

SOUTHERN AFRICA

Angola	Botswana	Comoros	Lesotho
Madagascar	Malawi	Mauritius	Mozambique
Namibia	Seychelles	South Africa	Swaziland
Zambia	Zimbabwe		

Recent Developments

The political and humanitarian situation in Southern Africa during the period under review was pre-occupying. For example, in Zimbabwe, a complex mix of electoral, constitutional and land-related developments brought the country to a national crisis. Angola's long-standing civil conflict and its impact on population movements, both internally and externally, otherwise continued to dominate the humanitarian scene. As in many other African conflicts, the conflict featured disturbing regional dimensions, with States trading accusations and threats rooted in the suspicion of support for or sympathy with the armed opposition.

In Angola, the Government consolidated its military gains over UNITA and now controls most of the strategic areas previously held by the rebel organisation, including Andulo and Bailundo. Although elections are scheduled for 2001, many daunting challenges remain. Meanwhile, the humanitarian situation in Angola itself was as disconcerting as ever. In June, at the request of the Government of Angola, and following intensive consultations with the Government and other UN agencies, UNHCR launched a programme to address the critical humanitarian and protection situation of some 300,000 IDPs located in the three provinces of Luanda, Uige and Zaire.

The cross-border effects of the Angolan conflict were strongly felt in the northern part of Namibia with armed attacks taking part on both sides of the border. Several innocent civilians lost their lives and many others were displaced. Even so, Angolan refugees continued to cross the border into Namibia. By June, the total number of Angolan refugees in Namibia was close to 12,000 or double the initial

UNHCR planning figure. In an atmosphere of insecurity, the refugees were facing serious protection challenges, including separation, abduction, forced recruitment and deportation. With the situation in the Caprivi region also remaining tense, more than 1,500 Namibians sought asylum in Botswana, some for a second time.

The critical situation which occurred in Zimbabwe in the run-up to the parliamentary elections in June was a source of considerable anxiety for the international community as a whole. As veterans of Zimbabwe's war of independence occupied several white-owned farms across the nation and the electoral campaign became characterised by violence, the exodus of thousands of Zimbabweans to neighbouring countries was feared. UNHCR prepared the necessary contingency plans to respond to possible refugee displacements, and organised workshops on emergency preparedness for governments, UN agencies, national and international NGOs in neighbouring countries. Fortunately, the feared exodus did not take place and the post-electoral climate has remained relatively calm. With no Zimbabweans forced to seek refuge outside their country, the emergency preparations were relaxed.

Zambia continued to receive refugees from Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The majority of these were arriving in border areas in the country's western provinces, where access and other operational conditions were extremely difficult, making it necessary to evacuate them to settlements further inland. Accordingly, in an operation carried out jointly with IOM, some 7,000 refugees were relocated from the border location of Sinjembela to a new camp in Nangweshi, 120 kms away from the border. This exercise was com-

pleted in March. Meanwhile, the provision of food for refugees in Zambia remained a challenge. In January, WFP had to organise an air-lift of food for Angolan refugees in Kalabo town and the most vulnerable among them were evacuated by air to the Mayukwayukwa settlement.

Elsewhere in the region, the most notable humanitarian problems resulted from the floods that devastated most of the countries of Southern Africa earlier this year. Although the impact in Mozambique captured both the international headlines and the largest proportion of international aid, Botswana, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe were all affected. In Botswana and Zimbabwe, the floods had an impact on the refugee programme, either because delivery of assistance to refugees was momentarily disrupted due to damaged roads or because refugee camps were flooded. Additional emergency resources thus became necessary to mitigate the effects of the floods on refugees in the region.

Strategic Objectives: Progress and Constraints

UNHCR's initial strategic objectives to ensure that refugees gain access to asylum, are treated in accordance with internationally established standards and assisted to find durable solutions remain unchanged. One of the most important obstacles to attaining these objectives originated from the Office's funding crisis during the period under review. As a result, UNHCR's offices in Southern Africa were obliged to conduct repeated downward adjustments of their respective refugee assistance budgets in order to identify possible savings. Inevitably, refugee welfare was affected as a number of needs could not be met. Similarly, with almost all the countries of the region facing new emergencies or significant increases in persons of concern to UNHCR, the Office's staffing capacity was stretched to the limit. The inability to deploy permanent protection staff to monitor border areas and to carry out other critical protection and assistance functions had serious effects, especially in Namibia and Bot-

swana. Resource constraints also meant that refugee shelters damaged by the cyclones in Mozambique and Zimbabwe could not be repaired immediately. UNHCR's diminished credibility with host governments, refugees and NGO partners was evident, especially given that food shortages were also being experienced.

Nevertheless, UNHCR continued to strive to protect and assist refugees in the best way possible, and advocate for governments and civil society to maintain their commitment to protect and care for refugees. One of the most positive developments in this regard occurred in January, when Swaziland acceded to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the two Statelessness Conventions. For those countries which have not acceded to these conventions, UNHCR's efforts to encourage accession continued. On a regional level, various initiatives were undertaken, including with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to address a number of refugee questions of regional interest as well as broader political questions pertinent to refugees. Workshops on international protection and refugee law were held for government officials and NGOs in, among others, Botswana, Mozambique and Namibia to enhance knowledge of asylum and protection issues.

Despite these efforts and because of concrete problems of capacity, asylum applications remained pending in a number of countries. A significant improvement was noted in Botswana, where procedures were streamlined for a rapid transfer to Dukwi refugee camp of newly arrived asylum-seekers. Another major achievement was in South Africa, where the regulations to implement the 1998 Refugee Act were issued and a new eligibility procedure came into force. Accordingly, a project to clear up to 30,000 asylum applications was in the course of being mounted throughout the country.

Many of the long-staying Angolan and Congolese refugees in the region have managed to in-

tegrate into their host communities pending their return home. However, prospects for voluntary repatriation were slim: the repatriation of Angolan refugees remained suspended and the repatriation of Congolese refugees was not encouraged given the fragility of the Lusaka Peace Agreement.

Activities until 30 June

Operations in **Angola, South Africa and Zambia** are described in separate subsequent chapters.

In **Botswana**, the arrival of new Namibian refugees from the Caprivi region (including some who had repatriated in 1999) compelled UNHCR to suspend repatriation for this group of refugees. UNHCR continued to assist 2,100 Namibian refugees at Dukwi refugee camp with food, relief items (blankets, mattresses, clothing and toiletries) and education (102 refugees at the primary level and 88 refugees at the secondary level). The number of Somali refugees was also on the increase. About 400 Somalis are currently of concern to UNHCR in the country, but have not been able to obtain refugee status because of the “country of first asylum” principle as applied in Botswana. While continuing its representations for a more flexible application of this principle, UNHCR has been obliged to resort to resettlement in particular cases where this

was the only possible course of action. About 40 Somali refugee children were registered at the primary school in Dukwi refugee camp and a further six at the educational resource centre. Some 30 adult refugees attended English courses. UNHCR supported a number of retail outlets run by Somali refugees. Other refugees were engaged in subsistence crop production and commercial poultry-farming. Angolan refugees continued to receive basic humanitarian assistance at the camp. A reception facility was established at Shakawe and a registration centre at Maun to assist the 350 Angolans who arrived since January. The planned naturalisation of some 250 Angolan refugees who arrived in Botswana two decades ago was delayed as the modalities for their integration had not yet been finalised (although all refugees had received certificates of land ownership).

In the Indian Ocean islands (**Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles**), UNHCR continued to rely on UNDP to help refugees recognised under its mandate. Here too, resettlement was often the only measure that could be pursued. Progress on efforts to promote accession to the international refugee and statelessness instruments, enact national legislation and establish eligibility procedures has been slow, as relatively few asylum-seekers are arriving in the islands and the matter is not considered urgent. To raise awareness and understanding for refugees, the first ever workshop



on international refugee law and protection is expected to take place in Madagascar in September. A similar situation exists in **Lesotho**, where UNDP continued to monitor UNHCR's interests, particularly the situation of some 30 refugees who are integrating locally.

Malawi continued to receive an average of 150 new refugees and asylum-seekers per month, mainly from the Great Lakes region. Between January and June, the refugee population almost doubled from 1,300 to 2,400 individuals. The goals of improving refugee protection in Malawi through the removal by the Government of reservations to the 1951 Convention concerning freedom of movement and access to employment, and of introducing subsequent amendments to the national refugee legislation have not yet been attained. Ad hoc arrangements have nevertheless alleviated some of UNHCR's concerns. All refugees and asylum-seekers reside at Dzeleka camp, where they have access to safe drinking water, basic sanitation (pit latrines), health services (at the camp clinic and the district hospital) and counselling. Education was available in the camp school for children of primary school age. The school is currently being extended with new classrooms. By June, 43 refugee children were attending national secondary schools in the area. Refugees were encouraged to participate in camp activities (for example grass-cutting and shelter-construction), and UNHCR continued to stress, in camp management meetings, the need to involve women in refugee committees to address the specific needs of women and children (such as food distribution, health issues, etc.). To preserve the environment, UNHCR provided paraffin to each household for cooking and lighting. However, refugees continued to search for firewood and charcoal for the running of small-scale businesses (bakeries, food stalls). Many refugees are not yet fully self-sufficient in food production, particularly those who arrived recently (although longer staying refugees shared their limited produce with the newcomers). UNHCR has contacted FAO to evaluate the situation and provide advice on how to improve yields. Meanwhile, the Office continued to provide rice and vegetable oil to the refu-

gees, and an NGO partner supplied other basic food commodities.

In **Mozambique**, UNHCR was concerned about the very poor living conditions for refugees and asylum-seekers as well as continuing insecurity in Bobole camp. The inability of the national eligibility committee to meet and review asylum applications caused additional backlogs and the number of refugees awaiting a decision on their status increased. Meanwhile, more than 400 refugees were accommodated at Bobole camp, where they received basic humanitarian assistance including food (distributed weekly), domestic items, medical services, primary education, Portuguese language courses and support for poultry and vegetable farming from UNHCR and its NGO partners. The steady influx of asylum-seekers from the Great Lakes region into the northern provinces (mainly Niassa) prompted the Government to announce that all asylum-seekers entering the country in that area would be accommodated and assisted in a new refugee camp in Nampula province. UNHCR advocated local integration of the residents of Masaca camp (who have achieved economic self-sufficiency) and the transfer of the residents of Bobole camp to the new camp in Nampula. Efforts to assist the Government to protect and assist refugees and asylum-seekers more effectively will be intensified during the second semester.

Continued insecurity in the Kavango and Caprivi provinces of **Namibia** posed serious protection challenges to the Office. Many refugee families were separated at the border and some Angolans who had been spontaneously settled in northern Namibia for many years were deported. UNHCR temporarily deployed additional protection staff to oversee the proceedings of the immigration tribunal and although deportations ceased momentarily, they resumed shortly thereafter. A tripartite agreement signed between the Government, UNHCR and a national NGO which will require the latter to conduct preliminary interviews with the claimants before the national eligibility committee makes a decision. The overcrowding of Osire camp prompted the Government to re-

quest UNHCR to set up a new facility elsewhere. Plans began to transform a reception/transit centre in Kassava, where the availability of arable and grazing land would enable refugees to become self-sufficient. UNHCR was providing food to the refugees in Osire camp until March, when WFP took over. The Office continued to provide dried fish, blankets, mattresses, pots, buckets, stoves and paraffin. The construction of a 500 metric tonne capacity warehouse in Osire camp was completed in February. More than 30 boreholes were drilled and equipped with hand pumps (six of them solar-driven) and 552 family latrines were completed. UNHCR also funded the construction of 29 double community latrines and 20 double community bathrooms. Work also began on the construction of wash-basins. Distribution of building materials to the refugees continued, enabling them to construct 255 temporary homes. Of a total of 915 tents, UNHCR purchased 215 and a government donated the remainder. More tents will be required to meet the need for shelter for the ever-increasing camp population. Osire camp has one health clinic staffed by only two nurses. This has proven insufficient to provide adequate health services to the refugees and the deployment of a medical doctor has therefore become urgent. An NGO partner recently added two small wings to the health clinic and an ambulance was deployed in June. More than 1,900 children attended the primary school in Osire camp. UNHCR covered the salaries of 17 out of the 27 teachers. The teachers need training but lack of funds prevented UNHCR from addressing the situation. It is hoped that UNESCO will be able to assist in the matter. UNHCR also helped more than 500 refugees attend secondary schools and 40 refugees participated in vocational training. In addition, 25 refugees attended the University of Namibia, the Polytechnic Institute of Namibia and the Institute of Higher Education under the DAFI programme.

In **Swaziland**, the draft refugee legislation finalised last year with UNHCR's assistance has not yet been tabled in Parliament. UNHCR's activities focused on helping up to 1,000 refugees

and asylum-seekers with basic protection and relief assistance. Educational grants were given to more than 90 refugees at levels ranging from primary to post-secondary. A refugee-based commission worked closely with UNAIDS to educate refugees on health issues, including prevention of HIV/AIDS and malaria control. Several training courses were organised for refugees: 25 adults and 26 children attended separate training courses on environmental awareness, the rights of the child, abuse prevention and reproductive health; 18 refugee women and men attended a workshop on equal rights; and ten refugees were trained in business management. The Office strengthened its relations with the media and continued to advocate for refugees and their rights through a pilot project in 65 schools. It also worked to forge links between civil society and the refugees (through church and cultural organisations) to encourage local integration and self-reliance.

A number of events influenced UNHCR's activities in **Zimbabwe**, in particular the declining economy, the natural disaster caused by cyclone Eline and a number of protection challenges which occurred during the period under review. The exceptionally high inflation rate (58 per cent in June) and a shortage of foreign currency (leading to a shortage in fuel and medicines) required UNHCR's NGO partners to review salary levels, as the labour movement was demanding a more than 90 per cent increase. The situation has not yet been settled. Cyclone Eline caused extensive flooding in the eastern and southern parts of Zimbabwe and access to and communication with the Tongogara refugee settlement was cut off. As the camp was completely flooded, refugees had to relocate to higher ground and it cost UNHCR USD 150,000 to repair the camp and move the refugees back. Assistance in Tongogara settlement included support for education and income-generation as well as food. More than 100 refugee children attended national primary schools and some 80 refugees were registered at secondary and higher institutions, all with grants to cover school fees, supplies and uniforms. A group credit scheme for 200 low-

income households was set up to help them become self-reliant and basic food rations were given to more than 400 asylum-seekers. More than 80 refugees and local farmers in and around Tongogara settlement were trained in permaculture (small-scale gardening), 76 persons received training in soap-making, 33 in bee-keeping and eight in organic cotton growing. Urban refugees were assisted in finding employment and received educational grants, language and vocational training as well as support for income-generating activities. The two Cuban doctors remained in custody for six weeks, after which UNHCR secured their release and transfer to a third country. The Office continued to ensure that asylum-seekers are not subjected to prolonged periods of detention and that the transfer of refugees to Tongogara settlement is voluntary, in accordance with applicable international standards.

Outlook for July - December

UNHCR's main priority in the region will be to ensure that the most urgent humanitarian needs of newly arrived Angolan, Congolese, Namibian and other refugees and asylum-seekers are met and that they are received and treated in conformity with internationally rec-

ognised protection standards. However, it will be increasingly difficult to help them integrate in their host countries as funds for local integration projects are becoming scarce. Pending repatriation, the Office will nevertheless continue to support local integration (and naturalisation) of long-staying Angolan refugees in Botswana and Zambia and advocate the issuance of naturalisation certificates or the granting of permanent residence permits. Self-sufficiency in food production will also be supported through the allocation of new land plots in agreement with the respective governments. This is one of three components in UNHCR's region-wide strategy to create a better environment for refugees and others of concern. The other components (legal and institutional capacity-building and increased public awareness and understanding for refugees) will also be pursued in the latter part of 2000, with emphasis on Namibia, Mozambique, South Africa and Swaziland. In Angola, UNHCR will help the Government improve the living conditions of thousands of destitute IDPs in targeted communities, and eventually, if the security situation makes voluntary repatriation feasible any time soon, start making plans for a more extensive reintegration programme.

FINANCIAL DATA (USD)

Countries	Initial Budget		Revised Budget		Total Funds Available*		Total Funds Obligated	
	AB and TF	SP	AB and TF	SP	AB and TF	SP	AB and TF	SP
Angola	2'555'084	0	5'339'307	8'427'692	3'281'518	0	3'222'700	0
Botswana	1'121'139	0	1'119'267	0	494'000	0	494'000	0
Malawi	890'007	0	907'366	0	531'500	0	531'500	0
Mozambique	656'660	0	1'093'190	0	471'800	0	471'800	0
Namibia	1'490'348	0	3'409'969	0	1'262'416	0	1'124'900	0
South Africa**	5'315'322	0	6'012'808	0	2'738'900	0	2'679'800	0
Swaziland	429'614	0	428'836	0	198'600	0	198'600	0
Zambia	5'938'363	0	12'461'272	0	4'690'522	0	4'492'100	0
Zimbabwe	730'688	0	946'688	0	420'200	0	420'200	0
Regional Projects***	253'800	0	253'800	0	630'162	0	250'000	0
Sub-total	19'381'025	0	31'972'503	8'427'692	14'719'618	0	13'885'600	0
Liaison Unit at								
Headquarters	486'525	0	547'093		242'266	0	242'266	0
TOTAL	19'867'550	0	32'519'596	8'427'692	14'961'884	0	14'127'866	0

*Includes income from unrestricted contributions, income from contributions restricted to the region and countries within the region, opening balance and adjustments.

**Includes administrative costs for the Regional Director's Office as well as operational and administrative costs in Comoros, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles.