenditure in the Middle East and North Africa (USD)						
Country	Final budget			Expenditure		
	Annual budget	Supplementary budget	Total	Annual budget	Supplementary budget	Total
North Africa						
Algeria	8,372,630	1,091,015	9,463,645	7,407,744	778,177	8,185,921
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	2,262,124	248,989	2,511,113	1,711,666	176,665	1,888,331
Mauritania	1,678,843	4,705,324	6,384,166	1,247,124	4,510,281	5,757,405
Morocco	1,373,145	384,138	1,757,283	1,354,976	265,180	1,620,156
Tunisia	484,135	236,326	720,461	483,170	156,118	639,288
Western Sahara	0	3,294,729	3,294,729	0	2,791,790	2,791,790
Regional activities ¹	0	1,982,393	1,982,393	0	1,374,225	1,374,225
Subtotal	14,170,877	11,942,913	26,113,790	12,204,680	10,052,437	22,257,117
Middle East						
Egypt	5,125,026	2,803,602	7,928,628	4,991,669	2,003,536	6,995,205
Iraq	407,337	51,089,623	51,496,960	334,744	50,372,657	50,707,401
Israel	1,897,919	0	1,897,919	1,753,201	0	1,753,201
Jordan	1,183,449	49,884,309	51,067,758	1,066,544	44,489,944	45,556,488
Lebanon	2,868,526	6,548,991	9,417,517	2,611,592	6,194,481	8,806,073
Saudi Arabia	2,825,203	400,000	3,225,203	2,761,054	394,191	3,155,245
Syrian Arab Republic	1,238,911	128,297,716	129,536,627	1,103,582	107,019,047	108,122,629
United Arab Emirates	2,158,503	0	2,158,503	2,133,220	0	2,133,220
Yemen	11,761,739	8,188,937	19,950,676	10,860,232	4,810,579	15,670,811
Regional activities ²	0	5,571,625	5,571,625	0	3,519,163	3,519,163
Subtotal	29,466,612	252,784,803	282,251,415	27,615,838	218,803,598	246,419,436
Total	43,637,489	264,727,716	308,365,205	39,820,518	228,856,035	268,676,553

Note: Excludes indirect support costs that are recovered from contributions against supplementary programmes and the "New or additional activities - mandate related" (NAM) Reserve.

¹ Includes activities for refugee protection within broader migration movements in North Africa.

² Includes emergency assistance for Iraqi refugees and others of concern.

Voluntary contributions to the Middle East and North Africa Region (USD)			
Donor	Annual budget	Supplementary budget	Total
Australia		5,831,600	5,831,600
Australia for UNHCR	63,216	9,969	73,186
Austria	256,610		256,610
Belgium		1,446,345	1,446,345
Brighter Vision Foundation (Liechtenstein)		18,600	18,600
Canada*	511,247	1,658,284	2,169,531
Central Emergency Response Fund		7,078,496	7,078,496
Charities Aid Foundation (United Kingdom)		1,143	1,143
Croatia		37,200	37,200
Denmark	81,948	5,111,721	5,193,669
España con ACNUR (Spain)		14,576	14,576
Estonia*		92,439	92,439

Donor	Annual budget	Supplementary budget	Total
European Commission	5,218,921	17,314,110	22,533,031
Finland*		1,906,940	1,906,940
France		881,195	881,195
Germany	60,233	4,757,713	4,817,946
HQ online donations		18,107	18,107
HRH Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein (United Arab Emirates)	22,500		22,500
Iceland*		93,000	93,000
Iraq		7,440,000	7,440,000
Ireland		2,304,665	2,304,665
Italy		6,181,624	6,181,624
Japan	1,500,000	469,255	1,969,255
Japan Association for UNHCR	263	338,528	338,791
Kuwait		930,000	930,000
Liechtenstein	87,719		87,719
Netherlands	2,296,008	2,513,513	4,809,521
New Zealand		512,988	512,988
Norway*	242,148	1,341,082	1,583,230
Poland		294,768	294,768
Private donors in Canada		15,915	15,915
Private donors in Greece	125	3,227	3,352
Private donors in Syria		29,143	29,143
Private Donors in the Netherlands		8,649	8,649
Private donors in the United Kingdom		8,327	8,327
Red Crescent Society (United Arab Emirates)	13,924		13,924
Spain	259,067	2,710,103	2,969,170
<i>Stichting Vluchteling</i> (Netherlands)		15,552	15,552
Sweden	5,392,912	6,371,626	11,764,538
Switzerland	682,164	1,014,827	1,696,990
UN Millennium Development Goals	7,500		7,500
United Kingdom	54,962	5,862,487	5,917,450
United States of America*	8,522,802	167,620,600	176,143,402
USA For UNHCR	109,600	156,240	265,840
Total	25,383,870	252,414,556	277,798,426

* Countries contributed the following funds to the Middle East and North Africa region:

Earmarking	Donor	Annual budget	Supplementary budget	Total
MENA Region	Canada	511,247		511,247
	Estonia		92,439	92,439
	Finland		1,906,940	1,906,940
	Iceland		93,000	93,000
	Norway		651,362	651,362
	United States of America		108,252,000	108,252,000
Total		511,247	110,995,740	111,506,988

Note: Contributions shown exclude indirect support costs that are recovered from contributions against supplementary programmes and the "New or additional activities - mandate related" (NAM) Reserve.