

South Africa



Main objectives

Provide temporary assistance to the most vulnerable asylum-seekers and refugees; strengthen the legal and social framework which allows refugees to become self-reliant; help the Government and partners to build capacity to respond more effectively to refugee needs; and find alternative durable solutions for refugees.

Impact

- UNHCR supported the Department of Home Affairs' "Turn-around" efficiency drive, by offering advice and sharing best practices on refugee registration and status determination procedures, the issuance of refugee identity documents and other relevant matters. UNHCR donated computer equipment to support improved refugee registration and reduce the backlog of pending applications.
- The Government allowed asylum-seekers to work and study immediately after filing an asylum application whereas previously they were required to wait for six months.
- Needy refugees were exempted from fees when applying for permanent residence.
- The proportion of refugees holding identity documents increased from 33 per cent in 2003 to 49 per cent in 2004 (a precondition for accessing local services and a first step towards local integration).
- UNHCR provided emergency assistance to nearly 3,500 vulnerable individuals (40 per cent of them female) for a limited period.
- More than 1,100 children were assisted to attend school.
- UNHCR assisted 163 refugees with voluntary repatriation, and 56 refugees were resettled.
- Media coverage of refugees was much more positive.

Working environment

The context

In South Africa, the total number of persons of concern increased from 110,000 to almost 142,000. The number of recognized refugees increased from 26,000 to almost 27,000 while the backlog of pending asylum applications grew by 26 per cent. Only 1,600 decisions were taken, as the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) lacked the capacity to process more applications.

A greater number of HIV/AIDS-affected refugees approached UNHCR for counselling, information and assistance. While access to local HIV/AIDS-related services improved, notably with the Government decision to allow recognized refugees access to the public anti-retroviral treatment programme, the impact of HIV/AIDS on UNHCR's assistance and protection programmes was significant, draining both human and financial resources. For individuals unable to care for themselves, the Office provided home-based care services and a monthly allowance equivalent to the government social grant (in the expectation that recognized refugees would shortly become eligible to receive it).

The Department of Education demonstrated a willingness to ensure that all refugee children of primary school age were enrolled. Efforts are being made to appeal to the Department of Social Development and the relevant civic and professional organizations to act with a similar spirit of generosity and enhance access for refugees to public welfare programmes.

Constraints

The phenomenon of mixed flows of economic migrants and refugees continued to pose major challenges to the protection of refugees. In the absence of an immigration regime which allows economic migrants to enter easily and remain in the country legally, prospective immigrants abused the existing asylum procedure in an effort to legalize their stay, thus clogging the asylum procedure. Another major challenge is posed by criminal syndicates which abuse the asylum procedure and thereby tarnish the public image of refugees. It is estimated that among the many pending applications, as many as 80 per cent originate from non-conflict countries.

Persons of concern				
Main origin/Type of population	Total in country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Various countries (asylum-seekers)	114,800	15,000	-	-
DRC (refugees)	9,500	4,100	-	-
Somalia (refugees)	7,100	500	-	-
Angola (refugees)	5,800	700	-	-
Burundi (refugees)	2,100	1,300	-	-
Rwanda (refugees)	1,300	1,100	-	-
RoC (refugees)	1,100	400	-	-

Income and expenditure (USD)				
Annual programme budget (excl. Regional activities)				
Revised budget	Income from contributions ¹	Other funds available ²	Total funds available	Total expenditure
2,852,512	0	2,832,281	2,832,281	2,808,845

¹ Includes income from contributions restricted at the country level.

² Includes allocations by UNHCR from unearmarked or broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments. The above figures do not include costs at Headquarters.

In South Africa, refugees and asylum-seekers are very widely scattered, and UNHCR's implementing partners operate in the major urban centres at great distances one from another. The limited human and financial resources available do not allow for sufficiently frequent and accurate assessment of refugee needs, or for sufficiently close coordination or monitoring of implementation and financial management by partners.

Funding

As in previous years, there was a sizeable gap between actual needs and available funds. However, thanks to further increased professionalism among implementing partners, it was possible to spend less, and yet double the number of assisted refugees. UNHCR's costs once again soared due to appreciation of the local currency (19 per cent against the US dollar).

Achievements and impact

Protection and solutions

The Office continued to endeavour to expand the availability of professional assistance services to refugees, emphasizing referral to competent services and solutions to problems rather than dependence on UNHCR's assistance. A steady improvement was observed in the provision of direct assistance to refugees, following the Office's support for the professionalization of the services of partners involved in social counselling. To increase awareness of refugee health rights, including the right to access HIV/AIDS-related services, a health training manual and information posters were developed and circulated to public health services.

The joint UNHCR-JICA National Baseline Survey provided essential data, dating back to 2003, for the design of the refugee programme and for setting operational priorities. It also served as a source of information for the development of appropriate standards and indicators for the urban refugees.

The first meeting of the Tripartite Commission for the voluntary repatriation of Angolan refugees was held, but interest in return among refugees remained limited. Many Angolan refugees have

shown a reluctance to consider return, as the South African Government has, to date, not indicated its policy regarding Angolan refugees and asylum-seekers who would prefer to remain in the host country. Nevertheless, UNHCR organized the first phase of an information campaign directed at the scattered Angolan refugee population. The initial response of most refugees suggested a preference to remain in South Africa.

In Comoros and Madagascar, UNDP provided support to 68 refugees, and in Swaziland, the remaining refugee population at Malindza camp reached a level of self-reliance that allowed UNHCR to plan the discontinuation of assistance there in mid-2005.

Activities and assistance

Community services: Over 500 social workers from government institutions and non-governmental organizations received training on refugee issues, with a view to increasing their responsiveness to the social problems of refugees.

Domestic needs/Household support: Some 3,500 of the most vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers received time-limited assistance.

Education: Fifteen per cent more children were assisted to attend primary school than in the previous year. UNHCR helped pay school fees on behalf of 181 children in pre-school and 636 pupils in primary schools (in both categories more than half were girls). The Office also paid secondary school fees for 177 refugee pupils (52 per cent girls). UNHCR negotiated school fee exemptions for 147 primary and secondary school children.

Food: UNHCR assisted nearly 3,500 vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers with food.

Health/Nutrition: During the year, UNHCR witnessed a significant reduction in programme expenditure in the health sector. This was attributable to greater access for refugees to free or low-cost public health care. UNHCR assisted a total of 39 chronically and terminally ill refugees with home-based care services as well as a monthly social grant, pending access to the government social assistance programme. This monthly social grant was also extended to 21 disabled refugees. The number of unaccompanied minors decreased with the

intensification of protection screening to identify genuine and needy cases. A total of 169 unaccompanied minors and young people at risk received assistance.

Income generation: The Office promoted the economic self-reliance of refugees through vocational skills and business training, language courses, job placements and small business loans. Over 1,250 refugees benefited from these programmes, half of them women.

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South Africa: This Congolese refugee from DRC, Jacques, is an unaccompanied minor (17 years old) attending secondary school in Pretoria. *UNHCR/N. Behring*

Legal assistance: Legal assistance was provided directly by UNHCR to refugees and asylum-seekers as well as through a network of legal counsellors operating in all major refugee receiving areas. The assistance included help with accessing the asylum procedure, preparing appeals and intervening in



cases of arbitrary detention and threats of *refoulement* as well as other relevant legal issues. A series of submissions were made to the Department of Social Development and the Treasury advocating access for recognized refugees to public welfare programmes, such as foster care, child support grants, or disability grants. A breakthrough on these issues remained elusive.

Operational support (to agencies): Administrative costs of implementing partners were covered by UNHCR to ensure timely and efficient service delivery to beneficiaries. Other activities related to World Refugee day celebrations and strategic planning meetings that were held with the partners.

Shelter/Other infrastructure: The Office assisted some 3,500 vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers with accommodation and referrals to existing local services.

Transport/Logistics: UNHCR assisted some 160 voluntary repatriation movements out of the country. In Swaziland, the Office covered maintenance, fuel and salaries of drivers for the four vehicles that were used in Malindza camp on a daily basis.

Water: Funds were used to maintain the water supply system in the Malindza camp in Swaziland. Activities included construction of a water point for the local population as well as installation of three water tanks to assist the refugees with agricultural activities.

Organization and implementation

Management

UNHCR's regional office in Pretoria covers South Africa, Swaziland, Lesotho and the Indian Ocean Island States and provides technical support to offices in Mozambique and Botswana. In 2004, the staffing complement of the office was reduced from 14 to 12 international staff. As in 2003, 20 national staff posts were maintained. The regional remit of four of the international staff members covered external relations, refugee women and children, supplies and HIV/AIDS respectively.

Working with others

In South Africa and Swaziland UNHCR worked with ten implementing partners, comprising two international and ten national agencies (including two South African universities). UNHCR also made financial contributions to "Bonne Espérance", a local church organization in Cape Town, providing shelter for vulnerable refugee women and girls. UNHCR maintained close cooperation and liaison with various government departments, particularly the Department of Home Affairs and the Department of Social Development. In addition to implementing partners, UNHCR maintained close contact with several other private organizations, which provided services to refugees free of charge, and promoted coordination of activities. UNHCR also piloted capacity-building activities for a selected number of refugee NGOs.

Potential areas of cooperation on post-primary education were discussed with the Refugee Education Trust (established by the former High Commissioner, Sadako Ogata, as a legacy of UNHCR's 50th anniversary). Selected UNHCR partners were invited to submit proposals for small projects.

UNHCR continued to participate in the UN Inter-agency Theme Group on HIV/AIDS. Practical opportunities for UN inter-agency cooperation remained limited inasmuch as refugees are concentrated in the cities, whereas it is the South African Government's policy that UN agencies focus on rural areas. UNHCR also actively participated in the Southern Africa Regional Steering Committee's deliberations on the conclusions of the UN Study on Violence against Children, as well as in the UN Regional Directors Forum on the Triple Threat (of HIV/AIDS, food insecurity and weak governance).

Overall assessment

South Africa made significant progress in integrating refugee rights into areas such as health and education. The improvements came after sustained and intensive advocacy by UNHCR and its partners. However, the expected breakthrough regarding refugee access to social grants remained elusive. The effectiveness of the Department of Home Affairs improved with the launch of the "Turn-around" strategy. As a result of the continued professionalization of the services of partners working in the social sector, the improved effectiveness of this programme could be

sustained against further reduced costs. This shows clearly that the drive towards professionalization has succeeded in substituting for old-fashioned charitable hand-outs – an approach which emphasizes appropriate solutions for individual problems.

Offices

Pretoria

Partners

Government agencies

Department of Home Affairs (Republic of South Africa)

Ministry of Home Affairs (Swaziland)

NGOs

Agency for Refugee Education, Skills Training and Advocacy

Cape Town Refugee Centre

CARITAS (Swaziland)

Jesuit Refugee Services

Lawyers for Human Rights

Mennonite Central Committee

National Consortium for Refugee Affairs

Planned Parenthood Association of South Africa

Others

UNDP (Comoros, Madagascar)

University of Cape Town

University of Witwatersrand

Financial Report (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects	Prior years' projects
	Annual programme budget	Annual and Supplementary programme budgets
Protection, monitoring and coordination	418,159	0
Community services	210,112	95,102
Domestic needs / household support	134,614	73,398
Education	424,113	159,709
Food	24	0
Health and nutrition	107,088	66,888
Income generation	35,616	6,675
Legal assistance	236,124	97,799
Operational support (to agencies)	439,067	158,043
Shelter and infrastructure	10,119	0
Transport and logistics	304,700	51,213
Water	3,090	0
Instalments with implementing partners	728,379	(708,828)
Sub-total operational activities	3,051,205	0
Programme support	2,234,348	0
Total disbursements	5,285,553	0
Instalments with implementing partners		
Payments made	1,964,925	
Reporting received	(1,236,546)	
Balance	728,379	
Prior years' report		
Instalments with implementing partners		
Outstanding 1 January		793,867
Payments made		31,383
Reporting received		(708,828)
Refunded to UNHCR		(115,439)
Currency adjustment		(983)
Balance		0
Unliquidated obligations		
Outstanding 1 January		186,922
Disbursements		(129,787)
Cancellations		(57,135)
Outstanding 31 December		0

Includes costs related to Regional activities.