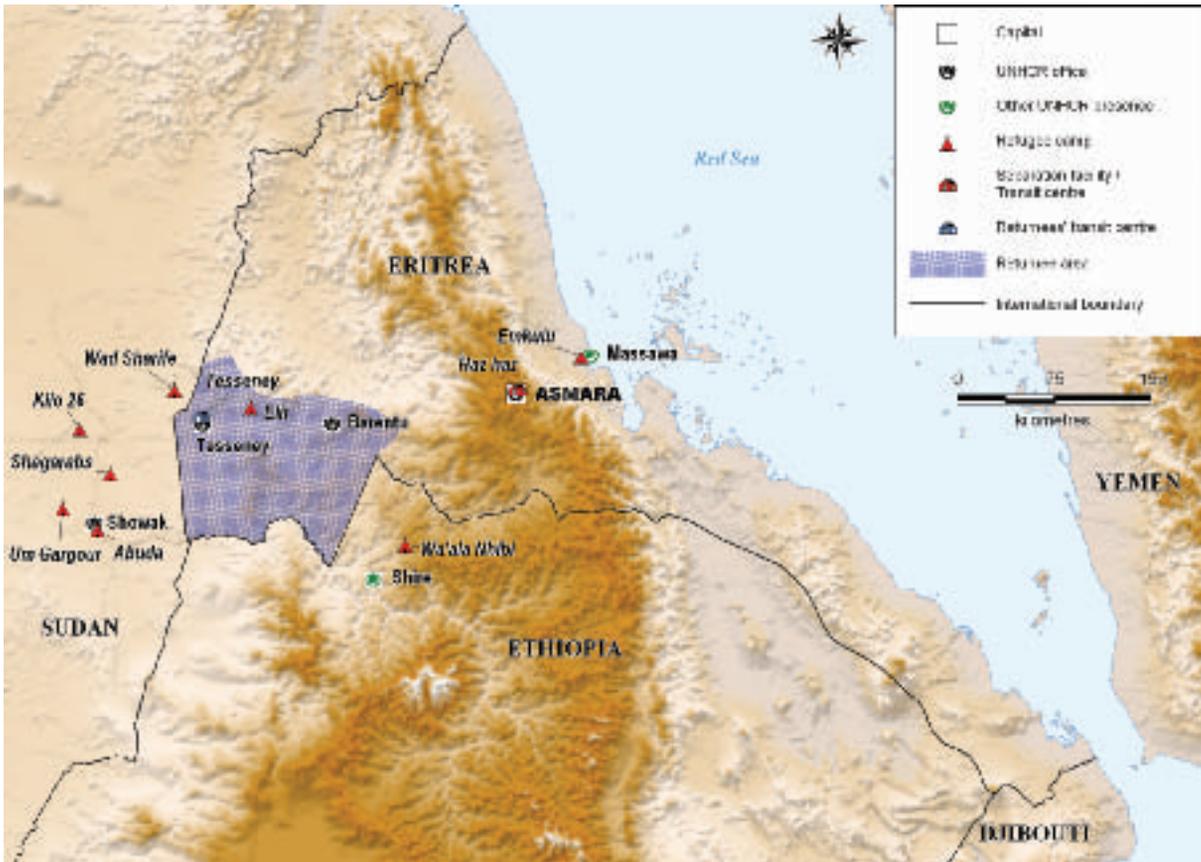


# Eritrea



## Main objectives

Support the Government in providing international protection and material assistance for 4,000 camp-based Sudanese and Somali refugees as well as for 200 urban asylum-seekers and refugees; promote and facilitate the voluntary repatriation of some 25,000 Eritrean refugees from Sudan, providing initial reintegration assistance to over 112,000 returnees in the returnee areas, simultaneously engaging development agencies to address medium to long-term reintegration needs; ensure that returnees enjoy basic rights and equal access to services; maintain a focus on vulnerable persons such as female heads of households, refugee children, adolescents, the disabled and older returnees and refugees.

## Impact

- 9,444 Eritrean refugees were helped to return from Sudan in organized convoys.
- All returnees received 'reinsertion assistance' upon arrival and reintegration projects were implemented in the sectors of community services, crop production, education, health, sanitation and water.
- UNHCR had access to returnee sites and was able to conduct protection monitoring.
- An Integrated Recovery Programme, a comprehensive "4Rs Recovery Strategy", were developed together with the Government of Eritrea and UN agencies to address the long-term reintegration needs of returnees, IDPs and expellees in their host communities.
- The LOU signed by UNHCR, WFP and the Government ensured food aid and recovery assistance, minimising the impact of drought on returnees.

- A new registration system for refugees was established to facilitate the identification and implementation of durable solutions.
- An awareness programme was implemented on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and HIV/AIDS.
- Five refugees from Ethiopia and Sudan were resettled in Canada.

## Working environment

### The context

Due to the closure of the border, voluntary repatriation from Sudan could not take place until June 2003. After intensive negotiations, UNHCR secured agreement on the opening of a humanitarian corridor to facilitate voluntary cross-border repatriation movements from Sudan. This allowed 9,444 refugees to repatriate from Sudan during a four-month period.

The Integrated Recovery Programme (IRP), a joint initiative of the Government of Eritrea and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) was formulated to address a variety of needs, mainly in returnee areas. UNHCR's reintegration assistance was aimed at meeting the most immediate needs of

returnees, so as to dovetail the recovery and development initiatives undertaken by the Government in partnership with other UN agencies and NGOs. UNHCR's involvement thus consisted of a returnee-monitoring programme to ensure that returnees had access to all basic facilities.

Eritrea is not a signatory to any international refugee convention nor does it have national legislation on refugee matters. UNHCR funds the management of the two refugee camps and continues to seek durable solutions for the refugees, mainly voluntary repatriation or resettlement, as local integration is not a viable option.

### Constraints

The major constraint hampering repatriation operations was the closure of the Eritrean/Sudan border for reasons of insecurity. UNHCR secured a new crossing point and transit site after intensive negotiations. The impact of drought worsened in 2003, and severely affected the returnee-receiving areas, affecting 80 per cent of the population.

The problem of implementation capacity was aggravated by national service obligations, which reduced the limited pool of skilled labour. This slowed down the provision of goods and services, the building of

Persons of concern				
Main origin/Type of population	Total in country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Somalia (refugees)	3,300	3,300	44	50
Sudan (refugees)	600	600	31	40
Ethiopia (asylum-seekers)	200	200	42	-

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
16,829,167	11,406,197	5,203,182	16,609,379	16,484,994

<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.

Note: The Supplementary programme budgets do not include a 7 per cent charge (support costs) that is recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR.

infrastructure, and the ability to monitor and evaluate ongoing projects. The relatively small number of NGOs in the country hampered the potential to carry out humanitarian activities and thus limited the implementation capacity.

The absence of refugee legislation affected the quality of protection and asylum which were often dealt with on an ad hoc basis.

## Funding

UNHCR participated in the UN inter-agency consolidated appeals process and presented its requirements for the repatriation of Eritreans and care and maintenance activities for Somali and Sudanese refugees in Eritrea.

The Eritrean operation received generous earmarked contributions during 2003 representing 68 per cent of UNHCR's total revised requirements for the annual budget.

## Achievements and impact

### Somali and Sudanese refugees

#### Protection and solutions

During 2003, Eritrea provided international protection to 600 Sudanese and 3,300 Somali refugees, all of whom received material assistance from UNHCR in two camps, Elit (for the Sudanese) and Emkulu (for the Somalis). UNHCR improved its presence in the camps and was able to address specific concerns. Additionally, HIV/AIDS awareness-raising activities took place and living conditions were improved for refugees in the camps.

New arrivals from Somalia and Sudan were granted *prima facie* refugee status and accommodated in Emkulu and Elit refugee camps respectively. Protection activities included increased monitoring in both camps, installation of a new registration system and improvements to the standard of services and safety in cooperation with the Government. Voluntary repatriation was not a viable option for Somali or Sudanese refugees during 2003. Most refugees stayed in camps as local integration was not possible. The Office continued to engage the Eritrean



To facilitate their reintegration, returnees are registered for ID cards in Tesseneay. UNHCR

authorities in discussions on acceding to the international refugee, and regional instruments and the Statelessness Conventions. In this context, UNHCR translated the 1951 Refugee Convention into Tigrinya and disseminated copies to relevant government bodies, NGO communities and UN agencies. At the time of publication, the Office was in the process of translating the Convention Handbook into Tigrinya.

### Activities and assistance

**Community services:** One hundred refugees, mainly female heads of households, received



ney. UNHCR/E. Parsons

training in chicken rearing. The effect was two-fold, to reduce levels of malnutrition and also to generate income. Somali and Sudanese refugees also benefited from recreational and sports facilities.

**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 to 45 received sanitary materials every month. Each family received three bars of soap as well as 20 litres of kerosene per month (the kerosene reduced the need for firewood and thereby

helped to prevent further degradation of vegetation in camp areas).

**Education:** A total of 1,084 refugee students (including 456 girls) attended primary schools in both camps. Adult education opportunities were taken up by 320 men and 162 women; 634 students and 279 adults participated in UNHCR's Life Skills training (Peace Education Programme).

**Food:** All 3,900 refugees received food baskets consisting of wheat flour or rice, lentils, oil, sugar, salt and fresh vegetables. In both camps, distribution of

food items was organized by refugee committees composed of men and women.

**Health/Nutrition:** Primary health clinics were run in both camps, with supplementary feeding centres for malnourished children, pregnant/lactating women and sick refugees. HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns focused on behavioural change.

**Income generation:** Refugees with advanced carpentry skills received machinery for the production of saleable items and the training of apprentices.

**Legal assistance:** Refugee identification cards were replaced. Birth and death certificates were issued regularly. A new comprehensive registration system was introduced, comprising information on camp refugees and urban refugees; this enabled the Office to follow up individual cases more effectively.

**Operational support (to agencies):** To ensure effective management of the refugee programme, UNHCR provided operational support to its government counterpart in the form of salaries and allowances for project staff, vehicles, office supplies, rent and utilities.

**Sanitation:** Camp sanitation committees organized regular cleaning campaigns. UNHCR assisted in providing garbage collection barrels, cleaning materials and stipends for sanitation workers. Work continued on communal block latrines. 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. For protection and security reasons, both camps had electrical power for outdoor lighting at night.

**Transport/Logistics:** Food and non-food items were transported regularly from Asmara to the refugee camps. There were no delays in the distribution of food and non-food items during 2003.

**Water:** An assessment of water facilities was undertaken in both camps and there was a significant overhaul of the water system at the Emkulu camp which led to the supply of more than 15 litres per person per day.

## Eritreans returning from Sudan

### Protection and solutions

UNHCR originally planned to receive as many as 82,000 Eritrean refugees from Sudan during 2003 but that figure was reduced to 25,000 at the mid-term review. However, only 5,338 families (9,444 persons) returned by organized convoys. There were very few spontaneous returns. The low rate of return was due, in part, to the closure of the border between Eritrea and Sudan. The repatriation that resumed in June 2003, after UNHCR secured a humanitarian corridor, was again suspended between July and October 2003 due to the rainy season and then continued till the end of December. UNHCR had access to all returnee areas and was able to conduct some monitoring of their conditions, enabling the follow-up on protection issues. Few protection concerns were reported and in general, the reintegration process went smoothly.

### Activities and assistance

**Community services:** Eight childcare centres were constructed and 48 day-care assistants were trained. One youth centre was built, and another rehabilitated, extending the variety of activities, and promoting positive interaction within host communities.

**Crop production:** Activities aiming at self-reliance in crop production benefited 12,000 returnees. Each returnee family received two hectares of land for agricultural purposes. Livestock watering ponds and soil embankments were constructed for water harvesting and soil erosion control. Pressurised drip irrigation was introduced in two villages, resulting in at least three harvests per year. Tree nurseries were created to reduce environmental degradation and improve soil conservation in three villages.

**Domestic needs/Household support:** All returnees received the revised insertion package of cash assistance, one blanket per person, a kerosene stove, a water container, tools, soap, a mosquito net, jerry can, plastic sheeting, griddles, cups and cooking pots, floor mats and wire mesh as well as sanitary material for all women aged 15 to 45.

**Education:** More than 20 projects supported the reintegration of returnee children. These included

the construction of three new schools and the extension/upgrading of three other schools to serve more than 2,300 elementary school students. Some 30 Arabic-speaking teachers were recruited and another 121 teachers were trained. In all the returnee areas, UNHCR worked with a national implementing partner, providing 73 students and seven teachers with training in life skills, including peace education.

**Food:** Hot meals were distributed at the Tesseney transit centres during all repatriation movements.

**Health/Nutrition:** Medical screening and care was provided at the Tesseney transit centres, two health stations were built and training courses provided to all medical personnel.

**Income generation:** Palm leaf thatch production benefited some 400 women, and home economics training was provided to 1,350 women in 20 villages. The bakeries constructed in four villages enabled 300 women to be trained.

**Legal assistance:** Support under this sector enabled UNHCR's main implementing partner to register and document returnees upon arrival at the Tesseney reception centres. It also covered the costs of deploying a UNV Protection Officer to monitor the situation of returnees.

**Operational support (to agencies):** Operational support provided to 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:** A total of 20 latrine blocks were constructed at community facilities.

**Shelter/Other infrastructure:** Shelter structures, roofing mats and plastic sheeting were distributed to all returnees going to rural areas. A cash-for-shelter alternative was made available to urban returnees.

**Transport/Logistics:** A fleet of 61 UNHCR trucks with 20 trailers was used to transport returnees. Commercial trucks and buses were rented when needed.

**Water:** UNHCR carried out capacity development activities to provide the immediate and longer-term supply of water and sanitation services to returnees and their host communities. Other regional and national programmes were implemented to build capacity and institutional frameworks for the long-term management and sustainability of water and sanitation programmes. UNHCR donated hydrogeological and geophysical equipment to the Government. Five new village water storage and distribution systems were constructed, three existing water systems were reconstructed and responsible persons in 44 villages were trained in effective management of water systems. Water service connections were provided to eight schools, two kindergartens and three health centres.

## Urban asylum-seekers and refugees

During 2003, the number of asylum-seekers/refugees in urban areas increased from five to 200. In the absence of a national refugee status determination process, UNHCR conducted Refugee Status Determination (RSD) for this population and provided the required follow-up. The asylum-seekers comprised Sudanese and Somalis who were not granted *prima facie* status by the Government, Ethiopians who were not permitted to seek asylum in Eritrea, and a number of *de facto* stateless persons deported from Ethiopia and unable to demonstrate an ethnic link to Eritrea. As refugees with Mandate Refugee Status could not be offered the possibility of local integration in Eritrea, UNHCR pursued resettlement as a durable solution. A lack of protection staff in 2003 slowed down the RSD process. However, with the introduction of a new registration system able to bring together information on the urban population and the refugees in camps, a single unified system for the whole country was introduced for the first time. Basic assistance packages were provided to the most vulnerable asylum-seekers and refugees, which included coverage of some medical expenses. Five refugees from Ethiopia and Sudan were resettled to Canada.

## Organization and implementation

### Management

UNHCR maintained three offices in Eritrea (Asmara, Barentu and Tesseney) with a total of 85 staff (18 international, 67 national). The international staff comprised 13 UN staff, one JPO and four UNVs.

### Working with others

UNHCR continued to involve other UN agencies, donors and NGO partners in assessments, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation activities. UNHCR's work on the development of the IRP drew upon a needs assessment and joint strategy. The IRP underlines the need for capacity building of regional administrative authorities in returnee areas and encourages other UN agencies to work along the same lines. Close collaboration was maintained with government implementing partners. UNHCR maintained good relations with the UNCT, working closely on the CAP, participating and co-chairing a number of UNDAF Thematic Groups. A letter of understanding signed by UNHCR, WFP and the Gash Barka Zoba Administration ensured a focus on food aid and recovery activities for refugees and returnees, which minimized the impact of drought. The millennium development goals featured prominently in all activities, with a view to achieving progress for refugees and Eritreans alike.

### Overall assessment

In a short space of time, UNHCR assisted the successful return and reintegration of 9,444 Eritreans, breaking a political deadlock across the Sudan/Eritrean border after months of intensive negotiations. The Office pushed for improved living conditions in the camps and conducted a re-registration exercise so as to improve the management of all cases. UNHCR continuously reviewed the amount and type of basic assistance provided.

UNHCR's major advance for 2003 was in the area of reintegration, with the return of 112,000 Eritreans since the cessation of hostilities in July 2000. It was apparent from the early stages of the return that continuing the provision of humanitarian assistance

to returnee areas and building the long-term self-reliance capacity of the refugee population would be required to sustain the return. Linked to the repatriation and reintegration efforts, UNHCR instigated immediate improvements to the most basic services (which had suffered the effects of prolonged war and drought). Activities in the fields of education, health and income generation were crucial to support successful and rapid reintegration of the Eritrean returnees.

#### Offices

##### Asmara

Barentu  
Massawa  
Tesseney

#### Partners

##### Government agencies

Eritrean Relief and Refugee Commission  
Ministry of Education  
Ministry of Health  
Office of Refugee Affairs  
The Gash Barka Zoba Administration

##### NGOs

*Comitato di Coordinamento delle Organizzazioni per il Servizio Volontario (COSV)*  
*Cooperazione e Sviluppo (CESVI)*  
Eritrean Social Marketing Group  
International Medical Corps  
Lutheran World Federation  
National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students  
OXFAM  
Refugee Trust International

##### Others

UNDP  
UNICEF  
UNOPS  
UNVs  
WFP

## Financial Report (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects		Prior years' projects	
	Annual programme budget	notes	Annual and Supplementary programme budgets	notes
Protection, Monitoring and Coordination	1,539,535		1,299	
Community Services	468,452		132,799	
Crop Production	1,231,201		402,968	
Domestic Needs/Household Support	143,429		135,683	
Education	538,799		976,452	
Food	405,969		56,363	
Health/Nutrition	374,485		587,355	
Income Generation	8,244		6,973	
Legal Assistance	233,090		61,180	
Livestock	0		835	
Operational Support (to Agencies)	601,307		257,532	
Sanitation	225,295		31,108	
Shelter/Other Infrastructure	678,164		237,538	
Transport/Logistics	531,287		624,368	
Water (non-agricultural)	857,567		953,925	
Transit Accounts	0		960	
Instalments with Implementing Partners	4,126,437		(2,382,842)	
<b>Sub - total Operational</b>	<b>11,963,261</b>		<b>2,084,499</b>	
Programme Support	1,556,841		12,933	
<b>Sub - total Disbursements / Deliveries</b>	<b>13,520,102</b>	(3)	<b>2,097,432</b>	(5)
Unliquidated Obligations	2,964,892	(3)	0	(5)
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,484,994</b>	(1) (3)	<b>2,097,432</b>	
<b>Instalments with Implementing Partners</b>				
Payments Made	9,307,945		1,884,662	
Reporting Received	5,181,508		4,267,504	
<b>Balance</b>	<b>4,126,437</b>		<b>(2,382,842)</b>	
Outstanding 1st January	0		2,778,627	
Refunded to UNHCR	0		404,539	
Currency Adjustment	0		8,753	
<b>Outstanding 31 December</b>	<b>4,126,437</b>		<b>0</b>	
<b>Unliquidated Obligations</b>				
Outstanding 1st January	0		2,278,514	(5)
New Obligations	16,484,994	(1)	0	
Disbursements	13,520,102	(3)	2,097,432	(5)
Cancellations	0		181,082	(5)
<b>Outstanding 31 December</b>	<b>2,964,892</b>	(3)	<b>0</b>	(5)

Figures which can be cross-referenced to the Accounts:

- (1) Annex to Statement 1
- (3) Schedule 3
- (5) Schedule 5