

South Africa Representation and Multi-Country Office December 2024

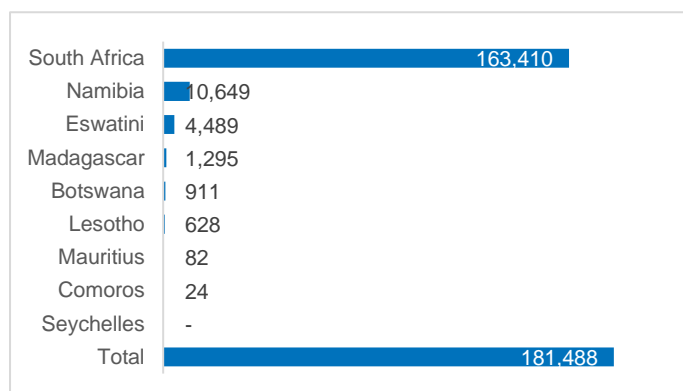
As of 31 December 2024, the Multi-Country Office supports approximately **181,488** refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons in **nine countries**: Botswana, Comoros, Eswatini,

Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritius, Namibia, Seychelles and South Africa. Priorities include strengthening **national asylum systems**, addressing asylum backlogs, promoting **social**

cohesion, ending **statelessness** and providing assistance to the most vulnerable and strengthening partnerships.

POPULATION OF CONCERN

Host Countries

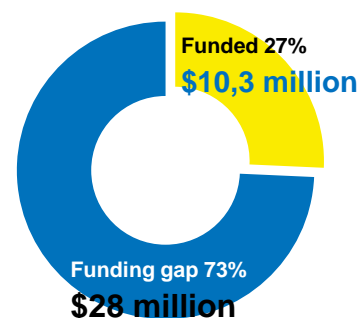


**There are no active refugees and asylum seekers officially reported in Seychelles. However, Immigration deported three individuals registered by UNHCR in 2022 and 2023.*

FUNDING (AS OF 30 NOVEMBER 2024)

USD 38.8 million

requested for the South Africa Multi-Country Office



UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

45 x National Staff

24 x International Staff

Offices:

1 x Multi-Country Office in Pretoria, South Africa

1 x Field Office in Windhoek in Namibia

1 x Field Office in Dukwi, Botswana

1 x Field Office in Musina, South Africa

1 x staff presence in Mbabane, Eswatini

1 x staff presence in Antananarivo,

Madagascar



Representatives from government, CSOs, RLOs private sector, and academia join workshop on misinformation, disinformation and hate speech

Working With Partners

- UNHCR has Partnership Framework Agreements in place with **14** implementing partners funded by SAMCO in six countries: Botswana (1), Eswatini (1), Lesotho (1), Madagascar (2), Namibia (1), South Africa (8). These partners deliver services on behalf of UNHCR to refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless persons. The services include legal assistance, advocacy, promotion of social cohesion and community engagement, psychosocial counselling, gender-based violence (GBV) case management, climate change initiatives, cash-based interventions (CBI) for vulnerable populations, education, and livelihood support to help refugees rebuild their lives.
- A Partnership Framework Agreement has also been established with the Mixed Migration Centre-Danish Refugee Council, funded by HQ Innovation Fund, to gather data and conduct research on decision-making and protection experiences related to mixed movements along the Western Indian Ocean Route, funded by the HQ Data Innovation Fund. Additionally, UNHCR is collaborating with the South African Human Rights Commission to implement a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in place since 2021, that commits both organizations to cooperate in areas such as detention, statelessness, advocacy and human rights, accompanied by a concrete workplan
- UNHCR SAMCO is part of the eight UN Country Teams (UNCT). The Mauritius UNCT also covers Seychelles.

Overview

Background

- The **protection environment** in the nine SAMCO countries is diverse and challenging, with a mix of low and middle-income countries, on-going **refugee policy reforms** and alongside countries without a national asylum system. Protection space among the nine countries varies widely. South Africa, Lesotho, Eswatini, Madagascar, and Mauritius permit freedom of movement, while Botswana and Namibia host refugees in settlements and maintain a reservation on the right to freedom of movement.
- All SAMCO countries except Comoros and Mauritius have acceded to the 1951 Convention; Madagascar has not acceded to the 1967 Protocol. While Seychelles and Madagascar have acceded to the 1951 Convention, it has not been domesticated, and neither have national asylum legislations.
- Botswana, Lesotho and Eswatini have acceded to the 1954 Statelessness Convention (Madagascar retracted its original accession); only Lesotho and Eswatini acceded to the 1961 Statelessness Convention. The total estimated

population of stateless persons in SAMCO is **116,000** (approximately 100,000 stateless in Madagascar, **10,000** in South Africa, **5,000** in Namibia, **5,000** in Botswana, **5,000** in Eswatini, and **1,000** in Lesotho).

- SAMCO is committed to the development of fair, inclusive and efficient asylum systems in all nine countries. The operation is also focused on how to better address mixed movements through a route-based approach - this will involve other countries in the region as well as East/Horn of Africa and Europe (for movements towards Mayotte). SAMCO continues to advocate for inclusion in national systems, including socio-economic rights, an out-of-camp approach and alternatives to detention as top priorities.

Main activities

Legislative reforms

- During the 75th session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme in October 2024, SAMCO countries, including South Africa, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho and Madagascar highlighted their commitment to their Global Refugee Forum (GRF) including efforts to reduce poverty and climate change on displacement, statelessness and advocating for investment in asylum systems and digital transformation.
- UNHCR advocates for implementing pledges from the 2019 Global Refugee Forum and the High-Level Segment on Statelessness. In 2023, **59** pledges were made for the nine countries under UNHCR SAMCO. These include joint commitments by UN Country Teams in Botswana, Namibia, Lesotho and South Africa, focusing on refugee inclusion in national agendas and services. State pledges aim to integrate refugees, ensure registration and access to identity cards, provide agricultural land and work permits, enrol refugees in higher education and strengthen asylum procedures and legal frameworks.
- Efforts are being made to ensure data access and sharing between UNHCR and the South African Department of Home Affairs through signed agreements. This will allow UNHCR to access monthly or quarterly statistical data for projects.
- Constructive engagements continued with the South African authorities on the White Paper on Citizenship, Immigration, and Refugee Protection, published on April 17, 2024. UNHCR raised concerns about increasing restrictions on refugee rights, including the proposed withdrawal from the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, with plans to re-enter with reservations.
- High-Dialogues with the South African Government on the Route Based Approach and UNHCR's support on the Backlog Project were held in February

and, with government pledging a full support to strengthening asylum systems. In November, UNHCR held a workshop with **42** refugee participants focused on route-based data collection.

- An inaugural judicial engagement conference was held on 05-07 November 2024, in Pretoria, South Africa, bringing together the Department of Home Affairs, the South African Judiciary and the litigating NGOs with the aim to strengthen relations, establish an Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanism (ADR), harmonize interpretation of the Convention, and enhance capacity of key stakeholders in refugee and asylum law, was held.
- Following concerted efforts to conclude the long-standing amendment of Botswana's Refugee Act, the Amendment Bill was approved on the floor of Parliament in August 2024. Although the Legislative Bill has not yet been signed by the President, the UNHCR's efforts to highlight the urgency of finalizing the amendment Bill through high-level meetings have significantly raised the priority of UNHCR's initiatives on the Government's agenda.

Protection

- UNHCR has leveraged its advocacy in Indian Ocean countries. UNHCR agreed on a roadmap for asylum capacity development with authorities in Madagascar, now with a dedicated staff based there. UNHCR responded effectively on many refoulement incidents, particularly by Seychelles and Madagascar.
- UNHCR, in collaboration with other UN Agencies, the Government of Eswatini, donors and Humanitarian bodies has provided support for some **950** asylum-seekers arrived in Eswatini due to the political violence in Mozambique following the October 2024 elections. The new arrivals are accommodated at the Malindza Refugee Reception Centre (MRRC). Resource mobilization is ongoing including with pledges on WASH, clothing, food and tents.
- A Disability Day Care event was held in Namibia with **14** refugees, including **9** children with disabilities and 5 family members, highlighting bullying issues faced by these children in schools and the community. UNHCR will conduct regular school visits to educate students about bullying and disabilities.
- On 5 December 2024, UNHCR, the Mixed Migration Centre and the Danish Refugee Council held a workshop to validate research on mixed migration dynamics along the Western Indian Ocean Route. Building on the outcomes of the SADC and UNHCR High-Level Dialogue, the workshop focused on improving coordination, harmonizing policies, and establishing effective data sharing systems.

- UNHCR re-established operations in Musina, Limpopo Province, South Africa, to strengthen the asylum-system process, the Route-Based Approach and improve data collection on mixed migratory movements. Strong collaboration with the Musina Refugee Reception Office and the Border Management Authority aims to improve access to territory for refugees and asylum seekers.

Verification and documentation

- Verification exercises were conducted in Namibia, Lesotho and Botswana, with socioeconomic data collected and analysed to inform targeted assistance and programming.
- Namibia officially announced plans to issue biometric ID cards to refugees, granting access to essential services like banking, employment and education. Regularly updating, verifying and recording new data elements over time will strengthen identity data.
- In preparations for the roll-out of the cash-based initiatives (CBI) in Namibia, UNHCR and a financial service provider conducted an enrolment exercise for Maris Wallet (Mobile Money) in Namibia. Each household head's identity was biometrically verified before enrolment. Registration and CBI officers, along with UNHCR field staff, partners and government officials, verified individuals and updated phone numbers and entitlement cards in ProGres.
- UNHCR also participated in a High-Level Dialogue and organized a birth registration panel at OHCHR's symposium in Cape Town, South Africa.

Community empowerment and self-reliance

- Progress on the Ndzevane Economic Empowerment Project includes engagements with the refugee community and potential donors. Soil analysis, land clearing and crop selection process are underway, with clearing starting in November. This project, part of the GRF pledge by the Eswatini Government reaffirmed in 2023, targets **2850** refugees and **500** host community members to improve food security, enhance self-reliance and encourage participation in the local market. Ten households are scheduled to relocate to Ndzevane by the end of December.
- In a UNHCR-funded project, five refugee women at Dukwi refugee camp in Botswana received laying hens to sell within the camp and host village, supplementing their meals and supporting their families. A refugee-led women's organization also won the Julia Taft award to support an artisanal handcraft project, aiming to make livelihood interventions more market-based and sustainable for refugees and host communities.

- In Lesotho, refugees and asylum-seekers benefited from livelihood projects such as cosmetics production, mushroom farming and rabbit rearing. These initiatives have empowered refugees to engage in income-generating activities and contribute to local economies. More than **60** refugees benefited from agricultural interventions, approximately **65** benefitted from livelihoods and economic inclusion interventions and **25** received seed capital or start up kits.
- As climate change continues, communities, including refugees in Lesotho and Namibia, are facing severe hardship and food insecurity and also impacting their livelihood projects. UNHCR is working with other UN agencies, governments and donors to find solutions. In Namibia, by the end of September 2024, livelihoods and economic inclusion interventions benefited **48** refugees and asylum-seekers, with seven of them receiving seed capital.
- The first Cash-Based Intervention (CBI) was successfully launched at Dukwi camp in Botswana, providing support to **855** individuals from **267** households. The assistance was delivered by Botswana Post, a financial service provider contracted by UNHCR, using mobile money services (PosoMoney). This initiative will boost the local market, promote social cohesion with the host community, enhance self-reliance and the financial inclusion of refugees. In Madagascar, **18** individuals with specific needs benefitted from CBI.
- In Mauritius, UNHCR works with Caritas to provide ad hoc CBI (Cash-Based Interventions) for vulnerable individuals to address their immediate needs and enhance their self-reliance.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

- In Botswana, **721** people were supported with access to water and/or sanitation services. Water and sanitation services reached over **1000** people in Eswatini, with **274** women and girls receiving sanitary materials and **136** households participating in proper hygiene practices. In Namibia, access to water and sanitation services was provided to **5,800** people and **2,303** women and girls received sanitary materials. At least 236 individuals were assisted with shelter.



- UNHCR launches the first-ever CBI roll out in Botswana. ©UNHCR/Staff

Education

- UNHCR continues to prioritize education, providing assistance for inclusion. By the end of September 2024, **545** refugees and asylum seekers received monetary or in-kind support for any education related costs in Botswana (187), Eswatini (136) and Madagascar (222).
- In Botswana, **187** children were enrolled in primary education, **61** enrolled in secondary education and **11** students enrolled in tertiary education. In Eswatini, **112** refugee and asylum-seeker children were enrolled in primary schools, **85** in secondary schools and four at tertiary education. In Madagascar, **178** children are enrolled in primary education, **44** enrolled in secondary education.
- UNHCR team accompanied Ambassador Toussaint “Tusse” Chiza from Sweden on a mission to South Africa from November 19-21, to gather fundraising content for S4U’s education campaign. By visiting Johannesburg, Durban and Richard’s Bay, Toussaint learned about UNHCR’s role in South Africa and the needs of refugees, which he will share to encourage support.
- UNHCR continues to raise awareness about the DAFI scholarship programme and its support. In 2024, a total of **64** students registered at various tertiary institutions through DAFI scholarship. **15** students have successfully graduated from the 2024 academic year. Two DAFI students from Namibia were successfully resettled to the United States of America through UNHCR programme.

Child protection and GBV

- UNHCR continues to play a key role in interagency efforts to strengthen community engagement in child protection, Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

prevention, collaborating with other UN Agencies, key government departments, donors and partners.

- The 2024 campaign for 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence was commemorated in Botswana and Namibia, in collaboration with the governments, refugee-led organizations and partners, addressing various issues such as domestic violence and child marriage.
- By the end of September 2024, in Eswatini, child protection services benefitted **236** children and caregivers, with three workshops conducted. In Botswana, **32** children and caregivers received child protection services and three awareness workshops and **133** people benefitted from specialized GBV programmes.
- In South Africa, **1 081** children and caregivers received child protection services and **572** workshops and **2,230** people benefitted from specialized GBV programmes and 549 GBV information sessions.
- In Namibia, a total of **94** children and caregivers received child protection services, while **355** people benefitted from specialized GBV programmes. In Madagascar, 495 information sessions on access to local health, mental health, HIV/CP, GBV and reproductive health services were conducted.

Promoting social cohesion

- UNHCR continues to foster partnerships with governments, partners and donors to mobilise support in promoting social cohesion. In South Africa, anti-foreign sentiments protection service for refugees and asylum-seekers has been enhanced by continuous community engagement and robust social cohesion initiatives.
- UNHCR assists refugees who meet specific criteria for naturalization, working with legal organizations and local governments to support their full integration into host communities. This includes providing guidance on accessing social services, employment resources, and community support networks – this activity will be more streamlined in 2025.
- In South Africa, a webinar was held with **51** refugee representatives, civil organisations society and government on how to facilitate spaza shop registration for refugees in line with the Presidential decree, highlighting four best practices led by Refugee-Led Organisations in the field in terms of community mobilization, stakeholder engagement, advocacy and social cohesion programming around the spaza shop issue.

- Approximately **40** representatives from government, civil society organisations, the private sector, and academia joined a two-day workshop on misinformation, disinformation and hate speech.

Efforts to eradicate statelessness

- UNHCR continues focusing on supporting countries that need legislative nationality reform, such as Eswatini and Madagascar, as well as improving birth registration through Civil Registration and Vital Statistics systems.
- UNHCR is currently finalizing the statelessness study in Botswana, concluded the South Africa study pending validation and finalizing hiring of the Lesotho consultants for a study in 2025.

Durable Solutions

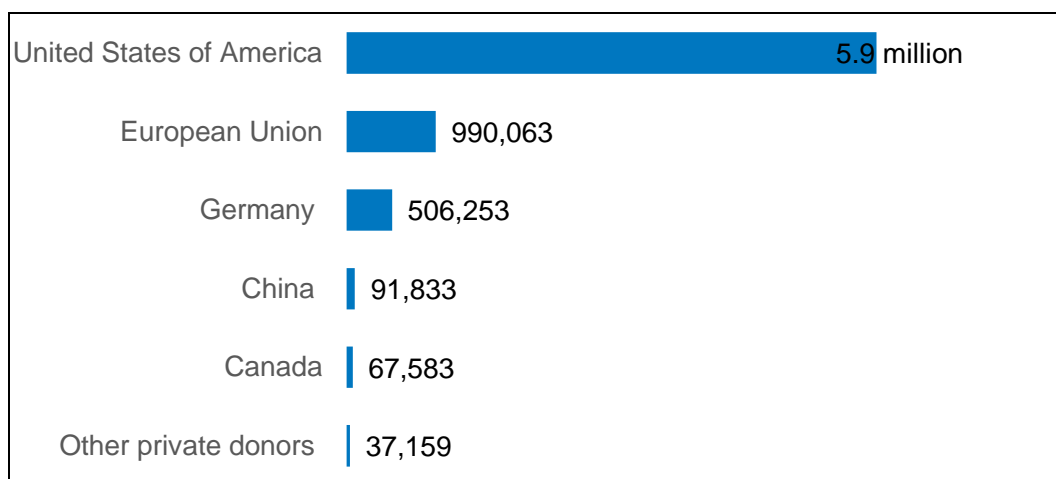
- SAMCO will continue to employ the strategic use of resettlement as a protection tool and voluntary repatriation for refugees who wish to return home in safety and dignity while enhancing complementary pathways. Advocates for the local integration of refugees and asylum-seekers wherever possible.
- **Voluntary Repatriation:** UNHCR has assisted **338** refugees and asylum-seekers to voluntarily return to their countries of origin in 2024. Majority of the returns have been to DRC and Burundi with one returning to South Sudan.
- **Resettlement:** UNHCR has successfully met and exceeded the resettlement quota for 2024, submitted **1,660** individuals (107%) against an allocated quota of 1550. As of 30 Nov, a total of **960** refugees have departed for resettlement. Of the total submissions so far, **1,483** individuals have been directed to the United States, **164** individuals were submitted to Canada, nine to New Zealand (add-ons to ongoing cases) and four to Germany. Canada has offered South Africa a submissions quota of **50** individuals for 2025.
- **Complementary Pathways:** Successfully facilitated the departure of six individuals traveling on labour and education Pathways: two individuals departed under the UNICORE program and a family of four individuals departed from South Africa to Canada through the Economic Mobility Pathways Pilot (EMPP) Labour mobility program. This is the first family to depart from South Africa through this pathway, setting a positive precedent for future applicants from SAMCO. Additionally, arrangements are in place for one Duolingo scholar to depart for the US in January 2025 to begin her academic journey at Macalester University.

Financial Information

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to the South Africa Multi-Country Office as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with broadly earmarked and unearmarked funds.

CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Contributions to the South Africa Multi-Country Office amount to some **US\$ 10,3 million**.



OTHER SOFTLY EARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Special thanks to the major donors of other softly earmarked contributions that can potentially be used for this operation due to their earmarking to a related situation or theme, or to the region or sub-region.

Australia for UNHCR 9.9 million | **UNO-Flüchtlingshilfe** 4.7 million | **Norway** 2.8 million | **Private donors** in Italy 2.2 million
Italy | Finland | Private donors

UNEARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Special thanks to the major donors of unearmarked contributions.

Sweden 112.2 million | **España con ACNUR** 62.2 million | **Norway** 58.9 million | **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland** 41.4 million | **Japan for UNHCR** 38.6 million | **Denmark** 37.8 million | **Netherlands (Kingdom of the)** 36.3 million | **France** 33.6 million | Private donors in the **Republic of Korea** 28.4 million | **Germany** 25.1 million | **Switzerland** 19.2 million | Private donors in **Italy** 18.4 million | **Republic of Korea** 18.1 million | **Belgium** 14.2 million | **Ireland**

13.6 million | Private donors in the **Netherlands** 12.8 million | **Sweden** for UNHCR 12.7 million | **Australia** 10.7 million.

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Judicial Engagement Conference in Pretoria, South Africa, supported by the Delegation of European Union in South Africa. © South Africa's Home Affairs/ Staff

External/Donor Relations

CONTACTS

Tapiwa Shana Nkhoma, External Relations Officer, South Africa Multi-Country Office, Nkhoma@unhcr.org, Tel: +27 12 762 7565

Tendani Sibuyi, Senior External Relations Associate, South Africa Multi-Country Office, sibuyi@unhcr.org, Tel: +27 12 762 7565

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