

South Africa



Operational highlights

- The Government of South Africa extended access to HIV and AIDS anti-retroviral therapy to refugees and asylum-seekers.
- UNHCR trained 132 Department of Home Affairs (DHA) officers on asylum procedures and refugee law to help reduce the backlog of pending asylum claims and increase the efficiency of the national asylum procedure.
- Despite the efforts of UNHCR, the South African Government and civil-society groups to promote understanding and tolerance, refugees and asylum-seekers were increasingly the target of xenophobic attacks, intolerance and discrimination.

Working environment

The Republic of South Africa hosts a large and diverse population of asylum-seekers and refugees, comprising at least 54 nationalities. South Africa allows these

people to move freely and choose their place of residence.

With one of the most dynamic economies on the continent, South Africa attracts migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers. However, the country is marked by a sharp divide between rich and poor, with a minority benefiting from technological advancement and a high living standard compared to the majority living in extreme poverty. Security continued to be a major concern. Refugees and asylum-seekers, as well as UN staff members, have been the victims of serious crimes.

UNHCR is concerned about the rise in xenophobic attacks on refugees and asylum-seekers. Concerted efforts by the South African authorities and UNHCR brought a peaceful resolution to conflicts between Somali traders and local communities in the Western and Eastern Cape Provinces. New attacks were reported, however, against Somali-owned businesses in Gauteng and Mpumalanga provinces. The arrival of thousands of Zimbabweans has exacerbated this trend.

Persons of concern					
Type of population	Origin	Total	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Refugees	DRC	11,100	3,400	-	-
	Somalia	8,600	1,000	-	-
	Angola	5,800	410	-	-
	Burundi	2,200	1,100	-	-
	Rep. of Congo	1,300	250	-	-
	Rwanda	1,300	1,000	-	-
	Various	6,500	800	-	-
Asylum-seekers	Zimbabwe	33,400	3,900	-	-
	DRC	11,100	8,600	-	-
	Malawi	8,200	160	-	-
	Ethiopia	7,100	500	-	-
	Bangladesh	4,800	30	-	-
	Somalia	4,000	600	-	-
	United Rep. of Tanzania	2,700	380	-	-
	Uganda	2,200	360	-	-
	Pakistan	2,000	40	-	-
	Congo	1,800	600	-	-
	India	1,700	20	-	-
	Burundi	1,700	1,700	-	-
	Nigeria	1,400	150	-	-
	China	1,100	-	-	-
	Kenya	800	120	-	-
	Eritrea	700	140	-	-
	Mozambique	700	-	-	-
	Rwanda	600	500	-	-
	Zambia	450	50	-	-
	Ghana	440	30	-	-
	Cameroon	440	130	-	-
	Senegal	230	-	-	-
	Egypt	210	-	-	-
	Côte d'Ivoire	190	30	-	-
	Algeria	170	-	-	-
	Mali	110	-	-	-
Liberia	100	30	-	-	
Various	82,400	220	-	-	
Total		207,540	26,250		

The AIDS epidemic affects the economy and social life of South Africa. The Government estimates that about 5.5 million South Africans live with HIV. The majority of refugees and asylum-seekers originate from countries with far lower HIV prevalence rates, and while they could utilize HIV and AIDS-related care and support services in South Africa, their access to assistance is limited by language barriers and a lack of information about available services.

By the end of 2007, South Africa hosted some 36,800 recognized refugees. More than 45,000 individuals applied for asylum during 2007, and some 88,910 asylum cases remained pending with the DHA at the end of the year. Many of the new arrivals came from Ethiopia, Somalia and Zimbabwe (Zimbabweans accounting for about 39 per cent of the total). The number of asylum-seekers from the Great Lakes Region decreased significantly, owing to the somewhat greater stability in the region.

Achievements and impact

Main objectives

UNHCR's main objectives were to help the Government of South Africa clear the backlog of pending asylum claims and ensure a more rapid review of new claims; bolster the capacity of the Government and civil society to protect and assist refugees and asylum-seekers in accordance with international standards; ensure that refugees and asylum-seekers have access to national social services, including education, health and assistance programmes; mobilize resources jointly with partners to assist refugees and facilitate durable solutions for refugees.

Protection and solutions

While the DHA received more than 45,000 new applications for asylum in 2007, less than 5,900 claims were adjudicated. The department granted refugee status in 29 per cent of these cases. UNHCR worked closely with the DHA to strengthen its capacity to handle this enormous challenge. In addition to training DHA officials, UNHCR provided country of origin information, promoted the timely issuance of identification documents to recognized refugees, and conducted interviews with refugees applying for convention travel documents. UNHCR advocated for Government departments and civil society to improve refugees' access to public and social services. The Office also contributed to law reform and provided advice on the refugee legislation currently under review in South Africa.

The DHA aims to reduce and eventually eliminate the backlog of pending asylum applications that accumulated before the end of 2005. The adjudication of these applications has led to the rejection of a large number of applicants. Many of those rejected have applied for reconsideration by the Refugee Appeals Board, creating another backlog. UNHCR has increased

funding for its partners to hire additional staff to handle appeal cases.

The Office continued to promote and facilitate voluntary repatriation as a durable solution. Despite positive developments in some countries of origin, the number of refugees opting for voluntary repatriation remained low. Only 97 refugees went home from South Africa with UNHCR's assistance in 2007. Many refugees believe remaining in South Africa offers them better prospects than returning to a homeland emerging from conflict.

UNHCR offers resettlement opportunities for refugees in South Africa, although identifying individuals who need this durable solution presents a major challenge. In 2007, some 28 refugees were resettled. The main criteria for resettlement were legal and physical protection needs, women-at-risk, survivors of violence and torture, and family reunification.

UNHCR promotes local integration as a solution for refugees in South Africa. The Office helps refugees to fully exercise their civil, social, cultural and economic rights as prescribed in South Africa's 1996 Constitution.



UNHCRIP - Rutashie

This woman and her child were among the refugees and asylum-seekers evicted from the building where they were living, in Johannesburg, and they found themselves living on the street while efforts were undertaken to provide them with a new shelter.

Activities and assistance

Community services: UNHCR assisted some 140 children with specific needs. They received material assistance and services such as placement in foster care and help with family reunification. The Office assisted about 260 refugee adults, more than half of whom were women, with shelter, food, and access to medical facilities. UNHCR offered material, financial and technical support to 14 community-based organizations run by refugees with a view to enhance self-reliance.

Domestic needs and household support: UNHCR provided emergency assistance to some 3,800 refugees and asylum-seekers for three months to help them with initial needs. While women accounted for only 14 per cent of the total population, over 40 per cent of the beneficiaries were women. Assistance included food, shelter and sanitary materials for women and girls.

Education: UNHCR helped more than 1,600 refugee children with school fees, uniforms, stationery, and transportation costs. Nearly 1,700 refugees, of whom 30 per cent were women, benefited from language courses offered by UNHCR and its partners, with high rates of success. Some 580 refugees (185 women) received various types of vocational training. Furthermore, about 250 children were placed in day-care centres in order to allow their mothers to work or attend training courses.

Health and nutrition: UNHCR successfully advocated for refugees to have free access to public hospitals and clinics, including universal access to anti-retroviral therapy. Information, education and communication sessions on reproductive health, life skills training and voluntary counselling and testing for HIV and AIDS reached some 13,300 refugees and asylum-seekers, with about 40 per cent of the participants being women. In addition, UNHCR took care of more than 1,000 refugees with specific health needs.

Income generation: The Office provided micro-credit loans to some 200 refugees and asylum-seekers. Some 250 refugees and asylum-seekers were helped to attain certification in order to practice in South Africa as doctors, nurses, engineers, accountants or lawyers.

Legal assistance: UNHCR's legal partners assisted some 5,700 refugees and asylum-seekers. The Office trained 132 DHA officers on asylum procedures and refugee law. Some 97 refugees repatriated voluntarily to their home countries and 28 refugees departed South Africa for resettlement in third countries. Following intervention by UNHCR, 109 refugees and asylum-seekers were released from detention.

Operational support: UNHCR covered the operational costs of implementing partners to strengthen their ability to deliver quality services to refugees and asylum-seekers.

Constraints

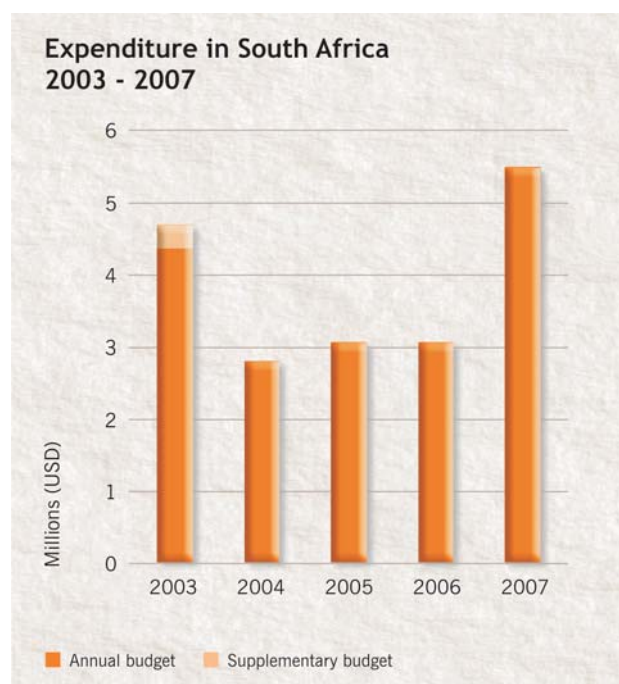
The practical challenges of dealing with the largest number of individual asylum applications in the world overwhelmed the Government's administrative capacity. Despite the DHA's efforts, delays in issuing decisions on asylum applications impede the ability of refugees to enjoy the rights provided to them under the law.

South Africa is a country in transition and the socio-economic problems faced by its citizens are shared by refugees and asylum-seekers. Refugees and asylum-seekers searching for work encounter discrimination and infringements of their rights. They are vulnerable to exploitation and face a growing trend of xenophobia.

Financial information

UNHCR's programmes in South Africa received their strongest funding for many years in 2007. Full funding of the budget gave UNHCR the flexibility to meet the needs of the most vulnerable, particularly the many Zimbabweans who came to the country.

After a drop in 2004, UNHCR's annual programme expenditures remained steady between 2004 and 2006. In 2007, expenditure rose significantly due to the large influx of Zimbabweans and assistance rendered to many individuals with specific needs in this group.



Organization and implementation

Management

The regionalization of UNHCR's operations in Southern Africa moved forward, with activities in Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia and Zimbabwe covered since January 2007 by the regional office in Pretoria. The Pretoria office also continues to be responsible for people of concern in Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Lesotho and Swaziland and UNHCR's relations with the Governments of these States.

UNHCR strengthened the capacity of the Pretoria office by creating new posts in 2007. Operations are now run by 36 UNHCR staff, 15 international and 21 national staff. Five of the international professionals support regional activities in areas such as protection, community services and registration.

Working with others

In 2007, UNHCR worked with 10 implementing partners in South Africa. The Office collaborated with the DHA and participated actively in the UN Country Team. UNHCR maintained close contact with a range of local NGOs and other organizations through various refugee networks in the country.

Overall assessment

UNHCR achieved most of its objectives, especially in facilitating the self-reliance of refugees and increasing their access to health care and education. While voluntary repatriation and resettlement benefited a limited number of refugees, the numbers of people of concern receiving certificates to apply for permanent residence rose. Also, a new initiative to certify educational and professional qualifications got underway successfully. Toward the end of 2007, UNHCR's evaluation of the performance of some implementing partners revealed weaknesses and highlighted the need for more effective monitoring and communication with these agencies.

Partners

Implementing partners

NGOs: *Bonne Espérance*, Cape Town Refugee Centre, Jesuit Refugee Services, Lawyers for Human Rights, Mennonite Central Committee, National Consortium on Refugee Affairs, Planned Parenthood Association of South Africa, Sediba Hope, and Caritas Swaziland

Operational partners

Government agencies: Department of Home Affairs, Department of Education, Department of Health and Department of Social Development

NGOs: Agency for Refugees' Education, Skills and Training

Others: IOM, UNAIDS, UNICEF, WHO and the University of Cape Town

Budget, income and expenditure (USD)

	Final budget	Income from contributions	Other funds available	Total funds available	Total expenditure
Annual budget	5,698,203	606,612	4,874,871	5,481,483	5,481,483

Note: Income from contributions includes contributions earmarked at the country level. Other funds available include transfers from unearmarked and broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

Financial Report (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects	Previous years' projects
	Annual budget	Annual and supplementary budgets
Protection, monitoring and coordination	538,205	0
Community services	279,145	0
Domestic needs and household support	184,206	0
Education	267,995	0
Health and nutrition	144,246	0
Income generation	45,235	0
Legal assistance	278,062	0
Operational support (to agencies)	446,296	0
Transport and logistics	100	0
Instalments with implementing partners	291,739	0
Sub-total operational activities	2,475,231	0
Programme support	3,006,253	0
Total expenditure	5,481,483	0
Cancellation on previous years' expenditure		(17,091)
Instalments with implementing partners		
Payments made	1,713,424	
Reporting received	(1,421,684)	
Balance	291,739	
Previous years' report		
Instalments with implementing partners		
Outstanding 1st January		431,713
Reporting received		0
Refunded to UNHCR		0
Adjustments		98
Balance		431,811