



UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL
ASSEMBLY



Distr.
GENERAL

A/36/214
21 April 1981

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Thirty-sixth session
Item 12 of the preliminary list*

REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Humanitarian assistance to refugees in Djibouti

Report of the Secretary-General

1. In its resolution 35/182 of 15 December 1980, the General Assembly, having endorsed the report of the mission to Djibouti and the recommendations contained therein (see A/35/409, annex), invited the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to continue his humanitarian assistance to the refugees in Djibouti.
2. The General Assembly also requested the High Commissioner to continue to ensure that adequate assistance programmes were organized for the refugees, to keep the refugee situation in Djibouti under constant review and to mobilize the necessary assistance to the Government of Djibouti to cope effectively with the refugee situation.
3. The Secretary-General was requested to report to the Economic and Social Council at its first regular session of 1981 and to the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session on the implementation of Assembly resolution 35/182. A report prepared by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, describing the humanitarian assistance being provided to refugees in Djibouti, is annexed hereto.

* A/36/50.

ANNEX

Assistance to refugees in Djibouti

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The number of refugees in Djibouti increased sharply in 1980. A survey undertaken by the Government revealed the presence of some 20,000 refugees of unconfirmed status, dispersed in Djibouti city (10,000 more than previously supposed). With the continued movement of refugees during the first few months of 1980, the total number of refugees as at June 1980 was assessed at 42,000, constituting a significant percentage of Djibouti's total population.
2. Many of the refugees are of rural background, but their settlement in agriculture in Djibouti is largely impracticable, owing to the harsh climatic conditions, the lack of suitable land and the persistent drought in the area. Some 17,000 refugees are accommodated in the two camps of Dikhil and Ali Sabieh, where relief assistance has been provided since 1977 and where the programme of assistance of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has continued to be implemented by the Government, supplemented by contributions from the World Food Programme (WFP) and a number of voluntary agencies.
3. Many refugees of urban background continue to live in precarious conditions in the capital city. Their presence weighs heavily upon the economy of the country, particularly in view of the low living standards and the high unemployment rate, estimated at 50 per cent of the labour force. Intensified efforts have been made by UNHCR to promote counselling services for these refugees, including many students for whom the only solution lies in placement in schools or colleges in other countries. Meanwhile, plans are under way for a transit centre designed to house refugees and improve their chances of resettlement and employment through vocational training.
4. With the goal of bringing about a gradual shift of emphasis towards the long-term objective of attaining self-sufficiency for rural refugees in camps, a pilot project, begun in 1979, was designed to settle a number of refugee families and an equal number of local families in an irrigated farming scheme at Moulloud. Since the application of schemes such as this would not be possible on a large scale, increased efforts are also being made to facilitate the settlement of refugees of rural background in handicrafts, fishing and other appropriate activities. Emphasis is also being placed on the construction of housing, extension of health education, women's education, primary education, assistance to self-education groups, as well as to language and teachers' courses.
5. The marked increase in the number of refugees in 1980 placed a very heavy burden on the meagre resources of Djibouti. This situation, brought to the attention of the Economic and Social Council at its first regular session of 1980,

led to the sending of a United Nations interagency mission to the country in June of that year to assess the needs of the refugees.

6. The interagency mission recommended an intensification of the assistance programme of UNHCR in certain areas, and the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees at its thirty-first session in October 1980, approved increases in the allocations for assistance in respect of local integration of refugees in 1980 and 1981. These increases amounted to \$US 1.3 million for the latter part of 1980 (bringing the total expenditure for the year to close to \$US 5 million) and an additional \$US 2.36 million for 1981 (bringing the total allocations for the year to some \$US 7 million). On 15 December 1980, the General Assembly, by resolution 35/182, endorsed the report of the interagency mission (A/35/409, annex), took note with appreciation of the High Commissioner's oral report to the Assembly and invited the High Commissioner to continue his humanitarian assistance to the refugees in Djibouti.

II. FOLLOW-UP TO THE UNITED NATIONS INTERAGENCY MISSION TO DJIBOUTI

7. As has been mentioned above, the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has approved intensified assistance by UNHCR as a result of the United Nations interagency mission. The increased allocation of \$US 1.3 million for local integration measures in 1980 was used to provide supplementary food rations to benefit those refugees who had not been able to avail themselves of UNHCR assistance in the past, in particular urban refugees and new arrivals. Provision was also made for the supply of additional domestic utensils, clothing and blankets. Increased assistance was also provided in connexion with the transportation and distribution of relief supplies and the construction of additional storage facilities. A further strengthening of existing health care programmes was undertaken.

8. Of the \$US 2.36 million additional assistance for 1981, \$US 1 million will be used for the procurement of supplementary food and for costs related to the handling and transportation of commodities and \$US 500,000 to purchase domestic utensils, clothing and blankets. Further funds are also earmarked for the construction of storage facilities and for financing the second phase of a ~~xxxxxu~~ construction project aimed at providing traditional housing (toucoules) for refugees in the camps of Ali Sabieh and Dikhil. This project is intended to create housing and sanitary facilities to accommodate 2,000 families at present living in tents. For the transit centre benefiting young urban refugees, an additional amount of \$US 250,000 is to be provided to cover running and related costs.

9. Some brief examples of implementation of these increased assistance efforts are given below.

10. The efforts of UNHCR to provide regular food assistance, and supplementary food as needed, to rural refugees in the camps of Ali Sabieh and Dikhil continued through 1980. The self-help construction scheme for housing in the camps proceeded well. Five hundred families in each camp can now be accommodated in traditional toucoules built of stone. UNHCR procured a prefabricated

tuberculosis ward which, together with a similar ward provided earlier, will, upon completion, permit a tuberculosis centre to become operational near the refugee camp at Ali Sabieh. Fresh food was provided for mother and child centres. Refugee children were able to benefit from Koranic education, the expenses of which were met from another UNHCR project. An extension of the educational facilities to allow regular primary and vocational training will be implemented during the current year.

11. A three-year pilot project for irrigated farming gave satisfactory results: with further financial input from UNHCR in 1980, 24 families of refugees and nationals produced and sold a variety of vegetables. Funds for the purchase of prefabricated buildings for provision of a community centre for the area were made available by a voluntary agency.
12. Other UNHCR projects covered assistance towards transport, vehicle costs, housing of project supervisors, supplementary aid etc.
13. UNHCR obligated funds for erection, infrastructure and furniture/equipment related to a transit centre with some vocational training facilities at Ali Sabieh to benefit urban refugees. Assistance was granted to educational groups of young urban refugees
14. To ease the situation of refugees in the city of Djibouti, UNHCR undertook to place refugees in other countries in Africa through educational assistance or outside Africa through permanent resettlement. Several hundred refugees of primarily urban origin thus departed from Djibouti under either of these two solutions.
15. Under the revised 1980 programme, funds were obligated mainly for additional procurement of food and of vehicles to transport relief supplies, for the local construction of a warehouse, for the purchase of miscellaneous supplies for refugees and for the granting of emergency assistance towards health needs. In close co-operation with a voluntary agency, UNHCR was able to obtain a donation in kind of blankets for refugees and to arrange for medical personnel to assist the Government in reversing the critical health situation reported in refugee camps.
16. While many of the above assistance activities are in the implementing stage, UNHCR recently obligated funds for the procurement of some medical supplies reported by the interagency mission as lacking everywhere. Depending on the state of needs, further funds are available for the construction of additional housing and storage facilities in the refugee camp areas, supplementary food etc., as required. A voluntary agency pledged assistance for the provision of household items. Close contact is kept with Governments with a view to funding this important programme. Obligations for UNHCR programmes in Djibouti totalled approximately \$US 5 million in 1980.
17. Programmes approved by UNHCR in 1981 for the benefit of refugees in Djibouti total over \$US 7 million. Recent increases in the staffing of the UNHCR branch office administering the programme will make it possible to draw maximum benefit for the refugees in need of assistance in Djibouti.