

Southern Africa

Recent Developments

At the beginning of 2001 there will be nearly 300,000 refugees and asylum-seekers in the Southern Africa region. In contrast to previous years, refugees did not return home in significant numbers in 2000. On the contrary, throughout the year new refugees fled the continuing conflicts in Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). This pattern is likely to continue in 2001.

Angola has nearly 12,000 refugees, the majority of them from the DRC. It is also the scene of the region's worst internal displacement problem. Four million people have been displaced – nearly a third of the population. Access by humanitarian agencies to many areas is curtailed due to security concerns. This situation has not permitted UNHCR to revive repatriation of Angolan refugees, which remains stalled since late 1998. In response to calls for stronger and more effective humanitarian measures to assist internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the country, and following a request by the Government of Angola (and the results of a joint UN assessment mission in the spring) UNHCR agreed in July 2000 to undertake a limited programme to help provincial and national authorities improve the situation of up to 300,000 IDPs and returnees in the provinces of Luanda, Uige and Zaire.

As a result of the war in Angola, Zambia has been receiving a steady influx of Angolan refugees. By mid-October, well over 10,000 new refugees had entered the country, bringing the total for the year to some 33,000. Zambia now hosts some

Angola
Botswana
Comoros
Lesotho
Madagascar
Malawi
Mauritius
Mozambique
Namibia
Seychelles
South Africa
Swaziland
Zambia
Zimbabwe





230,000 refugees (mainly from Angola and the DRC) – far more than any other country in the region. The ongoing influx from Angola includes unprecedented numbers of former combatants. This poses protection and status determination problems at a time when UNHCR's human resources are severely stretched.

The effects of the fighting in Angola were strongly felt in the northern region of Namibia, with armed clashes on both sides of the border. It was reported that Angolan refugees had been forcibly recruited to fight in the civil war in Angola. In some cases refugee families were separated at the border and some refugees, asylum-seekers and Angolans who had been spontaneously settled in northern Namibia for many years were deported. Continued tension in the Caprivi region of Namibia precluded the repatriation of the more than 3,000 Namibian refugees currently in Botswana.

The Republic of South Africa hosts 14,500 registered refugees from several African countries (and elsewhere). UNHCR continued to support the Government of South Africa in setting up the required mechanisms to deal with more than 27,000 outstanding asylum applications. The large number of refugees and asylum-seekers present in the country has led to increasing xenophobia. UNHCR continues to address this

problem through nation-wide public awareness activities. The 1998 Refugee Act entered into force in 2000, providing a solid basis for refugee protection and assistance.

In Swaziland, a lifting of the ban on political parties in place since 1973 was followed by increased political activity and demonstrations by opposition parties. A positive development was the country's accession to the 1951 Convention.

Although Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe host relatively small numbers of refugees (3,300 in Botswana; 3,300 in Malawi; 2,000 in Mozambique; and 2,500 in Zimbabwe), the numbers of newly arrived refugees have increased dramatically. Many of these recent refugees originate from the Great Lakes region, notably Burundi, the DRC and Rwanda. In Mozambique, political clashes resulted in the death of more than 40 people. A large backlog of asylum requests is still awaiting a decision by the Government. In Zimbabwe, political tension surrounding the Government's plans for land reform erupted in violence. Despite fears of a major crisis during the weeks preceding the elections, prompting UNHCR and other agencies to activate contingency plans, a measure of calm finally returned (but the situation remains volatile). The 2,500 refugees in the country were not immediately affected by the situation.

UNHCR faced several constraints in attempting to fulfil its mandate in the Southern Africa region. The shortage of staff, particularly protection staff, was a major impediment. In addition, due to financial constraints, UNHCR was forced to cut back a number of services for refugees, including basic assistance. The impact was particularly severe on the smaller programmes in Botswana, Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe, where UNHCR is directly responsible for the provision of food. In Zambia, likewise, the complete food basket could not always be guaranteed. Moreover, refugees were affected by the floods and cyclones which struck the region early in the year.

Strategic Objectives

In 2001, UNHCR's overall strategic objectives in Southern Africa will fall into five main categories: protection, solutions, operations, management and external relations.

With regard to protection, the primary objective will be to ensure that asylum-seekers are admitted to countries of asylum and are able to gain access to expeditious, fair and efficient refugee status determination procedures that meet international standards. UNHCR will continue to build government and local capacity to protect refugees and respond to

their protection needs through training on refugee law, refugee status determination and related issues. To improve the legal framework for protection at the national level, UNHCR will promote accession to international refugee instruments and assist states to develop or reform refugee legislation, while providing policy guidance on important protection issues. It will also work with states to diminish the backlog of asylum applications. The Office will encourage states to improve the treatment of asylum-seekers and refugees and avoid incidents of arrest, detention and deportation, as well as harassment and violence against refugees. To do so, it will not only intervene directly with the authorities, but also pursue programmes aimed at combating xenophobia, while sensitising governments and the public at large to the plight of refugees. A key priority will be to meet the special protection needs of refugee women, children and adolescents. Other important protection objectives include improving the safety of refugee camps and settlements and working to ensure their civilian and humanitarian character, helping states to address the problem of irregular movements, and addressing the special situation of asylum-seekers and refugees in urban settings.

UNHCR will pursue lasting solutions for refugees, mainly in the form of voluntary repatriation, but also local settlement



and, for a limited number of persons, resettlement. As long as peace and security do not prevail in Angola and the DRC, large-scale repatriation to these countries is unlikely. UNHCR will review the situation of all long-staying refugee groups in the region so as to identify the most appropriate solution, including naturalisation (although success has been limited). In pursuing solutions, UNHCR will also continue to support access to employment, income-generating activities and micro-credit schemes, as a means of encouraging economic self-reliance.

In its operations, UNHCR will give priority to improving preparedness for emergencies, by working closely with governments and NGOs on contingency planning and emergency preparedness arrangements (including the possible establishment of regional stockpiles of assistance items) and related training. In responding to emergencies, but also in all aspects of its operations in the region, the special needs of women, children and adolescents will continue to be addressed, particularly in the areas of social and community services, shelter, health care and education. The Office will also continue projects to preserve the environment and counteract environmental damage. Other important priorities include further improving needs assessment and programme planning; strengthening monitoring and evaluation; and improving the effectiveness and accountability of implementing partners (both government and NGO counterparts) through training.

The Regional Directorate for Southern Africa, based in Pretoria, will consolidate regional management structures and responsibilities. UNHCR will redouble efforts to adopt a co-ordinated approach to refugee situations affecting a number of countries. The management of human resources will be improved to ensure the expeditious filling of posts and the most efficient use of staff resources. The Regional Directorate will ensure that operations are effectively implemented, and that reporting on UNHCR's activities in the region is enhanced.

With regard to external relations, a key priority will be to strengthen co-operation with the Southern African Development Community (SADC), based on jointly agreed objectives and a plan of action.

Operations

The Regional Directorate oversees operations in 14 countries in the Southern Africa region. In addition to the country programmes in **South Africa** and **Zambia**, which are presented in separate chapters, UNHCR has operations in Angola, Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland and Zimbabwe, as described below.

In 2001, UNHCR will continue to provide international protection and basic humanitarian assistance to some

12,000 refugees in **Angola**, most of whom originate from the DRC. Refugee children will have access to primary education and adults, particularly women, will benefit from vocational training courses and income-generating activities to help them become self-sufficient. Refugees will have access to medical assistance and shelter materials will be provided to refugees whose houses are in need of repair. Counselling (both individual and community-based) and recreational activities for adolescents are part of the community services activities that will be undertaken. UNHCR will continue to work closely with the Inter-Ministerial Commission established by the Government to review and approve asylum applications. Repatriation assistance will be provided to some 2,000 refugees who are expected to return to the DRC in 2001. In July 2000, UNHCR launched a special operation to provide protection and assistance (in close co-operation with other UN agencies and NGOs) for about 300,000 Angolan IDPs in selected locations in the northern provinces of Uige and Zaire, and in the outskirts of Luanda. The first phase of this programme concentrated on meeting the most immediate needs of IDPs by helping the Government improve basic services for them. Following an internal review of the IDP programme in the autumn of 2000, it was decided to launch a Supplementary Programme to ensure the continuation of these activities in 2001. Further details about this programme can be found in an addendum to the 2001 Global Appeal.

In **Botswana**, UNHCR will ensure that asylum-seekers and refugees continue to be treated in accordance with international standards. UNHCR is a member of the Refugee Advisory Committee, which assesses refugee eligibility. Resettlement will remain an important option for individuals not granted asylum. There are currently 3,300 refugees in the country. Because of the continuing conflict in Angola, the voluntary repatriation of Angolan refugees is not being contemplated at present. UNHCR will continue to work with the Government for the naturalisation of Angolan refugees who arrived in the 1970s. For the Namibian refugees in Dukwi camp the options of voluntary repatriation and local integration will be explored. In the meantime, all refugees will continue to receive basic humanitarian assistance and services. The Government of Botswana, which administers Dukwi refugee camp, runs a local clinic and provides security. Women, who constitute the majority of refugees, will benefit from special training and income-generating activities and children will continue to have access to pre-school and primary education. Efforts to mitigate the impact of the refugee population on the environment will continue.

Increasing numbers of asylum-seekers from the Great Lakes region are expected to arrive in **Malawi** in 2001. There are at present 3,300 refugees in the country. The processing of applications by asylum-seekers is likely to constitute much of the work of the office in Malawi, which will also ensure that

refugees receive basic assistance and services (including shelter, food, water, relief items, education and health care). UNHCR will continue to work with its partners and other UN agencies to implement projects for women, children and adolescents, and protection of the environment. It will also participate in efforts to combat poverty and the spread of HIV/AIDS. Activities to build up the expertise and resources of the Government and implementing partners in working with refugees will continue.

In **Mozambique**, UNHCR will continue to encourage the local settlement of some 2,000 recognised refugees. The voluntary repatriation or resettlement of individual refugees will be facilitated, when appropriate. Meanwhile, UNHCR will ensure that refugees and asylum-seekers continue to have access to international protection and basic humanitarian assistance. Procedures to determine refugee status will be improved and the National Eligibility Commission will be reinforced through material resources, administrative support and training. The effects of the disastrous floods of February 2000 will continue to be addressed: refugees will need new or reconstructed shelters, latrines and various social infrastructures. The needs of refugee women and children and the necessity to protect the environment will be given priority in the design of all projects.

UNHCR, in conjunction with its partners and other UN agencies, has established adequate emergency mechanisms in **Namibia** to respond to the continuing influx of refugees from Angola. In 2001, UNHCR will continue to ensure that refugees are admitted and that they benefit from international protection and assistance. There are at present some 15,000 refugees in Namibia. Since voluntary repatriation to Angola is not feasible, UNHCR will explore the possibility of local integration. The economic independence of refugees, particularly women, will be encouraged through vocational training and income-generating activities. In order to ease overcrowding at Osire refugee camp, new facilities are being set up in Kassava, where the availability of arable and grazing land will also enable refugees to become self-sufficient. More tents will be required to meet the need for shelter for the ever-increasing camp population. Health facilities will be upgraded and, if possible, a medical doctor will be deployed. Refugee children will continue to have access to primary education and UNHCR will help refugees attend secondary schools and participate in vocational training. The institutional capacity of the Government will be strengthened through the training of staff on the principles and practices of international refugee law.

In **Swaziland**, UNHCR's activities will focus on providing international protection for up to 1,000 refugees and asylum-seekers and helping them with basic relief assistance. Refugee children will have access to primary education and adolescents

will be able to attend secondary school. Training courses will continue to be organised on environmental awareness, the rights of the child and reproductive health (including prevention of HIV/AIDS) as well as malaria control. Refugees will receive advice and training in business management. Vulnerable refugees will receive special care. UNHCR will continue to advocate for refugees and their rights and work to forge links between civil society and the refugees (through church and cultural organisations) to encourage local integration and self-reliance. The Office will also offer advice to the Government in incorporating the tenets of the 1951 Convention (to which it recently acceded) into a national law on refugees.

UNHCR will continue to ensure that asylum-seekers, as well as some 2,500 refugees in **Zimbabwe**, receive protection and assistance in accordance with international standards. The Office will assist the Zimbabwe Refugees Committee (ZRC) to carry out its responsibilities with regard to refugee status determination and work to enhance the knowledge and application of international refugee law by providing training to ZRC staff. In line with its overall objective of searching for lasting solutions, UNHCR will continue to work with the Government on the local settlement of refugees. To encourage self-reliance, the Office will support income-generating activities and vocational skills training for refugees and offer advice on how to run small businesses. Refugees, particularly women, will receive help with language training and advice on employment possibilities and further education. UNHCR will strengthen its emergency preparedness and response capacity through contingency planning, while activities to reinforce the expertise and resources of the Government and implementing partners in dealing with refugees will continue.

BUDGET (USD)

Country	Annual Programme
Angola	4,234,182
Botswana	2,163,477
Malawi	972,289
Mozambique	1,061,741
Namibia	2,942,870
South Africa ¹	5,412,610
Swaziland	469,647
Zambia	12,187,833
Zimbabwe	1,163,769
Regional Projects ²	268,000
Total	30,876,418

¹ Includes administrative costs for the Regional Director's Office of USD 1,825,794.

² Includes scholarships for refugee students in Southern African countries.