

South Africa in short

Main Objectives

- Strengthen the legal and institutional capacity of the Government through the implementation of national refugee legislation, institution-building and training.
- Achieve the economic independence of refugees through vocational training and income-generating activities.
- Find specific durable solutions for individual refugees, including voluntary repatriation and resettlement, where appropriate.
- Counter increasing signs of intolerance towards foreigners through public information and awareness campaigns.
- Strengthen preparedness for emergencies and response capacity through contingency planning.



WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Recent Developments

The majority of refugees and asylum-seekers residing in South Africa come from some of Africa's most troubled areas: the Great Lakes region, Angola and Somalia. The continuing instability in Angola and the Great Lakes region led to new arrivals of asylum-seekers and refugees and reduced the likelihood that refugees will begin to return to their countries of origin in the near future. In addition, Africans who are compelled to flee their countries often decide to seek asylum in South Africa due to the country's comparatively robust economy. Nonetheless, millions of South Africans face economic and social hardship. The presence of an increasing number of asylum-seekers and refugees has therefore led to worrying levels of public resentment and xenophobia.

In April 2000, the 1998 Refugee Act officially entered into force, swiftly followed by the promulgation of regulations to

implement it, establishing a solid foundation for refugee protection and assistance in South Africa. The new legislation modifies the refugee status determination procedure and provides for the issuance of identity cards to recognised refugees.

Constraints

Major challenges include the backlog of asylum applications, abuse of asylum procedures, the presence of large numbers of undocumented immigrants, and growing xenophobia. The new refugee legislation forbids asylum-seekers to seek employment (or enrol for study) while their refugee status is being determined (45 to 180 days). As a result, higher numbers of asylum-seekers are requesting assistance for food and shelter, putting additional demands on the limited resources of UNHCR and its implementing partners.

PLANNING FIGURES		
Population	Jan. 2001	Dec. 2001
Refugees / Asylum-seekers	60,000 ¹	75,000
Total	60,000	75,000

¹ Of this figure, some 9,000 refugees are assisted directly by UNHCR in co-operation with implementing partners.

TOTAL REQUIREMENTS • USD 5,412,610

STRATEGY

Protection and Solutions

UNHCR will work closely with the authorities to set in place fair, credible and efficient refugee status determination procedures and to reduce the backlog of first-instance asylum decisions. This co-operation is also intended to counter abuse of the system, contribute to reducing public hostility and, consequently, lifting obstacles to local integration. To support the Government's efforts to revamp the refugee status determination procedure, UNHCR has agreed on a strategy with the Department of Home Affairs involving: a project to clear the backlog of asylum applications (applicable to all those pending as at 31 March 2000); a financial contribution towards the production and issuance of identity cards for refugees; and the printing of anti-corruption posters and the hiring of interpreters. UNHCR will also provide training in refugee status determination and international refugee law. Unless the problems of corruption and abuse are effectively addressed within the framework of the new eligibility procedure, however, a backlog will soon re-emerge.

A network of five legal counsellors in major urban centres (Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban, Port Elizabeth and Cape Town) will continue to assist asylum-seekers and refugees nation-wide. In addition, co-operation with universities will be expanded to include the provision of legal services and psychosocial counselling for refugees.

UNHCR will continue to seek durable solutions for refugees with a focus on creating an environment conducive to local integration. UNHCR will build institutional capacity through training and carry out public awareness and information campaigns. The 'Roll Back Xenophobia' campaign, which began in Pretoria in 1999, will remain the principal tool in UNHCR's efforts to increase awareness and understanding of the plight of refugees in South Africa. The campaign, which is carried out jointly with national NGOs and local refugee forums and associations, includes radio programmes, media campaigns, as well as art and photo exhibits. UNHCR will intensify efforts to identify and involve new donors so as to expand the campaign's funding base.

Counselling and assistance will continue to be provided for refugees who opt for voluntary repatriation. On a limited scale, UNHCR will also help refugees who meet the established criteria to resettle abroad.

UNHCR will continue to organise contingency planning and training exercises for government officials to prepare for a possible mass influx of refugees. These will ensure that international protection and assistance standards are respected were an influx to occur.

Assistance

UNHCR will assist refugees to become self-sufficient as a vital corollary to lasting local integration. This will include providing support for primary and secondary education, vocational and skills training and language classes, income-generating projects and social and psychological counselling. Skills training will specifically target the needs of refugee women. Co-operation with the private sector will be strengthened to develop new initiatives, including job placements, to increase employment opportunities for asylum-seekers and refugees. At the same time, special attention will be paid to meeting the needs of women and children by providing limited emergency assistance in the form of food, accommodation and household items for extremely vulnerable refugees for a period of three to six months after arrival. UNHCR also will continue to participate in the Inter-agency Theme Groups on HIV/AIDS and gender. In 2001 this will involve implementing joint projects with UNFPA and UNAIDS on reproductive health for adolescent refugees.

Desired Impact

By the end of 2001, the backlog of asylum requests will have diminished considerably. The authorities will have begun to implement fair and efficient refugee status determination procedures. The streamlined eligibility procedure, better training of government officials and improved public awareness of the plight of refugees will help create an environment more conducive to the local integration of refugees. National partners dealing with refugee issues will have begun to develop the capacity to operate relatively independently of UNHCR's support.

ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Management

The Office of the Regional Director for Southern Africa is based in Pretoria and includes 26 staff (12 international and 13 national, as well as one Junior Professional Officer). The Regional Director oversees operations in 13 countries in the Southern African region, provides advice and deploys specialist staff, as needed, to field operations experiencing emergencies. In addition, the country office for South Africa, based in Pretoria, oversees operations in Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique and the Indian Ocean Islands (Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles). In 2001, the country office will have 29 staff (seven international and 21 national, as well as one Junior Professional Officer).

OFFICES

Pretoria

Co-ordination

UNHCR plans to work with a total of eleven NGOs (ten national and one international). There is, at present, no single government department responsible for co-ordinating refugee-related matters. To lay the basis for the formation of an inter-ministerial committee for refugee affairs, UNHCR will explore the possibility, in co-ordination with the National Consortium for Refugee Affairs, of providing draft policies on refugees for various line ministries (in the fields of education, welfare, labour and health). Key UN partners include UNDP, UNFPA and UNAIDS. The Office also co-operates closely with the UN Resident Co-ordinator on the Common Country Assessment and the United Nations Assistance Framework. South Africa and the UN system have identified integrated rural development as one of the pillars of their joint country strategy. UNHCR is expected to play an important role by providing expertise relating to forced and voluntary migration, conflict resolution and management and emergency preparedness. UNHCR will also continue to participate in the Inter-agency Theme Groups on HIV/AIDS and Gender. A regional voluntary repatriation project will be implemented in co-operation with IOM.

PARTNERS

Government Agencies

Department of Education
 Department of Foreign Affairs
 Department of Health
 Department of Home Affairs
 Department of Justice

NGOs

Cape Town Refugee Forum
 Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation
 Durban Refugee Forum
 Jesuit Refugee Service
 Lawyers for Human Rights
 Margaret Sanger Center International (South Africa)
 National Consortium for Refugee Affairs
 Planned Parenthood Association of South Africa
 South African Human Rights Commission
 University of Cape Town Legal Aid Clinic
 University of the Witwatersrand Law Clinic

Other

International Organisation for Migration

BUDGET (USD)

Activities and Services	Annual Programme
Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination ¹	485,081
Community Services	111,987
Domestic Needs/Household Support	63,388
Education	456,971
Food	18,927
Health/Nutrition	156,435
Income Generation	130,580
Legal Assistance	134,279
Operational Support (to Agencies)	624,680
Shelter/Other Infrastructure	59,779
Transport/Logistics	194,974
Total Operations	2,437,081
Programme Support ²	2,975,529
Total	5,412,610

¹ Includes USD 152,572 for the costs of the Regional Director's Office.

² Includes USD 1,673,222 for the costs of the Regional Director's Office.