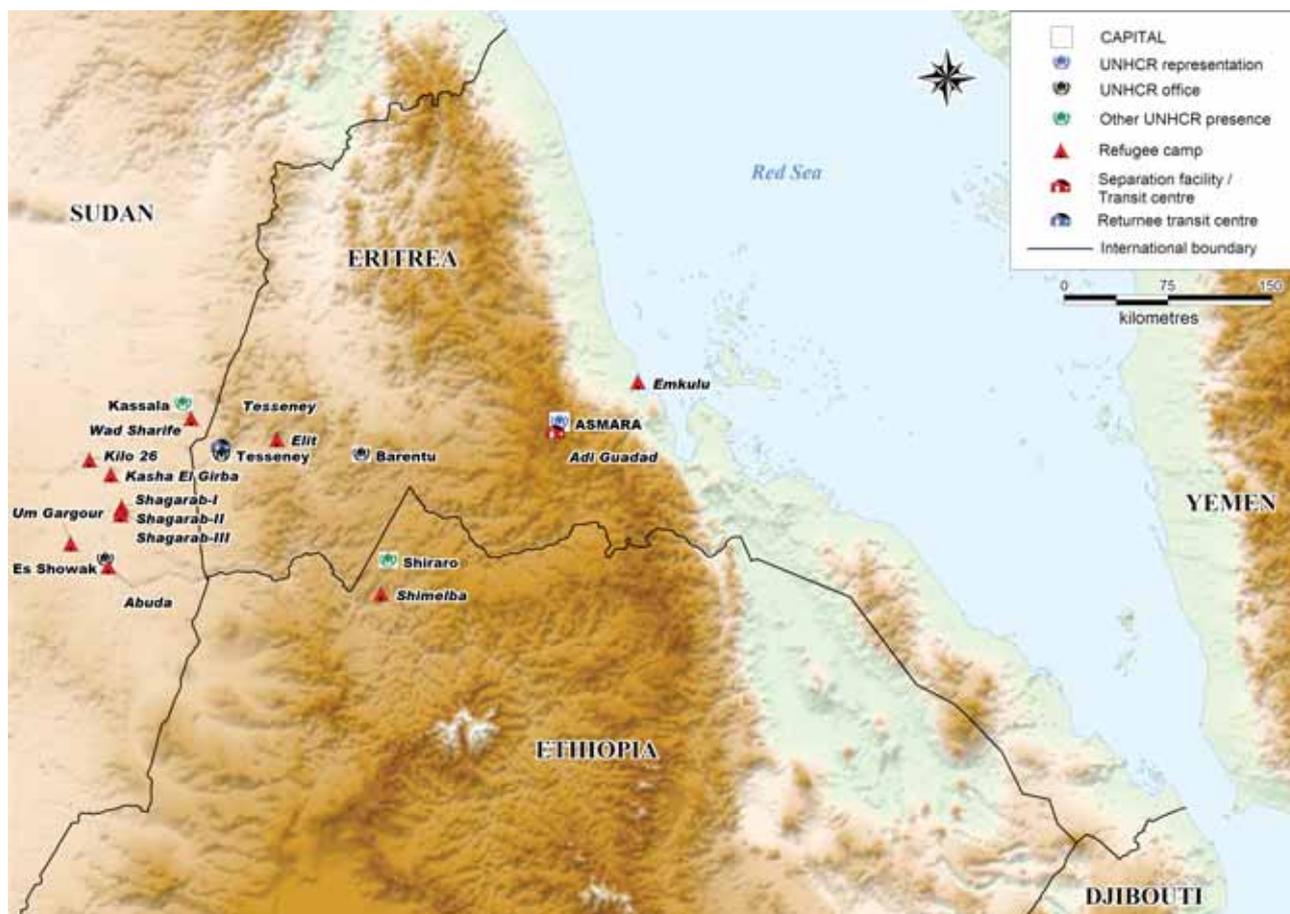


# Eritrea



## Operational highlights

- UNHCR provided international protection and assistance to approximately 4,600 refugees and some 2,000 asylum-seekers.
- More than 120,000 Eritrean from previous years and their communities benefited from UNHCR's reintegration support, which focused on improving food security through irrigation and soil-conservation projects in returnee areas.
- Twenty-seven refugees were resettled abroad, and 21 Somali refugees repatriated voluntarily.
- UNHCR continued to phase down its reintegration support for returnees. Meanwhile, it advocated the greater involvement of development partners, including other UN agencies, in returnee areas.

## Working environment

Eritrea is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol. It has not ratified the Organization of African Unity's 1969 Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, and it does not have national refugee legislation.

The country's asylum practices are primarily influenced by security and political concerns.

Almost five years after a ruling by the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission, the border between the two countries had not been demarcated and tensions remained high. This undermined the planning and implementation of development and humanitarian activities. Insecurity, compounded by recurrent droughts and severe gaps in human and other resources, had a deleterious effect on the national economy and the most vulnerable groups.

A participatory assessment was conducted in 2006 in Emkulu camp, on the outskirts of the port city of Massawa, as part of the age, gender and diversity mainstreaming initiative in Eritrea.

## Achievements and impact

### Main objectives

UNHCR's objectives in Eritrea were to ensure international protection, provide basic assistance and seek durable solutions for more than 4,000 refugees

and asylum-seekers; consolidate assistance to returnees and returnee-receiving areas; and mobilize the support of the United Nations and other development agencies to address the longer-term needs of returnee areas.

## Protection and solutions

UNHCR protected and assisted 800 Sudanese refugees in Elit camp near Tesseny, close to the Sudanese border, and 3,800 Somali refugees in Emkulu camp. The Office also protected and assisted some 1,900 asylum-seekers from Ethiopia living in urban areas. Under the durable solutions programme, 27 refugees were resettled abroad and 21 Somali and two Sudanese refugees repatriated voluntarily.

Eritrea recognizes refugees from Sudan and Somalia on a *prima facie* basis. However, it has not put in place any national refugee status determination (RSD) procedures. UNHCR continued its discussions with the authorities on accession to international refugee instruments and on the development of national RSD procedures.

Eritrea does not consider asylum claims from Ethiopian nationals, but respects their right to approach UNHCR to seek refugee status. UNHCR registered, profiled and counselled Ethiopians who approached it, and conducted formal RSD where it was deemed necessary. It also registered – and carried out RSD for – asylum-seekers from countries other than Somalia, Sudan or Ethiopia.

## Activities and assistance

**Community services:** To encourage gender equity, UNHCR promoted the participation of women in the provision of health services, water and food in returnee areas. A total of 380 vulnerable returnees in the Gash Barka region, mainly members of female-headed households, received home-economics training to reduce waste and control household costs. A women's association in Emkulu camp increased women's involvement in assistance and management issues in the camps.

UNHCR provided life-skills training and health education to refugees and returnees. It also provided training in the prevention of, and response to, sexual and gender-based violence. A reporting mechanism was established as part of this process.

**Crop production:** UNHCR implemented soil and water-conservation projects to assist returnee families. River water was diverted to agricultural areas for irrigation. Measures to prevent soil erosion in Gash Barka and the Northern Red Sea region also helped returnees improve their returns from agriculture.

**Domestic needs and household support:** All refugees in the camps received non-food items such as jerry cans, bowls, blankets, kerosene, kerosene stoves, shelter materials, mosquito nets and sanitary materials for women. Replacements were provided as needed.

**Education:** UNHCR promoted universal primary education in refugee camps and returnee areas, with a strong focus on girls' education. School supplies, teacher training and other assistance to primary education benefited some 1,200 refugee students (including 500 girls) in Elit and Emkulu camps. A 2005 memorandum of understanding between UNHCR and the Ministry of Education allowed refugee students to attend national secondary schools, and 36 students were enrolled in 2006. Furthermore, some 300 men and 260 women in the camps benefited from adult-education programmes. A summer English course for returnees was organized for the fifth time, and 107 teachers, including seven women, participated.

**Food:** All refugees in camps received their monthly rations of food including wheat flour, lentils or beans, vegetable oil, salt and sugar in a timely manner. Some 4,000 refugees received fresh vegetables as a complementary food ration. Malnutrition was continually addressed through supplementary feeding.

**Health and nutrition:** Primary health care clinics operated in both Elit and Emkulu camps. The clinics had supplementary feeding centres for malnourished children, pregnant and lactating women and sick refugees. The effective delivery of food and a supplementary feeding programme helped reduce

Persons of concern					
Type of population <sup>1</sup>	Origin	Total	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Refugees	Somalia	3,800	3,800	44	54
	Sudan	800	800	33	45
Asylum-seekers	Ethiopia	1,900	1,900	50	38
	Various	100	100	21	19
<b>Total</b>		<b>6,600</b>	<b>6,600</b>		

<sup>1</sup> In addition, UNHCR assisted more than 120,000 Eritreans who returned in previous years.



Haykota primary school, one of UNHCR's community reintegration projects.

malnutrition. The malnutrition rate for children under five decreased from 16 percent in June to 14 percent in December.

UNHCR's programmes supported community health in returnee areas. The Office installed solar-powered water pumps in five health stations and recruited 62 health aides in the Gash Barka region. In the Northern Red Sea region it constructed the Ghedem Halib health station. The Office also covered the salaries of 30 health assistants involved in supporting community health activities.

HIV and AIDS-awareness programmes in the camps targeted 160 community leaders as well as teachers, clinic and feeding-centre staff, peer educators and religious leaders. No case of HIV and AIDS was reported in either camp.

**Legal assistance:** UNHCR registered asylum-seekers and provided documents for refugees, including identification cards and birth and death certificates. Legal assistance was given to needy refugees and asylum-seekers on a case-by-case basis.

**Operational support (to agencies):** To ensure the effective management of refugee and reintegration programmes, UNHCR supported the Government's Office of Refugee Affairs by assisting it with vehicles, office supplies, salaries, rent and utilities. UNHCR also conducted training programmes and workshops to improve the camp-management skills of project staff.

**Sanitation:** Sanitation workers received stipends for the maintenance of latrines. Refugees were provided with garbage-collection barrels and cleaning materials.

**Shelter:** A semi-permanent metal housing structure, plastic sheeting and mats were given to each refugee family. Both refugee camps were provided with electricity for outdoor lighting to improve security at night.

**Transport and logistics:** Food and non-food items were transported regularly from Asmara to the refugee camps. Warehouses in the camps and in Adi Guadad transit camp were fumigated. Only two Sudanese refugees were assisted with repatriation.

**Water:** The water system in Elit camp was improved and refugees received 20 litres of water per person each day in both camps.

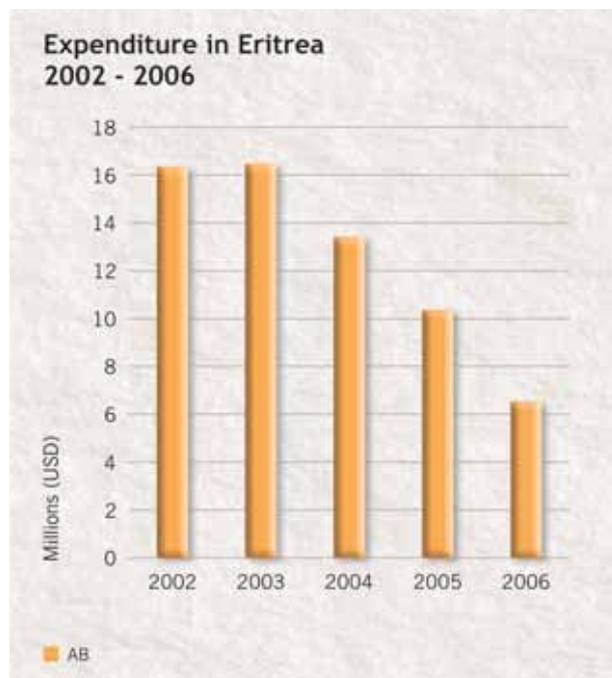
## Constraints

UN Security Phase III (see *Glossary*) was in effect throughout Eritrea, with the exception of the Gash Barka region and the temporary security zone on the border with Ethiopia, which were under Phase IV. This prevented UNHCR from placing international staff in the main returnee areas. In June, the Government required that all foreign nationals obtain permits to visit areas outside Asmara, thus limiting the movement of international staff.

Reintegration assistance was restricted by shortages of basic commodities, rapid hikes in the cost of building materials, and a lack of skilled workers. A temporary ban on the activities of private construction companies also hindered UNHCR projects, resulting in the suspension of activities in sectors such as water, sanitation and health.

## Financial information

UNHCR was the only agency responsible for funding and implementing activities for refugees. A low budgetary allocation and rapidly rising costs placed the Office in serious financial difficulty in 2006.



Furthermore, the Government did not allow WFP to provide basic food rations and supplementary nutrition for refugees. As a result, UNHCR could provide food for refugees only until August. For the remainder of the year, food requirements were met through a grant from the UN Central Emergency Response Fund.

With regard to expenditure, with the conclusion of the organized repatriation of Eritreans from Sudan in December 2004 and, as the returnees began settling down and integrating into their communities, UNHCR's repatriation and reintegration support was scaled down and its expenditures reduced. Costs were cut further with the closure of offices in the returnee region in 2006. Since October 2006, UNHCR has focused on the protection and assistance of Somali and Sudanese refugees and other people of concern.

## Organization and implementation

### Management

At the beginning of 2006, reintegration activities were scaled down. The field office in Tesseney and the sub-office in Barentu were closed in June and December, respectively, leaving UNHCR's programme to be managed by four international and 29 national staff based in Asmara.

### Working with others

UNHCR's activities in Eritrea were implemented by three governmental partners: The Ministry of Labour and Human Welfare handled returnee issues; the Gash Barka Zonal Administration implemented repatriation and reintegration programmes; and the Office of

Refugee Affairs was responsible for refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people. The Government provided land for refugee and asylum-seeker shelters, offices, and reception and transit centres. It also contributed to the salaries of senior officials of implementing partners and allowed the procurement of food from subsidized stores.

UNHCR maintained a close relationship with the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator, the designated official for security and other UN agencies. In the UN Theme Group on HIV and AIDS, the Office helped to build the capacity of national and regional authorities in returnee areas. UNHCR also participated in the UNDP-managed programme for relocating IDPs.

## Overall assessment

UNHCR provided a significant level of assistance to strengthen the local capacity to absorb the large number of returnees. It also helped to lay the foundations for sustainable livelihoods and self-reliance for both returnees and host communities. To support reintegration, UNHCR ensured that returnee areas saw improvements in agriculture, primary health care, education, water, sanitation and community services. However, with developmental goals for areas of return not yet reached, UNHCR urged donors and partners to support returnees with longer-term programmes.

### Partners

#### Implementing partners

**Government agencies:** Gash Barka Zonal Administration, Ministry of Labour and Human Welfare, Office of Refugee Affairs

### Budget, income and expenditure (USD)

	Final budget	Income from contributions <sup>1</sup>	Other funds available <sup>2</sup>	Total funds available	Total expenditure
AB	7,085,149	2,644,878	3,906,549	6,551,427	6,544,744
SB <sup>3</sup>	185,929	0	880	880	880
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,271,078</b>	<b>2,644,878</b>	<b>3,907,428</b>	<b>6,552,306</b>	<b>6,545,624</b>

<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.

<sup>3</sup> The SB figures apply to the Return and Reintegration of Sudanese Refugees to Southern Sudan. The budget does not include a 7 per cent support cost that is recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR.

Financial Report (USD)				
Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects			Previous years' projects
	AB	SB	Total	AB and SB
Protection, monitoring and coordination	1,035,676	0	1,035,676	0
Community services	66,201	201	66,402	139,870
Crop production	1,389,569	0	1,389,569	532,259
Domestic needs and household support	292,981	0	292,981	40,632
Education	101,114	0	101,114	278,783
Food	487,390	32	487,422	185,245
Forestry	0	0	0	41,888
Health and nutrition	105,922	0	105,922	259,131
Income generation	0	0	0	355,661
Legal assistance	11,649	0	11,649	2,952
Livestock	0	0	0	72,027
Operational support (to agencies)	278,099	0	278,099	285,960
Sanitation	6,856	0	6,856	136,148
Shelter and infrastructure	74,586	0	74,586	164,129
Transport and logistics	130,828	646	131,474	42,524
Water	97,999	0	97,999	267,063
Instalments with implementing partners	1,417,210	0	1,417,210	(2,804,270)
<b>Sub-total operational activities</b>	<b>5,496,079</b>	<b>880</b>	<b>5,496,959</b>	<b>0</b>
Programme support	1,048,665	0	1,048,665	0
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>6,544,744</b>	<b>880</b>	<b>6,545,624</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Cancellation on previous years' expenditure</b>				<b>(107,177)</b>
<b>Instalments with implementing partners</b>				
Payments made	4,221,336	0	4,221,336	
Reporting received	(2,804,126)	0	(2,804,126)	
<b>Balance</b>	<b>1,417,210</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,417,210</b>	
<b>Previous years' report</b>				
<b>Instalments with implementing partners</b>				
Outstanding 1st January				3,737,962
Reporting received				(2,804,270)
Refunded to UNHCR				(90,660)
Adjustments				(395,779)
<b>Balance</b>				<b>447,253</b>