

# Annual Results Report

**2025**

**South Africa MCO**

## Acknowledgements

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### **Note:**

The baseline values presented in this document reflect previous year's progress when available. If such data is not available, strategy baseline values are used instead.

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# Section 1: Context and Overview

## 1.1 Changes to the Operational Context

In 2025, the nine countries of Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean supported by the UNHCR South Africa Multi-Country Office (SAMCO) hosted an estimated 197,560 forcibly displaced and stateless persons, comprising 105,315 asylum-seekers, 77,292 refugees, 14,796 stateless people along with 157 other assisted persons. Compared to 2024, this reflects a moderate overall increase of approximately 3.3 per cent in the total population of concern, driven by a 5.9 per cent rise in asylum-seekers (from 99,478 to 105,315) and a marginal 0.5 per cent increase in refugees (from 76,926 to 77,292)

Protracted and resurgent sub-national conflicts in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) Ethiopia, and Somalia continued to trigger influx and secondary movement to both sub-regions and beyond exerting pressure on the capacity of hosting states. Countries with nascent asylum procedures saw continued new arrivals of mixed populations. Recurrent extreme weather events compounded by the impact of severe underfunding heightened vulnerability of refugees. As per the vulnerability assessment conducted in 2025, over 70% of refugees in Namibia and Botswana fall under the extremely vulnerable category which calls for the transition plans developed for these countries to be resourced. UNHCR has been working with the Governments of Botswana and Namibia to operationalize transition towards sustainable solutions in Dukwi and Osire settlements. UNHCR foresees a responsible withdrawal from both countries by June 2026 due to funding shortfalls.

Concurrently, small countries such as Eswatini and Mauritius saw the number of new asylum-seekers increase over-stretching their limited reception and processing capacity against the backdrop of fewer pathways for resettlement. The conclusion of third country extradition agreements outside UNHCR's remit has also made the sub-regional protection environment more complex.

During the same time frame, States also made considerable strides undertaking bold legal reform in refugee law, reduction of statelessness and advancing solutions for which UNHCR SAMCO played an instrumental role. This includes legal commentary and advocacy on South Africa's Draft Revised White Paper on Citizenship, Immigration and Refugee Protection, which prevented withdrawal from the 1951 Refugee Convention. UNHCR SAMCO also shared its legal opinion on the implementation of the "good cause" provision, which severely restricted access to the asylum system for new arrivals. This procedural hurdle left many individuals undocumented and increasingly vulnerable to arrest, detention, and deportation. Accession to statelessness conventions and national laws reducing this risk were also advanced.

Resource constraints necessitated a reduction in UNHCR's geographic footprint, leading to the difficult decision to discontinue physical operational presence in Eswatini and Madagascar by mid-year.

In response to the resource constraints, UNHCR SAMCO rapidly adapted its operations and accelerated sustainable response interventions, focusing on refugee inclusion in national systems, government capacity building for asylum management, and social cohesion. A key priority was advancing the localization agenda by expanding partnerships with national NGOs, Refugee-Led Organizations (RLOs), and the private sector to sustain community-level delivery, building on the strong NGO, RLO, academic, and private sector presence across SAMCO's area of responsibility.

## 1.2. Progress Against the Desired Impact

### 1. Impact Area: Attaining Favorable Protection Environments

Refugees, asylum seekers and Stateless Persons are able to enjoy international protection

Indicator			
Country	Population Type	Baseline	Actual (2025)
<b>1.1 Proportion of people seeking international protection who are able to access asylum procedures</b>			
Botswana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
Comoros	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
Eswatini	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
Lesotho	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
Madagascar	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
Mauritius	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	85.86%
Namibia	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
Seychelles	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0.00%	100.00%
South Africa	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
<b>1.2 Proportion of people who are able to move freely within the country of habitual residence</b>			
Lesotho	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
South Africa	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%

Across the SAMCO countries, all individuals had access to asylum procedures (100%) although various challenges persist that require further development to ensure quality service delivery and fairness. South Africa remained the country hosting the largest number of asylum-seekers and refugees within the remit of SAMCO. While the principle of non-refoulement has been upheld, access to asylum was constrained (with only an estimation of some 8,000 new asylum-seekers registered in 2025) and reduction of the backlog was slower than planned (from 120,778 at the end of 2024 to 116 474 at the end of 2025). Nice cases South Africa “good cause” interviews under the current policy, means in practice that individuals must enter South Africa through an official port of entry, express an intention to seek asylum there and receive a section 23 transit visa, and proceed to lodge an asylum claim at a Refugee Reception Office within five days. All others must undergo an interview to establish whether they had “good cause” for irregular entry or presence in the country before being allowed to apply for asylum. This makes access to asylum more bureaucratic and hence less effective. It is currently unknown how many individuals in need of international protection were unable to access the asylum system due to lack of data. Legal partners in the Western Cape intervened at police stations in 76 cases in this regard, and intervened in 52 cases of arrest and detention in Gauteng, Gqeberha and Durban. UNHCR has worked with South Africa’s asylum bodies on first instance and appeals to ensure fairer and more efficient refugee status determination procedures and prevent abuse. In 2025, technical cooperation between the Government and UNHCR was good and ongoing and engagement with South African civil society including through law clinics remained impactful to preserve the right to seek and fair treatment of asylum seekers and refugees.

Botswana, Namibia, Eswatini, and Lesotho all have accessible government-led asylum systems. In May 2025, Eswatini and the United States entered into an agreement concerning the removal of third-country nationals. UNHCR worked closely with the government of Eswatini to ensure that individuals transferred under this agreement are able to access asylum. Moreover, 373 individuals were released from immigration detention in Botswana in mid-2025 following sustained advocacy by UNHCR. SAMCO advocacy to lift strict encampment policies in Botswana and Namibia, was ongoing and authorities are informed of worsening food insecurity, limit livelihoods, and increased GBV risks. The Governments are receptive to UNHCR

advocacy but also have called for increased responsibility sharing to support refugee and host communities. 2025 saw the refoulement of one individual from the Seychelles, who ended up being resettled to Canada through UNHCR intervention, and of 37 persons from Madagascar who were refouled back to Somalia. There were alleged reports of five asylum-seekers being turned back from Mauritius. In 2025, UNHCR finalized qualitative studies on statelessness for South Africa, Botswana, and Lesotho. These studies have been handed over to the governments. This allows for UNHCR to collaborate with those governments in the design of national action plans to address statelessness and to issue policy recommendations aligned with current practices, a process that has yielded tangible positive outcomes in the reduction of statelessness in Namibia, which is currently passing a statelessness bill with UNHCR technical advice and Eswatini.

## 2. Impact Area: Realizing Rights in Safe Environments

### FDPs have increased access to protection services through national systems

Indicator			
Country	Population Type	Baseline	Actual (2025)
<b>2.2 Proportion of people residing in physically safe and secure settlements with access to basic facilities</b>			
Botswana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
Eswatini	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
Lesotho	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
Namibia	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
<b>2.3 Proportion of people with access to health services</b>			
Botswana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
Eswatini	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
Lesotho	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
Madagascar	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	44.74%
Namibia	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
South Africa	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%

A total of 2131 individuals benefited from specialized gender-based violence (GBV) programmes. In South Africa, GBV survivors were further supported through tailored livelihoods training and the provision of start-up kits. 212 survivors participated in self-reliance initiatives, including skills development, seed capital support, and business start-up kits, aligned with their specific needs. These interventions strengthened survivors' economic resilience while expanding support to women-led and refugee-led organizations. Through targeted stakeholder engagement and advocacy for children's right to education, four children in South Africa were assisted to enroll in school. Additionally, 33 learners received school fee exemption letters to support families facing financial barriers; 26 exemptions were approved, while seven were declined due to outstanding debts or non-compliance with payment arrangements. A further 12 children were referred to legal partners to support their 2026 school enrollment across various grades. Successful advocacy efforts also led to the removal of international levies previously imposed on DAFI students, thereby enhancing affordability and access to higher education. A total of 1641 children and caregivers received child protection services.

Education interventions supported 206 refugee children in Botswana, 147 at primary level and 59 at secondary. Relative to the established baseline of 100, this reflects that all refugee children have access to education services. The results contribute directly to Indicator 3.2a (Proportion of children and young people enrolled in primary education) through the enrolment of 206 learners, and to Indicator 3.2b (Proportion of children and young people enrolled in secondary education). This achievements signal measurable progress in strengthening access to formal education for refugee children. Funding from the Latter-Day Saints of Jesus Christ enabled the construction of new classrooms in Eswatini, resulting in 64 refugee children being exempted from school fees. Access to higher education was sustained through scholarship programmes such as the Mastercard Foundation and the DAFI scholarship, which collectively support 42

students. The operation secured commitments from sister UN agencies to collaborate across multiple sectors, including child protection, GBV, social cohesion and self-reliance, to advance the inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers within national systems and ongoing programmes. Across Eswatini, Botswana, Namibia and Lesotho, 8,875 individuals were included in national health plans and policies, further strengthening access to essential health services.

### 3. Impact Area: Empowering Communities and Achieving Gender Equality

#### FDPs are empowered with social economic opportunities and have durable solutions

Indicator			
Country	Population Type	Baseline	Actual (2025)
<b>3.1 Proportion of people who have the right to decent work</b>			
Lesotho	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
South Africa	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
<b>3.2a Proportion of children and young people enrolled in primary education</b>			
Botswana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
<b>3.2b Proportion of children and young people enrolled in secondary education</b>			
Botswana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%

In 2025, the situation of forcibly displaced people across the SAMCO footprint advanced measurably toward the impact of durable solutions. 868 individuals benefitted from livelihoods initiatives to help improve their economic status; a big improvement compared to only 270 people who benefitted in 2024.

A total of 1,107 individuals received counselling and up-to-date information, and 373 verified returns were facilitated with comprehensive pre-departure planning, travel document issuance, logistical support, and coordinated reintegration referrals with UNHCR counterparts in receiving countries. These efforts ensured that returnees departed with clearer understanding of conditions in countries of origin, confirmed service arrangements, and established referral pathways with local authorities and service providers.

Resettlement and complementary pathways delivered durable legal status and predictable mobility for many of the most vulnerable. UNHCR's completion of the allocated quota of 50 places for Canada, alongside the facilitation of 327 resettlement departures, ensured beneficiaries secured legal permanence, access to reception services, and structured integration support in receiving states. Complementary pathways broadened labour mobility and developed a profile pool of over 1,034 candidates yielding 16 matches (and one family departure), and family reunification efforts advanced multiple cases, including one family of five who departed. Local integration was advanced through civil documentation, residence recognition, or administrative endorsements. Botswana under its transition plan granted access to naturalization to 63 refugees. Compared with 2024, voluntary return departures rose from 337 to 373, reflecting stronger uptake despite implementation starting mid-2025. Resettlement departures were lower in 2025 (327 versus 1,107 in 2024) largely because the majority of cases were in the USRAP, which was suspended on 20 January 2025; resettlement slots remain minimal for 2026. UNHCR has already started to consider how to work with IOM to operationalize the route based approach and return of rejected asylum seekers which is in the national interest of SA and Indian Ocean States.

UNHCR SAMCO is actively pursuing local integration prospects for refugees in Botswana including naturalization and alternative residency status to reduce protracted displacement. The Government of Namibia has also been willing to support refugee self-reliance initiatives but on a limited scale. Despite these areas of durable solutions progress, the drop in resettlement and slow pace of progress towards local integration against the backdrop of dwindling resources remain major constraints. The lack of inclusion of refugee hosting areas as part of sub-national development plans and priorities at the national and UNCT levels remain major obstacles to operationalizing the leaving no one behind principle in practice. The integration of Dukwi and Osire settlement as part of national social protection and safety nets has yet to be achieved.

Strengthened durable solutions case management, targeted legal counselling, and enhanced coordination

with governments and partners improved the consistency, transparency, and strategic value of available pathways. In the areas of livelihoods, the operation scaled up self-reliance efforts in the second half of 2025 to promote sustainable and strategically aligned responses for refugees and asylum-seekers across Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia, and South Africa. 868 people benefited from livelihood interventions. In South Africa, over 408 individuals participated in livelihood initiatives, including 212 GBV survivors who received psychosocial support and business skills training. Interventions covered beauty services, tailoring, call-centre training, customer service, and home-based care, with more than 300 people receiving seed capital or start-up kits. In Namibia, 45 people received start-up kits for farming and participated in a revolving fund, complemented by strategic investment in an irrigation system to address water shortages that hinder refugee farming. In Lesotho, 94 people participated in business training, youth apprenticeships, and mushroom and poultry farming. In Eswatini, 321 individuals benefited from business training, second-hand clothing activities, and farming initiatives, supported by the implementation of a small irrigation system in Malindza. The operation will continue to follow up on these initiatives in 2026 and identify opportunities for further scale-up.

Regarding statelessness, 1,000 persons were formally documented through partners in Madagascar, and three studies were concluded and handed over to governments of Lesotho, South Africa and Botswana. As a result – South Africa has formally introduced the definition of a stateless person into policy documents on a pathway to legislation. Botswana has formalized the procedure to accede to the 1961 Convention on Statelessness and Lesotho is on a pathway to developing a Bill on Statelessness. Eswatini's constitution continues to prevent mothers from passing on nationality to their children; however UNHCR's focus in 2026 will be to reprioritize this existing case at the Supreme Court to be heard.

## Other Core Impact Indicators

Country	Population Type	Baseline	Actual(2025)
<b>4.1 Number of refugees who voluntarily return in safety and dignity to their country of origin</b>			
Botswana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	8	0
Comoros	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	0
Eswatini	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	16	2
Lesotho	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1	1
Madagascar	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	0
Mauritius	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1	0
Namibia	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	33
Seychelles	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	0
South Africa	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	575	333
<b>4.2a Number of people who departed on resettlement</b>			
Botswana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	13	6
Comoros	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	2	0
Eswatini	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	4	0
Lesotho	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	0
Madagascar	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	11	0
Mauritius	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	0
Namibia	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	238	77
Seychelles	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	1
South Africa	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	836	242
<b>4.2b Number of people who departed through complementary pathways</b>			

Botswana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	6
Comoros	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	0
Eswatini	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	0
Lesotho	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	0
Madagascar	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	0
Mauritius	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	0
Namibia	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	10	0
Seychelles	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	0
South Africa	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	6	10
<b>4.3a Number of stateless people for whom nationality is granted or confirmed</b>			
Madagascar	Stateless Persons	Data not available	1,000
South Africa	Stateless Persons	0	0
<b>4.3b Number of refugees for whom residency status is granted or confirmed</b>			
Eswatini	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	0
Namibia	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	0

## 1.3 Challenges to Achieving Impacts

Across the SAMCO region, a range of structural, legal and operational challenges continue to hinder access to protection, services, and durable solutions for refugees, asylum-seekers, and other forcibly displaced persons. In South Africa, “good cause” interviews have significantly restricted access to asylum for people in genuine need of protection. Although the Western Cape High Court ruled in May 2025 that the interviews were unconstitutional and violated the principle of non-refoulement, the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) has continued applying them pending Constitutional Court confirmation. UNHCR engaged constructively with all stakeholders throughout the case, producing the first amicus curiae ever drafted by the operation marking a significant advance in strategic judicial engagement for improved protection outcomes. At the same time, a major gap persists in the absence of effective and adequately financed mechanisms for returning rejected asylum-seekers and other individuals not in need of international protection. While UNHCR is collaborating with IOM under the route-based approach, the lack of resources continues to limit the ability to facilitate safe and dignified returns.

The lack of national legal frameworks or mechanisms for asylum processing in the Indian Ocean States similarly heightens the risk of detention, refoulement, and inconsistent asylum management. UNHCR is supporting governments to advance alternatives to detention, expand access to national systems, and establish national asylum procedures. Meanwhile, rising anti-foreigner sentiment in South Africa has further impacted protection space, contributing in some areas to the denial of access to hospitals and schools despite the inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers in national systems. In Eswatini, cabinet-level interpretations of the education policy have constrained refugee children’s access to primary education. These challenges are compounded by broader pressures on constrained national systems, policy barriers, and socioeconomic limitations, as well as the spread of misinformation and the effects of reduced funding. In Namibia, inadequate documentation continues to impede the inclusion and mobility of many forcibly displaced persons. Although the government began printing refugee ID cards in early 2026, sustained efforts remain essential to ensure documentation remains prioritized as a key component of empowerment and inclusion.

Progress toward durable solutions across the SAMCO footprint is equally shaped by administrative, policy, and operational hurdles. Lengthy documentation renewals in South Africa, delays in issuing Convention Travel Documents (CTDs), and inconsistent verification and exit procedures hinder mobility, slow case processing, and restrict access to essential services. These administrative barriers intersect with resource constraints short-term funding cycles, limited technical capacity, and reduced outreach that weaken follow-up on reintegration and inhibit scaling of critical programming.

Resource limitations also constrain the delivery of sustainable livelihoods interventions. A shrinking humanitarian funding landscape, combined with limited specialized technical expertise, continues to challenge efforts to deliver programming that supports long-term self-reliance.

Strategic, coordinated action can address these barriers. Sustained advocacy with national and local authorities can streamline documentation processes and standardize verification and exit procedures. Jointly developed and operationalized SOPs with government partners such as DHA would help establish more predictable return frameworks. Expanded resource mobilization including multi-year funding, diversified donor engagement, and partnerships with the private sector—would strengthen programme stability, broaden outreach, and reinforce reintegration support.

Scaling complementary pathways will require stronger partnerships with educational institutions, labour recruiters, and sponsorship entities, along with improved CTD processing to reduce attrition. Enhanced data systems capable of generating timely information on documentation, naturalization, and reintegration outcomes are essential to enable better targeting, strengthen accountability, and inform advocacy. Managing community expectations remains critical. Transparent communication on the limitations of resettlement and the availability of complementary pathways can counter misinformation, while strategic public messaging can help mitigate anti-foreigner rhetoric. With coordinated advocacy, predictable resourcing, administrative reforms, expanded partnerships, and strengthened data ecosystems, SAMCO can translate current momentum into sustainable, scalable durable solutions across the region.

## 1.4 Collaboration and Partnerships

In 2025, SAMCO delivered substantial progress through deepened collaboration with national and local authorities, UN agencies, and refugee-led partners across the sub-region. Working through 14 national NGO partners, seven Refugee-Led Organizations (RLOs) and national state actors, SAMCO advanced the localization agenda while ensuring delivery of essential protection and assistance services. These included legal aid, social-cohesion initiatives, psychosocial support, GBV case management, climate-action programming, cash-based interventions, education, and livelihoods support.

SAMCO's engagement is firmly anchored in the Global Compact on Refugees and reinforced through commitments made at the Global Refugee Forum in 2019 and 2023. Across its nine countries, governments have advanced pledges aligned with GCR Objectives, including the education inclusion pledge, efforts to eradicate statelessness, strengthen legal and administrative frameworks for refugee protection, promote universal birth registration, expand access to documentation, and enhance socio-economic inclusion and durable solutions.

Partnerships with RLOs were operationalized through subcontracting arrangements facilitated by implementing partners. This model enabled RLOs to lead sport-based social-cohesion activities, rights awareness, GBV and child-protection interventions, and self-reliance activities.

Civil-society partners further operationalized Global Refugee Forum (GRF) pledges by delivering vocational skills training for LGBTIQ+ refugees in baking, barbering, beauty therapy, and digital literacy. These efforts were complemented by annual capacity-development for 150 refugees, mental health and social support services, and leadership and advocacy training for refugee women and youth. More than 700 individuals accessed self-reliance activities, reinforcing the GRF objective of increasing refugee self-reliance.

Collaboration with UN agencies was significantly strengthened, particularly through UNICEF–UNHCR multisectoral programming at Dukwi Refugee Settlement in Namibia. Joint interventions included distribution of “Ready for School” kits to newly arrived and vulnerable children and orientation sessions to promote effective use of learning materials. UNICEF and UNHCR also delivered comprehensive Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and child-safeguarding training for service providers, camp leadership, youth and RLOs. To support adolescents and young people, employability and life-skills sessions were conducted covering CV writing, interview readiness, and entrepreneurship, complementing ongoing advocacy to reduce legal barriers to employment. Climate-change and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) awareness activities were further rolled out, with messages focused on environmental conservation, forest preservation, hygiene promotion, and safe use of solar lighting in response to deteriorating WASH conditions. UNICEF also supported UNHCR in assessing school computer lab functionality and connectivity to strengthen digital learning opportunities.

Progress in national systems strengthening continued, with SAMCO deepening collaboration with

governments. This included ongoing partnership with the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) through a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on detention monitoring, statelessness, human rights advocacy, and joint protection interventions. The sub-region experienced strong legislative momentum on statelessness eradication, marked by increased government engagement in statelessness data collection, policy dialogue, and legal-reform processes. In Botswana, notable progress was made toward transitioning the refugee programme to full government leadership, with commitments to absorb programme responsibilities in light of UNHCR funding constraints. In Namibia, similar transition discussions have taken place.

In Eswatini and Namibia, UNHCR and Government jointly coordinated Technical Working Groups (TWGs) comprising agriculture and water departments, NGO partners, WFP, FAO, and UNHCR to advance refugee agriculture initiatives. The TWGs provided oversight and technical guidance on irrigation design, crop selection, and market assessments. To date, 100 hectares have been cleared with support from the Ministry of Agriculture, and Eswatini Water and Agricultural Development Enterprise (EWADE) has completed the irrigation design for Eswatini, while Namibia initiated installation of its irrigation system.

SAMCO also intensified cooperation with South Africa's Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DOJ&CD), supporting implementation of the National Action Plan to combat racism, anti-foreigner sentiments, and related intolerances, while strengthening social-cohesion interventions aligned with national priorities.

UNHCR continued to strengthen its collaboration with international financial institutions, notably the World Bank and the African Development Bank, to advance sustainable solutions. In South Africa, the SAMCO office engaged with the World Bank on a project to map areas of refugee concentration and assess livelihood opportunities, while discussions with the African Development Bank progressed towards potential support for livelihoods interventions across the region

## Section 2: Results

### 2.1. Outcomes and Achievements

#### 1. Outcome Area: Access to Territory, Reg. and Documentation

**Countries under SAMCO coverage have protection-sensitive border mechanisms, allowing access to territory and asylum including those arriving in mixed movements, alongside the adoption of functional and inclusive registration and documentation procedures and systems for FDPs and stateless persons**

##### Core Outcome Indicators

Country	Population Type	Indicator		
		Baseline	Target (2025)	Actual (2025)
<b>1.1 Proportion of refugees and asylum seekers registered on an individual basis</b>				
Botswana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	100.00%
Comoros	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	100.00%
Lesotho	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	50.00%	100.00%
Madagascar	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	100.00%
Mauritius	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	100.00%
Namibia	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	100.00%
Eswatini	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	100.00%
Seychelles	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	100.00%
South Africa	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
<b>1.3 Proportion of people with legally recognized identity documents or credentials</b>				
Botswana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	100.00%
Lesotho	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	50.00%	100.00%
Madagascar	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	100.00%
Mauritius	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	100.00%
Namibia	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	100.00%
Eswatini	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	100.00%
South Africa	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

#### Progress Against the Desired Outcome

Registration activities continued across the region, with asylum-seekers and refugees receiving protection documentation in all countries except South Africa, where the Government leads registration and UNHCR relies on national figures while using the proGres database to support case management. By the end of 2025, the nine countries hosted an estimated 197,560 forcibly displaced people, comprising 105,315 asylum-seekers, 77,292 refugees, and 14,796 stateless individuals in Namibia, along with 157 other assisted persons. Of the total population, 72% were male and 28% female, with the Democratic Republic of

Congo (DRC), Ethiopia and Somalia remaining the top countries of origin. Between January and December 2025, 13,839 individuals received protection documentation, including civil documents issued by governments such as travel, birth, death, and marriage certificates — an important step toward durable, nationally anchored solutions. While all the persons known to UNHCR in the official statistics are documented, it should be noted that especially in South Africa, access to asylum faces severe restrictions since 2024. Therefore an accurate or reliable estimate of this indicator remains challenging. Progress towards strengthening national ownership continued. In Botswana, the Data Sharing Agreement (DSA) reached an advanced stage of finalization and is now only pending signature by Minister of Justice (MOJ). Once concluded, it will allow the Government to securely access proGres and UNHCR's Biometric Identity Management System (BIMS), a major milestone toward localized and sustainable information management. UNHCR continued building national capacity through virtual registration training for newly appointed government and partner registration officers. Weekly Quality Control (QC) reports were shared with each country, supporting improvements in data accuracy and registration integrity. Remote technical assistance was also provided to countries utilizing proGres in their national systems. In Mauritius, UNHCR observed a continued rise in asylum-seekers throughout 2025, averaging 20 new registration requests per month. In the absence of a UNHCR office, Caritas and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), both non-funded partners played a critical role in identifying and referring new arrivals seeking international protection. Remote registration was conducted until October 2025, when a temporary suspension was introduced pending the outcome of high-level discussions with the Government of Mauritius to develop and operationalize an international protection strategy. Throughout the year, monthly Note Verbales were shared with the Government to ensure continued transparency on newly registered individuals. Localization and system strengthening were further supported through technical assistance for target writing for cash assistance, enabling effective delivery of Cash-Based Interventions (CBI) in Namibia and Botswana. To advance durable solutions, UNHCR continued utilizing BIMS to biometrically enroll eligible asylum-seekers and refugees. This contributed to enhanced identity management and enabled successful voluntary repatriation, resettlement, and complementary pathways, particularly in South Africa. Biometric verification strengthened protection mechanisms and supported more efficient, accountable service delivery across the region, contributing to long-term sustainability and increased government engagement.

## 2. Outcome Area: Status Determination

**Asylum-seekers benefit from RSD procedures that are accessible, fair, efficient, adaptable and which have integrity.**

### Core Outcome Indicators

Country	Population Type	Indicator		
		Baseline	Target (2025)	Actual (2025)
<b>2.1 Average processing time (in days) from registration to first instance asylum decision</b>				
South Africa	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0.00	30.00	0.00
<b>2.2 Proportion of people undergoing asylum procedures who have access to legal representation</b>				
Mauritius	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	10.00%	9.96%
South Africa	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	100.00%
<b>2.3 Proportion of people undergoing asylum procedures who have access to an effective appeal mechanism after first instance rejection of their claim</b>				
Mauritius	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	100.00%
South Africa	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	100.00%

## Progress Against the Desired Outcome

UNHCR continued to make strategic investments in strengthening the Refugee Appeals Authority of South Africa (RAASA)'s operational capacity, providing targeted financial and technical support to reduce the existing appeal backlog and reinforce systems that will prevent future accumulations. Through this partnership, RAASA finalized a draft adjudicative strategy and successfully operationalized a standardized decision-making template, key milestones that will significantly enhance consistency, transparency, and efficiency across the appeals process. UNHCR also developed and helped deploy a scheduling and tracking application, representing a major step forward in modernizing data management within the system. These efforts contributed to a notable increase in overall case processing output from 2,198 cases finalized in 2024 towards 3,093 cases completed in 2025. Individual productivity of RAASA members as such also increased significantly, issuing an annual average of 254 decisions, an improvement from 217 in 2024. While overall output remained below the 5,000-case target, with 3,093 cases finalized, the gains achieved in 2025 provide a strong foundation for accelerated progress in the year ahead. The Surge project launched in 2025 generated critical insights through comprehensive capacity assessments at both first instance and review levels, enabling UNHCR to design a holistic capacity development response for the national asylum system. Importantly, the Surge also strengthened collaboration with the Government of South Africa, which made significant contributions to the project, including funding the recruitment of additional adjudicators to help ensure its success. In 2026, efforts will prioritize operationalizing the adjudicative strategy and scaling up capacity development initiatives to sustain long-term institutional strengthening. In Botswana, the new government's decision to pause the entry into force of the Refugee Act opened a constructive window for engagement, providing UNHCR with the opportunity to submit comments to help ensure alignment with international human rights standards. In Eswatini, although the 2023 GRF pledge related to the operationalization of the Refugee Appeal Board and adoption of the 2017 Refugee Act regulations did not see much progress, UNHCR remains ready to support authorities in reactivating these important commitments.

### 3. Outcome Area: Protection Policy and Law

**Countries under SAMCO coverage have undertaken measures (legal reform, accession, domestication, change of practices) to meet international standards in relation to asylum and stateless policies and laws**

#### Core Outcome Indicators

Country	Indicator			
	Population Type	Baseline	Target (2025)	Actual (2025)
<b>3.1 Extent national legal framework is in line with the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol</b>				
Botswana	None	Not yet aligned	Broadly aligned	Not yet aligned
Comoros	None	Not yet aligned	Broadly aligned	Not yet aligned
Lesotho	None	Not yet aligned	Broadly aligned	Not yet aligned
Madagascar	None	Not yet aligned	Broadly aligned	Not yet aligned
Mauritius	None	Not yet aligned	Broadly aligned	Not yet aligned
Namibia	None	Not yet aligned	Broadly aligned	Not yet aligned
Eswatini	None	Progressing toward alignment	Broadly aligned	Progressing toward alignment
Seychelles	None	Not yet aligned	Broadly aligned	Not yet aligned
South Africa	None	Broadly aligned	Broadly aligned	Broadly aligned
<b>3.2 Extent national legal framework is in line with the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness</b>				
Botswana	None	Not yet aligned	Broadly aligned	Not yet aligned
Comoros	None	Not yet aligned	Broadly aligned	Not yet aligned

Lesotho	None	Not yet aligned	Broadly aligned	Not yet aligned
Madagascar	None	Not yet aligned	Broadly aligned	Not yet aligned
Mauritius	None	Not yet aligned	Broadly aligned	Not yet aligned
Namibia	None	Not yet aligned	Broadly aligned	Not yet aligned
Eswatini	None	Progressing toward alignment	Broadly aligned	Progressing toward alignment
Seychelles	None	Not yet aligned	Broadly aligned	Not yet aligned
South Africa	None	Not yet aligned	Broadly aligned	Not yet aligned

## Core Output Indicators

Indicator		
Country	Population Type	Actual (2025)
<b>03.1.1 UNHCR has engaged in legislative and judicial processes to strengthen laws and policies for the protection of refugees, IDPs, returnees and stateless people and/or the reduction and prevention of statelessness</b>		
Botswana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Yes
Comoros	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Yes
Lesotho	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Yes
Madagascar	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Yes
Mauritius	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Yes
Namibia	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Yes
Eswatini	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Yes
Seychelles	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Yes
South Africa	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Yes
Madagascar	Stateless Persons	Yes
South Africa	Stateless Persons	Yes

## Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2025, UNHCR successfully navigated a complex legislative environment through sustained, high-level advocacy and strategic policy dialogue. A defining achievement was the engagement with the Government of South Africa regarding the Draft Revised White Paper on Citizenship, Immigration and Refugee Protection. Through targeted advocacy and bilateral dialogues, the South African Government formally reaffirmed its adherence to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, averting a previously anticipated withdrawal and reservations. This critical policy win safeguarded the national protection environment and facilitated the introduction of progressive elements within the revised policy framework. These elements include the adoption of a route-based approach to migration, formal recognition of statelessness with dedicated provisions for granting citizenship, modernized approaches to permanent residency, and new proposals addressing climate-induced migration. UNHCR's contribution was central to these policy enhancements. To embed international legal principles at the executive level, UNHCR and the International Institute of Humanitarian Law (IIHL) facilitated a high-level policy workshop for senior government officials, directly endorsed by the Minister of Home Affairs. Institutional coordination was further elevated by establishing a high-level task team, which convened six strategic meetings involving senior Department of Home Affairs (DHA) leadership and UNHCR technical experts to align systemic reforms. Additionally, a quadrilateral summit involving the EU Delegation, the Minister of Home Affairs, and UNHCR secured crucial executive commitments to strengthen the national asylum system. Collaboration with other stakeholders significantly increased these outcomes. UNHCR, in partnership with UNICEF and IOM, advanced protection-sensitive border management by delivering specialized capacity-building to 150 frontline officials from the Border Management Authority (BMA), the South African National Defense Force, and the South African Police Service. This initiative successfully integrated the Route-Based Approach and non-penalization principles into daily operations, supported by a newly developed guideline handbook and

formalized referral pathways. Furthermore, UNHCR and the DHA co-facilitated comprehensive stakeholder engagement sessions across five provinces, reaching up to 1,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, to counter misinformation and clarify rights, documentation requirements, and appeals procedures.

## 4. Outcome Area: Gender-based Violence

### FDPs benefit from GBV prevention, mitigation and response through national systems and UNHCR interventions

#### Core Outcome Indicators

Indicator				
Country	Population Type	Baseline	Target (2025)	Actual (2025)
<b>4.1 Proportion of people who know where to access available GBV services</b>				
Botswana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	25.80%
Madagascar	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	7.10%
Namibia	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	100.00%
Eswatini	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	100.00%
South Africa	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	0.89%

## Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In South Africa, Namibia, and in Eswatini 2131 people benefited from specialized gender-based violence (GBV) programmes. These interventions strengthened protection systems, increased access to survivor-centered services, and improved safety and wellbeing for persons at heightened risk. Awareness-raising sessions on GBV were conducted in Eswatini, Botswana and Namibia throughout the reporting cycle in collaboration with key stakeholders such as higher education institutions, refugee-led organizations and local authorities. 16 Days of Activism events were organized in South Africa, Namibia and Eswatini in commemoration of the campaign to end violence against women and children. These efforts expanded community understanding of GBV, enhanced early-identification of risks, and promoted collective responsibility in prevention. In South Africa, despite funding cuts, referral pathways were reinforced through continued collaboration with key partners, including Thuthuzela Care Centres and other service providers. Furthermore, cash assistance was provided to 114 GBV survivors, contributing to the reduction of negative coping mechanisms and enabling access to safety, basic needs, and early recovery opportunities. Developmental support promoted women's economic resilience and long-term self-reliance. Capacity-building for four female-led Refugee-Led Organizations (RLOs) through tailored consultations and training strengthened organizational governance and leadership, resulting in improved community-based prevention and response mechanisms driven by refugee women themselves. The operation focused on strengthening service delivery for GBV survivors in South Africa through enhanced collaboration with UN sister agencies. Bilateral meetings and a joint UN workshop were convened to identify strategies for improving access to services for refugees and asylum-seekers. As a result, commitments were secured from UNFPA and UN Women to coordinate with local NGO partners in support of expanding access to GBV services. In Botswana, Safe Spaces trained GBV mentors continued empowering women and girls through short GBV-awareness workshops and income-generation skills. The expansion of the chicken project increased women's access to livelihood options, reducing financial vulnerability and exposure to exploitative or harmful coping strategies. Community groups, including the Waste Management Committee, Children's Council, and youth groups, participated actively in planning and monitoring activities, ensuring inclusive engagement. Training provided to volunteers and committee members on GBV prevention, mental health, child protection, PSEA, hygiene, and community engagement built a stronger and more knowledgeable

protection network capable of identifying risks, supporting survivors, and mobilizing community-driven solutions. Examples include hygiene sessions and clean-up campaigns led by the Waste Management Committee and awareness and referral activities facilitated by GBV mentors, resulting in improved access to information and timely support. In Namibia, continuous psychosocial services were provided to GBV survivors, inclusive of males and females. These services contributed to emotional stabilization, enhanced coping capacity, and strengthened survivors' ability to pursue recovery and reintegration within their communities.

## 5. Outcome Area: Child Protection

**FDP children have increased protection from violence, abuse and exploitation through enhanced access to national systems and targeted UNHCR interventions**

### Core Outcome Indicators

Country	Population Type	Indicator		
		Baseline	Target (2025)	Actual (2025)
<b>5.2 Proportion of children who participate in community-based child protection programmes</b>				
Botswana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	30.80%
Namibia	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	6.65%
Eswatini	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	57.39%

## Progress Against the Desired Outcome

A total of 1,641 children and caregivers received child protection services across South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, and Eswatini, contributing to strengthened national protection systems and advancing localized, sustainable solutions for vulnerable populations across the region. In Botswana, 13 children's assessments were conducted under the Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC) programme. These assessments ensured timely identification of child-specific risks and informed individualized care plans, reinforcing early detection and case management systems. In addition, foster parents received targeted training on parental duties and responsibilities, child protection principles, positive parenting, psychosocial support, safeguarding, discipline without violence, and the promotion of children's rights. This capacity-building intervention enhanced caregivers' ability to provide safe, supportive, and family-based care, a core element of sustainable community-led protection and the localization agenda. In South Africa, 158 Best Interests Assessments (BIAs) and 10 Best Interests Determinations (BIDs) were undertaken as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen protection interventions for highly vulnerable children. These processes ensured that decisions regarding care and durable solutions remained child-centered and aligned with international protection standards. Strengthened engagement in child protection forums has contributed to improved coordination and more effective case referrals. Complementing case management, awareness-raising sessions were delivered throughout the programme cycle focusing on birth registration and maintenance of documentation to safeguard children's access to essential services such as health, education, reporting mechanisms for abuse and neglect, and referrals for case management. Engagement with the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) was intensified to address challenges related to grant payments linked to documentation barriers, contributing to systems-level improvements in social protection services and ensuring that children remain included within national welfare structures. In Botswana, assessments for vulnerable children under the UASC programme were conducted for 12 children (5 males and 7 females) at the beginning of the year. By mid-year, one additional child was newly identified, assessed, and enrolled in the programme, bringing the total to 13 children. In addition, foster parents were trained on parental duties and responsibilities, child protection principles, positive parenting, psychosocial support, safeguarding, discipline without violence, and the promotion of children's rights and wellbeing to strengthen caregiving capacity and ensure safe and supportive home environments. This training strengthened family-based care structures and supported sustainable, locally driven protection

responses. In Namibia, six child protection prevention and response workshops were conducted to further capacitate community members. These workshops enhanced local knowledge and strengthened community structures to identify, prevent, and respond to protection risks directly contributing to localized, community-led child protection mechanisms and sustainable long-term solutions.

## 6. Outcome Area: Safety and Access to Justice

**FDPs and Stateless Persons benefit from protection services and legal assistance in a transparent and reliable way**

### Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2025, the provision of protection services and access to justice was significantly expanded despite an increasingly restrictive administrative environment. UNHCR's implementing partners exceeded service delivery targets, providing in-person and digital legal services to 12,481 individual cases across five established legal clinics in Cape Town, Durban, Gqeberha, Johannesburg, and Pretoria, as well as through 12 mobile law clinics in the Eastern Cape. Interventions heavily focused on combatting restrictive access to asylum, addressing systemic documentation failures, and preventing unlawful detentions. For example, partners assisted 2,266 clients with documentation renewals in the Eastern Cape and drafted 968 declarations of intent in the Western Cape to protect undocumented individuals from deportation. To combat refoulement, legal partners conducted 76 legal representations at police stations in the Western Cape and intervened in 52 cases of arrest and detention across three other locations. UNHCR and partners also prioritized empowering displaced communities through proactive engagement. 60 interactive outreach sessions were conducted across five provinces to equip refugees and asylum-seekers with actionable knowledge on administrative justice and civic engagement. Furthermore, civil society partners developed three key publications to raise awareness on pathways to retain asylum, the right to nationality, and family joinder procedures. Crucially, UNHCR spearheaded groundbreaking capacity-building initiatives within the justice system to ensure it acts as the ultimate safeguard for displaced persons. In partnership with the South African Judicial Education Institute (SAJEI), the Judicial Institute for Africa (JIFA), and the International Association of Refugee and Migration Judges (IARMJ), UNHCR facilitated the launch of South Africa's first specialized online international refugee law course for judges. This course was officially launched at the global IARMJ conference in December 2025, with 35 South African judicial officers enrolled in the inaugural cohort. Additionally, three targeted webinars reached 95 magistrates to unpack the variances between national immigration legislation and international protection standards. To standardize legal practice nationwide, UNHCR collaborated with academia and the private sector to develop the "Refugee Law Practitioners' Handbook," while also delivering specialized training to 65 legal practitioners from 12 university law clinics.

## 7. Outcome Area: Community Engagement and Women's Empowerment

**Protection services for FDPs is enhanced by continuous community engagement and robust social cohesion initiatives**

### Core Outcome Indicators

Country	Population Type	Indicator		
		Baseline	Target (2025)	Actual (2025)
<b>7.1 Extent participation of displaced and stateless people across programme phases is supported.</b>				
Botswana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	Extensive	Extensive
Comoros	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	Extensive	Limited
Lesotho	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	Extensive	Extensive
Madagascar	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	Extensive	Limited

Mauritius	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	Extensive	Limited
Namibia	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	Extensive	Extensive
Eswatini	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	Extensive	Extensive
South Africa	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Moderate	Extensive	Extensive
Madagascar	Stateless Persons	Data not available	Extensive	Limited
South Africa	Stateless Persons	Moderate	Extensive	Extensive
<b>7.2 Proportion of people who have access to safe feedback and response mechanisms</b>				
Botswana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	100.00%
Comoros	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	100.00%
Lesotho	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	100.00%
Madagascar	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	100.00%
Mauritius	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	100.00%
Namibia	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	100.00%
Eswatini	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	100.00%
South Africa	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
<b>7.3 Proportion of women participating in leadership/management structures</b>				
Lesotho	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	50.00%	0.00%
Namibia	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	50.00%	22.22%
Eswatini	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	50.00%	0.50%

## Core Output Indicators

Indicator		
Country	Population Type	Actual (2025)
<b>07.1.1 Number of people consulted through Participatory Assessments</b>		
Botswana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	300
Comoros	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1
Lesotho	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	130
Madagascar	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	290
Mauritius	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	37
Namibia	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	574
Eswatini	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	99
Seychelles	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0
South Africa	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1,269
<b>07.2.1 Number of people who used UNHCR- supported feedback &amp; response mechanisms to voice their needs/ concerns/feedback</b>		
Botswana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	600
Comoros	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	7
Lesotho	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	59
Madagascar	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	270
Mauritius	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	97
Namibia	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	873
Eswatini	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	619

Seychelles	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0
South Africa	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	14,963
<b>07.3.1 Number of people who received protection services</b>		
Botswana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1,054
Comoros	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1
Lesotho	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	304
Madagascar	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	735
Mauritius	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	102
Namibia	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1,589
Eswatini	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	2,145
Seychelles	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0
South Africa	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	20,723

## Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2025, SAMCO strengthened protection outcomes for forcibly displaced and stateless persons by centering community engagement and social cohesion across its nine-country coverage. Continuous participatory assessments, quarterly engagements with refugee leadership, and sustained two-way communication through mailers, WhatsApp, help sites and helplines ensured community-driven programming and timely feedback, reinforcing accountability and early risk detection.

Through 14 national partners in six countries, SAMCO expanded community-based protection, legal assistance, psychosocial support, GBV case management and social cohesion initiatives that promoted peaceful coexistence.

A key achievement was the rollout of the UNHCR Sport for Protection programme funded by the FIFA Legacy Fund, implemented with three RLOs and three NGO partners, which strengthened RLO capacity and enabled refugee facilitators to lead social cohesion and conflict-mitigation activities. UNHCR also subcontracted four additional RLOs under NGO-led partnerships covering child protection, GBV, self-reliance and access to rights.

UNHCR advanced social cohesion efforts with government and the Protection Working Group actors to prevent and respond to violence against foreigners, designing a contingency plan and coordinating responses to incidents in multiple locations while supporting implementation of the National Action Plan against racism and xenophobia.

The Norway-funded Information Integrity Project addressed online misinformation targeting refugees, reducing risks of tension.

SAMCO further reinforced protection systems through its MoU with the South African Human Rights Commission on detention monitoring, advocacy and statelessness, strengthening referrals and rights-based reporting. Collaboration with UNESCO under the EU-funded Social Media for Peace project will equip RLOs with training on media integrity alongside other civil society actors.

## 8. Outcome Area: Well-Being and Basic Needs

**FDPs in settlements, camps and urban settings have access to services which meet human basic needs through CBI, national structures or other interventions**

### Core Outcome Indicators

Indicator				
Country	Population Type	Baseline	Target (2025)	Actual (2025)
<b>8.1 Proportion of people that receive cash transfers and/or non-food items</b>				
Botswana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	100.00%
Madagascar	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	10.00%	0.92%
Mauritius	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	15.00%	17.24%
Namibia	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	70.00%	96.35%
Eswatini	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	0.50%

### Core Output Indicators

Indicator		
Country	Population Type	Actual (2025)
<b>08.1.1 Number of people who received cash assistance</b>		
Botswana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	944
Madagascar	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	13
Mauritius	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	45
Namibia	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	6,623
Eswatini	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	25

## Progress Against the Desired Outcome

Under the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and livelihoods portfolio, the operation advanced community-driven and sustainable programming across the SAMCO countries. UNHCR SAMCO engaged in sustained advocacy to safeguard refugees' right to access healthcare in South Africa, contributing, together with civil society partners to a landmark court ruling that prohibited anti-migrant practices restricting access to health facilities. Communities played an active leadership role in project design through participatory assessments, focus group discussions, and collaborative planning sessions. This participatory approach extended into implementation, with community members contributing directly to the construction of shelters and latrines, as well as the installation of irrigation systems, deepening local ownership and enhancing long-term sustainability. As a result of these efforts, 3,293 people gained access to improved WASH services in Botswana, Eswatini, and Namibia. In Namibia, 535 individuals received shelter support, while 1,674 people across Botswana, Eswatini, Namibia, and Madagascar accessed essential health services via national systems, including primary, secondary, and tertiary care as well as psychosocial support. Cash assistance continued to serve as a strategic modality for meeting basic needs and enabling dignity and choice. 96% of the populations in Botswana and Namibia were supported with cash for basic needs. In Namibia, 6,623 individuals (96%) were supported, alongside 905 people (97%) in Botswana. In Madagascar and Eswatini, 13 and 12 individuals, respectively, received cash support, while 44 people in Mauritius benefited from value vouchers. In South Africa, 114 individuals received cash specifically targeted to mitigate GBV risks, ensuring access to protection services, safety, and urgent essentials. To address acute food insecurity, vulnerable refugees received in-kind food assistance, ensuring immediate access to essential nutrition. This included 1,224 new arrivals and persons with specific needs in Namibia and 58

vulnerable individuals in Lesotho. In addition, relief items were distributed to 660 households in Namibia, 921 households in Eswatini, and 19 households in Lesotho, supporting families in meeting their short-term non-food needs. Looking ahead, the operation conducted a comprehensive vulnerability assessment as part of a strategic shift away from blanket assistance toward a more targeted, needs-based approach. This transition aims to support self-reliance by prioritizing interventions for moderately and least vulnerable households, particularly through livelihood and economic inclusion initiatives. Aligned with the localization agenda and sustainability priorities, the operation fully transitioned to government-led responses in Botswana and is working toward similar handover arrangements with the Government of Namibia. Investments in self-reliance, especially in irrigation and climate-smart agriculture will be prioritized in Namibia to enable households transitioning out of assistance to engage in productive agricultural activities and strengthen their food security.

## 11. Outcome Area: Education

**All FDPs have access to primary, secondary, and tertiary education through national systems and targeted UNHCR interventions**

### Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In all the SAMCO countries except for the Indian Ocean islands, refugee children can access primary and secondary education on par with nationals. This continued inclusion within national education systems reflects great alignment with sustainable, government-owned solutions and ensures that refugee learners progress through recognized, accredited pathways. Most children in Madagascar were home schooled, whilst the other Indian Ocean countries have no school going age children. In South Africa, children from disadvantaged backgrounds are afforded the opportunity to apply for school fees exemption for primary and secondary education should they not be able to pay for school fees. This is inclusive of foreign national children as well, and 33 refugee children were assisted with letters of exemption. These efforts demonstrate effective alignment with national provisions and strengthen long-term inclusion by reducing financial barriers that often hinder school attendance for vulnerable families. In Botswana, refugee students in primary, junior secondary and senior school were supported with uniforms, school fees, Parent Teachers Association fees, boarding packages and transport. Liaison with guidance and counseling teachers to identify children with learning difficulties at Dukwi Primary School enabled early identification and timely support. Those referred by the primary school were tutored by a fellow refugee volunteer after school. This collaboration with school personnel, combined with refugee-led tutoring support, underscores the localization agenda by empowering community-based and refugee-led initiatives while strengthening school-level capacities. The operation continued with efforts to ensure access to higher education scholarship opportunities such as the Mastercard Foundation and DAFI scholarship. 42 students were supported under the DAFI scholarship programme in Eswatini (5); Namibia (12) and South Africa (25). 5 outreaches were conducted in Namibia, Eswatini and South Africa to give visibility to the DAFI programme. In addition to these initiatives, an increasing number of refugees are benefitting from the USA-funded Global Education Initiative implemented through the Scalabrini Centre in partnership with Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU), which provides accredited, competency-based tertiary education and enhances pathways to self-reliance and economic inclusion. The Ministry of Justice and Correctional Service in Botswana established a programme called “Adopt a Refugee Student Initiative (AARSI) in which five tertiary institutions contributed 24 full tuition scholarships for refugees, and an appeal was sent to other institutions including UN agencies, private sector and many other stakeholders to contribute. Maruapula Secondary School in Botswana, a very prestigious school offered a full tuition scholarship to one refugee between form four and form six.

In South Africa, in partnership with the education partner, Studie Trust, the operation successfully advocated with higher education institutions on the removal of international levies charged to DAFI students. This achievement contributes to fair and equitable access to tertiary education and strengthens sustainable integration within national higher education systems.

## 13. Outcome Area: Self Reliance, Economic Inclusion and Livelihoods

**By 2027 all forcibly displaced and stateless will be benefiting from increased national and development opportunities for self-reliance and livelihoods**

### Core Outcome Indicators

Country	Population Type	Indicator		
		Baseline	Target (2025)	Actual (2025)
<b>13.1. Proportion of people with an account at a bank or other financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider</b>				
Botswana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	31.14%
Namibia	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	80.00%	23.64%
Eswatini	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	6.45%
South Africa	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	46.13%	55.00%	50.00%

### Core Output Indicators

Country	Population Type	Indicator
		Actual (2025)
<b>13.1.1 Number of people who benefitted from livelihoods and economic inclusion interventions</b>		
Lesotho	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	50
Namibia	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	45
Eswatini	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	321

## Progress Against the Desired Outcome

Across the region, livelihoods interventions have evolved in response to differing operational realities, population needs, and resource constraints. 868 people were supported with livelihood opportunities through training, coaching, seed capital, or start-up kits, depending on need. In South Africa, 408 people benefitted, with the programme core focus on supporting survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), who accounted for 212 participants. The aim was to empower them economically and socially, recognizing that recovery from GBV requires not only protection but also the ability to regain control over one's life. Areas of focus included employability training such as customer service, barista skills, and home-based care, as well as small-business development, beauty therapy, tailoring, and crafts. Importantly, the programme also extended support to members of the host community. This deliberate inclusion strengthened social cohesion, reduced tensions between refugees and hosts, and promoted shared economic growth through joint participation in training and skills-development initiatives. In Namibia, 45 people were supported in 2025 with business skills, farming kits and participating in a revolving fund that aims to reinvest business proceeds. Limited funding necessitates a more targeted and strategic approach. Cash assistance in 2026 will only be reserved for individuals assessed as most vulnerable. Recognizing that many refugees and asylum-seekers categorized as moderately or least vulnerable still face barriers to self-reliance, the operation prioritized preparedness for scaling up of self-reliance initiatives in 2026. Installation of an irrigation system, conducting perception surveys with refugees on their areas of interest, and targeting training, coaching, and livelihood pathways were planned for expansion in 2026 to equip these groups with the tools to support themselves sustainably, with the aim of reducing dependency on humanitarian aid while enabling households to maintain dignity and stability. In Eswatini, the long-term operational vision focuses on decongesting the current reception centre and facilitating the gradual relocation of the population to Ndzevane. At this site, households have opportunities to engage in farming and agricultural activities, creating more dignified living conditions while promoting autonomy. Agricultural livelihoods, supported through access to land, tools, seeds, and training are expected to reduce reliance on assistance and strengthen resilience. In 2025, a total of 321 individuals were supported across various livelihoods

interventions, including vocational training, start-up kits for small enterprises, and farming-related initiatives. This demonstrates steady progress toward broader self-reliance outcomes in line with the operation's strategy. In Eswatini, the refugee and asylum-seeker population is primarily urban-based, which influences the design of livelihoods programming. With limited opportunities for land-based livelihoods, the focus is on equipping individuals with market-relevant skills that enhance employability in urban settings. Whether through vocational training, entrepreneurship development, business coaching, or employment-readiness activities, the overarching goal is to empower refugees to access income, either through formal employment or within the informal economy and ultimately fend for themselves. By strengthening economic inclusion in urban environments, the programme helps reduce aid dependency while fostering long-term socio-economic integration. In Lesotho, 94 people benefitted, 50 of them female, in various areas including apprenticeships, mushroom and backyard farming, poultry farming, cosmetics, branding and business management skills. UNHCR SAMCO implemented these interventions in close collaboration with government, civil society, and development partners, leveraging their expertise and resources to strengthen self-reliance and expand sustainable livelihood opportunities for both refugees and host communities.

## 14. Outcome Area: Voluntary Return and Sustainable Reintegration

### Refugees make fully informed decisions on voluntary return

#### Core Output Indicators

Country	Indicator	
	Population Type	Actual (2025)
<b>14.1.1 Number of people who received counselling and/or information on voluntary repatriation</b>		
Botswana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	50
Comoros	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	5
Lesotho	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1
Madagascar	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	7
Mauritius	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	4
Namibia	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	150
Eswatini	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	2
Seychelles	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0
South Africa	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	900

### Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2025, a concerted effort across the SAMCO footprint yielded clear progress toward enabling refugees to make fully informed and voluntary decisions to return. Information and casework reached 1,107 interested individuals, improving the quality of decision-making and ensuring choices about return were grounded in up-to-date, rights-based advice. Outreach intensified during the year with two dedicated missions in July and August to the Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng remained ongoing in South Africa, which broadened engagement and information access in areas of high interest. As a result of systematic counselling, verification and logistical support, 373 voluntary returns were completed in safety and dignity: 242 returnees repatriated to the Democratic Republic of Congo and 131 to Burundi. Most departures were facilitated from South Africa, with additional departures processed from Namibia (33), Eswatini (2) and Lesotho (1). Notably, voluntary repatriation from Namibia resumed after a 1.5-year hiatus, enabling refugees there to return to DRC with coordinated support. UNHCR also facilitated targeted use of assisted voluntary return mechanisms by referring two cases to IOM's Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programme, of which one departed and one remains pending. Quality assurance and monitoring by

UNHCR improved recordkeeping and verification, enabling clearer tracking of outcomes and follow-up needs. Other stakeholders were instrumental in operationalizing returns and reinforcing procedural integrity. The Department of Home Affairs (DHA) supported exit clearances through Regional Reception Office (RRO) processes and collaborated with UNHCR on standard operating procedures (SOPs) to streamline status cancellations and exit formalities. Border and migration authorities (BMA) provided operational support at points of exit to ensure seamless processing, and embassies issued travel documentation required for travel.

Operational partners, social and protection actors, including refugee-led organizations — ensured referrals reached UNHCR for timely support and coordinated reception services, psychosocial assistance and links to livelihoods. Donors funded movement and reintegration activities, and interagency coordination platforms ensured coherent referrals and reduced duplication.

## 15. Outcome Area: Resettlement and Complementary Pathways

**Multi-stakeholder approaches benefit refugees through improved resettlement, family reunification and complementary pathway procedures**

### Core Outcome Indicators

Country	Population Type	Indicator		
		Baseline	Target (2025)	Actual (2025)
<b>15.1 Number of refugees submitted by UNHCR for resettlement</b>				
Botswana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	13	50	0
Comoros	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	5	5	0
Lesotho	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	9	10	0
Madagascar	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	17	20	5
Mauritius	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	5	5	0
Namibia	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	715	50	30
Eswatini	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	18	20	0
Seychelles	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	5	1
South Africa	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	883	1,550	43
<b>15.3 Number of people admitted through complementary pathways from the host country</b>				
Botswana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	10	0
Comoros	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	5	0
Lesotho	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	5	0
Madagascar	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	5	0
Mauritius	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	2	0
Namibia	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	5	0
Eswatini	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	10	0
Seychelles	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	5	0
South Africa	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	6	20	10

## Core Output Indicators

Country	Indicator	
	Population Type	Actual (2025)
<b>15.1.1 Country issues machine-readable travel documents</b>		
Botswana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	No
Comoros	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	No
Lesotho	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Yes
Madagascar	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	No
Mauritius	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	No
Namibia	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Yes
Eswatini	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Yes
Seychelles	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	No
South Africa	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Yes

## Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2025 SAMCO made advances in resettlement, converting protracted uncertainty for many refugees into verified, durable solutions. UNHCR successfully completed the submission of 50 individuals under the allocated quota (Namibia: 3 cases / 17 individuals; South Africa: 7 cases / 33 individuals) and supported additional unallocated submissions (5 cases / 10 individuals). Operationally, SAMCO facilitated 327 resettlement departures to receiving States including Canada, New Zealand, Australia and the United States, with flows reflecting protection priorities and available quotas.

Following the suspension of the United States Refugee Admission Program (USRAP), a comprehensive stocktake of all cases in the U.S. pipeline was conducted; emergency and urgent cases were re-triaged and redirected to Canada or the unallocated quota to ensure the most at-risk individuals continued to access third-country protection. A ProGres V4 cleanup exercise completed in the first quarter improved data integrity across submission pipelines and supported more effective case management. UNHCR's role was central; the Office led identification and prioritization of vulnerable cases, prepared robust submission dossiers, managed ProGres and resettlement workflows. Quality assurance, verification and monitoring strengthened the credibility and reliability of resettlement outcomes. IOM and facilitated travel documentation, exit formalities and arrival coordination by means of which 327 individuals successfully departed. Complementary pathways expanded predictable, lawful mobility options and translated alternative pathways into concrete departures and opportunities. Education pathways supported 17 scholars (4 departed, 3 pending) through programmes such as Duolingo University Access and UNICORE 7.0 cohort. Labour mobility initiatives registered over 1,034 refugee profiles on Talent Lift and Talent Beyond Boundaries, producing 16 job matches and one family departure. Family reunification activity progressed multiple cases, including one family of five who departed. UNHCR brokered partnerships with education providers and labour platforms, conducted skills verification exercises to populate labour mobility registries, and advocated with authorities to mitigate documentation constraints—particularly Convention Travel Documents (CTD) validity—that affect eligibility and programme continuity. Education and private sector partners undertook candidate preparation and predeparture support, while national authorities and embassies coordinated exit formalities.

Collectively, resettlement and complementary pathway efforts broadened durable solutions options across the SAMCO footprint, improved conversion from submission to departure, and strengthened institutional linkages necessary for scaleup. Continued focus on documentation (CTD validity), data quality, streamlined administrative procedures and expanded partnerships will be critical to sustain and expand these gains.

## 16. Outcome Area: Integration and other Local Solutions

### Strengthened local integration opportunities through enhanced legal framework and conducive environment

#### Core Outcome Indicators

Indicator				
Country	Population Type	Baseline	Target (2025)	Actual (2025)
<b>16.2 Proportion of people covered by national social protection systems</b>				
Botswana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	20.00%	0.00%
Lesotho	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	100.00%
Namibia	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	0.00%
Eswatini	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	100.00%	0.00%
South Africa	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	11.30%	100.00%	41.12%

#### Core Output Indicators

Indicator		
Country	Population Type	Actual (2025)
<b>16.1.1. Government Social protection system is inclusive of forcibly displaced and stateless people</b>		
Botswana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Partially
Comoros	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Not at all
Lesotho	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Partially
Madagascar	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Limited
Mauritius	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Limited
Namibia	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Partially
Eswatini	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Not at all
Seychelles	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Limited
South Africa	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Fully
<b>16.2.1 Number of people supported by UNHCR to acquire nationality, permanent residency status or to access naturalization procedures</b>		
South Africa	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	63

## Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2025, SAMCO recorded measurable progress on local integration, with notable advances in South Africa and Botswana and ongoing work in Madagascar. UNHCR, together with legal partners Lawyers for Human Rights and the legal clinics at the University of Cape Town (UCT) and Nelson Mandela University (NMU), provided targeted legal and documentation assistance to 1,013 refugees pursuing durable status. Key outputs included 274 citizenship applications submitted, 32 permanent residence applications lodged, and 419 certification applications filed; 77 certification-related cases assisted. Partners also conducted protection needs assessments and supported case follow-up, improving application quality and prioritizing vulnerable cases. In Botswana, government led regularization advanced positively, resulting in 69 refugees obtaining naturalization. This outcome signals growing state ownership of durable solutions processes and materially enhances beneficiaries' legal security, access to services and prospects for long-term inclusion.

UNHCR's contribution combined technical support, casework and advocacy. The Office coordinated partner interventions, provided technical guidance on documentation procedures, and engaged authorities to streamline processing. Lawyers for Human Rights, UCT and NMU delivered operational case preparation, submissions and community outreach, while civil society and refugee-led organisations offered referrals and paralegal assistance. Government authorities retained final decision-making responsibility for status determinations and documentation issuance. These coordinated interventions brought significant cohorts closer to durable legal status in 2025, strengthening prospects for social and economic inclusion. To consolidate and expand these gains across the SAMCO footprint, continued scaling of legal aid, enhanced administrative efficiency and systematic monitoring of post status outcomes will be essential. The situation of inclusion of refugees in the nine SAMCO countries has remained the same overall in 2025 as compared to 2024. In South Africa, disruptions were recorded in access to health care and education for foreigners amid anti-foreigner sentiment; UNHCR advocated with relevant line ministries and the civil society brought a High Court case which resulted in an emergency ruling safeguarding unimpeded access to health services. Moreover, in South Africa, recognised refugees are eligible for social grants however, this is not the case for asylum seekers therefore there is partial inclusion in social protection systems in South Africa. In Botswana and Namibia, inclusion remains unchanged given the existing encampment policies and there is limited inclusion (only healthcare and education). In Eswatini, while the Constitution and the 2018 National Education and Training Sector Policy emphasize free primary education for Swazi children, and the Free Primary Education Act (2010) permits the Minister to exempt certain foreign pupils from fees, in practice refugee and asylum seeker children continue to require tuition for enrolment; UNHCR is actively advocating for ministerial exemptions to ensure non nationals' access. The Indian Ocean Island states continue to have no inclusion due to the absence of asylum systems and support to vulnerable individuals is provided on an ad hoc basis through operational partners and civil society organizations. The remaining SAMCO countries show partial inclusion in national protection systems.

## 2.2. Age, Gender and Diversity

In 2025, SAMCO deepened the operationalization of the Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) policy across nine countries by embedding routine participatory assessments and structured quarterly engagements that systematically included women, men, adolescent girls and boys, older persons, LGBTQI+ persons, and persons with disabilities. Annual, dedicated consultations with individuals of diverse sexual and gender orientation ensured that the specific risks and priorities of LGBTQI+ communities were meaningfully reflected in planning and decision-making. UNHCR social assistance partners prioritized forcibly displaced people with disabilities facing severe protection risks, while SAMCO elevated intentional resource mobilization for disability inclusion as a strategic priority for 2026. SAMCO expanded structured participation mechanisms, including annual and ongoing participatory assessments and quarterly meetings with refugee leadership structures across all operations. Multi-channel feedback and response systems (WhatsApp, helplines, help sites, and suggestion boxes) enabled safer reporting, strengthened two-way information flows, and accelerated referral pathways. Localization was advanced through deeper integration of refugee-led organizations (RLOs), supported through mentorship, oversight, and project management capacity building, including in Sport-for-Protection initiatives. This investment enhanced community dialogue platforms, expanded social cohesion efforts, and reinforced refugee leadership as a cornerstone of sustainable, community-owned protection approaches. Prevailing societal norms continued to restrict leadership opportunities for women, children, LGBTQI+ persons, and other marginalized groups, limiting their ability to influence mainstream programming and articulate protection risks. In addition, chronic underfunding for disability inclusion constrained tailored outreach and service delivery. Addressing these structural and social barriers, alongside closing resource gaps, remains essential to achieving equitable and sustained participation across all diversity groups. Community-based protection structures played an increasingly critical role in identifying individuals with specific needs and facilitating tailored support for women and girls, older persons, persons with disabilities, LGBTQI+ persons, unaccompanied and separated children, and persons with chronic medical conditions. Looking ahead, SAMCO will prioritize mobilizing resources for disability inclusion, strengthening inclusive leadership capacities across refugee and host-community structures, and advancing risk-informed approaches that safeguard individuals sharing disability or Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC) data.

These efforts will reinforce sustainable, locally led protection solutions aligned with the broader localization agenda.

Throughout 2025, SAMCO maintained a consistent cycle of annual participatory assessments, including dedicated LGBTQI+ consultations, quarterly leadership engagements, and country-wide feedback and response systems to ensure timely information flow, complaint handling, and adaptive programming. Aggregated feedback informed referrals, partner tasking, and targeted community messaging. Sex- and age-disaggregated analysis was strengthened, with progressive integration of diversity markers guiding prioritization for GBV services, livelihoods for women and girls, and support to persons with disabilities.

## Section 3: Resources

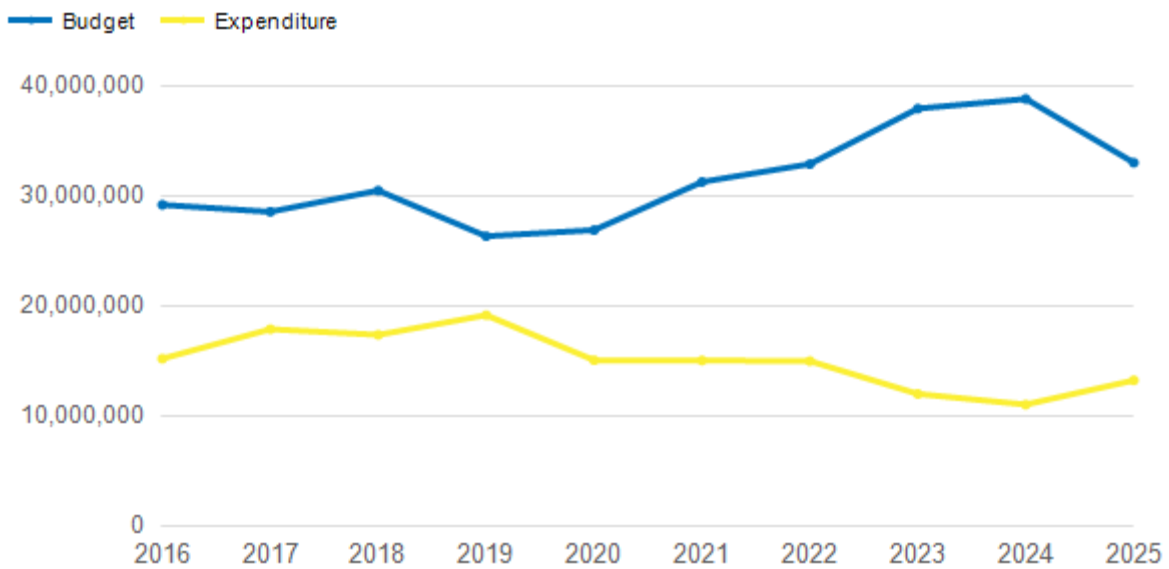
### 3.1 Financial Data

(Financial figures in USD)

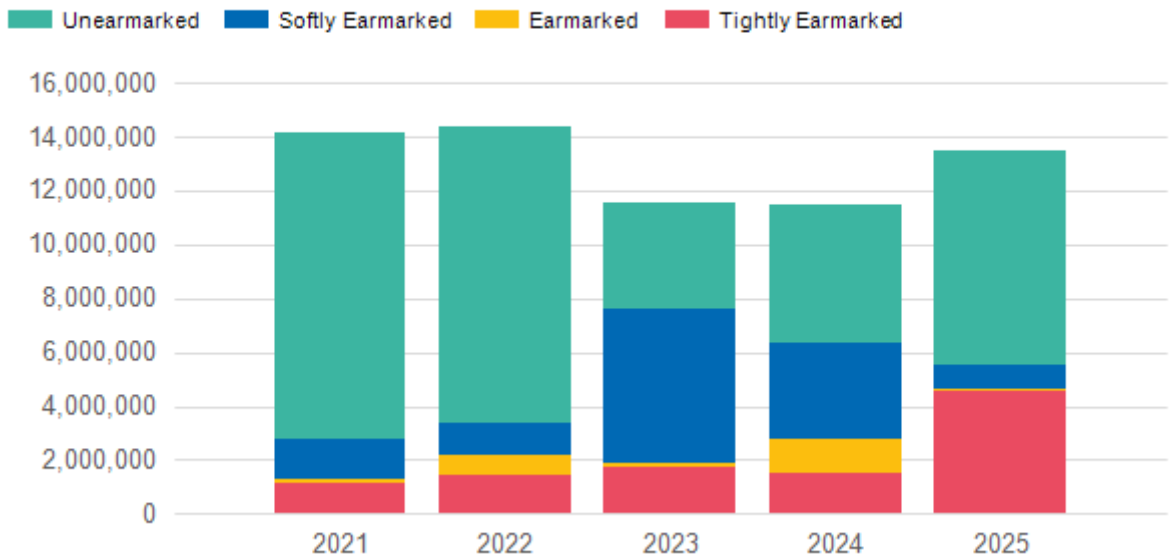
Impact Area	Final Budget	Funds Available	Funds Available as % of Budget	Expenditure	Expenditure as % of Funds Available
IA1: Protect	7,864,745	2,488,150	31.64%	2,488,150	100.00%
IA2: Respond	10,446,468	6,154,298	58.91%	6,154,298	100.00%
IA3: Empower	14,668,008	4,565,434	31.13%	4,564,894	99.99%
<b>Total</b>	<b>32,979,221</b>	<b>13,207,882</b>	<b>40.05%</b>	<b>13,207,341</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Outcome Area	Final Budget	Funds Available	Funds Available as % of Budget	Expenditure	Expenditure as % of Funds Available
OA1: Access/Doc	2,873,453	829,423	28.87%	829,423	100.00%
OA2: Status	2,318,888	929,330	40.08%	929,330	100.00%
OA3: Policy/Law	765,245	257,516	33.65%	257,516	100.00%
OA4: GBV	1,104,023	538,371	48.76%	538,371	100.00%
OA5: Children	1,241,279	344,874	27.78%	344,874	100.00%
OA6: Justice	1,907,159	471,881	24.74%	471,881	100.00%
OA7: Community	1,298,143	648,140	49.93%	648,140	100.00%
OA8: Wellbeing	6,082,369	4,392,455	72.22%	4,392,455	100.00%
OA11: Education	720,653	230,458	31.98%	230,458	100.00%
OA13: Livelihood	8,398,435	2,810,391	33.46%	2,810,391	100.00%
OA14: Return	3,037,717	1,146,018	37.73%	1,146,018	100.00%
OA15: Resettle	1,941,983	366,145	18.85%	365,615	99.86%
OA16: Integrate	1,289,873	242,881	18.83%	242,870	100.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>32,979,221</b>	<b>13,207,882</b>	<b>40.05%</b>	<b>13,207,341</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

### Budget and Expenditure Trend



### Contributions Trend by Type



## 3.2. Resources Overview

The operation’s geographic footprint evolved significantly over the course of the year. At the outset, UNHCR maintained an operational presence in South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Eswatini and Madagascar. However, by May, resource constraints necessitated the discontinuation of presence in Eswatini and Madagascar. This contraction limited the operation’s ability to sustain previously achieved gains and reduced the capacity to maintain a comprehensive regional footprint. In 2025, total budget needs were \$32.143M, of which \$11.757M (36.5%) was funded. Of this, \$4.28M was earmarked against the \$5.643M OPS budget, resulting in 76% earmarking and only 24% operational flexibility. Of the OPS funding, 24% was implemented through partnerships with 14 local NGOs, one government partner, one international

NGO, and seven RLOs subcontracted under NGO partners.

The high funding gap and limited flexibility left major gaps in core protection areas. However, the unearmarked funding enabled the operation to advance self-reliance initiatives that support refugee empowerment and reduced dependence. Despite these challenges, the operation advanced its localization agenda and strengthened community-level delivery mechanisms. A total of 15 partnership agreements were established with national NGOs across Botswana, Comoros, Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia, Madagascar, Mauritius and South Africa. Complementing these efforts, nine Refugee-Led Organizations (RLOs) were subcontracted in Botswana, Lesotho and South Africa, reinforcing a deliberate and strategic shift toward locally anchored and community-driven implementation. Among the partnership agreements, one was supported by the Innovation Fund and another through a DRS-linked DAFI scholarship initiative. Across all partnerships, the operation maintained strong collaboration with government counterparts, UN agencies and operational partners, promoting a whole-of-society approach aligned with sustainable solutions.

At the beginning of the year, operational prioritization was guided by earmarked contributions, core protection needs, self-reliance initiatives and essential operational enablers such as Global Fleet Management and Affiliate Work Force-related costs. The funding freeze introduced in January, following a change in U.S. administration, required the suspension of all non-earmarked activities, including self-reliance initiatives, a central pillar of the sustainable solutions agenda. Concurrently, cashflow constraints required reductions in partner instalment payouts, which in turn delayed implementation of earmarked projects. Upon the lifting of the freeze, the operation received additional resources that enabled reprioritization of key elements of the solutions approach, including self-reliance, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), and shelter rehabilitation and construction.

In 2025, the operation diversified and expanded its resource base with support from the Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives (MBRGI), FIFA Legacy Funds, the EU for the Backlog Project, Canada for resettlement and complementary pathways, Ashraful Aid in Eswatini, Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) for basic needs, PRM funding for solutions and GBV programming, and Innovation Funds supporting social cohesion and the Route-Based Approach in Comoros. These contributions collectively strengthened national systems, reinforced long-term inclusion pathways, and enhanced the operation's capacity to pursue durable, sustainable solutions. Government leadership remained central to the operation's approach to sustainable solutions and localization. Throughout the year, the operation prioritized transitioning toward government-led response structures, ensuring national authorities were positioned to take a progressively stronger role in coordination, service delivery and strategic leadership. This transition has been successfully realized in Botswana, where government institutions assumed leadership across key protection and solutions areas. In Namibia, the transition is progressing well, with substantive steps taken toward integrating refugee response within national systems. Eswatini and Namibia, the operation strengthened complementarity and efficiency by supporting the establishment of government-led Technical Working Groups (TWGs). These TWGs convened relevant government departments, NGO partners, WFP and FAO to advance sustainable solutions for refugees while leveraging synergies across sectors. This multi-stakeholder approach reduced duplication, enhanced coordinated planning and reinforced national ownership. Importantly, it improved resource efficiency and aligned interventions with broader national development priorities, strengthening prospects for long-term sustainability. Looking ahead, the operation aims to intensify resource mobilization efforts, particularly within the private sector, which remains an under-utilized funding avenue. Strengthening collaboration with government counterparts, UN sister agencies and national partners will remain a central priority to ensure complementarity, maximize collective impact and reinforce national leadership.

# Section 4: Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

## 4.1 Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

The strategic lessons emerging from recent stakeholder discussions including a Strategic Moment of Reflection (SMR), monitoring missions, and assessments conducted highlight clear programmatic and operational priorities for the operation. The operations ensured continuous engagement with key stakeholders throughout the year, bilaterally, and through joint sessions. An SMR was conducted at the beginning of the year with key stakeholders including the populations we serve, government actors, NGOs both funded and operational, UN agencies and donors. Across these engagements, partners consistently emphasized that core protection interventions, GBV services, legal aid and appeals support, community engagement, education advocacy, and capacity development remain essential and must continue. These areas have proven impact and are central to sustaining a protection-sensitive response. At the same time, findings from monitoring and assessments point to the need to scale up efforts in resource and capacity mobilization, birth registration, child protection, gender-based violence (GBV) awareness, resilience and self-reliance initiatives, access to education and scholarships, and complementary pathways. Strengthening community structures, including the empowerment and training of RLOs, emerged repeatedly in stakeholder feedback as a priority. A key lesson reinforced through field missions is the need to enhance monitoring, reporting, and rapid intervention on refoulement. Stakeholders also stressed that individuals should not be excluded from cash assistance solely due to negative asylum decisions, highlighting the importance of protection-sensitive targeting. The collective message from the people we serve from the SMR was the significance of regular consultations with refugees and community representatives for UNHCR to increase field presence, engage more frequently at community level, and better understand daily realities. Monitoring visits confirmed that direct engagement is essential for trust-building and accountability. RLOs also expressed the need for more structured training on roles, responsibilities, and ethical considerations. The SMR also emphasized the need to adopt a “business unusual” mindset and acting collectively as the UN, given the increasingly challenging operating environment. Despite resource limitations, obligations tied to the SDGs remain unchanged, requiring sustained commitment. With this, the operation will continue to seek stronger collaboration with UN sister agencies and operational partners to ensure complementarities.

Strengthening stakeholder coordination and communication also featured prominently in the SMR session. Civil society, financial institutions, development partners, and national bodies such as the Standing Committee for Refugee Affairs (SCRA) all require clearer understanding of procedures, roles, and available services. At the same time, refugees must be supported to understand their rights and responsibilities, including compliance with procedural requirements such as attending interviews and responding within given timelines. Monitoring findings reinforced the need for stronger community engagement to support this. The operation will increase information sharing with communities and stakeholders to support in managing expectations and also ensure clarity on roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders.

Funding constraints were highlighted repeatedly, with partners noting that critical services such as legal clinics cannot operate without adequate resources. Assessments warn that continued reductions risk eroding years of capacity-building and institutional investment. Stakeholders emphasized the need to engage the private sector more actively to support resource mobilization.

Finally, both assessments and community feedback signaled growing mental health needs among refugees, underscoring the importance of integrating mental health and psychosocial support more effectively across sectors and strengthening referral pathways. Overall, these lessons, rooted in consultations, monitoring missions, and assessment findings indicate a clear need to sustain core services while scaling critical gaps, deepen community engagement and field presence, strengthen coordination, intensify advocacy, and mobilize additional resources to protect essential services and capacities.



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