



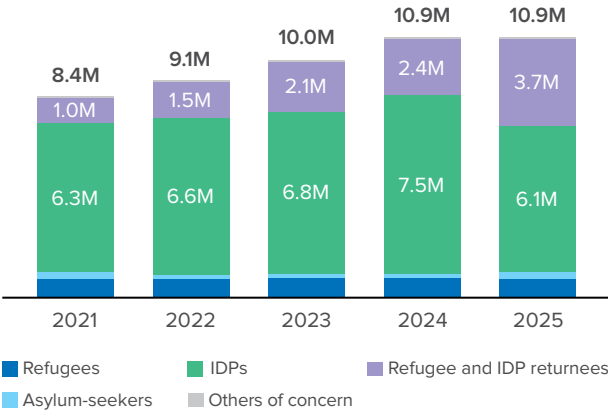
REGIONAL SUMMARY

In Nzakara village, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Central African refugees and host community members work together in a traditional bakery cooperative supported by UNHCR and its partners, helping strengthen self-reliance.
© UNHCR/Maimouna Amadou Djibo

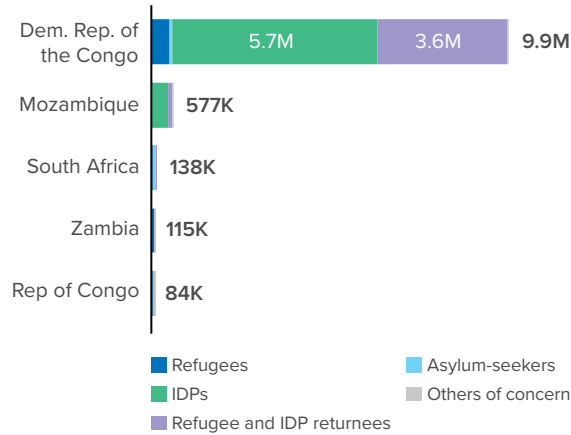
Southern Africa

UNHCR covered **8 operations**¹ across **16 countries** and territories in the region. In 2025, the region hosted nearly **10.9 million** forcibly displaced and stateless people, unchanged from 2024.

Population trend | 2021-2025



Top 5 countries by population



¹ Angola, Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa multi-country office, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Context

Southern Africa hosted 10.9 million forcibly displaced and stateless people, similar to 2024. More than one million of them were refugees and asylum-seekers. The region also saw large-scale returns in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Mozambique. At the same time, violence in eastern DRC required an emergency response, with around 5.7 million Congolese still internally displaced and 1.2 million living as refugees in other countries.

In Southern Africa, protracted situations coexisted with new and evolving displacement, driven by persistent armed conflicts and the growing impact of climate-related shocks. Conflicts in eastern DRC and northern Mozambique caused significant additional protection needs among displaced people. Recurrent cyclones, floods and droughts in DRC, Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe triggered new displacement and increased needs for shelter, livelihoods and other basic services. Mixed movements of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants towards South Africa persisted, putting pressure on national institutions to register, process and protect people on the move. Across the region, challenges such as poverty, food insecurity, weak social protection and pressure on health and education services shaped the protection environment. Despite this, governments and partners engaged in efforts to strengthen protection, expand access to services and advance sustainable responses.

UNHCR reconfigured its regional support structure during the last quarter of 2025. Responsibilities for the DRC and the Republic of Congo operations were transferred to the Regional Bureau for West and Central Africa and six other operations were transferred to the Regional Bureau for the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes, which was renamed the Regional Bureau for Eastern and Southern Africa.

Results and achievements

UNHCR's strategic vision was to ensure that forcibly displaced and stateless people can enjoy their rights without discrimination and are included in national systems and services, strengthening their protection, self-reliance and access to durable solutions. This vision cascaded to the following six strategic priorities:

- strengthening legal and policy frameworks
- promoting integration of refugees and stateless persons within national systems
- deepening partnerships with development actors, private sector and civil society
- expanding solutions for refugees, including return, local integration, resettlement and complementary pathways
- improving data and information management
- sustaining preparedness and emergency response capacities of governments, communities and local organizations.

During emergencies, UNHCR worked closely with national authorities and partners. Operations in the DRC and Mozambique responded to conflict-induced displacement and provided life-saving protection, shelter and basic services for more than 1.4 million IDPs. Recurrent disasters across Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe triggered multiple responses, with UNHCR and partners providing immediate shelter and protection.

New refugee and border management reforms in Botswana, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe offered opportunities for enhanced protection of refugees' rights. Together with UNICEF, UNHCR advanced cross-border case management for refugee and asylum-seeking children moving between the DRC, Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia.

Mixed movement analysis expanded across the DRC-Zambia and Mozambique-Zimbabwe-South Africa corridors. Along the Southern Africa and Western Indian Ocean routes, UNHCR increased joint analysis and advocacy on mixed movements and promoted safe, dignified access to services, particularly for people transiting through Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa and Zambia.

Countries in Southern Africa offered 168 pledges relating to the Global Compact on Refugees. Of these, 14 were fulfilled and 87 in progress. Regional and national authorities engaged in sustained inclusion of refugees and stateless people in national systems. For example, the DRC, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe advanced national strategies that integrate refugees into public education systems. In Zambia, refugees accessed free education, from early childhood development through to secondary schools.

National Action Plans to Eradicate Statelessness have been adopted in the DRC, Eswatini and Zambia. In Botswana, Lesotho and Malawi, citizenship laws are being revised to help people at risk of statelessness obtain nationality.

Operations promoted durable solutions where conditions allowed. UNHCR fully utilized resettlement quotas for Malawi and Zimbabwe, and prioritized high-risk cases in Zambia and South Africa multi-country office.

Planned voluntary returns to the DRC and Mozambique included a reintegration package to support scalable and sustainable solutions. In Zambia, a government-led agriculture roadmap, combined with an enabling land and tenure framework, created conditions for transitioning refugees and host communities into commercial value chains.

Challenges

The reorganization of three bureaus in Africa into two led to workforce reductions and decreased UNHCR’s field presence. Underfunded humanitarian programmes placed greater pressure on a smaller number of partners to manage complex emergencies and find long-term solutions to forced displacement in the region.

Weak civil documentation and nationality frameworks, exclusion from censuses and statistics, and restrictions on civic space keep many forcibly displaced and stateless people out of public systems and decision-making. As a result, states struggle to plan, target and deliver inclusive services and solutions.

Worsening conflict, climate-driven displacement and mixed movements increase the risk of trafficking, exploitation and arbitrary detention for people on the move, while outpacing the capacity of states and partners to build effective accountability and participation mechanisms.

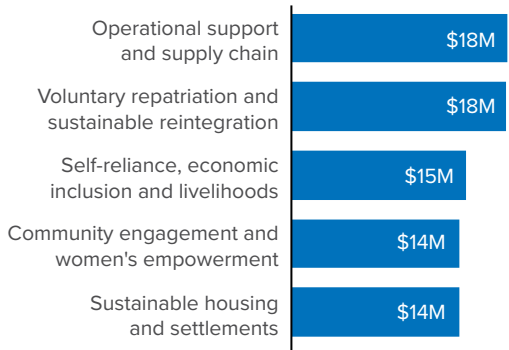
Financial overview

Regional expenditure and budget in 2025

- With funds available, UNHCR could spend **\$158 million** towards budgeted needs of **\$451 million**
- **18%** decrease in expenditure compared with 2024
- **\$293 million** of unmet needs or **65%** of the budget
- **55%** of total expenditure in the region or **\$88 million** was funded by flexible funding, including **\$62 million** of unearmarked funding.

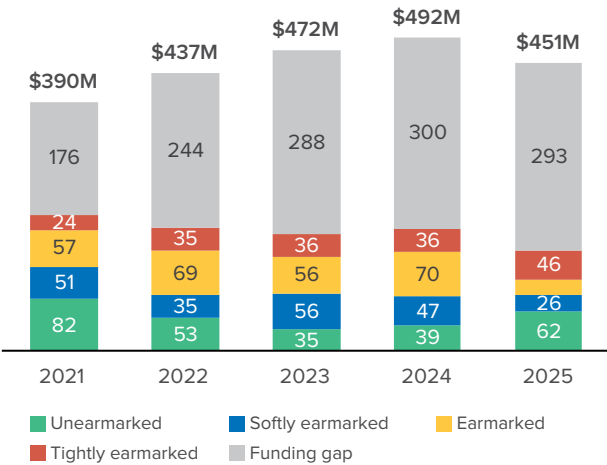
Top 5 areas of expenditure in 2025

These 5 areas accounted for **\$79 million** or **50%** of total regional expenditure



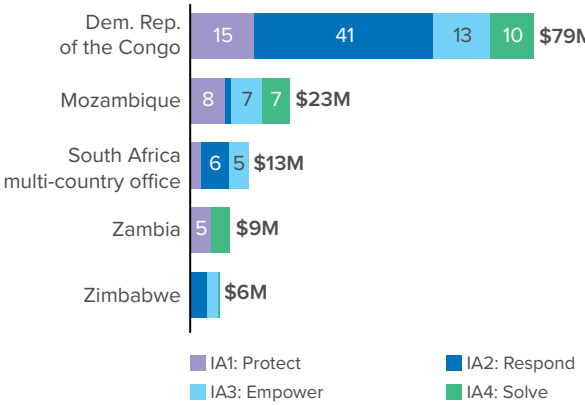
Regional funding and earmarking | 2021-2025

\$158 million funds available (**35%**) in 2025 out of the **\$451 million** required



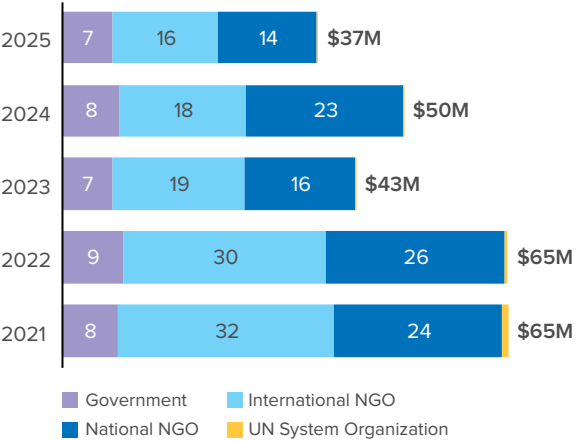
Operations with the highest expenditure

These 5 operations accounted for **\$130 million** or **83%** of total regional expenditure



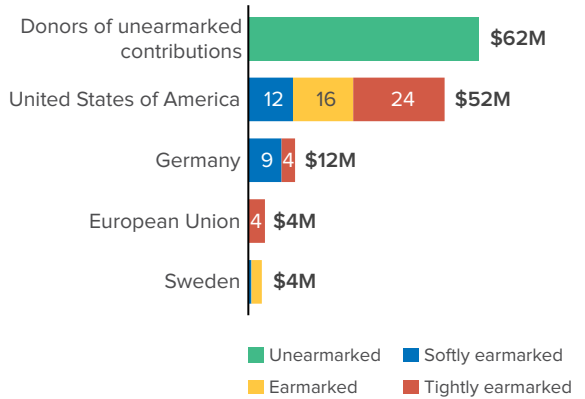
Expenditure via partners | 2021-2025

\$37 million (-25% from 2024) spent via **95** partners (+8%) in 2025.



Top 5 donors of voluntary contributions | 2025

These 5 donors provided **\$134 million** or **85%** of the funds available for the region



Core output indicators in Southern Africa

Reporting period: 1 January – 31 December 2025

 PROTECT	Attaining favourable protection environments	
	Protection	710,100 people received protection services in 14 countries -57% vs 2024
	Access to territory, registration and documentation	138,900 people registered on an individual basis in 6 countries -70% vs 2024 115,700 people supported to obtain civil status, identity or legal status documentation in 6 countries -29% vs 2024
	Gender-based violence	284,600 people benefited from specialized GBV programmes in 6 countries -28% vs 2024
	Child protection	29,900 children and caregivers received child protection services in 6 countries +29% vs 2024
	Safety and access to justice	31,200 people received legal assistance in 5 countries +116% vs 2024
 EMPOWER	Empowering communities and achieving gender equality	
	Community engagement and women's empowerment	22,900 people consulted through participatory assessments in 12 countries -69% vs 2024 83,100 people used UNHCR-supported feedback & response mechanisms to voice their needs/concerns/feedback in 14 countries -69% vs 2024
	Self-reliance, economic inclusion and livelihoods	24,700 people benefited from livelihoods and economic inclusion interventions in 9 countries -24% vs 2024

 RESPOND	Realizing rights in safe environments	
		92,600 people received cash assistance in 11 countries -35% vs 2024
	Well-being and basic needs	109,700 people received non-food items in 6 countries -55% vs 2024 9,540 people supported with improved cooking options in 2 countries +0% vs 2024
	Sustainable housing and settlements	51,700 people received shelter and housing assistance in 5 countries -58% vs 2024
	Healthy lives	439,200 individual consultations in UNHCR-supported health care services in 7 countries -9% vs 2024 29,400 consultations in UNHCR-supported mental health and psychosocial support services in 7 countries +118% vs 2024
	Education	71,900 people benefited from education programming in 7 countries -18% vs 2024
	Clean water, sanitation and hygiene	293,300 people supported with access to water and/or sanitation services in 6 countries -53% vs 2024
 SOLVE	Securing solutions	
	Voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration	39,600 people received counselling and/or information on voluntary repatriation in 15 countries -75% vs 2024
	Local integration and local solutions	463 people supported by UNHCR to acquire nationality, permanent residency status or to access naturalization procedures in 4 countries +1,262% vs 2024