

ORGANISING COMMITTEE FOR THE RETURN OF POLITICAL EXILES

ANNUAL REPORT.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:-

1. Overview	page 2
2. OCRPE's main objectives in the period under review.	page 3
3. How OCRPE went about achieving these objectives	page 3
4. Major activities of the OCRPE - National - Regional - International - In relation to Govt. - In relation to other org.'s	page 4
5. Interaction with ANC structures at all levels - Other departments - Regions - Missions	page 11
6. Problems Encountered	page 12
7. Personnel in OCRPE	page 14
8. The Way Forward	page 13
9. Elections.	page 14

1. Overview.

This report seeks to cover the period between the 28th February 1992 and 28th February 1993. It will give a very broad overview of the life and activities of the OCRPE.

It will be made clear here that despite the problems encountered, we managed to fulfil the tasks entrusted to us by the Organisation.

The year under review saw the involvement of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in the repatriation and reintegration process of South African Exiles following the signing of the Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) between the UNHCR and the South African Government. This development, understandably, carried with it new dimensions and new challenges for us. It meant that we had to shift our main emphasis.

In this period, we also had to try and keep in touch with the political developments in our country and to seek ways and means whereby our activities would seek to enhance the process of democratic change.

In our activities within the year under review, we invariably had to interact with other departments and structures of the ANC. This process of coordination helped us a lot in realising our set objectives. The same applied to other organisations. We refer here to such organisations as the NCCR, Batlagae Trust, Matla Trust, Kindernothilfe (SA), Training institutions, and the business community.

Repatriation and reintegration of exiles, by its very nature, required of us us to establish and sustained health relationships with some sectors of the international Community including the UNHCR. This has been very helpful.

3.

We also tried to maintain good relations with some government structures and departments for the benefit of the programme. On the whole, our interaction with the government has been health, except for one area (TPA and reception centre) which we hope will be resolved in due cause.

2. OCRPE's Main Objectives in the Period Under Review.

Whereas at its inception, OCRPE's main objective was the orderly and dignified return of all exiles, the involvement of the UNHCR somewhat relieved us in that this task was then taken up by the latter in conjunction with the NCCR. Our primary objective, then, became that of seeing to the reintegration of our returned comrades into society. We were conscious of the fact that we were faced with a mammoth problem given the dire socio-economic situation obtaining in South Africa at present.

Here were thousands of exiles who were returning to a country ravaged by the scourge of apartheid. Violence was continuing unabated in the Townships. There was massive homelessness, joblessness and poverty.

The majority of returnees had no marketable skills. Many who had left South Africa as youngsters were returning with families of their own. In a number of cases their spouses were of non-South African origin who had to assimilate into a new language and culture.

4.

3. How OCRPE went about achieving this objective.

In order to achieve the set objective we realise that ours was to help returnees in the following manner:

- a. Education and Training
- b. Job Placement
- c. Income generation projects for the returnees
- d. Finding accommodation for the destitute
- e. Helping returnees obtain the necessary SA documents
- f. Helping returnees to have access to social services.
- g. Tracing of next-of-kin

We decided to structure ourselves accordingly. We established and strengthened a referral system whereby comrades could benefit from existing resources in the country. We set up an Employment desk, the Education and Training desk and the Projects desks. We also strengthened our work within the NCCR so that returnees could receive necessary assistance.

4. Major Activities of the OCRPE.

The activities embarked upon in the period under review are as listed under 3. a. to g. above.

National.

All these activities were by and large coordinated from the national office of the OCRPE. This was mainly because we did not succeed in establishing corresponding structures in the regions because of financial constraints.

The exception here was Southern Natal where a group of our returnees established what they call the Returnees Repatriation and Reintegration Committee. They were offered use of an office by the Region. The comrades there are doing very commendable work. At the present there are two comrades who are working full time on a voluntary basis. These comrades have now been working for more than a year. Considering that the comrades are unemployed returnees, we think it will serve well if some form of an incentive was made available to them.

a. Education and Training.

We managed to place a number of returnees in educational and training institutions. Educational opportunities were made possible through bursary assistance by such organisations as Batlagae Trust, Kindernothilfe (SA), ASCOP, SASET and EDT.

A number of returnees has been placed at such training institutions as the Peninsular Technikon, Vaal Triangle Technikon, Chamdor, Wits Technikon, Birnam College, Damelin Institute, Germiston Training Centre, Wits University, University of Cape Town, University of the Western Cape, University of the North, University of Durban-Westville, Fort Hare, The Academy of Learning, Zakheni Computing, Community Education Computer Society (CECS) and the African Institute of Technology (AIT).

- 80 comrades have been trained in legal, executive and general secretarial courses
- 240 people have graduated in accountancy, bookkeeping, public relations and personnel management, security, electronics, computer, marketing and travelling
- 225 returnees received training in business and commercial fields

- 521 young adults were trained in various technical and vocational fields like motor mechanics, welding, carpentry, electrical wiring, dressmaking and designing, driving, TV and video repair, refrigeration, upholstery, cobblery, etc.
- 192 students went through education bridging courses
- 2008 students were assisted with bursaries at tertiary level

We welcomed the decision by the UNHCR to purchase the Eskom Training Centre at Henly-on-Klip (Vereeniging) for the purpose of offering training to returnees. We think that when this deal is concluded many of our people will be able to benefit from it. This is a centre that, in the long run, will play a very important part in the development of our country as a whole.

b. Job Placement.

This has been a singularly difficult area because the business world continues to regard the returnees with suspicion and mistrust. Qualifications obtained in the former socialist countries and in Cuba are not recognised in South Africa. The exception is only the medical profession. However, because of our concerted efforts, we are beginning to witness some positive responses.

More than 50 qualifications breakdown documents have been sent to various companies and government institutions. Of those who responded;

Spoornet interview 66 returnees. A number of these have received confirmation letters

Siemens S.A. has employed 7 returnees and are interested in 2 more this year

6.

Amalgamated Beverage Industries (Coca-Cola) has offered 14 vacancies for licenced drivers

Flite Star Airways is interested in air-hostesses

General Accident has interviewed applicants out of the 78 CV's we sent to them

Murray & Roberts Civils has employed one returnee

Olset Television Production Company has requested CV's for journalists and engineers

Standard and First National Banks have requested for CV's

Toyota (SA) has undertaken to train our people in the engineering field with the aim of employing them upon completion of their training

The Carlton Hotel has employed three drivers

The Blackchain Supermarket has employed one accountant

Apart from the afore-mentioned, we managed to assist 427 with job placements, 22 on temporary employment and 10 with community organisations. 30 returnees received training attachments and internship.

c. Income generating projects.

We have encouraged returnees to embark upon small scale income-generating projects. We consider this to be very significant in fostering independence and self-reliance among the people who have returned from exile. To this end the NCCR established a Development Unit, with our active participation, to organise and direct this process.

The UNHCR provided the initial sum of R1 million. The EEC pledged R10,5 million with the initial R2,2 million made available for the second half of 1992. Other donors are HEKS (Switzerland), KFS (Austria), DANCHURCHAID and the WCC.

A loan scheme was developed whereby returnees are given a sum of R6 000.00. Applications for loans not exceeding R6 000.00 are approved the NCCR regional level whilst those that are beyond are approved by the NCCR National Screening Committee.

As of now, 255 comrades have benefited at a cost of some R2,5 million nationally. We expect this number to grow.

d. Accommodation for the destitute.

This has also proved to be a most problematic area. A number of comrades have returned with no home/relatives to go to.

These destitute people are currently housed at such places as the Sebokeng Reception Centre which is now threatened with closure (more on this later). Others are housed at Moira Henderson in Cape Town.

The NCCR has managed to acquire plots at Orange Farm where about 40 families now stay. The TPA has also promised to make plots available for destitute returnees at Orange Farm.

We facilitated the process whereby Matla Trust was able to acquire land for the construction of a Reception Centre. The Italian Government has pledged a sum of R10 million for the construction of this centre to house the veterans and orphans for up to 5 years. The centre (to be built in Vosloorus) will also offer vocational and primary education facilities. It is envisaged that, after five years, the returnees will be able to stand on their own. In that event, and provided a democratic government is in place, the Centre shall be donated to the local community.

e. Helping returnees with documentation.

We, invariably, referred returnees to the ANC Legal Department where they were given the necessary assistance.

f. Referral for Social Services.

In the period under review, a number of cases were referred to other agencies for assistance.

- The bulk was referred to the NCCR
- Others were referred to educational institutions for placement
- There are those we referred to Housing Agencies for accommodation.
- In the light of the fact that the NCCR is not in a position at present to give grants to returnees, we have been referring people to Operation Hunger where they have been assisted with food.

g. Tracing of the next-of-kin.

We assisted returnees with tracing their relatives. In this area we have not been very successful because we still have people staying at Reception Centres precisely because they cannot be united with their families. We, however, try our utmost. The main cause for this state of affairs is the apartheid policy of forced removals and the violence that has continued to ravage our country.

We also assist relatives to be in contact with their loved ones who still remain in exile. ANC Missions abroad have been very helpful in this regard.

Regional.

As mention already mentioned, OCRPE did not manage to establish corresponding structures in the regions. We relied heavily on NCCR regional offices which are numerically fewer than the ANC regions. However, where we have no NCCR regional offices, ANC regions were very helpful.

We must state here that coordination at regional level could have been better had we had the necessary human and material resources.

International.

Our activities internationally were within the sphere of facilitating the smooth running of the programme and of fund-raising.

a. UNHCR and IOM.

Since the involvement of the UNHCR in the repatriation programme we have been in close interaction with them. The same applied to the IOM, which is responsible for transporting returnees home.

The UNHCR had decided that the repatriation programme in South Africa should fold at the end of 1992. This would have put returnees in a very difficult situation because thousands of our compatriots still remained outside the borders of our country.

In October 1992, we were invited to attend the UNHCR Executive Committee meeting in Geneva. We, therefore, used this opportunity to have that decision reversed. We are happy to report that that meeting recommitted the UN High Commissioner to continued involvement in the repatriation process and to the protection of returnees.

Our relations with the UNHCR are good although some problems are encountered where services to returnees are concerned (See 6. below)

b. The following have been very helpful in making our programmes possible through generous donations

- SIDA (Sweden)
- NORAD (Norway)
- Free Mandela Foundation (USA)
- DANIDA (Danmark)

- British Consulate
- German Consulate
- World University Services.
- Interfund

We are looking forward to continued support.

c. UNICEF

We made contact with Unicef, who have since opened offices in Johannesburg. Unicef has committed itself to assist in the reintegration of returnees, mainly women and children.

The South African Government.

In the year under review, we maintained healthy and principled working relationship with the government structures. We refer mainly to the Departments of Home Affairs and Justice. This was necessary for the acquisition of relevant documentation for returnees and also to ensure that our people are indemnified.

The problem arose when the Transvaal demanded to that we remove our people from the Sebokeng Reception Centre. After discussion with them we managed to have our occupation of the centre extended to the end of April. Our position is that the government is politically and morally bound to offer reception facilities to the returnees and that this and any other centre should be made available as long as the Memorandum Of Understanding signed between the UNHCR and the Government is in operation.

Other Organisations:

The main organisation through which we carried forward our activities is the NCCR. We participate in all the structures of this organisation nationally and in the PWV region. In other regions, representatives of the ANC Regional Committees play in NCCR regional committees.

With other organisations that are relevant to our work, we have worked through a referral system.

5. Interaction with ANC structures at all levels.

We would not have been able to fulfil our tasks as we did had there be no healthy relationship and coordination with all ANC structures. We managed to get all the necessary assistance we needed from within the Organisation.

ANC Missions and regions have been particularly helpful where the tracing of the next-of-kin was concerned.

ANC Missions have also been inundated by comrades wishing to return home, especially since the UNHCR has had to suspend repatriation as a result of problems faced by the NCCR (See 6. below). We were advised timely and as such we were able to assist.

Regions continue to bear the brunt as a result of returnees who come to the offices for assistance especially in the light of the non-availability of grant money.

Regions such as Natal and the PWV have had to tackle the problem of returnees who are victims of the on-going violence.

6. Problems Encountered.

The major problem we encountered was with the NCCR. This problem still remains unsolved. The problem is characterised by the following:

- the failure by the NCCR to account for UNHCR funds for the period December 1991 to December 1992 which makes an audit not possible at this stage
- The failure by the NCCR to produce a master-list of all the exiles who have returned
- Fraudulent activities that were uncovered last year which make the UNHCR and other donors reluctant to make funds available to NCCR until proper accounts are provided
- The unavailability of funds to the NCCR to service the returnees
- The suspension of flights for exiles who wish to return.

The religious constituent organisations in the NCCR (SACC, SACBC and WCRP) are now calling for the dissolution of the NCCR. It will be extremely difficult for us to avoid such an eventuality given the fact that, indeed, the NCCR is not delivering the goods.

The closure of the NCCR will inevitably bring a lot of pressure to bear upon the ANC.

7. The Way Forward.

About 16 000 exiles have now returned home. There are still some 4 500 exiles who have registered with the UNHCR and who are yet to be repatriated.

It is clear to us that at some point our structure will have to fold as repatriation is clearly nearing its end.

However, it is imperative to us that in the foreseeable future we need to expend our energies in reintegrating the thousands of returnees into society.

Also, given the fact that the NCCR is likely to dissolve, we will find ourselves having to perform the tasks currently entrusted to it (NCCR), namely reception, resettlement and reintegration of returnees, including those that are still outside the country.

8. Personnel in OCRPE.

Personnel in OCRPE stands as follows:-

Jackie Selebi - Head
 Carol Jack - Admin. Secretary
 Zanele Ntuli - Secretary
 Sidney Mbangula - Coord. (Training & Employment)
 Lindile Bavuma - Educ. & Training Officer
 Moses Maboitshego - Employment Officer
 Jabulani Dũmane - Coord. (Regions & NCCR)

9. The Role we will in the elections.

OCPRE has, since its inception been working closely people who have been in exile. We interact with them on a daily basis.

The role we see ourselves playing in the election process is that of boosting the ANC election machinery by providing a volunteers among returnees for the campaign. We will do that in consultation with our Elections Commission.

JACKIE SELEBI

DATE: _____