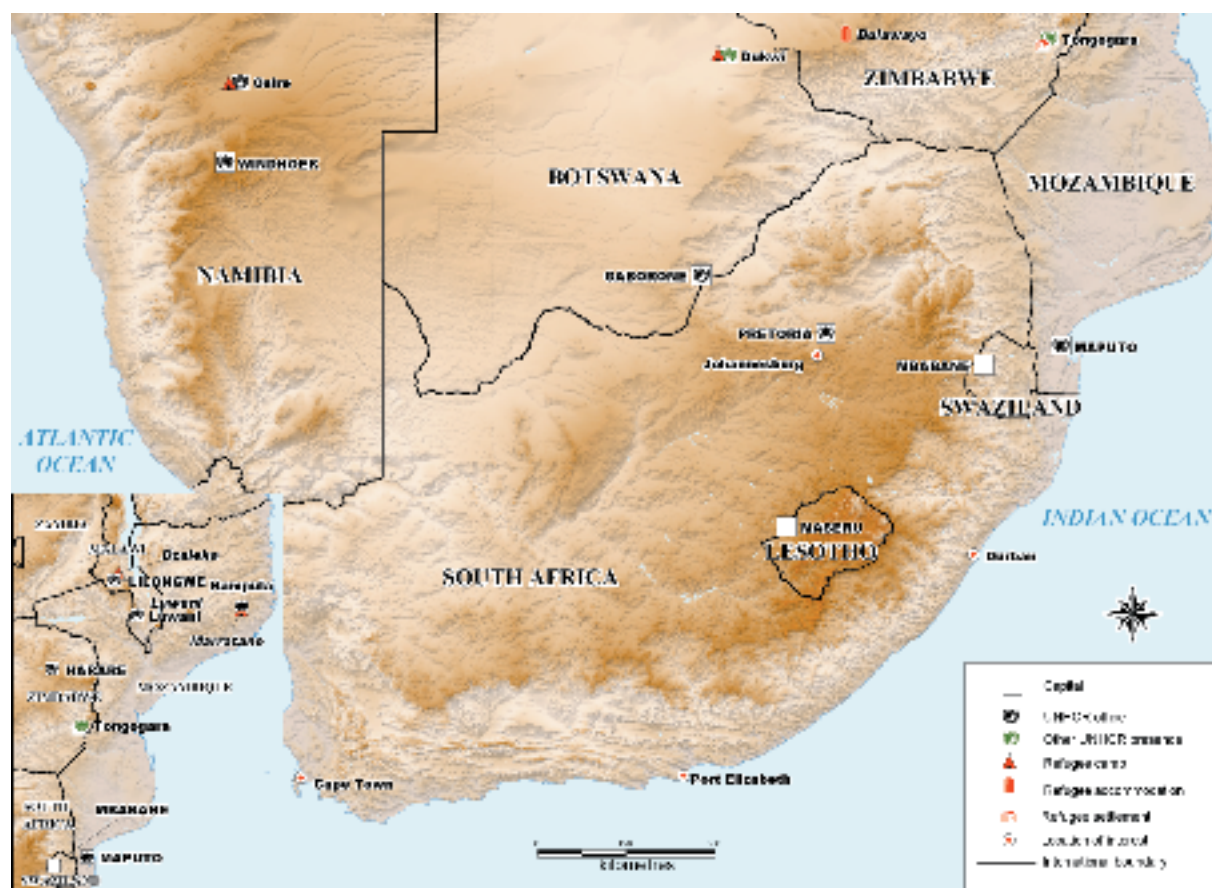


South Africa



Main objectives

- Support the Government of South Africa in clearing the backlog of pending asylum applications and ensuring a more rapid review of new claims.
- Build the capacity of the Government and civil society to provide protection and assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers according to international minimum standards.
- Facilitate self-reliance for refugees through promoting access to health, education and other government social services.
- Facilitate durable solutions for refugees, including voluntary repatriation and resettlement.
- Conduct a follow-up national refugee baseline survey on the socio-economic and legal situation of refugees and asylum-seekers.

Planning figures		
Population	Jan 2006	Dec 2006
Various (asylum-seekers)	59,000	22,000
DRC (asylum-seekers)	23,000	23,000
DRC (refugees)	12,000	17,000
Various (refugees)	10,300	15,000
Somalia (asylum-seekers)	10,000	10,000
Somalia (refugees)	9,000	12,000
Angola (asylum-seekers)	6,000	3,000
Angola (refugees)	5,700	5,000
Total	135,000	107,000

Total requirements: USD 5,181,084

Working environment

Recent developments

The refugee population continues to grow slowly in South Africa with just over 28,000 recognized refugees in July 2005, primarily from the Great Lakes region, Somalia and Angola. The refugee population is concentrated in the main urban centres of South Africa, namely Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban and Cape Town. Asylum-seekers continue to arrive on a daily basis in South Africa, with approximately 35,000 applications since January 2004. The backlog of more than 117,000 pending asylum claims in July 2005 represents the most substantial asylum-related challenge for South Africa. The growing backlog is caused primarily by the large number of economic migrants who abuse the asylum procedure to legalize their stay, coupled with inadequate processing capacity at the severely under-resourced responsible government body, the Department of Home Affairs (DHA).

DHA is now implementing an ambitious plan to resolve the backlog and ensure that asylum claims are processed in a timely manner, which will bring down the number of asylum-seekers, while increasing the number of refugees. As part of a reorganization of its immigration services, the Government established a Directorate for Refugees under the newly-created National Immigration Branch (NIB) of DHA. NIB subsequently overhauled the management of its refugee reception centres and promulgated new immigration regulations. At the same time, DHA has acquired a new refugee registration system which it is using to build up a refugee database. Early results of DHA's efforts are positive, with 630 applications granted refugee status in the first two months of 2005, compared with 1,125 for all of 2004.

Recently, South Africa has started to recognize refugee rights in areas such as health, education and social welfare, following sustained advocacy by UNHCR and its partners. While refugees now have improved access to local health services, including HIV/AIDS-related assistance, and primary education, access to many other government services, particularly social grants for foster children and the disabled, remains elusive.

Constraints

The growing backlog of asylum claims means that it takes much longer for those with a genuine refugee claim to find protection and durable solutions in a timely manner. As many government services are available only to recognized refugees, asylum-seekers are relatively unlikely to attain self-reliance. This in turn has major resource implications for UNHCR and its partners, who are forced to fill the gap in the interim. Moreover, in spite of recent advances, more than half of all refugees remain without documentation, and are therefore unable to access meaningful employment or social services.

These challenges are compounded by the difficult employment situation in South Africa and widespread xenophobia towards refugees, in the business community, which tends to favour South African job applicants, and among local authorities, who often block the permits required for establishing a small business. In recognition of the latter problem, DHA is planning to establish an anti-xenophobia unit by the end of 2005.

Despite reduced funding, a professionalization of NGO services has allowed for a tripling of the number of assisted refugees and asylum-seekers since 2003. However, available UNHCR funding remains far too modest to meet all the needs, many of them very acute, of the beneficiary population. The Office is therefore obliged to maintain extremely restrictive criteria in the provision of assistance. The increasing impact of HIV/AIDS on refugees and asylum-seekers further compounds the situation.

Strategy

Protection and solutions

UNHCR will continue to provide policy advice, training and material assistance in support of DHA's effort to clear the backlog of pending cases and review new claims in a more timely manner. Of particular importance will be training on international and national refugee law, as DHA recruits a large number of new eligibility and immigration



A Rwandan refugee who worked as a guard in Durban for several years and was awarded a DAFI scholarship to study medicine. She passed her exams *suma cum laude* and is now working as a "Sister" at Durban City Hospital. UNHCR / P. Rulashe

officers. With the development of a DHA refugee database, the Office will work closely with the statistician newly appointed by DHA to ensure a clear and consistent approach to refugee and asylum-seeker statistics.

The Office will continue its support of legal counselling and advocacy by its NGO partners to ensure that refugees and asylum-seekers have full access to asylum procedures and social services. To combat xenophobia, UNHCR will work in close cooperation with the new anti-xenophobia unit in DHA.

UNHCR will conduct a follow-up to the 2003 National Refugee Baseline Survey on the socio-economic and legal situation of refugees and asylum-seekers. These data will assist the

Government, UNHCR and its other partners in identifying progress, as well as setting operational priorities to meet remaining gaps.

The repatriation of Rwandan and Angolan refugees will be promoted in 2006 within the framework of the respective tripartite agreements. However, interest among both nationalities is expected to be limited. Resettlement will continue to be pursued on a case-by-case basis.

UNHCR will also undertake capacity building of its implementing partners on programme and protection issues to ensure a consistent and high quality delivery of services to refugees and asylum-seekers.

Assistance

UNHCR will continue to focus on advocating for the coverage of refugees in existing government programmes. UNHCR is discussing with the Government the reactivation of the government-sponsored Refugee Relief Fund, aimed specifically at the most vulnerable asylum-seekers, who are unable to access the regular government programmes until their asylum claim is processed.

For those needy refugees and asylum-seekers who cannot access government services, UNHCR will deliver critical assistance through its network of national NGO partners. Key activities include English language and vocational training, job placement, small business loans, grants for primary school education and home-based care for the most infirm. In 2006, UNHCR will expand its pilot initiative to support refugee NGOs in delivering services to their communities.

Desired impact

In 2006, UNHCR expects that there will be a dramatic decrease in the number of pending asylum applications, which will in turn enable refugees to find protection and durable solutions more quickly. It is also anticipated that by the end of 2006 all refugees will receive identification cards, thereby facilitating access to employment, public services and application for permanent residence in South Africa. Moreover, it is assumed that the refugee and asylum-seeker database will be fully operational by the end of the year.

During the course of the year, UNHCR foresees that the Government will open a number of additional public services to refugees, and will re-establish the Refugee Relief Fund to provide rapid assistance to asylum-seekers. These developments will be important markers on the path towards UNHCR's long-term objective of delivery of all assistance to refugees by the South African authorities.

Repatriation is predicted to increase slightly in 2006 with the consolidation of peace in a number of countries in Africa. Movements are expected to Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo,

Rwanda, Burundi and Sudan, and possibly to other countries as well. Resettlement is also expected to increase with the deployment of a specialist staff member to Pretoria.

Organization and implementation

Management structure

For 2006, UNHCR will have a total of 32 staff: 13 international, including two JPOs, and 19 national staff.

The Pretoria office is directly responsible for administering the Swaziland country programme, provides support to the UNHCR offices in Botswana and Namibia and cooperates with UNDP in the provision of protection and assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers in the Indian Ocean Island States of Madagascar and Comoros. The office also gives administrative assistance to five regional technical posts (registration, HIV/AIDS, public information, refugee women and children and procurement).

Coordination

The 2006 priorities for the refugee programme in South Africa have been identified in a series of participatory strategic planning workshops with all relevant stakeholders, including implementing partners, representatives of the Government, the Red Cross, academic institutions, churches and refugee organizations. All these parties will be involved in one form or another in the implementation of the 2006 programme.

UNHCR will continue to fully participate in the development of the 2006-2011 UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and ensure the consistency of its programming with UNDAF. UNHCR will also maintain its active role in the UN Thematic Group on HIV/AIDS and the UN Regional Inter-Agency Coordination and Support Office (RIACSO) in Johannesburg.

Offices
Pretoria

Partners
Government agencies
Department of Education
Department of Health
Department of Home Affairs
Department of Social Development
Ministry of Home Affairs (Swaziland)
NGOs
<i>Bonne Espérance</i>
Cape Town Refugee Centre
Caritas (Swaziland)
Jesuit Refugee Services
Lawyers for Human Rights
Mennonite Central Committee
National Consortium for Refugee Affairs
Others
IOM
UN Regional Inter-Agency Coordination and Support Office
UN Thematic Group on HIV/AIDS
UNDP (Madagascar and Comoros)
University of Cape Town, Legal Aid Clinic

Budget (USD)	
Activities and services	Annual Programme Budget
Protection, monitoring and coordination	744,036
Transport / logistics	1,000,000
Total operations	1,744,036
Programme support	3,437,048
Total	5,181,084