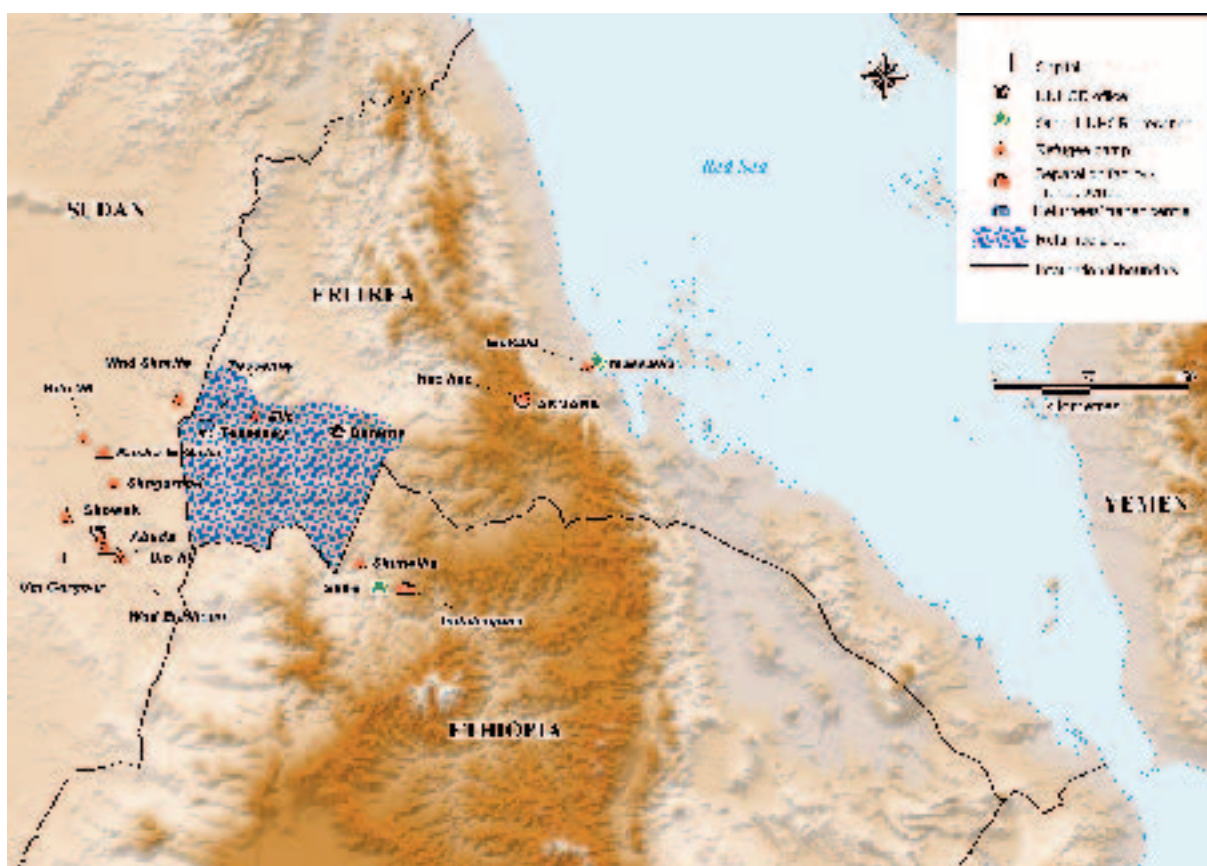


# Eritrea



## Main objectives

Support the Government in providing international protection and assistance while seeking durable solutions for refugees and asylum-seekers; promote and organize the voluntary repatriation of Eritrean refugees from Sudan and provide sustainable reintegration assistance; simultaneously engage development agencies to include returnees in long-term development plans; ensure that returnees enjoy basic rights and equal access to services; maintain a focus on vulnerable persons such as female heads of households, children, adolescents, the disabled and older returnees and refugees; urge Eritrea to accede to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and/or the 1969 OAU Convention on Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, as well as the two Conventions related to statelessness.

## Impact

- UNHCR provided humanitarian assistance to 700 Sudanese refugees in Elit camp and 3,500 Somali refugees in Emkulu camp, while over 450 urban refugees and asylum-seekers received protection and individual assistance.
- Eight refugees were resettled abroad.
- In 2004, some 9,900 Eritrean refugees repatriated voluntarily from Sudan in safety and dignity. Upon arrival all returnees received reintegration assistance in the form of cash, non-food items and food (from WFP). Reintegration support projects were implemented in the following sectors: water, sanitation, health, community services, education, income generation and agriculture with total beneficiaries estimated at 120,000.
- The organized voluntary repatriation from the Sudan was concluded on 31 December 2004 as agreed in the 8th Tripartite Commission meeting in April 2004.

- UNHCR promoted universal primary education in refugee camps and returnee areas, especially girls' education.
- To further encourage gender equity, UNHCR monitored the participation of women in community health and water committees in returnee areas and in food distribution and elder committees in refugee camps.
- Kerosene and stoves were provided to refugees and returnees to save local vegetation and make the daily routine of women and girls safer.
- UNHCR had access to the majority of returnee sites and undertook protection monitoring, both in the Gash Barka and northern Red Sea regions.
- The Office continued to engage the Eritrean authorities in discussions on acceding to the international refugee and regional instruments and the Statelessness Conventions. Three workshops were held on refugee issues.
- Active participation in joint planning with the Government successfully focused on returnee area interventions.

## Working environment

### The context

Eritrea is not a signatory to any of the international conventions relating to refugees nor does it have any national legislation relating to refugee matters. UNHCR funds the management of the two refugee camps, provides assistance to urban asylum-seekers and refugees and continues to search for durable solutions, mainly voluntary repatriation or resettlement, as local integration is not viable.

The Integrated Recovery Programme (IRP), a "4Rs" programme, was not implemented for lack of agreement with concerned parties on the resource mobilization strategy. As a result, UNHCR increased its efforts to advocate representation of returnee needs in national and UN development plans, working towards the 4Rs framework. Overall, the political climate remained stable, with the Government increasing its control of the economy.

### Constraints

Continued tensions over the border demarcation dispute with Ethiopia resulted in Eritrea remaining in a heightened state of military mobilization. The

### Persons of concern

Main origin/Type of population	Total in country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Eritrea (past returnees)	120,000	120,000	50	23
Eritrea (new returnees)	9,900	9,900	50	23
Somalia (refugees)	3,500	3,500	44	51
Sudan (refugees)	700	700	32	42
Ethiopia (and other asylum-seekers)	450	450	44	39

### Income and expenditure (USD)

#### Annual programme budget

Revised budget	Income from contributions <sup>1</sup>	Other funds available <sup>2</sup>	Total funds available	Total expenditure
13,447,666	9,441,550	3,980,787	13,422,337	13,422,337

<sup>1</sup> Includes income from contributions earmarked at the country level.

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

impasse, often described as 'no war, - no peace', led to more frequent security incidents and travel restrictions, limiting staff movements and operational capacity. Implementation capacity was also affected by persistent shortages, increases in the cost of basic commodities and the non-availability of skilled labour due to national service obligations. High inflation accompanied further economic decline and increasing poverty. The scarcity of natural resources, inadequate social services and persistent drought has meant that a majority of Eritreans rely on direct humanitarian assistance. Few national and international NGOs were present, limiting the number of operational partners and reducing the ability of UNHCR to implement a phase-out strategy.

## Funding

UNHCR was the only agency responsible for refugee-related costs, including food, as NGOs were not authorized to work in this domain. Humanitarian assistance to refugees generally met minimum standards, but proved to be a challenge due to rising costs. The status determination of fast-track cases – particularly vulnerable asylum-seekers – was processed in an expedient manner. However, the backlog of cases yet to be determined continued to increase due to limited resources.

## Achievements and impact

### Protection and solutions

A preliminary registration of the Somali refugees in Emkulu Camp (who hail from all areas of Somalia) found that 30 per cent wanted to repatriate and some 150 Sudanese refugees indicated a desire to return to Sudan; meanwhile, over 450 urban asylum-seekers were registered for refugee status determination.

Protection activities included increased monitoring in camps and returnee areas, along with certain improvements to the standard of humanitarian assistance (including safety). Most refugees stayed in camps, as local integration was not possible.

A joint UNHCR-Government village assessment took place in the 20 largest returnee communities in

Gash Barka. Preliminary findings indicating that substantial progress had been made in providing basic infrastructure, but without consolidation of sustainable reintegration through, for example, economic and livelihood support as well as capacity-building for local communities.

## Activities and assistance

**Community services:** Vulnerable refugees, mainly female-headed households, received training in chicken rearing and sewing. Experienced carpenters from Emkulu Camp provided carpentry training to five new apprentices. Eight child-care centres (initiated in 2003) were completed to benefit 1,600 returnee and local children – with a high impact on reducing the care-giving burden on returnee mothers.

**Crop production:** In principle, each returnee family received two hectares of land for agricultural purposes – although problems persisted in the allocation of land. Soil embankments were constructed to control soil erosion. Returnee land preparation continued with clearing, ploughing, planting and harrowing 8,800 ha.

**Domestic needs/Household support:** Somali and Sudanese refugees received non-food items such as jerry cans, bowls, blankets, bed sheets, mattresses, kerosene stoves and shelter materials. All refugee women aged 15-45 regularly received sanitary materials. All returnees received a cash grant, shelter structures (or cash alternative for urban areas) and various non-food items such as water containers, soap, blankets, mosquito nets, plastic sheeting, tools, and cooking utensils.

**Education:** One thousand, one hundred refugee students attended primary schools in refugee camps, and some 400 people attended adult education training. Refugee teachers were given summer training courses at Asmara University. For returnee children, 58 additional classrooms were constructed in two new schools, as well as the extension/upgrading of two additional schools. School furniture and materials was provided to ten schools, and UNHCR also provided supplementary English tutoring to some 3,000 returnee students.

**Food:** All refugees in camps received food baskets consisting of wheat flour or rice, lentils, oil, sugar,





Eritrea: One of many children enjoying daycare facilities at UNHCR pioneering programme - a daycare centre established for the purpose of giving mothers the time and opportunity to better themselves by learning new skills and methods which help to increase their income. *UNHCR/E. Parsons*

salt and fresh vegetables. Supplementary feeding continued to address malnutrition in the camps. Food for returnee rations was received from WFP, including fresh vegetables.

**Health/Nutrition:** Primary health care clinics were run in the refugee camps, with supplementary feeding centres for malnourished children, pregnant/lactating women and sick refugees. Two new health clinics were completed (with the construction of another three ongoing), and medicines were provided to health facilities in the Gash Barka region. UNHCR ensured respect for the returnees' right to free health treatment for a minimum of one year after their return. Medical screening for returnees was provided at the Tesseney Transit Centre.

**Income generation:** Through a strategic year-long partnership with ILO, a socio-economic reintegration

specialist was seconded to UNHCR and several income-generation projects were established – these included road repair and the construction of a live-stock market, as well as two horticulture farms. Home economics training was offered to female-headed households, including production of hollow cement blocks and production of palm leaf baskets and mats for own use and to sell. A village bank (microfinance) was established with funds from ILO. (Expenditure for these activities are shown under Instalments with implementing partners in the Financial report).

**Legal assistance:** Cash assistance was provided to very vulnerable urban refugees and asylum-seekers. Interpreters were employed so that the refugees and asylum-seekers could communicate in their own language. Refugee identification cards were issued, as well as birth and death certificates, and returnees were registered and provided with documentation. A

new comprehensive refugee registration system was implemented (using the so-called "RAPID" software) to provide better individual follow-up and improved statistical reporting.

**Operational support (to agencies):** To ensure effective management of the refugee and reintegration programmes, UNHCR supported government counterparts with salaries and allowances for project staff, vehicles, office supplies, rent and utilities. Training provided to all implementing partners allowed them to undertake their activities in a more structured way, taking into account UNHCR rules and regulations on coordination, reporting and financial accountability.

**Sanitation:** Camp sanitation committees organized regular cleaning campaigns. Garbage collection barrels and cleaning materials were provided (with stipends for sanitation workers). Sanitation-related diseases were rarely observed in the camps.

**Shelter/Other infrastructure:** A semi-permanent metal housing structure, plastic sheeting and mats were provided to each refugee family – saving on the need for construction timber in a country with limited forestry resources. For protection and security reasons, both refugee camps had electrical power for outdoor lighting. Metal shelter structures and plastic sheeting were also distributed to returnees in rural areas. A cash-for-shelter alternative was made available to urban returnees. Some 400 additional shelter structures were distributed to vulnerable returnee families and UNHCR ensured that Government assistance was provided.

**Transport/Logistics:** Food and non-food items were transported regularly from Asmara to the refugee camps. A fleet of 61 UNHCR trucks with 20 trailers was used to transport returnees and reintegration-related commodities. Commercial trucks and buses were rented when needed.

**Water:** Works undertaken for more than 120,000 beneficiaries in 16 sites included completion of five water systems (initiated in 2003), construction of one new system and improvement of three existing ones. UNHCR supported regional and national programmes to build capacity and institutional frameworks for the long-term management of water and sanitation programmes. Monitoring took place in 28 villages and responsible persons in 40 villages were trained in effective management of water systems.

## Organization and implementation

### Management

UNHCR maintained three offices in Eritrea with a total of 86 staff (20 international, 66 national), including seven UNVs, six national and international UNOPs consultants, one JPO and one ILO secondment.

### Working with others

UNHCR's activities were implemented by eight implementing partners (four Government agencies and four NGOs). The Office maintained a close relationship with the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator/Designated Official and other UN agencies present in the country and actively contributed to the preparation of the Millennium Development Goals' Review. UNHCR also participated in the initial planning of the next CCA/UNDAF cycle and co-chaired the UNDAF Recovery Thematic Group and participated in the UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS. UNHCR emphasized capacity building of national and regional authorities and sought the support of sister UN agencies in returnee areas. Frequent and frank communication was maintained with key donors, and the Office continued to participate in the Consolidated Appeals Process.

## Overall assessment

Extensive returnee monitoring assured that improvements were made to primary health care, education, water and community sanitation. UNHCR did support returnee livelihoods, but the village monitoring assessment highlighted the continuing need to mobilize communities towards livelihood support, especially involving diversification of sources of income away from rain-fed agriculture.

UNHCR's various reintegration support projects directly or indirectly benefited 120,000 returnees and their host communities. However, persistent shortages of fuel and construction materials, as well as skilled labour, delayed implementation of many of the projects.

Humanitarian assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers was effective in terms of provision of basic support and encouraging self-sufficiency. A number of guidelines on protection procedures were improved and implemented, although available resources limited the number of refugee status decisions. The external audit process and the introduction of standards and indicators allowed UNHCR to refine its operations and improve its response. Capacity building in the form of protection and programme training seminars to Government officials resulted in closer cooperation and better understanding of UNHCR's mandate and procedures. In light of the failure of the Integrated Recovery Programme, ongoing dialogue with Government partners proved of vital importance to the maintenance of sub-agreements and other working modalities.

UNHCR made efforts to engage operational partners and other UN agencies in the assessment, monitoring and implementation processes to better target humanitarian assistance and avoid unnecessary duplication. However, needs in the areas of return continued to outstrip UNHCR's capacity and resources. A concerted effort was made, and is still required, to urge donors and partners to meet the outstanding needs and provide for returnees in longer-term planning. The successful phase-in of development specialists will allow UNHCR to scale down and exit.

Offices
<b>Asmara</b> Barentu Tesseneay
Partners
<b>Government agencies</b> Eritrean Relief and Refugee Commission Eritrean Community Development Fund Office of Refugee Affairs The Gash Barka Zoba (Regional) Administration
<b>NGOs</b> <i>Comitato di Coordinamento delle Organizzazioni per il Servizio Volontario</i> <i>Cooperazione e Sviluppo</i> International Medical Corps Refugee Trust International
<b>Others</b> ILO UNDP UNICEF UNOPS UNV WFP

## Financial Report (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects	Prior years' projects
	Annual programme budget	Annual and Supplementary programme budgets
Protection, monitoring and coordination	1,810,016	0
Community services	22,755	96,578
Crop production	541,675	254,636
Domestic needs / household support	851,842	558,513
Education	760,628	352,544
Food	707,754	284,224
Forestry	0	4,789
Health and nutrition	706,102	348,063
Income generation	0	141,827
Legal assistance	312,659	37,229
Operational support (to agencies)	584,192	225,559
Sanitation	15,488	122,903
Shelter and infrastructure	425,832	791,369
Transport and logistics	848,791	647,803
Water	276,053	633,045
Instalments with implementing partners	4,412,895	(4,499,082)
<b>Sub-total operational activities</b>	<b>12,276,682</b>	<b>0</b>
Programme support	1,145,655	0
<b>Total disbursements</b>	<b>13,422,337</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Instalments with implementing partners</b>		
Payments made	9,080,134	
Reporting received	(4,667,239)	
<b>Balance</b>	<b>4,412,895</b>	
<b>Prior years' report</b>		
<b>Instalments with implementing partners</b>		
Outstanding 1 January		4,126,437
Payments made		2,463,510
Reporting received		(4,499,082)
Refunded to UNHCR		(437,696)
<b>Balance</b>		<b>1,653,169</b>
<b>Unliquidated obligations</b>		
Outstanding 1 January		2,964,892
Disbursements		(2,737,258)
Cancellations		(227,634)
<b>Outstanding 31 December</b>		<b>0</b>